

### Assignment 1

Explore the Chauvet cave website at <http://archeologie.culture.fr/chauvet/en/> .

How old do archaeologists believe the marks and depictions found in the Chauvet cave to be? Briefly describe the process of carbon dating by which experts have dated the various drawings, paintings, carvings, and prints made at this site. What is the significance of the age of Chauvet cave?

Consider a few of the widely held theories on why early humans created such markings and sculptural works inside caves. Utilize information on the recurrence of specific animal types represented at Chauvet, as well as other caves from the same period, to compare depictions of human forms in the Paleolithic era. Be sure to use appropriate vocabulary to describe stylistic and technical features of the works. What meaning has been gleaned from the subjects Paleolithic people considered, and the manner that they depicted these subjects?

- or -

Read <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/10/131008-women-handprints-oldest-neolithic-cave-art/>

What evidence do we have that helps us to shape an understanding of who the creators were of prehistoric works?

In the article, Virginia Hughes relates a common scenario, “Another researcher recently studied the palm-to-thumb ratio of the hand prints and concluded they mostly belonged to teenage boys, who, he told *NatGeo*, often drew their two favorite topics: big powerful animals and naked ladies.”

Why do we customarily assume in the West that artwork from any period was made by a male who was creatively inspired? What does the researcher’s conclusion reveal about their own cultural biases and assumptions? How might these biases prevent us from understanding certain evidence? Identify a specific work from the Paleolithic or Neolithic era and discuss the visual causes and physical evidence in the work that indicates or suggests who the maker may have been?

- or -

Compare and contrast the *Head of an Akkadian Ruler*, c. 2250 - 2200 BCE with the statue of Gudea from the Temple of Geshtinanna, c. 2100 BCE. Consider the materials used to create these works, as well as their subject matter. What shapes

are repeated and avoided in these figures? What do the figures' poses and facial expressions suggest?

Discuss the issue of idealization vs. naturalism, anatomical proportions, size, and stylization in relationship to the function and purpose of the object. Are the subjects depicted naturalistically, reflecting their real-life appearance, or in an idealized manner, to suggest a divine power? How did this depiction serve the function and purpose of the object? What meaning is conveyed?