
1

Prehistory to AD 400

Early Cultures

Film – history’s newest art form – reaches back to some of the earliest images ever created by human beings. The two films which frame this first section of the Roland Collection’s history of art set the keynote of the collection: art on film, and film as art.

This section of 5 programs can be purchased on VHS for \$435

Television rights and prices on request

For the particular effects achieved in Tassili N’Ajjjer, the director, JD Lajoux, booked what was then the only camera of its kind in Europe (being used at the time in the filming of the feature *The Longest Day*), and traveled on camel-back to the Sahara, with all equipment, including that necessary for ‘bouncing’ natural daylight in the absence of power supply.

The *Origins of Art in France* presents near-hallucinatory sequences of artefacts and figures, alternated with images of the landscape, flora and fauna and rough-hewn architecture that were the backdrop to Gallic agrarian society, and to Druidic religion.

While the direction of these and other films in the Roland Collection is arresting and dramatic, it illuminates, rather than competes with, the art shown – neolithic rock paintings of animals, carved stone effigies, decorative artefacts, coins, cromlechs. These images are the antecedents of all the art of succeeding centuries. Bound up with lost social beliefs and customs, they yet retain in themselves aesthetic force and eloquence.



10 Tassili N'Ajjer
Prehistoric Rock Paintings of the Sahara

Four thousand years ago the people who inhabited the Tassili N'Ajjer, a group of mountains in the eastern Sahara, painted the rocks with scenes of their daily life. Why? Probably they were making magic; we can only guess. But from the hundreds of thousands of pictures they left (nowhere else is prehistoric art to be found in such abundance) we learn that the desert then was no desert at all: it was a place of flourishing community life, of flowers and waterholes and herds of antelope. To our eyes these vivid and colorful humans and animals in motion, farming and hunting and making war, look astonishingly 'modern,' preserved as they have been by the dry climate. Today, however, they are in danger, since many have been defaced by tourists and some have already entirely disappeared. To film this invaluable record of the paintings, some of the most recent technical developments in the art of film have been used to capture some of the most ancient images we still have. At the very dawning of artistic activity, the images human beings create are bound up with the politics and economics of their existence – the animals they hunt, the forces, natural and supernatural, that sustain their lives, the battles they fight. And their pictures are inscribed on the very fabric of the environment they inhabit – the rocks and cave walls – prefiguring the graffiti or public murals of today, giving expression to social concerns and passions.

'Very beautiful, with a very fine subject'
UNESCO

Director	16 minutes
Jean-Dominique Lajoux	Color
Narration	Age range 6–adult
Max-Pol Fouchet	Film \$553 Rental \$169
Original music	VHS \$79
Maurice Le Roux	
Awards	
Gold Medal, Venice	
Bronze Medal, Bilbao	
Quality Award and Prize,	
French National Film Center	

L 10
Five-thousand-year-old
rock painting

5 13
Stonehenge



13 Prehistoric Sites
From Stonehenge to the Moorlands of
Western Britain

Prehistoric sites are often difficult to understand; this video looks at a wide variety – from Stonehenge, in Wiltshire, England, to less well-known monuments high on the moorlands of western Britain – and helps to explain them. It also sets out to tell part of the story of the ancient peoples who built them. We can see the evidence – tools, stone buildings, earthworks, burial chambers, stone circles and long lines of upright stones – but how are we to interpret it? Many clues are pointed out to help work out what the monuments might have been used for. Reconstruction paintings of prehistoric times bring to life the remains of ancient communities: the makers of these structures were farmers, and we assume that the henges had ritual and religious significance in their lives. The construction of the later hillforts of the Iron Age, including Maiden Castle, is also looked at. An excavation of a long barrow is used to show how much of the evidence that we do have has been recovered by archaeological investigation. We also see a school party using a detailed map as they set out to explore a monument. The video ends by making clear just how many such ancient remains there are. It is a useful general guide to any study of prehistory.

Part of the series Looking at ...

English Heritage	20 minutes
	Color
	Age range 11–14
	VHS \$89

14 Grimes Graves
Neolithic Flint Mines and the Techniques
of Flint Knapping

The strange landscape of pits and mounds known as Grimes Graves near Thetford in Norfolk, England, is the site of one of Britain's earliest industries, flint mining, and its associated craft of flint knapping. This industry was carried on in the area within living memory – the craft survived long enough to be filmed in the 1940s and historic footage of this is included. Next, the mines are investigated and examined for evidence of how neolithic miners extracted the flint – the pits are the filled-in entrances to mine shafts. A school party is shown beginning their investigation of the mines. A professional flint knapper, John Lord, takes the viewer on a tour of the mines, including one of the deepest that is not open to the public. The flint is found underground embedded in the chalk, and the best is at the bottom of the pit, 60 feet down. Here tunnels lead off the central chamber into a maze of galleries beyond. John Lord demonstrates how the neolithic miners must have worked, using antler picks, by scraping away the chalk to loosen the large flint boulders. In the last part of the video he demonstrates the skills needed to make an axe head by using a pebble to split the flintstone and shape it. Finally the cutting edge of the axe head is put on, using an antler to flake off smaller pieces.

