



Africa's rock art heritage: key points

What and where is the art?

- Africa has the greatest diversity of rock art of any continent on earth.
- Africa has some of the World's oldest rock art. Paintings of animals on stones were excavated in Namibia and have been dated to around 27,000 years old.
- It is estimated that there are over 10 million individual painted and engraved images in Africa.
- The biggest concentrations of rock art are found in the Sahara Desert and in southern Africa, but there is also important rock art in East and Central Africa.

Why is the art important?

It provides the first evidence of human imagination.

- Rock Art is all that remains of mankind's earliest visual communications and artistic expressions.
- Rock Art is part of our heritage: who we are and where we come from.
- Rock Art provides evidence of the ways our ancestors saw their worlds and gives us glimpses of
- the origins of modern beliefs.

How is the art threatened?

Most Rock Art is old and fragile and is now threatened by expanding populations, carelessness, vandalism, theft, uncontrolled tourism and by national development projects such as new roads, reservoirs, urban expansion, mining and industry. Within 50 years much of the art may be damaged leaving little for future generations to enjoy and study.

What must be done to protect it?

Protection of this heritage is a global priority. We must learn to study the art, to try and find out how old it is, what the images might mean and why they were made. Understanding the art and its age confirms its value. It is the responsibility of everybody, you, me everyone else, to respect the art and protect for our children and all their descendants.

