



What's In A Name?

Some thoughts about this stuff we all love

URARA Symposium 2017

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It all started with...

Just what would the Fremonts, Anasazis or ancient Utes who did the drawings in Nine Mile Canyon have to say on the subject if they were still among us and had been invited to attend the big announcement at the State Capitol?

I'm saying it's highly possible that they would be trying hard to keep a straight face while poking each other in the ribs.

Anasazi 1 to Fremont 2: "I did that one while I was drunk."

Fremont 3 to Anasazi 4: "I got grounded three moons for that one."

Ute 1 to Ute 2: "That doesn't even look like a bighorn."

About Utah: Ancient sketches graffiti or art?; Lee Benson; Deseret News; January 8, 2010

What caught my attention...

This is from a letter written by Larry Cesspooch (Whitebelly) of the Ute Indian Tribe Historical Society:

“...The **writings** in Nine Mile Canyon are our sacred history. It's people like you who have made respect and appreciation of the **rock writings** in Nine Mile Canyon a straight-up battle.”

He goes on to add: “The **writings weren't put there as art, but as messages. That's where things get misunderstood — calling the messages art.**”

An archaeologist named Garth Norman e-mailed yet more elucidation:

“Technically it is neither graffiti nor art. It is writing.”

About Utah: Readers hurl rocks at column on rock art; Lee Benson;
Deseret News; January 17, 2010

Do we need to be the...

**Utah Rock Writing Research
Association?**

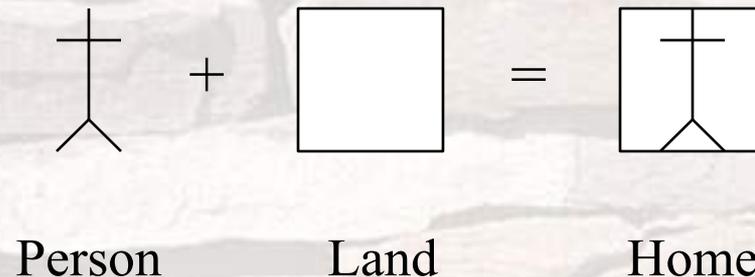
Writing...

- Within a language system, writing relies on many of the same structures as speech, such as vocabulary, grammar, and semantics, with the added dependency of a **system of signs or symbols**... Writing has been instrumental in keeping history, maintaining culture, dissemination of knowledge through the media and the formation of legal systems.

Source: Wikipedia

There are several forms of writing

- The two most frequent are:
 - Alphabetical style where a letter stands for a sound which are combined to form words (it's the way that English is done)
 - Ideograms where “pictures” form words



- Ideograms could fit what we see in rock art

However, all forms of writing require a consistent pattern for interpretation

This is writing

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In my mind, rock art isn't writing

I simply don't see a consistent pattern that would allow me to "read" the typical panel



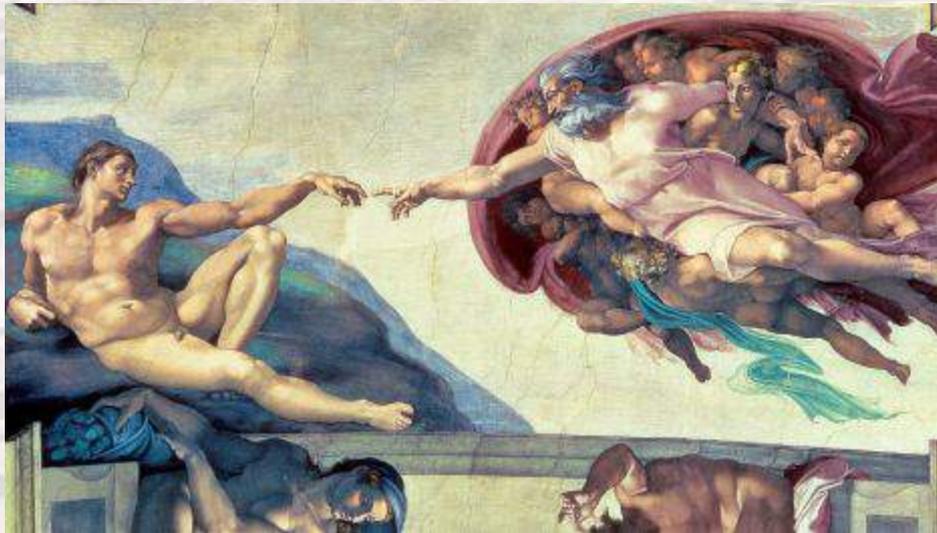
Is writing essential to communication?

