

PREHISTORIC ART



“Prehistoric people were constantly threatened by wild animals, famine, flood, disease, and the elements. Yet they not only managed to survive, but they also created art.”

~ World History & Art

PRE- HISTORY TIMELINE

Year 1 BCE, Year 1 CE

BCE

CE

Prehistoric "Stone Age"

Ancient Egyptian

Ancient Greece

Ancient Rome



Paleolithic
25 000-8000 BCE

Neolithic
8000-2000 BCE

5000-1570 BCE

1100-146 BCE

509 BCE-395 CE



SOCIETY

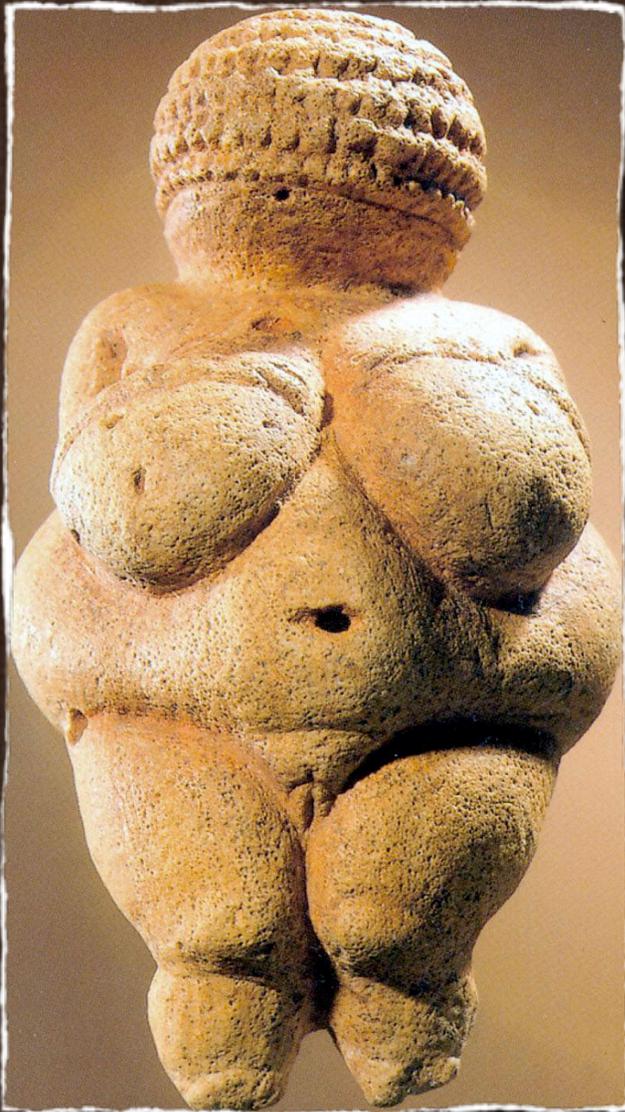
Paleolithic Era 25 000 BCE to 8000 BCE

- Humans are nomadic hunters; existence is based upon the availability of **food and shelter**
- The only social organization was limited to obvious family relationships
- Movement of people depended upon the location of game (mostly reindeer). It's been estimated that each person required 50 square miles to find food, therefore probably less than 100 000 people existed in Europe
- **Cave paintings** suggest they hunted bison, elephant, and bear, although reindeer would probably have been what they lived on
- Humans lived at the mouths of caves, for light and ventilation
- Humans begin to link **form and function** as they create the first forms of tools--therefore making the first forms of art possible.

PREHISTORIC ART

- Three purposes of art: **magic, decoration, and documentation**
- Figures are characteristically **stylized**- extraneous detail is eliminated and features are simplified
- A common technique was to envision something in the cave wall or on a piece of rock, and to sculpt it into the wall or rock using the **natural** shape of the surface
- People made small drawings and carvings in pieces of bone, animal horns, or stone; nearly all recovered sculptures are **female**.

SCULPTURE



Venus of Willendorf, c. 25 000 BCE
Limestone, 11 cm High

- Venus is a small hand-sized sculpture with **exaggerated** feminine features
- Her round figure suggests abundant **fertility** and plentiful supply of food—the 2 immediate needs to perpetuate society
- The natural shape of the **stone** is used to emphasize the form

WHY IS HER ROUND FIGURE IMPORTANT
TO PREHISTORIC PEOPLE?

