Art History

Client Name

University Name

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While travelling across the French countryside I stumbled across the Lascaux caves. Looking through each sculpture, I configured that they are representations of the upper paleolithic (starting 40 000 years ago) art. This is when region-specific art in sense of tradition begins to emerge paintings and stone sculptures mainly.

The paintings show that modern humans began migrating to Europe around 40 000 years ago (start of the period). In fact, the oldest cave paintings are estimated to about 32 000 years ago and the youngest to about 10 000 years ago. In this time period, the paintings were created at various places. At first, at cave entrances, and later, with the progression of time deeper and deeper in the cave complexes. One must bare in mind that there is an effort required to go deep into a cave complex and paint. These advances were established together with advances in tools used.

The paintings are of either animals, humans of some abstractions (there are also engravings). The animals depicted are those that were common to the landscape at that time - there are a lot of equines and cattle of various sorts. The paintings are quite realistic in their representations of animals. This means that at this point in time we already had a developed artistic style and tradition and the painting represented the civilians’ way of life at the time. In my opinion, there is no unique answer as to why were the paintings created. It could be a form of sympathetic magic i.e. creating the image of the hunt as realistically as possible to improve the chances of the hunters by casting this spell. It could also be a cultural symbolism of sorts. Whatever it was, I believe that it represents the beginning of modern symbolic expressions of imagination.

However, one should take notice that the massive tourism and artificial lightning disturbed the micro-climate of the cave over the years and have led to the development of various bacteria, fungi, arthropods and moisture. As far as I know, the cave was closed to all but a small set of people.

**Reference**

Clottes, J. (2008). Cave art. London: Phaidon.

Bastian, F., Jurado, V., Nováková, A., Alabouvette, C., & Sáiz-Jiménez, C. (2010). The microbiology of Lascaux cave. Microbiology, 156(3), 644-652.