

APPRECIATE ART - BEGINNINGS TO MODERN ART

Lecture 3

Prehistoric Art

Prehistoric Art that came about even before writing. This is the timeline of Prehistoric Art;

> Stone Age:

- Paleolithic Era (2,500,000 - 10,000 BC) :
- Lower Paleolithic (2,500,000 - 200,000 BC)
- Middle Paleolithic (200,000 - 40,000 BC)
- Upper Paleolithic (40,000 - 10,000 BC)
- Mesolithic Era 10,000 - 4,000 BC
- Neolithic Era (4,000 - 2,000 BC)

> Bronze Age (3,300 - 1,200 BC)

> Iron Age (1,300 BC - 200 AD)

THE STONE AGE ART:

> Petroglyphs - Cupules, engravings, drawings, symbols

> Sculpture/ Carving

> Cave Painting

What are Teroglyphics? The carvings and sculpting on rocks is known as Teroglyphics. This was practised widely by our ancient artists. The earliest surviving works of art are cave paintings and very small sculptures of human and animals and they were portable. Little is known about the original intention or meaning of prehistoric works.

As we have already seen in our previous chapters, artists have always been on the search for art, be it any situation or condition or even criticism, they have always wanted to create art. Who were the artists? Cro - Magnon people from 30,000 BCE are currently known as the world's first artists. They lived in caves when it was cold and hunted animals for food, clothing, tools and shelter.

The prehistoric people never had a fixed living, they were nomads. Hence, they kept passing from one place to another and only when it was cold, they took shelter in caves.

The first Discovery happened in the autumn of 1879, a Spanish nobleman and an amateur archeologist Marcelino Sanz de Sautuola and his young daughter, Maria set out to explore a cave in the hillside of Altamira, not far from the family estate in northern Spain. As a gentleman scholar, De Sautuola took a serious interest in finding out more about the prehistoric past.

Let us now have a closer look at the subjects of the cave paintings,

These animals and human hands were really familiar figures of cave paintings. Even before writing, people were;

- > Carving objects
- > Painting images
- > Creating structures/ shelter.

This is an example of a wall painting with horses, Rhinoceroses and Aurochs (oxen) at Chauvet Cave, France back in the years 30,000 - 28,000 BCE. You can see the faces of the horses and the Rhinoceroses. This was prepared on limestone.

This is a very famous example of the prehistoric art. The women or 'venus' of Willendorf. Taking a closer look at the image, the reproductive organs of the women are represented in an enlarged manner; the huge breasts, the belly, buttocks and navel. The hair is arranged in clumps or it could be a woven hat as well i.e the one on the head. The arms, face, legs have been deemphasized. Infact, the figure does not have feet, that only signified that she was never meant to stand up. The face may have been painted, there are traces of paint on the body. This could be a symbol of fertility or an idol to worship. Comparing this to the Venus they worship, she was never to stand up. This was a very small structure, less than 4 and a half inches. Venus is a name given to the object after its discovery as a way of comparing it to the ancient beauties. It's true purpose is unknown till date.

This is another interesting sculpture by our prehistorian artists, The Lion human. Taking a closer look at the sculpture, the face is portrayed to be a lion, while the rest of it is a body of a male. It is made out of Mammoth Ivory and it is said to be a very creative production of that area since this kind of structure never existed. This was considered to be a breakthrough - ability to conceive and represent a creature never seen in nature! This is nearly a foot tall. Looking into other cave paintings; There is a man and a bison. The man is represented as a stick figure with a bird's head, what could be the reason behind it. While the bison is rendered with such accurate details. Does this record an actual event ?

This is a very famous cave painting, the 'Hall of Bulls', from Lascaux Cave, France. The largest bull in this painting, extends to about 18 feet. This was painted onto limestone. Natural products were used to make paint; charcoal, iron ore, and essence from plants have been used. 650 paintings have been made this way, most common subjects have been the cows, bulls, horses and deer. Animals were placed deep inside the cave as in 100 feet in.

As in this image, you can see the body seen in profile, the horns are clearly defined. However, many overlapping figures are found. For example;

You can see the overlapping figures of this bull in this image. Evidence still visible of Scaffolding erected to get higher areas of the caves. So it is seen that, they haven't simply painted just the front part or the areas they could simply reach out. Rather, they have accessed areas much within the cave. Negative handprints are seen, and these could have been their signatures. Caves were not dwellings because prehistoric people led migratory lives following herds of animals, some evidence existed that people sought shelter at the mouths of caves. Walls were scraped to an even surface and were then painted upon. Paint colours were bound with animal fat, lamps were lit too see the interior of the caves.