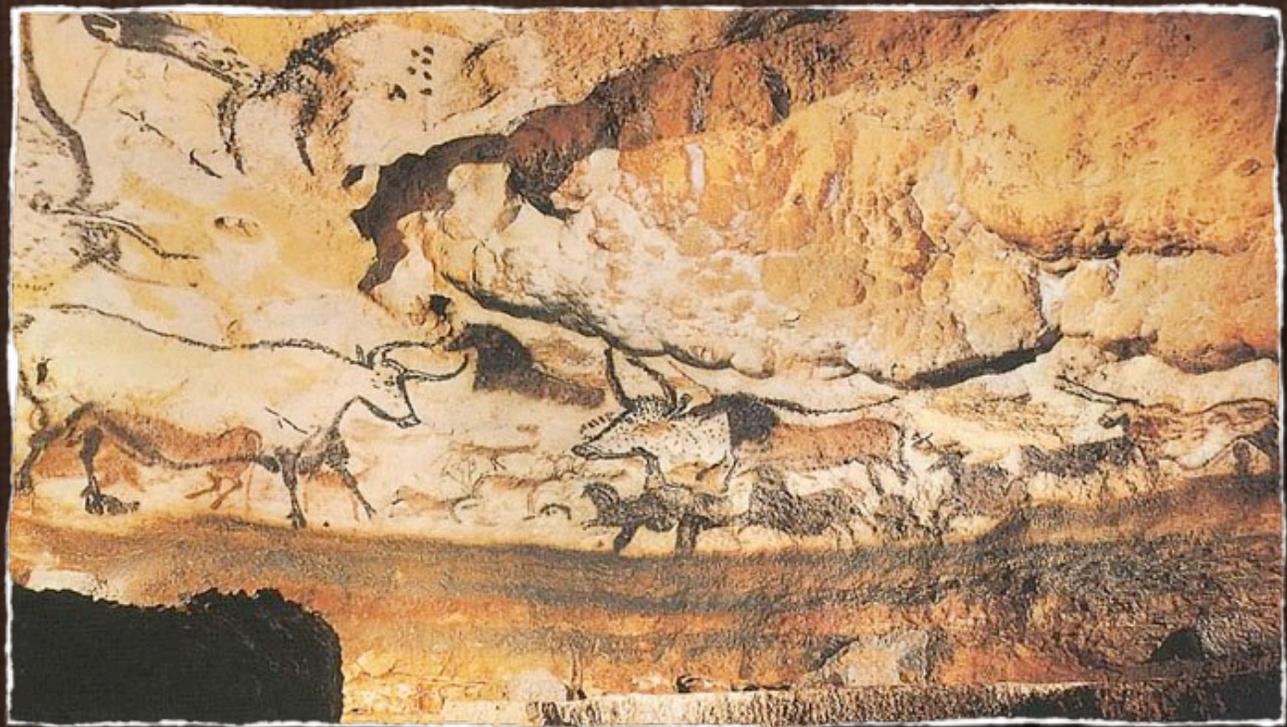
WHY DOESN'T SHE HAVE A FACE?

WHY IS THE SCULPTURE SO SMALL?

PAINTING

- Discovered by a group of young children in 1940
- Styles vary from great, impressionistic bulls (some 20 feet long), to small, precise, linear outlines of reindeer. Some animals are only partially drawn
- **Animal figures** are of various sizes and placed seemingly at random

WHAT DO
PAINTINGS
LIKE THIS
ONE TELL YOU
ABOUT
PREHISTORIC
HUMAN'S
OBSERVATION
SKILLS?

