

What is Art?

- ❖ In considering ancient cultures, imagine processes of mark making
- ❖ Is this Art? Were cave paintings that probably served as modes of communication considered art?
- ❖ Can surviving stone tools or artifacts be considered art?
- ❖ Think about a net, spear, bow & arrow
- ❖ Consider now, the term Visual Cultures. This is a term formed to replace the term Ancient Art
- ❖ Your thoughts....

Approximate Timeline

Lower Paleolithic Era

2,500,000 BCE - 230,000 BCE

Middle Paleolithic Era

200,000 - 40,000

Upper Paleolithic Era

(Modern Man replaces the Neanderthal)

40,000 - 10,500

Mesolithic Era

10,000 - 5000

Neolithic Era

4000 - 3000

Paleolithic Art

- ❖ 600,000 - 10,000 BCE
- ❖ Some historians disagree
- ❖ 35,000 - 7,000 BCE

Africa

- ❖ In 1925, explorers of a cave at Makapansgat in South Africa discovered bones of Australopithecus, a predecessor of modern humans who lived some 3 million years ago
- ❖ Associated with the bones was a water-worn reddish brown Jasperite pebble that bears a resemblance to a human face
- ❖ Nearest known source of this variety of ironstone is 20 miles away
- ❖ Consider Marcel Duchamp's Fountain 1917....
- ❖ 30,000 BCE, when most of Northern Europe was covered with glaciers during the Ice Age is when humans started intentionally creating sculptures and paintings



South Africa, 3,000,000 BCE, Reddish Brown Jasperite, 2 3/8 " wide

Paleolithic Era

- ❖ Paleolithic (prehistoric period) was a term coined by John Lubbock in 1865
- ❖ It basically means the Old Stone Age
- ❖ What was the meaning and intent of these works?

India

- **Auditorium Cave & Daraki-Chattan Petroglyphs**
- The oldest known prehistoric art is the series of Stone Age petroglyphs (cupules) discovered during the 1990s in two ancient quartzite caves in India: **Auditorium Cave, Bhimbetka** and a **Daraki-Chattan** rock shelter.
- Geological investigations of the prehistoric sites by renowned archeologists Bednarik, Kumar and others, have established that this rock art pre-dates the Acheulean culture of the Lower Paleolithic era, and must therefore date from at least 290,000 BCE.
- However, once more advanced dating methods become available, it is conceivable that these petroglyphs will turn out to be much older - perhaps originating as early as 700,000 BCE - although at present this is mere speculation.



Rock Art from Bhimbetka - 7000 BCE
Created over 250,000 years after the first petroglyphs and cupules were
produced at the Auditorium Cave

