



Stuart Weitzman Honored by Cantabria for His Commitment to Safeguarding Rock Art Heritage

New York, NY May 27, 2022—Stuart Weitzman, American shoe designer, philanthropist, and founder of the Stuart Weitzman shoe company, was honored, along with Barbara Kreger, his right hand in the business for over 40 years, by the Vice President of Cantabria, Pablo Zuloaga, and World Monuments Fund (WMF) CEO and President, Bénédicte de Montlaur, on Wednesday night for their commitment to the conservation and dissemination of the rock art heritage in Spain's Cantabria region. During the occasion, Stuart Weitzman announced he would contribute an additional \$250,000 through his foundation toward the continued protection of Cantabria's Paleolithic rock art, which is to be matched by the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust.

The event took place at the residence of the Spanish Ambassador to the United Nations in New York City, as part of a broader celebration of Cantabria's World Heritage sites featuring Paleolithic art. "On this occasion, we will publicize the projects of our archaeological heritage, such as the new MUPAC (Museum of Prehistory and Archaeology of Cantabria), and the Center of Cave Art, headquarters of the UNESCO CC2 on Rock Art and the World Heritage Convention," said Vice President Zuloaga.

With support from Mr. Weitzman, whose company has produced shoes in Spain since the 1970s, World Monuments Fund launched a project in 2017 to conserve and promote the cave of La Garma, a unique archaeological site that boasts an impressive collection of rock art and remains from the Paleolithic age.

The cave of La Garma is part of the world-renowned network of karst caves located in Cantabria in Northern Spain, included on the World Heritage List as Cave of Altamira and Paleolithic Cave Art of Northern Spain. The name La Garma refers to the mountain nestled in Sierra Calobra where five levels of caves have been discovered.

The cave's Lower Gallery, discovered in 1995, contains the largest example of Paleolithic floors in the world. These floors are in an extraordinary state of conservation, thanks to a landslide approximately 15,000 years ago that sealed the cave and kept the ancient remains mostly intact through the years. The rock art in La Garma and the surrounding caves comprise one of the best archaeological sequences in Europe, with evidence of human activity spanning over 300,000 years, up until the Middle Ages.

As part of the project led by WMF, a multidisciplinary team of experts studied the cave's ecosystem and archaeological remains, and assessed the state of conservation of the cave's art forms and floors to inform the development of a conservation plan for the site. In order to allow the public to explore the cave's interior while protecting the fragility of its environment, Weitzman's Fundación de Las Cuevas



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de Cantabria, in collaboration with WMF, funded the production of a virtual reality tour of the cave. In January 2020, *Forbes* magazine included *Memoria: Stories of La Garma* among the 50 top VR experiences of 2019.

A new virtual reality tour is now planned, with support from the Fundación de Las Cuevas de Cantabria, which will allow access to La Pasiega, a cave closed to the public and considered a Sistine Chapel of Paleolithic art, like Lascaux and Altamira.

World Monuments Fund will support these initiatives through its the new Rock Art Conservation Program established thanks to the generous donations of Stuart Weitzman and Barbara Kreger, the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust, and other supporters. Through this program, Stuart Weitzman and Barbara Kreger express their deep appreciation of Spain, the country where they made shoes for over 45 years.

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About World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to safeguarding the world's significant cultural places to enrich lives and build mutual understanding. For more than 55 years, working at more than 700 sites in 112 countries, its highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to the preservation of important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through the World Monuments Watch—a biennial, nomination-based program—WMF uses cultural heritage conservation to empower communities and improve human well-being. In partnership with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF seeks to inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York City, the organization has offices and affiliates worldwide. wmf.org