

Cave art shows Neanderthals were artists

Scientists have found the first major evidence that Neanderthals, rather than modern humans, created the world's oldest known cave paintings – suggesting they may have had an artistic sense similar to our own

Scientists using new dating technique, called **uranium-thorium**, discovered that paintings in three caves in Spain were created more than 64,000 years ago – 20,000 years before modern humans arrived in Europe

Cave sites

200km
125 miles

La Pasiega
IBERIAN
PENINSULA

Maltravieso

Ardales

Hand stencils at Maltravieso. One in centre dated to 66,000 years ago

64,000-year-old scalariform (ladder shape) at La Pasiega
Dates of paintings at Ardales span 25,000 years, suggesting creation of art was a long tradition

Neanderthal model at London's Natural History Museum



Neanderthals appear in Europe

64,800: Paintings created at sites in Iberian Peninsula

40,000: Neanderthals disappear

EUROPE

200 Thousands of years ago

100

50

Today

AFRICA

Homo sapiens appear in Africa

40-45,000: Modern humans reach Europe

Sources: Science Magazine, University of Southampton, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology

Pictures: H. Collado, Breuil et al. (1913), C.D Standish, A.W.G. Pike, D.L. Hoffmann

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