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# Signs, pictures, art, marks

Iain Davidson\*†<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of New England (UNE) – 10 Cluny Rd, Armidale, NSW 2350, Australie

## Résumé

In this paper will develop ideas about early art that I have been working on for nearly 30 years related both to Palaeolithic Art of Western Europe and to the rock art of Australia. I begin by discussing the context of deliberate production of marks in the environment, with emphasis on the relations between 1) the producer of the mark and the mark, 2) the producer of the mark and an informed observer at the time, 3) the mark and the informed observer in the absence of the producer and 4) the uninformed observer and the mark. In particular, I emphasise the importance of storytelling (including song) in secular and ritual contexts.

Out of this framework, I discuss the connections between indexical signs, iconic signs and symbols in relation to some of the earliest objects called art. I outline my arguments about how these semiotic categories were transformed in the emergence of pictures during archaeo-history. This is placed in a theoretical framework of cognitive evolution.

I then discuss recent work on scenes in rock art. The final example of non-western art is the use of mark making in Australian Aboriginal song and story.

Finally I discuss how all these examples of images connect to that which is called art in western society.

Two recent publication from which I approach some of these questions are: Davidson, I. (2017). Paleolithic Art. In J. Jackson (Ed.), *Oxford Bibliographies in Anthropology*. New York: Oxford University Press and Davidson, I. (2017). Images of animals in rock art: Not just "good to think". In B. David & I. J. McNiven (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of the archaeology and anthropology of rock art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Mots-Clés:** Signs, Semiotics, Marking, Pictures, Art, Cognition, evolution

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\*Intervenant

†Auteur correspondant: iain.davidson@live.com.au