

# Pleistocene Art of the World Congress 2010

## IFRAO Congress, Tarascon-sur-Ariège and Foix, France 6–11 September 2010

This major palaeoart congress will be held in the heartland of the Franco-Cantabrian cave art traditions, at the foot of the French Pyrenees. It is expected to become a major benchmark event in the discipline. It will be hosted by IFRAO in conjunction with French government authorities. Fieldtrip programs will include privileged visits to Palaeolithic cave art sites in France.

### **CONGRESS RATIONALE**

The existence of Pleistocene rock art, first proposed by Marcelino de Sautuola in 1879, was slowly accepted in the late 19th century. Since then, investigation of this phenomenon has been largely focused on a small region of western Europe, which has yielded over 300 cave sites of the most exquisite Palaeolithic rock art. Over the subsequent century, an elaborate stylistic chronology of this corpus, featuring naturalistic animal depictions and semiotic motifs, was developed. It also became the template of Pleistocene rock art in guiding the search for such phenomena in other regions of the world, prompting many reports of such rock art as well as portable art from across Eurasia. Research in recent decades has suggested that most Pleistocene palaeoart of the world may not be figurative, and most may be of Middle rather than Upper Palaeolithic modes of production. New evidence suggests there appears to be almost no figurative graphic art of the Pleistocene outside of western Europe. Typically, graphic Pleistocene art of Asia, Africa and Australia seems to be non-figurative (with very few exceptions), and the corpus of Australian Pleistocene rock art, which some assume to be the largest in the world, is entirely of Middle Palaeolithic traditions. Palaeoart of the final Pleistocene seems to occur in North America and may also yet be found in South America. Finally, India has yielded rock art even of the Lower Palaeolithic, and similarly ancient palaeoart may conceivably occur in Africa.

This scenario differs so significantly from the popular model of Pleistocene art that a congress should be dedicated to this subject, addressing questions of dating, of the definitions of palaeoart, and of regional distribution of evidence in each continent, re-evaluating the topic of the global phenomenon of Pleistocene palaeoart traditions. We invite contributions on all aspects of this subject.

Jean Clottes, Giriraj Kumar and Robert Bednarik (Immediate-Past-President, previous President and Convener of IFRAO respectively)

## SYMPOSIUM

Pleistocene art in Africa: Peter Beaumont, [se@museumsnc.co.za](mailto:se@museumsnc.co.za) and Dirk Huyge, [d.huyge@kmgk.be](mailto:d.huyge@kmgk.be)

Pleistocene art in the Americas: Alice Tratebas [ATratebas@aol.com](mailto:ATratebas@aol.com), André Prous, [aprous@dedalus.lcc.ufmg.br](mailto:aprous@dedalus.lcc.ufmg.br) and María Mercedes Podestá, [mercedespodesta@yahoo.com](mailto:mercedespodesta@yahoo.com)

Pleistocene art in Asia: Giriraj Kumar, [girirajrasi@yahoo.com](mailto:girirajrasi@yahoo.com) and Majeed Khan, [majeedkhan42@hotmail.com](mailto:majeedkhan42@hotmail.com))

Pleistocene art in Australia: Robert Bednarik, [robertbednarik@hotmail.com](mailto:robertbednarik@hotmail.com) and John Campbell, [john.campbell@jcu.edu.au](mailto:john.campbell@jcu.edu.au)

Pleistocene art in Europe: Jean Clottes, [j.clottes@wanadoo.fr](mailto:j.clottes@wanadoo.fr) and Manuel González Morales, [moralesm@unican.es](mailto:moralesm@unican.es)

