



A Nonprofit Education Corporation
 P.O. Box 23228, Santa Barbara, CA 93121-3228
 (805) 967-6030
 Web: vistaslifelonglearning.org
 Email: vistas@silcom.com

The Caves of Altamira

Presenter: Araceli Ardón
Sunday, November 16
1:30 to 4:00 PM
Valle Verde Social Room

Altamira, 15,000 Years of Art, Araceli Ardón

In November 2000, as a part of a 120-hour course on Museology, I had the privilege to enter the Altamira Cave in Spain. I had the good fortune to be toured by the director of the Research Center, José Antonio Lasheras. The Cave has the most important prehistorical paintings in the world. The impact that the visit had on me was so great that I developed a lecture with slides to show:

- The exploration of the caves in 1875 by Marcelino Sanz de Sautuola, a nobleman from Santander.
- The layout of the caves, with their paintings, drawings, sculptures and engravings and their possible meanings.
- The construction of the replica. How it was built and assembled.
- The National Museum and Research Center of Altamira, which has become a complex that contains a replica of the cave, a museum of prehistoric art, a research institute with space to host summer camps, and a restoration laboratory. The 2001 complex represents an investment of 25.5 million euros.



The Altamira Cave consists of a series of rooms and passages shaped like an S. The world famous feature of this cave is found on the ceiling, featuring colored paintings, mainly from the beginning of the Magdalenian period, about 15.000 years ago. Most paintings show bisons, but there are also two wild boars, some horses, a hind, and some other figures in a simpler style. The surprising quality and exceptionally well preserved state of the paintings caused specialists to doubt whether they were genuine. Their discoverer died before his find had been officially accepted as authentic. At the beginning of the 20th century the scientific community accepted them as unadulterated after several comparable remains from the Stone Age were discovered in this area.

ENROLLMENT FORM: *THE CAVES OF ALTAMIRA*

VISTAS Members \$15 per person — Non-members \$15 per person

Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Mail to: VISTAS Lifelong Learning, Inc., P.O. Box 23228, Santa Barbara, CA 93121-3228

Deadline for registration: November 2, 2008

Altamira is still the most exceptional evidence of the Magdalenian culture in southern Europe. The habitation of the cave starts in the Aurignacian (Perigordian) period, in which the first figure-like symbols etched in the walls belong. It was used more intensely in the Solutrean and Magdalenian periods. Proof of the habitation are the abundant stone material and the organic remains dated with the C14 dating. The drawings show bisons, horses, red deer and boar. The animal figures are large scale, e.g. the red deer is 2.20m long. It is surprising because the artists very painstakingly depicted its specific and sexual features. The pictures are dynamic and the movement of the animals comes to life through the thoughtful use of the reliefs and uneven surface of the walls, thus creating a breathtaking effect. Another outstanding aspect is the variety in the texture of the furs and manes of the different species painted on the rock surface. It is created with a minimum of facilities and with the restrictions imposed by the use of only three shades of colour: ochre, red and black. In the complex of painting in the cave, bisons in different positions are most common and carried out most expertly. Other drawings, described as anthropomorphous, show humans with animal heads as well as different signs, such as hands or comb- and step-like symbols difficult to explain.

Today, access to the cave is extremely restricted due to CO2 breathed out by visitors.



VISTAS Fall 2008 Calendar

Seminar/Event	Inclusive Dates	Time	Venue
Representation, Voting Systems & the Electoral College	Oct. 29	1—4PM	Parish Hall All Saints by the Sea
Globalization & Off-shoring	Tues., Dec. 2, 9, 16	TBD	TBD
The Art Market	Fri., Dec. 5	10AM—12PM	TBD
Myth, History & Poetry in Homer's Iliad	Jan 7, 14, 21	9:30AM—12:30PM	TBD



P.O. Box 23228
Santa Barbara, CA 93121-3228