

Willi Baumeister in Dialogue with Prehistoric Art: From Altamira to the Swabian Jura

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Around 40,000 years ago there arose one of the most fascinating phenomena of human cultural history: Ice Age art. After sporadic but not necessarily systematic examples in Africa, perhaps in Australia and during the Neanderthal period, Ice Age art emerged in an explosive burst of creativity. In earlier conceptions, prehistoric art's initial phase was characterized by very simple, almost instinctual depictions. In contrast, today we know that about 40,000 years ago, an incomparably rich and varied corpus of art appeared. From the very beginning, it combined virtually all artistic techniques available in more recent art history, whether painting, engraving, or sculpture.¹

The most important assemblage of the oldest Ice Age art, recently registered as UNESCO World Heritage, is located in the Swabian Jura in southwestern Germany.² Four caves there, the Hohle Fels and the Geißenklösterle caves near Ulm and the Vogelherd and Stadelhöhle caves near Heidenheim, have provided unique examples of ivory figurines representing animals, humans, and hybrid beings. The first discoveries were made in 1931 during excavations by the Tübingen prehistorian Gustav Riek

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- 1 H. Floss, 2005b, „Die Kunst der Eiszeit in Europa“, eds W. Schürle and N.J. Conard, *Urgeschichtliches Museum Blaubeuren, Zwei Weltalter. Eiszeitkunst und die Bildwelt Willi Baumeisters*, 8–69.
 - 2 H. Floss, 2014, “A new type of society creates a new type of objects. Aurignacian ivory sculptures from the Swabian Jura (Southern Germany)”, S. Corchón and M. Menéndez (eds), *Cien años de arte rupestre paleolítico. Centenario del descubrimiento de la cueva de la Peña de Candamo (1914-2014)*, Salamanca 2014, 53–62. H. Floss, 2015a, “Different! European Upper Palaeolithic art: a cultural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value”, N. Sanz (ed.), *Human Origin Sites and the World Heritage Convention in Eurasia, Heads 4*, Vol. II, 103–134. H. Floss, 2015b, « Le plus ancien art mobilier: les statuettes aurignaciennes en ivoire du Jura souabe (sud-ouest de l'Allemagne) », F. Bon and R. White (eds), *The Aurignacian Genius, art, technology and society of the first modern humans*. Proceedings of the New York Congress, NYU April 2013, *Palethnologie*, 322–336. H. Floss and N. Rouquerol (eds), 2007, *Les chemins de l'Art aurignacien en Europe – Das Aurignacien und die Anfänge der Kunst in Europa*. colloque internationale, Aurignac 2005, Éditions Musée-forum Aurignac 4, 2007. H. Floss and N.J. Conard, 2010, « L'art mobilier du Jura souabe », M. Otte (ed.), *Les Aurignaciens. Éditions Errance*, 201–214. N.J. Conard, H. Floss, M. Barth and J. Serangeli (eds), 2009, *Eiszeit, Kunst und Kultur*. Große Landesausstellung Baden-Württemberg. Stuttgart exhibition catalogue.

in Vogelherd cave in the Lone valley. In layers of the Aurignacian, which is the first supra-regional culture of *Homo sapiens* in Eurasia, Riek and his colleagues discovered the famous Vogelherd horse, the equally well-known mammoth, and several big cat figurines. In recent years, thanks to excavations in the dump of Riek's excavations, new figurines as well as additions to the original fragmented figurines have since been found. The most legendary discovery of the Swabian Jura is certainly that of the "Lion-man of the Hohlenstein-Stadel" (Löwenmensch aus dem Stadel), an ivory composite figurine with an animal torso and the lower body of a human that is over 30 cm high. Almost all figurines are made of mammoth ivory. There is a preponderance of lion, mammoth, and horse representations. A discovery of particular importance is that of a headless woman with enormous breasts, the "Venus of Hohle Fels" (Venus vom Hohle Fels). Engraved signs are regularly found on the figurines' bodies—crosses, chevrons, and even complex wave and rhomb patterns. When it comes to the question of these figurines' use in everyday life, the strange theme of hybrid beings points to a presumed cultic function, an idea supported by the hypothetical animistic worldview of prehistoric hunter-gatherers in which humans and animals have ontologically congenial functions.³ Additionally, the special archaeological circumstances of the "Lion-man" (Löwenmensch) discovery, found in a niche at the back of a cave and thus in some ways similar to the sanctuaries of Franco-Cantabrian cave art, testify to a special use for these figurines. Experimental replicas, however limited they may be in their explanatory power, repeatedly show that a great effort is required to produce such sculptures. Such effort would only have been put forth if there was some kind of elevated social or religious purpose for the creation of such objects. Because of their excellent aesthetic quality, for a long time many prehistorians were convinced that these sculptures could not have come from early Ice Age art. André Leroi-Gourhan in particular classified the figurines of the Swabian Jura in his Style II, which is reserved for advanced stages of Ice Age art. Only in the last few decades meticulous excavations yielding high resolution stratigraphic data have clarified the assignment of these figurines to the Aurignacian. In addition, a very large number of radiocarbon datings have silenced even the greatest skeptics. The oldest figurines from the Swabian Jura, like the "Venus of Hohle Fels" for example, date from around 42,000 years BP. Most of them are likely to be around 35,000 years old and the most recent ones can be dated to the transition to the following Gravettian around 32,000 years ago. For a long time, there was only one archaeological corpus in Europe that produced similarly old works of art: the Dordogne. From several rock shelters such as La Ferrassie, Castanet, Blanchard or Cellier in this prehistoric Mecca have come archaic pictographs that originally marked Leroi-Gourhan's Style I. Such representations—vulva symbols and simple animal silhouettes—correspond closely to the evolutionist notion that Ice Age art evolved from simpler to more complex. Although the difference between the Dordogne and the Swabian Jura in some way emphasizes the mosaic like

3 S.T. Hussain and H. Floss, 2015b, Sharing the world with mammoths, cave lions and other beings: linking animal-human interactions and the Aurignacian "belief world". *Quartär* 62, 85–120.

nature of the Aurignacian period, we know today that this striking contrast was due to a research gap. With the fortunate discovery of very old paintings in the Chauvet cave at Vallon Pont d'Arc in 1994, the tide finally turned. Many researchers began to speculate about whether or not other examples of parietal and mobile art, which on the traditional classification did not so to speak have the right to be that old, might now be dated to this early phase of Ice Age art. As a result, we now know of 40 sites from the Atlantic to the Carpathians and Russia with cave- and mobile art dated to this early phase of Ice Age art. The dates of this early art are derived either from direct dating of the paintings, from archaeological contexts, the confrontation of parietal to mobile art or from technological and stylistic comparisons. This Aurignacian art represents the earliest phase of 30,000 years of human artistic endeavor, which occupies a big part of history and is the base of our current presence on earth.

Ice Age art leads us into the dark secrets of our being, so far and yet so near. And yet what we recognize in these paintings is ourselves, our very roots. Whoever has stood even once before Tito Bustillo's red panel can practically feel the birth of the world. Whoever has plunged into the dark depths of La Baume Latrone in order to stand before the awe-inspiring images of lions and serpents has felt a surge of primordial fears within. And whoever, after a breakneck tour, has stood before the pair of sculpted bison in Tuc d'Audoubert knows the meaning of true intimacy. Whoever has not experienced this profound sensation with regard to Ice Age art, however, may dismiss this approach to our distant ancestors as some overblown obsession, and fails to recognize that, besides simply trying to understand past human behavior, we are doing nothing less than recapturing our lost identity in order to understand who we truly are in a moment where technological progress has mercilessly overtaken us.

