MAN and the NATURAL WORLD:
GLOBAL PREHISTORY: FOCUS
(Prehistoric Art)
TITLE or DESIGNATION: Apollo 11 Stones from Namibia

CULTURE or ART HISTORICAL PERIOD: African Prehistory

DATE: c. 25,000-25,300 B.C.E.

MEDIUM: charcoal on stone
ONLINE ASSIGNMENT:
http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org/origins.html

TITLE or DESIGNATION: Great Hall of Bulls at Lascaux, France

CULTURE or ART HISTORICAL PERIOD:
Paleolithic Europe

DATE: c. 15,000- 13,000 B.C.E.

MEDIUM: rock painting
ONLINE ASSIGNMENT: http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org/susa-ibex.html

TITLE or DESIGNATION: Bushel with ibex motifs from Susa, Iran

CULTURE or ART HISTORICAL PERIOD: Prehistoric West Asia

DATE: c. 4200-3500 B.C.E.

MEDIUM: painted terracotta
ONLINE ASSIGNMENT: http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org/stonehenge-salisbury-plain-england.html

TITLE or DESIGNATION: Stonehenge

CULTURE or ART HISTORICAL PERIOD: Neolithic Europe

DATE: c. 2500-1600 B.C.E.

LOCATION: Wiltshire, UK
GLOBAL PREHISTORY

Online Links:

Origins of Prehistoric Art – Smarthistory

Tassili n' Ajjer - Unesco Video – YouTube

Prehistoric Sites and Decorated Caves of the Vezere Valley – YouTube

Stonehenge Monument – YouTube

Stonehenge – Bluffton

Possible Scenario of Human Evolution - Flow of History
GLOBAL PREHISTORY

Online Links:

Domestication of Animals and its Effects - Flow of History

Secrets of Stonehenge – YouTube

Walking through History: Stonehenge – YouTube

Stonehenge Article Dry Spells Reveal Secrets - Guardian
Animal Facing left, from the Apollo 11 Cave, Namibia, c. 23,000 BCE, charcoal on stone
Like most other paintings for thousands of years, this very early example from Africa represents an animal in strict profile so that the head, body, tail, and all four legs are clearly visible. A frontal view would conceal most of the body, and a three-quarters view shows neither the front nor side fully.

Between 1969 and 1972, scientists working in the Apollo 11 Cave in Namibia found seven fragments of stone plaques with paint on them, including four or five recognizable images of animals. In most cases, the species is uncertain, but the painters always rendered the form with care.
The discovery occurred during the flight of Apollo 11, and the shelter where it was found now bears that name. The stones were painted in charcoal, ocher, and white. The two separate pieces underwent different patinations, as the image shows.

The Apollo 11 stones were thought to be the oldest known artwork of any kind from the African continent. But in 2002, news of an important discovery in Blombos Cave on the southern Cape coast was made; Chris Henshilwood announced the uncovering of a piece of ochre decorated with a delicate geometric pattern. He dated the piece conservatively at 77,000 years old; in fact, it could be as much as 100,000 years old.
The stone slabs consist of different varieties of clay schist that outcrop in the vicinity of the shelter. The seven fragments are not exfoliated parts of a larger wall painting, but are separate representations on loose slabs.

With the exception of the drawing of a rhinoceros, the zoological identification of the representations is ambiguous. One slab, consisting of two fragments, shows the body of an animal, most likely a feline, with human hind legs that were probably added subsequently. Two barely visible lines at the head resemble Oryx horns, and a lappet at the abdomen may represent the sexual organ of a bovid. Indeed, it may depict a supernatural creature, a so-called “therianthrope”, which would suggest a complex belief system.
Running Horned Woman. Tassili n’Ajjer, Algeria, c. 6000-4000 BCE, pigment on rock

A 7,000 year-old painting from Tassili n’Ajjer in southeastern Algeria in the central Sahara (at that time a verdant savannah) is one of the earliest and finest surviving examples of rock art. The painter depicted a running woman with convincing animation and significant detail. The dotted marks on her shoulders, legs, and torso probably indicate she is wearing body paint applied for a ritual.
The white parallel patterns attached to her arm and waist probably represent flowing raffia decorations and a raffia skirt. Horns are also part of her ceremonial attire—shown, as typically in prehistoric art, in the twisted perspective, or composite view, that is, seen from the front even though on a profile head. Notably, the artist painted this detailed image over a field of much smaller painted human beings, an example of why it is often so difficult to date and interpret art on rock surfaces, as subsequent superimpositions are frequent.
Hall of the Bulls. Lascaux, France, 16,000-14,000 BCE
What can we really know about the creators of these paintings and what the images originally meant? These are questions that are difficult enough when we study art made only 500 years ago. It is much more perilous to assert meaning for the art of people who shared our anatomy but had not yet developed the cultures or linguistic structures that shaped who we have become.

