

Prehistoric Art In Punch Cartoons 1894-1984

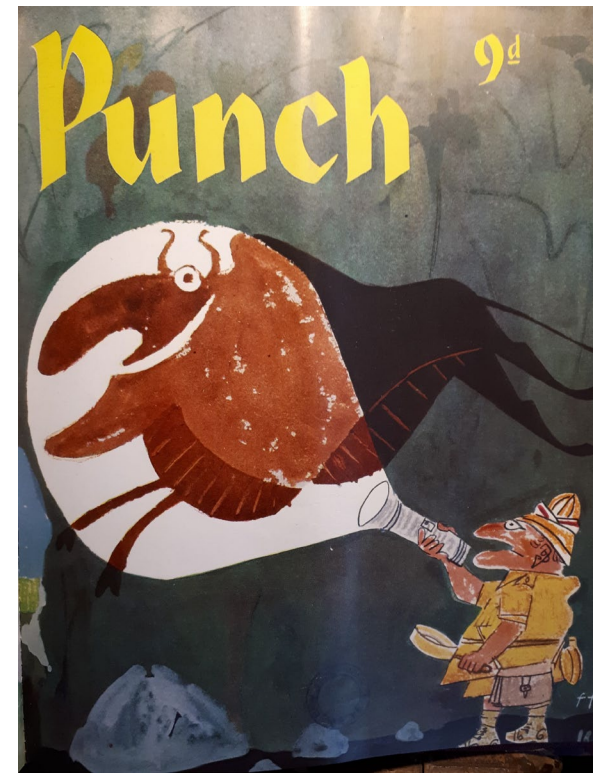
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2nd year PhD (part time)

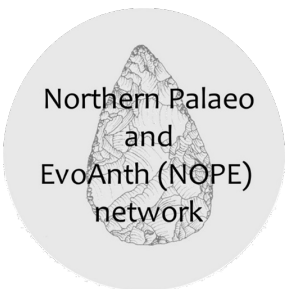
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Punch 1959 Volume 236 Cover



Overview

- background
- analytic approach
- before Altamira
- after Altamira
- conclusions



“It’ll get by the Editor and make the readers laugh – but what about a student doing his PhD at Kent a hundred years from now?”

Punch 1979 Volume 269 p895

Background

- looking at popular conceptions of prehistory
- focusing on “cave men”
- long lived, well known stereotypes
- where do they come from?
- why don't they change as knowledge changes?



“It’ll get by the Editor and make the readers laugh – but what about a student doing his PhD at Kent a hundred years from now?”

Punch 1979 Volume 269 p895

Background

- exploring cartoon portrayals
 - quick hit humour
 - stable stereotypes
- from *Punch*
 - 1841-1992 (+ 1996-2002)
 - chronology mirrors development of archaeology/anthropology
 - very widely read
 - reflects dominant notions of class/gender/race/colonialism
 - assumes some scientific literacy

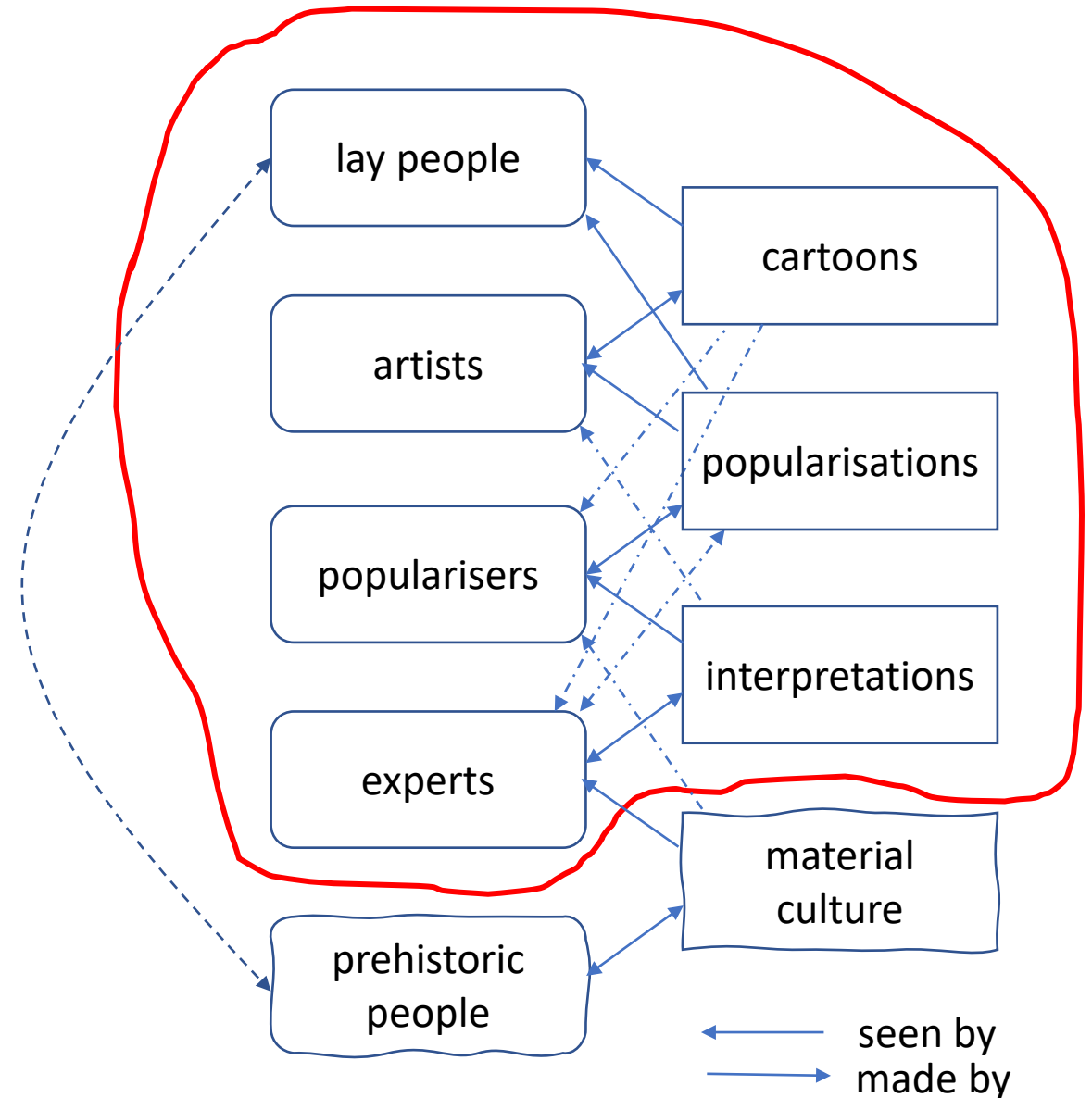


“It’ll get by the Editor and make the readers laugh – but what about a student doing his PhD at Kent a hundred years from now?”

Punch 1979 Volume 269 p895

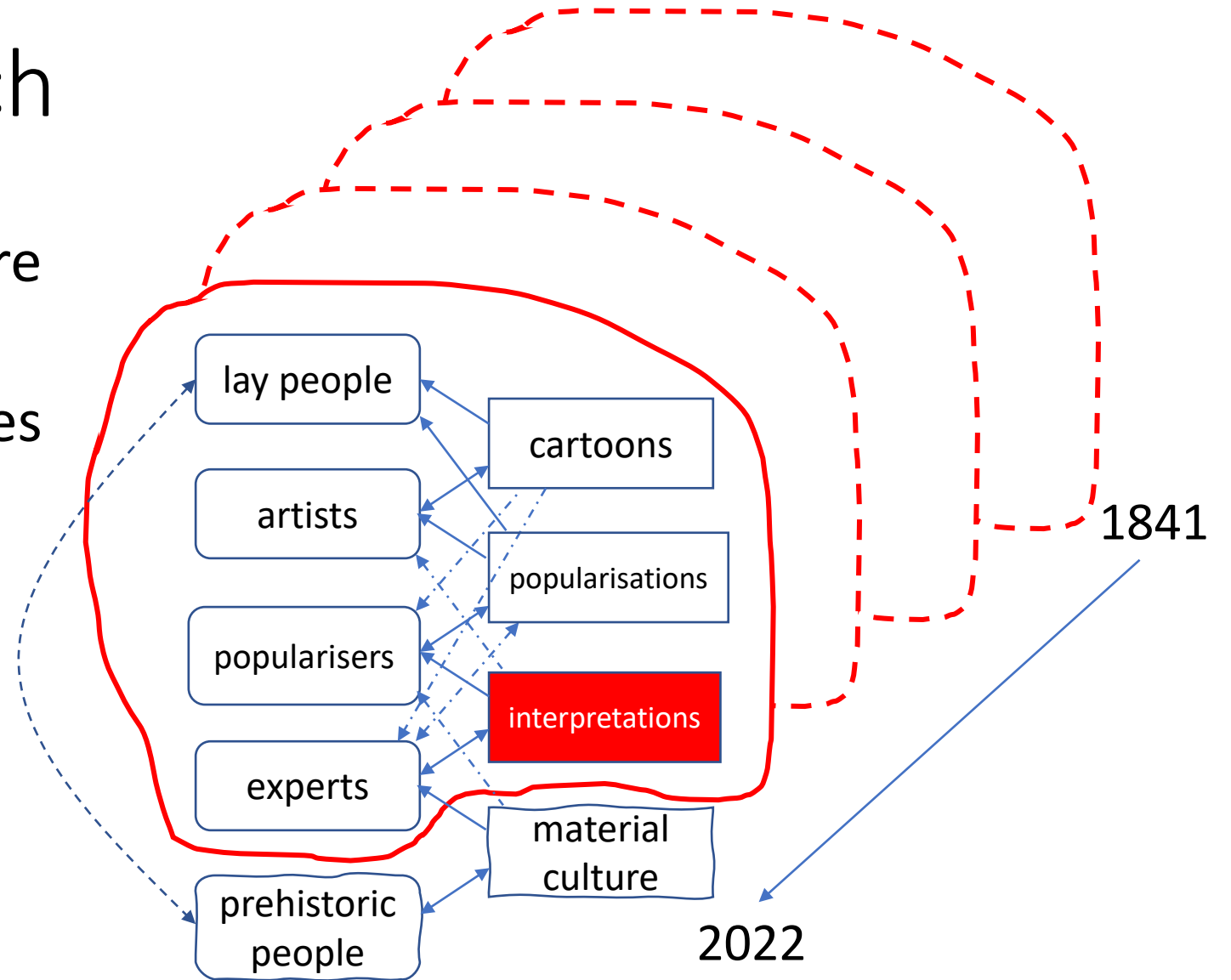
Analytic approach

- nested/intertwined stages
 - diagram is gross simplification...
- lay people apprehend prehistoric people via cartoons
 - amongst other popularisations...
- unlikely to be aware of intermediate stages



Analytic approach

- expert interpretations are layered in time
- change as theory changes
- how to navigate layers?