CAVE PAINTING THEORIES

- > A way to strengthen clan bonds.
- > A ceremony to enhance animal fertility.

- > Expressions of sympathetic magic they believed that one day, their paintings might come true someday.
- > Religious or magical function
- > Visual record of hallucinations.
- > Visual record of real life happenings or people simply enjoying the creative process.

Egyptian Art

Let's have a closer look into the Egyptian Art and the timeline of it. This Art travels from the predynastic to the new kingdom, ranging from 3000 to 900 BC.

The Earliest Egyptian history goes all the way back to the art of predynastic Egypt in the years 4000 - 3200 B.C. This period of known from funerary offerings, consisted largely of painted pottery and figurines, ivory carvings, slate cosmetic palettes and finely worked flint weapons.

The work on the pottery might be a painting or art produced by scratching the surface with flint weapons. On the right, we have the finely worked flint weapons of the ancient Egyptians. These weapons were used to make vessels; you would also notice the sharp edges. It might even be used to mark carvings.

The other sizes of flint weapons used for different needs.

Towards the end of the predynastic period, sculptors began to carve monolithic figures of the idols from limestone, such as the Min at Coptos. In the Protodynastic and early dynastic periods (3200 - 2780 B.C) some Mesopotamian motifs began to appear.

The image on the extreme right, is a monolithic figure carved out of limestone and this is the Min at Coptos. Monolithic structures are those structures that are carved out, from a single stone.

OLD KINGDOM a.k.a Age of Pyramids

Egyptian tomb statues fulfilled an important function. Sculptures served images of the deceased to serve abode for the KA. For this reason an interest in portrait

sculpture developed in Egypt. Sculptures were made out of wood, clay and other materials, but for royal and noble class stones, were used as the primary material. Here, we would notice the importance given to the noble class. A fine example would be the seated statue of KHAFRE; this was carved for the pharos valley temple near the great sphinx and the stone used is diorite, a hard dark stone.

This is the seated statue of KHAFRE and as we saw, the stone used is diorite, the hard dark stone. You would also stiff posture of Khafre being seated.

The great sphinx of Giza. One would hardly be able to imagine the constructional details put for these kinds of mammoth structures.

MIDDLE KINGDOM ART:

Typical product of the middle kingdom artist were smaller sculptures in painted wood. It was made to be placed in the dead man's tomb for his services. Most of it was the scaled down versions of everyday activities and situations. The painted chest from the tomb TUTANKHAMEN; the lid panel shows the king as the successful hunter pursuing drives of animals in the desert and the right panel shows him as a great warrior, together it shows royal power.

The image on top, he is portrayed to be a great warrior and the image below portrays him as a great hunter.

SCULPTURE AND THE PHARAOHS

While in the Old kingdom, art depicted Pharaohs as Godlike and crushing, art of the Middle Kingdom represented the rulers of ancient Egypt as much more eager and human.

These are the Pharaohs Senusret and Amenemhet III. They are depicted as strong men, but not inhumanly so, the statues are a little bit bigger than the average person, a great change from the frightening, huge sphinxed of the Old kingdom.

NEW KINGDOM:

This kingdom was extremely popular during the new kingdom were the block statues. Radical simplification of the form of the eternal home. The design concentrates attention on the heads and treats bodies as blocks. Stone construction of buildings - the remains that we see today are from this period.

The temple complex at Karnak dedicated to Amen-Re:

The man here is so tiny, which only shows how huge these columns are. Specifically speaking; they are 66ft high. This hall is known as the great hypostyle Hall, meaning it has a lot of columns supporting the roof.

Hatshepsut is often depicted wearing a fake, ceremonial beard; you could see in these structures.

Nefertiti -

She was Akhenaten's queen, sculpted by Thutmose. Intentionally left incomplete but why is the question?, the left eye hasn't been completed yet. You would notice the elongated neck, exaggerated features to meet the era's standard of spiritual beauty.

In portraits with the pharaoh, she is the same size as him, suggesting her importance.

This is King Tut's portrait mask, you would notice the amount of detailing here and the colours used, only to symbolize the royalty.

GREEK ART

Ancient Greek art has survived successfully in the forms of;

- > Sculptures
- > Architecture, as well as in minor art such as,
- > Coin Design
- > Pottery
- > Gem engraving

Art historians speak that, art produced from 1000 BC to 100 BC in Greece.