Part of the series Evidence on Site

Director/Writer	12 minutes
Philip Sugg	Color
English Heritage	Age range 6–14
Also available in French	VHS \$79





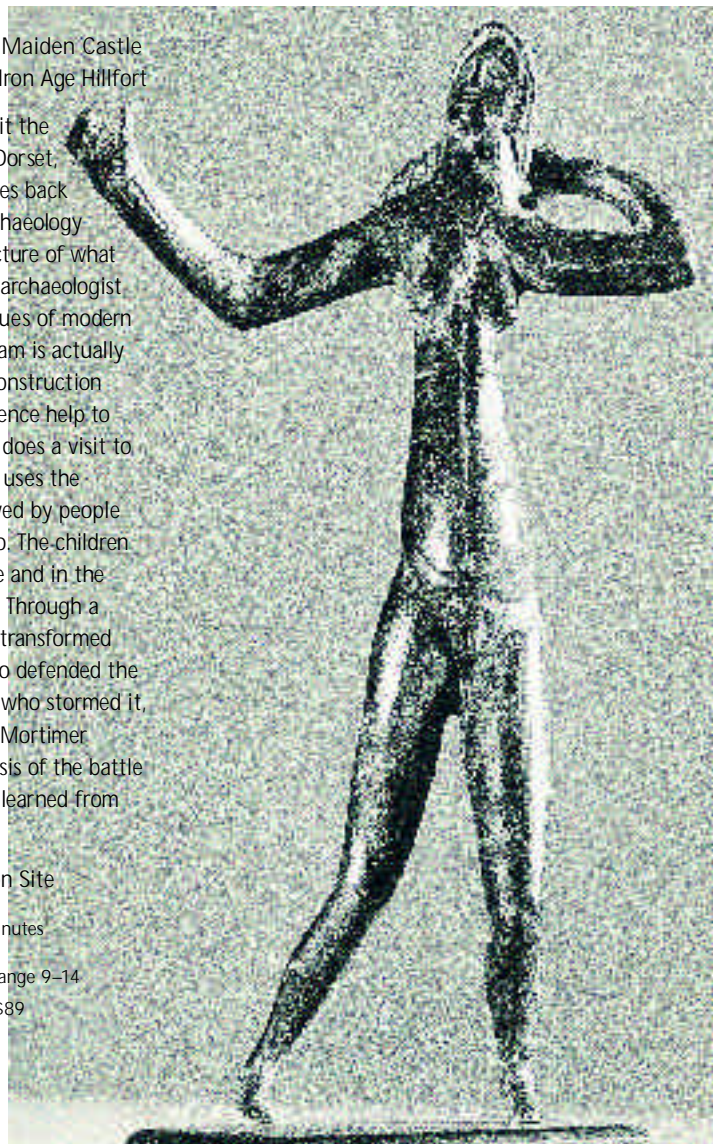
16 Working on the Evidence: Maiden Castle
Modern Archaeology at the Iron Age Hillfort

A group of young people visit the hillfort of Maiden Castle in Dorset, England, and think themselves back in time. They realize that archaeology is all about building up a picture of what life was like in the past. The archaeologist at work explains the techniques of modern archaeology and what his team is actually doing at Maiden Castle. Reconstruction paintings based on real evidence help to show life in the Iron Age, as does a visit to an experimental farm which uses the farming 'technology' employed by people over two thousand years ago. The children work on the evidence on site and in the local museum in Dorchester. Through a series of 'dissolves' they are transformed into the Iron Age people who defended the fort and the Roman soldiers who stormed it, while archive film shows Sir Mortimer Wheeler giving a vivid analysis of the battle of AD 43, based on what he learned from his excavations.

Part of the series Evidence on Site

Director/Writer 20 minutes
David Collison Color
Age range 9–14
Narrator VHS \$89
Magnus Magnusson

English Heritage
Also available in French



20 The Origins of Art in France
Celtic Art Treasures

Bringing together an unprecedented range of artefacts – jewels, animals in stone, carved figures and heads, abstract decorations on standing stones and primitive architecture – this film presents Celtic art in the context of Gallic civilization as a whole. The poetic and penetrating narrative by Max-Pol Fouchet stresses the art's supernatural roots in Druidic cults of gods, goddesses and heroes. For the Celts, we are told, 'the spirit and the head are inseparable'; and 'eternity is in the gaze.' Theirs is 'a religion of spiritual intensity; of 'transcendence; concerned with forces beyond human control. Fouchet hints at how the reduction of artistic forms to their expressive essentials relates to Scandinavian art of the period, to the distant oriental connections of the Celtic peoples, and indeed to modern Cubism and Abstraction. In Gallic art, we learn, abstraction and representation co-exist and merge. Fouchet's narration accompanies mesmeric sequences of intricate metalwork, ornaments, charms, 'souvenirs'; helmets (symbols of the French 'Gauloise' cigarette), and shots of desolate fortresses, tombs, and above all gazing, timeless heads. We learn how Gallic culture developed against the backdrop of a yet more ancient prehistory, recorded in cromlechs and stone circles that the sculptor Rodin came to consider 'the predecessors to the great Gothic cathedrals.' We learn too how, with the coming of the Romans, Romano-Gallic art extended to the building of bridges, aqueducts and ornamented, columned façades. It is thus out of an extremely rich brew of cultures that French art evolves.

'A masterly production. An enormous amount of documentary evidence shown very successfully.'

UNESCO

Directors 38 minutes
Max-Pol Fouchet Black and white
Jean L'Hôte Age range 12–adult
Narration Film \$693 Rental \$199
Max-Pol Fouchet VHS \$99
Also available in French

- L 13, page 15
Castlerigg Stone Circle
- O 16
Reconstruction drawing
- I 20
Celtic dancer