Analytic approach

- *the past in the past*
- what did/could people know then?
- *hermeneutics*
 - contexts of comprehension
 - Hodder(1992)
- don't impose current understandings, but be aware of them

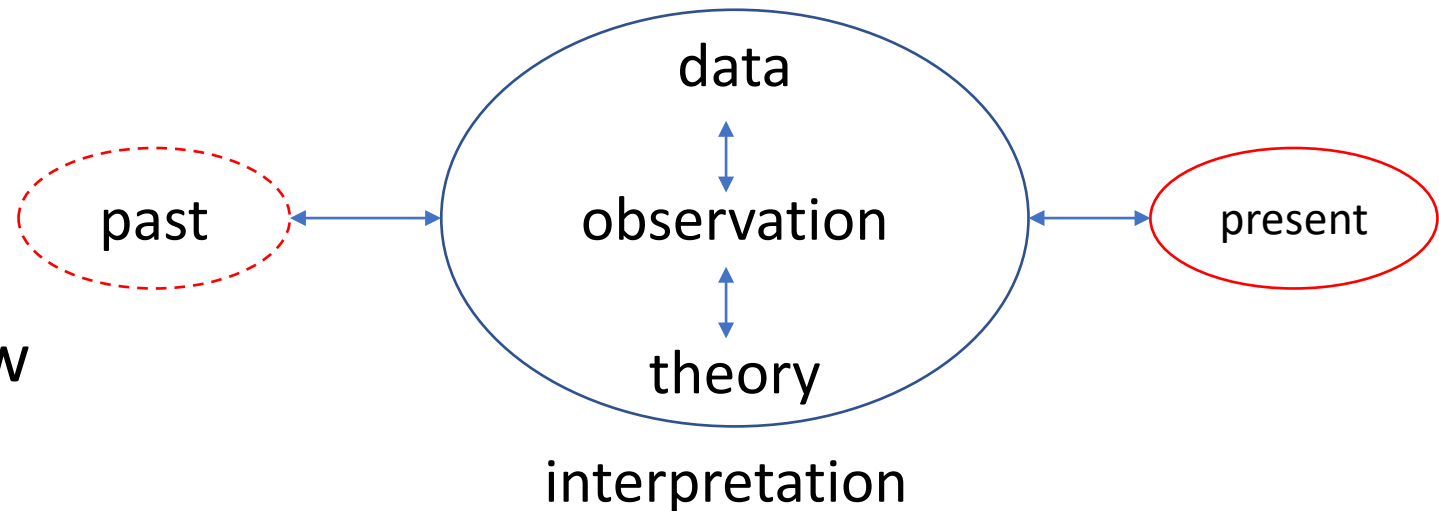
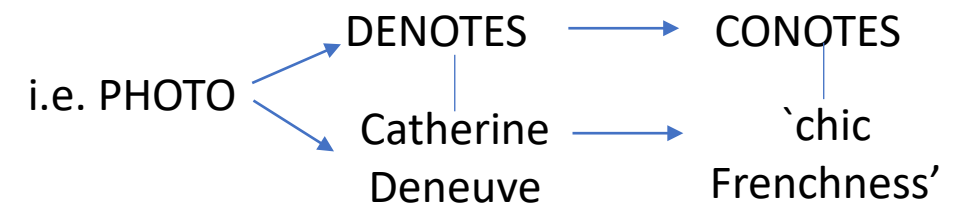
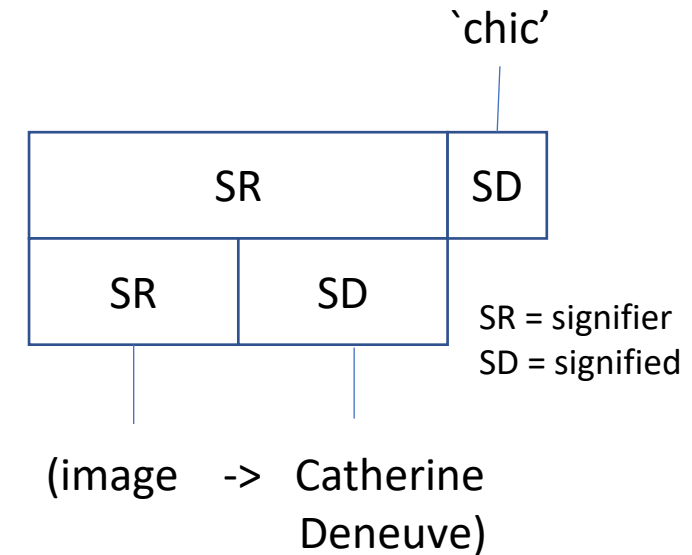


Figure 16 Interpretation as a hermeneutic mediating between past and present hermeneutics, after Hodder (1992) p179

Analytic approach

- *the work the cartoons do*
- semiotics
 - denotation – what cartoons show
 - connotation – what cartoons imply
 - Williamson (1978)
- schemata
 - standard forms/tropes/memes
 - Gombrich (1960)

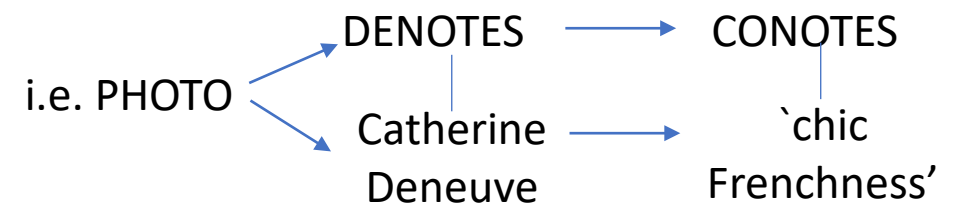
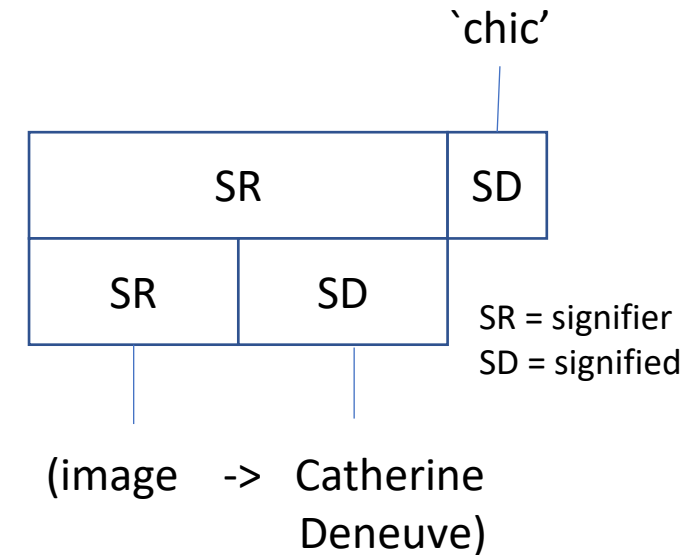


after Williamson (1978) A8 p25 + p100

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/catherine-deneuve-is-the-face-of-chanel-number-5-70s--106960559891091106/>

Analytic approach

- cartoons as ideological products
 - who made cartoons?
 - who are cartoons made for?
 - what dominance relations do they reproduce?
 - Berger (1972)