STYLES AND PERIODS:

> Archaic Period:

This ranges from about 1000 BC, traditionally known as the 'dark age' of Greece.

> Classical Period:

480 BC - 448 BC.

> Hellenistic period:

The reign of Alexander the great, 336 BC - 323 BC.

> Geometric Period.

The earliest Greek vases were decorated with bands of simple geometric patterns, covering most of the vessel.

> Funerary Vase: 8th century B.C.

Taking a closer look into it, you would notice the horizontal, vertical lines and the zig zag patterns all throughout the vase. You would also notice the human figures and lines across the vase. Here below, you could it painted black. Thus, portraying to be a fine example of the geometric period with simple geometric shapes.

Taking this as an example, let us take a closer look at it. Figures are more lifelike and were placed in storytelling scenes. This is a vase with a Ajax and Achilles playing dice, You would notice it in the image above.

Exekias was an ancient greek vase - painter and potter. He worked mainly in the black figure technique (as depicted in the image above), which involved the painting of scenes using a clay slip that fired to black, with details created through incision. Exekias is regarded by art historians as an artistic visionary whose masterful use of incision an psychologically sensitive compositions mark him as one of the greatest of all Attic vase painters.

Here in the image, we see these two figures playing a game of dice on the pottery. These figures are painted using a clay slip and they are burnt, which becomes black, these details on these paintings are done by incision.

The earliest artist to have signed his name was, Sophilos in 580 B.C.

Paintings:

Greek painters worked mainly on wooden panels. Today, nothing survives of the greek paintings exist except few on terracotta, painted pottery. Few paintings on walls of tombs exist today.

Pottery:

Ancient Greek made pottery for everyday use, painted funeral urns have also been found. Miniatures have also been produced in many numbers.

Sculptures:

Sculptures are the most surviving form of Greek art. The greek decided at a very early stage that human form was the most important of artistic endeavor.

The three main artists are;

- > Myron
- > Phidias
- > Polyclitus

You will be able to explain how Greek sculpture changed over time from the Archaic, classical and Hellenistic Periods by the end of this session.

ARCHAIC PERIOD

- > The most famous sculpture of the archaic period was the KOUROS (the standing nude male).
- > The KORE female standing nude, but the greek did not permit the female nudity in sculptures.

> In this period, the statues were never intended to be the depiction of the real individuals. They were depictions of ideal, beauty, honor, sacrifice etc.

Here you can see the KUROS, the nude standing male and the KORE the nude standing female, however, clothed as a sculpture.

Originally this was just a painting and then made into a sculpture.

Looking at the form of the KUROS, you would notice he is really stiff, his knees don't bend, his hands are straight, it is so stiff that no one in reality would be comfortable to maintain such a posture.

The Korai - clothed women

- > The Hera of Samos
- > Stone cylinder
- > Stiff pose like kouros
- > Bent left arm
- > Symbol of authority

Classical Period - 510 - 332 B.C

The second major period of Greek life. Besides war and conquest, in this period of Ancient Greece, the Greeks produced great literature, poetry, philosophy, drama and art. Classical Greece includes the period known as the Age of Pericles. The revolution in Greek sculpture, it changed both in style and function of the sculpture. The poses of the statue became more realistic and the technical skill of the Greek sculpture increased greatly.

CONTRAPPOSTO

The marble Kritios Boy or Kritian boy belongs to the early classical period of ancient Greek sculpture. It is the first statue that uses contrapposto. This is a pose

in which the weight of the body is balanced on one leg while the other leg is free and relaxed. The hands are seen in a relaxed position as well.

Taking a closer look at other famous example by Sculptors;

Myron's Discus Thrower

This belonged to the classical period, it posed bold new ideas, more skill, abandoned the age old custom of stiff monoliths. You would notice, the free flowing movement of the sculpture, this is such a flexible position when compared to the previous period, you could see the flexibility in the sculpture. They are becoming more naturalistic as ages pass by. This figure belongs to the 450 B.C. Taking a closer look at Myron, the disc thrower, this is an example of the Classical period, we could see more skills involved when compared to the Archaic period. Just looking at the position, the body is meant to be so free flowing, the position of his head and his hand is rested on his right knee. This is such a nice example, portraying the flexibility and movement in the image.

Myron, the chief material used bronze mostly, he never worked in marbles. All original bronzes were melted down long ago. What is known today of Greek works comes from copies made later by the Romans.

