

*All Mixed Up: The Problem of Mixed Styles  
And Style Designation On The Colorado  
Plateau*

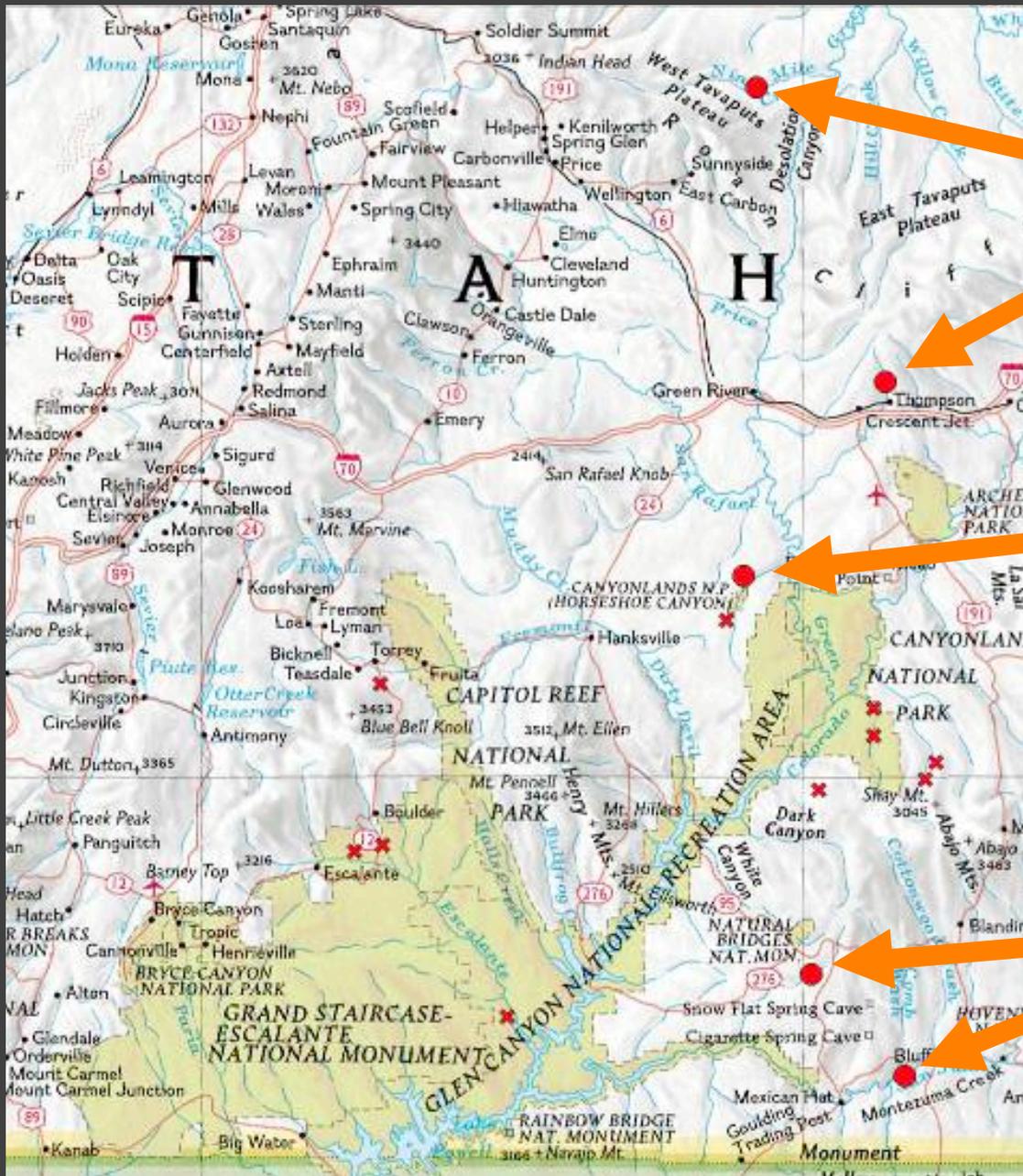
David Sucec, BCS PROJECT  
URARA 2007

In the study of prehistoric rock art, on the Colorado Plateau little seems to be fixed—

- style names change unexpectedly
- new styles are still being designated
- no complete record of any of the many prehistoric rock art styles has been realized.



Fremont Style?



Fremont Style

Barrier Canyon Style

Basketmaker Style



Black line represents area of figures in the Barrier Canyon style, 2007.