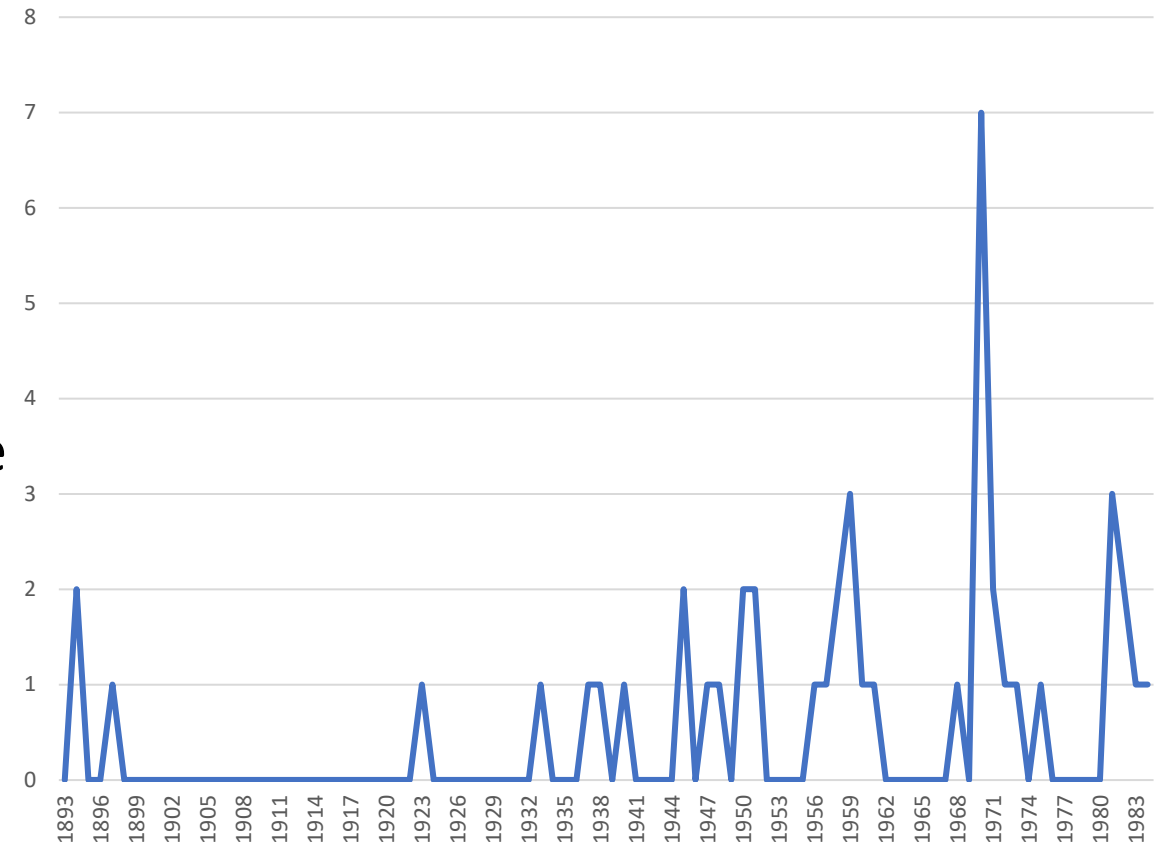
after Williamson (1978) A8 p25 + p100

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/catherine-deneuve-is-the-face-of-chanel-number-5-70s--106960559891091106/>

Data collection

- 6000+ contextualising cartoons
- categories derived from studies of prehistoric illustration:
 - Galanidou (2007), Gifford-Gonzales (1993), Moser (1996), Moser & Gamble (1998), Solometo & Moss (2013)
- 700+ about prehistory
- 45 involve prehistoric art
 - 1894-1984
- case study

Prehistoric art in cartoons by year



Before Altamira

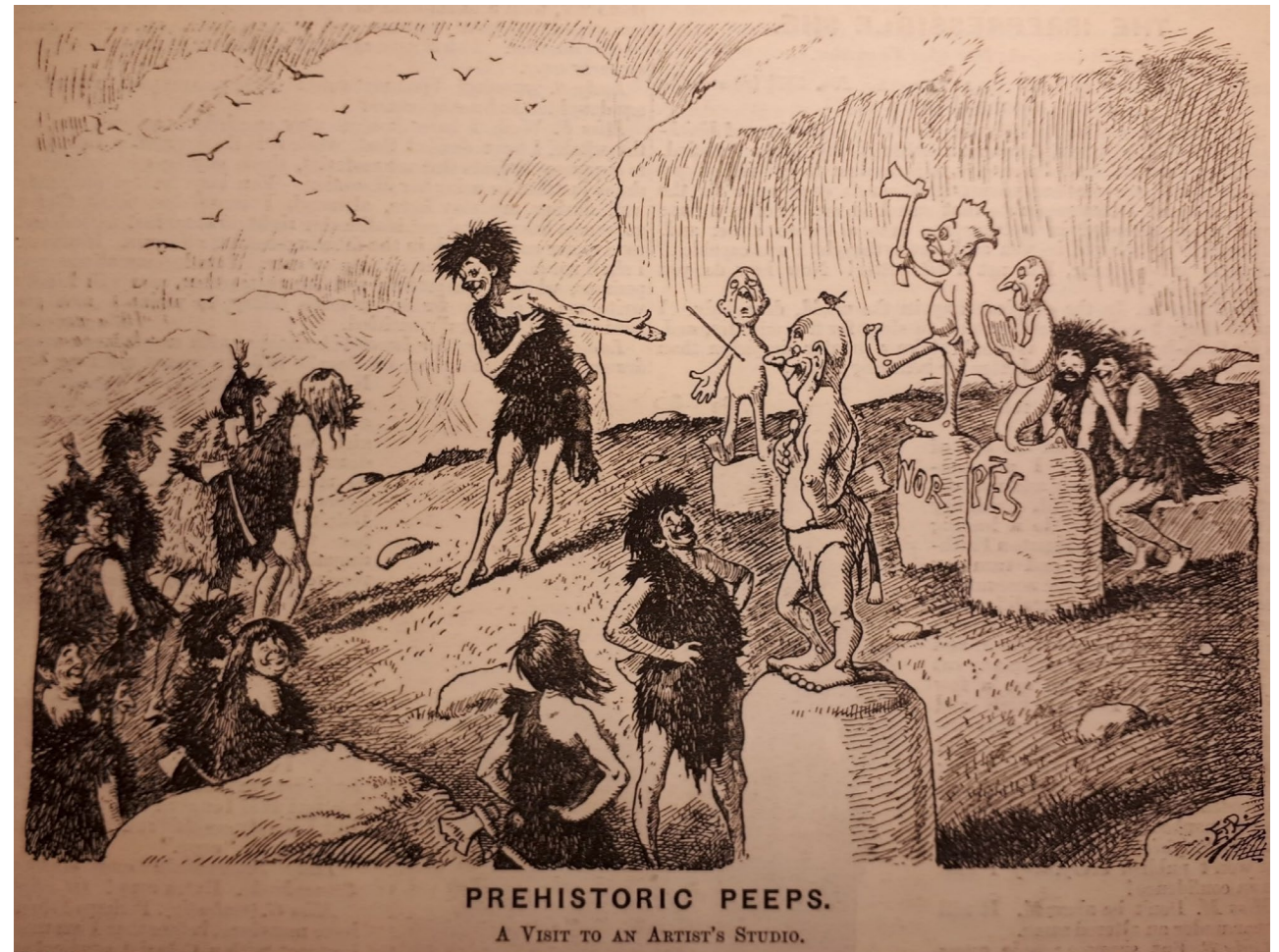
- Satuola 1896
 - not accepted until Breuil 1903
- limited sources for prehistory
- Edward Tennyson Reed (1860-1933)
- *Prehistoric Peeps*
 - Flintstone progenitors
- *us like them*
 - modern context with prehistoric technologies

“suddenly, from nowhere (as it usually happens) ‘The First Hansom’ in the Stone Age shaped itself”
Reed, in Leslie (1957) p57

“similarity of face and figure accompanies similarity of pursuit throughout the generations”
Spielman (1895) on Reed’s Peeps
p562-3

1894

- funny statues
- men make art in studios
- men and women look at art
- prehistoric people are white and hairy, wearing skins

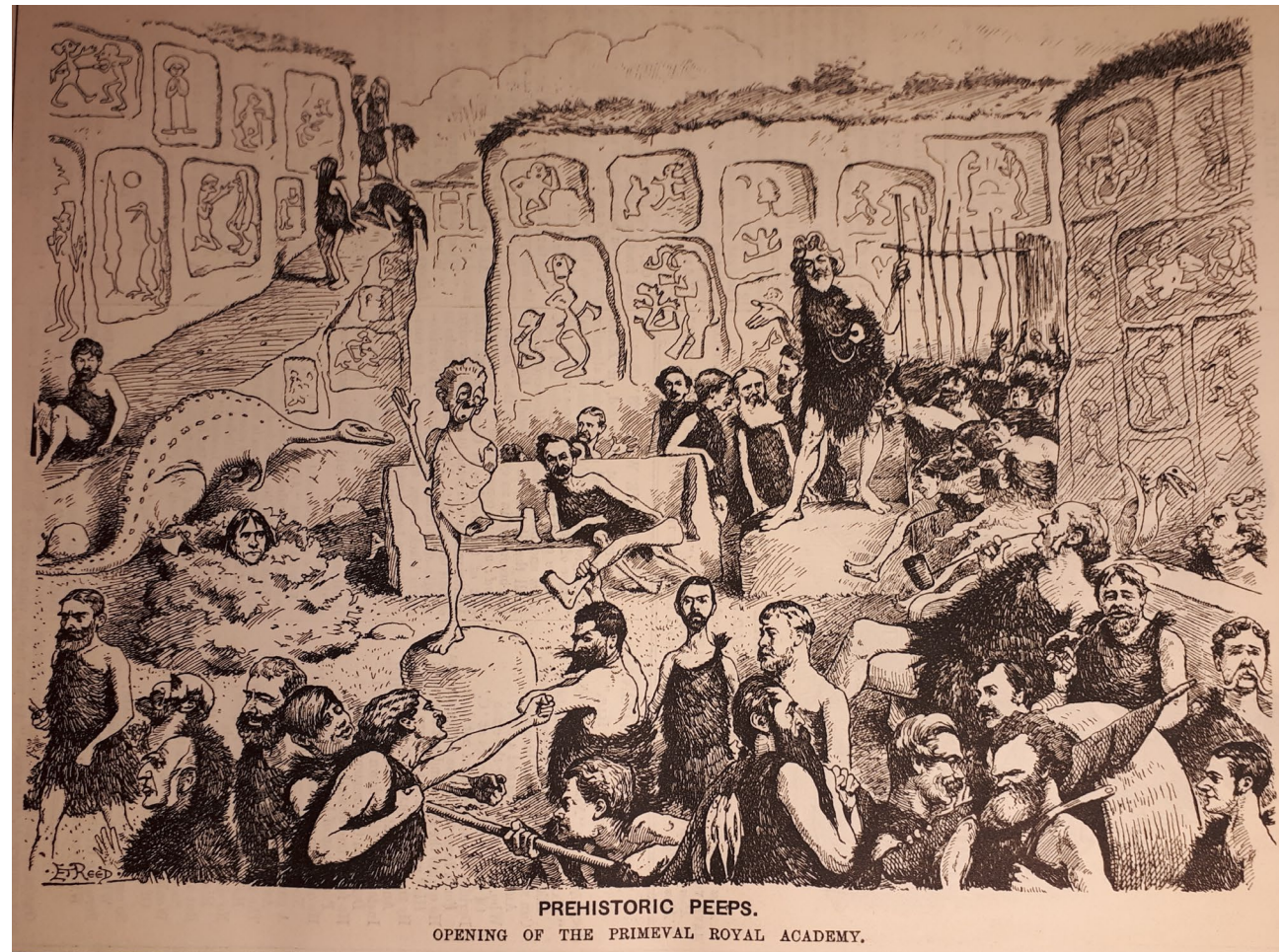


A VISIT TO AN ARTIST'S STUDIO

Punch 1894 Volume 106 p51

1894

- funny bas-relief/statue
- men make art
- Academicians are white, well kempt men, wearing skins
- prehistoric monsters at same time as humans