So it is not by chance that since the earliest discoveries of Ice Age art, not only archaeology and even sometimes art history and also visual arts have increasingly taken an interest in distant ethnic groups, whether distant in time in form of the early stages of human culture or distant in space and lifeways, being interested in foreign ethnic groups in far-off lands. While these references were still the exception during the 19th century, they increased in significance by the beginning of the 20th century. Dehumanization accompanied rapid industrialization during the turmoil of the World War I. In Germany's Weimar Republic and early Nazi period, it was amongst others art that served as a counterweight to these malignant trends. This could have been realized by manifold approaches: by exaggerated futuristic representations, by a turn to innocent animals as in the work of Franz Marc and August Macke. Or perhaps it might have been a quest for archaic content from self-taught people, guided by instincts and unfamiliar with any cultural conventions. Very early on, this connection between archaic and contemporary art was already well-established, if we take as an example W. Paulcke's *Stone Age Art and Modern Art (Steinzeitkunst und Moderne Kunst)*⁴ (1923). With its brilliantly chosen title, J.A. Mauduit's 1954 work *40,000 Years*

4 W. Paulcke, 1923, *Steinzeitkunst und Moderne Kunst*. Schweizerbart, Stuttgart.

of *Modern Art (40,000 ans d'Art Moderne)*⁵ articulated this very fact: the creation of art by *Homo sapiens* began 40,000 years ago.

In southwestern Germany, Adolf Hölzel was the first to break with the traditional conventions of his conservative Stuttgart milieu and pursued suddenly abstract painting. His most famous student, Willi Baumeister, was born in Stuttgart in 1889 (fig. 1). In a famous quotation that has come down to us, he predicted that Baumeister would have a brilliant future: “You will go further than all the rest of us.”⁶ In 1905, Baumeister began his studies at the Royal Württemberg Academy of Fine Arts and in 1910 he became Hölzel’s student. After an early Impressionist phase, which was followed by his military service, he became well-known in the 1920s, in particular for his constructivist-influenced works. So it comes as no surprise that early on he exhibited with Oskar Schlemmer, with whom he also founded the Üecht artist group. He was also close to Fernand Léger, as evidenced by a joint exhibition in *Der Sturm* and a meeting in 1924. As early as 1925 Baumeister had already exhibited in Paris and after 1928 he became a teacher at the Frankfurt School of Applied Arts (Frankfurter Kunstgewerbeschule), which is later on the Städel.

With Baumeister, a reorientation towards new archaic topics and forms can be observed at the end of the 1920s.⁷ Although such a change in the formal idiom pre-

5 J.A. Mauduit, 1954, *40.000 ans d'art moderne*. Plon.

6 The translation of this quote as well as all others is by the translator, Christopher Schaefer.

7 Baumeister’s proximity to archaic themes has already been described several times. However, these attempts always proceeded from an art historical point of view. With all due respect for these works, among which Nicola Assmann plays a significant role (2002, 2003, 2005a, 2005b) and without intellectual arrogance (quite the contrary, in fact, as the author lacks a great deal of art-historical knowledge), these studies reveal some bizarre mistakes, which simply grew out of a lack of knowledge of prehistoric content. For example, the provenance of the 25,000-year-old ivory engraving from the Moravian site Předmostí, which Baumeister repeatedly used as an inspiration, was located to Africa (Spielmann 2005b, fig. 13, 160). When discussing whether Baumeister at the beginning of the 1930s was more influenced by the Eastern Spanish Levante art or the classic Ice Age art in the style of Lascaux, authors overlooked the fact that Lascaux was not yet discovered at this time (Llorens 2004, 18). In the survey of the Baumeister collection, a mammoth engraving on mammoth ivory from the Dordogne site La Madeleine, which was discovered in the middle of the 19th century (this piece is to be regarded as the key artifact for the recognition of the Ice Age art) is designated as “a copy of an unidentified original” (Assmann 2005b). The indication that the Runner theme would stem from Palaeolithic cave paintings from the Spanish Valltorta gorge (Spielmann 2005a, 74), is wrong in a twofold way, because it is neither Palaeolithic, but rather post-glacial, nor from a cave, but from a rock shelter. It requires a very detailed and subtle knowledge of prehistoric content in order to adequately comprehend the turn of modern art to such themes. We played a leading role in a project that underlined the influences on Willi Baumeister of Ice Age art. In the course of the redesign of the Blaubeuren Prehistoric Museum at the beginning of this century, the relationship between the topics of Ice Age art with those of modern art were discussed. On the one hand, Blaubeuren is one of the most important centers of Europe for early Stone Age art, on the other hand it is a former artists’ colony in which painters like Paul Kleinschmidt worked. Additionally, the former district administrator of the Alb-Donau-Kreis, Dr Schürle, was able to draw on the large art collection of the Upper Swabian Electricity Company (Oberschwäbische Elektrizitätswerke), which was not accessible to the public in large part. Among the artists of the region there were some representatives,



1 Portrait of Willi Baumeister, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Archives Baumeister

sumably occurred more intuitively and corresponded to the attempt to develop an essentially new artistic language, Baumeister's interest in prehistory, paleontology and geology was nonetheless very tangible. This casts in doubt the hypothesis of W. Haftmann and W. Grohmann that Baumeister's use of archaic subjects would be a kind of inner, psychologically conditioned position as a retreat in the face of emerging National Socialism.⁸ Since 1928, he was in contact with the paleontologist Dr

first of all Willi Baumeister, but also others from Oscar Schlemmer, Julius Bissier, Max Ackermann and Otto Baum to Wolfgang Laib, who could be described as more or less archaic in character. Thus, a concept of a dialogue between Ice Age art and modern art was developed, which resulted in an exhibition section of the Blaubeuren Museum called "Galerie 40,000" which opened in 2002 and also in a book project on Willi Baumeister and Ice Age art (Schürle et al., 2005). Leading figures involved with this project were Dr. Schürle and Harald Floss as well as Dr Harry Schlichtenmaier, Prof. Nicholas J. Conard, Dr Peter Beye, and Dr Stefanie Kölbl, the director of the museum. In parallel with this project, in 2004, Dr Schürle, the district administrator of the Alb-Donau-Kreis, asked me to compile a global directory of artists with attested influences of archaic content (Floss 2004). This same project was repeated for southwest Germany (Floss 2005). Willi Baumeister has always been an important part of this research. In the recent past, we have also become more interested in his collection of prehistoric objects. Felicitas Baumeister, Cristjane Schuessler and Hadwig Goetz must be thanked for making these objects available for study.