Do the tools of art history even apply? Here is evidence of a visual language that collapses the more than 1,000 generations that separate us, but we must be cautious. This is especially so if we want understand the people that made this art as a way to understand ourselves. The desire to speculate based on what we see and the physical evidence of the caves is wildly seductive.
Beginning around 40,000 B.C.E., the archaeological record shows that anatomically modern humans effectively replaced Neanderthals and remained the sole hominid inhabitants across continental Europe. At about the same time, and directly linked to this development, the earliest art was created. These initial creative achievements fall into one of two broad categories. Paintings and engravings found in caves along walls and ceilings are referred to as "parietal" art. The caves where paintings have been found are not likely to have served as shelter, but rather were visited for ceremonial purposes. The second category, "mobiliary" art, includes small portable sculpted objects which are typically found buried at habitation sites.
In the painted caves of western Europe, namely in France and Spain, we witness the earliest unequivocal evidence of the human capacity to interpret and give meaning to our surroundings. Through these early achievements in representation and abstraction, we see a newfound mastery of the environment and a revolutionary accomplishment in the intellectual development of humankind.
Although the cave at Lascaux was closed to the public in 1963 so that conservators could battle an aggressive fungus, authorities created a facsimile of it.

The prehistoric painters depicted cow, bulls, horses, and deer along the natural ledges of the rock, where the smooth white limestone of the ceiling and upper wall meets a rougher surface below. They also utilized the curving wall to suggest space.

The animals appear singly, in rows, face to face, tail to tail, and even painted on top of one another. Their most characteristic features have been emphasized. Horns, eyes, and hooves are shown as seen from the front, yet heads and bodies are rendered in profile in a system known as *composite pose*.
The caves could be a prehistoric planetarium in which humanity first charted the stars. According to Dr. Michael Rappenglueck of the University of Munich, these outlines form a map of the sky with the eyes of the bull, birdman and bird representing the three prominent stars Vega, Deneb and Altair.

Together, these stars are popularly known as the Summer Triangle and are among the brightest objects that can be picked out high overhead during the middle months of the northern summer.

"It is a map of the prehistoric cosmos," Dr Rappenglueck told BBC News Online. "It was their sky, full of animals and spirit guides."
But the sky map is not the only evidence that prehistoric man took a keen interest in the night sky. Nearer to the entrance of the Lascaux cave complex is a magnificent painting of a bull.

Hanging over its shoulder is what appears to be a map of the Pleiades, the cluster of stars sometimes called the Seven Sisters.

Inside the bull painting, there are also indications of spots that may be a representation of other stars found in that region of sky. Today, this region forms part of the constellation of Taurus the bull, showing that mankind's identification of this part of the sky stretches back thousands of years.
At Lascaux engraved images are more sharply incised, very small and subsidiary to the paintings, and a wider range of colors was used derived from natural minerals- reds, yellows and brown from ochre and haematite; black, dark brown and violet from types of manganese. They were ground to powder and applied directly to the damp limestone surfaces.

First the outlines were either drawn with sticks of charcoal or painted - using pads of fur or moss, primitive brushes or feather or chewed stick, or simply a finger- and then the outlines were filled in by spraying powders through bone tubes. (Such tubes with traces of color have been found in several caves.)
Bushel with ibex motifs, Susa, Iran, 4200-3500 BCE, painted terracotta

Neolithic cultures flourished in the vast area of West Asia (called from a European viewpoint the Near East). To judge by the pottery, a high degree of technical skill was attained. The walls of some of their pots are quite amazingly thin and delicate.

A beaker from Susa is painted boldly and fluently with schematic yet remarkably lively animals in pure silhouette: a frieze of very-long necked birds at the top, a band of running dogs and, below, an ibex with huge horns. These animals are distorted expressively, the elongation of the dogs, for instance, suggesting speed of movement.

The birds and ibex stand on, and the dogs skim over, firmly marked ground lines, which provide the lower edges of frames enclosing “image fields.” In this way the image acquires, for the first time, a definite space of its own in striking contrast to cave paintings. This invention preceded that of writing, it should be noted.
This sculpture was found in Mexico and fashioned from the sacrum (part of the pelvis bone) of an extinct species of llama- is the earliest recorded American work of art. (Neatly chipped flint instruments testify to man’s presence in America from about the thirtieth millennium.) The coyote head is a reminder of how fragmentary our knowledge of Paleolithic art is.

