



UNI
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LECTURE SERIES 2019

Archaeology, Cognition, and the Spread of Visual Culture

Institut für Archäologische Wissenschaften,
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, Freiburg
KG I, HS1199, 18:15

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and the Spread of Visual Culture

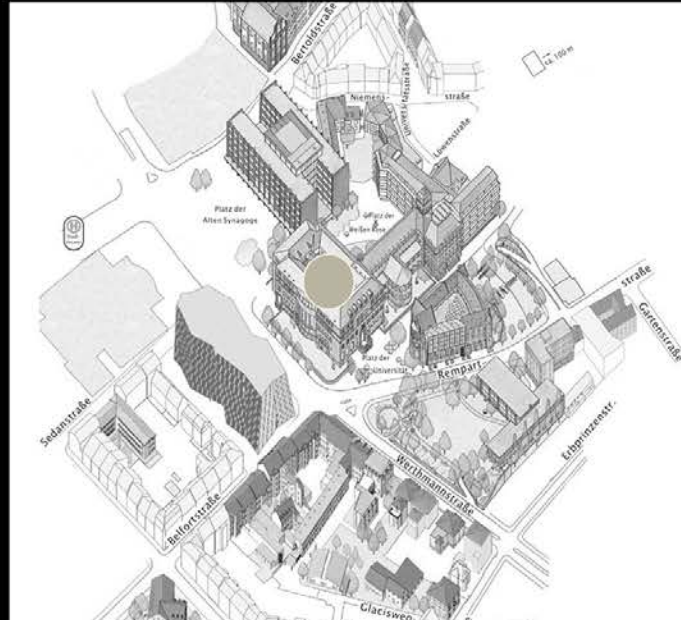
held by Prof. Dr. David Wengrow

Initiative of the project:
'Visual Culture and Anthropology in Antiquity'

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'Kleine Fächer' Baden-Württemberg



Venue:
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, Freiburg
KG I, HS 1199, 18:15
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David Wengrow

Professor of Comparative Archaeology
University College London

Programme

18th of June: The Bronze Age of Mikhail Rostovtzeff
25th of June: Visual Imagination in the Earliest Cities
2nd of July: The First Age of Mechanical Reproduction



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Lecture 1:

The first lecture will discuss how the study of cognition is becoming an integral part of archaeological and art historical research, and some of the methodological challenges this generates. It will introduce the notion of “counter-intuitive” images (e.g. depictions of organic beings with body-parts clearly taken from different species), and the puzzling distribution of such images in the archaeological record, as a case study. The lecture will locate these new approaches within an older tradition of research, beginning with the intriguing, but little-known views of M.I. Rostovtzeff (1870-1952) about the connection between commerce and the spread of images in the ancient world, especially between China and the Mediterranean, via the nomadic cultures of the Central Asian steppe.

Lecture 2:

To go deeper into the relationship between cognition and culture, this second lecture will consider the puzzling distribution of “monsters” (Mischwesen) in the archaeological record, and in the record of human image-making more generally. Why are these composite figures apparently so rare in prehistoric art (e.g. the Upper Palaeolithic and Neolithic art of Eurasia)? Why, on the other hand, do they appear in such great numbers and over such great areas, once human societies begin to take the form of cities and states, in the Bronze and Iron Ages? Examples will be drawn from the Bronze Age of western Eurasia, and from the “orientalising” art of the Iron Age Mediterranean.

Lecture 3:

The third and final lecture will draw together a number of strands of enquiry, in order to propose an explanation for the distribution of “counter-intuitive” images, such as monsters or Mischwesen, in the record of human image-making. These include the role of mechanical reproduction (e.g. seals and casting moulds) in the dissemination of imagery, from the Bronze Age onwards, as well as the institutional relationship between administration, scribal practices, and the production of images. The relationship between universal (cognitive) and historical (technological, institutional) factors will be considered, with reference to examples from the ancient Near East, Egypt, China, and elsewhere.



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