

ROCK ART STUDIES: NEWS OF THE WORLD V

edited by

**Paul Bahn, Natalie Franklin,
Matthias Strecker and Ekaterina Devlet**

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WILLIAM BREEN MURRAY†

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Preface

Paul Bahn, Natalie Franklin, Matthias Strecker and Ekaterina Devlet

This fifth volume in the series *Rock Art Studies: News of the World* covers the years 2010 to 2014 inclusive. Rock art now definitely plays a major role in archaeological research, as we can see from numerous new publications directed towards specialists (general surveys, detailed analyses of long-known and recently discovered sites) as well as guidebooks for the general public.

This volume once again shows the very wide variety of approaches and emphases that exist in different parts of the world. However, one recurring theme this time – already foreshadowed in volume IV, as we wrote in its preface – is the astonishing impact on the subject of new techniques of recording and analysis such as DStretch. The subject is currently undergoing something of a revolution, because thanks to technology and software we can now see far more clearly pictographs which have become very pale or even which are now invisible to the naked eye – in other words, it has become necessary to re-study all known painted sites, and even to examine apparently undecorated rocks! One of the latest developments is that image enhancement is now available on iPod and iPhone. In addition to DStretch's impact on the study of rock paintings, the importance of RTI for the recording of petroglyphs cannot be exaggerated. It has made it possible to deliberately choose the angle of light with computer software, instead of long waits at the rock art sites in question.

However, although knowledge about rock art sites is more widespread than before, there have not been similar advances in the government institutions responsible for the recording, conservation and management of rock art sites, particularly in Third World countries where a large part of the world's rock art is located.

One other, highly unfortunate aspect of the past five years is that a whole series of towering and influential figures from rock art studies have left us. In particular, Australia has lost three of its best: George Chaloupka (1932-2011) and Mike Morwood (1950-2013), and, while this volume was being compiled, John Clegg (1935-2015). Each made a major contribution to the field. George Chaloupka established the distribution, extent and richness of the Western Arnhem Land corpus of rock art, recording some 2000-3000 sites at a time when regional rock art studies were not commonplace. He determined a sequence of styles within the art, linking his phases to major dated environmental changes in the region, and arguing for the deep antiquity of Arnhem Land rock imagery. Although his sequence has been widely debated it has still formed a foundation for future research in the region. George also promoted rock art to the public as an important part of our cultural heritage, and worked tirelessly with the region's Aboriginal custodians for its conservation.

Although renowned more recently for his leadership of the team that discovered the 'hobbits' on the island of Flores, Mike Morwood also made a major contribution to regional rock art studies in Australia. His research focused on the iconic stencils and engravings of the Central Queensland Highlands (the subject of his Ph.D. thesis) and the North Queensland Highlands, and the spectacular paintings around Laura in Cape York Peninsula and in the Kimberley. In these studies, Mike aimed to draw together the various lines of evidence and information – rock art, environment, flora and fauna, archaeology, ethnography and history – in order to write regional archaeologies of rock art.

John Clegg was another pioneer of Australian rock art research who, unlike George Chaloupka, advocated the use of quantitative and multivariate analyses to study rock art as an archaeological artifact, promoting objective interpretations that eschewed the need to identify the 'subjects' of motifs. In these endeavours his approach was similar to that of Lesley Maynard, whose seminal work established a new basis for Australian rock art research as well as a whole new generation of students of rock art. John also carried out a major recording exercise at Sturt's Meadows, a vast Panaramitee Tradition rock engraving site in western New South Wales, and drew public attention to the extensive body of rock engravings in the Sydney region. George, Mike and John will all be personally and professionally missed by Australian rock art researchers.