Polyclitus's Spear Thrower:

An example of his work, is the Athena Parthenos, this sculpture is 45 feet tall. Precious stones have been used for the eyes and it is covered fully with Gold, over one ton of Gold has been used. This is an example of Polyclitus's work - the spear thrower, though the spear doesn't exist now. It appears more lifelike, confident and athletic.

Let us have a look at the Polyclitus's Spear thrower, as we studied earlier, the Contrapposto style is applied here. You could notice the right hand here, it is aligned differently, which would have probably bagged the spear while the hand on the left is so relaxed. The left leg bears his weight while the right leg is really relaxed. You would also notice the masculinity of his body and the curves. Let us

have a closer look of his torso, his muscles and the position of the head and the shoulders. You could feel a sense of movement and naturalism in this sculpture. Just compare it to Archaic figure, which was so stiff, cylindrical and the movement posed by them, is not possible in real life and one would not be comfortable in such a kind of position.

HELLENISTIC PERIOD

This is the 3rd period of Greek Art-filled with expression and emotion. Extremely skillful and confident. Beauty was less important than expression, it lacked the precise balance and harmony of classical sculptures. Sculptures became more naturalistic. Common people, women, children, animal, domestic scenes, etc became more appreciable subjects for sculpture. Realistic portraits of men and women of all ages were produced, marked by an increase in scale.

Pathos was the main subject used in Hellenistic sculptures, a quality that caused people to feel sympathy and sadness. This represented an appeal to the audience's emotions.

The Dying Gaul is one of the examples of the Hellenistic period;

The Dying Gaul is one of the very famous, expressive examples of the Hellenistic period. Let us take a closer look into it. In this picture, he is portrayed to be a Celtic warrior and what could be the possible characteristics in which he is portrayed? This is a white marble statue, which may have originally been painted depicts a wounded, slumping Celtics with remarkable realism and pathos, particularly as regards the face. We can see the pain that he has undergone through his face, it is portrayed in such an expressive manner. A bleeding sword puncture is visible in his lower right chest. The figure is represented as a Celtic warrior with characteristic hairstyle and moustache is nude save for a torc around his neck. Look at the hairstyles and the mush, which are the remarkable features of a Celtic warrior and his nude sake top on his neck. you could see he is building by a sword puncture. You could see that he is lying on a shield with his sword, and the bent trumpet.

The Nike of Samothrace

This was created to honor the NIKE as well as the sea battle. This conveys a sense of action and triumph as well as portraying artful flowing drapery. This was made to look like the prow of a ship. Taking a closer look at the image, you would notice how the drapery is appeared to flow in a manner like it were blown by the wind and such that they cling to the skin. The details are so wonderfully portrayed, it seems so naturalistic.

The Seated Boxer

One of the very famous boxers of the Hellenistic period. This appeals to emotionalism. the arms rested on his knees, seated and near to exhaustion from a match bleeding from wounds all over his body. He looks exhausted, yet powerful, brutalized yet handsome. His hands are relaxed but his toes are tensed.

Taking a closer look into it, he has placed his hands on his leg, his hands seem so relaxed and he is still with his boxing gloves but his leg seems so tensed as he rested on this plane. We could see his masculine body and he is wounded just after a match, bleeding from his body all over but he is still able to turn his head, representing that he is not completely exhausted and hence he is ready for the next match or it might even be that the boxer is listening to the applause after a winning match. Have a look at how his hair and mustache have been represented and his masculine body, his torso, his muscles and the details of the gloves, represent him as the boxer. The rock on which he is seated, his legs. fingers and even the details of his nails are to be noted as well. His face shows expression that depicts his semi-exhaustiveness as well as his will power for his next turn.

Laocoon and his sons:

The figures are near life sized (6ft and 7 inches), showing the trojan priest Laocoon and his sons Antiphates and Thymbraeus being attacked by sea serpents. The group has been 'the prototypical icon of human agony' in Western art.

Taking a closer look into this, you can see the Trojan priest, Laocoon here with both his sons on either sides, they are being attacked by the sea serpents and the

agony portrayed through these sculptures, the hands, the legs, the expression of their faces. The serpents have wrapped around their entire body and their pain is expressed by the movements of the body, hands and expression on their face. This sculpture is a prototypical icon of human agony. Taking a closer look into it, the position of the arms and legs shows the pain they undergo and they are trying to get relief from the serpents. The serpent surrounds them all around and you can see the amount of detailing in this. It is so naturalistic that even the viewer is able to feel the pain.