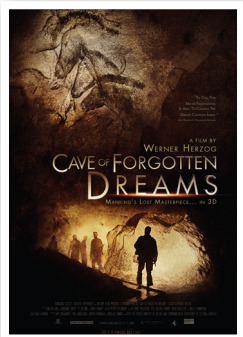


Cave of Forgotten Dreams



Synopsis

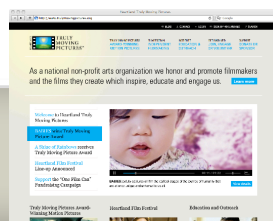
Werner Herzog gains exclusive access to film inside the Chauvet caves of southern France, capturing the oldest known pictorial creations of humankind in their astonishing natural setting. He puts 3-D technology to a profound use, taking us back in time over 30,000 years. The caves contain fascinating images created by prehistoric man, and profound insights into the beginning of art and the soul are explored through the simple yet incredible paintings.

Discussion Questions

- Were you familiar with the Chauvet caves, or other famous caves that are full of human-created paintings? Why was the cave featured in the film so important to all the scientists who were interviewed, and even to the French government, which severely restricts access to the caves?
- This film can partially be viewed as an anthropological study of humankind. What new discoveries were the scientists who work at the caves making? How were they able to speculate about the possible lives that the original painters might have lived?
- Throughout the film the concept of the vast scope of time and human existence is a recurring theme. The paintings were done more than 30,000 years ago. Think about the average lifespan of humans today, and then consider the vast stretch of time and generations between today and when the caves were painted. Is it difficult to comprehend the span of time and human existence that is so much longer than simply your personal experience?
- Director Werner Herzog decided to film the movie in 3D to take advantage of the natural contours, nooks and crannies of which the cave walls are comprised. What do you think of the use of 3D? Does this approach provide greater detail and texture, or is distracting?
- Is the movie just about cave paintings? What deeper, more thoughtful themes come out in the narration and the approach of Herzog and the scientists?
- At one point in the film Herzog postulates that maybe these paintings reflect the beginning of the human soul, as art and music became essential expressions of humanity. What do you think the relation is between art and the essence of being human?

Movie images © 2011 IFC Films

Find out what other people are saying about this film and discover how they are using the guide!
Join the conversation at TrulyMovingPictures.org.

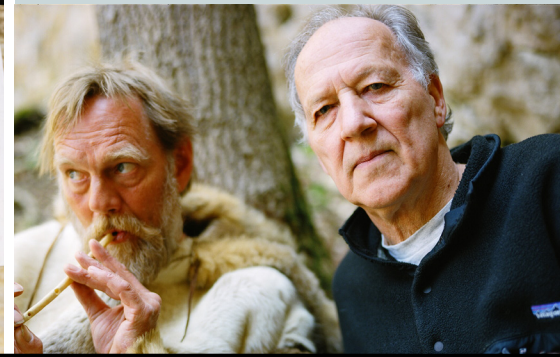


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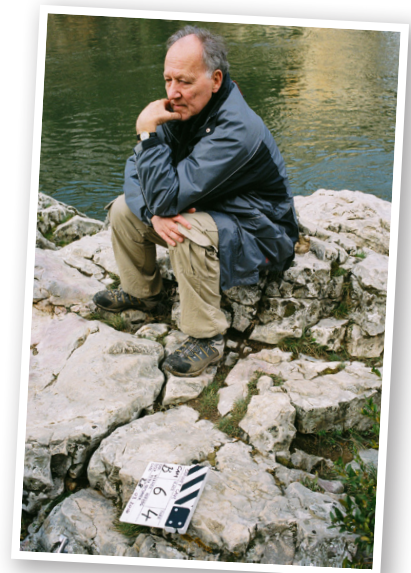
Cave of Forgotten Dreams

Do Your Research

- Are there other caves that have old paintings like those at Chauvet? Research the Lascaux caves, which are mentioned in the film. Why are the caves at Chauvet considered so important?
- The Lascaux caves are now closed to the public. Research the reasons for the closure to understand why such great care is being taken with the Chauvet caves. How does the mere presence of humans, light and air conditioning dramatically affect the environment of caves and the paintings they contain?
- Research some of the other films Werner Herzog has made. Many of them are narrative feature films, but many are documentaries. He has made films all around the world, from Antarctica to African deserts and South American jungles, but he is always exploring vertically, as well, trying to understand the depths of the human soul. Pick two or three of his films and see if you can find common elements in his work relating to the human condition.

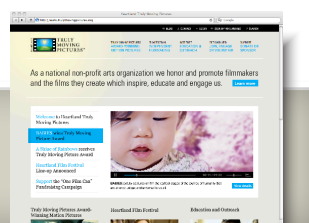
Get Involved

- Preservation is a key factor in the caves at Chauvet. Why is it so important to preserve historical artifacts and study them? What is it about history that allows us to better understand humanity today? Visit your local historical society and ask them about the lengths they go to in order to preserve historical documents and photographs from your city or state. See if you can volunteer with them and help preserve history for your children and grandchildren.



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