

AP Art History: Prehistoric Art

Time Period

Paleolithic Art: 30,000-8000 BCE in Near East, then rest of world

Neolithic Art: 8000-3000 BCE in Near East, then rest of world

***Near East-** Turkey, Egypt, Western Asia

General Knowledge

Prehistoric art...

- existed before **writing**
- has been affected by **climate change**
- can be seen in **practical and ritual objects**
- shows an **awareness** of everything

More

- Oldest objects are **African or Asian**
- First art forms appear as **rock paintings, geometric patterns, human and animal motifs, architectural monuments**
- Ceramics first produced in **Asia**
- People of the Pacific are **migrants from Asia** who bring ceramic making with them.
- European cave paintings and megalithic monuments show **ritual traditions**
- Early Americans use **natural materials** for ritual objects
- **Asian shamanic religious practices** align with ritual ancient American objects
- **Scientific dating** shows use of objects.
- **Archaeology** increases understanding.

Background

Paleolithic- Old Stone Age

Neolithic- New Stone Age

- Categories roughly correspond with **food gathering**.
- **Paleolithic** had **hunter-gatherers**
- **Neolithic** had **farmers** and **livestock, organized settlements, occupations, homes**

Sculpture

- Some are **portable**
- Use cave to **enhance** carvings

Sculpture Images

1. **Camelid sacrum in the shape of a canine from Central Mexico, 14000-7000 BCE, National Museum of Anthropology**

Prehistoric Architecture

I. General

- A. Shelters were built out of **large animal bones**
- B. Most famous structures are for **worship**
- C. Menhirs were erected **singularly or in long rows**
 - 1. **Menhir** - large individual stone
 - 2. **Megalith** - one cut into rectangle shapes and used in construction of complexes
 - a) **Henge** - circle of megaliths
 - 3. Established **post-and-lintel** architecture
 - a) **Most fundamental** type of architecture

II. Images

A. Stonehenge, 2500-1600 BCE, sandstone, Neolithic Europe, Wiltshire, United Kingdom

1. Technique

- a) **Post-and-lintel building** : lintels grooved in place by mortise and tenon system
 - (1) **mortise and tenon** - form of joining
- b) Large megaliths in center
 - (1) Over 20 feet tall
 - (2) Form a horseshoe around central flat stone
 - (3) Ring of megaliths
- c) Hundreds of smaller stones around monument
- d) No wheels or pulleys used, maybe rolled on logs or on a sleigh greased with animal fat

2. Context

- a) Some stones weigh >50 lbs, shows permanence of structure
- b) Some stones imported from 150+ miles, shows special/sacred significance

3. History

- a) Perhaps took 1000+ years to build
 - (1) Redeveloped by succeeding generations
- b) Built in 3 phases
 - (1) **First Phase** - circular ditch containing 56 pits called Aubrey Holes
 - (a) **Aubrey Holes** - named after John Aubrey
 - (b) Filled with chalk
 - (2) **Second Phase** - wooden structure, Aubrey Holes may have been used for cremation burials
 - (a) Adult males buried, site for certain people
 - (3) **Third Phase** - stone construction

4. Tradition

- a) Possibly inspired by previously standing wood circles
- b) **Stone circles** - common

5. Theories

- a) Thought to be oriented toward sunrise at summer solstice and sunset at winter solstice, used to predict eclipses

- Characteristics
 - Narrative setting
 - 3D figures
 - Placement of figures
 - Value
 - Perspective

15th Century Renaissance

- Rise in Humanism
- Realistic, 3D paintings
- Architecture emphasizes light spaces
 - Balanced and symmetrical
- Political and economic changes led to wealthy patrons
- **The Florentine Renaissance**
 - Anatomy, modeling, perspective
- Attention to human form
- 1450
- Return of classical nudity and contrapposto (Roman influence)
- Linear perspective (3d space illusion)
- Aerial perspective
- Chiaroscuro to model forms, use of single light source allowed for greater realism, strong contrasts between light and dark
- Balanced, symmetrical compositions, pyramidal composition (triangles)
- Classical forms
- 1 and 2 point perspective
- High Renaissance 1515

Mannerism

- Deliberately intellectual
- Distorted figures
- 1530
- Long figures
- Less emphasis on balance, symmetry, and ration composition
- Unusual lighting

Masters

- Leonardo da Vinci

Constructivism/Surrealism/DeStijl/Mexican Muralists

- 1930
- Bauhaus
 - Germany
 - School for architecture and interior design
 - Influenced by DeStijl and Constructivism
- Constructivism
 - Russia
- Mexican Muralists
 - Rivera - Dream of Sunday Afternoon in the Alameda Park
- DeStijl
 - Completely abstract
 - 6 colors used
 - Black, white, gray, red, blue, yellow
 - Only perpendicular lines
 - Holland
 - Mondrian - Composition in Red, Blue, and Yellow
- Surrealism
 - Influenced by Dada
 - Used improvisational techniques
 - Realm of the fantasy
 - Oppenheim - Object
 - Dali - The Persistence of Memory
 - Kahlo - The Two Fridas
 - Lam - The Jungle

20th Century Architecture

- Natural and Organic Forms
 - Harmony between architecture and human habitation
 - Based on site, furnishing, building
 - Wright - Kaufmann Family House
 - Le Corbusier - Villa Savoye
 - Miles, van der Rohe, Johnson - Seagram Building