8 R. Hirner, 1989, „Anmerkungen zu Willi Baumeisters Hinwendung zum Archaischen.“ In: U. Gaus,



2 Willi Baumeister, 17 June 1939, in the Stuttgart-Untertürkheim Quarry, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Archives Baumeister, Willi Baumeister, second from the left, with hat and light trench coat

Fritz Berckhmer, who was the head of the Department of Geology and Paleontology at the State Museum of Natural History in Stuttgart. Baumeister's wife Margrit Baumeister had been friends with Gerda Berckhmer, *née* Fraas, ever since her days as a schoolgirl. In 1931, precisely in this transitional phase in which Baumeister was moving to archetypes, Gustav Riek excavated the Vogelherd cave in Lonetal near Heidenheim (Baumeister's own Swabian homeland), where he discovered the small ivory figurines mentioned at the beginning of our article (fig. 2). It seems unlikely, however, that there was any direct contact between Riek and Baumeister. Riek was a Nazi, and Baumeister was anything but a Nazi supporter. Among other consequences, this led to his 1933 dismissal in Frankfurt by the Nazis and to his inclusion in the 1937 exhibition "Degenerate Art". Line figures as well as amoeba-like beings, archetypes, metamorphoses, and paraphrases of living phenomena all originated in Baumeister's works at that time. On 9 July 1934, Baumeister mentioned in his diary⁹ that

1989, *Willi Baumeister, Zeichnungen, Gouachen, Collagen*. Stuttgart 1989, 45-53, 46. S. Baumgart, 1996, „Willi Baumeister – Aspekte des Wandels im zeichnerischen Werk der dreißiger Jahre.“ In: Michael Semff (ed.), *Willi Baumeister, Zeichnungen*. Verlag Gerd Hatje, 26-45, note 52.

⁹ I thank Felicitas Baumeister for providing the relevant passages from the diary.

along with the friends of the Natural History Cabinet headed by Berckhemer, he had taken part in an excursion to the Lonetal caves, where the famous Aurignacian Ice Age ivory figurines had been discovered three years earlier. He further mentions in this diary that he had come into contact there with the Aurignacian and Mousterian culture in Heidenheim, which can only mean that the excursion had also led to the Heidenschmiede, a cave site in this town. This is a cave occupied by Neanderthals, located below Hellenstein Castle and excavated first by Hermann Mohn and then by Eduard Peters with the support of Berckhemer. Baumeister also mentions in his diary what great interest he took in those Stone Age sites. Another clear reference to topics from archaeology and geology is the use of sand in the creation of his pictures since the 1930s. A picture from this series on a sandy bottom is even called “Aurignacian Altamira”.¹⁰ How could Baumeister’s reference to the Stone Age be any clearer? Also in this period (1933–35), we see for the first time the influence of prehistoric rock art on his work, visible in the *Valltorta* series (fig. 3) and the famous painting “Runner” (*Läufer*, fig. 4). On the one hand, it demonstrates a clear allusion to the Valltorta gorge rock paintings, and, on the other hand, with its focus on sports, it demonstrates Baumeister’s view of a continued contemporary relevance. This is further reflected in the so-called “Football picture” *Fußballbild* (1934), which resembles a prehistoric cave painting.¹¹ As already mentioned, after the 1930s, Baumeister built up a prehistoric and archaeological collection, as it did before various representatives of the classical modern period (to name only Picasso, Mirò and the Expressionists of the group Die Brücke), as well as a large prehistoric library. Works by artists such as Hugo Obermaier, Leo Frobenius and Herbert Kühn appeared in this library. In the collection, which still exists today, there are also numerous ethnological works,¹² such as African masks and pre-Columbian figurines. In the inventory of the collection are found prehistoric small sculptures, such as the “Venus of Willendorf” (Venus von Willendorf) and “Venus of Lespugue” (Venus von Lespugue), and an ivory mammoth representation from the rock shelter of La Madeleine in the Dordogne, which Baumeister obtained from the Krantz Company in Bonn, a specialist merchant for geological and archaeological casts.¹³ Numerous prehistoric stone artefacts are also found in the Baumeister collection,¹⁴ which already existed in 1946.¹⁵ It is now the subject of a thesis by my student Fiona Pfrommer in the laboratory of Early Prehistory and Quaternary Ecology at Tübingen University. Above all, in our context, it is of course important to mention

10 N. Assmann, 2003, „Willi Baumeister (1889-1955). Der Maler, die Eiszeitkunst und die Moderne.“ In: W. Schürle (ed.), *Bausteine der Geschichte 2, Alb und Donau*, Kunst und Kultur 35, 197-223, 211.

11 Assmann, 2003, 211.

12 H. Spielmann, 2005b, „Willi Baumeisters Deutung der frühen und fremden Kulturen.“ In: Schürle et al. (eds), *Zwei Weltalter, Eiszeitkunst und die Bildwelt Willi Baumeisters*, 152-167, 159.

13 Assmann, 2003, notes 43 and 47.

14 Assmann, 2005b, „Ausgewählte Objekte der Sammlung Willi Baumeisters.“ In: H. Spielmann and O. Westheider (eds), *Willi Baumeister, Figuren und Zeichen*. Bucerius Kunst Forum. Hatje Cantz Verlag, 186-205, 186ff.

15 Spielmann, 2005b, 159.

that there are also some replicas of Vogelherd figures found by Riek in 1931 in Baumeister's collection. According to N. Assmann,¹⁶ Baumeister painted over the plaster casts of the figures with an earth-colored patina. The close connection of the artist to these prehistoric finds is also underlined by the presence of a book by Riek, *Cultural Items from the Palaeolithic Wuerttemberg (Kulturbilder aus der Altsteinzeit Wuerttembergs)* in Baumeister's Library.¹⁷ In November 1931, Baumeister attended a series of lectures on prehistoric art by the cultural historian Hans Mühlestein in Frankfurt. Mühlestein, who was also very interested in modern art, had a teaching position on the Prehistory of Human Culture.¹⁸ In Frankfurt, Baumeister maintained extensive contacts with the Frobenius Institute.¹⁹ On 18 October 1935, Baumeister conducted another diary entry related to archaeology, in which he writes that he went to see the Steinheim skull in the Natural History Museum (Naturalienmuseum) with Berckhemer, and then on to the Sigrist gravel pit at Steinheim an der Murr, the site where this prehistoric human find comes from.²⁰

Two important theoretical strands corroborate Baumeister's relation to prehistoric art. The first was his contact with the paint manufacturer Kurt Herberts (Wuppertal) at the end of the 1930s, and the second is his correspondence with the publisher and art critic Eduardo Westerdahl (1936–1938). Since the end of the 1930s, Baumeister and Herberts had been interested in the technique of prehistoric painting, particularly concerning Altamira. Baumeister carried out his own cave art painting experiments on travertine plates. Through this work he had found, that they were painted without any binding agent, such as fat, but just with water, in refutation of the claims of prehistorians like Henri Breuil and Obermaier.²¹ As an ostracized artist, Baumeister was not allowed to publish himself, so his studies were published under Herberts' name despite Baumeister's larger role.²²

In a letter to Westerdahl, Baumeister describes both Ice Age art and his own art as a direct expression achieved by rudimentary means. In 1938, Westerdahl sent the catalog of the New York exhibition "Prehistoric Rock Pictures" to Baumeister, which also contains reproductions of Frobenius' rock paintings. Baumeister responded, saying that he was fascinated by their strong primordial expression.²³

A dramatic development in Baumeister's career was his inclusion in the 1937 exhibition "Degenerate Art." The National Socialist rejection of any nonconformist

¹⁶ Assmann, 2003, 217ff.

