Nathaniel Mellors
Browserer

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Nathaniel Mellors throws historical linearity off course by using anachronistic stylistic devices belonging to an imaginary cinematic world and objects indexed to contemporary archaeology. It is a matter of putting the crisis of the modern system into perspective, both in its artistic nature and its economy, which is reflected in Mellors's hybridization of the contemporary and the Palaeolithic.

What crisis does Mellors refer to? To the failure of ideologies (progress, communism, universalism) established in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the beginning of the scientific era. The rupture between humanity and nature—'leaving Eden'—during the Neolithic period with the advent of tool production, the domestication of animals and finally the mastery of agriculture that enabled the storage of goods and the beginning of capitalism. Or the realization of the modern subject as being "in crisis", that is, permanently on the brink, or "too early" or "too late" in the fold of time, the breaking of the image, the temporal coalescence that defines our present. Mellors creates a layered history, a meta-historical voyage with humorous facets, an original quest.

The film *Neanderthal Crucifixion* (2021) takes place inside a hemispheric cavity. In the matrix. Projections on white-plastered walls constitute a set of panels, screens and folding screens. They are stop-motion images. The whole installation seems to be an enlarged model, the figurative prototype of which is a plasticine figure. It's sausage-shaped head sits horizontally on it's a trunk-body, forming a T. The sculptural forms seem to be in the spirit of the work of Peter Fischli & David Weiss, combining a DIY aesthetic with found objects, or the installations of Jason Rhoades and their *horror vacui* principle. From the infinitely small to the infinitely large.

The cave, whose size and depth are uncertain, appears to have been whitewashed. It is filled with projected images, generated using Google's 'Deep Dream' algorithm applied to images of Chauvet cave and other sources. [...] These appear haloed by dotted lines, pixels and coloured frames. A new pictorialism built upon the use of edited found images is at work. Thus, all this was produced, potentially, by an algorithm or Artificial Intelligence. Glitch or glyph?

We credit the whole invention of symbolism and art to Homo Sapiens. However, recent discoveries, such as an engraved bone in Lower Saxony's Unicorn Cave (Einhornhöhle), prove "decorative" artistic activity was in existence at the remote date of 51,000 BCE; that is, well before the junction of Neanderthal and Sapiens. This fits with certain recent historical sources that describe prehistoric artists' nomadism, giving evidence of schools of style, and thus, of

notions of transmission. Decorated caves could be artist's studios or sites that punctuated an initiatory journey[1].

This defies the idea of progress in art, which is always searching for evolution, starting from representation as a copy of the real. In reality, figuration and abstraction have always coexisted. Dots, lines, blown pigment, bison, erect men, vulvas: all these motifs can be found on cave walls. We also suppose that there is a connection between the use of caves, rock decoration and sources of light—daylight, fire, torches—and the intentional exploitation of crevices to create surprise effects. Rock caves could well be a form of proto-cinema. [...] Recent discoveries also point to the fact that Neanderthal man was certainly nomadic, but socially organized, and that inequalities already existed in the Palaeolithic period.

— Marie de Brugerolle

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[1] The prehistorian Emmanuel Guy explores this idea of nomadic transmission in *Préhistoire du sentiment artistique : l'invention du style, il y a 20000 ans*, Dijon: Presses du Réel, 2011.