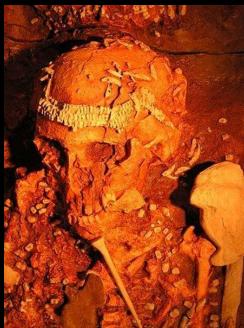


Upper Palaeolithic Arts

1

Arriving in western Eurasia in the Upper
Palaeolithic modern humans came with their arts.
“Art” was already a part of human culture.

One of the most
elementary
categories of art
is body art.



Detail: Burial S-1 at Sungir. Ivory beads, likely fastened to leather or fur, are part of this man's cap. Note also the ivory pin at his throat (to fasten a cloak?)

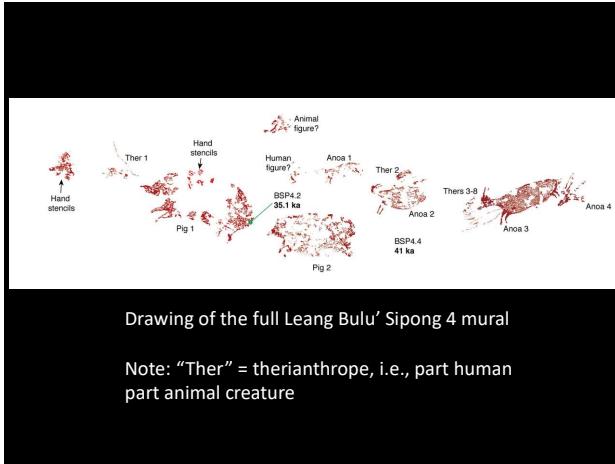
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Older art

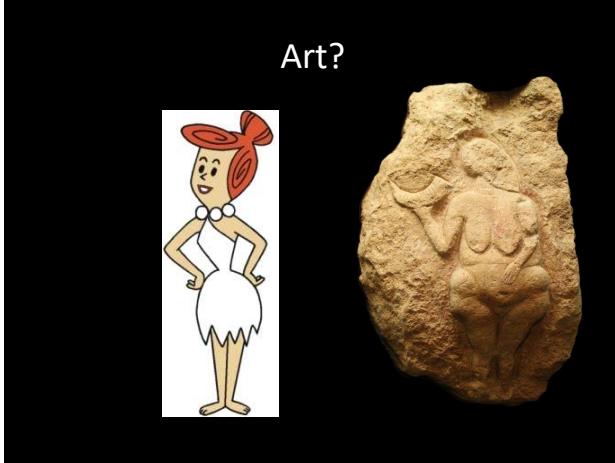


Six humanoid figures (“therianthropes”) with animal features surround an anoa, a small type of buffalo, in a detail from a 44,000-year-old Indonesian cave mural found at the Leang Bulu’ Sipong 4 site on the island of Sulawesi, December 2019.

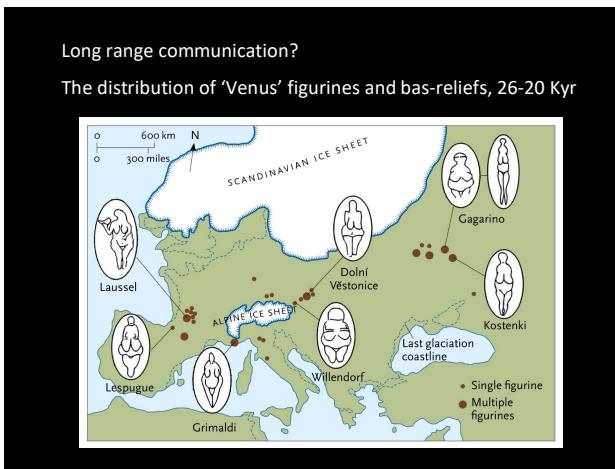
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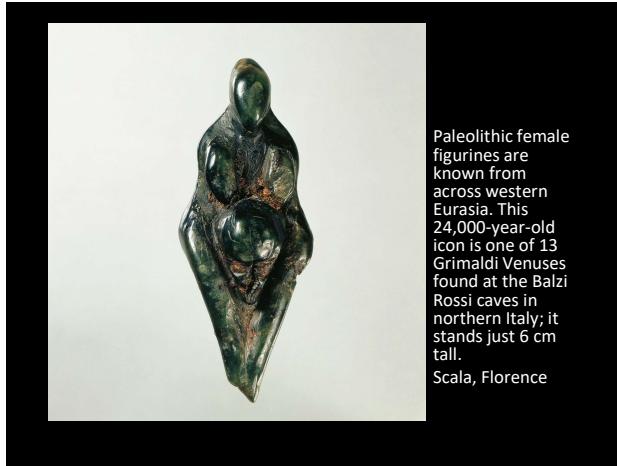
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5



6



7

Why Venus?

- European scholars began recovering the so-called Venus figurines in the 19th century. The first one was found in 1864 by French archaeologist Paul Hurault, Marquis de Vibray. He uncovered an 8-cm-high ivory figurine at Laugerie-Basse, France. The carved nude figure is missing its head and arms, but the hips, pubic mound, and legs are well defined. Analysis shows that the figure dates to around 17,000 to 12,000 years ago.
- Hurault dubbed the small statue *Vénus impudique*, which means "immodest Venus," in a nod to European artworks that depict *Vénus pudica*, or "modest Venus."

8

Sandro Botticelli, "Nascita di Venere" (*The Birth of Venus*)
Late 15th c CE

Ivory figurine from Laugerie Basse, "*Vénus impudique*", (Immodest Venus), Magdenian period, 17-12 Kyr BP

9



- The oldest known Venus figurine (left) was found in the cave of Hohle Fels in southern Germany and is estimated to be 35,000 years old. Museum of Prehistory, Blaubeuren, Germany

10



- In 2019 the so-called Renancourt Venus was found in Amiens, France.
- Carved from chalk in the late Gravettian period, she is 23,000 years old and measures 3.8 cm

11



- This limestone figurine was discovered in 1983 at the Russian site of Kostenki near the River Don. Like the other Venususes, it is small, about 10 cm high. Scholars believe it was made between 23,000 and 21,000 years ago, during the period of the Gravettian culture.
- In terms of shape and the detail of the hairstyle or headdress, it resembles the Venus of Willendorf. Both figures were painted with red ochre. The figure wears various ornaments: bands or belts on the upper body and bracelets on the forearms and wrists. Such ornaments may have been made from leather, animal skins, or vegetable fibers. Various lines are visible on the buttocks and hips that could represent clothing (braids of threads, strings, or strips of leather)

12



- This mammoth ivory figurine, 34,000 years old, was found in the Hohlenstein-Stadel Cave in Germany.

13



- The hooded lady, or the Venus of Brassempouy, was carved about 25,000 years ago. This fragment is in the National Archaeology Museum in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France.

14



The Venus of Willendorf, discovered in 1908, is an icon of Stone Age art.

15

Categories of “art” in the Upper Palaeolithic

- Parietal art: depictions on cave walls.
 - Engravings
 - Drawings
 - Paintings
- Bas-relief and modeling
- Portable art
 - Figurines
 - Ornaments