Africa, too, lost one of its leading specialists with the passing of Bert Woodhouse (1919-2011), not only a great rock art researcher but also a remarkably kind and gentle man. Although often dismissed and derided as an 'amateur' by the 'professionals', Bert had probably forgotten more about South Africa's rock art than they would ever know. His knowledge of sites and their contents was encyclopedic, and he used his vast collection of excellent photographs to



FRAGMENT OF SUPERIMPOSITIONS OF
PETROGLYPHS BY PAINTINGS IN RED AND BLACK
ON DECORATED SLABS FROM STONE CISTS AT
KARAKOL (ALTAI). MODERN RECORDING BY RTI
AND DStretch.

produce a whole series of books which remain invaluable repositories of information and examples. Born in England, he worked in banks and construction all his life, and saw his first Bushman painting while climbing in the Drakensberg in the early 1950s. The rock paintings became his passion, and he spent decades discovering and photographing sites, and recording precise map references for each one. All this work was done in his spare time and at his own expense. Nobody did more to popularize the art of the San than Bert, and in 2006 President Mbeki of South Africa awarded him the Order of Ikhamanga for ‘outstanding achievement in the field of rock art’.

Latin American rock art studies lost Andrea Stone (1949-2014), the foremost researcher of Maya rock art – see the Maya chapter, p. 280; and Jean Guffroy (1949-2013), one of the leading specialists on Peru – see the Peru chapter in this volume.

In Russia, Vladimir Kubarev (1946-2011) passed away during this period. A real trailblazer, he had been an active and tireless specialist in the rock art of Siberia and Inner Asia, particularly the Altai region and Mongolia. In the 1960s, as a radio operator and meteorologist in the Altai mountains, he first developed an interest in the petroglyphs and stone stelae of the region, and subsequently turned to archaeology. He was eventually to publish more than 100 deer stones, many of which he discovered himself. He also investigated a complex of cist burials at Karakol (early 2nd mill. BC), in which many of the re-used sandstone slabs were decorated with petroglyphs and paintings of animals and fantastic anthropomorphs. Kubarev’s recordings of this imagery, produced with the naked eye, was of astonishing quality and accuracy, as has been seen through recent applications of new techniques such as infra-red, RTI and DStretch. Among his major works are a study of Kalbak-Tash, an enormous rock art site in the Altai, as well as collaborations with Esther Jacobson and others in Mongolia.

As this volume was going to press we heard the sad news that our friend and colleague William Breen Murray had passed away. Breen had contributed to every volume in this series, as writer and coordinator of the chapter on Mexico. His knowledge and enthusiasm will be greatly missed, and we would like to dedicate this book to his memory.

New Developments in Pleistocene Art, 2010-2014

Paul G. Bahn

Introduction

As in the previous five-year period, the years 2010-2014 saw some new discoveries of Ice Age art – albeit with few finds of enormous importance. One unexpected development was the discovery of early parietal art, and extremely early portable art, in Indonesia. Direct dating has continued, with major contributions by the Uranium/Thorium dating of calcite formations, including some very early results from cave art in Northern Spain. Widespread support arose for the now well-established view that the early dates for the art in Chauvet Cave are erroneous, and caused by contamination – or incorrect decontamination – of samples. The application of new technology is making an ever-growing contribution to the study of both portable and wall art, with software such as DStretch producing important results, particularly in Spain. Very little new interpretation has been presented. As usual, this paper cannot cover all of the very numerous books and papers which appeared during those five years, but it will highlight what are considered to be the most important.

