

Neanderthal Art

There is a tradition of Ice-Age statuary which, until now, has been called “Venus”. The conjecture, now apparently unquestioned by the science of anthropology, is that the Venus figurines depict pregnant women. The bellies and waists of those figurines, have various degrees of superfluous skin and/or fat, even forming overhanging folds. Such flabbiness is inconsistent with pregnancy. Pregnancy stretches the skin around the waistline, making it more taut. I haven’t seen any example of a pregnant woman who I knew to have had that kind of distention, before she got pregnant. There would have to be “before and after” pictures, but pregnancy must disguise a falling figure. On those figurines with so little distention that it’s not wrinkled, the waistline still does not indicate pregnancy. The distention of a pregnant belly, forms a perfect arc which begins much closer to the breast bone. The Venus tummy protrusion is a narrow band which is lower; apparently meant to be fat. I can’t think of what else it could represent, but it isn’t pregnancy.

There are many features which have nothing to do with pregnancy or gender. 1} The hips are too wide in relation to the shoulders; not proportioned as in normal women. 2} The shoulders are too narrow for the height of the model. 3} The pear shape of the physique is carried out in the head which is too narrow at the top. Skull shape obviously does not change during pregnancy.

Dr. Jerome E. Dobson of Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee, notes that the morphology of Neanderthal skeletons matches that of the Ice Age Venus statues. (He also shows clinical photos matching the pathology of their morphology, with that of Iodine deficiency.*)

Dobson postulates that Cro-Magnon continued to make Venus for millennia after Neanderthal extinction, out of race memory. That may seem no more astonishing than the failure by everyone, including him, to even consider that Neanderthal could have made those statues. 1} How would it contribute to survival to retain such a detailed memory of an extinct species, accurate or not? 2} Why would they consider their disfigured, extinct neighbors, worth that effort? 3} Where are the Cro-Magnon sculptures of themselves? When pre-historic Moderns portray themselves, it’s exclusively in paint, unless the Venus statues are Modern. It’s not credible that a people, who had never depicted themselves in a given medium, would make so many representations of another human type, in that medium. 4} Other statuary from the last millennium of the Ice Age, doesn’t seem as crude as Venus. For lack of technical knowledge, I’ll only assert that they are apparently more sophisticated than some Venuses. Why would two such different standards apply just to that medium? 5} Unless the work is intentionally non-representational, the subjects of art, must exist for the artist to draw upon. Art sometimes makes the familiar, bizarre, for a purpose, but, in these statues, features which might seem like distortions of nature, are, if Dobson is right, exactly the shape of Neanderthal skeletons. If the Venuses match something real, which is far from normal, the oddities are not imaginative, but documentary. (This weird distortion means that those figures could represent pregnant women, as well as anyone else, although the distortion, itself, does not. If any of the models are pregnant, the distention only disguises it.)

A study by Fred Smith (Northern Illinois U.) finds that Neanderthal extinction does not pre-date

28,000 B.P.* Elsewhere I have seen Neanderthal survival established to 22,000 B.P.*, and the most recent Venus statues to 20,000 B.P. Compared to the distance in time of both of those dates, from the present, the 2,000 year gap is not long. Distant dates are estimates, drawn from artifacts and remains which are a minuscule sampling of whatever has been buried over millennia. Two events, so long ago, but so close to each other, must be considered simultaneous. If the disappearance of Neanderthal and the Venus figurines are so close, and if there is no controversy on those dates, but merely a margin of error, then they must depict Neanderthals, whoever made them. In Neanderthal Extinction, I will introduce a doubt about how long Neanderthal survived, based on the Venuses, but Neanderthal authorship of Venus, stands on the co-incidence of the similarity of their shape to the Venus and the extreme oddity of both, noticed by Dobson. Neanderthal lasted long enough to make the most recent of the Venus statues, whenever that was.

It has been known for decades that Neanderthal was more adroit and creative than had originally been assumed. Their burials and artifacts are too sophisticated for us to assume they did not create the Venus statues, even though Venus seem too crude to be consistent with other Upper-Paleolithic sculpture. (This is not a trained professional opinion. The Venus just seems crude compared to the cave paintings.)

