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~~THE~~ MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK

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FOR RELEASE Wednesday, April 28, 1937

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, announces an exhibition of Prehistoric Rock Pictures from the Frobenius Collection which will open to the public Wednesday, April 28, and will remain on view through Sunday, May 30. The exhibition will fill three floors of the Museum and will include 150 facsimiles of rock paintings and engravings chosen from the Frobenius Collection of 3500 in the Institute for the Study of the Morphology of Civilization, Frankfort-on-Main, Germany. The material in the exhibition was selected by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum, when he was abroad last Summer. The exhibition has been installed by Dorothy C. Miller of the Museum staff and Douglas C. Fox, an American who for three years has worked with Professor Frobenius in Frankfort-on-Main and who has accompanied him on one of his expeditions. Mr. Fox is a member of the staff of the Institute for the Study of the Morphology of Civilization.

On the fourth floor of the Museum modern paintings will be shown which bear a certain similarity to the pictures painted and engraved by prehistoric man. Among the modern paintings to be shown are works by Miro, Arp, Klee, Masson, Lebedev, and Larionov. Also on the fourth floor will be shown reproductions of pictographs painted in polychrome and red monochrome many years ago on California rocks by American Indians. These reproductions made in color by workers on the Federal Art Project are shown, as are the modern paintings, for the purpose of comparison with European and African rock pictures.

"That an institution devoted to the most recent in art should concern itself with the most ancient may seem something of a paradox," stated Mr. Barr in commenting on the exhibition, "but the art of the 20th century has already come under the influence of the great tradition of prehistoric mural art which began around the 200th century B.C. The formal elegance of the Altamira bison; the grandeur of outline in the Norwegian rock engravings of bear, elk, and whale; the cornucopian fecundity of Rhodesian animal landscapes; the kinetic fury of the East Spanish huntsmen; the spontaneous ease with which the South African draftsmen mastered the difficult silhouettes of moving creatures: these are achievements which living artists and many others who are interested in living art have admired.

"Such technical and esthetic qualities are enviable but no more so than the unquestioned sense of social usefulness which these prehistoric pictures suggest. Until recently our own mural art was usually an architect's after-thought, a mere decorative postscript. The mural art of the Spanish caves and African cliffs was, on the contrary, an integral and essential function of life, for these painted animals were almost certainly magic symbols used to insure the successful hunting of the real animals. Today walls are painted so that the artist may eat, but in prehistoric times walls were painted so that the community might eat.

"We can, as modern men, no longer believe in the magic efficacy of these rock paintings; but there is about them a deeper and more general magic quite beyond their beauty as works of art or their value as anthropological documents. Even in facsimile they evoke an atmosphere of antediluvian first things, a strenuous Eden where Adam drew the animals before he named them. It is even possible that among them are man's earliest pictures. In any case, this is the way he drew and painted, apparently following continuous traditions for thousands of years in parts of the earth as remote from each other as the North Cape of Norway and the Cape of Good Hope."

The facsimiles to be shown in the exhibition have been painted or drawn directly from the actual cliff and cave pictures. Artists are taken on all Frobenius expeditions to do this work. Twelve expeditions headed by Professor Frobenius have been made to the centers of prehistoric art on the Scandinavian coast, to the caves of France and Northern Spain, the Comonica Valley in the Italian Alps, and in Africa to the Libyan Desert, the Sahara-Atlas, the Fezzan, Southern Rhodesia and the Bushman caves and rock shelters of South Africa.

Photographs showing the actual rocks on which the prehistoric pictures were found and the surrounding terrain will be hung on the Museum's walls with the facsimiles themselves. The facsimiles reproduce exactly the colors and forms left by prehistoric men some ten or twenty thousand years ago. Most of the facsimiles to be shown in the exhibition are the size of the original rock pictures. Several of them are enormous, the largest 22 feet wide and 14 feet 9 inches high. One facsimile, too high for the Museum's ceiling, extends out on the floor; another hangs two stories down the Museum's stairway.

When the exhibition closes in New York May 30 it will go on an extensive tour throughout the country.