## Study–Area Ancient Rock Art Styles

- Barrier Canyon Style
- Fremont Style
- Basketmaker Style
  
- Mixed / Abajo-LaSal Styles





BCS Holy Ghost Group, The Great Gallery, Canyonlands National Park.



Fremont Shaman Figure Panel, Nine Mile Canyon.



Painted Basketmaker Panel, Cedar Mesa.



Bow and Arrow Panel. Western Canyonlands, Mixed style figures—BCS figure with bow and arrow, figures with Fringed-horn head extensions (right), curved tail canines.

## Elements of Style

- Barrier Canyon Style
- Fremont Style
- Basketmaker Style

...vision is not a mechanical recording of elements but the grasping of significant structural patterns.

Rudolph Arnheim, *Art And Visual Perception*



## The Barrier Canyon Style

- Elongated figure proportion, width to length
- Spirit Figures are bilaterally symmetrical
- The *parallel line motif* with long vertical lines rather than the typically horizontal orientation (rake) of other Archaic styles
- Arcs over head and/or shoulders
- Headdresses such as “crowns” and double antennae
- Oversize vacant eyes
- Compositions apparently representing friendly associations of animal, bird, snake and plant images with anthropomorphic spirit figures.
- Composite figures, or hybrids, made up of body parts of different species
- Quadrupeds (dogs, cougar?) with tails curved over its back
- fletched or unfletched spears (tall poles)



## Fremont Style

- Hourglass figure / elongated trapezoidal figure (Uinta)
- Bison horn headdress and fringed “horn” headdress
- Necklace / chin line
- Horizontal “belt” line
- Slit eyes
- Arms extend straight down at slight angle from shoulders
- Fringed staff
- Bow and arrow

