Where were cave paintings found?

Who painted on the cave walls and what did they paint?

Why did they paint the cave walls?

What was used to create their art?
Cave Painting

Cave Paintings from Spain and France

The very first cave paintings were discovered in 1896 in the Altamira Cave in Santander, Spain. These paintings dated back to 14,000 BC and showed bison over 8’ long!

Later, archeologists discovered the paintings in the Hall of Bulls Cave in Lascaux, France. What was so interesting about this find was that it showed so many different kinds of animals. Why do you think this is so? I will give you a hint: they were painted at different times. Now, why do you think there are so many different animals? That’s right! They are from different times. Each group of animals likely represents a hunt that was performed at a different time. It would seem as though they used this cave over and over again for artwork, with many different artists taking turns.

The Very First Artists in the World

What is even more interesting is that a very long time ago, when cave men were alive, only a few very special people were allowed to create art. They were called Shaman or hunter-magicians. Early cave men believed that if they drew an animal on a wall, they would capture its spirit and the Shaman would be able to control the success of the hunt. So, if they drew bison on a wall, what animal do you think the Shaman was trying to control with his art? That’s right! In the Altamira Cave from Spain, they were trying to control bison. But, in the cave paintings from the Hall of the Bulls, what animal do you think they were trying to control? I’ll give you a hint: the name of the Cave is Hall of the Bulls. That’s right! They were probably trying to control bulls and ensure the hunters a good hunt.

Cave Man’s First Signature

Of all the cave paintings that were found, the one from the Pech-Merle Cave in Lot, France from 14,000 BC is very exciting. In this particular painting, you see a spotted horse with a negative hand imprint next to it. Since early cave men did not have words or an alphabet or language, this is probably their very first expression of identity or how they wrote their signature next to their artwork. Some believe that these first handprints may have inspired the development of written language at a later date.

Another is of this early painting of man from the Hall of the Bulls in Lascaux, France. In this particular painting we see a man with a face of a bird. This could be the depiction of the Shaman himself. If early Shaman believed that there was a special spirit that protected them, what animal spirit do you think was protecting this one? That’s right! It probably was a bird.

Early Art Tools

When early cave men artists, or Shaman, first created art, there was no such thing as paint or brushes or canvas. They had to work with what they could find. They used the cave walls instead of paper or canvas, twigs or leaves as brushes and different types of dirt and berries for paint.