

Prehistoric Art

Paleolithic and Neolithic

Prehistoric Europe and the Near East



Paleolithic

- Humans create the 1st sculptures and paintings before the invention of writing
- Tiny figurines that could be carried around as well as life size paintings and relief sculptures on cave walls are predominant works of art found
- Works of art containing women are generally thought to be as fertility imagery



Figure 1-2 Waterworn pebble resembling a human face, from Makapansgat, South Africa, ca. 3,000,000 BCE. Reddish brown jasperite, approx. 2 3/8" wide.

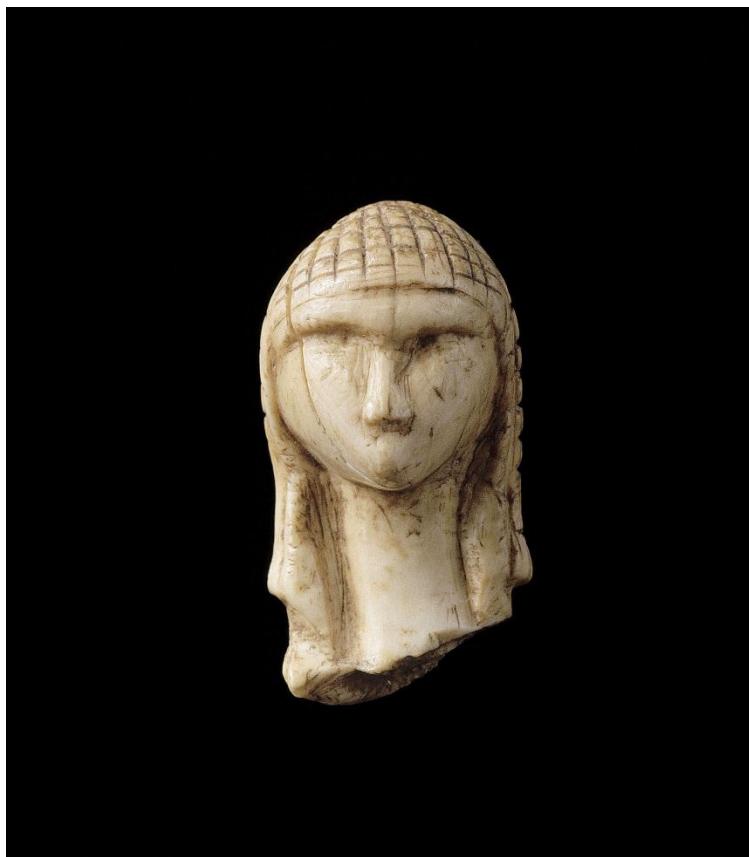


Figure 1-5A Head of a woman, from the Grotte du Pape, Brasempouy, France, ca. 25,000–20,000 BCE. Ivory, 1 1/2" high. Musée d'Archéologie Nationale, Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

Woven Hat Possible Fertility Statue



Figure 1-3 Animal facing left, from the Apollo 11 Cave, Namibia, ca. 23,000 BCE. Charcoal on stone, 5" X 4 1/4". State Museum of Namibia, Windhoek.

Figure 1-4 Human with feline head, from Hohlenstein-Stadel, Germany, ca. 30,000–28,000 BCE. Mammoth ivory, 11 5/8" high. Ulmer Museum, Ulm.

Art historians are not positive what this statue represents during the stone age since rituals are not thought to have occurred in this era.