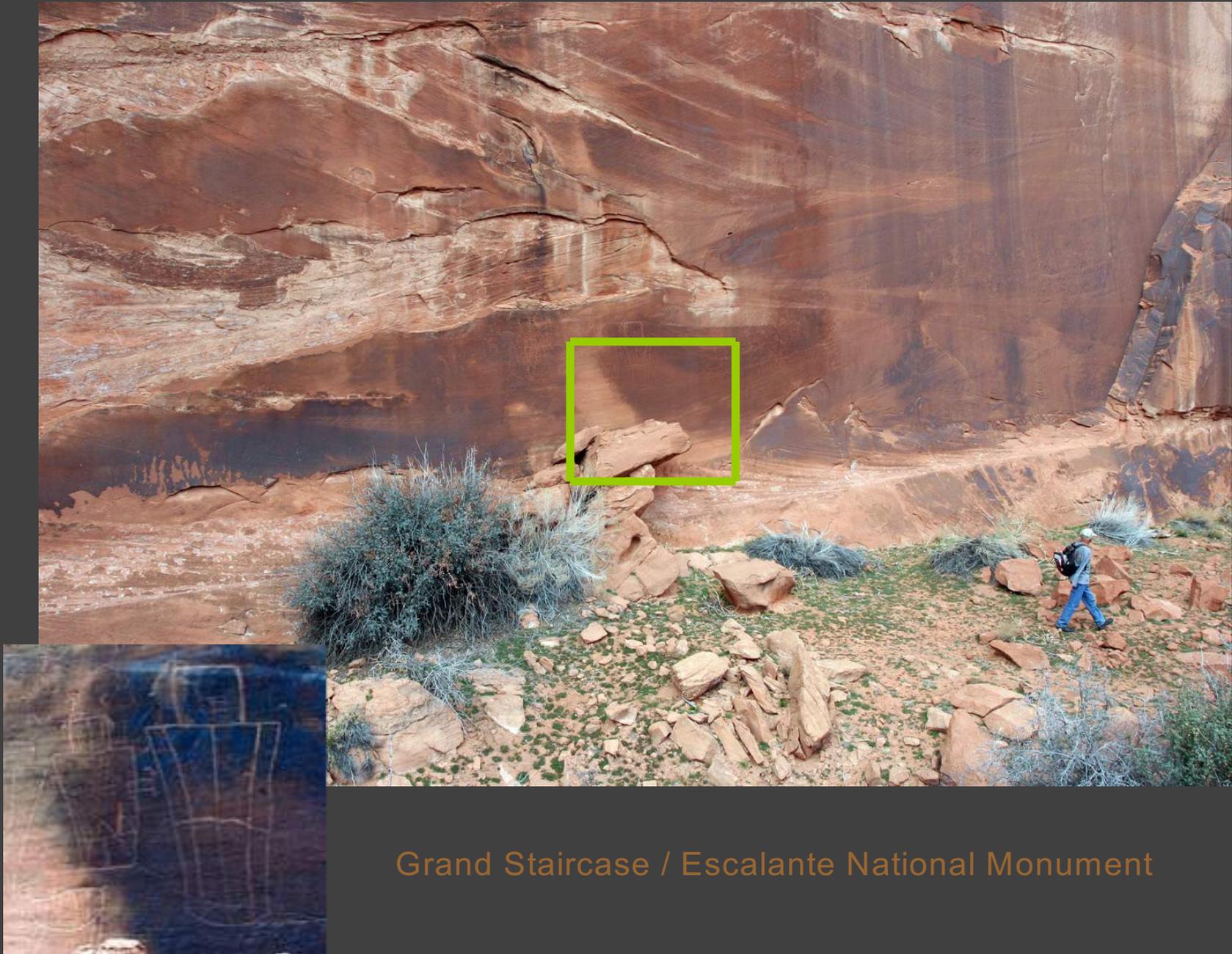




## Basketmaker Style

- Box like body form
- Arms and legs
- Arms extend straight out from shoulders and 90 degrees down
- Splayed, full hands and feet
- Forms stacked over the head (and side of head), ranging from crescents to horizontal forms with little or no curve
- Atlatl form

# Grand Staircase / Escalante National Monument Area



Grand Staircase / Escalante National Monument

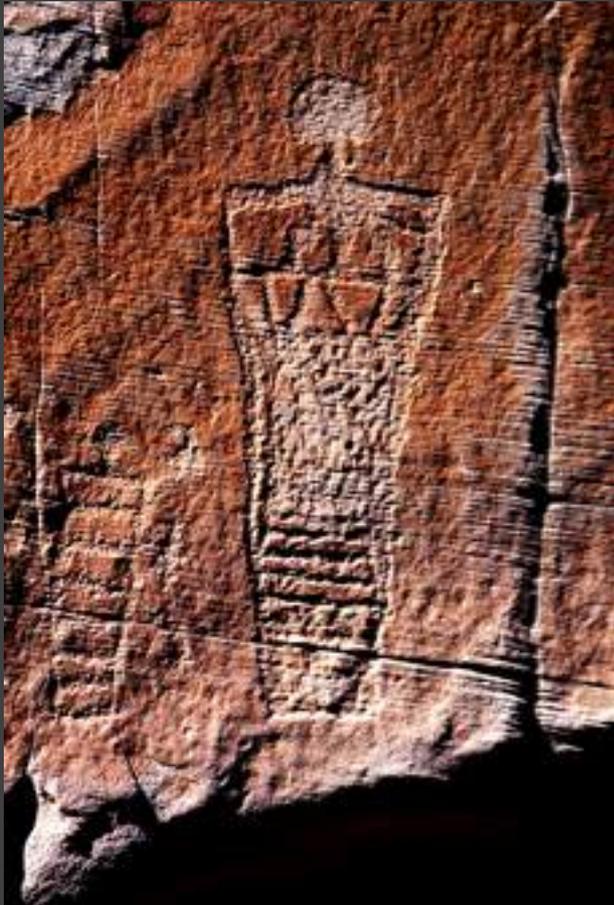


Mixed style, mostly BCS, figures, with parallel line motif, tapered body forms, square head forms. Superimposed on earlier pecked images, including possible Glen Canyon Linear style quadrupeds.