16

Engravings

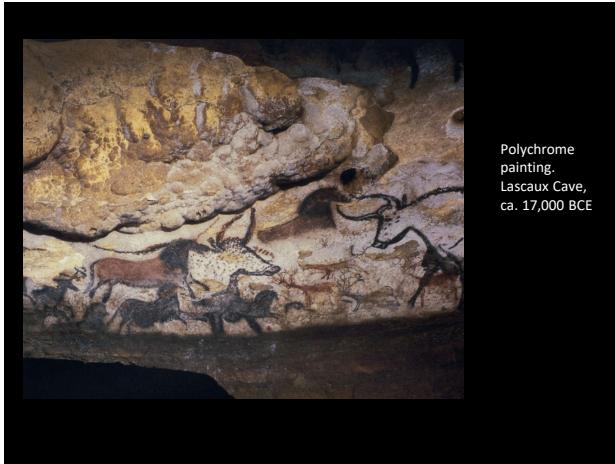


17

Drawing of a horse.
Charcoal.
Chauvet Cave,
ca. 30,000 BCE

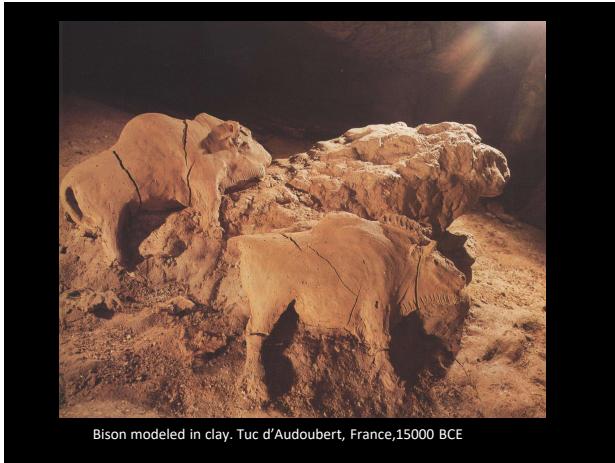


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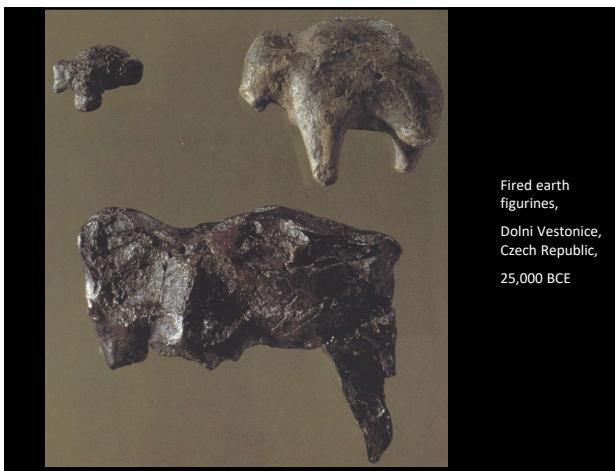
Polychrome
painting.
Lascaux Cave,
ca. 17,000 BCE

19



Bison modeled in clay. Tuc d'Audoubert, France, 15000 BCE

20



Fired earth
figurines,
Dolni Vestonice,
Czech Republic,
25,000 BCE

21

Human figures



"Art" in and of themselves, perhaps, but these carved figures do certainly show aspects of Upper Palaeolithic body art and decoration.

22



- Example of portable art
- Series of 137 stone, bone, and ivory beads and pendants, reconstructed as a necklace.
- Abri Blanchard
- Aurignacian

23

???

- First of all, using the term "art" is problematic because in Western society we tend to have a particular set of characteristics and images that qualify as art.
- Art, however, is a historical category of our own cultural tradition and not many other cultures have this concept.
- It is accepted that Upper Paleolithic cultures did not have these notions
- The cave art images are nevertheless evocative and speak a 'universal language' - but only insofar as the images get a reaction from everyone

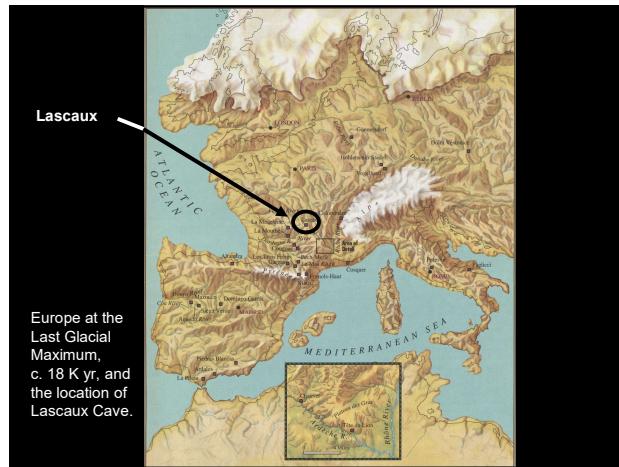
24

- In anthropology, representation—whether visual or some other kind—is ALWAYS understood in terms of the contexts of its creation and use.
- Those contexts are technological, economic, social, and/or ideological.
- That is why you can not take all of the visual representations created over 25,000 of the Upper Paleolithic and lump them together.
- They are too diverse.

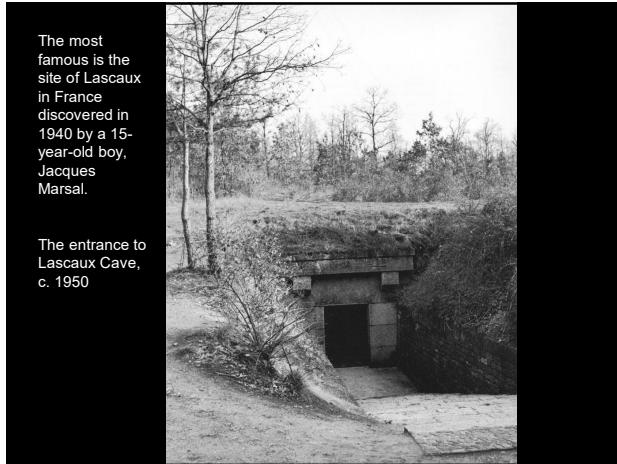
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Cave Art

26



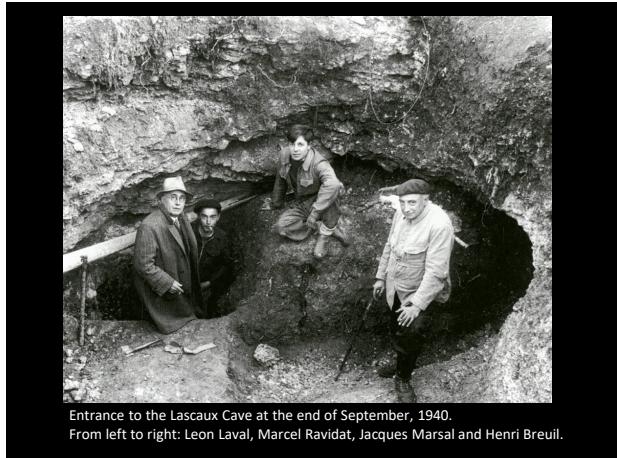
27



The most famous is the site of Lascaux in France discovered in 1940 by a 15-year-old boy, Jacques Marsal.

The entrance to Lascaux Cave, c. 1950

28



Entrance to the Lascaux Cave at the end of September, 1940.
From left to right: Leon Laval, Marcel Ravidat, Jacques Marsal and Henri Breuil.

29

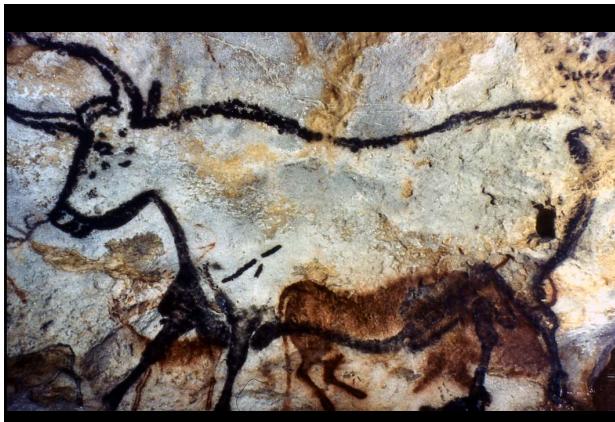


30



Horses, superimposed on a bull. Hall of the Bulls.

31



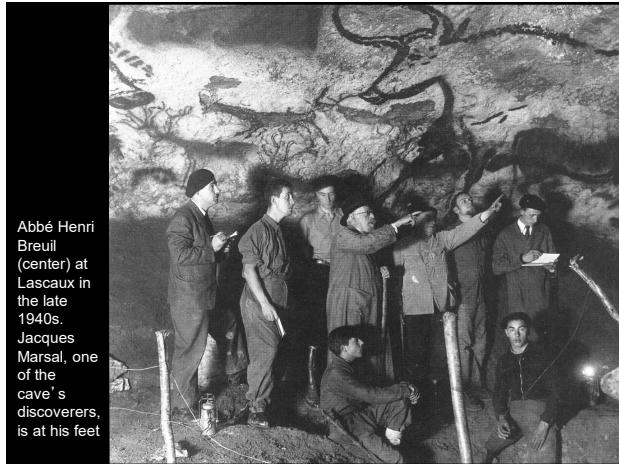
Bull (3.5 m long), superimposed over a red, kneeling bovid. Hall of the Bulls.