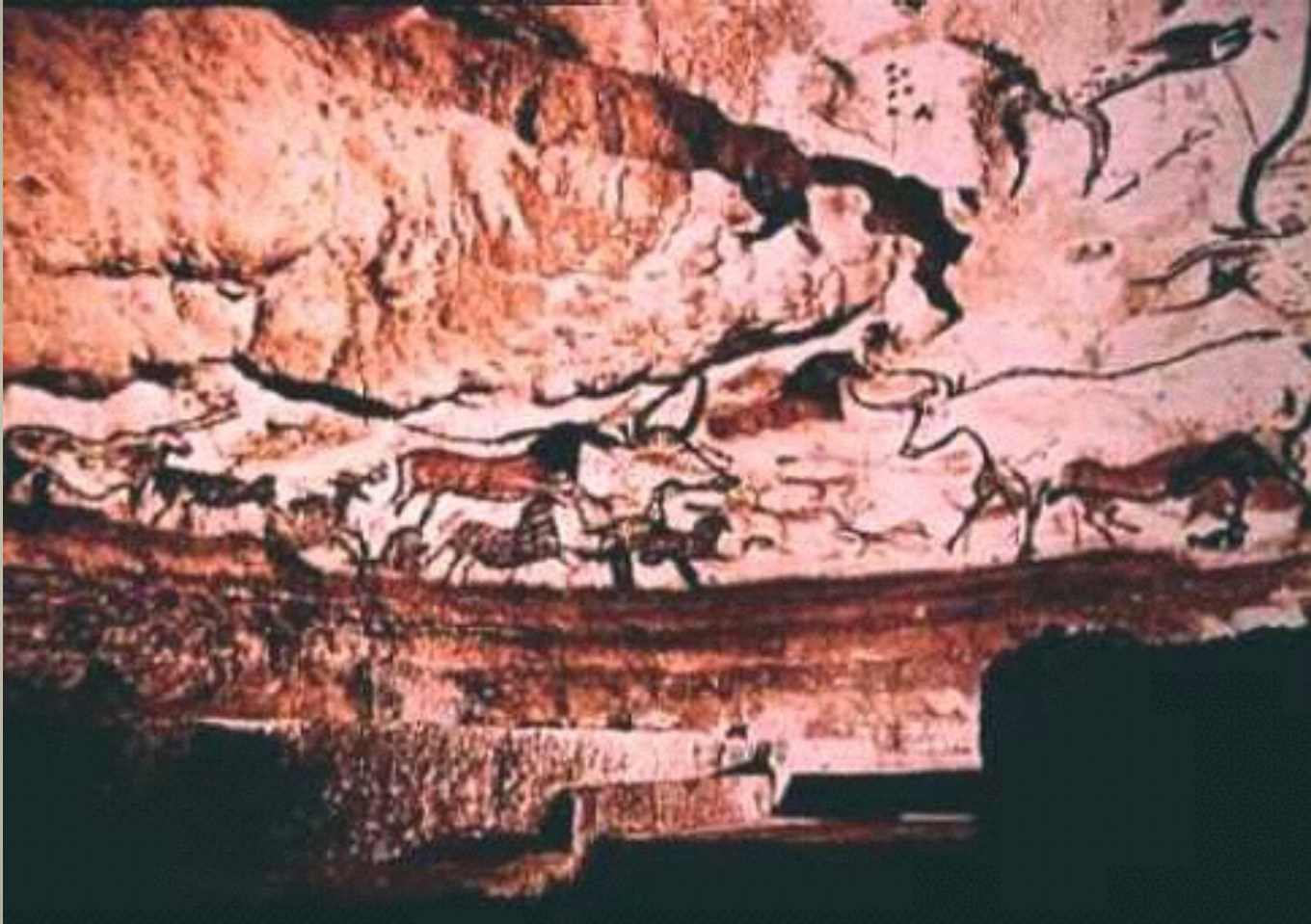
Paleolithic Era

Cave paintings were focused on large animals most commonly

There are several theories as to why these works were made:

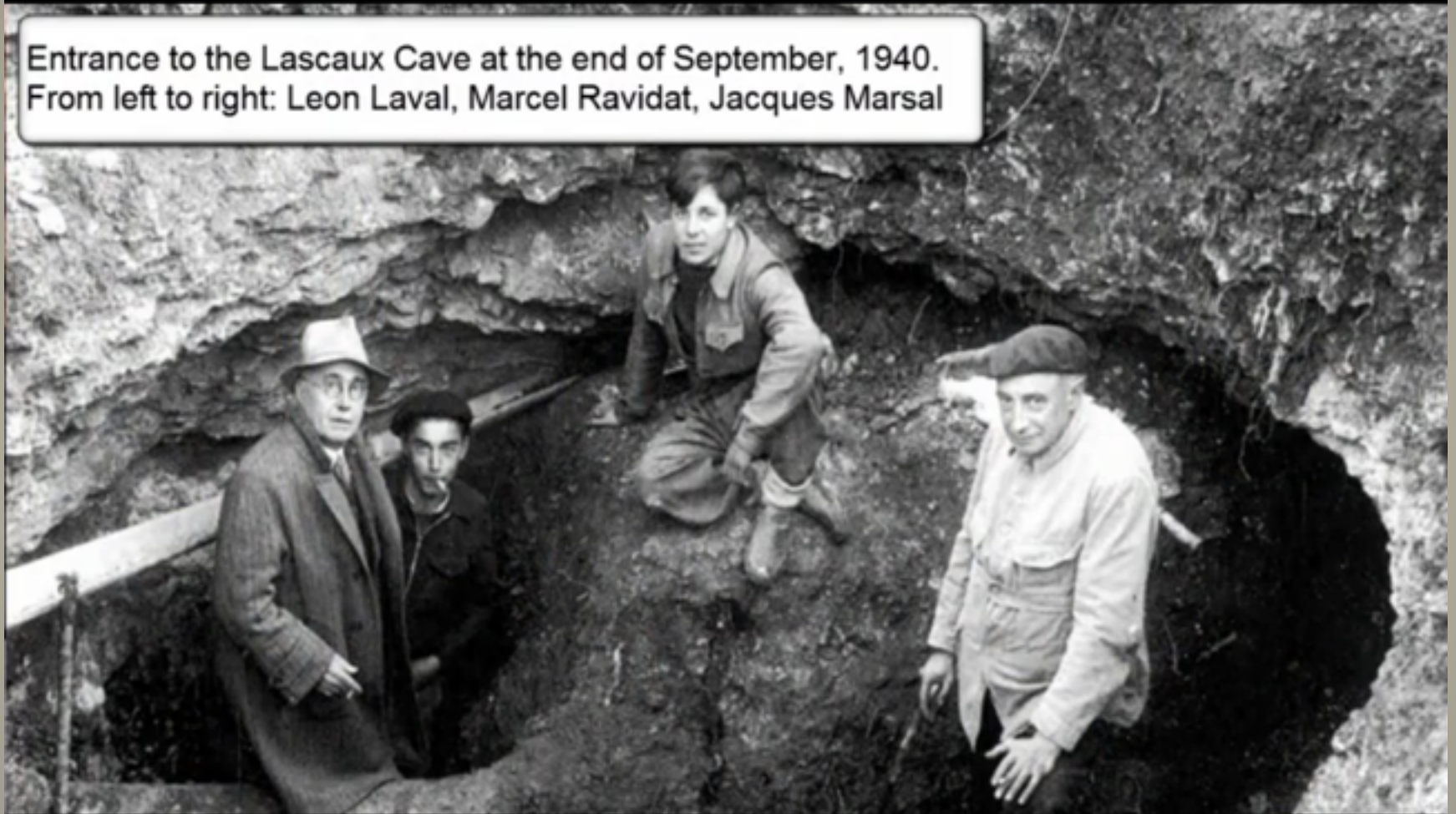
- ❖ Shamanism
- ❖ Magic to increase success on hunts and ensure food supply
- ❖ Religious and Ritual behavior associated with the paintings

Lascaux, France



Hall of Bulls (left Wall) in the cave at Lascaux, France, 15,000 – 13,000 BCE
Largest Bull 11' 6" long

Entrance to the Lascaux Cave at the end of September, 1940.
From left to right: Leon Laval, Marcel Ravidat, Jacques Marsal



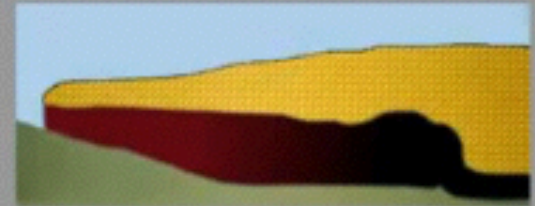


Lascaux, France, Paleolithic Period, 15,000-13,500 BC

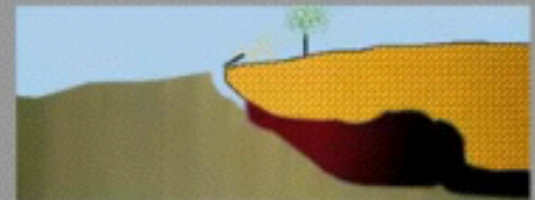
The entrance to Lascaux is halfway up the side of a hill. The cave is no more than 250 metres deep, with a drop in level of about thirty metres.

In prehistoric times a small rocky escarpment marked the entrance, which was later gradually hidden by sediments as a result of erosion.

These deposits accumulated over the millennia to form a scree covered cone which hid the entire entrance.