OPENING OF THE PRIMEVAL ROYAL ACADEMY

Punch 1894 Volume 106 p226

1897

- children draw on cave walls
- women/children are white & wear skins
- women run kitchens
- servants are women
- prehistoric monsters are food

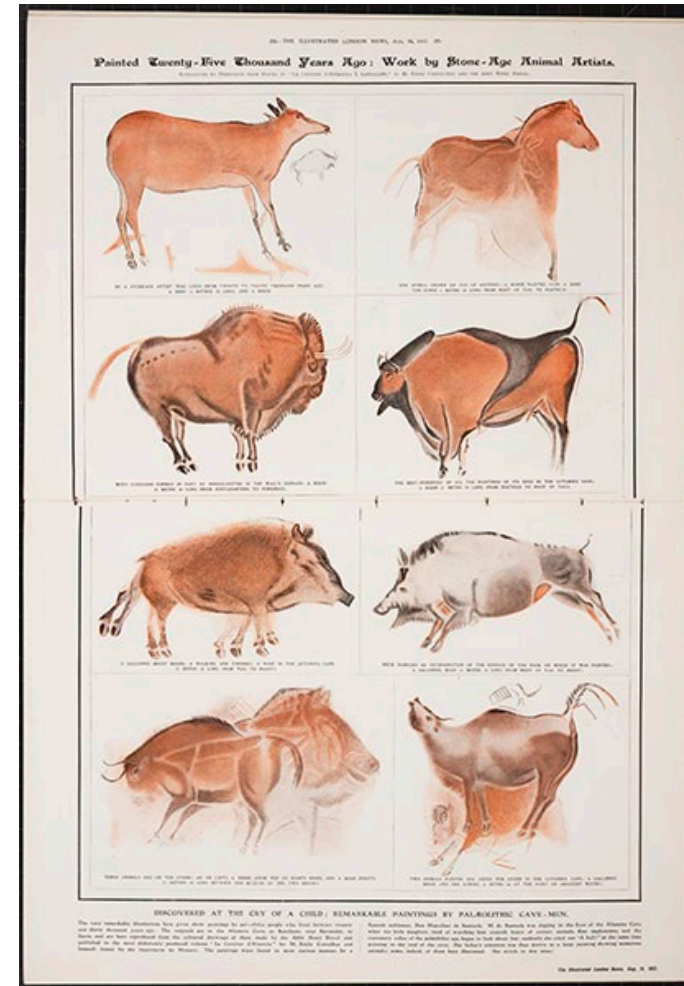


THE GREAT "SERVANT DIFFICULTY."

Punch 1897 Volume 113 p154

After Altamira

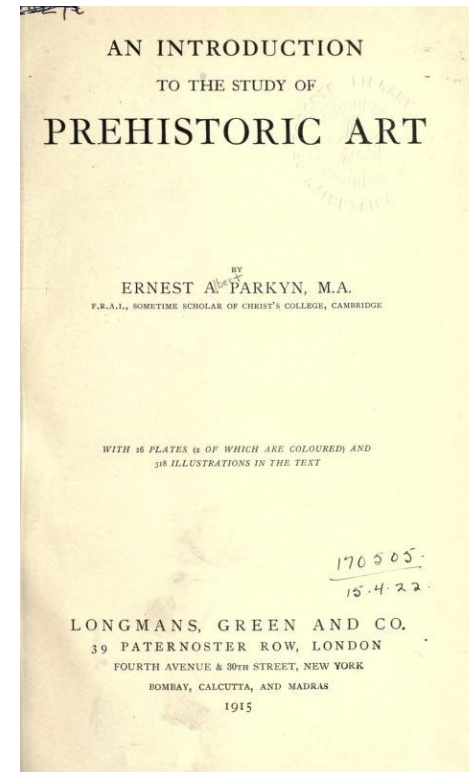
- explosion of scientific & popular literature on prehistory
- ongoing finds across Western Europe



Illustrated London News, 1912
<https://www.lindahall.org/henri-breuil/>

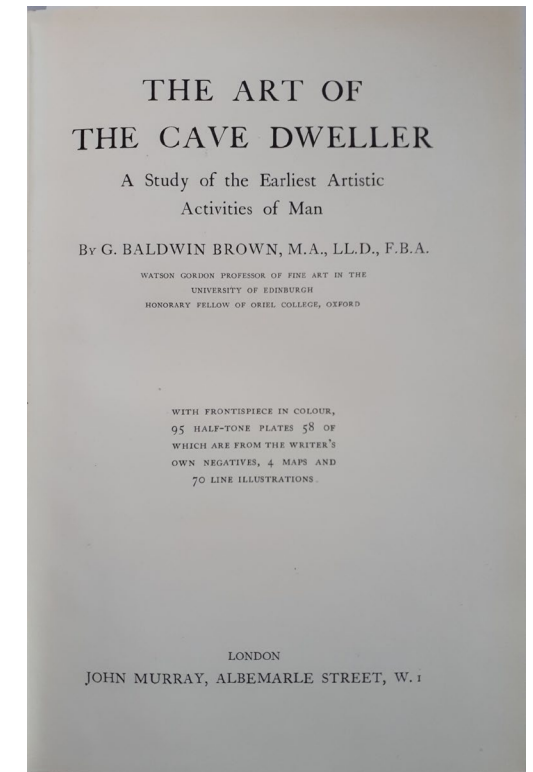
After Altamira

- new discipline of prehistoric art
- theories
 - hunting magic
 - ritual
 - religion
 - portal in liminal space
- based on ethnological analogies



1915

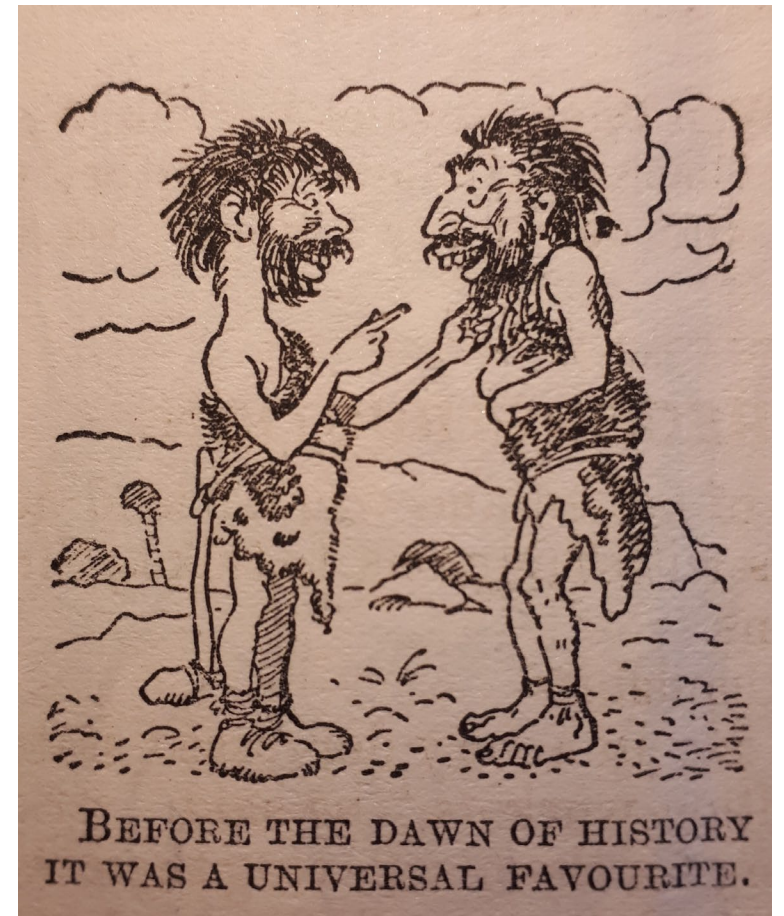
<https://archive.org/details/introductiontos00parkuoft/page/n7/mode/2up>



1928

1919

- first modern *Punch* cartoon
- George Morrow (1869-1955)
- *them like us*
 - prehistoric context with modern sensibility
- *“Prehistoric man is my favourite. You can get the type from books on anthropology, and as for costume – well, you can just dress him up as you would dress yourself if you had his limited means.”* Morrow (1944) p65