¹⁷ Assmann, 2005a, „Baumeisters Sammlung alter und außereuropäischer Kulturen. Figuren, Masken, Artefakte.“ In: Spielmann and Westheider, 174-185.

¹⁸ Assmann, 2003, note 13, 221.

¹⁹ V. Hildebrand-Schat, 2005, „Willi Baumeister und Leo Frobenius.“ In: Spielmann and Westheider, 182-185, 182ff.

²⁰ Assmann, 2003, note 3, 220.

²¹ Assmann, 2003, 205.

²² For example, K. Herberts, 1938, *10000 Jahre Malerei und ihre Werkstoffe*. Technische Veröffentlichungen von Dr. Kurt Herberts & Co. Vorm. O. L. Herberts, Wuppertal.

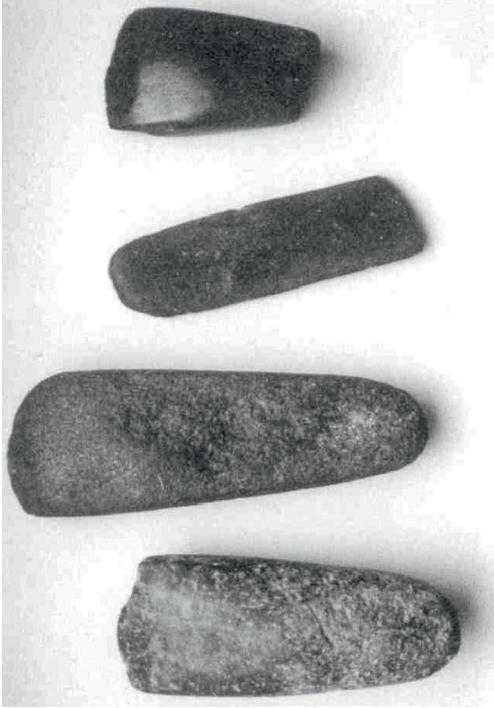
²³ Assmann, 2003, 204.



3 *Archer from Cova dels Cavalls, Gorge of Valltorta, Spain, Tigris Museum, Photo Harald Floss*



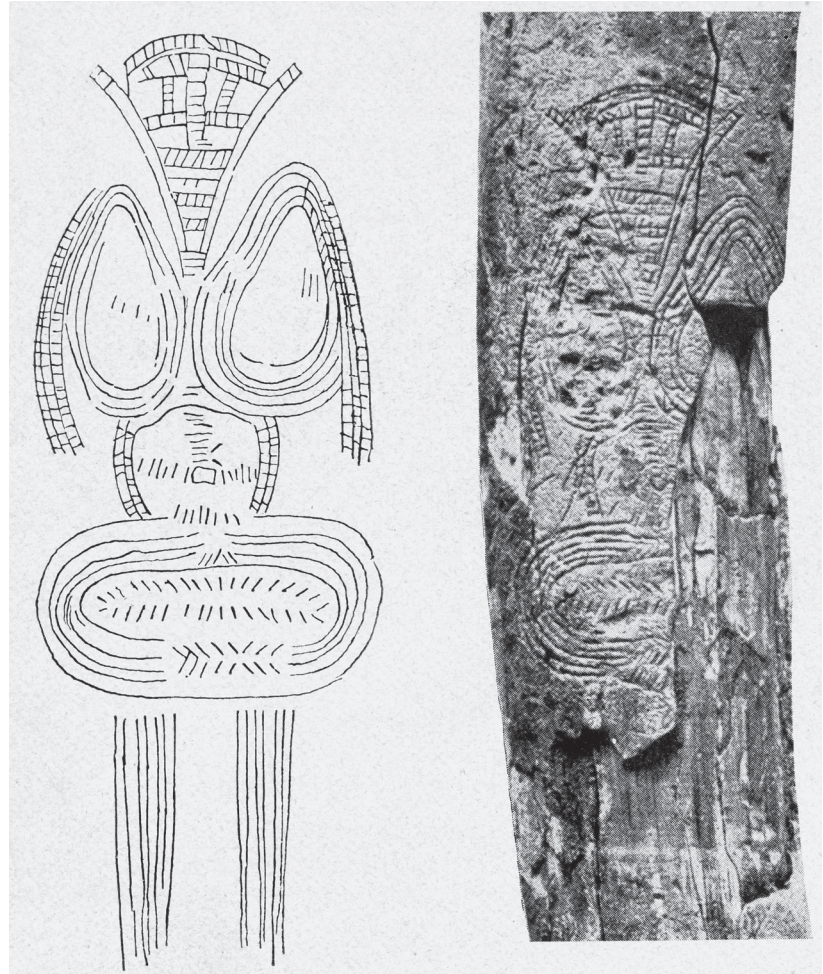
4 W. Baumeister, *Runner of Valltorta*, 1934, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Archives Baumeister



5 Neolithic Axes, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Archives Baumeister



6 Willi Baumeister, Floating Forms in Black and White, 1938, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Archives Baumeister



7 Engraving of a Woman on Mammoth Ivory from the Moravian Gravettian Site of Předmostí (see Willi Baumeister, *The Unknown in Art*, 1947, p. 154) Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Archives Baumeister

art, which included all artists who dealt with archaic works, was clearly expressed in Adolf Dresler's formulation: "For our sake, these prehistoric Stone Age artists and these stammering art charlatans (*Kunststotterer*) should take their primitive international scribbles back to their ancestors' caves. The Haus der Kunst in Munich was built by the German people for German art and it alone..."²⁴

A further direct connection to prehistoric themes originated from Baumeister's 50th birthday in January 1939, when he visited several museums. At the Musée de l'Homme in Paris he saw the lower jaw of a prehistoric human found near Heidelberg, and examples of "primitive art" (*Kunst der Primitiven*).²⁵ On 17 June 1939, Baumeister

24 A. Dresler, 1938: *Deutsche Kunst und entartete Kunst. Kunstwerk und Zerrbild als Spiegel der Weltanschauung*, München; cited in Susanne Baumgart, 1996, „Willi Baumeister - Aspekte des Wandels im zeichnerischen Werk der dreißiger Jahre.“, In: Michael Semff (ed.), *Willi Baumeister, Zeichnungen*. Verlag Gerd Hatje, 26-45, note 57, 45.

25 Baumeister diary entry, see Assmann, 2003, note 6, 220.



8 Willi Baumeister, *Salome IV*, 1943 (see U. Gaus, 1989, 168), Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Archives Baumeister

visited the Biedermann travertine quarry in Stuttgart-Untertürkheim. An additional diary entry mentions “stone tools of pre-Mousterian man.” Baumeister lived through the war years in southwestern Germany, a time marked by hardship and reprisals. In 1943, he and his family moved from bombed-out Stuttgart to Urach, where, with very few available resources, he produced frottages as illustrations for the Gilgamesh theme. In 1945, he fled from Urach to Lake Constance to be with Max Ackermann and the publisher Curt Weller. It was not until 1949 that Baumeister traveled abroad again.²⁶ Several key events occurred in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. In 1946, Baumeister became a professor at the Stuttgart Academy of Fine Arts (Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart) and in 1947, he published his magnum opus *The Unknown in Art* (*Das Unbekannte in der Kunst*), which he had written from 1943 to 1945. Baumeister was on the Deutscher Künstlerbund board from 1951 to 1954. There was a great retrospective on the occasion of his 65th birthday in 1954, and he retired in 1955. On 31 August 1955, shortly before his death, Baumeister gave his last lecture, in which his life came full circle: he made his last references to Ice Age art, which included a rough outline of the various chronological phases.²⁷

For decades, Baumeister maintained a special connection to the well-known palaeolithic cave of Altamira, discovered in the 19th century and located at Santillana del Mar in Cantabria (Spain). Sometime after 1935, Baumeister took an interest in the cave, verifiable since he had bought Breuil and Obermaier’s 1935 book about the

²⁶ Assmann, 2003, note 12, 221.