New publications

These five years saw a number of centenaries of events, such as the 1911 publication of ‘Les Cavernes de la Région Cantabrique’ by Alcalde del Río, Breuil and Sierra (Fernández Vega *et al.* 2010); the 1912 discovery of the art, including the clay bison, of Le Tuc d’Audoubert (Bégouën and Bégouën 2013); and the 1914 discovery of the art in Candamo Cave (Corchón and Menéndez 2014; Rodríguez and Barrera 2014). Historical studies in Palaeolithic art included an account of the life and work of the abbé Lemozi (Bournazel-Lorblanchet 2011); two studies of the abbé Breuil (Hurel 2011; Arnould 2011); an interesting article on the people involved in the early days of Lascaux’s discovery and study (Delluc and Delluc 2010); papers on the religious interpretation of Palaeolithic art (Palacio-Pérez 2010, 2010a), and an account of the history of the very concept of ‘Palaeolithic art’ (Palacio-Pérez 2013). Where portable art is concerned, a new study of the classic finds from La Madeleine and Laugerie Basse was produced (Grands Sites 2014), as well as a study of the collection (mostly from Laugerie Basse) of the Marquis de Vibraye (Paillet 2014; see also Paillet and Man-Estier 2011); a detailed analysis of the famous mammoth engraving from la Madeleine (Paillet 2011); and a much-needed study of

the engraved antler from Neschers, housed in London’s Natural History Museum (Bello *et al.* 2013), and which was one of the earliest such objects ever found (c. 1842), but had remained largely unknown despite being featured in Bahn and Vertut (1997: 5).

A few general studies have appeared (e.g. Svoboda 2011; Lawson 2012), as well as a fine monograph on the functions of Upper Palaeolithic jewellery (Vanhaeren 2010); but by far the most important event has been the appearance of the magnificent book by Michel Lorblanchet (2010), in which he has presented much of his outstanding and decades-long work in the Quercy caves. Although regional in content, this book is a treasure-house of knowledge and insights into the whole phenomenon of Ice Age art, displaying an exemplary objective, experimental and scientific approach. It is truly a monument in the literature, and at last we have a successor to the monographs of Breuil and Leroi-Gourhan.

A new, updated edition of the guidebook to all the decorated Ice Age caves open to the public appeared (Bahn 2012), as well as a guide to five decorated caves in the Les Eyzies area (Desdemaines-Hugon 2010). One particularly interesting and refreshing book was published by a guide to Font-de-Gaume and other caves, presenting his personal view of the art and its effects on himself and on the visitors to the sites (Pelletant 2014).

Several volumes appeared on different regions of Spain and France: on Cantabria (ACDPS 2010; Garrido and García-Díez 2013); Asturias (de Blas 2014); Andalucía (Martínez 2010); Málaga (Maura 2011; Cantalejo and de Mar 2014); Poitou-Charente (Buisson-Catil and Primault 2010; Delage 2010); and northern France (Baffier and Girard 2013).

A number of exhibitions produced catalogues (for example, Escobar and Rodríguez 2012). One was devoted to portable art (Cook 2013), but, bizarrely, completely ignored Spain, which contains more than half of all known Ice Age art!

A series of major conferences produced published acts, most notably the 2010 IFRAO conference on Pleistocene art (Clottes 2012), and a 2013 conference in Nerja (Medina-Alcaide *et al.* 2014), while the 2014 UISPP congress was the stimulus behind a major survey

of Palaeolithic sites in Iberia (Sala 2014). In addition, two Festschrifts appeared in tribute to recently deceased eminent specialists: a major volume dedicated to Javier Fortea (de la Resilla 2013) and a smaller one for Alain Roussot (Mélanges Roussot 2014). All of these works contain interesting texts on Ice Age imagery.

A few noteworthy theses were completed during these five years, such as that of Bourdier (2010) on the parietal sculpture of the sites of Angles-sur-l'Anglin, La Chaire-à-Calvin, Reverdit and Cap Blanc; that of Fuentes (2013; see also 2013a) on human figures in the Magdalenian; and that of Fernandes (2012) on the degradation and conservation of rock art sites, notably in the Côa Valley.

Among the general studies published were two on ibex depictions (Martin 2010; Castelli 2012), one on bears (Man-Estier 2011), and one on the deer figures drawn with dots in northern Spanish caves (Garate 2010); an important rebuttal by Lorblanchet (2014) of the widespread but ridiculous view that the highly stylized 'spotted' horses of Pech Merle are accurate depictions of dappled animals (see also Alpert 2013); more works by Azéma on movement in Ice Age art (2010, 2011; Azéma and Rivère 2012); a claim by Bosinski (2013) that the portable art from the Sungir graves should be seen as precursors of Aurignacian art elsewhere, and as a transition from worked pebbles to ivory carvings; and a study (Pettitt *et al.* 2014) on the positioning of hand stencils in El Castillo and La Garma.