THE HISTORY OF A JOKE

Punch 1919 Volume 156 p7

1933

- men make cave art
- art is a commodity
- art is expensive

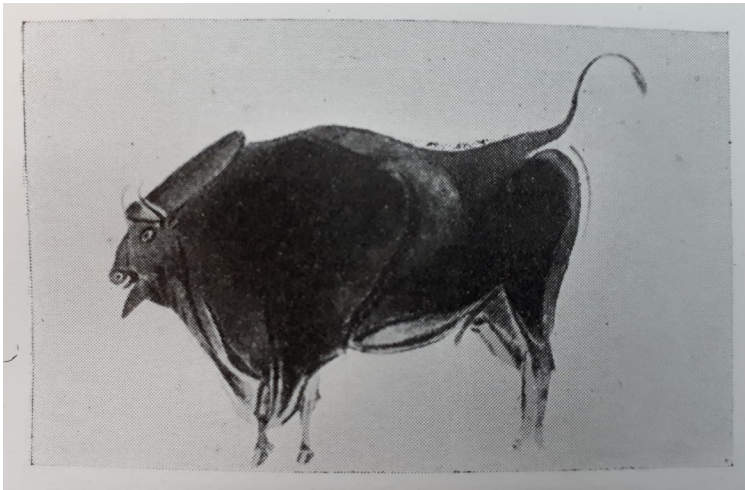


Fig. 24. The best preserved Altamira bison
Baldwin Brown (1928) p63



A CRO-MAGNON PAINTER SELLS A MASTERPIECE

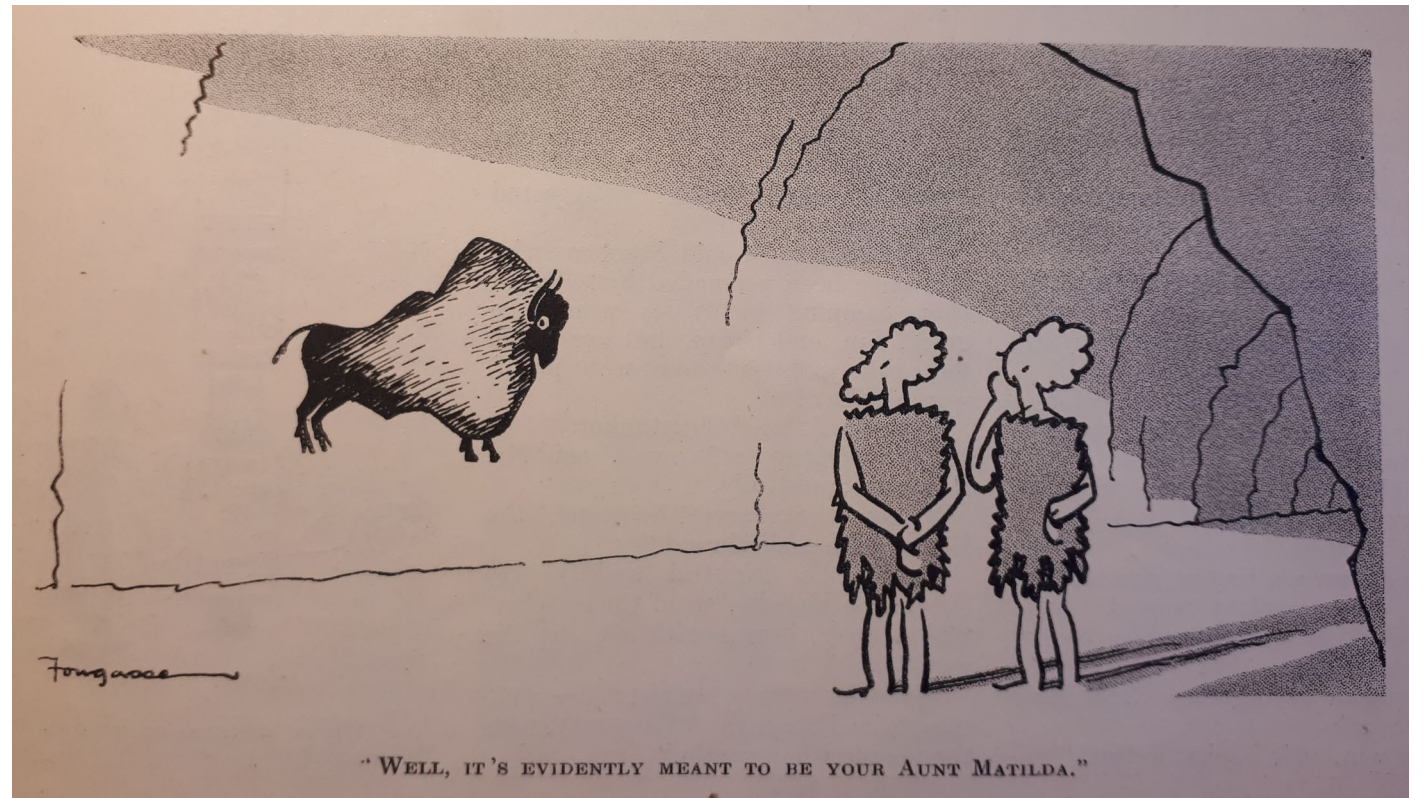
Punch 1933 Volume 184 p103

1937

- men look at cave art
- a bison is a humorous analogy for a woman



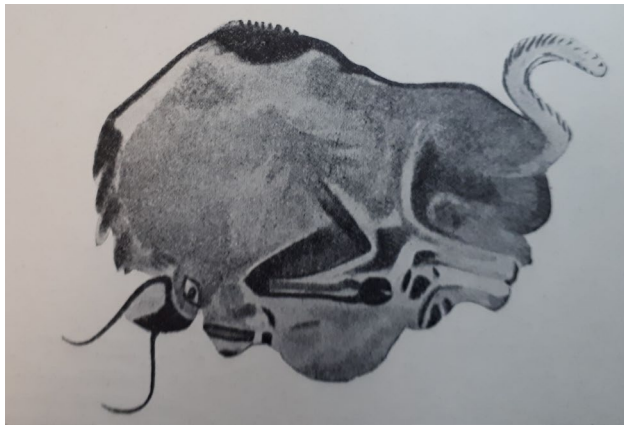
Fig. 100, Bison at Font de Gaume.
Baldwin Brown (1928) p148



“WELL, IT’S EVIDENTLY MEANT TO BE
YOUR AUNT MATILDA.”
Punch 1937 Volume 192 p573

1940

- an air raid shelter is like a cave
- conflation of Magdalenian & Iberian Mediterranean styles



(Altamira) Fig. 126. - Polychrome painting of a bison.
Sollas (1911) p231



Fig. 49.- Capsian Hunting Scene
Davidson (1934) p148



Punch 1940 Volume 199 p106

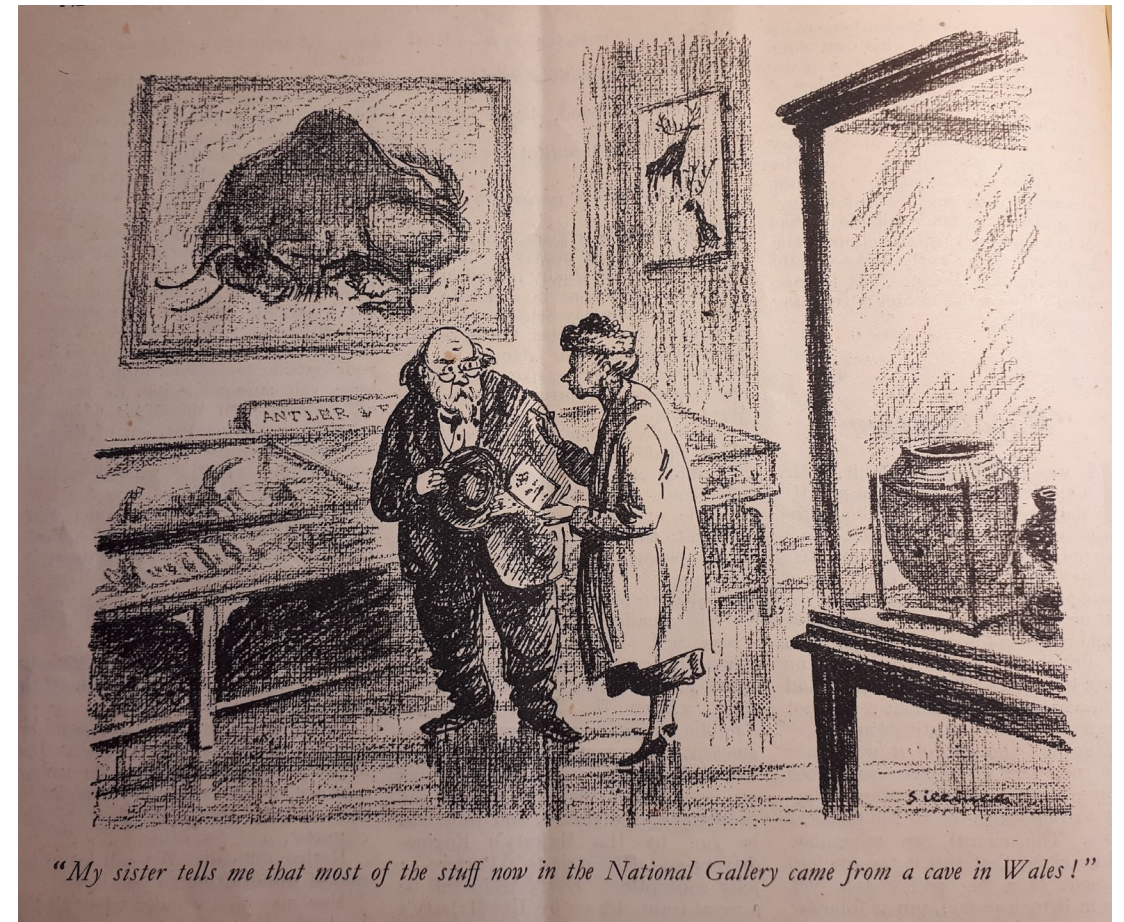
1945

- cave art is in museums
- men and women visit museums



(Altamira) Fig. 228. Female bison lying down.
Osborn (1916) p425

[in 1940, art from the National Gallery was
stored in a cave in Wales]



*"My sister tells me that most of the stuff now in
the National Gallery came from a cave in Wales!"*