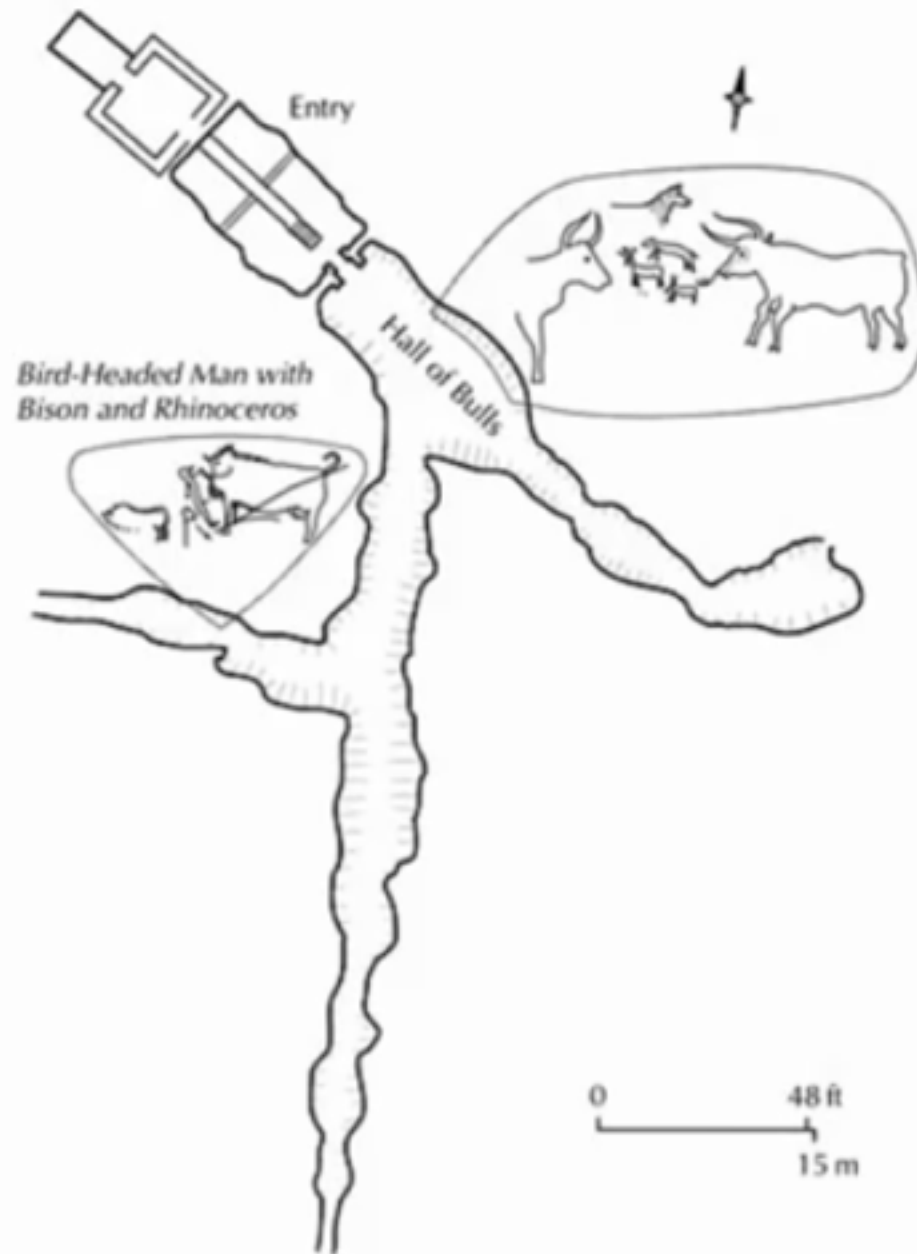
Section of the entrance at the end of the Palaeolithic Age.



Section of the entrance at the time of discovery in 1940.









Wounded bison attacking a man
c. 15,000-10,000 BC
bison length 43 in. (110 cm)
Lascaux, France

Altamira, Spain



Altamira:
In 1879, The
Marquis
Marcelino de
Sautuola first
discovered the
cave paintings
while walking
with his daughter.



Paleolithic Era

- ❖ Animals were often painted with perspective, an outline to define the form and colored pigment to show muscle and depth
- ❖ This shows a form of judgment about visual stimuli
- ❖ The works were surface modified
- ❖ Used rounded walls to add bulk to their animals and depressions in cave walls to create distance and depth
- ❖ At first glance, this is difficult to see but researchers found that with a small dim light, the paintings seemed to come to life







space
composition
picture plane





Why in profile? What function does contour serve?

Colors/Pigments

- charcoal
- manganese
- ochres
- ferrous oxides
- vehicle or medium



Bisons

c. 15,000-12,000 BC

bison length 77 in. (195 cm)

Altamira, Spain

Paleolithic Era

❖Carving

The term "petroglyph" stems from two Greek words ("petros" meaning rock, and "glyphein" meaning to carve) and means simply "rock carving."

