

Prehistoric Art



From the reading . . .

- What is the generally accepted purpose of early painting? What evidence supports this conclusion?
- What vocab terms could we use when discussing cave paintings?
- Other than paintings, what else has been found in the caves?
- What stood out or surprised you about cave paintings?

Dating Conventions and Abbreviations

B.C.=before Christ

B.C.E.=before the Common Era

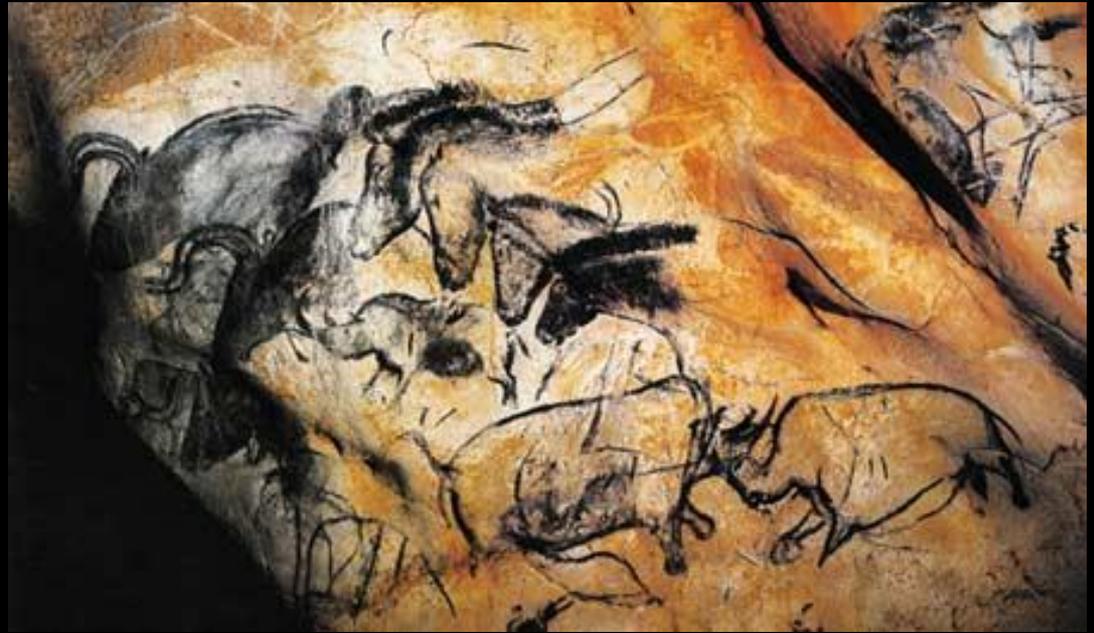
A.D.=*Anno Domini* (the year of our Lord)

C.E.=Common Era

c. or ca.=circa

C.=century

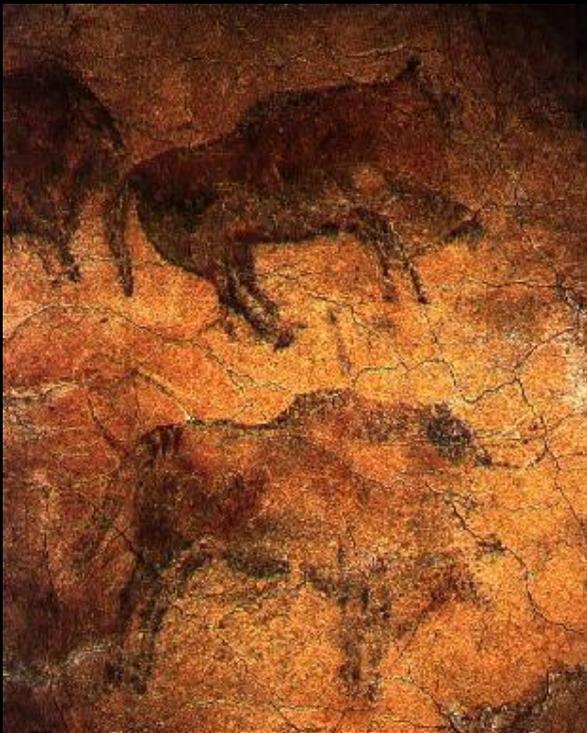
- No decorative purpose- Why?
 - due to location deep in uninhabited caves So must = Special significance
 - Magical Meaning to Creators: remoteness of sites and difficulty of access, used for centuries indicates that hunter attributed magical powers to them
 - confine/ control animal within limits of the painting



Chauvet Cave paintings

**Vallon-Pont-d' Arc, Ardèche,
France**

**ca. 30,000-28,000 B.C.E.
pigment on stone**

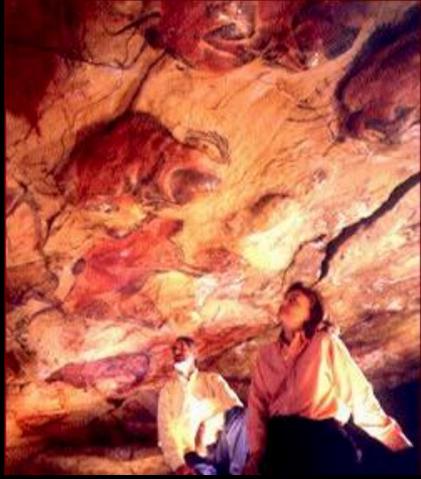


Altamira Cave paintings

Santander, Spain

ca. 12,000-11,000 B.C.E.