There has been a continued interest in the depiction of women (Cleyet-Merle 2011; Bosinski 2011; Bourrillon *et al.* 2012) as well as the vulva (Duhard *et al.* 2014) and the phallus in Ice Age art (Duhard 2011).

New studies of known caves

Cave monographs included what is certainly the most important of this period – the volume on the incredibly rich Pyrenean cave of Les Trois Frères (Bégouën *et al.* 2014), a magnificent companion to the volume on Le Tuc d'Audoubert which appeared in 2009. In addition, a large engraved phallus was discovered in the middle of the 'sanctuary' of Les Trois Frères (Bégouën and Bégouën 2013a, 2013b), a new and striking example of the phenomenon that no decorated cave is ever fully known, and that finds can still be made even in the best-known sites and, indeed, in the best-known panels!

Where the French Pyrenees are concerned, a new edition of a monograph on Niaux appeared (Clottes 2010), as well as a paper on the same cave (Alpert 2012); and a small book on Marsoulas (Fritz and Tosello 2010). However, the other major event was the appearance of books on two of the three levels of the cave complex of Isturitz – the caves of Oxocelhaya (Larribau 2011) and Erberua (Larribau 2013). They are particularly

welcome as so little information has hitherto been available on these sites. The cave of Isturitz itself has been undergoing a new study (Garate *et al.* 2013b), as has the much-neglected cave of Ste Colome, or Tastet (Garate *et al.* 2013c).

On the Dordogne, only one new book of importance appeared, on Font-de-Gaume (Cleyet-Merle 2014); but there has been the usual steady stream of papers on different sites: for example, a new gallery was penetrated by an intrepid speleologist at the far end of Les Combarelles, and was found to contain yet more engraved figures (Cleyet-Merle 2012); there were new studies of the cave of St Cirq (Pigeaud *et al.* 2012), of Cap Blanc (Bourdier *et al.* 2019/10) and Reverdit (Bourdier 2011), and also of Les Bernoux (Petrognani *et al.* 2014) where some new figures and interpretations have been put forward, not all of them convincing. Investigation of the major decorated cave of Cussac is proceeding slowly (Aujoulat *et al.* 2013); and a new comparison was made of the imagery in Lascaux and Gabillou (Petrognani and Sauvet 2012). This confirmed their probable contemporaneity, though the treatment of horses is quite different in the two sites, especially the limbs.

For the rest of France, a book appeared on Chauvet written by its three discoverers (Brunel *et al.* 2014), as well as a picture book (Lima 2014), and a study of anthropic structures and activities in that cave (Dellannoy *et al.* 2012). A new saiga figure from the Grotte du Colombier (Ardèche) was reported (Martin 2011). Two papers on imagery in the cave of Gouy were published (Martin 2010, 2010a), as was a study of the portable art of Le Roc de Marcamps (Lenoir and Welté 2013), and a new study of that from La Colombière (Paillet and Man-Estier 2010).

In Spain, in the Basque country, some major studies of the cave of Altxerri have been presented, including a monograph (Ruiz-Redondo 2014) which sets its art in a regional context; a volume to mark the 50th anniversary of its discovery (Aranzadi 2012); and an important study by Ruiz-Redondo and González Sainz (2012) which, by using digital treatment of photos, has revealed eight new animal figures as well as more than a dozen non-figurative motifs, and has modified the interpretation of some already-known figures. In another new study of Santimamiñe, González Sainz and Ruiz Idarraga (2010) revealed that photos taken over the decades since this cave's discovery in 1916 have shown the startling and little-known fact that traits were added to four black figures in the cave – a head to a horse, an antler to a deer, an eye to the bear and a horn and other features to a bison – on at least three different occasions in the 1960s, yet few of these additions had been noticed by specialists, and they had thus entered the corpus! The cave of Praileaitz was also the subject of new publications (Peñalver 2014;