❖Painting

Paint was made of 3 elements

- a pigment + binder + extender

Pigments from various materials like charcoal, manganese, ochres, ferrous oxides

Binder was often spit or animal fat

Extender was to make the paint stretchy, water was often used

Paleolithic Era

- ❖ A technique of spit painting is commonly found in ancient aboriginal art, Australia.
- ❖ Spitting pigment over hand or body parts to create shapes
- ❖ Took on a spiritual meaning, the act of using one's breath
- ❖ Alternatively, hand printing was also another form of communication, it means a person was there, imprinting presence



Cosquer Cave, France c25,000

Paleolithic Era

Speculations of Intent

- ❖ Beauty - If they were made for beauty, then why were they in dark and in accessible caves?
- ❖ Magic - Animals had power they wanted to possess, made effigies of them to guarantee the success of the hunt
- ❖ Shamanism - Enter a state of trance, a ritual based journey. In comparing cave art from various locations researchers have highlighted the possibility of entopic designs as a common linking thread
- ❖ In darkness, with sleep and food deprivation, the brain tries to make sense of it's surroundings and often makes geometric or simplified patterns, these could have been the visions that Shamans saw and depicted on the walls. This might explain some connections between cave art from various cultures

Austria



Venus of Willendorf



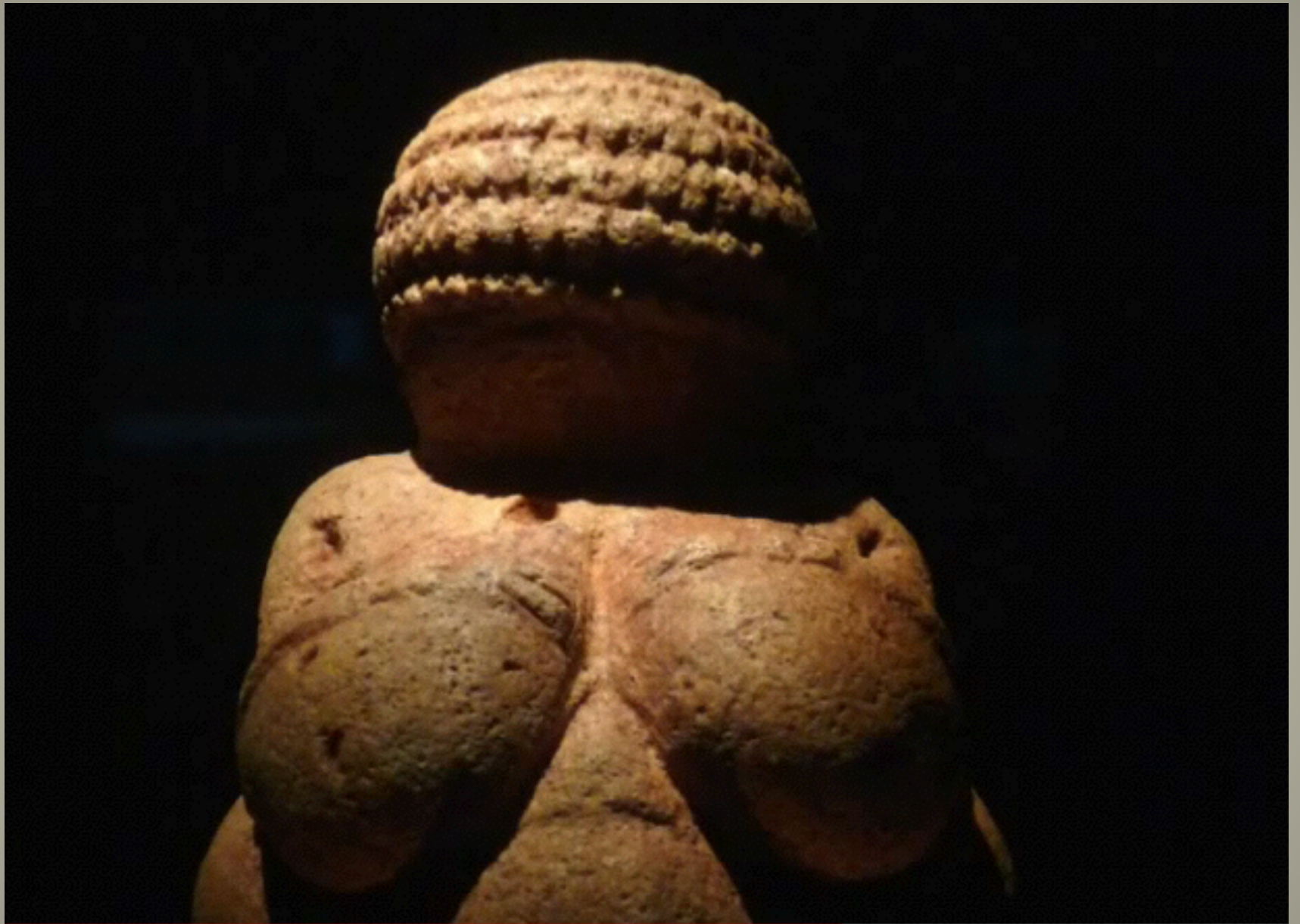
Venus of Willendorf

- ❖ Dates about 25,000 years ago
- ❖ One of the oldest works of art ever found
- ❖ Name given to her, no association with her
- ❖ No idea who made her and why
- ❖ By giving her this name, we are attaching context to her
- ❖ Perhaps fertility and abundance
- ❖ Several nude female figures found, perhaps male figures may be found in the future
- ❖ All speculation



Venus of Willendorf

- One of the oldest works of art in the world
- Name makes no sense , found in 1908 in a village in Austria, Willendorf
- Know almost nothing about her, no context, anthropological object or art?
- Giving her a name of ancient greek goddess, assigning a meaning to her, fertility etc
- No reason to believe it's true
- Almost all other figures found were women, most accentuating breasts and buttocks
- No feet, very thin arms resting on breasts
- No facial features as with other similar figures found
- Limestone, shape affected by stone