²⁷ Assmann, 2003, 212.



9 Willi Baumeister and his Scenery for the Play «Liebeszauber» by Manuel de Fallas (*DER SPIEGEL*, November 1947), Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Archives Baumeister

Altamira cave and since he had worked on painting experiments related to the Altamira cave in the late 1930s. He also toyed with the idea of accompanying a Frobenius Institute excursion to the Pyrenees²⁸ and reproduced the main panel of Altamira in *The Unknown in Art*.²⁹ Because of the Spanish Civil War (1936–39) and then the Second World War it was not until 1950 that he was able to go to Altamira himself. On 17 September 1950, he traveled with his wife via Paris to Santillana del Mar in order to participate in the 2nd Artistic Congress School of Art in Altamira, for which he was appointed president. At this time, much of his life's work was already filled with metaphors from early cultures (Spielmann 2005b). On 26 September, Baumeister gave the closing lecture of the congress in the Altamira Cave, in which he identified the beginning of art with the appearance of the Upper Palaeolithic and *Homo sapiens*. He drew a comparison between the people of Altamira and the artist association: "We are a cell like the Altamira cave." ("*Nous sommes une cellule comme la caverne de Altamira*").³⁰ During the congress, a picture was taken of Baumeister together with Westerdahl, publisher of the *Gaceta de Arte* (1932–36), and a long-time friend of Baumeister, whom he however had only just met in person. Baumeister also took some blurred photos of the Altamira cave ceiling.³¹ Immediately after the congress, Baumeister finally visited the archaeological museum in Santander along with the sculptor Angel Ferrant (also a congress participant) and gave a talk on cave painting technique.³² Altamira strongly impressed Baumeister, which can be seen in his diary entries. He found the reliefs with three fingers that he had observed on the underside of rock pieces particularly noteworthy, calling them retracted lineament. These finger-drawings, which are today known as macaroni, are among the most typical expressions of Ice Age art.³³ Incidentally, in his closing speech, Baumeister articulated a fundamental insight that I still share today, when he stated that with the first appearance of *Homo sapiens* (in the Aurignacian period), art is suddenly there. "Art is thus a part of man from the beginning ..."³⁴ Such observations could previously be found in *The Unknown in Art*.³⁵ Even in the 1950s, Baumeister was still very interested in prehistoric topics, as can be seen in various pages from his sketchbooks.³⁶ In these he depicts skull shapes of Palaeolithic humans and even mentions various Palaeolithic cultures with their typical material culture.³⁷

28 Assmann, 2003, 205.

29 W. Baumeister, 1947, *Das Unbekannte in der Kunst*, fig. 6.

30 Assmann, 2003, 204.

31 Assmann, 2003, 214–215.

32 Assmann, 2003, 205.

33 For Baumeister's stay in Altamira see above all Alarcó 2004.

34 Assmann, 2003, 204.

35 Baumeister, 1947, 67ff.

36 G. Presler and F. Baumeister, 2010, *Werkverzeichnis der Skizzenbücher*. Schriften des Archivs Baumeister 2.

37 These are the sketchbooks PB 19, PB 31 and PB 33, the last from 1953/54, as from early 1955. In the text accompanying the sketches, Felicitas Baumeister describes her memories, including when her father taught her and her sister Palaeolithic terminology. Sketch from PB 31_39, p. 241 with Baumeister's draw-

10 *Lion in Mammoth*
Ivory, Vogelherd Cave,
Germany, Aurignacian.
Photo: Hilde Jensen,
University of Tübingen



11 Willi Baumeister, *Tennis Player*,
1934 (see U. Gauss, p. 124), Kunst-
museum Stuttgart, Archives Bau-
meister



12 *Bear or Lion in Mammoth Ivory, Vogelherd Cave, Germany, Aurignacian.* Photo: Hilde Jensen, University of Tübingen



13 Willi Baumeister, *Oval shapes*, 1938 (see D. Ponert 1988, WVZ 648), Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Archives Baumeister

Concrete Works Related to Prehistory

Almost all of Baumeister's works after the end of his constructivist phase are archaic landscapes. In a notable quote, Baumeister mentions that "modern abstract painting is archaic".³⁸ In fact, Baumeister sought and found inspiration in many related forms, whether prehistory, ethnology, geology, the plant kingdom, or the microscopic world of bacteria, to name but a few. Baumeister worked abstractedly, starting from concrete examples, which were not necessarily to be recognized, creating them with his own unmistakable original language. It is true that the content-interpretable elements in Baumeister's work are given comparatively less importance than some of the titles in the picture might suggest.³⁹ Nonetheless, Spielmann's remarks in his preface to the new edition of *Room and Wall Spirits (Zimmer- und Wandgeister)* gets the gist of it: "Baumeister was never an 'unrepresentative' painter, he painted 'abstractly' in the sense that he translated the real world into perfectly understandable characters." In *Room and Wall Spirits*,⁴⁰ which gives the best explanation of his work process, Baumeister made fun of observers' desire to find figurative elements in the pictures and to recognize certain artwork titles in them. Baumeister believed titles were only there to distinguish the pictures from each other. And later: "Of course, the painter gains inspiration from the environment ... the artist knows little about his work ... The forms appear during the painting in the imagination of the artist. One form triggers the other like in a dream ... The forms are originally from somewhere and often from the artist's environment ... Our idea is not the photographic reflection of what we see. Our idea adds the particular features that have been noticed to a picture." "The essence, the representation of the figure arises in as primitive and simplified form as the child, the prehistoric man", "the painter needs the shortest, simplest form of expression for human beings", "the artist needs objects on which he can act, objects that ignite his fantasy" and "the figures get at the meaning of symbols. They have become signs. The insignificant and expendable have fallen away."

This being said, the search for concrete examples of Baumeister's pictorial world via a concrete discipline such as prehistory may seem like a sacrilege, an embarrassing undertaking, like a crazy man running around in circles, presenting the impossibility of doing justice to the nature of Baumeister's work. To do so seems to demystify his work, almost to destroy the magic of *The Unknown in Art*. Nevertheless—and this has already happened in part—it makes sense to an archaeologist as me to search for

ings of prehistoric men. PB 19 1951-53 shows sketches which are reminiscent of an animal like the bison from Altamira (*die Wisente aus Altamira*). PB 31 1952/53, 241 shows sketches of skulls and Palaeolithic cultures. PB 33 1953/54, 262/263 as well as sketches of cultures and finds.

38 Assmann, 2002, „Willi Baumeister – der Maler im Dialog mit den „elementaren“ Kunstformen der Welt.“ In: Galerie Schlichtenmaier (ed.), *Willi Baumeister, Dialog der Kulturen*, 6-14, 6.