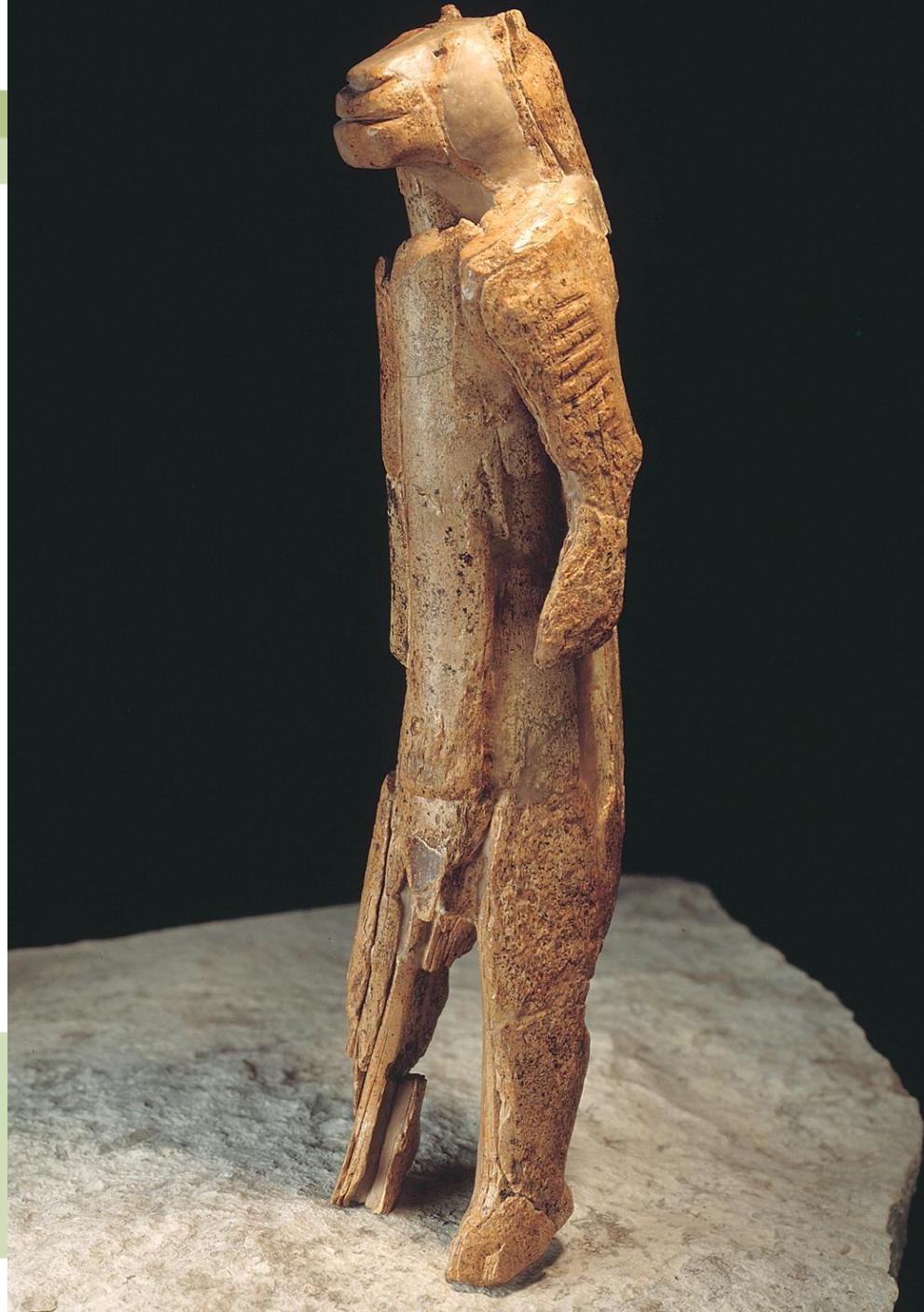


Figure 1-5 Nude woman (*Venus of Willendorf*), from Willendorf, Austria, ca. 28,000–25,000 BCE. Limestone, 4 1/4" high.

Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Anatomically exaggerated figurine.

Represents woman with Child Bearing capabilities which ensured humans survival of their species.

Her breasts are larger than proportion –
Curly hair or may be wearing a woven hat
from plant fibers



Figure 1-6 Woman holding a bison horn, from Laussel, France, ca. 25,000–20,000 BCE. Painted limestone, approx. 1' 6" high. Musée d'Aquitaine, Bordeaux.