- Small, fits in hand painted with red paint originally



Neolithic Era

- ❖Agriculture
- ❖Before this revolution, man was a hunter gatherer species
- ❖Some modern thinkers claim that the advent of agriculture was the beginning of man's destruction, it was when we began to change our environment to suit ourselves
- ❖Started in 3 places simultaneously
- ❖Agriculture was slow to spread
- ❖Agriculture changed many aspects of human life
- ❖Irrigation
- ❖Trading

Stonehenge

- ❖ Salisbury Plain in Southern England
- ❖ 2,500 BCE
- ❖ Archaeological enigma
- ❖ Startling structure and size suggests spiritual significance
- ❖ Construction began 5000 years ago
- ❖ Continued for 1500 years in 3 stages which involved dismantling the previous structure



Stonehenge

- ❖ A henge is an arrangement of megalithic stones in a circle, often surrounded by a ditch
- ❖ A complex of rough-cut Sarsen stones (a form of sandstone) and smaller bluestones (various volcanic rocks) built in several stages over hundreds of years
- ❖ Final henge took the form of concentric post-and-lintel circles.
- ❖ The outer ring, almost 100 feet in diameter consists of sarsen megaliths
- ❖ Inside, is a ring of bluestones, which in turn encircle a horseshoe (open end facing east) of trilithons (3 stone constructions) - 5 lintel topped pairs of the largest sarsens, each weighing 45 to 50 tons
- ❖ The heel stone for a person looking outwards from the centre is where the sun rose at the summer solstice (longest day of summer)
- ❖ Remarkable accurate solar calendar
- ❖ Human remains found around stone henge, they were cremated not buried.



Stonehenge

- ❖ Construction involved moving stones 100s of miles
- ❖ The mechanics don't explain the intent for it
- ❖ The meaning would have been tied to the prevailing beliefs at the time, then, it was worship of the Sun
- ❖ Sun worship has its roots in the pre-Christian Druid movement
- ❖ Did Druids build it? Earliest records 3rd century BC, not possible, 1000 years after Stonehenge was at its zenith
- ❖ Researchers now speculate that it may have been built as worship to the Moon



Thoughts

- Art as a reflection of the state of society
- What about art today
- Consider Contemporary art today
- The 'Venuses' depicted in art today
- The abundance that we are surrounded by today in contrast to hunting and gathering
- Any current comparisons to Stonehenge?