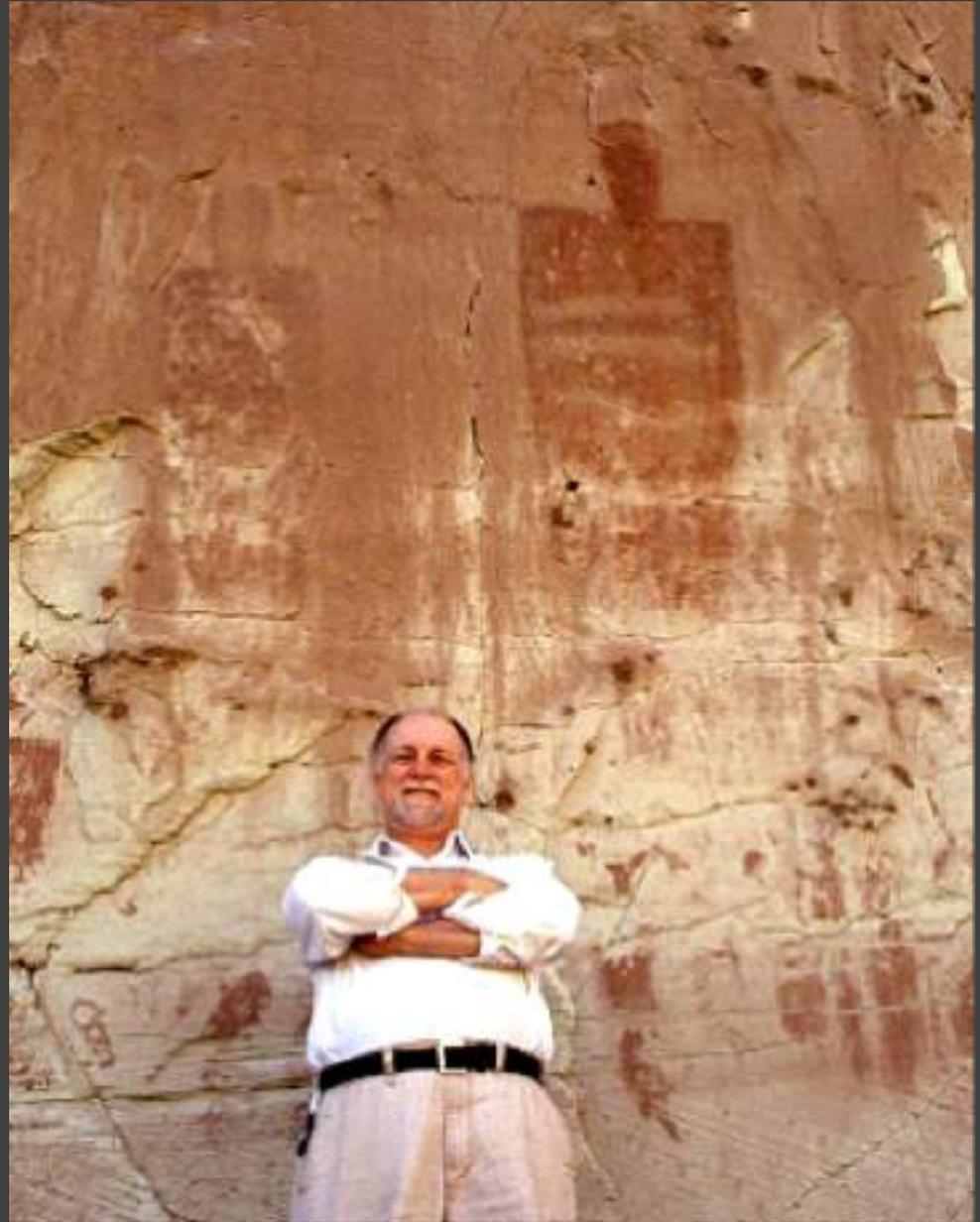


Large Petro Panel, Western Canyonlands. Pecked figures, late (?) Barrier Canyon style.





Large Petro Panel, Western  
Canyonlands.





Fish Creek Cove, Boulder Mountain Area. Many affiliate these figures with the Fremont style but, in form, they are much closer to the Barrier Canyon style.



Fish Creek Cove Site



Top left: Fish Creek Cove.  
Right: Great Gallery.



Top left: Fish Creek Cove.  
Right: Cowboy/Walters Caves







Antler Panel, Escalante River. Fremont figure shooting Bighorn (left), Mixed style, mostly BCS, figures with large Mule Deer antler head extensions—a local variation seen in the figures of the Barrier Canyon, Mixed, and Fremont styles, in the Escalante area.