32

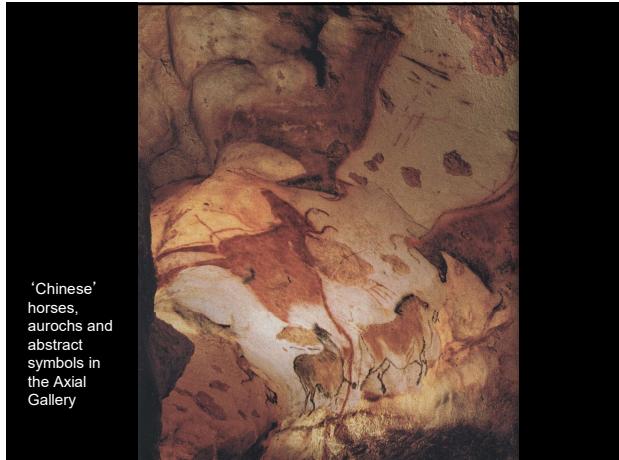


Red deer, detail. Note the effect produced by calcite crystals on the wall. Hall of the Bulls.

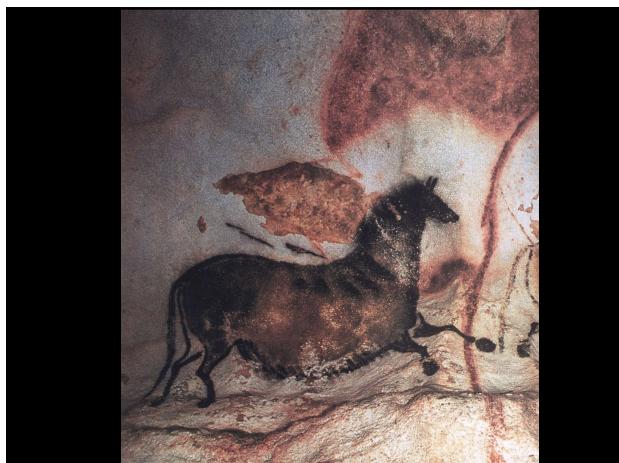
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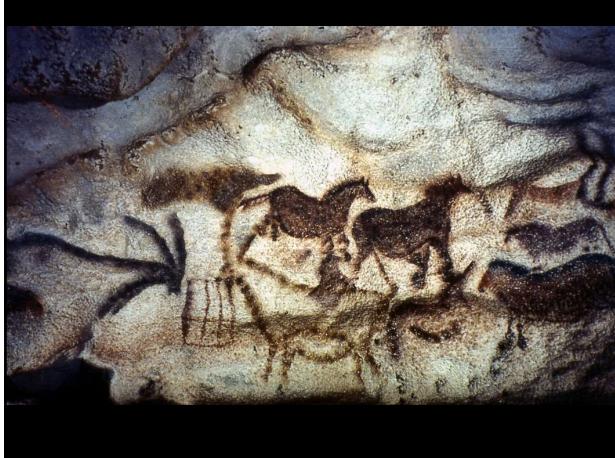
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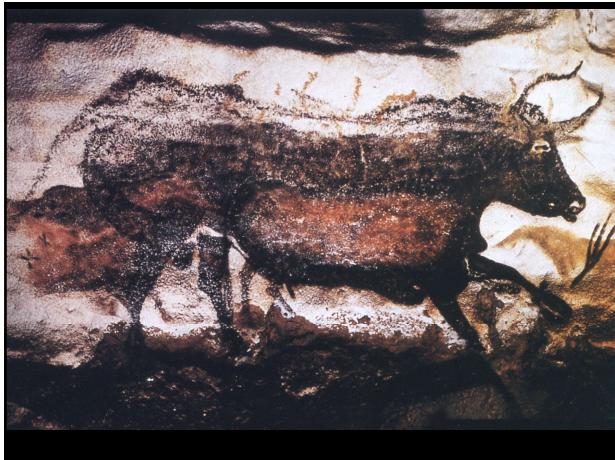
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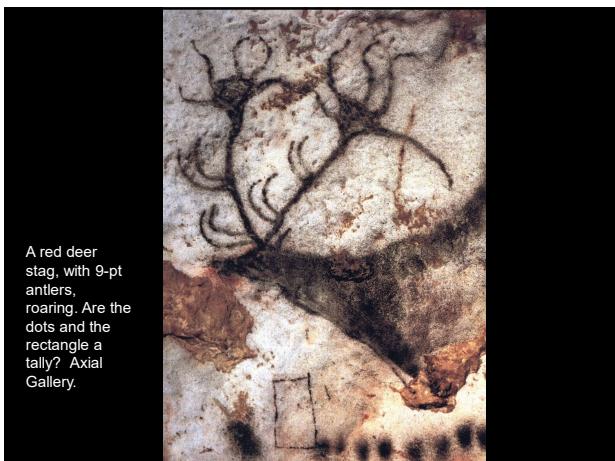
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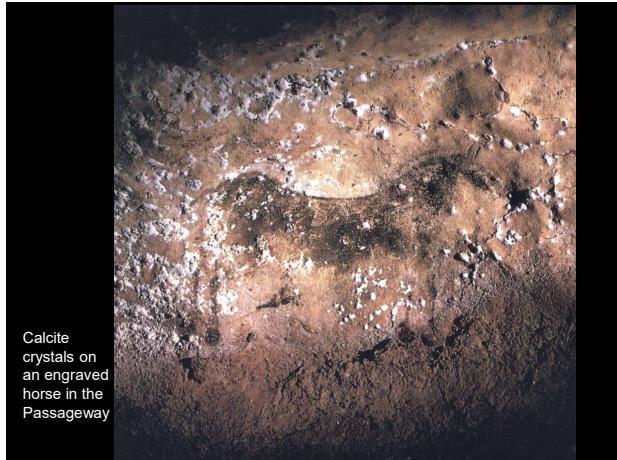
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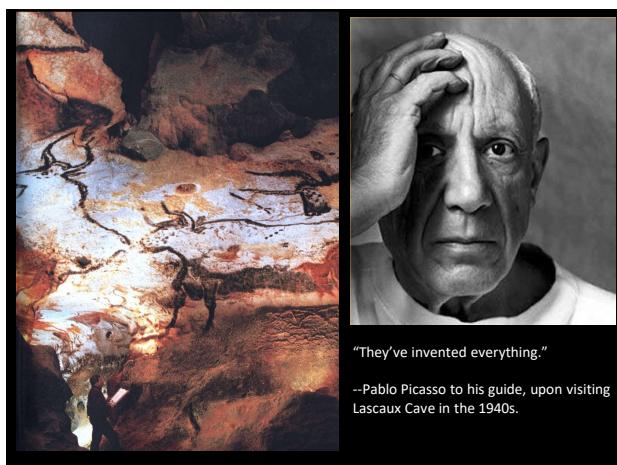
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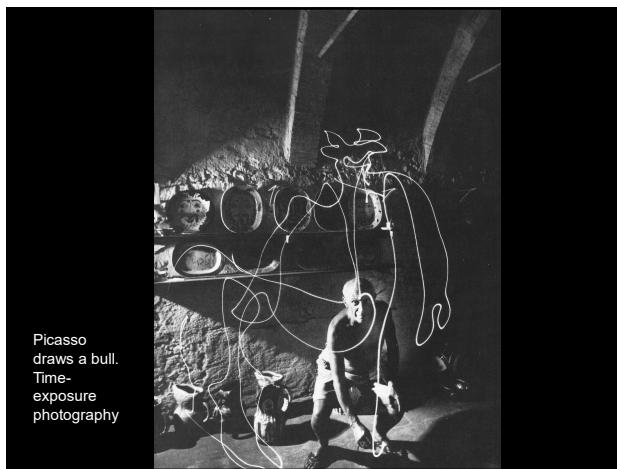


41



"They've invented everything."
--Pablo Picasso to his guide, upon visiting Lascaux Cave in the 1940s.

42



43

What had they invented?

- A language of signs, for which there is no Rosetta Stone

Panel of signs from Niaux, France.
Height 120 cm; width 65 cm.
Magdalenian.

44

What had they invented?

