

Phillips

A

DISCUSS THE DIFFERENT STYLES  
OF CAVE ART

Richard Phillips

DISCUSS THE DIFFERENT STYLES  
OF CAVE ART

When the necessity of procuring food and shelter does not fill all the time of waking life, man often turns to create a work of art. Leisure, however, was no criteria for the beginning of cave art, as it had its birth before man had learned to ensure his food supply by the cultivation of plants, or to lighten his laborers by domesticating animals for his use. Even so, at this time he developed a pictorial art so perfect in style that the modern painter marvels and tries to capture its spontaneous simplicity.

Because these drawings were made far into the depths of the caves, where the light of day would never penetrate, it was necessary for the artist to draw from memory by the dim light of a torch or a wick fed by melting grease. Even so, these pristine works of art embody such simple beauty that the superiority of spirit over mundane obstacles is shown.

\*\*\*\*\*

Art and cave art in particular was born in the Magdalenian period, but was preceded by two periods of pre-natal endeavor, the Aurignacian, when three dimensional drawings were made and also engraved and colored two dimensionally, and the Solutrean, which represents a break in the Aurignacian-Magdalenian style -- as vivid representation was replaced by highly stylized geometric figures. Finally, as Magdalenian art was fully launched and western Europeans carved in Ivory, bone and horn; engraved on flattened or rounded surfaces and ultimately carved and painted the walls of caves, a work materialized that was not a struggling attempt to represent objects in the rough, but a work of such fidelity to the form represented, that after 20,000 years the species of the animal portrayed is immediately recognized.<sup>2</sup>

In a polychrome painting on cave ceiling at Altamira, Santillana, Spain, four shades of color were used, the artist first engraved the outline and a few details then applied the colors, at the same time adapting the posture of the animal to the irregularity of the rocks' surfaces--(when this principle is used today by an artist, it is considered vastly clever) thereby adding to the drawing a third dimensional aspect.

The nearest parallel to this "silhouette" art is found not in France but in North Africa, the Sahara and South Africa, where the petroglyphs however, appear to be neolithic and therefore much later in time sequence. These African cave drawings portray elephants, rhinoceroses, buffalo, ostriches and lions -- all animals that have become extinct in North Africa. \*\* This faunal change suggests antiquity, yet many of the carvings show domesticated cattle, sheep and goats in association with the extinct animals.

- - - - -

That the last shall be first and the first last, is true in the history of art, as modern painters are striving for the ultimate spirit of freedom and truth as it was expressed 20,000 years ago. The success of these pristine artists was due to their great knowledge of their subjects and the fact that art was an integral part of their lives. The great motivating force behind this art is a magical symbolism as Cro-Magnon Man believed that a desired result could be achieved by a wish painting. Consequently when men were about to hunt they would make a painting of the desired kill; also, hundreds of animal figures were drawn one upon the other and recklessly mutilated after they had served their purpose. \*\*

The birth of art was the first written indication of man's bid for control over his environment.

in Anthropology Kroeber  
in Encyclopedia of Social Sciences  
see South African Rock Pictures Nelson  
see General Anthropology "Art" E. Bunzel