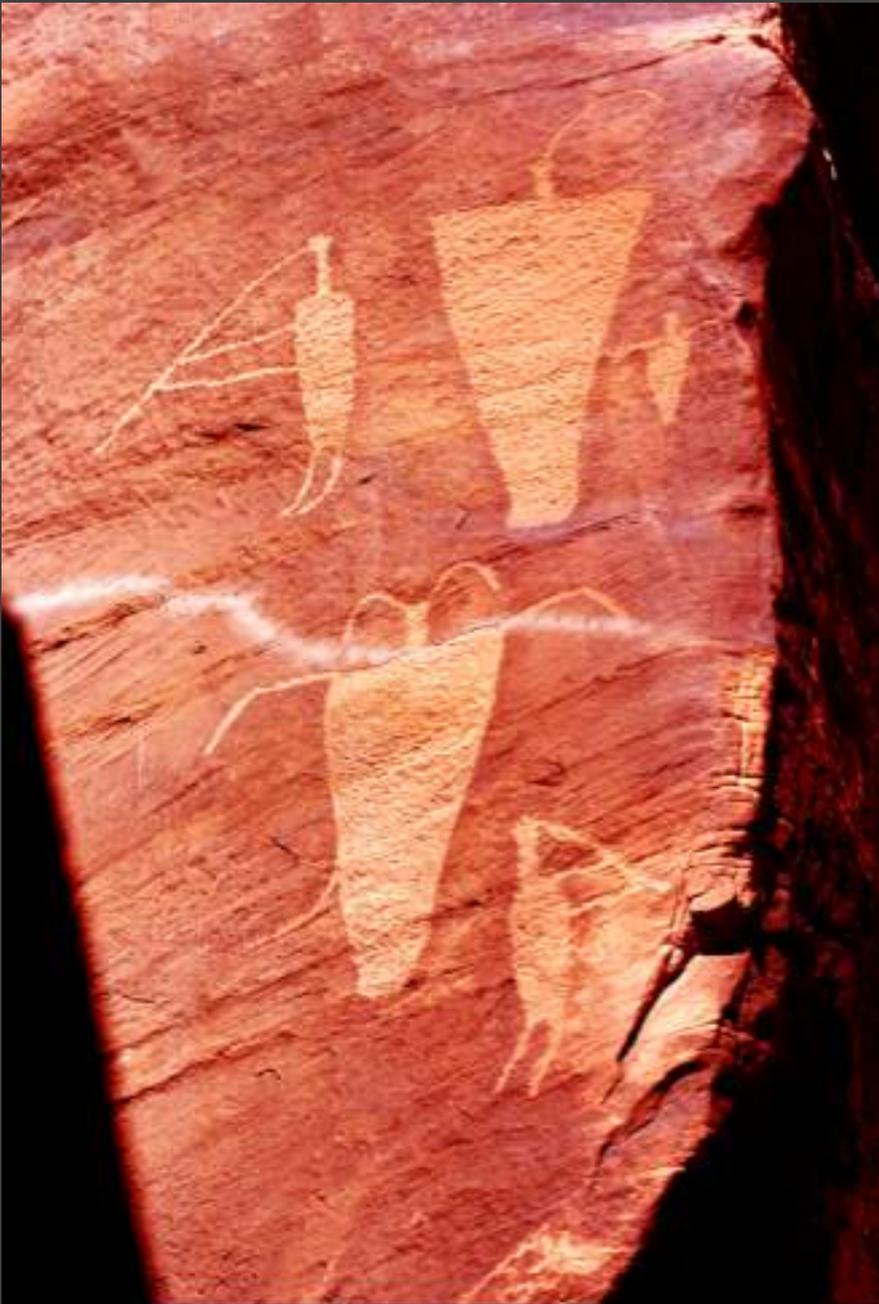


Fremont Trio Panel. Escalante River drainage, A PLM BCS figure, with deer antler head extensions at the lower right, The triad of Fremont figures appear to be more recently painted and two of the figures superimpose earlier images, including a BCS figure with Basketmaker-type hands. CL

## Abajo–LaSal Style

The Abajo-LaSal Style has attributes of Barrier Canyon Style and San Juan Basketmaker rock art and is likely to be associated with Basketmakers living north of the San Juan.

Sally Cole, *Origins, Continuities, and Meanings in  
Barrier Canyon Style Rock Art*



## Abajo-LaSal Style Type Site

Relationships between makers of Barrier Canyon Style and San Juan Basketmaker II are most clearly indicated by material culture and rock art in the Abajo and LaSal Mountains area.

Sally Cole



Passage Point Site, Eastern Canyonlands, type-site for Sally Cole's Abajo-LaSal style.



Large Panel,  
Passage Point Site.  
Barrier Canyon,  
Mixed, and Fremont  
(including Shield)  
style figures.



Detail, Large Panel, Passage Point Site. Barrier Canyon, Mixed, and Fremont style figures.





Painted Panel, Passage Point Site. Barrier Canyon style figures with curved arms, apparently, a local variation.



