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Paleolithic vs neolithic art

People make art. We do this for many reasons and regardless of the technologies that are available to us. In the Middle East and Africa, extremely old, non-presentive ornaments were found. In the sculpture chapter we saw Venus from Berekhat Ram, a possible sculpture from more than 200,000 years ago. The oldest, heavily dated example is the collection of 82,000-year-old Nassarius snails found in Morocco, which are pierced and covered with red ochre. Wear patterns suggest that beads may have been coated. Nassarius shell balls found in Israel may be more than 100,000 years old and in Blombos Cave in South Africa, pierced shells and small pieces of ochre (red Haematite) etched with simple geometric patterns have been found in a 75,000-year-old layer of sediment. It should be remembered that Paleolithic people engaged in nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle, and therefore the objects they created were usually small and portable; used, held or placed in a bag. Some of the oldest known representative paintings come from a wide swath of Europe (especially southern France, northern Spain and Swabia, Germany), including more than two hundred caves with spectacular paintings, drawings and sculptures, which are among the first undisputed examples of representative creation of paintings. The oldest of these may be a 2.4-inch female figure carved from mammoth ivory, which was found in six fragments in the Hohle Fels cave near Schelklingen in southern Germany. Its dates back to 35,000 BC. The caves of Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc (see image below), Lascaux, Pech Merle and Altamira contain the most famous examples of prehistoric painting and drawing. Here are extremely evocative renderings of animals and some people who employ a complex mix of naturalism and abstraction. Archaeologists who study people from the Paleolithic (Stone Age) era believe that the paintings discovered in 1994 in a cave in Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc in the Ardèche Valley in France are more than 30,000 years old. The images found in Lascaux and Altamira are newer, dating back to about 15,000 BC. Images in Pech Merle date back to both 25,000 and 15,000 BC. What can we really know about the creators of these images and what the images originally meant? These are questions that are quite difficult when we study art done just 500 years ago. It is much more dangerous to assert the importance to art of the people who shared our anatomy, but have not yet developed the cultures or language structures that shaped who we became. Do art history tools apply? Here's proof of the visual language that breaks down the more than 1,000 generations that separate us, but we have to be careful. This is especially important if we want to understand the people who have made this art as a way to understand themselves. The desire to speculate based on what we see and the physical evidence of caves is always present. The cave in Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc has 300 meters long and two large Carbon samples date charcoal used to represent two head-to-head rhinos (see image above, bottom right) 30,340-32,410 years before 1995, when the samples were taken. The cave drawings depict other large animals, including horses, mammoths, musk ox, ibex, reindeer, aurochy, megaceros deer, panther and cyan (scientists note that these animals were not a normal part of people's diet at the time). Photographs show that the drawing shown above is rendered very carefully, but can be misleading. We see a group of horses, rhinos and bison and see them as a group, overlapping and warped on a scale. But the photo distorts the way in which these animal data would have originally been perceived. Bright electric lights used by the photographer create a wide flat viewing range; How different to see each animal emerge from the darkness under the flickering light cast by the flame. In 2009, Dr. Randell White, a professor of anthropology in New York, suggested that the overlapping horses pictured above could represent the same horse over time, running, eating, sleeping, etc. Perhaps these are much more sophisticated performances than we imagined. There is another drawing in Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc that warns us of the finished assumptions. It has been interpreted as depicting a woman's thighs and genitals, but there is also a drawing of a bison and a lion, and the images are almost interconnected. In addition to drawings, the cave is littered with skulls and bone of a cave bear and traces of a wolf. There is also an imprint of the foot, which was made by an eight-year-old boy. Neolithic: A Settled Life When people think of the Neolithic era, they often think of Stonehenge, the iconic image of that early era. Dating back to around 3000 BC and located on Salisbury plain in England, it is a larger and more complex structure than anything built before it in Europe. Stonehenge is an example of the cultural progress caused by the Neolithic Revolution, the most important development in human history. The way we live today, we have settled in houses, close to other people in cities and towns, protected by law, eating food grown on farms, as well as leisure time to learn, discover and invent, all this is the result of the Neolithic revolution that took place about 11,500-5,000 years ago. The revolution that led to our way of life was the development of the technology needed to plant