So perfectly is the form integrated with the medium that it is impossible to tell whether the bones were carefully selected in order to carve predetermined shapes or whether the animals were suggested by the natural formation of the bones.
Stonehenge, Wiltshire, England, c. 2550-1600 BCE
Stonehenge is an example of a henge, a circle of stones or posts, often surrounded by a ditch with built-up embankments. Laying out such circles with accuracy would have posed no particular problem. Architects likely relied on the human compass. All that is required is a length of cord either cut or knotted to make the desired radius of the circle.
Stonehenge is a complex of rough-cut sarsen (a form of sandstone) stones and smaller “bluestones” (various volcanic rocks) built in several stages over hundreds of years. The final henge took the form of concentric post-and-lintel circles. The outer ring consists of huge sarsen megaliths. Inside is a ring of bluestones, and this ring, encircles a horseshoe (open and facing east) of trilithons (three-stone constructions). Standing apart and to the east (outside of this aerial view on the left) is the “heel-stone”, which, for a person looking outward from the center of the complex, would have marked the point where the sun rose at the summer solstice.

It has recently been shown that the stones could have been used for more sophisticated solar and lunar observations to predict solstices and eclipses through a 300-year cycle.
Of all the methods for spanning space, post-and-lintel construction is the simplest. At its most basic, two uprights (posts) support a horizontal element (lintel). The upright megaliths at Stonehenge were secured by mortise-and-tenon joints, that is, joints made by a conical projection at the top of each upright that fits like a peg into a hole in the lintel.
The differences in the types of stone used in the different phases of construction are significant. Unlike the sarsen stone, bluestone was not locally available and would have been transported over 150 miles from the west, where it had been quarried in the mountains of west Wales. By bringing the bluestones and using them in the early Stonehenge cemetery, these migrants made a powerful connection with their homelands. Over the next thousand years people continued to alter the arrangement of the bluestones and cremation burials continued in pits at the site.
We now believe that Stonehenge was the site of ceremonies linked to death and burial. This theory has been constructed from evidence that looks not only at the stone circles but also at the nearby sites dating from the periods when Stonehenge was in use.

The site started as a cemetery of cremation burials marked by a circle of bluestones. Unlike the more famous monument, nearby habitations were built of wood, in particular large posts and tree trunks. At Durrington Walls a mile away, are a number of circles, not made from stone but from wood, and many circular houses constructed with wooden posts. The rubbish left behind at this and similar sites provides archaeologists with insights into the lives of the inhabitants.
Chemical analysis of animal bone debris indicates that the animals consumed came from great distances before they were slaughtered, and therefore that the people who stayed here had come from regions far removed from the site.

Significantly, both Stonehenge and Durrington Walls are connected to the Avon River by banked avenues. These connected the worlds of the living (the wood settlement) with the domain of the dead (the stone circle).
Neolithic people would have moved between these worlds as they walked the avenues, sometimes bringing the deceased to be buried or cremated, other times approaching the stone circle for ceremonies and rituals dedicated to the memories of the deceased and the very ancient ancestors.

The meaning of Stonehenge therefore rests within an understanding of the larger landscape that contained not only other ritual sites but also sites of habitation.
MAN and NATURE:
GLOBAL PREHISTORY: ACTIVITIES and REVIEW
(Prehistoric Art)
STUDENT PRESENTATION #1:

What are some theories that have been proposed as to why prehistoric men created these paintings deep within the interior of a cave? What visual evidence is used to support these theories?
STUDENT PRESENTATION #2:

What are some theories that have been proposed as to why this Neolithic complex was created? What visual evidence located at the site and in surrounding areas is used to support these theories?
The work on the left is a depiction of a bison licking its flank carved out of reindeer horn (c. 12,000 BCE from the eastern hemisphere in La Madeleine, France). In what way does this work reflect a similar approach to the use of materials and techniques seen on the right (from the western hemisphere)?
VIDEO: Bushel with Ibex Motif on Smarhistory
Sacred spaces generally possess aspects or qualities of the masculine and feminine. Which of these two principles, the masculine or feminine, would you associate the following and why?

caves/ bull/ star constellations/ earth pigments/ hunting/ horns/ darkness
VIDEO: Cave of Forgotten Dreams Movie Trailer
How many well-known buildings, structures, or designed sites can you name that are circular? What accounts in each case for their circular design?
VIDEO: Rewriting Stonehenge's History (UCL)
VIDEO: Henges, Stonehenge, Woodhenge, Avebury and Stanton Drew
Were any of these on your list? Why was each of the structures above built with a circular design? How might some of these structures provide a clue as to how and why Stonehenge was built and used?