



The Nature of Paleolithic Art

R. Dale Guthrie

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The cave paintings and other preserved remnants of Paleolithic peoples shed light on a world little known to us, one so deeply embedded in time that information about it seems unrecoverable. While art historians have wrestled with these images and objects, very few scientists have weighed in on Paleolithic art as artifacts of a complex, living society. R. Dale Guthrie is one of the first to do so, and his monumental volume *The Nature of Paleolithic Art* is a landmark study that will change the shape of our understanding of these marvelous images.

With a natural historian's keen eye for observation, and as one who has spent a lifetime using bones and other excavated materials to piece together past human behavior and environments, Guthrie demonstrates that Paleolithic art is a mode of expression we can comprehend to a remarkable degree and that the perspective of natural history is integral to that comprehension. He employs a mix of ethology, evolutionary biology, and human universals to access these distant cultures and their art and artifacts. Guthrie uses innovative forensic techniques to reveal new information; estimating, for example, the ages and sexes of some of the artists, he establishes that Paleolithic art was not just the creation of male shamans.

With more than 3,000 images, *The Nature of Paleolithic Art* offers the most comprehensive representation of Paleolithic art ever published and a radical (and controversial) new way of interpreting it. The variety and content of these images—most of which have never been available or easily accessible to nonspecialists or even researchers—will astonish you. This wonderfully written work of natural history, of observation and evidence, tells the great story of our deepest past.

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