Signs, symbols, myth, ideology in Pleistocene art: the archaeological material and its anthropological meanings: Dario Seglie, [CeSMAP@cesmap.it](mailto:CeSMAP@cesmap.it), Mike Singleton, [singleton@demo.ucl.ac.be](mailto:singleton@demo.ucl.ac.be) and Marcel Otte, [marcel.otte@ulg.ac.be](mailto:marcel.otte@ulg.ac.be); co-assisted by Enrico Comba, [enrico.comba@unito.it](mailto:enrico.comba@unito.it) and Luiz Oosterbeek, [loost@ipt.pt](mailto:loost@ipt.pt)

Dating and taphonomy of Pleistocene palaeoart:  
Jean Clottes, [j.clottes@wanadoo.fr](mailto:j.clottes@wanadoo.fr)  
and Robert Bednarik, [robertbednarik@hotmail.com](mailto:robertbednarik@hotmail.com)

### **Application of forensic techniques to Pleistocene palaeoart investigations:**

Yann-Pierre Montelle, [yann\\_montelle@mac.com](mailto:yann_montelle@mac.com)  
and Robert Bednarik, [robertbednarik@hotmail.com](mailto:robertbednarik@hotmail.com)

Pleistocene portable art:  
Aline Averbouh, [averbough@yahoo.fr](mailto:averbough@yahoo.fr) and Valérie Feruglio, [feruglio@free.fr](mailto:feruglio@free.fr)

The IFRAO Congress will take place from 6 to 11 September 2010 inclusive in France, essentially in Tarascon-sur-Ariège. Its base in the French Pyrenees will be the Prehistoric Park (near Tarascon-sur-Ariège), whose team together with the Conseil Général team, will see to the logistics.

Address:  
Congrès Art Pléistocène dans le Monde, Parc de la Préhistoire,  
09400 Tarascon-sur-Ariège, France.  
Email: [ifrao.ariege.2010@sesta.fr](mailto:ifrao.ariege.2010@sesta.fr), Tel. +33 561 055 040.

Hotel information and bookings: Comité départemental du Tourisme 'Loisirs Accueil'.  
Email: [ifrao.ariege.2010@sesta.fr](mailto:ifrao.ariege.2010@sesta.fr)

Visits of caves (Niaux, Bédeilhac, Le Mas d'Azil, Gargas) and Palaeolithic art museums (Le Mas d'Azil, Musée Bégouën) will be organised both during (on 8 September) and at the end of the Congress (on 11 September).

*Congress official languages will be English, French, Spanish.*

Congress registration fee: 100 euros for participants; 60 euros for accompanying persons and for students. Registration will depend on the actual payment of the fee.

**Registration deadline: 30 June 2010.**

If, however, the number of participants duly registered before the deadline reaches the maximum number of persons we can accept, registration will be immediately stopped and notice will be given on the web-site. If you intend to come you are thus strongly advised not to delay your registration too long!

Presentations may not exceed 20 minutes, plus 10 minutes for discussion (30 minutes in all). The titles of all proposed papers and their abstracts (from 50 to 100 words) must be sent to the chairmen of the various Symposia before 28 February 2010.

The papers accepted must be sent to them, complete and in digital form, before 1 June 2010. This is because we intend to place all accepted papers on the Web before the Congress.

The publication of the proceedings is obviously necessary. The modalities of their publication will be detailed later.

Any further information will be given on the Congress web-site: [www.ifraoariege2010.fr](http://www.ifraoariege2010.fr)

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

The congress Pleistocene Art of the World will comprise nine symposia. The submission of paper titles and abstracts is now invited for the following symposium subjects. The deadline of submissions for all symposia is 28 February 2010.