Debatable gesture with the angle of horn being held and left arm gesturing towards pubic region.





Figure 1-6A and B *Top:* Reclining woman, rock-cut relief

Magdalene des Albis, France, ca. 12,000 BCE. 2' 3 5/8" long. *Bottom:* Drawing of the reclining woman in the middle cave at La Magdalene (Siegfried Giedion).

Again we see a fertility image. Exaggeration of Breasts, hips and abdomen. Arm draws attention to belly.



Figure 1-7 Two bison, reliefs in cave at Le Tuc d'Audoubert, France, ca. 15,000–10,000 BCE. Clay, each 2' long.
Largest among the paleolithic sculptures known. Showing a twisted perspective or a composite view.



Figure 1-8 Bison with turned head, fragmentary spearthrower, from La Madeleine, France, ca. 12,000 BCE. Reindeer horn, 4" long.

This sculpture has more detail and the head is at an unusual angle which helped to preserve the originality of the horn and shape. Paleolithic artwork maintains strict profiles for the capability of the animals sake. St



Figure 1-9 Bison, detail of a painted ceiling in the cave at Altamira, Spain, ca. 12,000–11,000 BCE. Each bison 5' long.

Stone lamps filled with bear marrow or animal fat would have been used along with moss to light the inside of caves. Mineral oxides and Iron powder was used to paint with. Flat stone palettes used for paint and hollow bones to spray.

