

Prehistoric and Mesopotamian Art

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

- Prehistoric art existed before writing.
- The oldest objects are African or Asian.
- Prehistoric art is best understood as an interdisciplinary activity.
- Ancient Near Eastern Art concentrates on royal figures and gods.
- Ancient Near Eastern Art is inspired by religion; kings often assume divine attributes.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

- Prehistoric art has been affected by climate change.
- Prehistoric art can be seen in practical and ritual objects.
- Prehistoric art is concerned with cosmic phenomena as well as down-to-earth concerns.
- Human behavior is charted in the earliest art works.
- European cave paintings indicate a strong tradition of rituals.
- Scientific dating of objects has shed light on the use of prehistoric objects.
- Archeology increases our understanding of prehistoric art.
- Basic art historical methods can be used to understand prehistoric art, but our knowledge increases with findings made in other fields.
- Ancient Near Eastern art takes place mostly in city-states of Mesopotamia.
- Art from this region is one of the foundations of art history.
- Figures are constructed within stylistic conventions of the time, including hierarchy of scale, registers, and stylized human forms.
- Ancient Near Eastern architecture is characterized by ziggurats and palaces.

IDEAS AND CONCEPTS

The earliest surviving works of art are cave paintings and portable sculptures of humans or animals. Little is known about the original intention or meaning of prehistoric works. Buildings such as Stonehenge show the ability of prehistoric people to build elaborate religious structures using the post-and-lintel system of construction. The Ancient Near East brought about the birth of art in the service of the state and religion. Combined with writing, Mesopotamian objects give us the first systematic record of human development. Ancient Near Eastern buildings were created for religion, as were ziggurats, or the state, as were the palaces. They were built oh mud-brick, and were either painted or faced with tile or stone. Large stelai commemorating the achievements of ancient rulers were erected throughout Mesopotamia. Guardian figures that are usually hybrids of men and animals protected the entrances to important sites. Assyrian lion reliefs are among the first organized narrative works of art in history.

VOCABULARY

carbon 14	blind arcade
corbeled vault	barrel vault
in the round	cella, citadel
lintel	city-state
megalith	cuneiform
Mesolithic	cylinder seal
Neolithic	repousse
Paleolithic	stele
twisted perspective	votive figure
apadana,	ziggurat

RESOURCES

A link to the text book on line:
<https://goo.gl/mPAJB6>

A link to all of the best links for AP Art History:
<https://smarthistory.org/required-works-of-art-for-ap-art-history/>

Cave Painting in 3D
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CX4KulBmnjl>

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JOURNAL

The Law Code of Hammurabi
(3.1, 1.4, 2.2)

CONTEXT

Paleolithic era (Old Stone Age 33,000-10,000 BC) lived in the hill country of what is now Western Europe. The function of the paintings that they created in their cave dwellings is a mystery, but are presumed to have a far more serious purpose than mere decoration. Mesolithic era (10,000-8,000 BC) transition period techniques of gathering food became more efficient, cultivation of plants likely, a more stable communal life replaced the nomadic lifestyle. Neolithic era (8,000-2,000 BC) a new art form develops, monumental stone architecture megaliths Great civilizations were born in Mesopotamia. Gods and rulers became central to the creation of art. Sumerian's formalize the depiction of the human form. There was constant political change in the region.

Although prehistoric people did not read or write, it is a mistake to think of them as primitive, ignorant, or even non-technological. Some of their accomplishments, like Stonehenge, continue to amaze us forty centuries later.

People created before they had the ability to write, cipher math, raise crops, domesticate animals, invent the wheel, or use metal. They painted before they had anything that could be called clothes or lived in anything that resembles a house. The need to create is among the strongest of human impulses. All attempts to explain prehistoric motivations are founded on speculation. From the first however, art seems to have a function. They are designed with a purpose in mind.

The ancient Near East is where almost everything began first: writing, cities, organized religion, organized government, laws, agriculture, bronze casting, even the wheel. It is hard to think of any other civilization that gave the world as much as the ancient Mesopotamians. Large populations emerged in the fertile river valleys that lie between the Tigris and the Euphrates. City centers boomed as urbanization began to take hold. Each group of people vied to control the central valleys, taking turns occupying the land and eventually relinquishing it to others. This layering of civilizations has made for a rich archaeological repository of successive cultures whose history has yet to be uncovered.



WORKS OF ART

- Apollo 11 Stones 25,500-25,300 BCE
- The Great Hall of Bulls at Lascaux 15000-13000 BCE
- Camelid Sacrum in the shape of a canine 14000-7000 BCE
- Running Horned Woman 6000-4000 BCE
- Bushel with Ibex Motifs 4200-3500 BCE
- Anthropomorphic Stele 4th milineum BCE
- White Temple and Ziggurat 3500-3000 BCE
- Statues of Votive Figures 2700 BCE
- The Standard of Ur 2600-2400 BCE
- Stonehenge 2500-1600 BCE
- Stele with Law Code of Hammurabi 1792-1750 BCE
- Lamassu 720-705 BCE
- Royal Audience Hall (apadana) 520-465 BCE

ASSIGNMENTS

- ☐ Read Gardners pages 1-29, and 31-53
- ☐ Complete homework packet
- ☐ Fill in flashcards
- ☐ Write journal
- ☐ Get contract signed by parent or guardian

HOMEWORK DUE: _____