Stone cannot be dated. “The main way to date carved rock art is usually through stylistic comparisons (called relative dating methods).”* The validity of any opinion about who inhabited those locales, depends on the thought process of the person who forms it. Are Archaeologists making any assumptions, based on the level or area in which artifacts are found? Do they believe that Moderns lived in a locale because they assume that the artifacts, found there, could not have been made by Neanderthal? Do they think that the Venuses are Modern because they’re found with Modern Human remains, or do they start by assuming that the Venuses are Modern, and decide that the sites where they’re found, must, therefore, be Modern? When artifacts are found, if the professionals assume that any are too refined to be Neanderthal, Venus statues on that site, must get scooped up in the assumption. The same mind which makes that first assumption, is prone to the other, so that the highest quality artifacts elevate the less sophisticated “Venus” statues (in such a mind). Any person or group might be more accomplished in some skills, than others. The same people who painted Lascaux might have been only good enough at sculpture, to create those statues. If habitation by Modern Humans, at a certain level or site, has been considered proven, merely because the pros agree to assume that the artifacts, found there, are beyond the ability of Neanderthal, then the presence of Modern Humans, at those sites, is not established. Almost everything found with a Venus statue, must have been made by Neanderthal. {*Addendum}

Searching the web, I find no mention of the Venus statues in connection with the Altamira and Lascaux caves. If Moderns painted the caves and made the Venus statues, shouldn’t they be found in the same sites? Not really because one cave could have been inhabited by more than one group, at different times. 1} The new inhabitants could have gotten rid of the Venuses. They were distorted in a way which many would find disturbing, and no one could find them attractive. 2} If the inhabitants moved out, would they have left the statues, behind? Stone seems too heavy to tote without the wheel, draught animals or an engine. Even wooden or bone statues of that size, must be too much of a burden, in such primitive conditions, but, if the statues had sacred significance, a way would be found. They could have been carried on

something like a sedan chair, like the Ark of the Covenant. It would only have been an occasional project. How often would a clan have moved? > Which group inhabited a site, is not established by the absence of Venus.

In spite of the awareness of Neanderthal capabilities, recognized by anthropologists for many years, they maintain the notion (without ever consciously considering it, I think) that Neanderthal was unable to produce the Venus statues. How did the 'Venus Guess' ever gain credit among professionals, ostensibly dedicated to not guessing? 1} If Neanderthal is viewed as human, it's as a strain, inferior to homo sapiens. The failure to credit their creations, is based on the assumption of their inferiority. It's denial, motivated by a prejudice which is essentially ethnic. Europeans of the 19th and 20th centuries, were very creative in imagining alternatives to native authorship, even when there was only one racial group in the region, and no evidence that there had ever been another. That Africans built the city of Great Zimbabwe, has only been acknowledged since the 1970s. How the nose of the Sphinx looked, is still in doubt, although there is one feature of the damage, in which the African model is as obvious as a Nubian, naked but for a top hat, tap-dancing on the head of the enigmatic cat-man. (Watch for Why the Sphinx Lost Its Nose.) 2} If Neanderthal is counted as an animal, the mistake proceeds from our collective assumption of superiority to all other species. In that case, we could coin the term, 'speciesism' to blame the denial which has blinded us from seeing that Neanderthal made the Venus statues.

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Addendum: What to Call The "Venus" Statues

I use the the word, "Venus", throughout, not for want of a better word. Until the true authorship of all Neanderthal works has been sorted out, I would just call them "Neanderthal". There are reasons I did not, here. 1} Neanderthal has only been shut out of consideration, by prejudicial wild guessing. Almost all the artifacts ever found with the Venus statues, will now have to be credited as "Neanderthal", making that word insufficient to name that one type of statue. 2} I didn't want to lose you by changing the universal term for something so well known, at the first moment of hearing the new opinion. I could have just put quotation marks around every use of "Venus", after the first one, but I didn't want to bulk up the copy on you, like that. No — don't thank me. Just click the button to contribute and get an e-mail to respond.

Footnotes

1) Dobson thinks the statues were made after accepted date of Neanderthal extinction.

New York Times; Dec 1, 1998 (Science Times, Page 4, [col. 4])

2) Neanderthal specimens only 28,000 years old.

Science News; Oct. 30, 1999, vol.156 (p. 277)

3) The main way to date carved rock art is usually through stylistic comparisons (called relative dating methods).

<https://www.rockart.scot/about-rock-art/dating-rock-art/>