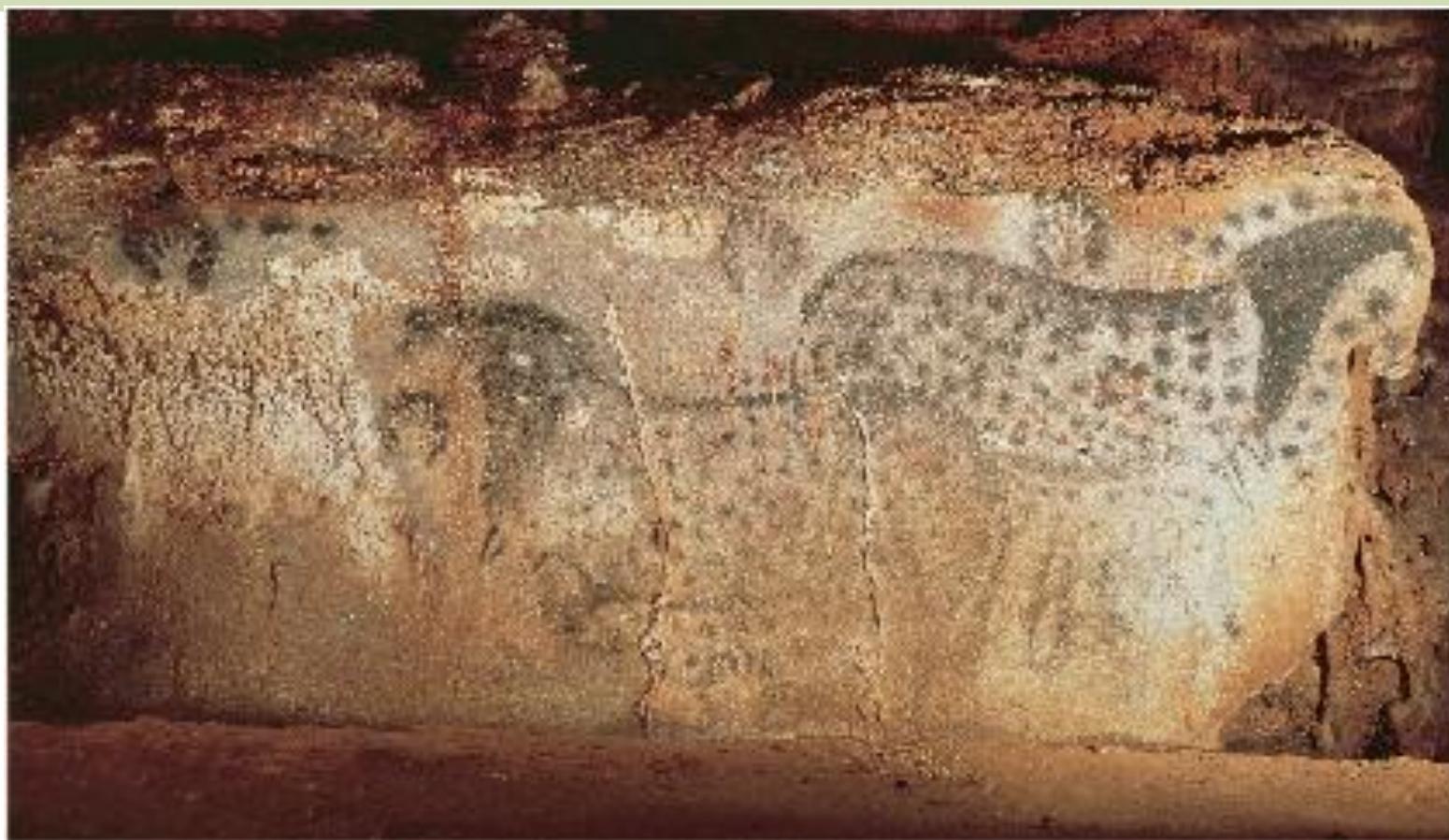


Figure 1-10 Spotted horses and negative hand imprints, wall painting in the cave at Pech-Merle, France, ca. 22,000 BCE. 11' 2" long.

Hand prints are negative. Can be considered as signatures of the artists.



Figure 1-11 Aurochs, horses, and rhinoceroses, wall painting in Chauvet Cave, Vallon-Pont-d'Arc, France, ca. 30,000–28,000 or ca. 15,000–13,000 BCE.

Dipict horns of Aurchs (extinct long horn oxen) Rhinos attacking each other. Controversy on the age of this painting because of the Aurchos as well as the content.