39 Assmann, 2002, 10-11.

40 W. Baumeister, 1967, *Zimmer- und Wandgeister. Anmerkungen zum Inhalt meiner Bilder.*

the origins of Baumeister's quotations. They shed light on an important aspect of his concrete working method, his concrete interests, even if, as often as not, the work's inspiration seems so modified that its possible origin ceases to be recognizable.

We are thus less interested in the general archaic style, which is seen in many of Baumeister's works, such as the Eidos or Gilgamesh series. Many of the painting's names can also be cited in this respect, for example the "Two Eras" (*Zwei Weltalter*) (1947),⁴¹ which shows various representations of life in prehistoric and present time. Numerous other examples of Baumeister's prehistory-influenced paintings' names could also be mentioned.⁴²

In this essay we are instead concerned with certain concretely demonstrable prehistoric sources for Baumeister's art motifs. Influenced by his own excursions to prehistoric sites, literary studies and the Frankfurt influences of Mühlestein and the Frobenius Archive, Baumeister was interested in prehistoric content from the early 1930s on, perhaps even as early as the late 1920s. From about 1933, the line figures arise—amoeba-like beings, archetypes, metamorphoses, and other paraphrases of life phenomena. Another clear reference to archaeology and geology is the use of sand in the creation of his paintings.⁴³ After the early 1930s, he used sand to evoke the grainy underground of rock and cave art that he had seen in literature since the 1920s. An example from this series on a sandy ground is even called "Aurignacian Altamira."⁴⁴

41 W. Schürle, N.J. Conard, and Urgeschichtliches Museum Blaubeuren (eds), 2005, *Zwei Weltalter, Eiszeitkunst und die Bildwelt Willi Baumeisters*. Hatje Cantz Verlag, figs. 15, 175.

42 There are, for example: "Eidos" 1939, archaic amoeba forms, Ponert Fig. 7, p. 15; "Archaic Dialogue" (*Archaischer Dialog*) 1943, Ponert Fig. 10, p. 18; "Tertiary Shape" (*Tertiär-Gestalt*) 1933, Ponert Cat. 464 p. 188; also the drawings "Rock Garden" (*Steingarten*) and "Primal Planting" (*Ur-pflanzlich*) 1939 show archaic references 1939, as well as the so-called "Callot figures" 1941 with amoeba beings, as well as the drawings "Figures, African" 1942, e.g. Ponert cat. 784, further "Jura" Ponert cat. 826, 309; "Archaic Dialogue" (*Archaischer Dialog*) 1943 Ponert 1498-1501; "Group of Archaic Figures" (*Figurengruppe archaisch*) 1943, Ponert Kat. 1431-1434; "Primeval Creatures in a Metaphysical Landscape" (*Urzeitgestalten in metaphysischer Landschaft*) 1946, Ponert Kat. 1635; in the category Ponert 1637-1639 the term "Archaic Figures" is also included in the title; "Archaic Figure" (*Archaische Figur*) or "Archaic Scene" (*Archaische Szene*), Ponert Cat. 1646-1648; "Two World Ages" 1947, Ponert Kat. 1678; "Urzeitgestalten" 1945-46, Ponert Cat. 1718-1721 and 1726-27, also "Urzeitgestalten" cat. Ponert 1735, 1737-1740, 1743-1745 from 1947; also 1748-1756; also in 1761 and 1764, 1765 of 1948, the term "prehistoric figures" appears in the title; Ponert Cat. 1772-1782 appears in the titles "*Urformen, Riesen, Urzeitgestalten*", all 1948; "Two World Ages" 1948, Ponert Kat. 1794; "Archaic Figures" 1948, Ponert Cat. 1804; "Archaic Dialogue" and the like 1947, Cat. Ponert 1828-36; "Archaic Scene V", 1949, Ponert Kat. 1848; "*Kammzugfiguren*" in 1948, Ponert Kat. 1892 etc. also show archaic characteristics; "Line Figure with Prehistoric Shape" (*Linienfigur mit Urzeitgestalt*) 1949, Ponert Kat. 1909; "Relief Figures" (*Relieffiguren*) 1950, Ponert Kat. 1985; "Urformen" 1949, Ponert Kat. 2066.

43 S. Baumgart, 1996, „Willi Baumeister - Aspekte des Wandels im zeichnerischen Werk der dreißiger Jahre.“ In: Michael Semff (ed.), *Willi Baumeister, Zeichnungen*. Verlag Gerd Hatje, 26-45, 33.

44 Assmann, 2003, 211.

Runner (Läufer) and Valltorta

The most famous example of inspiration from prehistoric images also dates back to this period (1933–35), even if Baumeister first visited a prehistoric cave art site not before 1950, his Altamira visit. This early reference to the pictorial series “Valltorta” and the famous painting “Runner” is clear (fig. 3 and 4). It shows the rock image of the Arquer de la Valltorta from the Cova dels Cavalls in Valltorta gorge in eastern Spain.⁴⁵ This was also formulated by Baumeister himself in *Room and Wall Spirits* and also in *The Unknown in Art*. There are several variations of the Valltorta-related runner theme, dating mainly to 1934. The prehistoric motif is quite widespread in these pictures. For Baumeister, the runner theme is an important contemporary reference with a bulk of variations of the theme in images of diverse sports genres. This is demonstrated, for example, in the “Football figure”, which combines profile and face representation as in a prehistoric cave painting.⁴⁶ There are also pictures of dancers, divers, and walking figures.⁴⁷ In the 1953 painting *Safer 4* from Baumeister’s late work, the runner theme appeared one last time.⁴⁸ Overall, variants of the Valltorta theme occurred in about 40 of Baumeister’s paintings.⁴⁹

Ideograms and Floating Forms

The ideograms created between 1937 and 1938 are, so to speak, a puristic reduction of Baumeister’s principle. These depictions have variously been associated with rock paintings from Zimbabwe, which Baumeister may have known about from the Frobenius Archive.⁵⁰ Other references, initiated by one of Baumeister’s picture titles, are made to the Torii, reliquary beams from Shinto shrines. However, these affinities apply at best only to the more crescent-shaped and curved forms. On the other hand, with the elongated, tapering forms, I see a clear relation to Neolithic polished axes, which were already in the Baumeister collection at this time.⁵¹ The reference to these forms becomes particularly clear in the 1938 painting “Floating Forms in White”

45 See also Baumgart, 1996. P. Alarcó, 2004, „Willi Baumeister und Spanien. Gemeinsamkeiten und Einflüsse.“ In: Helmut Friedel and Tomàs Llorens (eds), *Willi Baumeister*, Ausstellung Madrid, München, 50-73, 63. Friedel and Llorens 2004, cat. 24, 25; Spielmann 2005b.

46 Assmann, 2003, 211.

47 G. Boehm, 1995, *Willi Baumeister*. Hatje, cat. 25-29. See also in Ponert cat. 484-499 Runner (Läufer) 1934 or Valltorta Runner (Läufer) or Valltorta Runner with Counter-figure (Läufer mit Gegenfigur), all from 1934; Ponert 510 Valltorta Football Player (Fußballspieler) 1934; Ponert 518 Dancer (Tänzerin) 1934, also influenced by Valltorta.

