

Response to cave of forgotten dreams

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



of the Visual Arts and Film Studies of the Concerned 2 June Response to Cave of Forgotten Dreams Werner Herzog's documentary, Cave of Forgotten Dreams, depicting a 3D portrayal of the prehistoric artistic creations in the Chauvet Caves at Southern France forces the viewers to rethink as to what is the quintessential essence of humanness? Concerning the nature and essence of art, Herzog makes the viewers ponder as to whether art pursued a linear evolutionary course over the ages, or whether, as suggested by the cave pictures, human consciousness since times immemorial possessed an inner eye for beauty and awe, and the so called evolutionary development, constitutes a mere patina of the basic human ability to admire and imitate beauty? Doing so, Herzog nudges the contemporary viewers to reconsider the existing notions and concepts regarding creativity, art and art appreciation.

Herzog's documentary pursues a mesmerizing journey back in time; say almost 32, 000 years ago, to depict the earliest known art work created by mankind. If taken in a starkly pragmatic context, in consonance with the popular cinema as it is perceived today, prehistoric charcoal pictures should not ideally be the stuff of a gripping and thought provoking cinema.

However, it is not so with Cave of Forgotten Dreams. Herzog's usage of the 3D technology to film the ancient art work in a way redefines cinema. The nonstop projection of 3D images aided by the interviews of the experts and scientists, gives way to a creative space that is both contemporary as well as primordial, a space in which the viewers can shed their preconceived notions to think afresh about the fundamental nature and meaning of humanness.

Doing so, Herzog deliberately facilitates relevant insights into the essence of

mankind. All life forms live and thrive in the cradle of nature, yet it is only the mankind that has the ability to appreciate, cherish and imitate beauty. This capacity to appreciate and imitate beauty is the true essence of humanness and art. This capacity is ancient, prehistoric, raw, rough and wild, while at the same time being contemporary, current, sophisticated, delicate and civilized. There is some essential essence, energy or ether that though indiscernible, could very much be felt and experienced, which connects the so called rawness, wildness and roughness of the prehistoric man to the sophistication, sensitivity and civilization of the contemporary humanity through the medium of art.

In the light of this vision of art and humanity, it is easy to understand the comment made by Julien Monney in the film that an Aborigine rock art Painter in Australia believed that the rock art he was touching was the work not of man but of " the spirit". Perhaps that Aborigine rock artist was talking about the essential human ability to transcend beyond the apparent meaning being conveyed by one's imminent surroundings. The human nature to hold the natural phenomenon in awe, the impulse to imitate those phenomenons, and the audacity to overcome nature through imitation, a basic human tendency that has been passed on from one generation to next since the prehistoric times.