

Representation of birds in the Eurasian Upper Palaeolithic ice age art

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Artistic activities of our direct ancestor, the anatomical modern human being (*Homo sapiens*) of the European Upper Palaeolithic, are known by the term ice age art. The Upper Palaeolithic is the long period between about 35'000 to 10'000 BP.

Ice age art includes cave art, portable art and – until now known only from the Iberian Peninsula and one site in the French Pyrenees – open air rock art sites.

Cave art is very frequent in Spain and France. It is mostly characterized by the numerous animal representations which are often very realistic. There are differences in the frequency of the animal species. Most common are the mammals, especially the group of herbivores. Representations of birds are less numerous. Besides these animal figures there are also depictions of human beings which are less frequent. Even rarer are anthropomorphic composite beings. Some of them are showing the combination between human being and bird. The group of different signs, however, is much more common.

Upper Palaeolithic artists used three basic techniques for cave art: painting, engraving and sculpting. These techniques were applied singular or in combination. In a lot of caves there are depictions made by different techniques. In many cases the Palaeolithic artists integrated the natural shape of the rock in their art works or modified it to their use.

Portable art is known from many parts of Europe and even as far as Siberia. In contrast to cave art portable art is mobile and portable and therefore the term portable art. Portable art is mostly found in context of Upper Palaeolithic settlements. Different techniques can be distinguished. Portable art includes engravings of animals, human beings or signs on different materials such as antler, bone, stone etc. There are also animal and human figurines which were made of different materials. Although representations of birds do not dominate, their number is bigger than in cave art.

In open air rock art herbivores are dominant.

Keywords: Upper Palaeolithic, Ice age art, Cave art, Portable art, Rock art, Representations of birds.