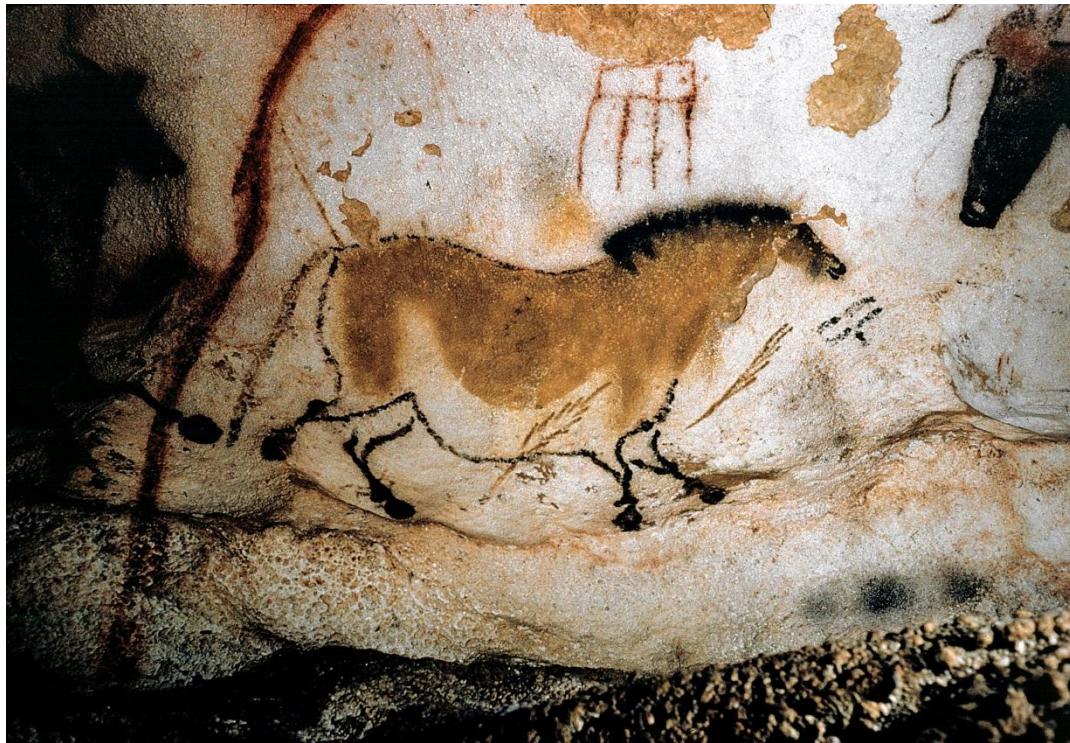


Figure 1-12A “Chinese horse,” detail of the left wall in the Axial Gallery of the cave at Lascaux, France, ca. 15,000–13,000 BCE. Horse, 4' 11" long.

Possibly a pregnant horse Surrounded by arrows or traps



Figure 1-12 Rhinoceros, wounded man, and disemboweled bison, painting in the well of the cave at Lascaux, France ca. 15,000 – 13,000 BCE. Bison 3' 8" long.

Twisted Perspective. Earliest appearance of man – NOT a woman. Bird face man or masked man. Which animal knocked him over? Is he dead? Wounded? Very few people would have been able to understand the story being shown.. Cave has very good acoustics and would have been ideal for