and harvest crops and to tame animals. Before the Neolithic revolution, you would probably have lived with your ceasing family as a nomad, never staying anywhere for more than a few months, always living in temporary shelters, always looking for food and never having anything that could not be easily packed in your pocket or bag. The change in Neolithic lifestyle was huge and led to many pleasures (a lot of food, friends and a comfortable home), which we still enjoy today. Neolithic Art Huge Changes in people's lives have also changed the types of art that you made. The Neolithic sculpture became partly larger because people no longer had to wear it; ceramics became more widespread and were used to store food collected from farms. This is when alcohol was invented and when the architecture, and its interior and exterior decoration, first appears. In short, people settle down and start living in one place, year after year. It seems very unlikely that Stonehenge could have been made by earlier, Paleolithic, nomads. Investing so much time and energy in building a monument in a place where they will never return or can return only rarely. After all, the effort to build it was remarkable. Stonehenge is about 320 feet in circumference and the stones that form the outer ring weigh as much as 50 tons; small stones, weighing as much as 6 tons, were excavated from a distance of 450 miles. The use or importance of Stonehenge is not clear, but the design, planning and execution could only be carried out by a culture in which power was unquestioned. This is a culture that has been able to bring together hundreds of people to do very hard work for a long time. This is another feature of the Neolithic era. Plastered skull Neolithic period is also important, because this is when you first find good evidence of religious practice, an eternal inspiration for fine arts. Perhaps the most fascinating are the gypsum skulls found around Levant, in six places, including Jericho in Israel. At that time in the Neolithic, around 7000-6000 BC, people were often buried under the floors of houses, and in some cases their skulls were removed and covered with plaster to create very realistic faces, along with shells inserted into the eyes and paint to mimic hair and mustache. The traditional interpretation of these skulls was that they offered a way of preserving and worshiping male ancestors. However, recent studies have shown that among the sixty-one plastered skulls that have been found, there are a large number that come from the bodies of women and children. Perhaps the skulls are not so many religious objects, but rather powerful images made to help in the mourning of lost loved ones. Neolithic peoples did not have written language, so perhaps we never met.1 1 The earliest example of writing develops in Sumer in Mesopotamia at the end of the 4th millennium BC. However, there are scholars who believe that earlier proto-writing developed during the Neolithic period. Stonehenge is a Neolithic monument in Wiltshire, England. Reader's question: Can you tell me about the changes that have occurred in human development since the Paleolithic through Neolithic periods, and the ways in which art has been affected by these changes? This is an exciting question for me, because as someone who currently works every day with contemporary visual culture, I don't have much opportunity to look that far back in history. As always in asking me to look at wide periods of time or geography, I have to start by disclaiming that this will be an extremely brief review of a very complex topic (as in ... 20th century history) and with some definitions: The Paleolithic era is about 3 million to about 12,000 years ago. The Neolithic era is about 12,000 to about 2,000 years ago. These dates vary depending on which part of the world you're looking at, so see them as very wide ranges. Basically, the Paleolithic era is when people first discovered stone tools, and the Neolithic era is when people started farming. Below I will go to a few examples to see what I'm talking about, but the most obvious difference in human development that has affected art is that people have switched from nomadic life to developing farming societies and being able to settle in one place. It was the beginning of permanent architecture, including tombs and monuments. Tools have also become more advanced, which has led to new art forms. Paleolithic (3 million – 12,000 years ago) Cave paintings from about 17,000 years ago in the Lascaux cave complex in France. In the Paleolithic era, there was more than one species associated with modern man, including Neanderthals. They lived a nomadic lifestyle as hunter-gatherers, not settling in any permanent communities and without the concept of private property. They used fairly simple stone tools. In the Paleolithic era there were two basic forms of art: painting and sculpture, two of the oldest known forms of art. Painting The oldest known graphic painting — more than 40,000 years ago — in the Lubang Jeriji Saléh cave. The type of painting made in the Paleolithic era was painting the cave, through techniques such as spraying paint with the mouth, applying paint with a brush or cotton swab and engraving. These cave paintings mainly depicted scenes of hunting, animals and handprints. The earliest known figurative painting in history, dating back more than 40,000 years, depicts a bull and is located in the Lubang Jeriji Saléh cave in Indonesia. Another well-known example from this era is the paintings in the Chauvet Cave in