**Pleistocene art of Asia**

Recent discoveries and scientific investigations have yielded new evidence about the Pleistocene art of Asia, the most significant of it being produced by the multidisciplinary project 'Early Indian Petroglyphs: Scientific Investigations and Dating by an International Commission' (EIP Project). It has demonstrated the occurrence of numerous exfoliated petroglyphs, and the hammerstones used in making the rock art, in Lower Palaeolithic strata at central Indian sites. Other but much more recent evidence of Pleistocene art, always in the form of mobiliary palaeoart, has been reported sporadically from Siberia, China, Japan,

Afghanistan, Israel and also India. Therefore, palaeoart has been in use for a great length of time in Asia, but relatively little evidence of it has been reported so far, especially in comparison to Europe. It is the purpose of this symposium to place the extraordinary finds from India within a pan-continental perspective, to disseminate new claims for Pleistocene palaeoart, and to consider the limited available data in the context of scientifically based models of the cognitive and cultural development of hominins. The 2010 IFRAO world congress on the global palaeoart of the Pleistocene offers a unique opportunity to consider these subjects in a comprehensive form.

Research papers on the above and related topics are invited from the international community of palaeoart researchers. Subjects of interest include rock art as well as mobiliary palaeoart of Pleistocene Asia; materials and techniques used in their production; find contexts and dating issues; what this corpus might tell us about the development of art-like practices in Asia; patterning in the way graphic evidence appears to present itself temporally and spatially; and how it might relate to Holocene palaeoart.

*Please send the titles of proposed contributions, together with abstracts of 50–100 words, to one of the two chairmen of this symposium:*

Professor Giriraj Kumar (India), e-mail: [girirajrasi@yahoo.com](mailto:girirajrasi@yahoo.com)

Professor Majeed Khan (Saudi Arabia), e-mail: [majeedkhan42@hotmail.com](mailto:majeedkhan42@hotmail.com)

### **Pleistocene art of Europe**

Europe is without a doubt the continent where most Pleistocene art sites have so far been studied and published, whether in caves and in shelters or on rocks in the open. Even though, as a consequence, Upper Palaeolithic cave art seems quite familiar and well-known, this is probably a misconception as each major discovery (e.g. in the past twenty years, Cosquer, Chauvet, Foz Côa, Cussac) changes some of our ways of thinking. The problems that may be addressed during the Symposium (or that it would be helpful to address) should be instrumental in answering various aspects of the main queries — admittedly all related to one another — that are:

*Who? When? What? Where? How? Why?*

1. *Who?* The coexistence of Neanderthals and modern Humans for thousands of years may pose the problem of Neanderthal art for the period considered. But even before Modern Humans arrived in Europe, what hard evidence have we of art made by Neanderthals or their predecessors. 'Who?' may also apply to the persons who made the art in caves and shelters: were they men, women, children, persons of a particular status?

2. *When?* This is the ever-present thorny problem of dating the art: newly acquired dates; dating methods; validity of styles to establish a chronology.

3. *What?* Not only what did they represent, but also what did they do around the art, in the caves and in the shelters, what can we say from the traces and the remains they left?

4. *Where?* This relates to the choices that were made: geographically, topographically, nature of the sites, choices of particular panels, surfaces and reliefs.

5. *How?* This is probably the problem most often addressed in the past, i.e. the techniques used, the way(s) to represent animals or humans.

6. *Why?* Conversely, the reasons why they made their paintings and engravings are very rarely addressed/argued seriously and dispassionately as they should.

7. *For how long?* If knowing and studying the art is a necessity, preserving it for the future is a duty. The problems of conservation are therefore of paramount importance and must be addressed.

Research papers on the above and related topics are invited from the international community of Pleistocene art researchers.

*Please send the titles of proposed contributions, together with abstracts of 50–100 words, to one of the two chairmen of this symposium:*

Dr Jean Clottes (France), e-mail: [j.clottes@wanadoo.fr](mailto:j.clottes@wanadoo.fr)

Professor Manuel González Morales, e-mail: [moralesm@unican.es](mailto:moralesm@unican.es)

