
Art as human production: why are we so obsessed in finding "Neanderthal art"?

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Résumé

In recent times, there is an increasing amount of research projects and papers devoted to the possible evidences of "artistic" activity by European Neanderthals, including rock art. This is a subset of the general discussion about symbolic practices by human groups before the emergence and dispersal of modern humans from Africa.

The anatomical, and more recently genetic, evidence of lack of evolutionary continuity between Neanderthals and modern humans in Europe has been paired with a reaction oriented to demonstrate that the cognitive skills of the first ones were indistinguishable from those of the latter in terms of lithic technology, subsistence strategies, social organization and symbolic behavior. Of course, the obvious question is why they became extinct in a short time.

From our point of view, a good part of this reasoning has a strong component of ethnocentrism (eurocentrism) and racism, and many of the procedures of analysis and discussion of the archaeological evidence are heavily biased by this component, and also are affected by the idea of "artistic" activity as manifestation of a superior level of mind, universal among "real humans".

Mots-Clés: Palaeolithic Art, Neanderthals, symbolic behavior

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