- Perspective – a technique that wasn't rediscovered until Classical Greece

Two bison at Lascaux. L = 2.5 m

45

What had they invented? Other inventions

- Pointillism



46

What had they invented? Other inventions

- Stencilling



47

What had they invented? Other inventions

- Scaffolds



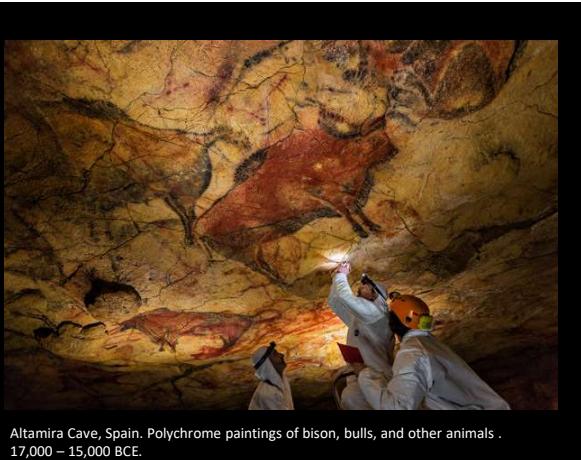
48

And most importantly, they invented...
...the very idea of an *image*.



Lascaux Cave, France. Red deer.
15000 BCE.

49



Altamira Cave, Spain. Polychrome paintings of bison, bulls, and other animals.
17,000 – 15,000 BCE.

50



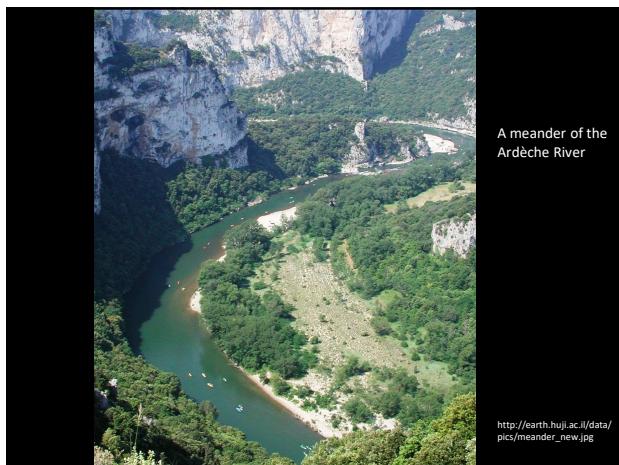
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Chauvet Cave: The Oldest Upper Palaeolithic Cave Art in Europe

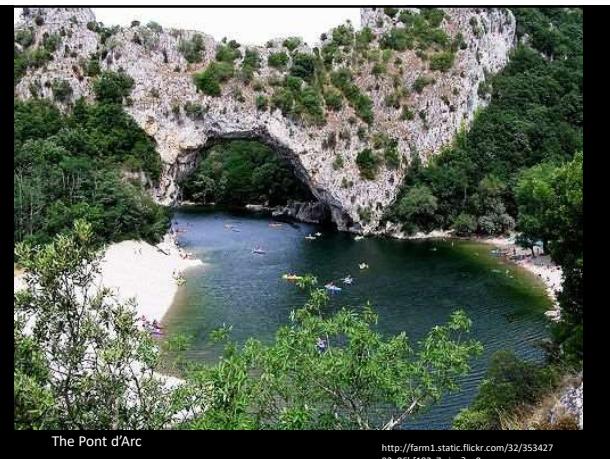
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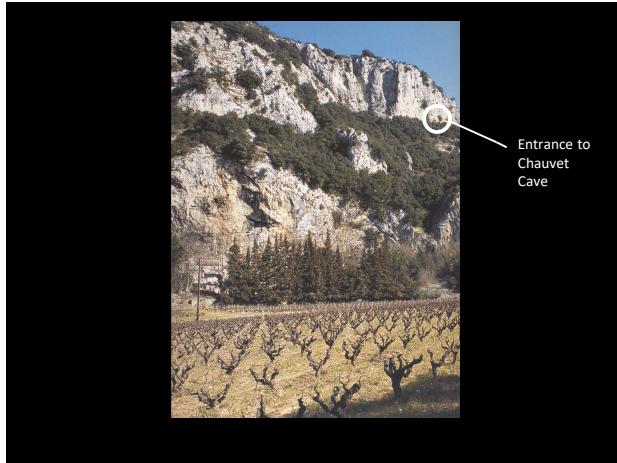
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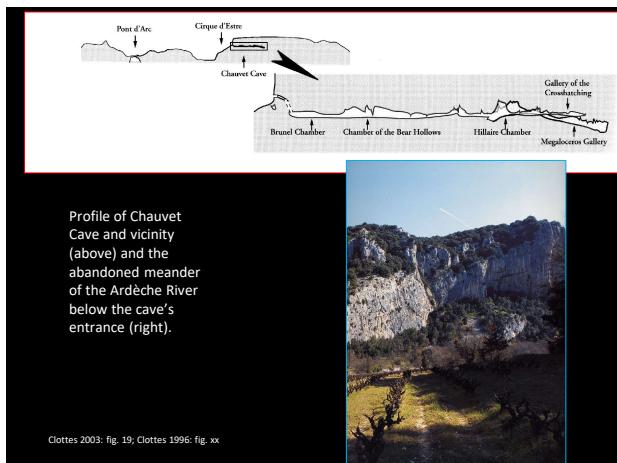
The Pont d'Arc

http://farm1.static.flickr.com/32/35342792_06bf182a7c.jpg?v=0

55



56



Profile of Chauvet Cave and vicinity (above) and the abandoned meander of the Ardèche River below the cave's entrance (right).

Clottes 2003: fig. 19; Clottes 1996: fig. xx

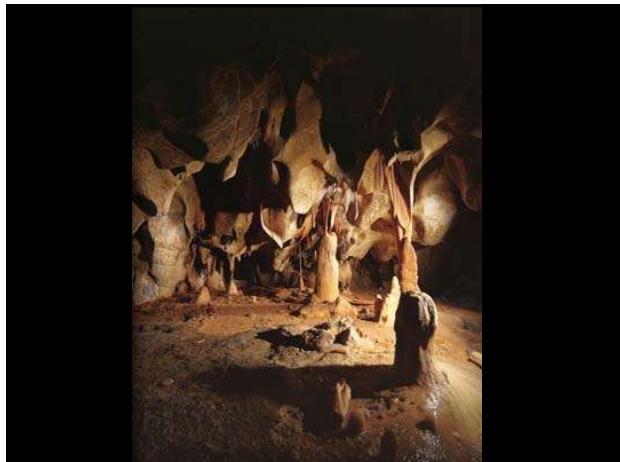
57



The narrow passage that leads to Chauvet Cave

(Clottes 2003: fig. 5)

