

ORIGINS OF ART: The Creative Explosion

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Creativity

Being human has both biological and behavioural (technology, symbolism, etc.) dimensions. This discussion explores the evidence for the appearance and nature of early human creative exploits.

Forms of Creativity

Archaeologists need to be aware of the various forms of expression and how to recognize them in the past. How do archaeologists determine what's artistic expression and what isn't? This question will flow throughout my talk.

What's the first evidence for music?

Some claims for musical instruments haven't worked out, but many have. What are the first musical instruments that archaeologists have found? What did they sound like?

What are the first carvings?

We'll explore the earliest representations of animals, deities and humans. They appear around 40,000 – 35,000 years ago. Human figurines, wherever they are found, have a common style—all female with specific characteristics.

The Cave Paintings

The longest art tradition in human history is found in caves, mainly in France and Spain. They seem to appear suddenly and disappear as suddenly. What's going on?

Why?

This is the BIG question. Notice that archaeologists ask “why?” because humans are motivated to do things. “How?” is a question that pervades science, but we need to understand human motivation. We'll explore a wide variety of possible explanations, none of which seems satisfactory on its own, but a combination of explanations might work. Hypotheses include brain evolution, graffiti, art for art's sake, sympathetic magic, memorializing events, the development of symbol systems, territory markers, dream records, and astronomy.

Recommended reading:

Clottes, J, Martin, RD, & Martin, O (2016). *What is Paleolithic art?: Cave paintings and the dawn of human creativity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Guthrie, RD (2005). *The nature of Paleolithic art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<https://www.ancient.eu/article/787/the-meaning-of-european-upper-paleolithic-rock-art/>

<http://archeologie.culture.fr/lascaux/fr/lascaux-0>

https://www.ancient.eu/Lascaux_Cave/

<http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/chauvet/index.php>