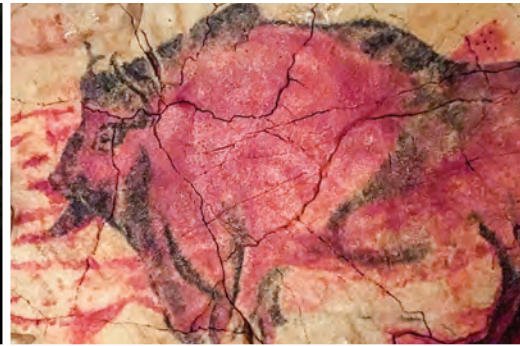
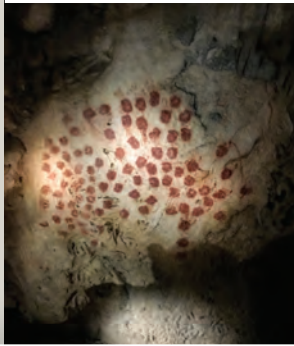


**NETWORKING
FOR ROCK ART**
Global Challenges,
Local Solutions



Edited by
Neville Agnew
Janette Deacon
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THE GETTY CONSERVATION INSTITUTE

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LOS ANGELES

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The Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) works internationally to advance conservation practice in the visual arts—broadly interpreted to include objects, collections, architecture, and sites. It serves the conservation community through scientific research, education and training, field projects, and the dissemination of information. In all its endeavors, the GCI creates and delivers knowledge that contributes to the conservation of the world's cultural heritage.

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Cover images:

Top: Painted Rock, a horseshoe-shaped sandstone feature in central California's Carrizo Plain, features numerous paintings on the walls of its interior. Its paintings have suffered greatly from disrespectful visitors, primarily in the first half of the twentieth century. Painted Rock was the focus of an on-site training course for rock art conservation, organized by Getty Conservation Institute, in 1991. See Chapter 3.1 for more information. Image: Tom McClintock.

Middle Right: The Cave of Altamira outside Santillana del Mar, Spain, was discovered in 1868. After decades of heavy visitation, authorities recognized the cave's delicate climate was being impacted to the detriment of the paintings' preservation. It was closed to the public in 1977 and a replica (pictured) was built for visitors, which opened in 2001. See Chapter 4.2 for more information. Image: Tom McClintock.

Bottom: The White Shaman Mural is one of the best preserved and most narratively elaborate paintings in North America. Located in the Lower Pecos River Region of southwest Texas, the site is currently managed by the Witte Museum in San Antonio. See Chapter 3.3 for more information on the rock art of the Lower Pecos. Image: Tom McClintock.

Middle Left: The Chauvet-Pont d'Arc Cave was closed immediately following its discovery in 1994, a decision that was based on the impacts observed at other sites like Altamira and Lascaux. At the time of discovery, the paintings yielded some of the earliest known radiocarbon dates for rock art, roughly 32,000 years old. A facsimile of the cave and its paintings was opened to the public in 2015. Pictured here is the replica of the "grand panneau des Points-Paumes," nearly one hundred ochre palm prints evoking the shape of a bison. See Chapters 2.4, 4.1, and 4.7 for more information. Image: Tom McClintock.

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4.3 Rock art on UNESCO's World Heritage List

Pilar Fatás Monforte

In 2020, UNESCO deemed 1,121 sites on five continents unique, irreplaceable, and authentic. Included on the World Heritage List, these are sites with such exceptional, cultural, or natural value that they transcend borders, rendering their protection an international duty and the concern of all humanity. This list was created according to the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage adopted by UNESCO in 1972, as an instrument to protect these extraordinary sites.

Among all the World Heritage sites, forty-eight of them specifically contain rock art (fig. 4.10). For most of these, the rock art itself is the value for which they are included in the List, while in others it is one of the added values to a landscape or natural area. This large number reflects the fact that rock art is the only universal art form over time and space. It is the oldest artform, dating from at least 43,000 years ago. This exceptional, universal feature of rock art has gradually been reflected on the List and the current map, which reveals its widespread geographic distribution.

Chronologically, the first two rock art sites to be designated World Heritage Sites were the Decorated Caves of the Vézère Valley (France) and Valcamonica (Italy), both in 1979. The Rock-Art Sites of Tadrart Acacus (Libya) were added in 1982, and the Cave of Altamira (Spain) and the Rock Art of Alta (Norway) in 1985. Very few were considered again until

FIGURE 4.10.