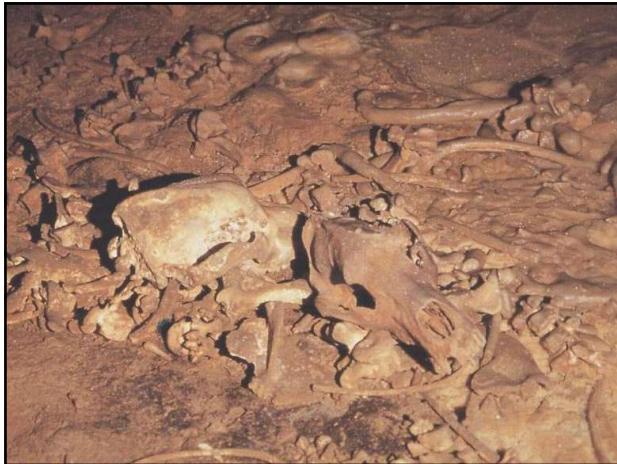
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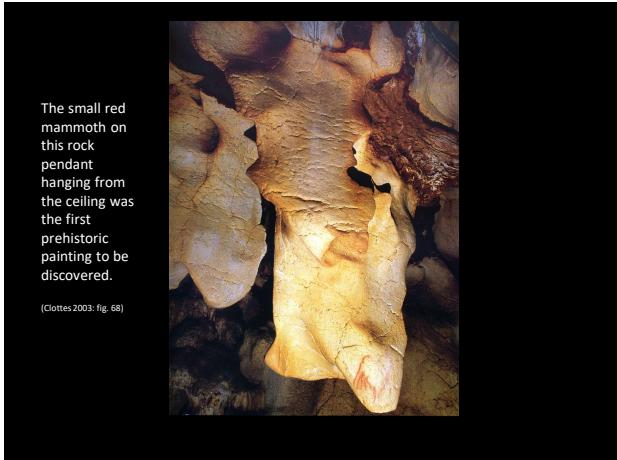
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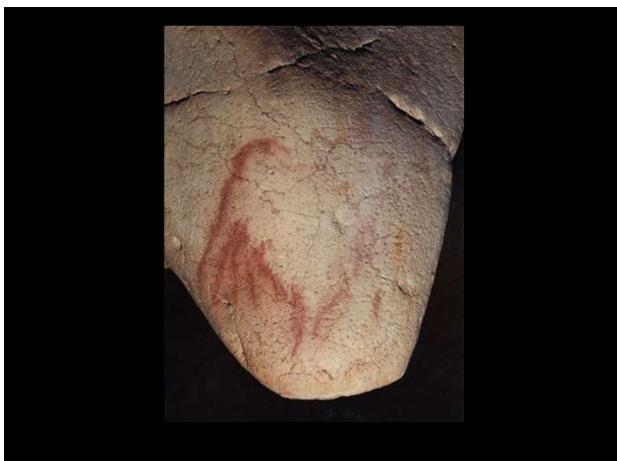
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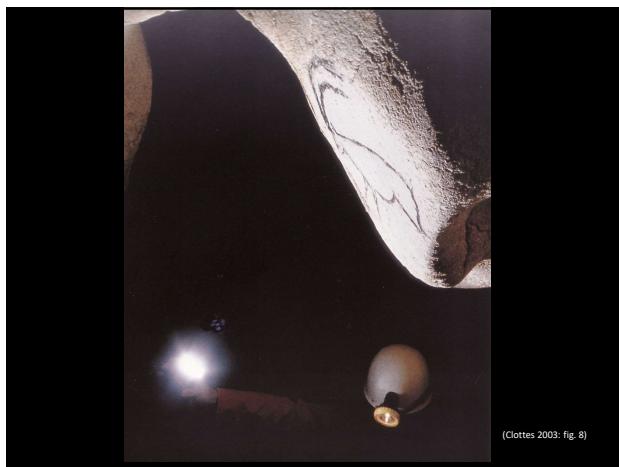
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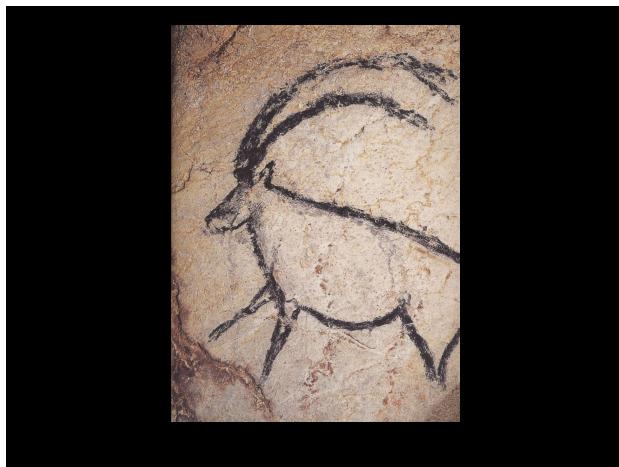
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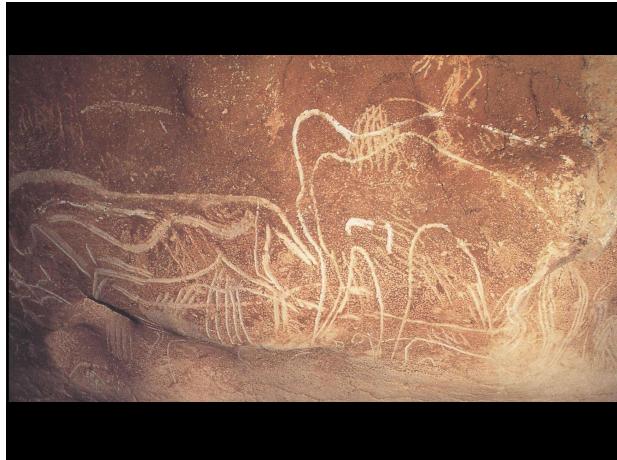
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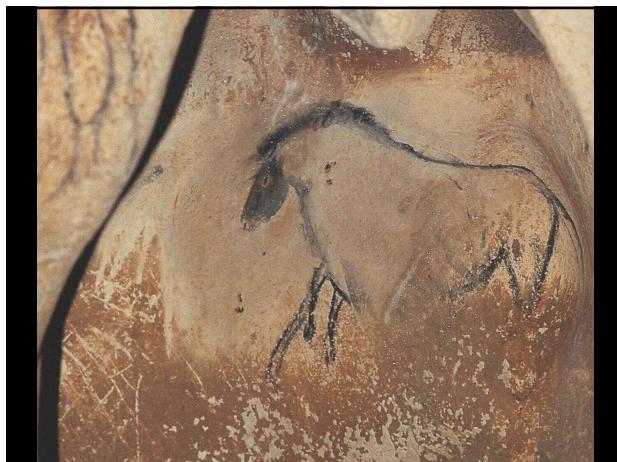
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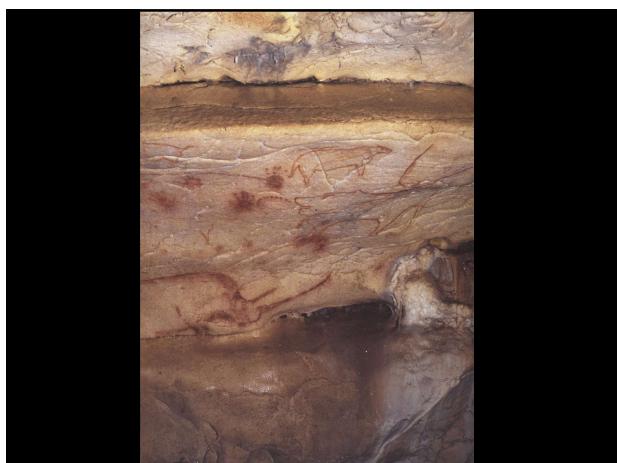
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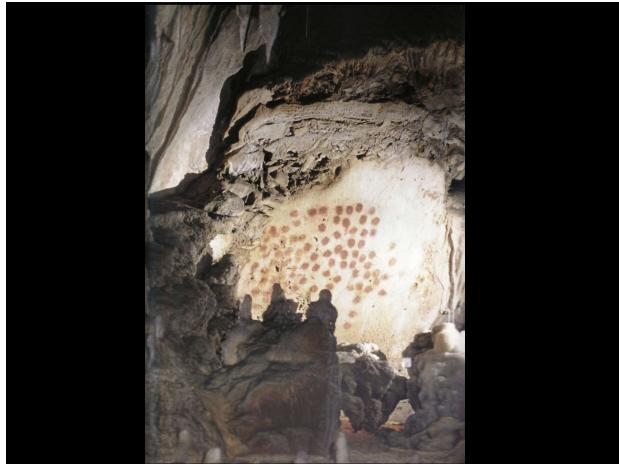
