Creating Color in Prehistoric Art of the Southwest

Procurement, Processing, and Application of Red Ochre and Other Pigments in the Rock Art of Utah
1. **Olorgesailie, Kenya:** Researchers recently discovered two pieces of ochre, intentionally shaped by humans, that were at least 307,000 years old. It’s the oldest such confidently dated find.

2. **Blombos Cave, South Africa:** Dated to about 100,000 years ago, ochre-processing “tool kits” and other artifacts found at the site — including an engraved piece of ochre, the oldest known art of its type — suggest early humans were capable of modern, complex behaviors much earlier than once thought.

3. **Northern Cape, South Africa:** Ochre fragments from a cluster of sites suggest the material was being collected as early as 500,000 years ago, though some researchers dispute the dates.

4. **Twin Rivers, Zambia:** Pieces of ochre up to 266,000 years old include a quartzite cobble stained with ochre that may be the earliest known ochre-processing tool.
5. **Porc-Epic, Ethiopia:** The largest collection of ochre pieces ever found, weighing nearly 90 pounds in total, includes a variety of tools to process and use the material 40,000 years ago.

6. **Maastricht-Belvédère, the Netherlands:** Fragments of ochre up to 250,000 years old, found among animal bones and stone artifacts, are the oldest evidence of the pigment’s use by Neanderthals.

7. **Rose Cottage Cave, South Africa:** Researchers have pieced together a story of ochre collection and processing that spans more than 60,000 years, from 30,000 to 96,000 years ago.

8. **Madjedbebe, Australia:** Various ochre pieces, found among thousands of stone tools, helped researchers establish in 2017 that humans were in Australia 65,000 years ago — 20,000 years earlier than researchers thought.