### **Pleistocene art of Africa**

As regards Pleistocene art studies, Africa has long been a somewhat 'neglected' continent. The best known finds in this respect are the figuratively painted rock slabs found in 1969 in the Apollo 11 Cave in southern Namibia that date back to about 26,000–28,000 BP, and the incised pieces of bone recovered from Border Cave in South Africa, that are over 100,000 years old. For a long time these have been more or less isolated finds and few further discoveries of art were reported, although pigments have been recovered from various sites in Zambia and South Africa that are up to several hundreds of thousands of years old, possibly pushing back the history of art in Africa to the Middle Pleistocene. Recently, however, spectacular new discoveries have been made that attest to the presence of sophisticated geometric Late Pleistocene art and various other evidence for symbolic behaviour in South Africa at around 70,000 years ago and beyond (Blombos and Wonderwerk Caves). Virtually nothing is known about Central Africa, apart from some finds of mobiliary art in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Ishango and Matupi Cave), and the existence of Pleistocene art in North Africa has been a subject of debate since Fabrizio Mori first attributed some of the Saharan art to the Pleistocene, which continues to be rejected by some. Several recent finds in northern Africa, however, particularly in Egypt (Qurta and related sites), Morocco (Ifri n'Amman) and Algeria (Afalou Bou Rhummel), now seem to present much more solid evidence for a Late Pleistocene art phase, that includes mobiliary as well as highly developed parietal art. Similarly aged rock art also seems to occur in some caves in northern Libya (Cyrenaica). Most recently, Pleistocene petroglyph sites have been found in the Kalahari Desert.

It is the purpose of the 2010 IFRAO congress to upgrade the status of research into Pleistocene art in Africa, to present a new status quaestionis in this respect, and to investigate the possible temporal and thematic relationships between this African legacy and the Pleistocene art of Eurasia. Research papers on the above and related topics are invited from the international community of Pleistocene art researchers. Subjects of interest include: rock art as well as portable art of Pleistocene Africa; materials and techniques used in their production; finds' contexts and issues related to dating and patterning in the way in which graphic evidence appears to present itself both temporally and spatially.

*Please send the titles of proposed contributions, together with an abstract of 50–100 words, to one of the two chairmen of this symposium:*

Dr Peter Beaumont (South Africa), [se@museumsnc.co.za](mailto:se@museumsnc.co.za)

Dr Dirk Huyge (Belgium), [d.huyge@kmkg.be](mailto:d.huyge@kmkg.be)

### **Pleistocene art of the Americas**

Evidence of Pleistocene art has been reported sporadically from South America (e.g. Serra da Capivara and Minas Gerais, Brazil) but remains controversial. Information of rock art of the Pleistocene-Holocene transition is often included in archaeological reports from all over South America. Rock paintings from the central plateau of Santa Cruz (Argentina) are a very good example of this period. This shows that palaeoart has probably been a cultural manifestation from the very beginning of the peopling of South America. The Pleistocene-Holocene transition was a critical time for the dispersal of human societies all over the continent. At Epullán Grande Cave in northern Patagonia, Palaeoindian bedrock petroglyphs of at least 10,000 years bp have been found. A similar case has been reported from Lapa do Boquete, Peruáçu, Brazil. In north-western Argentina rock art paintings of Inca Cueva are also thought to be around 10,000 years old and could be related to naturalistic rock art paintings of northern Chile and southern Peru. Cupules are another kind of palaeoart widespread in South America that has been assigned to the early palaeoart evidence.

Similarly, there is no widely accepted Pleistocene rock art known from North America although final Pleistocene examples may occur. The best-dated early palaeoart is the substantial series of portable engravings from the Gault site in Texas. Other claims for final Pleistocene portable art have appeared occasionally, some are fakes and others have not been convincingly authenticated.

Research papers on the above and related topics are invited from the international community of palaeoart researchers. Subjects of interest include rock art as well as mobiliary art of the Pleistocene and Pleistocene-Holocene transition; materials and techniques used in their production; dating issues; iconic and non-iconic art manifestations and regional distribution of evidence.