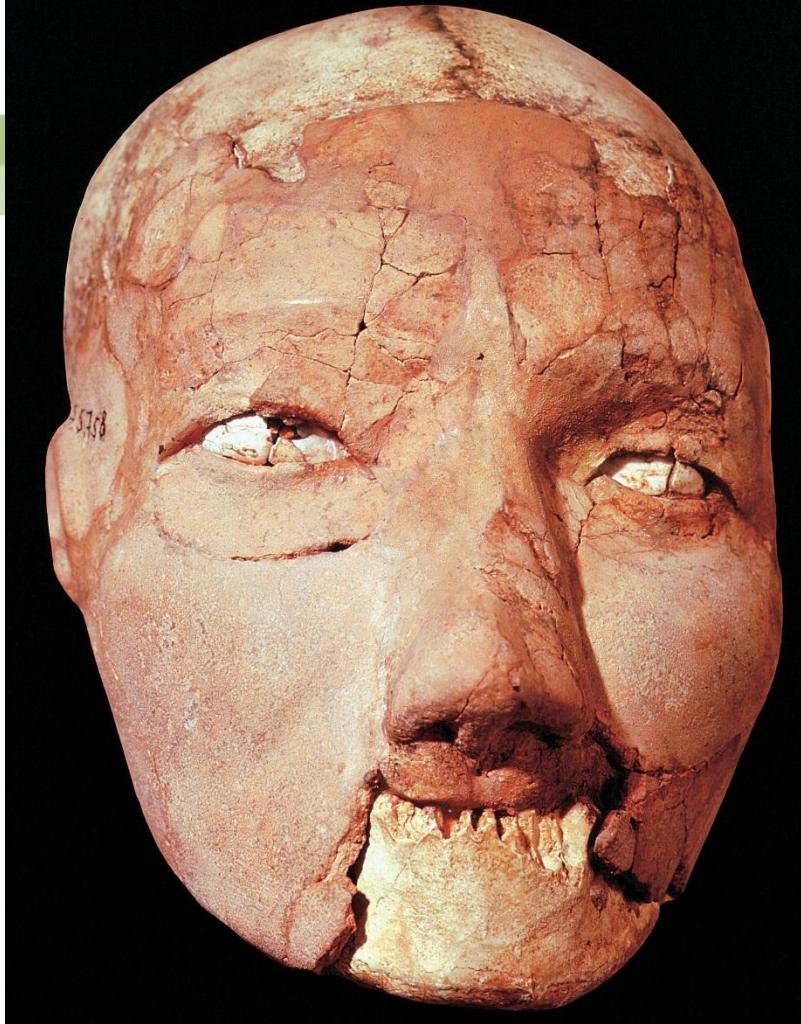
Neolithic Art

- 9000 BCE Ice covered most of Northern Europe – During the Paleolithic Era.
 - Climate Warmed and Ice melted causing sea level to rise over 300 feet. This separated England from Europe.
 - Mammoths disappeared and Reindeer migrated North
- Humans began to domesticate plants and animals and settled into adobes.
- Their food supply was assured and humans changed from hunter/gatherers to herders and farmers.
- Organized communities were surrounded by cultivated fields.
- Weaving, metalwork, pottery and counting and recording with clay tokens

Great stone tower built into
the settlement wall, Jericho,
ca. 8000–7000 BCE.

Stone laid with mortar
30' high & 33' diameter
1st known permanent stone
fortification – protection
against nomads.





Human skull with restored features, from Jericho, ca. 7200–6700 BCE. Features modeled in plaster, painted, and inlaid with seashells. Life size. Archaeological Museum, Amman.

Served as a shrine. Buried beneath houses. Detached cranium from skeleton and features reconstructed with plaster.

Human figure, from Ain Ghazal, Jordan, ca. 6750–6250 BCE. Plaster, painted and inlaid with bitumen, 3' 5 3/8" high. Louvre, Paris.

Monumental sculpture. Buried for ritualistic purposes.





Restored view of a section of Level VI, Çatal Höyük, Turkey, ca. 6000–5900 BCE (John Swogger).

Showed the existence of a flourishing Neolithic Culture Animal husbandry = Science of breeding and caring for farm animals

Neolithic Artistic Developments

- Monumental Sculptures
- Painted Plaster Walls – Smooth Surfaces to Work with
- Stone walls with Mortar to build
- Restoration of Life-Size Skulls
- Painted Plaster Figurines
- Ritualistic Figurines



Deer hunt, detail of a wall painting from Level III, Çatal Höyük, Turkey, ca. 5750 BCE. Museum of Anatolian Civilization, Ankara.

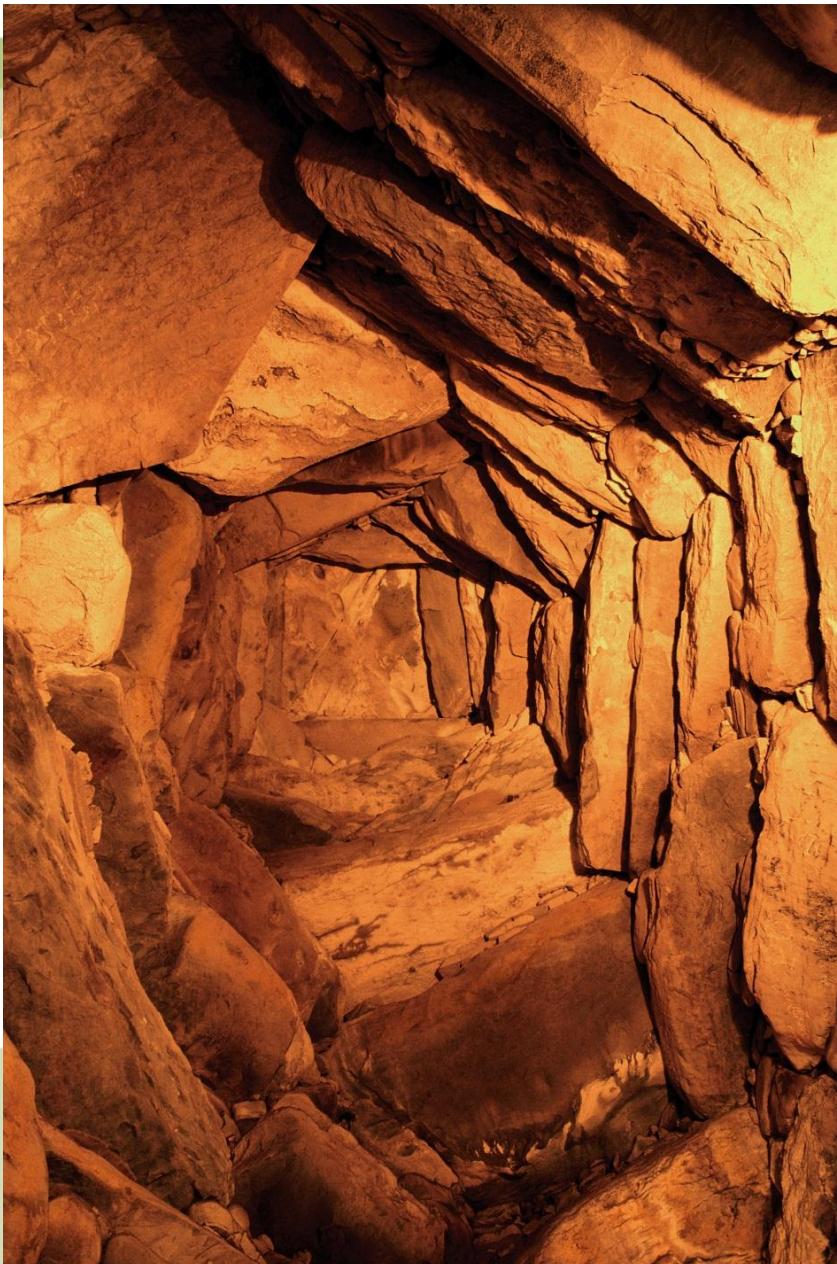
Paintings now show regular appearance of human form in groups and paintings have an easily readable narrative. Humans are dominating the animals



