

Contextual Practice.
Question Three.

From Caves to Modern Classrooms

How are caves so different to the modern day classroom? for one the classroom has four walls and is a lot warmer but overall our intelligence as man kind has come along way from when caves were inhabited by man kind. The history of prehistoric art forms tells us that most art forms were made for religious, tribal, or hunting reasons and although they may not have been as aware of the world around them as we are today they managed to leave us an insight of what life might have been like for them from all corners of around the world as there are traces of prehistoric art forms from India, Namibia, Morocco, France, Spain, Arabia and many more the list goes on however none of these countries would have had any connection or communication to each other as travel didn't exist in 290,000-3000 B.C in-fact Ferdinand Magellan was the first explorer on record to travel setting off in 1480 and travelled to world by 1521 so how did prehistoric art from all over the world have so much in common with one other? Using very similar if not the same techniques to make marks, painting, sculptures, even the choice of materials and a bigger question of why are we still using those techniques today?

Techniques that were commonly used during Palaeolithic times included cross hatching, positive and negative space, relief sculpturing (high and low), sculpturing, twisted perspective and petroglyphs which all have had an impact on modern day art and language however materials were limited so you can see that the material in which they were using was what they had at hand for example mammoth tusks/ mammal bones, stones/pebbles, and cave walls and limited coloured pigments, which were all key to create narrative works, zoomorphic's, murals, naturalisms, and landscapes.

One technique taught across Modern day art course, positive and negative spaces.

Definition: negative space is the space between, within and surrounding an object in an image, often to form another image or symbol. The positive space is the focus of the image, the object itself, but the negative space is just as important. It shares edges with the positive space, defining the outline of the object creating proportions.

This is a process is taught through life sessions in fine art, photography, surface design and more departments through out the university as it is key to our understanding and education in the modern arts. Traditionally, the compositional tool has been most widely used by artists producing paintings or drawings, as canvas and paper are prime surfaces for working with positive and negative space. Sculptors have also dabbled in the practice, since creatively playing with spaces as this is particularly important to three-dimensional pieces. Recently, however, many contemporary artists have started to produce positive and negative space art using a range of surprising and conventional materials which will lead us to relate to artists such as Henrique de Franca, Ileana Hunter, Kei Meguro, Shigeo Fukuda and many more artists who have demonstrated the impact and simplicity of using positive and negative spaces. However positive and negative spaces were one of the first evidence of art as many have been found worldwide dating from 290,000-3000 B.C. but one one example found in Argentina, hand stencils, the hand stencils in the Cuevas de les Manos (cave of the hands), dating to 11,000-7500 B.C, are critical in

demonstrating the artistic heritage of the late Pleistocene/Early Holocene hunter-gatherers of Argentina, who comprise some of the earliest human societies in the Americas. Here a cloud of several dozen stencils created using red, black and white pigments appears to be generally directed at a fissure in the wall. Left and right hands are represented, and there is presumably some meaning in the different orientation of some of them. Paintings of animals such as guanacos, hunting scene, and enigmatic abstract forms, also present in the cave, are much more recent than the hand stencils. Negative hand stencils and positive handprints are a common theme in the rock art of small-scale societies, characteristic, for example, in the Upper Palaeolithic art of France and Spain, in Australian Aboriginal art, and throughout the Americas. Hands may be painted and then applied to the rock surface (prints) or created as negative when the hand is placed on the rock surface and paint is blown – usually through a hollow tube – in different cloud around them (stencils).

Moving on to another modern day art form, sculpturing, sculpture demands a real world form of engagement than a two dimensional object hanging on a wall in a frame. That's because no matter where you might encounter one – as a statue in Central Park, or as a public art project, or as part of the art collection at The Met, MoMA or the Tate Galleries – sculpture always share the same three-dimensional space that you do. Instead of staring at a canvas or drawing from a more or less fixed position, sculptures are meant to be experienced in the round, compelling you to change you point of view as you interact with them. Since time immemorial, sculpture have explored this relationship between viewer, space and material object in a myriad of ways, now I could talk about prehistoric sculptures such as the 'Venus of Willendorf' or the statue of 'David' by Michelangelo however I would like to use a sculpture that was found in Malta as an example 'The Sleeping Lady' of Malta is arguably the most famous symbol of the islands' prehistoric Temple Period (4100-2500B.C). This highly accomplished and evocative figurine has the delicate feet, massive thighs and a pleated skirt, typical of Malta's more monumental statuary; but unlike the asexual form of many of those sculptures, the figure is clearly a female, with ample breasts. The complex pose of the body are exaggerated, and the figure imparts an astonishing sense of liveliness in I repose. The figurine was found in what has been interpreted as a votive pit on the main level of the Hypogeum of Hal Saflieni (3300-3000 B.C), a unique subterranean necropolis and cult centre carved out of solid rock; the pit also contained numerous amulets, beads, and mammal and human figurines. The Sleeping Lady's similarity in features and dress much larger statues found within the nearby Tarxien temple and elsewhere suggests that it may represent a deity, appears the have been an indication of fertility from earliest times. Another interpretations suggest that the figurine represent the rite if incubation, whereby a worshipper sleeps in a sanctuary in the expectation of receiving through the medium of dreaming. And although we can over ever make assumption for the reason of these figurines all conclusion have near the same conclusion of todays method of religion and reasoning allowing a viewer, space and materials express themselves.

Painting. What is there to say about painting that the painting don't already say about itself. How many different types of there of painting that allows maybe one or maybe 100 people to express themselves hundreds if not thousands, using all different paints watercolour, acrylic, oil, etc. And being inspired by amazing artists such as Vincent Van Gogh, Pablo Picasso, Michelangelo, Cindy Sherman, Bridget Riley, Francis Bacon, Tracey Emin, Edvard Munch, Oskar Kokischka and any more

Amy Monaghan
Second year

exploring movement and disciplines painting Modernism, Impressionism, Abstract Art, Expressionism, Cubism, Surrealism, etc. Leaving memories of battle and leaderships of past times and to this day in the modern art studio we are taught to experiment with the paint, to have an understanding of the paint, but where did it all begin. One painting that captured my attention was found Italy, this detail from a large fresco preserved on three sides of a room in the villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii is painted in Greek technique for large scale works called *megalographia*, the name reflecting the fact that the figures are life size to put it into perspective of the scale of this early painting. The Roman writers Vitruvius (75-15 B.C) and Petronius among others, discussed the style at length. The subject of this fresco is traditionally thought to be an initiation rite for a cult of Dionysos and Ariadne, who are the only two identifiable figures in the wall painting. In the scene, the semi-nude inductee (left) is apparently receiving a ritual beating from a winged victory figure (out of frame to the left). Whether the dancing figure (right) is the inductee again, and what the dance may mean, are unclear, as are many other details. Much of the villa was richly decorated in the so-called Second Style of Pompeian wall painting, dating to 90-20 B.C, with techniques of linear perspective used to create illusionistic space, in this case an elevated stage and simulated coloured marble revetment.