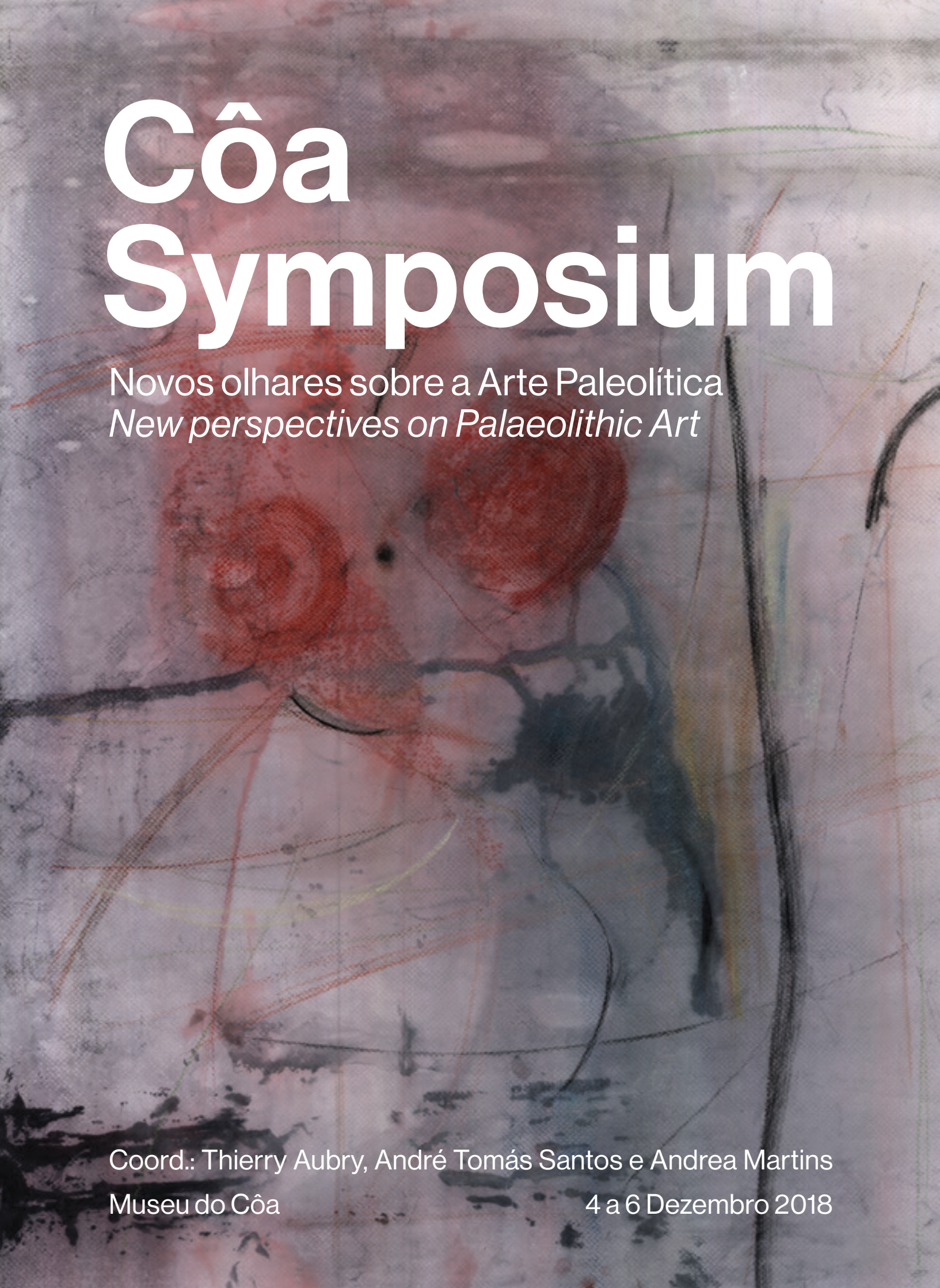




Côa Symposium

Novos olhares sobre a Arte Paleolítica
New perspectives on Palaeolithic Art

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Something other than hand stencils. Horse representations in the cave of Fuente del Trucho (Huesca, Spain)