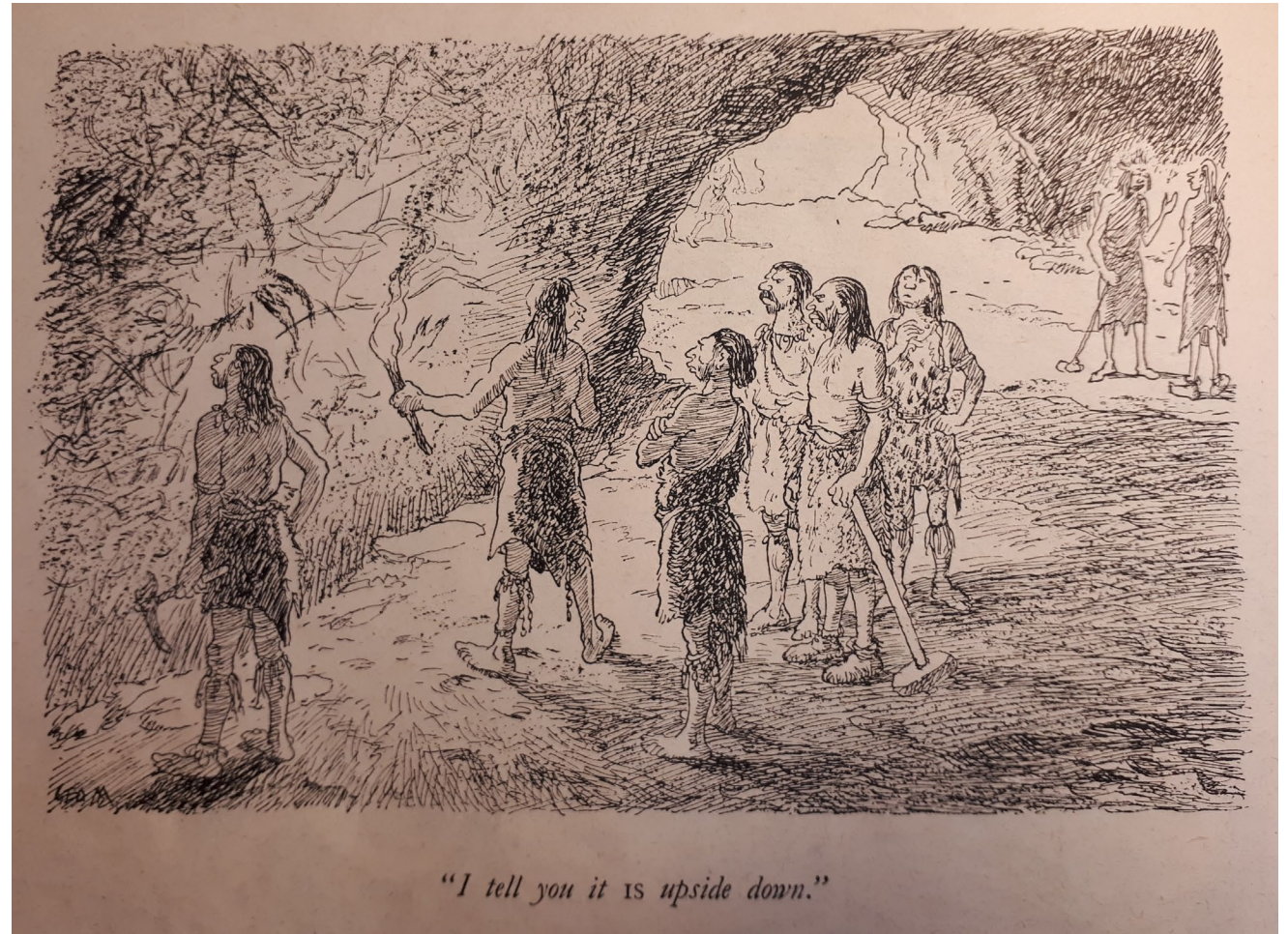
Punch 1945 Volume 209 p142

1948

- men look at cave art



Fig 96, Medley of superimposed figures at Teyjat
Baldwin Brown (1928) p134

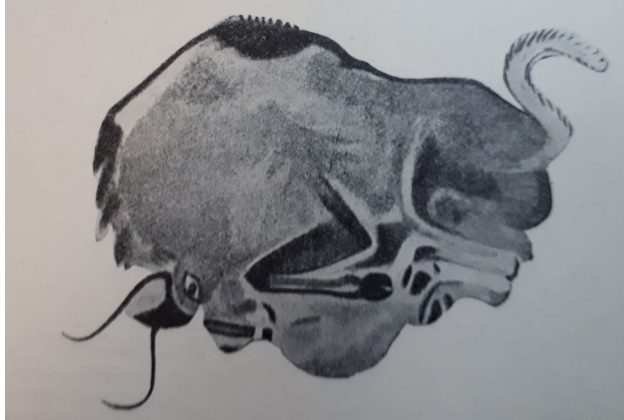


"I tell you it IS upside down."

Punch 1948 Volume 214 p430

1957

- cave art is domestic
- Altamira meme
- hunting meme



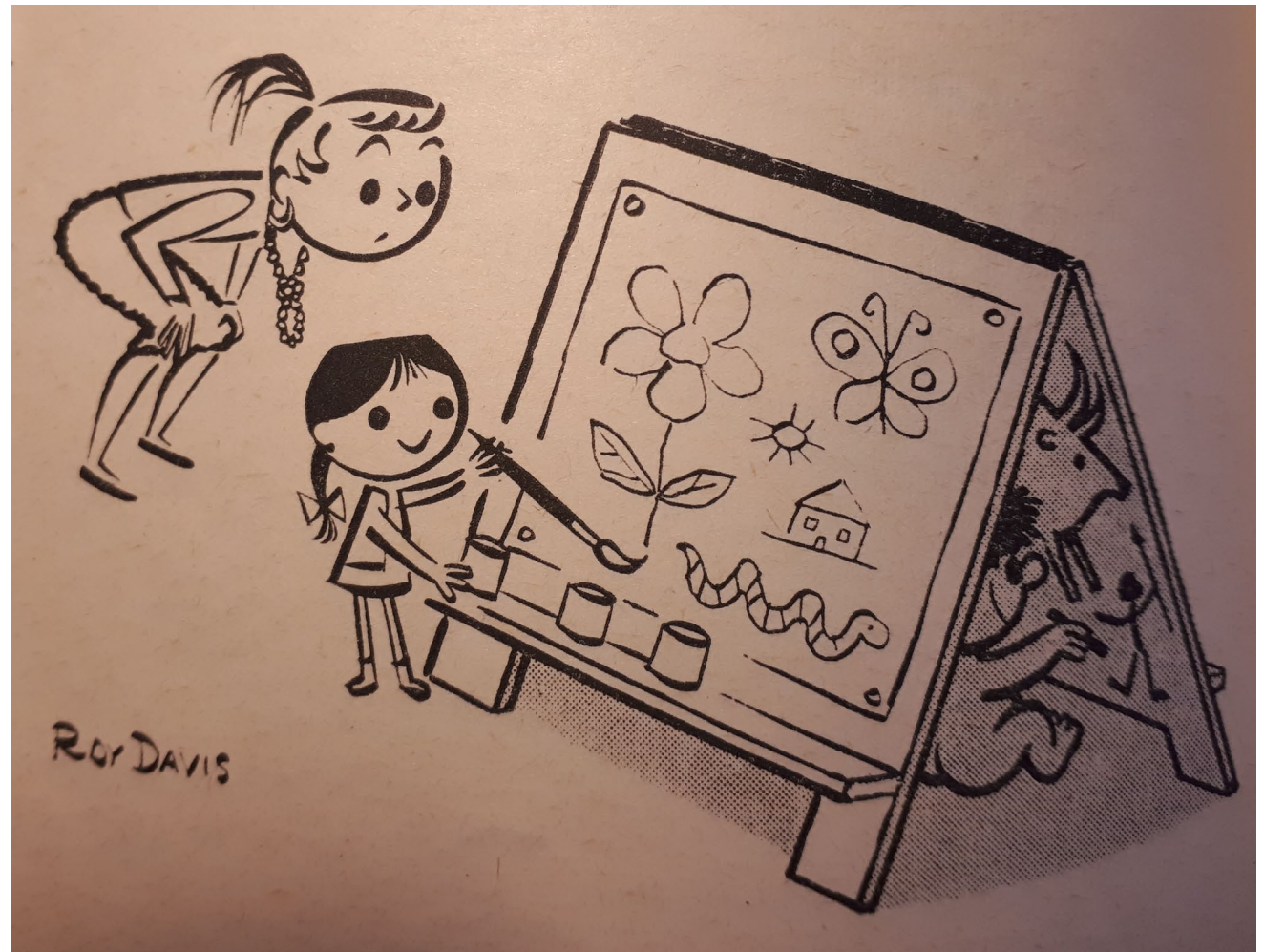
(Altamira) Fig. 126. - Polychrome painting of a bison.
Sollas (1911) p231