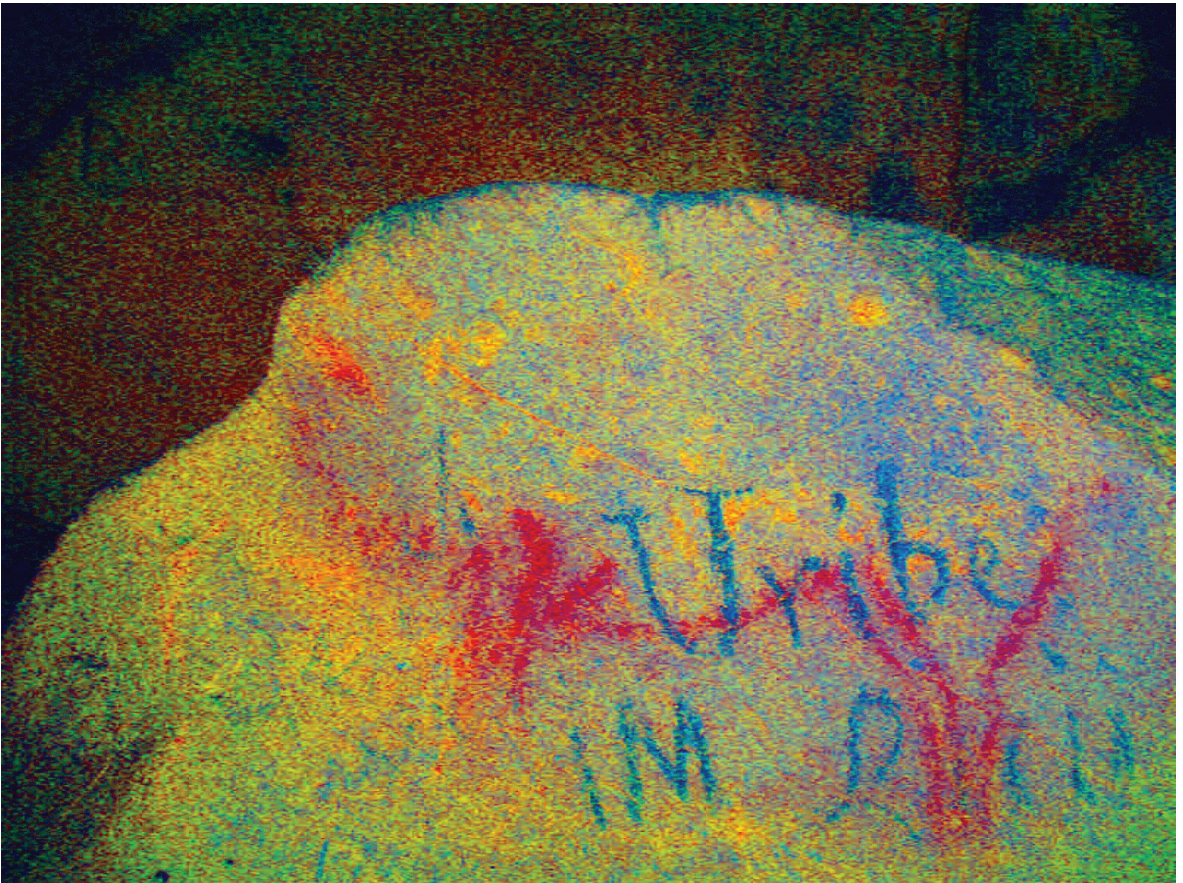


FIGURE 1A/B. BISON FIGURE IN LUMENTXA, NORMAL PHOTO AND USING DStretch LDS
(PHOTO: P. BAHN)

García-Díez *et al.* 2012), while a study of Ekain focused on animal figures seen from the front, especially ibex (Fano *et al.* 2012).

