



Prehistoric Art

30,000 BCE - 1300 BCE

Hunter gatherer communities are credited with the creation of these artworks. Originally, researchers believed that the cave paintings and drawings that were found throughout Europe were depicting everyday life, hopeful hunting scenes (to provide good luck for the hunt), and ceremonial practices. They weren't completely wrong, but these artworks were often deep inside of barely accessible caves, on ceilings (so, not where they would be seen regularly), and depicted dangerous animals such as bears, lions, and rhinos that would not be hunted by these people. In fact, the Lascaux Cave paintings only show 1 reindeer, but 90% of the food remains found there were reindeer bones.



Cave paintings and small sculptures have been found in many places, all over the world. **Europe, Africa, and Australia** are just a few of the best preserved locations.



Major Artworks

"Venus of Willendorf" (25,000 BCE)
Willendorf, Austria

"Chauvet Cave" (30,000 BCE)
Ardèche, France

"Altamira Cave" (16-14,000 BCE)
Santillana del Mar, Spain



Important Elements

Symbols: hand prints, palm prints, and various markings (these could depict weapons and/or other tools.)

Red Ocher: One of the most common pigments of this time. It was also painted onto bodies of the dead, suggesting it had a deep significance.

Animal Images: Animals were originally thought to be the hunters prey, but this was incorrect, and the animals depicted tend to be predators and not animals they would normally hunt.

Where to find more information

<https://www.britannica.com/art/prehistoric-art>
https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/preh/hd_preh.htm
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/prehistoric-art>