48 P. Beye, and F. Baumeister, 2002, *Willi Baumeister. Werkkatalog der Gemälde*, 2 Bde., Hatje Cantz, cat. 1873.

49 Beye and Baumeister, 2002, cat. 577ff.

50 Hildebrand-Schat, 2005, 184; Spielmann 2005b, fig. 6-7.

51 See also Spielmann, 2005a (with Karin Rhein), „Katalog.“ In: H. Spielmann (ed.), *Willi Baumeister, Figuren und Zeichen*. Bucerius Kunst Forum. Hatje Cantz Verlag, 56-173, 82.



14 *Lion in Mammoth Ivory*, Vogelherd Cave, Germany, Aurignacian. Photo: Hilde Jensen, University of Tübingen

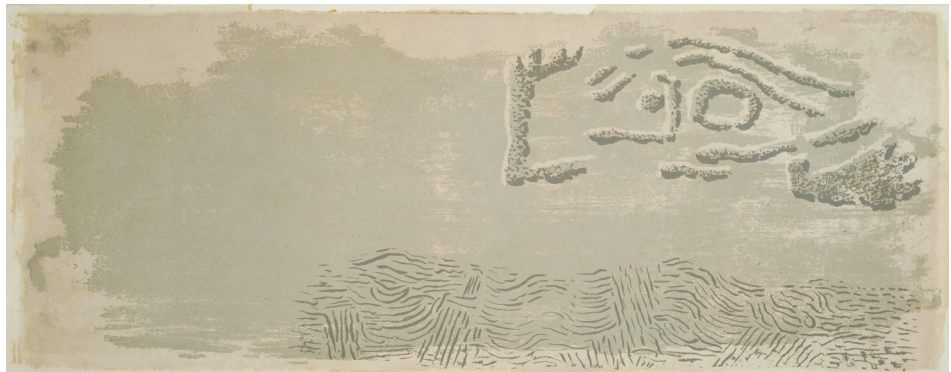
15 Willi Baumeister, *Archaic Scene from Gilgamesh*, 1943 (see D. Ponert 1988, WVZ 1430), Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Archives Baumeister.



16 *Figurine of a Headless Animal in Mammoth Ivory, Vogelherd Cave, Germany, Aurignacian. Photo : Hilde Jensen, University of Tübingen*



17 Willi Baumeister, *Gilgamesh Illustration*, 1955 (see B. Reinhardt, Willi Baumeister Serigraphien, 1989, p. 133) Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Archives Baumeister



(*Schwebende Formen in Weiss*)⁵² as well as in the work “Flying Forms” (*Fliegende Formen*) from 1937/38 (fig. 5 and 6).⁵³ All in all, the axe-like ideograms can be found in twelve paintings by Baumeister.⁵⁴

Předmostí

Probably the clearest influence of a prehistoric artwork on Baumeister’s art is an engraving of an abstract female depiction on a mammoth tusk from the Gravettian site Předmostí in Moravia, discovered in the 19th century (fig. 7). The reference to this Palaeolithic representation is also certain, as Baumeister mentions it explicitly in his text *Room and Wall Spirits* as an “ivory-carved female idol figure” and later emphasizing the influence of “Aurignacian carved drawings that step in the place of earlier torsos.” It already appears in Herberts’ book *10,000 Years of Painting and Its Materials (10.000 Jahre Malerei und ihre Werkstoffe)* (1938, 10), published by Baumeister, and in *The Unknown in Art*.⁵⁵ For Baumeister, there is something essential in the three-pronged lines.⁵⁶ “When you run your fingers through the sand, three fingers are noticeable (scratch marks). Only the trinity gives the impression of completeness, tranquility ... With three lines, the body can be described as a detached garment. Tattooing and body painting can be thought of detached from the body. This results in a language that everyone could understand”. For example, the Předmostí theme occurs in more or less complete or implied form in the following works: “Gilgamesh XLIIa (Variant)”, 1943;⁵⁷ “*Streifenkomposition auf Lila*”, 1944;⁵⁸ “Sumerian legend. What do you want from me, Utnapischtim?” (*Sumerische Legende. Was verlangst Du von mir, Utnapischtim?*) 1947;⁵⁹ “*Ur-Nugal*”, 1944;⁶⁰ “Mycenae” (*Mykene*), 1945;⁶¹ “*Kegelspiel*”, 1946/47;⁶²

52 Spielmann, 2005a, cat. 27, 84.

53 D.J. Ponert, 1988, *Willi Baumeister. Werkverzeichnis der Zeichnungen, Gouachen und Collagen*. In Zusammenarbeit mit Felicitas Karg-Baumeister. DuMont, Köln, cat. 662. See also Presler and Baumeister 2010, PB 6 1937/38, which shows six pages of axe-shaped ideogram sketches that look exactly like Neolithic axes.

54 Beye and Baumeister, 2002, cat. 762 ff.

55 Baumeister, 1947, 154.

56 See also Hirner, 1989, „Anmerkungen zu Willi Baumeisters Hinwendung zum Archaischen.“ In: U. Gauss 1989, *Willi Baumeister, Zeichnungen, Gouachen, Collagen*. Stuttgart 1989, 45-53, 51.

57 Hirner, 1989, p. 51, Fig. 9.

58 M. Semff (ed.), 1996, *Willi Baumeister, Zeichnungen*. Verlag Gerd Hatje, cat 104. Spielmann 2005a, cat. 45, 102.

59 Spielmann, 2005a, 54, fig. 39.

60 Spielmann, 2005a, cat. 46, 103.

61 Spielmann, 2005a, cat. 98, 155.

62 K. Von Maur, 1979, „Willi Baumeisters Spuren.“ In: Württembergischer Kunstverein (ed.), *Willi Baumeister 1945-1955*, 15-20, cat. 70, p. 67.

“*Esther-Illustration XXI*”, 1943,⁶³ “*Salome IV*” (fig. 8), 1943,⁶⁴ “*Four Figures*” (*4 Figuren*), 1942,⁶⁵ and “*Dialogue, Carved Figures (Dialog, Ritzfiguren)*”,⁶⁶ 1942/43.⁶⁷

In addition to these three main topics (Valltorta, Ideogram, and Předmostí), there are numerous individual examples in which Baumeister may have taken up prehistoric themes.

Particularly impressive is the curtain designed by Baumeister for the 1947 play “*Lovespell*” (*Liebeszauber*) by Manuel de Fallas, which appeared on the cover of *DER SPIEGEL* (fig. 9).⁶⁸ It is striking how large the hand is. While it is nothing unusual to depict a hand unless, like here, it has six fingers, in Baumeister’s image the shadowy dotting around the hand is conspicuous. It clearly recalls hand negatives based on Upper Palaeolithic cave art techniques,⁶⁹ which are sprayed in stencil-style (the French *pochoir* technique) that produces color shadings in order to make the area around the hand seem shadowy. We do not know where Baumeister might have gotten this suggestion, as he had yet to visit a Franco-Cantabrian cave art site at the time the stage set was made. So we suspect a reference either came from reading in his rich library or from suggestions in connection with the painting experiments with Herberts in Wuppertal. Otherwise, the theme of the hand occurs as far as I know only once more in the work of Baumeister, namely in “*Illustration I (Variant)*” from 1948.⁷⁰

There are also several references to African rock art in Baumeister’s work, which may have been the result of contact with the Frobenius documents in Frankfurt or

63 U. Gauss, 1989, *Willi Baumeister Zeichnungen, Gouachen, Collagen*. Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, zum 100. Geburtstag des Künstlers, 165, fig. 9.