Landscape with volcanic eruption (?), watercolor copy of a wall painting from Level VII, Çatal Höyük, Turkey, ca. 6150 BCE.

Monumental Architecture

- Megoliths are designated to Neolithic Era
 - Large or Great Stones
 - Roughly Cut and most weighing over 40 tons
- Tombs come into play as well as temples and ritualistic gathering points
- Passage Graves or a tomb with a long stone corridor leading to a dome covered burial chamber beneath a great Tumulus (earthen burial mound)
- Corbeled Vaulting is used at the passage grave entries.
 - Vault formed by piling rocks or stone blocks in horizontal courses, cantilevered inward until the two walls meet in an arch



Gallery leading to the main chamber of the passage grave, Newgrange, Ireland, ca. 3200 – 2500 BCE.

Example of a corbeled vault is shown. The megaliths of the dome of the main burial chamber beneath the tumulus are held in place by their own weight

Some mounds contain more than one passage grave. These graves show the importance of the Neolithic people honoring their dead.



Aerial view of the ruins of Hagar Qim, Malta, ca. 3200-2500 BCE

This is considered to be a temple. Altars were found as well as religious shrines. This structure is a form of a post and lintel system where two upright megaliths support one horizontal beam on top.

The semi-circular recesses are called apses. The layout of this temple is noteworthy for the combination of rectilinear and curved forms including the apses.



Aerial view of Stonehenge, Salisbury Plain, England, ca. 2550–1600 BCE. Circle is 97' in diameter; trilithons 24' high.

A henge is an arrangement of megalith stones in a circle. Stonehenge is made up of rough cut sarsen stone (a form of sandstone) and smaller “bluestones” (various volcanic rock) and was built in stages over hundreds of years. The final henge took form of the post and lintel circles. The outer ring is 100' diameter consisting of the sarsen megaliths and the inside ring of bluestones encircles a horseshoe of trilithons (three stone constructions). There are five lintel-topped pairs each weigh 45-50 tons.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ Why do you think that images of man were less prevalent in Paleolithic art than those of women?
- ❖ What accounts for the lifestyle changes? How did lifestyle changes between Paleolithic and Neolithic populations affect art and architecture?
- ❖ How is the human figure presented differently in the Paleolithic to the Neolithic periods? Are there any similarities in the representation of the human figure between the two periods?