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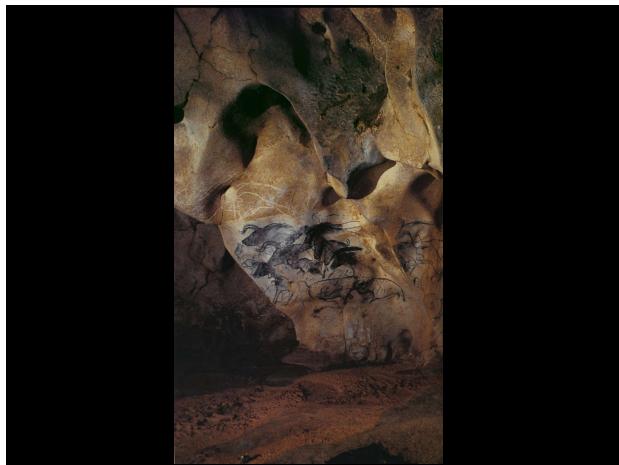
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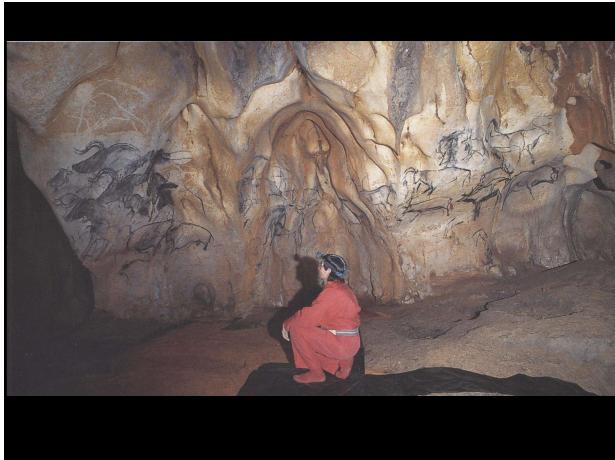
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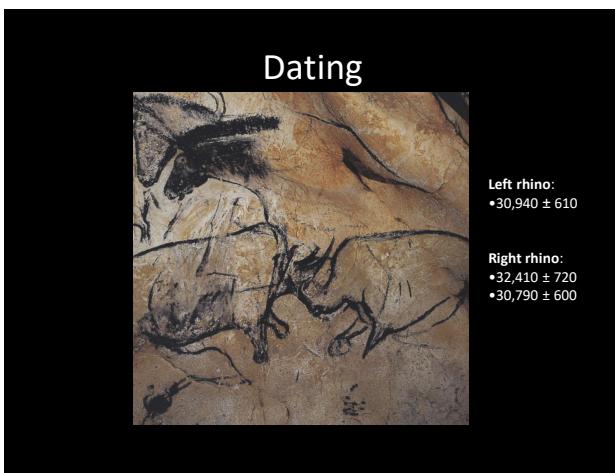
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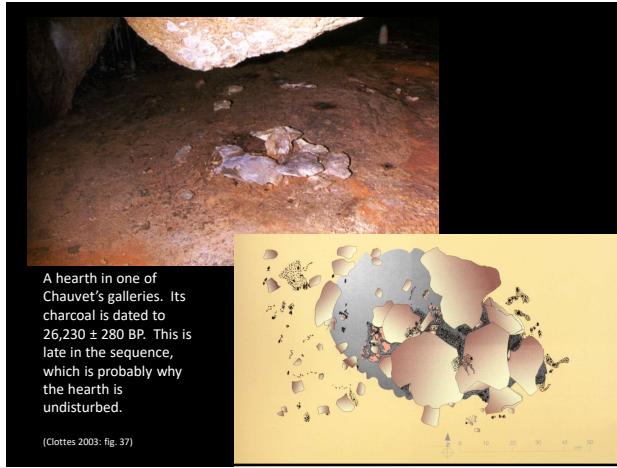
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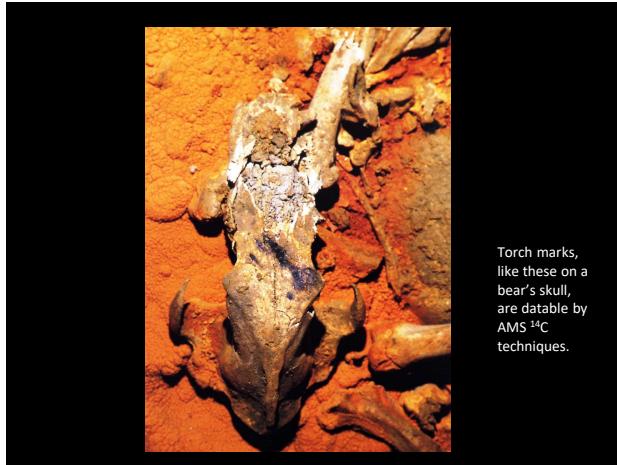
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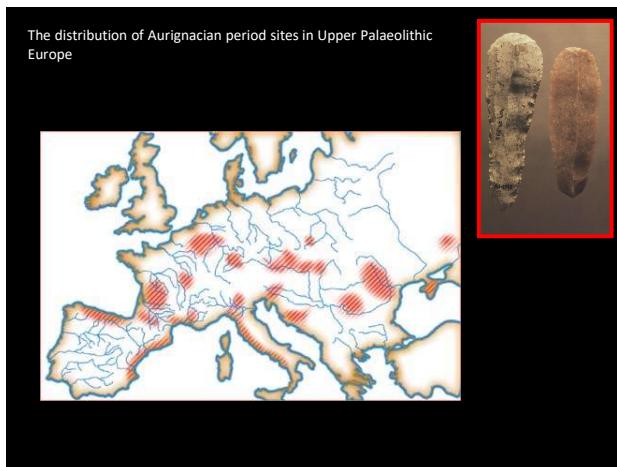
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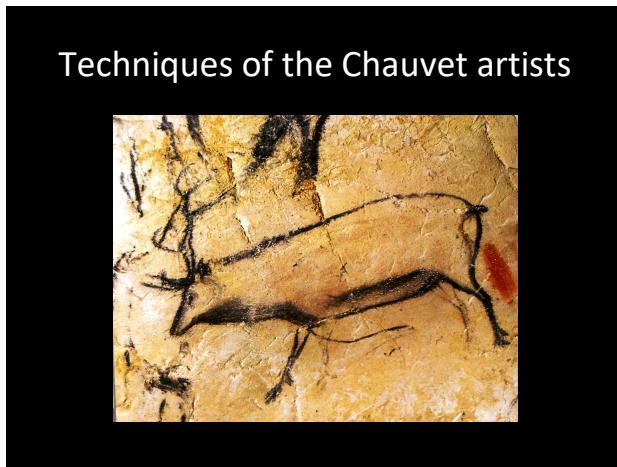
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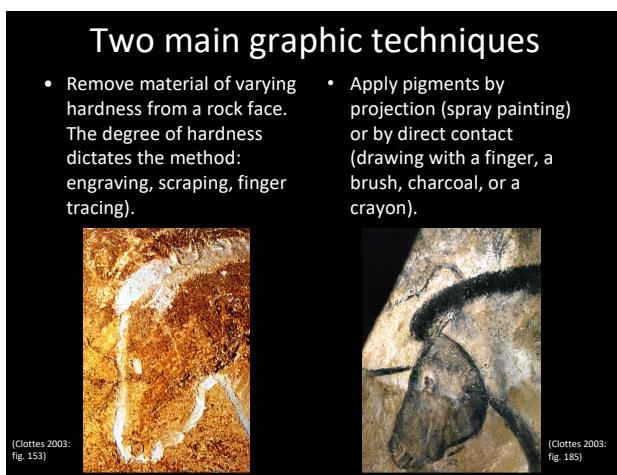
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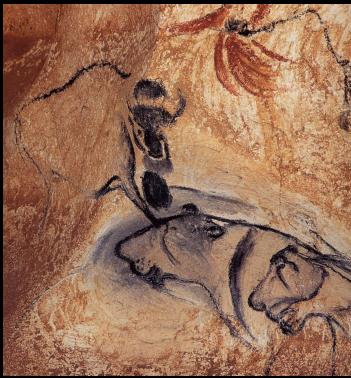