A map, accessible on the Bradshaw Foundation webpage, produced through a collaboration between RAN members shows the global distribution of rock art sites on the World Heritage List. Image: Bradshaw Foundation.



1994: Serra da Capivara (Brazil), Sierra de San Francisco (Mexico), the Lines and Geoglyphs of Nazca and Palpa (Peru) and the Rock Carvings in Tanum (Sweden).

In 1994 the World Heritage Committee reconsidered the list since, up to that point, many of the “traditional” categories, such as cathedrals or historical cities, had expanded while other forms of heritage, like prehistoric or industrial sites, had been neglected. Furthermore, the list’s growth had been extremely uneven in terms of geographic distribution, with most sites in Western countries. Thus, the Committee presented the “Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List,” which set new strategies to make the list more varied, geographically balanced, and representative of the world’s cultural and natural richness. Since then, progressively, other sites with rock art have been honored as World Heritage.

Rock art can be found in all regions and in all landscapes: forests, steppes and deserts, mountains and valleys, in the depths of caverns, and in open air. It is found in massifs such as the Ennedi Plateau (Chad), on steep cliff walls such as the Chaco Canyon (USA), or in post-glacial fjord landscapes like Alta (Norway). In terms of motifs, the majority are animals, particularly those characteristic of the landscape or the climate where they were rendered: elands in Maloti-Drakensberg Park (South Africa and Lesotho); guanacos in Cueva de las Manos (Argentina), giraffes, lions, and rhinos in Twyfelfontein (Namibia) and Matobo Hills (Zimbabwe), horses in Tamgaly (Kazakhstan); camels in Wadi Rum (Jordan); reindeer in Alta (Norway) and deer, bison, and horses in the Palaeolithic Cave Art of Northern Spain (which together with Altamira has been on the List since 2008), to mention a few examples.

While in Palaeolithic art few human figures were painted or engraved and they are not very naturalistic, since at least 10,000 years ago hunting, gathering, grazing, dancing, and fighting scenes have been featured in rock art. Magnificent examples can be found, for example, in the Rock Art of the Iberian Mediterranean Basin (Spain) or Bandiagara (Mali). In contrast to the animal renderings, depictions of human anatomical parts like the vulva and especially the hand, either in outline or as handprints, have been common motifs on five continents since the oldest art; the best example is unquestionably Cueva de las Manos (Argentina).

Depictions without counterparts in nature are called signs. These are frequent and widespread throughout the world and over time. They can be simple geometric shapes like triangles, circles, rectangles, or dots, or more complex ones like spirals and labyrinths. Most of the European Palaeolithic rock art sites have examples of these, as well as sites in Africa (Chongoni, Malawi, and Lopé-Okanda, Gabon), in the Americas (the Prehistoric Caves of Yagul and Mitla, Mexico), in Australia (Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Kakadu National Parks), or the more recent engravings in Sulaiman-Too Sacred Mountain (Kyrgyzstan).

While the motifs are varied, so too are the techniques used to make them. The most common colors in drawings and paintings are red and black, but white tones are also frequent in sites like Kondoa Irangi Rock Paintings (Tanzania). The carvings were made by hitting or incising the rock to create shallow or deep grooves, as seen at Cõa Valley and Siega Verde (Portugal and Spain), two masterful examples of open-air carvings. And we cannot forget geoglyphs, huge figures on the ground or on mountainsides made by removing or adding rocks to make the lines of each figure, such as the emblematic Lines and Geoglyphs of Nazca and Palpa.

However, if all rock art has one thing in common it is unquestionably its fragility since it is constantly exposed to both degrading natural and human factors. In addition to raising awareness of the need to enlist everyone in safeguarding this heritage, UNESCO created

the List of World Heritage in Danger for sites that run the risk of disappearing or of seriously deteriorating. Today, Tadrart Acacus (Libya) and Air and Ténéré (Niger) are on this list, due to the socio-political instability of their countries.

Rock art is a visual book that recounts our history and our way of understanding the world. Not only about the past, it is a living culture and part of our identity of what we are today. Therefore, both the oldest and the most recent rock art become meaningful in their landscape, societal, and cultural contexts. Understanding this should lead us to appreciate the extraordinary importance of this cultural expression and the need to preserve, not only its physical integrity through protection and conservation measures, but also its associated values. The sites on the World Heritage List have already been protected but let us not forget that there may be as many as 400,000 known sites with rock art on the planet and they all share the values and features outlined here. Therefore, we all can and should contribute to preserving them.

