

CONSERVATION OF ROCK ART: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

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The last four issues of COALITION were devoted to Rock Art. We would like to thank the contributors who made possible their publication.

As we can see through this and previous issues of COALITION, Rock Art is a particularly threatened part of Cultural Heritage. This is due to different factors, such as the fragile techniques involved in its creation, climate, natural disasters or the type of environment (open-air, shelter or subterranean). Anthropogenic impact might be one of the most important threats among a myriad of risks surrounding Rock Art.

Twelve papers have been published on this subject focusing on different aspects of Rock Art conservation. Thus, two papers have been published on a global perspective (Bednarik 2006, Seglie 2006), four papers presented an overview of world Rock Art and their specific problems of conservation: Fortea (2005), Watchman (2005), Strecker and Podestá (2006), and Gutierrez (2006) on Iberian, Australian, South American and Baja California respectively. On issues related to biodeterioration four papers have been published (Saiz-Jimenez 2005, Gonzalez and Saiz-Jimenez 2005, Dandridge and Meen 2007, Jurado et al. 2007). A paper on non-invasive documentation (Mark and Billo 2006) and another one on the management of a World Heritage site, Altamira Cave (Lasheras and de las Heras 2006), complete this special issue.

From these papers a variety of conclusions could be extracted. Among them it was clear a need for a strong public promotion of the principle that all Rock Art is part of the common heritage of mankind (Bednarik 2006), a proactive research, conservation and planning in order to preserve Rock Art (Watchman 2005), the premise that the best strategy on prehistoric painting conservation

could be maintaining their original conditions (Gonzalez and Saiz-Jimenez 2005, Lasheras and de las Heras 2006). A highlight on the fragility of Rock Art and the importance of human aggressions (Fortea 2005), such as vandalism or uncontrolled tourism (Strecker and Podestá 2006), sometimes consequence of a lack of knowledge (Seglie 2006), invasive methods of recording (Strecker and Podestá 2006), and by changes of the environmental conditions that may provoke unpredicted effects (Saiz-Jimenez 2005).

We hope that this series of papers devoted to Rock Art conservation were useful for both the scientific community and those involved in the conservation and management of Cultural Heritage. We conclude the series with this issue, although papers on this subject will be welcome, as well as those related to scientific research and conservation of Cultural Assets.

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ROCK ART, LICHENS, AND GEOCHEMISTRY

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Managers of rock art sites often are confronted with the dilemma of encroaching lichen colonies on ancient rock art.