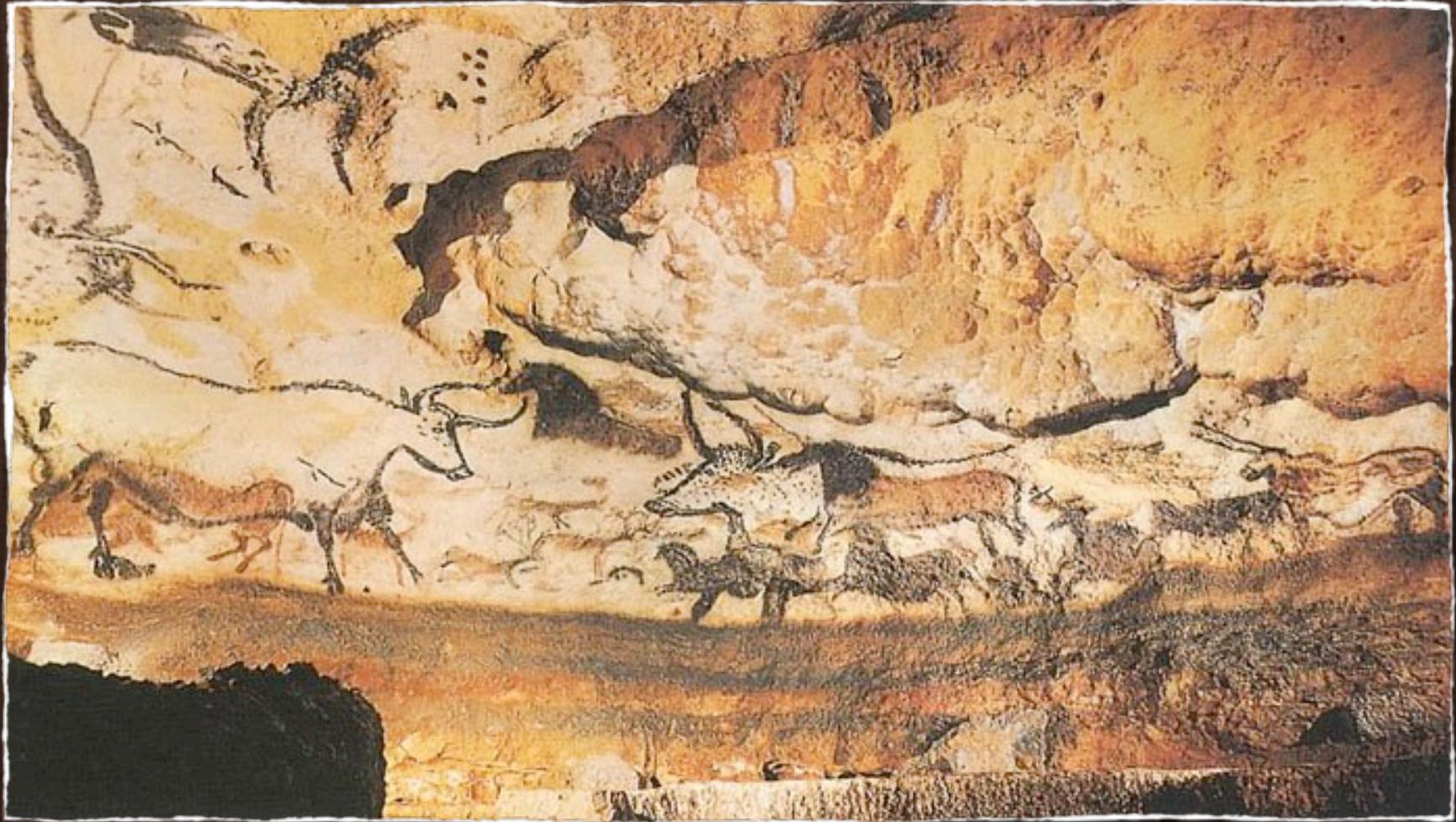


Cave Paintings of Lascaux, c. 15 000 BCE. France.

Title: Cave Paintings of Lascaux (c. 15 000 BCE. France)

Art Form: Drawing & Painting

Medium: Natural Pigments



<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arcnat/lascaux/en/index.html>

SOCIETY

Neolithic Era 8000 BCE to 2000 BCE

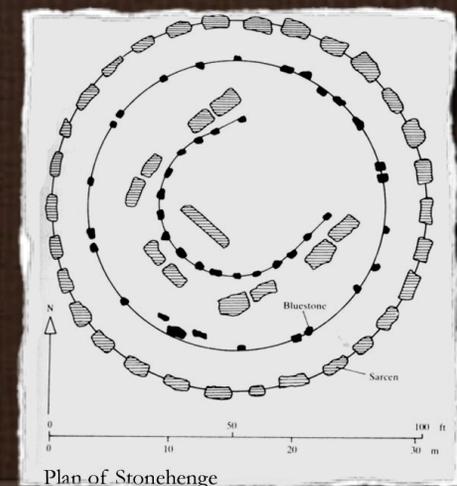
- The people were unlike their Paleolithic predecessors because these people were **shepherds and farmers**
- They initiated industry in the form of weaving, pottery, and finely made tools and weapons
- Organized tribes and villages were led by kings and priests
- The dawn of architectural construction saw basic homes built of grass, mud-brick, and stone
- They created **science**, in the form of astronomy and mathematics, to help understand their environment

ARCHITECTURE

- Stonehenge is a grouping of more than **900 stone circles** called “Cromlechs” on a ritual site that was possibly used to predict solstices, equinoxes, harvests, and religious ceremonies
- Some of the stones (called “Megaliths”) weigh five tons and stand on end
- The inner surface of each upright stone is carved and slightly convex
- Each year the rising sun shines into the circle and across the “altar” precisely on the morning that marks the **summer solstice** or mid-summer
- The structure represents an early massing of power and an increase of **political organization** in Britain



Stonehenge, c. 2000 BCE, Salisbury Plain, England.



Plan of Stonehenge