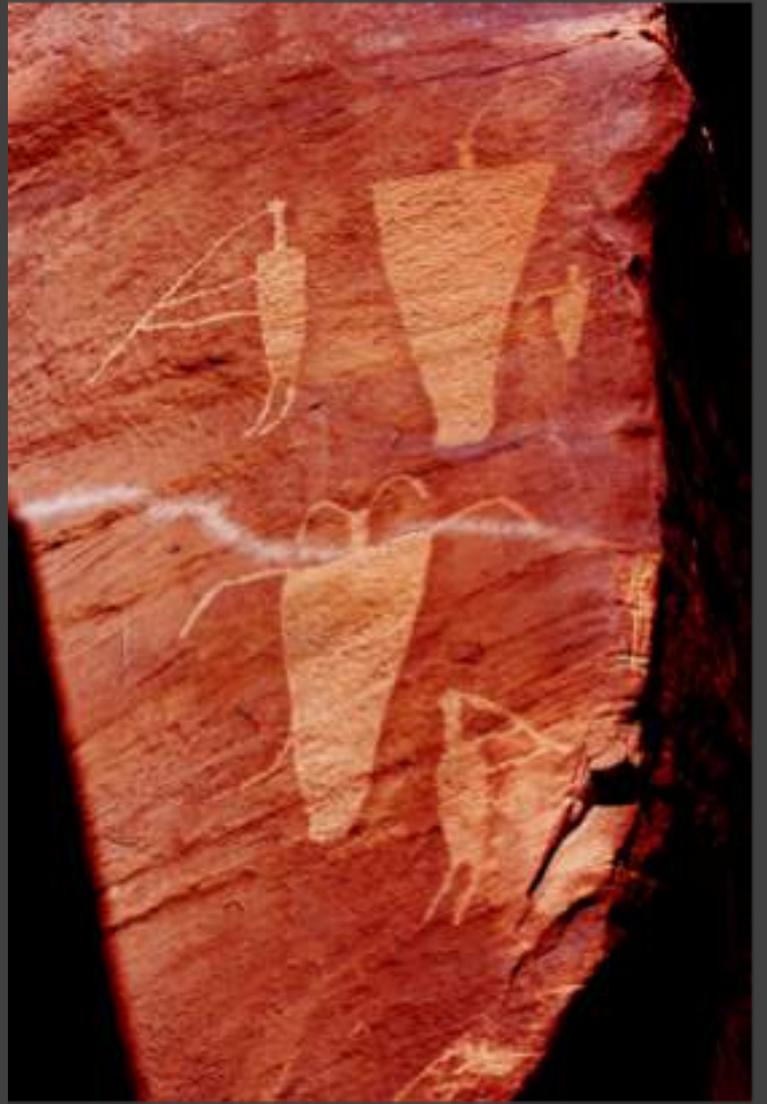
East Pecked Panels, Passage Point Site, Western Canyonlands.



East pecked panels, south panel. Barrier Canyon and Mixed/Abajo LaSal style figures.



East pecked panels, north panels. Barrier Canyon and Mixed/Abajo LaSal style figures.





White Bird Shelter, Eastern Canyonlands. Painted Barrier Canyon style figures, Salt Creek Variant. Triangular body forms, thin neck and head form.



Slanted Wall Panel, Eastern Canyonlands. Salt Creek Variant figures, triangular bodies, PLM, head arcs (bottom right).



Spring Panel, Eastern Canyonlands. Barrier Canyon or Abajo-LaSal style?