- ❑ You can communicate through writing...

So God created man in his own image, in the image of
God created he him; male and female created he them.

The Bible; Genesis 1:27; King James Version

- ❑ Or you can communicate without writing...



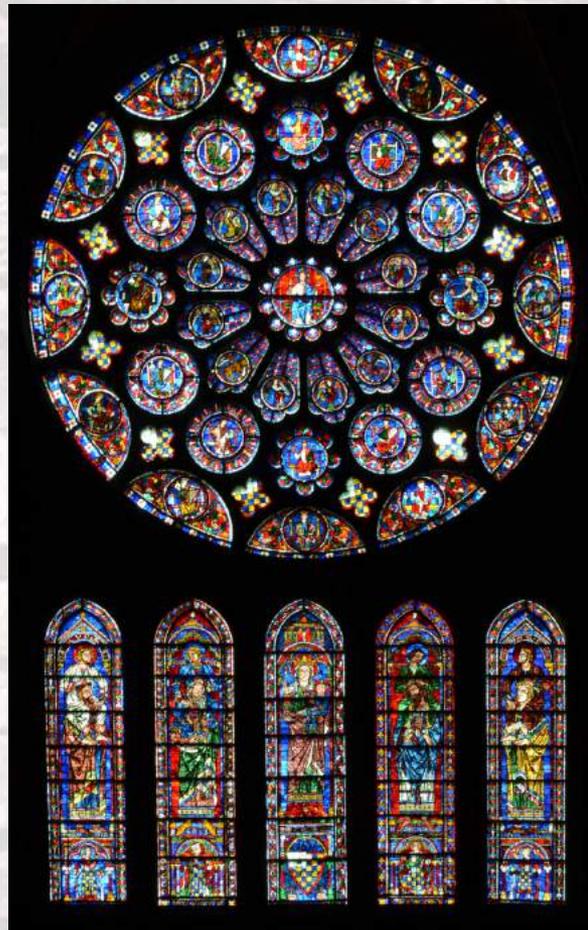
Michelangelo Buonarroti: The Sistine Chapel

We have to remember...

- ❑ Prehistoric cultures didn't have the range of options for communicating that we do. No...
 - Paper
 - Television
 - Billboards
 - Signs
 - Internet
 - Radio
- ❑ Rock surfaces were one of their few media. They were likely used for a broad series of purposes.

Art as communication

- ❑ In an era when most people were illiterate art was an important medium for communication



The southern window
of the Chartres
Cathedral; Created
about 1230 AD.
Chartres, France.

Like artists...the definition of “art” is complicated

- ❑ One early definition of *art* is closely related to "**skill**" or "craft," as associated with words such as “artisan.”
- ❑ Art is a diverse range of artifacts (artworks), expressing the author's imaginative or technical skill, intended to be appreciated for their **beauty or emotional power**.^{[1][2]}
- ❑ Art may be characterized in terms of its representation of **reality, storytelling, expression, communication of emotion**, or other qualities.
- ❑ Art has been defined as a vehicle for the expression or communication of **emotions** and **ideas**, a means for **exploring and appreciating formal elements** for their own sake, and as **representation**. Leo Tolstoy identified art as a use of indirect means to **communicate** from one person to another. Art as the means by which a **community** develops for itself a **medium for self-expression and interpretation**.

Skill

Aesthetics

Communication

Source: Wikipedia. Bolded and edited by me.

Is rock art “art”?

- ❑ Skill - varies
- ❑ Aesthetics - varies
- ❑ Communication – almost always

What was rock art to the cultures that created it?

- Story telling
- Education – learning rocks
- History
- Cultural values
- Religion
- Boundary markers
- Memories of important people
- Calendars
- Trail markers
- Maps
- Ritual/ceremony
- Religion
- Astronomy
- Record of significant events
- Aesthetics

Maybe we should be...

- ❑ The Utah Rock Communication Research Association

URComRA

- ❑ But I don't think that rock art is an inappropriate term for what we enjoy. So...I can easily live with

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