In Cantabria, there has been an interesting new book on Altamira (Madariaga 2010), a study of the outer engravings of Hornos de la Peña (Rivero and Garate 2013), and especially an important book on the signs in El Castillo (Mingo 2010). The major innovation, however, was the launch of a series of beautifully illustrated popular books on those caves open to the public, under the title ‘*Conoce...*’. Unfortunately, after the appearance of the volumes on Covalanas (García *et al.* 2011) and Chufin (Angulo *et al.* 2011), the economic crisis ended the series, but it is to be hoped that it will resume. Also in the series were volumes on Los Casares (Angulo and Moreno 2011), and on Tito Bustillo in Asturias (Millara and Angulo 2010).

The great cave of Tito Bustillo was also the subject of another important book (Polledo González 2011), as well as two major papers which additionally covered the neighbouring caves in the same massif (de Balbín and Alcolea 2012; de Balbín *et al.* 2012). The cave of El Pindal was also presented in a major new volume (González Pumariega 2011), marking the centenary of its appearance in ‘*Les Cavernes de la Region Cantabrique*’. Also in Asturias, there were new studies of La Lluera II (Rodríguez and Barrera 2012), of El Molín and Entrefoces (González Sainz *et al.* 2012), and the discovery of some new figures in Candamo (Corchón and Garate 2010; Corchón *et al.* 2011; Rodríguez and Barrera 2014). Finally, decades after it was written, a paper on Les Pedroses appeared at last (Jordá and Mallo 2014).

In other parts of the Iberian Peninsula, one should mention a new study of the hand stencils in the cave of Maltravieso (Collado and García 2013), a paper on the art of Gibraltar’s Gorham’s Cave (Simón *et al.* 2009), and new books on Ardales (Ramos *et al.* 2014), on Ojo Guareña (Ortega and Martín 2013) and on the Portuguese cave of Escoural (Silva 2011). Important new work was presented on the terracotta figurines from Moravia (Bougard 2010, 2011). Finally, in Russia, a new volume appeared on the cave of Ignatiev (Shirokov and Petrin 2013), although the attribution of its art to the Palaeolithic remains somewhat doubtful; and a great deal of work has recently been done in the undoubtedly Palaeolithic decorated cave of Kapova (see Devlet and Pakhunov, this volume).

New discoveries

As always, portable art has continued to be found. Probably the most remarkable find reported in these years is the 14,000-year-old amber elk figurine from the German open-air site of Weitsche (Veil *et al.* 2012).

Other novelties included the first portable art – two engraved schist plaques – from southern Portugal (Simón *et al.* 2012), the first Epigravettian ceramic figurines from Croatia (Farbstein *et al.* 2012), and a possible second engraved and highly stylised Gravettian venus from the Czech site of Predmostí (d’Errico *et al.* 2011). New excavations in France’s Abri Pataud yielded some fragments of bovine scapulas painted with red ochre, and dating to c. 22,000 years ago (Nespoulet and Chiotti 2012); while the open-air site of Yana in Arctic Siberia, dating to c. 28,000 BP, has yielded jewellery, pendants, and designs on mammoth tusks (Pitulko *et al.* 2012).

Once again, some finds have been made in old collections: for example, a horse-head engraving was found on a horse bone from Bruniquel, housed for 140 years in London’s Natural History Museum (Kaagan, Bahn and Lister 2011); an engraving of possible anthropomorphs on a bone from Gourdan has been rediscovered in the Czech Republic (Láznicková-Galetová 2009); while a drawing of a now-lost piece of portable art – a bone ibex-head, probably from the Spanish site of Balmori – has also come to light (Alvarez 2011).