*Please send the titles of proposed contributions, together with abstracts of 50–100 words, to one of the three chairpersons of this symposium:*

Dr Alice Tratebas (U.S.A.), [ATratebas@aol.com](mailto:ATratebas@aol.com)

Professor André Prous (Brazil), [aprous@dedalus.lcc.ufmg.br](mailto:aprous@dedalus.lcc.ufmg.br)

Professor María Mercedes Podestá (Argentina), [mercedespodesta@yahoo.com](mailto:mercedespodesta@yahoo.com)

### **Pleistocene art of Australia**

It has long been suspected that rock art of Pleistocene antiquity occurs in Australia, but for much of the 20th century, 'conclusive proof' remained elusive. The first substantive but still indirect evidence was secured in Koonalda Cave, on the Nullarbor karst plain, in the 1970s, followed by solid proof from a series of petroglyphs at Early Man shelter, near Laura, Cape York Peninsula, in 1981. A series of limestone caves near the continent's southern coast yielded direct dating results, some of the Pleistocene, at about the same time, and the notion of a significant Ice Age component of Australian rock art was accepted. More recently, research in northern Queensland has provided spectacular and substantial direct dating information about rock paint residues, while in the Pilbara region of Western Australia, the presence of major early corpora is implied by direct dating of petroglyphs. It has been

proposed that all Pleistocene rock art of Australia is non-iconic, just as is the case in most of the rest of the world. Moreover, all of the continent's early rock art is attributed to the core and scraper tradition, a Mode 3 ('Middle Palaeolithic') technocomplex, which in the case of Tasmania continued up to European colonisation. Since it has been estimated that between 10% and 15% of Australia's petroglyphs are of the Pleistocene, and since the continent's total number of petroglyphs is at least 10 million motifs, it follows that there is many times more Pleistocene rock art in Australia than there is in Europe. So far this has been largely neglected and it is hoped that this symposium can correct this status.

Research papers on the above and related topics are invited from the international community of rock art researchers.

*Please send the titles of proposed contributions, together with abstracts of 50–100 words, to one of the two chairmen of this symposium:*

Robert G. Bednarik (Australia), [robertbednarik@hotmail.com](mailto:robertbednarik@hotmail.com)

Professor John Campbell (Australia), [john.campbell@jcu.edu.au](mailto:john.campbell@jcu.edu.au)

### **Dating and taphonomy of Pleistocene palaeoart**

This symposium is intended to address the important subjects of how the age of rock art and portable palaeoart is determined in order to attribute such material to the Pleistocene, and the equally important topic of its taphonomy. Except in cases of very life-like depictions of species that are known to have become extinct before the advent of the Holocene, and certain cases where Holocene access was impossible to sites, rock art can only be safely attributed to any period through direct dating. Portable palaeoart, by contrast, is much easier to date, usually through the embedding sediment or occupation layer. Therefore, the methods of securing Pleistocene dates for rock art require special attention and will be reviewed in this symposium. Since the effects of taphonomy on rock art increase with greater age, they determine the composition of the surviving sample, particularly of the earliest rock art. Hence, the quantification and understanding of these processes are also of great significance to interpreting the characteristics of what has survived from such extremely ancient times. Taphonomic considerations apply equally to mobiliary palaeoart, and will hopefully be addressed as well.

Research papers relating to these topics are invited from the international community of palaeoart researchers. Subjects of interest include dating techniques for both rock paintings and petroglyphs, and their relative efficacy; recent age estimation projects from around the world; difficulties and controversies with age attribution of the Pleistocene; regional and global patterning of rock art distribution and genres, and its potential reasons; or patterning in the way taphonomic processes determine the characteristics of the surviving rock art and portable palaeoart.