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Resumo: La cueva de Fuente del Trucho (Asque-Colungo, Huesca, España) es conocida por sus representaciones de manos, que comprenden, al menos, 60 de estos motivos. Sin embargo, el número total de representaciones pintadas en la cueva supera las cien unidades. Junto con las series de signos y puntos, hay un grupo relativamente pequeño de unidades gráficas figurativas compuestas de zoomorfos (1 cabra montés, 1 ciervo y 9 caballos). Este artículo se centra en las representaciones de caballos. Teniendo en cuenta la variabilidad morfológica, las convenciones estilísticas y la datación U / Th, es posible identificar un amplio marco cronológico para estos motivos en la cueva, desde el Gravetiense hasta el Solutrense superior / Magdaleniense antiguo. **Palabras-clave:** Arte rupestre paleolítico; Figuraciones de caballos; Península Ibérica; Vertiente meridional de los Pirineos; Estilo; Cronología.

Abstract: The cave of Fuente del Trucho (Asque-Colungo, Huesca, Spain) is known for its hand stencil representations, comprising, at least, 60 such motifs. Nevertheless, the total number of painted representations in the cave exceeds one hundred. Together with signs and dots series, there is a relatively small group of figurative graphic units composed of zoomorphs (1 ibex, 1 deer and 9 horses). This paper focuses on the horse representations. Taking into account morphological variability, stylistic conventions and U/Th dating, it is possible to identify a wide chronological frame for these motifs in the cave, from Gravettian to Upper Solutrean / Lower Magdalenian.

Keywords: Palaeolithic Rock Art; Horse motif; Iberian Peninsula; Pyrenees South side; Style; Chronology.

1. Introduction

Although the cave of Fuente del Trucho can be defined as a major Palaeolithic rock art site, it is not in fact a cave in any real sense. It is a shallow open cavity in the conglomerates of the Fornocal sector (Pre-Pyrenees), with a 22 m wide mouth (oriented to the SE) and 24 m in depth. Its importance is based on its strategic location, controlling a narrow pathway in the ravine (an obligatory passage for humans and animals going in the N-S direction) and just in front of a natural spring of water (Fig. 1).