Punch 1957 Volume 232 p561

1959

- cave art is childish
- bull/hunting meme



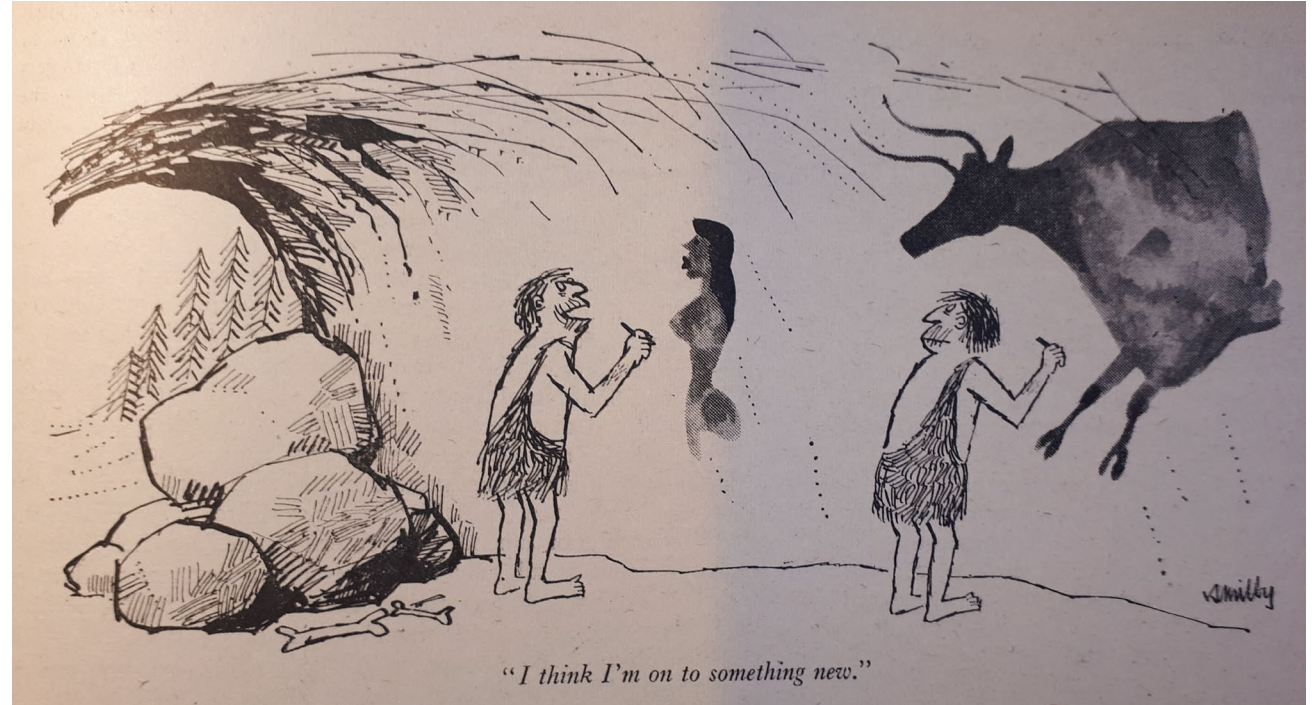
Punch 1959 Volume 236 p238

1960

- men make cave art
- men make pornography
- pornography has a long history



PLATE XIV (B): An ox from Font-de-Gaume
Burkitt (1921) p360



"I think I'm on to something new."

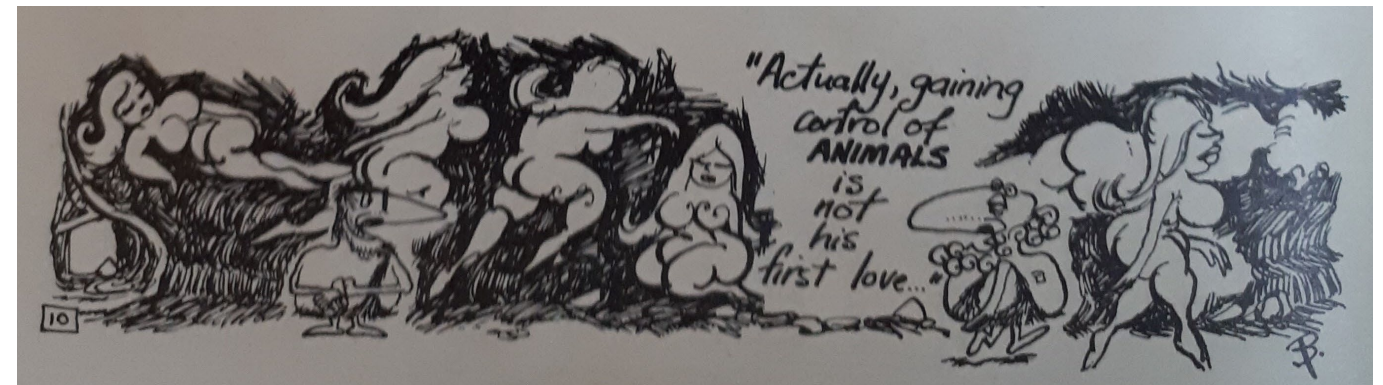
Punch 1960 Volume 238 p843

1970-4 - Stanley, the Great Palaeolithic Hero

- M. Ball (1939-2017)
- 214 weekly strips
 - 11 involve prehistoric art
- art as sympathetic magic
 - eject bear from cave
- art as commodity
 - pornography more profitable



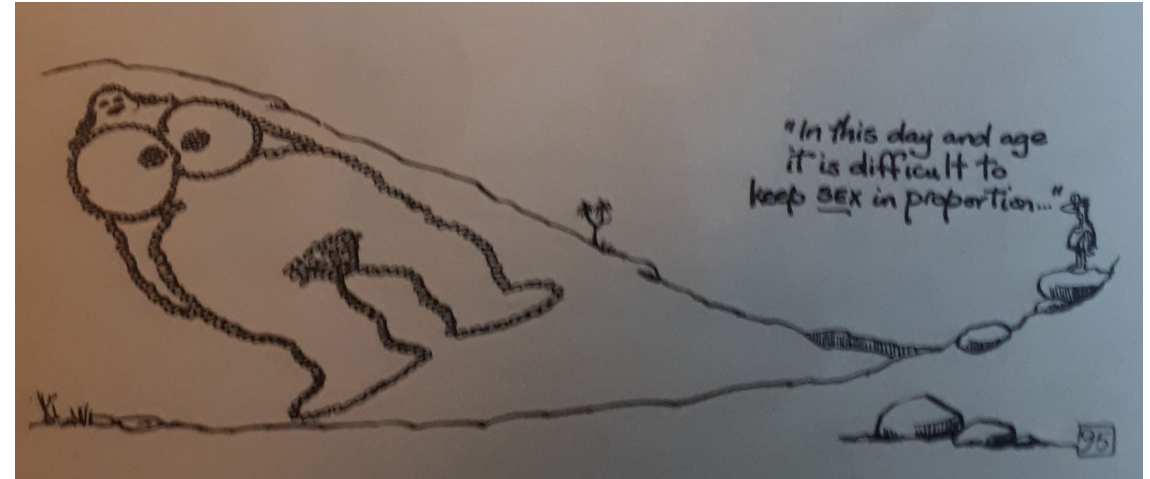
Punch 1970 Vol 258 p863



Punch 1970 Vol 259 p26

1970-4 - Stanley, the Great Palaeolithic Hero

- hill figure
- religious statues



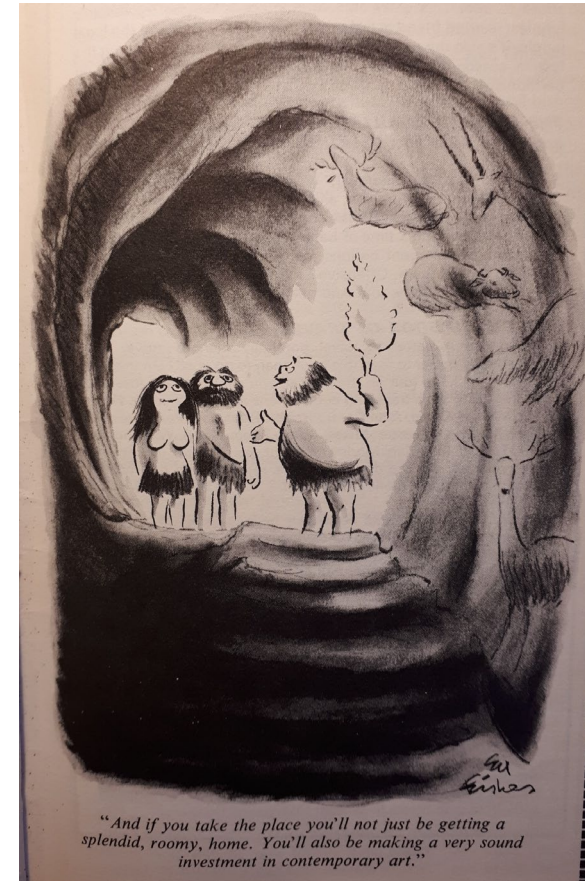
Punch 1972 Vol 262 p730



Punch 1973 Vol 264 p132

1975

- cave art is domestic
- big animal meme



“And if you take the place you’ll not just be getting a splendid, roomy, home. You’ll also be making a very sound investment in contemporary art..”