*Please send the titles of proposed contributions, together with abstracts of 50–100 words, to one of the two chairmen of this symposium.*

Dr Jean Clottes (France), [j.clottes@wanadoo.fr](mailto:j.clottes@wanadoo.fr)

Robert G. Bednarik (Australia), [robertbednarik@hotmail.com](mailto:robertbednarik@hotmail.com)



## **Applications of forensic techniques to Pleistocene palaeoart investigations**

In recent years scientific investigations in palaeoart have increasingly been relying on methodologies and techniques borrowed from the field of forensics. For the most part, the pioneering researchers have operated on the margins of an ill-defined discipline. This symposium will provide an opportunity for these scientists to present their work and establish the preliminary foundation for a standardised methodology based in the applications of forensics techniques in the study of Pleistocene palaeoart. Submissions of papers are invited on a large range of subjects, and may include, but not be limited to, the following:

Reconstruction of the gestures and kinetic activities involved in the production of palaeoart

Aspects of behaviour at rock art sites deducible from empirical evidence

Analyses of macroscopic and microscopic traces of palaeoart production

Sequencing of behaviour traces at sites

Behaviour traces in the context of site properties

Empirical evidence and site taphonomy

Controlled replication experiments of palaeoart production

Analyses concerning the ages of palaeoartists

Analytical studies of the tools and materials used in palaeoart production

Other forensic studies of rock art sites or portable finds

*Prospective contributors to this pioneering symposium are invited to submit the titles of their presentations, together with abstracts of 50–100 words, to one of the chairmen:*

Dr Yann-Pierre Montelle (New Zealand), [yann\\_montelle@mac.com](mailto:yann_montelle@mac.com)

Robert G. Bednarik (Australia), [robertbednarik@hotmail.com](mailto:robertbednarik@hotmail.com)

## **Pleistocene portable art**

Portable art is generally defined as art on objects that can be carried about, but, beyond this very general definition, what can we really say about it when we carefully examine the schemas of production implied, the range of supports used, the variety of raw materials selected, the different associations between representations and specific objects? In fact, present-day research tends to reveal that the choice of materials (be they bone slivers, fragments of cervid antlers, short, long or flat bones, shells, various-shaped lithic supports, tools or weapons) was instrumental in the choices of subjects and composition, as well as in that of the techniques applied.

This wide definition also contributes to blur chronology, particularly as concerns the beginning of portable art. In Europe, such a chronology has long existed even if controversy



and changes have occurred about some turning-point periods. But when should we fix its origins? Recent South African discoveries gave very ancient dates; does this mean that they date the birth of portable art? It is now necessary to list all the dates available in order to set up a chronology in relation to the main Pleistocene cultures, which will open up the problem of artistic cultural traditions: do they systematically exist? Under what forms? How do they evolve as concerns schemas of production, techniques, styles, motifs? How were they transmitted, insofar as we can access this process?

At the end of the Symposium, we shall propose a debate about the role and place of portable art within the different cultures that created it. As a link with other symposia, we shall particularly stress its relationship with wall art: what kind? Do we have a chronological framework accurate enough to deal with the problem? Would the representations on portable art in certain painted caves be a sort of sketch of the wall art? Would their purpose be the same? Or different? Etc.

*Please send the titles and abstracts of your proposed presentations to one of us:*

Dr Aline Averbough (France), [averbough@yahoo.fr](mailto:averbough@yahoo.fr)

Dr Valérie Feruglio (France), [feruglio@free.fr](mailto:feruglio@free.fr)

### **Signs, symbols, myth, ideology**

#### **Pleistocene art: the archaeological material and its anthropological meanings**

The symposium seeks to occasion new ideas and innovative research, to afford fresh theories and bold hypothesis together with unpublished information and recent discoveries relative to the study of Pleistocene art in general, and in particular to the philosophies and practices it implies. The symposium thus provides an opportunity to discuss the roles played by iconography and myth in archaeological times thanks, in part, to the light which can be shed thereon by insights emerging from the anthropological study of peoples whose material life styles and assimilated mentalities can be plausibly paralleled to those of our pre-Historic forebears.