64 Gauss, 1989, 168.

65 Beye and Baumeister, 2002, cat. 1052.

66 Beye and Baumeister, 2002, cat 1060.

67 Further support is provided in the catalogue raisonné of the drawings (Ponert, 1988): e.g. in the following catalog numbers: 847 Gyges after Herodotus III 1943; 975 Gilgamesh XX (variant) 1943; 976 and 977 both: Gilgamesh XX (sketch) 1943; 978 Gilgamesh XX (variant) 1942; 979 Gilgamesh XX (variant) 1943; 980 Gilgamesh XX (variant) 1943; 1022 Gilgamesh XLIIa (Variant) 1943, in this case especially typical similarities; 1093 Esther illustration XXI 1943; 1132 and 1133 both Esther XXI (variant) 1943; 1372 Salome IV (variant) 1946 in this case also very special similarity including the triangular head; 1390 Salome XIV (variant) 1943; 1391 and 1392 also Salome XIV (variant) of 1943 and 1942/43; 1412 figures II 1943 also an allusion to Dreiergravur; 1468 scene with incised figures 1943; 1477 group with scratched figure 1943; 1478 Three figures 1943; 1479 characters in conversation 1943; 1480 group of figures in landscape 1943; 1519 stripe composition on purple 1944; 1620 scratch figures 1945; very blatant matches; 1623 scratch figures in dialogue 1944; 1624 incised and primeval figures (sic!) 1946; 1625 incised figures in 1946; 1865 With a scratched figure (Fragment) 1948; 1914 Dialog 1949 also shows triple-line forming an oval; 1936 scratched figures 1948; 1938 group of figures with a comb chain 1948 very special resemblance; 1951 incised figures in landscape 1948; 1953 RILU 1948; 1954 Sol 1949; 1955 incised figures on brown 1949; 1975 serene landscape in 1948.

68 See Llorens and Friedel 2004, 264. B. Reinhardt, B. 1989, *Willi Baumeister. Die Serigraphien*. Willi Baumeister zum 100. Geburtstag. Galerie der Stadt Stuttgart, Edition Cantz, Stuttgart, 14. Boehm 1995, 226.

69 H. Floss and M. Ostheider, 2013, „Die Farbe Rot in der paläolithischen Kunst.“ In: H. Meller, et al. (eds), *Rot - Die Archäologie bekennt Farbe*. Tagungen des Landesmuseums für Vorgeschichte Halle 10, 89-98.

70 Ponert, 1988, cat. 2031.

his reading of various publications. The references to African topics begin around 1942. For Baumeister, Africa, with its religious pantheon, was a mirror of the earliest human consciousness.⁷¹ In his works there emerges a “prehistoric Africa” after 1942. Hildebrand-Schat⁷² indicates that there are references to rock paintings from the charter district Quenda in the painting “Two Figures on Sand” (*Zwei Figuren auf Sand*) and can be seen in the picture “Small Flame” (*Flämmchen*) from 1931. There is also a depiction of an elephant, also borrowed from the Frobenius rock carvings. Despite his intensive engagement with the Palaeolithic cave art of Europe, the recognizable references to it (other than the famous painted hand depiction) remain rather rare. Baumeister probably took less interest in the figurative, almost photo-realistic animal pictures of the Ice Age art than in the post-glacial pictures from the East-Spanish Levant, or even the stylized depictions of Palaeolithic humans. In this respect, artistic references to Altamira, which is so central to his theoretical work, are almost impossible to find. Only perhaps in 1952, two years after the visit to Altamira, do we find “Growth IV” (*Wachstum IV*),⁷³ which is reminiscent of the protuberances of the Altamira ceiling. Also “Lines in Motion” (*Linien in Bewegung*)⁷⁴ from 1953 and “Bustling Heap with Colors” (*Belebte Halde mit Farben*)⁷⁵ are reminiscent of Palaeolithic cave painting, the latter in particular of the ceiling of Altamira. Also the picture title “Memory from Spain” (*Souvenir d’Espagne*)⁷⁶ from the years 1952–53 references his stay in Spain and could contain references to the Altamira ceiling relief (*Deckenausstellungen*). Finally, the works “Lines in Motion with Bright Colors” (*Linien in Bewegung mit hellen Farben*), “Bright and Dark Lines with Colors” (*Linien hell und dunkel mit Farben*) and “Lines in Motion” (*Linien in Bewegung*)⁷⁷ from 1953 are reminiscent of engravings in Palaeolithic caves and in particular the so-called Macaroni, the finger drawings such as those found in Altamira which Baumeister had already reproduced in *The Unknown in Art*.

Based on the ivory figures from the Swabian Alb and Baumeister’s documented visit to the Vogelherd cave in 1934, we were particularly interested in the extent to which they also influenced the artist’s work. The results were rather negative in this respect. In the 1943 drawing “Figural with Colors” (*Figural mit Farben*),⁷⁸ one could see allusions to prehistoric small figurines, in the sense of small animal figures or even a piece of antler. Also the work “Line Figures with Bow” (*Linienfiguren mit Bogen*),⁷⁹ 1943, demonstrates such references.

71 Spielmann, 2005b, 158.

72 Hildebrand-Schat, 2005, 182 ff.

73 Boehm, 1995, 33.

74 Gauss, 1989, cat. 267.

75 Gauss, 1989, cat. 268.

76 Ponert, 1988, cat. 2143–2145.

77 Ponert, 1988, cat. 2172–2174.

78 Ponert, 1988, cat. 1421.

79 Ponert, 1988, cat. 1451.

On the other hand, several works seem to refer specifically to Vogelherd figurines. The silkscreen image “Illustration to Gilgamesh” (*Illustration zu Gilgamesch*)⁸⁰ from 1955 is very reminiscent of the deeply engraved Vogelherd animal figurine (fig. 14-17). Also the work “Esther XXX (Variant)”⁸¹ from 1943 suggests these undulating engravings. The painting “Tennis Player” (*Tennispieler*)⁸² from 1934 is the only one of Baumeister’s works to show a conspicuous diamond (rhomb) pattern similar to the Vogelherd snow leopard sculpture. Baumeister visited the Vogelherd that same year (fig. 10 and 11). Also the work “Shapes in Oval” (*Formen in Oval*)⁸³ from 1938 reminds us of a Vogelherd image, namely the bear or lion figure, whose head has only recently been found. Finally, a depiction of animals in the work “Archaic Gilgamesh Scene (Variant)” (*Archaische Szene Gilgamesch (Variante)*) (catalog of works no. 1430) recalls the lion sculpture from the Vogelherd. Above all, the uneven complete front and back legs in the drawing speak for the reproduction of an incompletely preserved archaeological object, as is typical of the Vogelherd figures.

Conclusion

On the whole, it has become clear how much Baumeister’s work is permeated by topics from Ice Age art and prehistory. Indeed, this is only one topic out of many that inspired Baumeister, from archaeology, mythology, geology all the way to nature observation and others. But in the life of Baumeister, it is a heavily significant topic that is deeply internalized.

80 Reinhardt, 1989, cat. 57.

81 Ponert, 1988, cat. 1162.

82 Gauss, 1989, cat. 68.

83 Ponert, 1988, cat. 648, 249.