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Craig Kraft's "Ancient Spiral," on view at the King Street Gallery.

The Urge to Mark

King Street Gallery, Montgomery College, 930 King St., Silver Spring, MD.

Neon has a modern, urban vibe, which it retains even when artists adapt the glowing tubes for something other than signage. It's unlikely that any practitioner has dragged neon further from Times Square than Craig Kraft. His "The Urge to Mark," now at Montgomery College's King Street Gallery, illuminates cave paintings that date to some 40,000 years before neon's early-20th-century commercialization.

Kraft, who maintains a storefront studio in Anacostia, has visited 26 cave sites on three continents. He identifies the precise locations of many of the markings he reproduces in this show. Some are merely documented by photographs; others are simulated or lighted by glowing lengths of glass.

Having previously experimented with translating doodles and graffiti into luminous gestures, Kraft continues to move away from neon's traditional uses. And yet, shaped light is crucial to the show's most striking pieces: a homage to a penniform symbol painted in a Spanish cave and an anti-poaching statement. In one, light seems to flow like blood; the other (made with Libby Cahill and Tristan Roland) outlines an elephant's head with multiple tubes. The latter doesn't have anything to do with cave painting, but it vividly demonstrates Kraft's quest to use neon for something more meaningful than advertising beer.