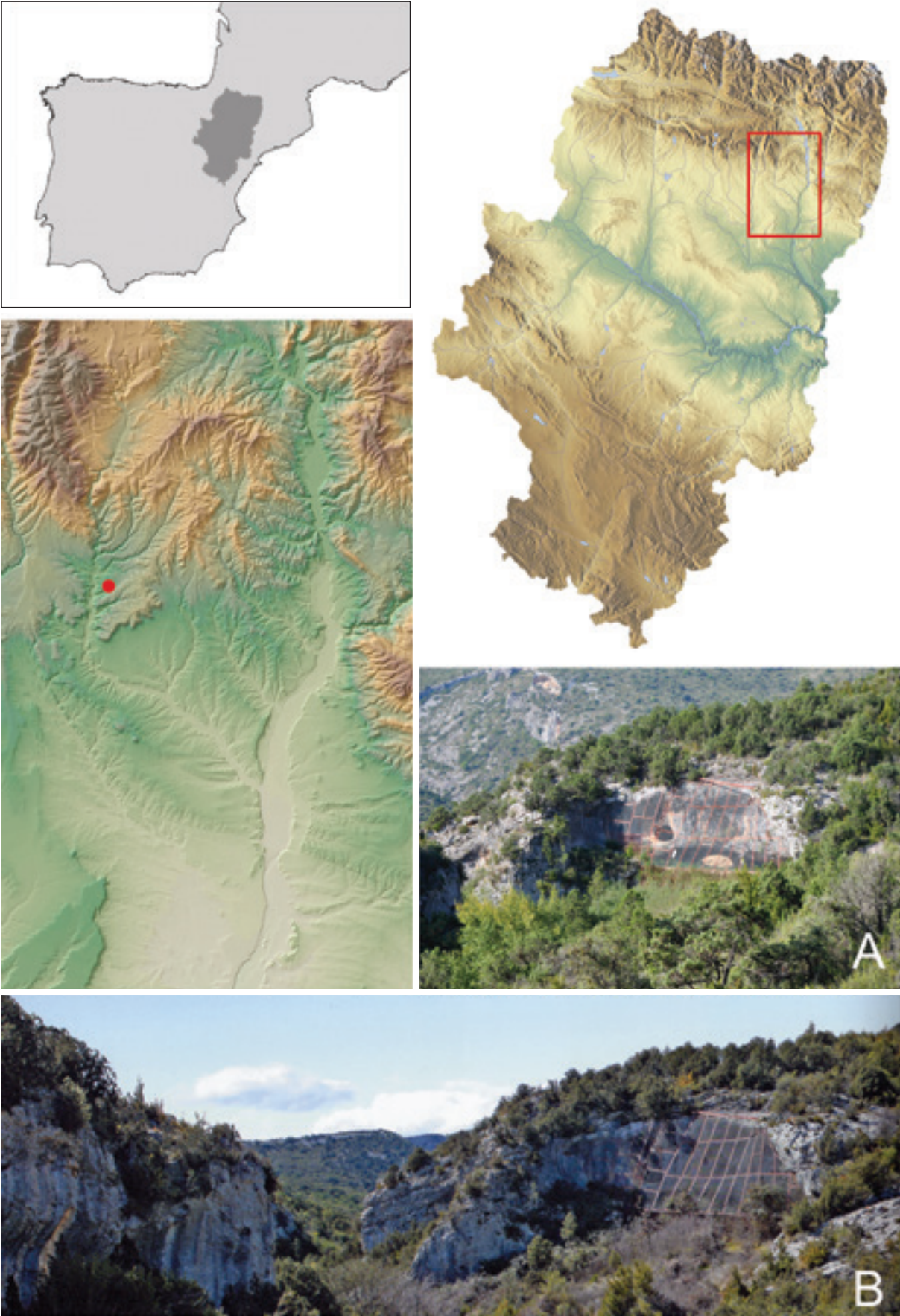
The space of the cavity is divided into two dissymmetrical lobes. The first, much smaller in size, is a spherical dome blackened by organic matter and smoke with a natural oval hole through which the sunlight enters. The floor of the southern part of this lobe falls into an oblique calcite flow, where several deep drawn engravings were made.

The second lobe, in semi-darkness, has a large number of paintings on its walls and ceiling. There are 21 decorated panels on which there have been documented, to date, 60 hand stencils, 9 horses¹, 3 bears, 2 cervidae, 1 ibex, 5 trefoil signs and a large number of dot series.

The cave is characterized by a semi-circular hole or natural window opened directly on the façade. The light directly illuminates the panel of the engravings. This natural hole would have been a real visual attraction for Palaeolithic humans all along the sequence, as attested to by the reiterative occupation of the cave. This suggestive circular perforation was also decorated on its external side by the painting of more than 100 dots or fingertip digitations, a decoration that could both have been made in Palaeolithic or Post-Palaeolithic ages. It is worth pointing out that there is no evidence of Mesolithic, Neolithic or Bronze Age occupation levels in the site, passing from the Magdalenian to Upper Medieval Age levels without any stratigraphic break.

There is quite an extensive bibliography on the cave, dating from its discovery in 1978 (Beltrán & Baldellou, 1981; Baldellou 1991, 1992, 1994; Mir, 1987; Ripoll & *alli*,

1. During these two years, new documentation on the cave have brought to light one more complete horse representation (in panel V) as well as two other dubious motifs in panel XXI.



←

Figure 1: Geographical location of Fuente del Trucho. The place where the engravings were carved is illuminated by sunlight coming through a natural hole in the wall (A). Obligatory narrow natural pass where the cave of Fuente del Trucho is located (B).