pigment on stone



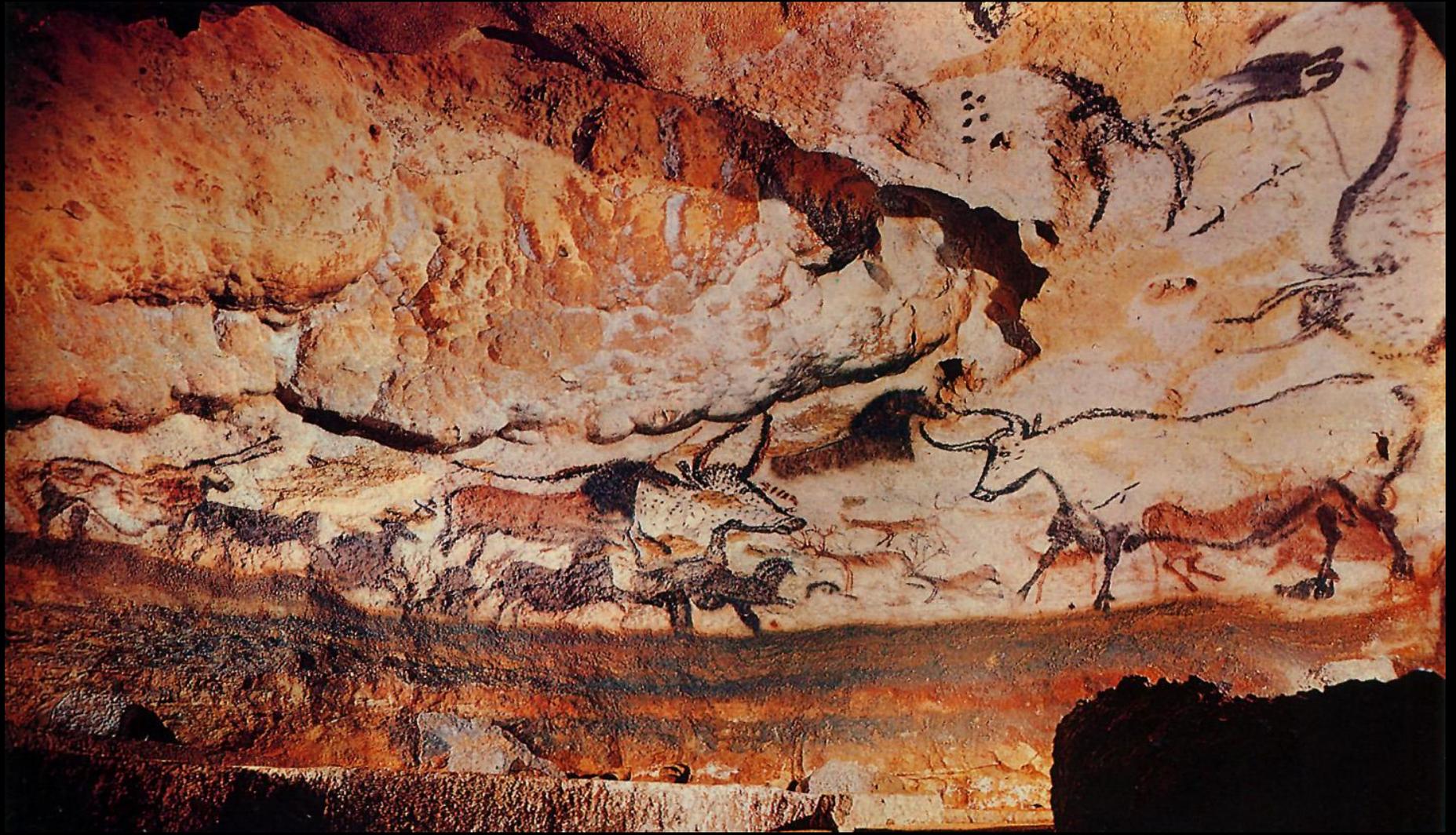


Lascaux Cave paintings

Lascaux, Dordogne, France

ca. 15,000-13,000 B.C.E.

pigment on stone





- Are the artists drawing what they see or from their imaginations?
- How do we know?



Pech-Merle Cave paintings

Lot, France

ca. 22,000 B.C.E.
pigment on stone

<http://www.npr.org/2011/11/12/142270047/polka-dotted-horses-cave-art-may-not-be-fantasy>

Living Art Work

- Evidence that hunters may have thrown spears as there are sharp gouges in some images
- Possibly predestinating or magically commanding the death of the animal



Survival of the Herd

- Representations of pregnant animals suggests anxiety about preserving the food supply and possibly that the paintings served magically to assure the herds survival.

