



Lascaux Caves (Hall of the Bulls detail)

Prehistoric

Prehistoric Creation–3000 B.C.

CAVES AND CARVINGS

In the beginning God made all things. All the art that has ever been made comes from what God made, and all art is inspired by His artwork. The Bible says that a man named Tubal-cain was the first human artisan. But his artifacts (and all the art made before the Flood) were destroyed. Any artworks by Noah’s children or great-grandchildren have apparently been lost, too. The only early art that still remains from prehistoric times are cave paintings and some small sculptures.

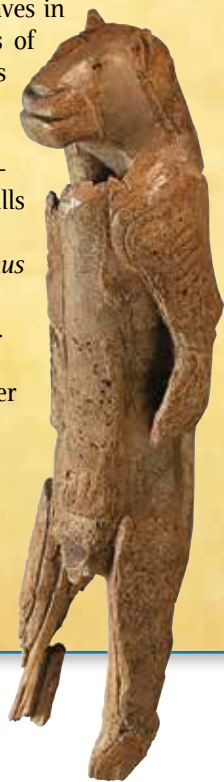
The most famous cave paintings were found accidentally in 1940 by young boys looking for their dog. The Lascaux Caves in southwestern France contain nearly 2,000 paintings of animals, people, and abstract shapes. The paintings include oxen, bison, wild horses, deer, ibexes, bulls, a bear, a wolf, a bird, and even a beast that looks like a unicorn. The Great Hall of the Bulls (front) is the best-known part of these caves. It has horses, stags, and bulls that are painted so they look like they are moving.

The most famous prehistoric sculpture is the *Venus of Willendorf*. A little over four inches tall, *Venus* has fancy braided hair—but no eyes, ears, mouth, or nose. When she was first dug up, this chubby limestone statue was nicknamed *la poire* (“the pear”). Much older than *Venus* is the *Lion Man* sculpture (right), carved from the tusk of a mammoth.

OTHER WORKS

Venus of Willendorf

Lion Man of Hohlenstein Stadel SHOWN





Ram in a Thicket

Mesopotamian

Mesopotamian

c. 3000–331 B.C.

KINGS AND GODS

The Bible says that Abraham came from Ur, a city in an area called Mesopotamia. The *Ram in a Thicket* (front) sculpture was named after the time when God tested Abraham on Mount Moria in Genesis 22. Mesopotamian Art includes works from three time periods, the Sumerian (c. 3000–2300 B.C.—from which the *Ram* comes), the Assyrian (900–612 B.C.), and the Persian (539–331 B.C.). In contrast to the almost realistic style of the *Ram*, Sumerian sculptures of people—like those from the Tell Asmar Hoard—are easily identified by their conical figures with huge eyes. Nearly all Sumerian art was made to decorate temples or to be used in temple worship.

Assyrian art lasted until the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C. It is known for its *bas-relief* (shallow carved stone) sculptures on royal monuments. Human figures in Assyrian art are rather stiff. Most show scenes of hunting and war. The best known of these bas-reliefs are *The Lion Hunt of Ashurnasirpal II* and the Lamassu (below)—winged bulls with human heads which often are found carved into royal Assyrian gateways.

The Archers of Darius I is a great example of Persian art. This famous frieze would have been a backdrop to much of Nehemiah's life as the cupbearer to the king. The frieze consists of glazed, low relief bricks that show the guards carrying bows and wearing long robes.

OTHER WORKS

The Archers of Darius I
Lamassu from the Palace
of Sargon II SHOWN





Fowling Scene from the Tomb of Nebamun

Egyptian

Egyptian

c. 3100–30 B.C.

ART FOR THE AFTERLIFE

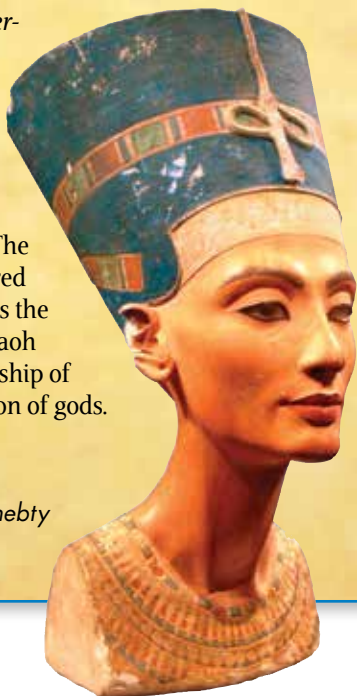
The art of the ancient Nile was made to glorify the Egyptian gods, promote the pharaohs, and guide the dead in the afterlife. Its style is well-known, and it changed very little over 3,000 years. In their paintings, Egyptians would portray the head, legs, and feet of people in profile, but show the eye, shoulders, arms and chest from the front—as seen in the *Fowling Scene* (front). Here, Nebamun is hunting with his wife and daughter. The writing below his arm says that he is “taking recreation and seeing what is good in the place of eternity.” The birds near the man show that the artists knew how to draw well but were limited by cultural rules about how to depict gods, royalty, and ordinary people in art.

Menkaure and his Wife, Queen Khamerernebtj is a classic Egyptian sculpture that also sticks to the rules of Egyptian art, showing the figures from the front with rigid poses. Although plain stone now, it was originally fully painted.

One of art’s most famous beauties is the nineteen-inch *Bust of Nefertiti* (right). The medium of the artwork is limestone covered with layers of painted stucco. Nefertiti was the Great Royal Wife of Akhenaten, the pharaoh who tried to convert his people to the worship of only one god instead of the entire pantheon of gods.

OTHER WORKS

Menkaure and his Wife, Queen Khamerernebtj
The Bust of Nefertiti SHOWN





Mask of Agamemnon

Aegean

Aegean

c. 3000–1100 B.C.

ART OF THE SEA AND WAR

Aegean Art is the name for the works of art made by three ancient civilizations—the Cycladic, the Minoan and the Mycenaean. The name comes from the fact that all three lived by the Aegean Sea. The earliest example of Aegean art appeared in the Cyclades islands off the coast of Greece between 2600 and 1100 B.C. Their best known artworks are wedge-shaped marble carvings of women that look like skinny versions of the *Venus of Willendorf*.

From about 3000 until 1400 B.C., when earthquakes destroyed it, the Minoan culture on the island of Crete developed advanced skills in the decorative arts. For example, the famous *Octopus Flask* is an almost perfect combination of decoration and the shape of the thing decorated, with its tentacles curving all over the flask. The *Bull-Leapers* (below) fresco from the palace at Knossos on the island of Crete is both bold and graceful.

Mycenaean art is often represented by the *Mask of Agamemnon* (front), a funeral mask that was hammered into shape out of a single sheet of gold. The archeologist who discovered it mistakenly thought that the mask had belonged to the legendary Greek leader Agamemnon, but it is now believed that the mask comes from much longer ago than Agamemnon's time.

OTHER WORKS

Octopus Flask

Bull Leapers SHOWN