Punch 1975 Volume 269 p897

1981

- cave art is drawn from life
- bull/hunting meme

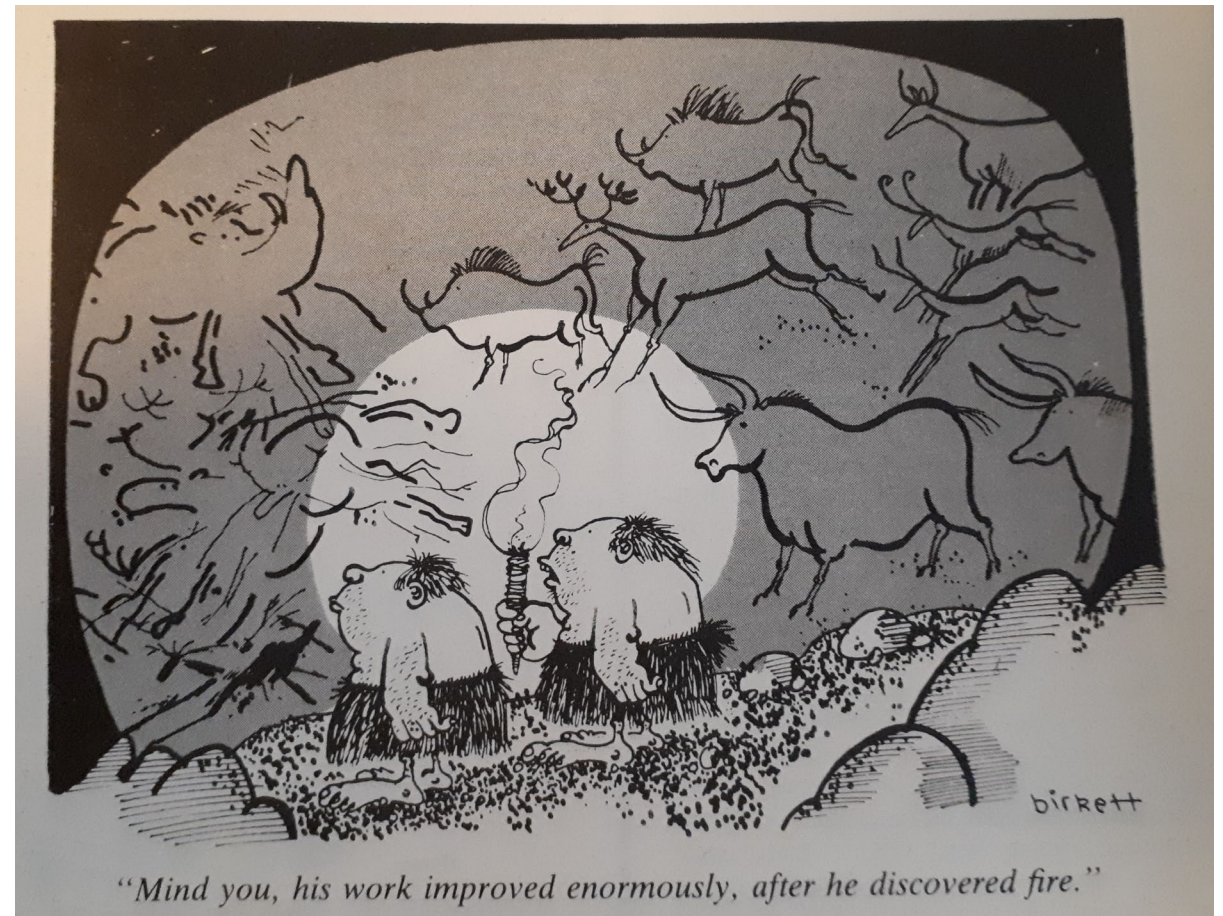


"Wow! I must paint this up when I get home."

Punch 1981 Volume 280 p912

1981

- men look at cave art
- bull/big animal meme



*"Mind you, his work improved enormously after
he discovered fire*

Punch 1960 Volume 238 p843

1982

- cave art is domestic
- bull/hunting meme
- women are house proud



“We feel we’ve made a real breakthrough with the kid’s room.”

Punch 1982 Volume 282 p907

1984

- men make cave art
- bull/hunting meme
- a woman may model a bull



"How much longer do I have to wear this thing?."

Punch 1984 Volume 287 29th August p25

Conclusions

- avoid synchronic reading
 - cartoons span 90 years
- popular topic
- many cartoonists
- themes/memes:
 - established early
 - long lasting



Conclusions

- *denotations*
- big animals
 - bulls/deer
- hunting
 - stick people
- heterosexual male erotica
 - women objectified



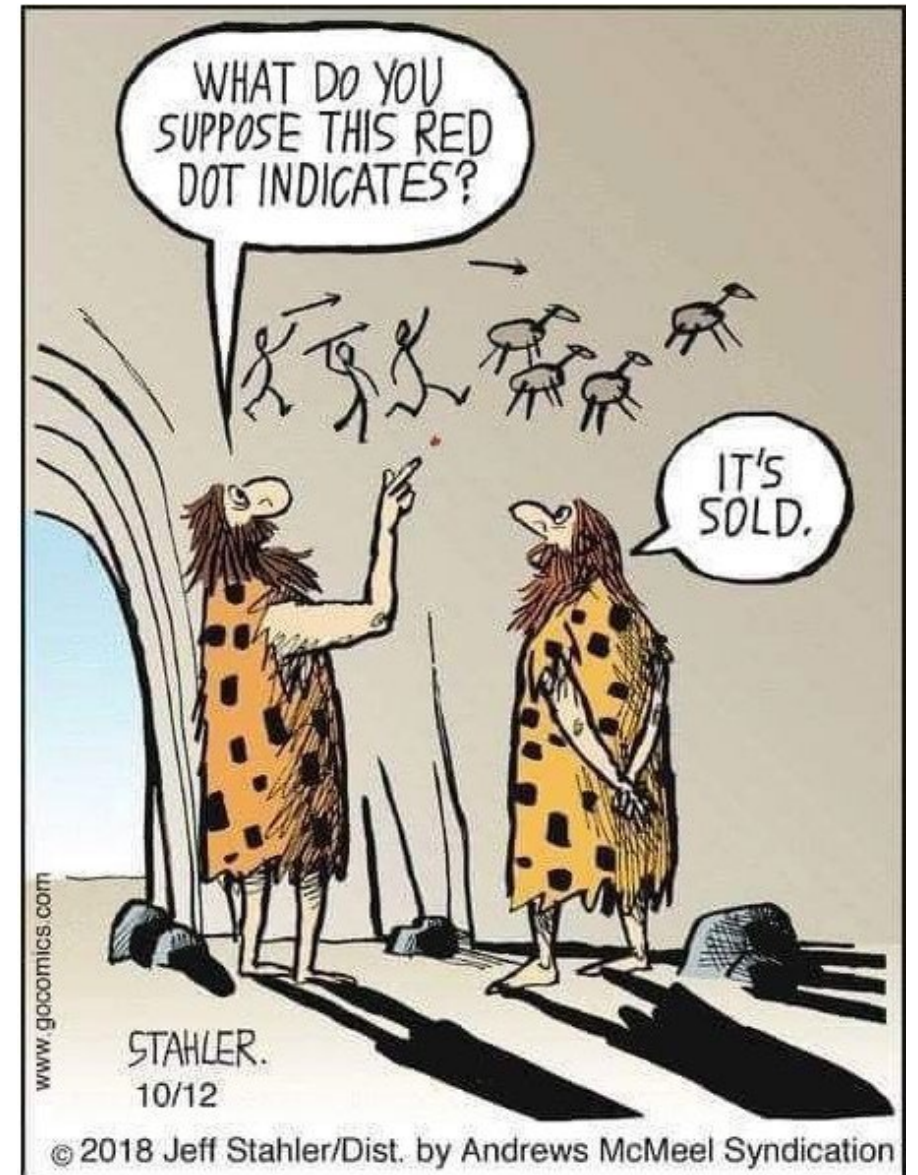
Conclusions

- *connotations*
- commodity
 - made by men
- audience appraisal
 - mainly men
- domestic consumption
- women absent/butt
- art is childish/childlike



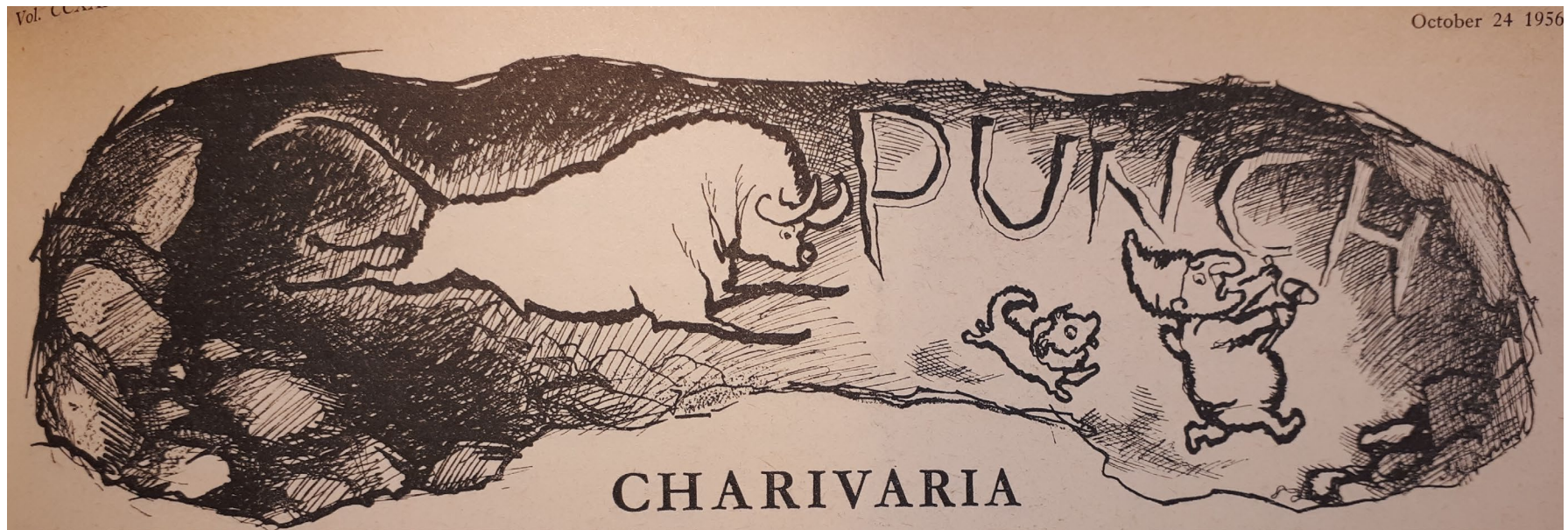
Conclusions

- cartoonists
 - treat sources seriously
 - informed presentation of cave art
 - pay little attention to theories about cave art
 - identify with cave artists as fellow producers
- plus ca change...



Acknowledgements

- thanks to my supervisors, Jeff Oliver and Elisabeth Niklasson



Punch 1956 Volume 231 p485

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