France, which are about 32,000-30,000 years old. We do not know the purpose or meaning of these images— they were made so long ago that we must be careful in trying to impose on them our contemporary interpretations and understandings and potentially tinging them with real historical and cultural significance. Possible theories about their meaning, however, include storytelling, spiritual and educational goals. Sculpture and ornamentation Two Paleolithic figurines of Venus. Left: Venus of Hohle Fels, the earliest known Venus figure between the ages of 40,000 and 35,000. Photo: Ramessos, CC BY-SA 3.0. Right: Venus of Dolní Věstonice, made between 29,000 to 25,000 AU. Photo Petr Novák, Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 2.5 The oldest examples of art are a non-presentation decoration; this means that decorative which do not depict any person, animal or thing. One example is an 82,000-year-old collection of Nassarius snail shells found in Morocco. They are pierced and covered with red ochre, suggesting that they may have dangled from a string. The most famous example of Paleolithic sculptures, however, are Venus figurines: small figurines carved from stone, bone, ivory or clay, depicting, often with exaggerated body parts and genitals. (I've mentioned them before in my history of hairless vulva in art.) Again, we don't know what the purpose of these figurines was, which were found all over Europe, but there are theories that they were somehow related to interest in fertility. Neolithic era (12,000 –2,000 years ago) Dolmen of Sa Coveccada, Sardinia. Photo: Giovanni Seu, CC BY-SA 3.0. In the Neolithic era, there was only one species of man— modern man. They began to tame plants and animals, developing agriculture and settling in permanent communities. This was the beginning of solid architecture. People have also developed or improved skills such as spinning, weaving and ceramics. Wall paintings that began in this era are less durable than cave paintings and very few will survive. Perhaps for this reason this era is more famous for its craftsmanship and architecture than for painting. Painting mural of Çatalhöyük. Photo: Omar hoftun, CC BY-SA 3.0. With the advent of permanent buildings, this era saw the beginning of painting walls in addition to cave painting. The famous Neolithic Çatalhöyük in Turkey has numerous murals. Like Paleolithic paintings, these also depict animals and hunting scenes. However, the wall paintings are not very durable, so only traces of Neolithic remains. Sculpture Two examples of Neolithic ceramics. Left: Jar from 4900-4300 AU at Erbil Civilization Museum, Iraq. Photo: Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin FRCP(Glasg), CC BY-SA 4.0. Right: A piece of pottery from Iraq with a picture of Ibex from 4700-4200 AU. Photo: ALFGRN, CC BY-SA 2.0. Ceramics was an increasingly important art form in this era. It was probably used to store food in these new farming communities, and to decorate permanent homes. Previously, it was believed that ceramics began in the Neolithic era; However, recent discoveries at the Xianrendong and Yuchanyan sites in China suggest that ceramics actually started a little earlier, around 20,000-15,000 BC. Nevertheless, ceramics certainly seem to be more developed and more common in the Neolithic era. While the murals were not durable and did not survive in large quantities, ceramic painting was much more durable because the paint is baked on the surface of the ceramics. As a result, we have many more examples of pottery painting than wall painting. The designs were usually geometric and quite simple. Another aspect of this era seems to be the development of sculptures and decoration of houses, permanent settlements. Perhaps this is why Chinese jade sculptures and varnishes were probably first developed in this era. Cairn architecture from Barnenez in France. Photo: NewPapillon, CC BY-SA 3.0. One of the most important artistic achievements at that time was the beginning of permanent architecture, which came with settling in communities. At that time, the earliest known building was still known: cairn from Barnenez in France, which was built in about 4800 BC from heavy stone. The Paleolithic era also ushered in megalithic architecture. The term megalithic architecture refers to large stones that have been placed to create buildings or monuments. This leads me to perhaps the most famous example of Neolithic art: Stonehenge in England, created between 2000 and 3000 BC. This monument of large vertical stones is famous for its secrets: who created it and for what purpose? Although we do not know exactly, I think it is likely that this monument could not have been erected in the Paleolithic era. It would take time and energy to put all these stones in place; something that nomads could not achieve, who could not settle for too long in one place. The conclusion is, of course, a very shallow summary of the differences in these eras, but it should give you at least a basic idea of the main differences between them and how these differences affected the art that was produced. The transition from a nomadic lifestyle to settling in permanent communities has led to a very pronounced impact on the art that has been produced, such as the beginning of permanent architecture, the transition from cave painting to wall painting, and the growth of ceramics and large sculptures. As always, let me know if you have any opinions, additional information, or other examples of Paleolithic and Neolithic art and visual culture! Culture!