There is no third way beyond conscious or unconscious ethnocentrism. It must consequently be recognised that anthropology and archaeology with their respective categorisations of empirical reality (amongst which art and prehistory, ritual and myth) are pure products of recent Western history. This recognition, creative as well as critical, could lead far beyond the usual interdisciplinary syncretisms, to radically new hermeneutical systems able to attribute less ambiguous meaning to the very terms under discussion, such as 'artistic production', 'the Pleistocene', 'primitive religion' and 'hunter-gatherers'.

In particular, such issues as the following will be debated:

- The emerging problems of the archaeological and anthropological documentation of art sites with special reference to palaeo-archaeo-anthropological data.
- The correlations, synchronic and diachronic, between palaeo-ethnocultural areas at different periods and in various places.

- The iconography of Pleistocene art as a reflection of palaeo-ethnic traditions.
- Ceremonial aspects and underlying meanings; the possible roles and function of Pleistocene art in keeping with eco-social-cultural changes.
- Data from sites that are still in use, insofar as they can be related to Pleistocene art sites.

Research papers on the above and related topics are invited from the international community of Pleistocene art researchers.

*Please send the titles of proposed contributions, together with an abstract of 50–100 words, to one of the three chairmen of this symposium:*

Professor Dario Seglie (Italy), [CeSMAP@cesmap.it](mailto:CeSMAP@cesmap.it)

Professor Mike Singleton (Belgium), [singleton@demo.ucl.ac.be](mailto:singleton@demo.ucl.ac.be)

Professor Marcel Otte (Belgium), [marcel.otte@ulg.ac.be](mailto:marcel.otte@ulg.ac.be)

They will be co-assisted by Professor Enrico Comba (Italy), [enrico.comba@unito.it](mailto:enrico.comba@unito.it)

and Professor Luiz Oosterbeek (Portugal), [loost@ipt.pt](mailto:loost@ipt.pt)

### **Enquiries:**

Dr Jean Clottes  
IFRAO Immediate-Past-President  
11, Rue du Fourcat  
09000 Foix,  
France  
E-mail: [j.clottes@wanadoo.fr](mailto:j.clottes@wanadoo.fr)

Robert G. Bednarik  
IFRAO Convener  
P.O. Box 216  
Caulfield South, VIC 3162  
Australia  
E-mail: [auraweb@hotmail.com](mailto:auraweb@hotmail.com)

### **Scientific Committee of the Congress:**

Jean Clottes France, IFRAO and UISPP)  
Robert G. Bednarik (Australia, IFRAO and AURA)  
Giriraj Kumar (India, IFRAO and RASI)  
Ulf Bertilsson (Sweden, CAR/ICOMOS)  
Yann-Pierre Montelle (New Zealand, AURA)  
Luis Oosterbeek (Portugal, IFRAO and UISPP)

**Organisational Committee:**

Conseil Général de l'Ariège: Joëlle Arches, Jacques Azéma, Emmanuel Demoulin, Pascal Alard

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Agence Départementale Touristique (ADP): Frédéric Fernandez

Jean-Michel Bellamy

Jean Clottes

Robert and Eric Bégouën (cavernes du Volp et Musée Bégouën)

Régis et Jean Vézian (grotte du Portel)

René Gailli (grottes de Bédeilhac et de La Vache)

**Participating agencies and associations:**

Ministère de la Culture, Service Régional d'Archéologie

Conseil Régional de Midi-Pyrénées

Conseil Général de l'Ariège

Municipalité de Tarascon-sur-Ariège

Agence Départementale Touristique Ariège Pyrénées

ARAPE (Association pour le Rayonnement de l'Art pariétal)

IFRAO (International Federation of Rock Art Organisations)

CAR/ICOMOS (Comité international d'Art rupestre de l'ICOMOS)

Centre émile Cartailhac (Toulouse)

Laboratoire PACEA, UMR 5199 (CNRS - Université Bordeaux 1 - MCC)

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