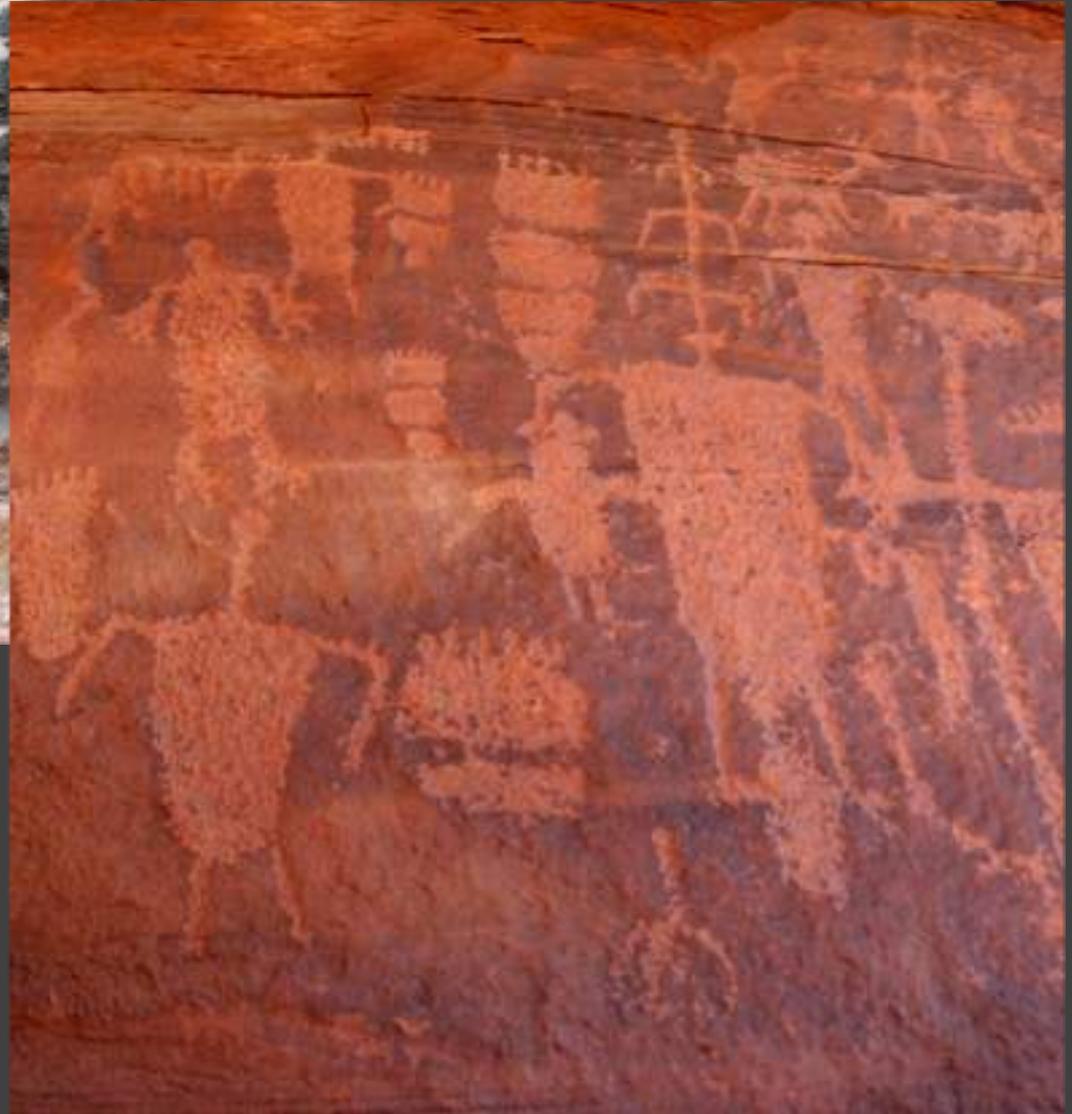


Mixed / Basketmaker Panel, Eastern Canyonlands.



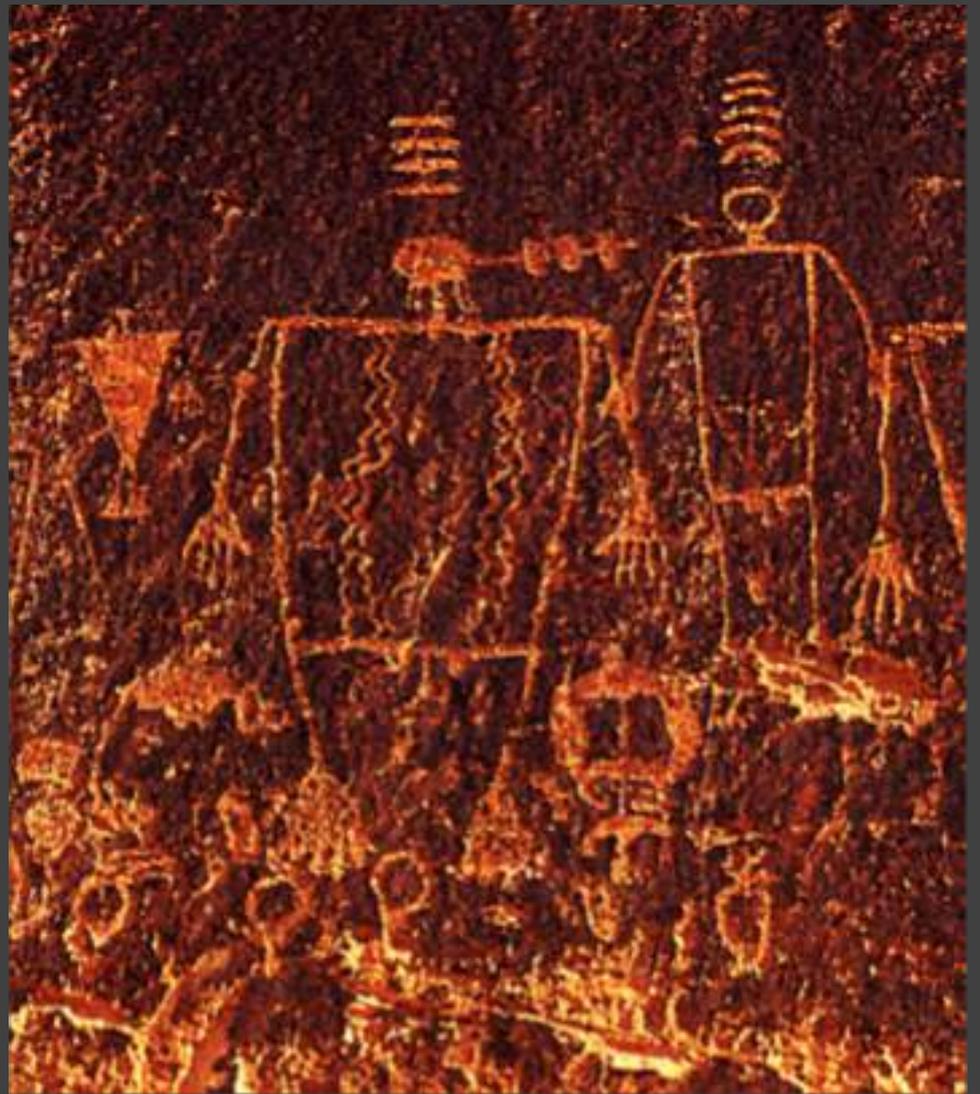
Above. Basketmaker Panel 1,  
Indian Creek Canyon drainage.  
Characteristic Basketmaker-body  
figure in upper half.