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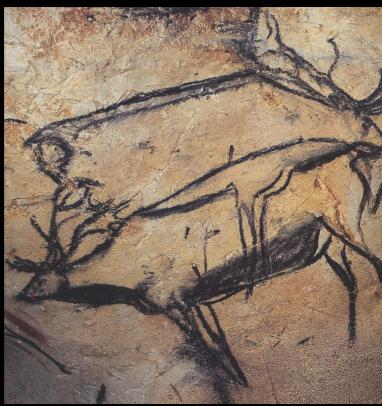
(Clottes 2003:
fig.)

82

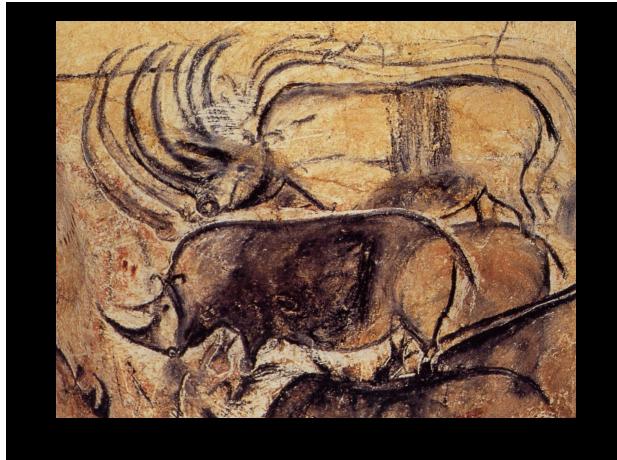
Perspective



83



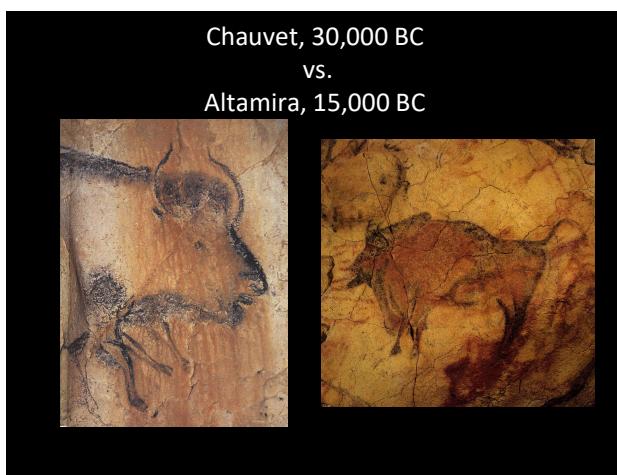
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86



87

Problems of interpretation

Upper Palaeolithic art, continued

88

Identity of the image

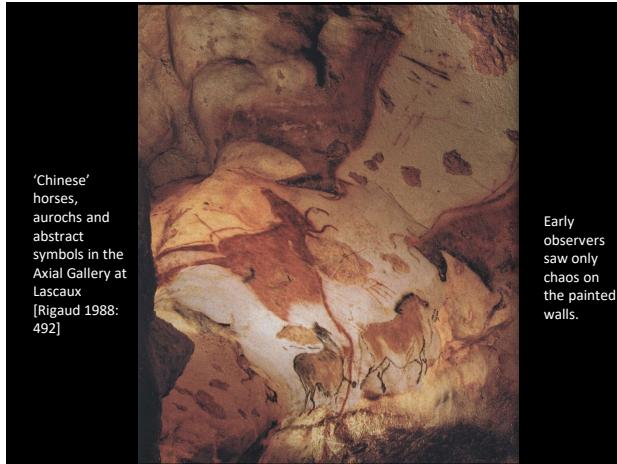


89

Interpretations of Upper Palaeolithic art over the last century

- Art for art's sake
- Totemism
- Sympathetic magic, hunting magic
- Cultural ecology
- Shamanism

90



91

Art for art's sake

- Gabriel de Mortillet argued that paintings and engravings had only an aesthetic purpose. Tools and weapons were adorned for pleasure.
- Obvious contradiction: why would anyone go deep, deep into a cave to make an image no one would see?



92

Early explanations: Totemism and sympathetic magic



93

Totemism

- Early 20th c ethnographers noted that often there is a tight correlation between a human group and a certain animal or plant – a totem. The totem is respected, venerated. It is an emblem of the group's identity.
- Inconsistent with pictures of wounded animals; no single cave is devoted to a single species.

94

Sympathetic magic

- Abbé Henri Breuil and Count Henri Bégouën proposed that there was a different direct relationship between image and reality.
- A common belief is that doing something to a special image has an effect on that which is represented. Voodoo is an example of sympathetic magic.
- Why else would people go into deep caves where their work couldn't be seen?

95

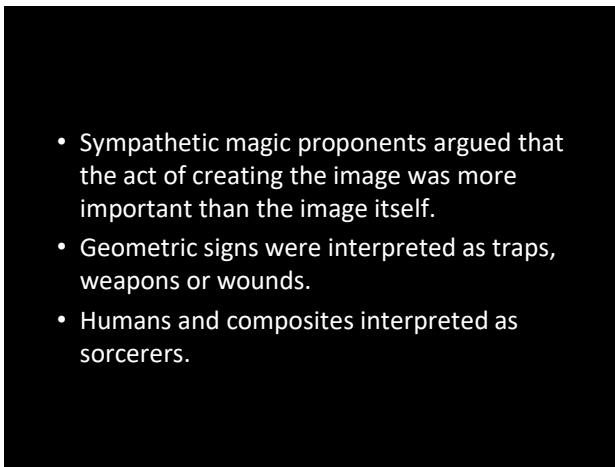
Hunting magic



96



97



98



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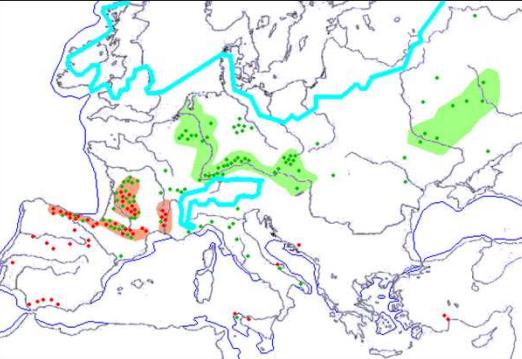
Cultural ecology



Why is there so much portable art at some sites in Upper Palaeolithic Eurasia? One answer focuses on the social relationships and cultural behaviours that result from different balances between resources and demography.

Upper Palaeolithic antler artifacts: perforated bâtons with figurative engravings

100



Upper Palaeolithic refugia in Europe: places with greater population density may find intensified ritual activity a benefit.

101

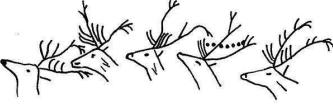


Does cave art communicate something about the migratory herd animals, like reindeer, upon which hunters depended?

If you were hunting reindeer, you would want information to be shared among highly mobile hunter groups..

102

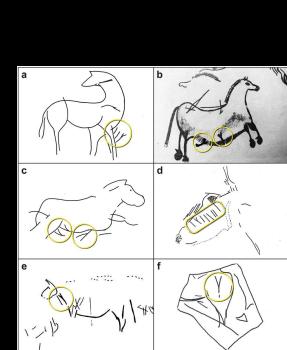
A lunar calendar?



Bacon, et al. 2023

- Upper Palaeolithic hunter-gatherers depended on getting horse, cervid, bovid, caprid, proboscidean, avian and aquatic foods. In modern populations, all of these share a characteristic annual cycle of mating and birthing seasons separated by variably extensive spring and autumn migrations.
- A paper published in January 2023 argues that, when found in close association with images of animals, the line < -> and dot <-> constitute numbers denoting months, and form constituent parts of a local calendar beginning in spring and recording time from this point in lunar months.

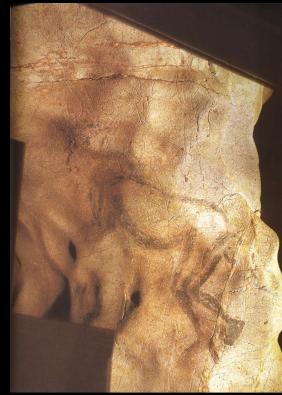
103



- The paper further argues that the <Y> sign, one of the most frequently occurring signs in Palaeolithic non-figurative art, has the meaning <To Give Birth>. The position of the <Y> within a sequence of marks denotes month of giving birth.

104

Shamanism



Trois-Frères, France. The image is engraved and painted. Photomontage.



Breuil's tracing of the Trois-Frères shaman.

105

Shamanism

- Shamans can send their souls out of their bodies to travel to another world.
- There, they communicate directly with the powerful forces that rule everyday life (hunting, illness, weather, human relationships).
- Shamans can be visited by spirit helpers. Shamans can take on the appearance of an animal.
- Shamans are mediators between the world of the living and the world of the spirits.

106

Moving between worlds

- To go underground was to move between worlds.
 - Effect: sensory deprivation and hallucination?
 - Effect: Convinced that they were in another world, visitors would be predisposed to see the spirits taking shape in the flickering torchlight on the cave walls

107



This figure of carved ivory has the body of a man and the head of a lion. Early Aurignacian. Hohlenstein-Stadel, S. Germany. H = 30 cm.