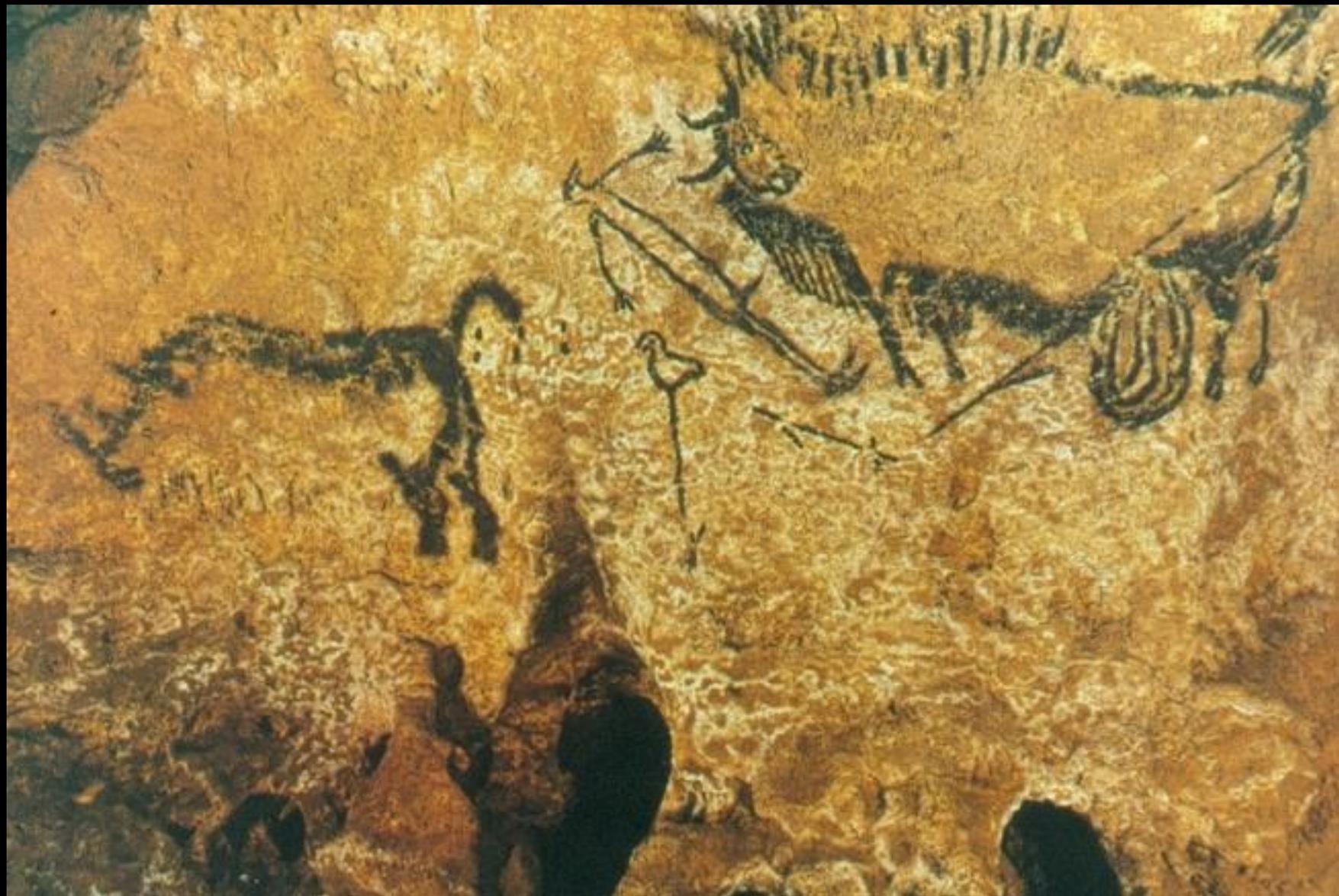


Functions other than Magic

- Calendar of the hunting seasons
 - *Palimpsest effect*: images superimposed on one another—possibly spatial representation of time
- Areas of organized groupings
 - Preference and concerns of hunters
- Objects of worship

Film

What is different about this painting?





Human representation

- The human figure is almost completely excluded from prehistoric cave paintings with a few notable exceptions:
 - *Well Scene*, Lascaux, c. 15, 000
 - *Sorcerer*, Trois-Freres, c. 13,000-11,000
- Abundant speculation on the meaning
- More importantly, why are the man and the animal figures treated so differently in terms of realism?

Suggestions

- With the dawn of magic, is there no image suitable for self-depiction when man distinguishes himself so much from the beast?
- Afraid to cast a spell on himself, as he casts on the animals, by rendering his image visible?



Suggestions

- Memory sketch of a shaman or witch doctor?
 - God of the beasts that has descended into the witch doctor and given him bestial power
- A hunter camouflaged to stalk deer