Right. Pecked figures with right-  
angle arms, full hands and feet,  
and stacked head extensions.





Pecked figures with BCS bodies and Basketmaker elements, such as head extensions, arms, hands, and feet



Left. Mixed style, mostly San Juan Basketmaker, head, arms, and legs atypical.  
Right. San Juan Basketmaker figures, Butler Wash, San Juan River.

# DISCUSSION

## Style

The concepts (involved in visual analysis) stress the appearance of objects rather than their purposes, their forms rather than their meanings...

Art objects are elements of particular temporal, spatial, and social sequences that may be called "historical styles." ... style is perceived as a function of the human imagination...

J. J. Brody, *Anasazi and Pueblo Painting*

## BCS PROJECT Working Chronology

- Barrier Canyon Style, ca. 6750 – 5600 b.c.e. – ca. c.e. 300?
- Glen Canyon Linear Style, ca. 6000-2000 b.c.e. – ca. c.e. 500?
- Basketmaker Style, ca. 2000-1000 b.c.e. – ca. c.e. 500
- Fremont Style, ca. c.e. 100 – ca. 1300

## Sally Cole Chronology

- Barrier Canyon Style, ca. 2000 b.c.e. – ca. c.e. 300-400
- Glen Canyon Style 5, ca. 5000-4000 b.c.e. – ca. 500 b.c.e.+
- Basketmaker II - III Style, ca. 1000-300 b.c.e. – ca. c.e. 500
- Fremont Style, ca. ca. 400 – ca. c.e. 1300

## Barrier Canyon Style

Cole (BCS) 2004 observations based on photographs and drawings of 60 sites (“out of a possible 155” from Manning, 1990).

“It is likely the Style rose during the Late Archaic period, but iconographic roots may lie in Early to Middle Archaic times.”

“The style may have earlier roots as suggested by Early Archaic figurines and rock art. Direct ties to the figurines are unknown, but the Glen Canyon Style 5, which may date from the Middle Archaic, is a good candidate for influencing [the] Barrier Canyon Style.”

Sally Cole

## Barrier Canyon Style and Fremont Style

“There are a few examples of rock art that appear to be transitional between Fremont and Barrier Canyon.”

“Barrier Canyon Style – Fremont continuity is reasonable but uncertain. It is suggested by examples of “mixed” rock art, but these seem to be few in number. One would expect there to be more given the geographic overlap.”

“Fremont culture did not develop until after AD 1–400. By this time, corn agriculture had been practiced on the Colorado Plateau for 500 plus years. It is logical that Fremont groups would have been influenced by Basketmaker II populations than by a hunter-gatherer based tradition.”

Sally Cole



## Style Classification

Classifying, as opposed to not classifying, has a value of its own, whatever form the classification may take.

The demand for organization is a need common to art and science and that in consequence 'taxonomy, which is ordering par excellence, has eminent aesthetic value,' Given this, it seems less surprising that the aesthetic sense can by itself open the way to taxonomy and even anticipate some of its results.

Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*