Where new decorated caves are concerned, there have been a whole series of additions to the corpus during the five years in question, primarily in the Spanish Basque country, and mostly involving the detection of poorly visible images in already-known caves: Astigarraga (García-Díez *et al.* 2011), Askondo (Garate and Rios-Garaizar 2011, 2012, 2012a), Lumentxa (Garate and Rios-Garaizar 2012b, Garate *et al.* 2013) (Figure 1), and Aitzbitarte (Garate *et al.* 2013a). In Cantabria, engravings were discovered in El Mirón (García-Díez *et al.* 2012a), while Galicia may have its very first Palaeolithic decorated cave, that of Eirós (de Lombera and Fábregas 2013).

In France the only new discoveries reported were the Grotte du Pech d’Arsou (Le Guillou and Guinot 2010) in the Lot; Palaeolithic art inside the already-known cave of Foissac, in the Aveyron (Le Guillou *et al.* 2010); and the Grotte des Gorges in the Jura (David *et al.* 2014). Romania produced its second decorated cave, after Cucuiul – that of Coliboaia (Besesek *et al.* 2010; Clottes *et al.* 2011; Ghemis *et al.* 2011), although the decorated gallery is extremely difficult to reach due to an underground river.

Where open-air art is concerned, a highly doubtful claim was made for a Palaeolithic attribution of a horse figure in Valcamonica (Martini *et al.* 2009), while claims continue that some aurochs petroglyphs at Gobustan (Azerbaijan) are Palaeolithic in age (Sigari 2013), but evidence other than style has not yet been presented to confirm this. Meanwhile a fine new aurochs petroglyph was found at Redor do Porco in Portugal (Baptista and Reis 2011), and further discoveries were made in Egypt (see below). However, by far the most striking discovery



FIGURE 2. THE FIGURES OF HORSES AND OTHER MOTIFS ON THE ROCK AT HUNSRÜCK
(PHOTO: P. BAHN)

was the schist rock-face at Hunsrück, Germany, which bears pecked images of several horses and other figures, which, while undated, are extremely likely to be Palaeolithic in age (Welker 2014) (Figure 2).

Ice Age art in other continents

Already mentioned in the previous volume in this series, what may be the first piece of figurative art from Pleistocene North America, an engraving of a mammoth on a piece of bone from Vero Beach, Florida, has been subjected to all kinds of tests which failed to prove that it was not authentically ancient (Purdy *et al.* 2011; Purdy 2012). It is engraved on a piece of megafauna, which unfortunately cannot be identified or dated (Figure 3), but an SEM study has shown that the engraving's edges are worn, and were not made with metal tools or recently.

In a curious echo of the situation with North American portable art, two undated petroglyphs on the San Juan River in Utah have been presented as depicting possible mammoths. If this interpretation is correct, then they must necessarily date to the Pleistocene unless – as is quite possible – this species survived for some time into

the Holocene in this enormous country (see Morales, this volume). Recently, radiocarbon dating has shown that some petroglyphs in the Winnemucca Lake Basin, Nevada, incised into a tufa mound, and covered by a carbonate crust, were produced between 14,800 and 10,200 years ago (Benson *et al.* 2013; see Morales, this volume). For developments in Brazilian rock art, see the dating section below.

The other major advance reported in the previous volume was the discovery of Pleistocene petroglyphs along the Nile, and here further discoveries of figures have been reported at Wadi Abu Subeira, near Aswan (Kelany 2012, 2014), while proof of the Pleistocene age of the petroglyphs at Qurta has been obtained through OSL dating (Huyge *et al.* 2011). Where African portable art is concerned, a new study of the notched bones of Border Cave, as well as of some perforated shells directly dated to 42,000 years ago, has appeared (d'Errico *et al.* 2012), as well as a new dating to c. 30,000 of the layer in Namibia's Apollo 11 Cave which yielded its portable art (Vogelsang *et al.* 2010). Wadley (2010) presented a study of ochre powder production at Sibudu Cave, South Africa, c. 58,000 years ago.