

Dark Caves - Bright Visions

Ice Age Cave Painting of France and Spain

Exhibit Theme

This thematic exhibit focuses exclusively on the cave wall paintings and engravings produced by Cro-Magnon man from approximately 33 thousand until 10 thousand years ago in the caves of southern France and northern Spain. This time period encompasses the European ice age and is called the paleo (old) lithic (stone) or 'old stone age'. It embodies the very cradle of art with a more sophisticated style than the two dimensional 'stick man' primitive sketching or geometric line efforts of early man and the use of color is also an exciting development. Although the art's origins are lost in antiquity, it represents man's earliest attempts to express his views of life and influence others in his society.

Exhibit Scope and Development

Exhibit scope includes discovery of the art and mistaken origins, Cro-Magnon man, tools, art sites of the Paleolithic period (in France & Spain) with examples of paintings from various caves, research, the suspected purpose and influence on modern artists and museums where cave art is reproduced for the public as many sites are now closed or inaccessible. The exhibit presents the art by site in order of their respective approximate ages. Fantasy or stylized designs are not included. Mobile art - such as carved objects, although prehistoric and found in caves, are not cave wall art and are not included.

Philatelic Elements

Elements are a key part of this exhibit and an effort has been taken to include as many elements as possible. Philatelically inspired items are minimized and mint or commercially used materials make up the majority of pieces. The following material types are included: die and presentation proofs, postage stamps - definitive, commemorative, airmail and semi-postal issues, booklet singles, gutter pair, printing date block, precancel, imperforate variety, maximum cards, first day cover, commemorative and printed to private order postal stationery, commemorative hand, machine advertising slogan and roller cancel devices, postage meter indicia, as well as various domestic and international destinations and rates.

Material Availability and Rarity

Postal materials with 'identifiable' paleolithic cave painting designs of this archaic period are relatively few. The total sum of items does not justify a two frame exhibit and is a challenge for an exhibitor. Items which are more difficult to obtain include commercially used postal stationery, roller cancels, advertising or commemorative hand and machine cancel designs, and postage meters.

Highlights (matted in gold)

- 1976 Presentation Proof (signed), France (page 1).
- 1989 Bromide Proof, NiuaFo'oo (page 3).
- 1949 Progressive Die Proof (signed), Monaco (page 16).

Literature References (site checked 31 January 2018)

Many philatelic reference articles on prehistoric art, too many to list here, are maintained with full text on the *Bone and Stone* website :

Live Link: <http://www.boneandstone.com/main/references.html>

Præhistorie in der Philatelie - Johan C. van Soeren, 1978, Geologie, eV., Erlangen, Germany.