108

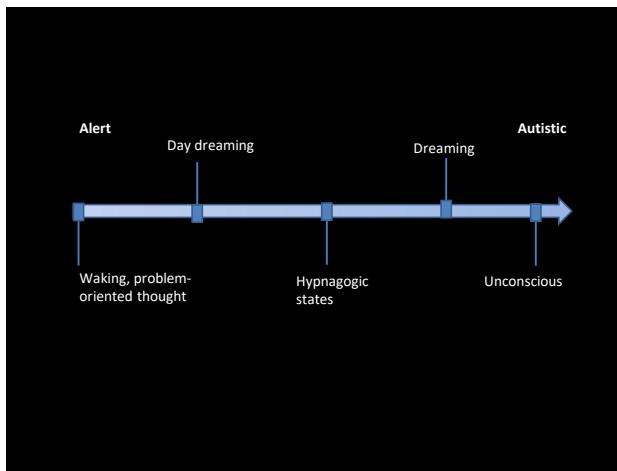


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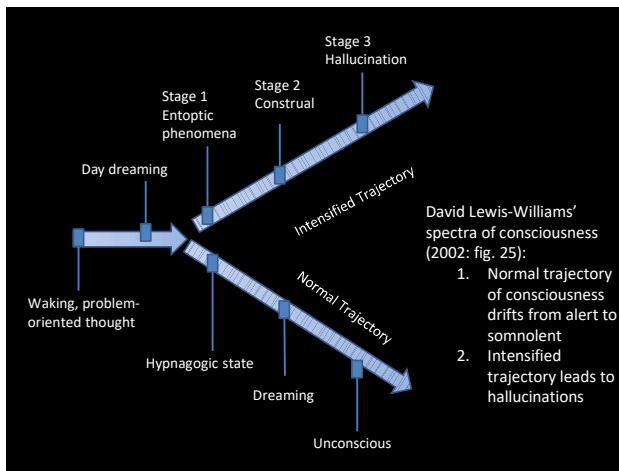


Chumash cave painting, S. California.

110



111

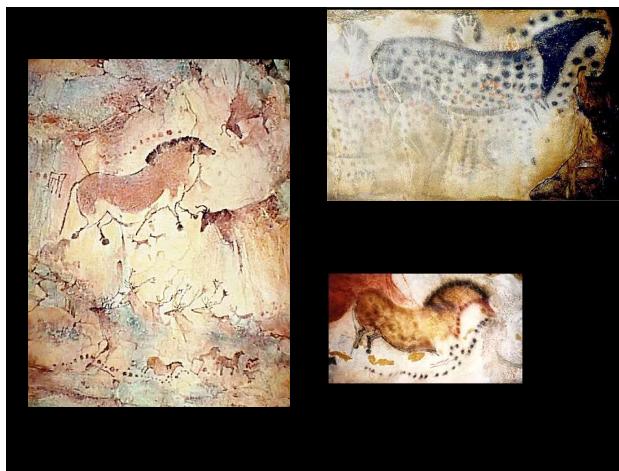


112

Entoptic Forms	San Rock Art engravings paintings		Palaeolithic Art mobile art parietal art	
	mobile art	parietal art	mobile art	parietal art
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

Adapted from Lewis-Williams and Dowson, 1988, pages 206 and 207

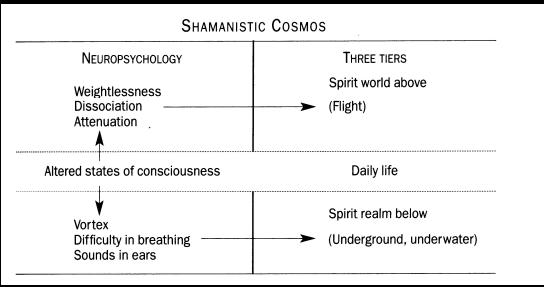
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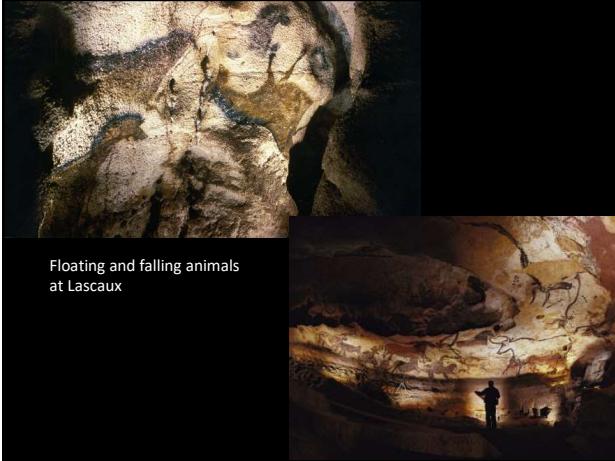
114

Concepts of a “tiered universe” are common in shamanistic (and other) religions.

These are probably the result of interpreting two common sorts of neuropsychological experience associated with altered states.



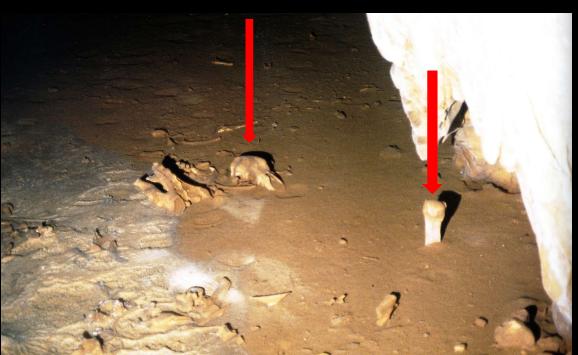
115



116

Caves as boundaries between worlds

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In one of Chauvet's chambers we find seemingly ritual acts. This photo shows the humerus (to the right) and the skull (center) of a bear. The humerus' position suggests it was deliberately plunged into the ground.

(Clottes 2003: fig. 41)

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Another humerus and skull of a bear in the same chamber at Chauvet. The limb bone's position suggests it was deliberately stuck into the ground.

(Clottes 2003: fig. 42)

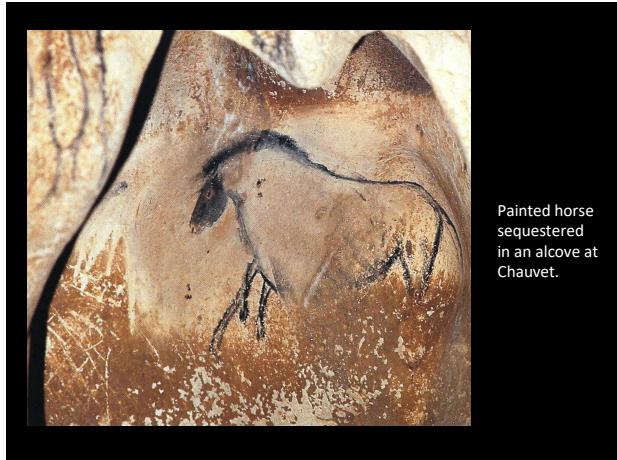
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Frontquarters of an engraved ibex at Chauvet. The animal is shown to be emerging from a cleft in the rock.

(Clottes 2003: fig. 187)

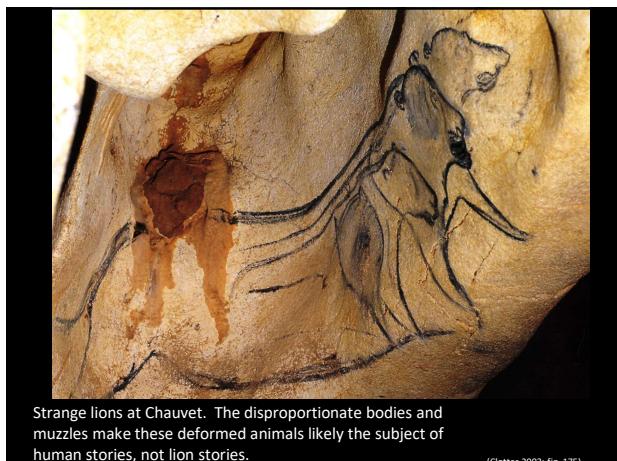
120



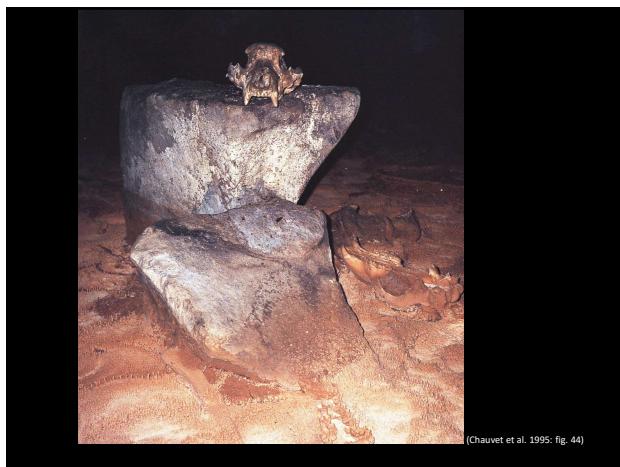
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(Chauvet et al. 1995: fig. 44)

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