

“Cave of Forgotten Dreams”

A film by Werner Herzog

The movie, “Cave of Forgotten Dreams”, tells of the story of the discovery of an ancient cave, Chauvet Cave, and documents the brilliant cave art (pictographs) that has been dated to 30,000 to 32,000 years ago.

The cave is located in Southern France and was “found” by three cave explorers, headed by **Jaen** Chauvet in 1994. The cave bears his name.

The cave entrance was covered by a landslide over 20,000 years ago. This fact was a key factor in the preservation of the rock art and other artifacts found within the cave.

The importance of the cave is the rock art that was found within the cave. Brilliantly detailed drawings of lions, rhinoceroses, bison, mammoths, deer, elk and horses are depicted in great detail. Most of the drawings are in black (charcoal) with some in red. These animals are typical of those found in this region at that time in history. Thirty thousand years ago, this region of France would have been cold and dry, but ice free, as the “ice age” glaciers did not extend this far south.

The cave art has been dated to have been created over a period of 5,000 years – with no real stylistic changes in the art.

Interestingly, there were a set of human handprints in one location (in red paint). Also there was a partial figure of a woman in another location.

There were animal bones found in the cave, but no human bones.

One location has an animal head on display on top of what appears to be an altar. This indicates the cave may have been used for ceremony. It is thought that the cave was not used for human habitation.

The following are some photographs taken from the film. Note the loose, free “brush” strokes. Note the location of the various body parts and the relationships of the various animals to each other to indicate motion and action. Note the accent lines, shadows and contrast to give the images form. The people who created these images observed what they saw and knew how to represent it. They were great artists and would be considered great even today!

Rhinos:



Deer / Elk:



Lions:



Horses:



I have included a photo of Prezwalski horses at a ranch in Hildale Utah and a couple of internet photos to illustrate the level of accuracy of the drawings,



Two Internet Photos:



Go to the following internet references to learn more about Chauvet Cave.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chauvet_Cave

<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arcnat/chauvet/en/>

<http://bradshawfoundation.com/chauvet/>

<http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=chauvet+cave&qvvt=chauvet+cave&FORM=IGRE>

http://www.sciencenews.org/view/generic/id/341206/title/Stone_Age_art_gets_animated