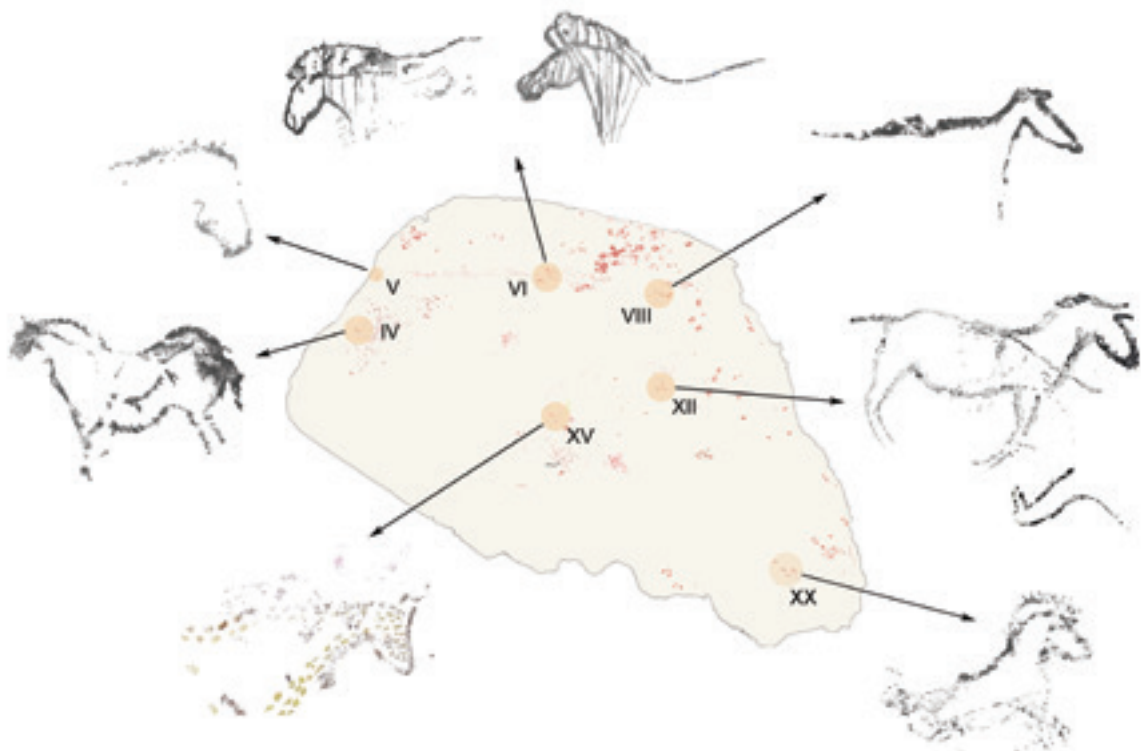
2001, 2005; Baldellou & Mir, 1996) to more recent archaeological surveys (Montes, Utrilla & Martínez-Bea, 2006). These studies emphasise the human occupation levels in the cave during Gravettian ($26,020 \pm 150$ and $20,800 \pm 100$ BP) and Magdalenian phases (TL 13,244 $\pm$ 945), according to the data obtained, or even Aurignacian and Solutrean as suggested by the discovery of some specific lithic tools, such as carinated and nosed endscrapers, strangled blades or flat retouch and notched points (Utrilla & *alii*, 2014a). Other studies concern rock art documentation (Angás & Bea, 2014; Utrilla & Bea, 2015; Utrilla & *alii*, 2012, 2014b, 2016; Collado & *alii*, 2018); or U/Th dating (Hoffmann & *alii*, 2016, 2017). The majority of these publications provide a global perspective of the cave, giving a general view about the paintings on its ceiling and walls. In the present contribution, we focus on the horse representations depicted in Fuente del Trucho (Utrilla, Bea & Angás, 2015).

The final study, focused on the paintings, awaits the outcome of a comprehensive project for the restoration, preservation and cleaning of the rock canvas, a splendid white support which will highlight the hundreds of paintings on the ceiling and walls of the cave.

2. Horse representations

At the moment (by 2018), there are documented nine painted horse motifs in the interior lobe of the cave, and two other dubious engraved representations on the exterior panel. Due to the uncertain nature of the engraved zoomorphs (whose analysis will be addressed in a future study), we focus our study on the horse figures in the inner lobe. Nine specimens in red colour are documented, distributed on different panels along the surface of the cave: panels IV, V, VI (2), VIII, XII (2 specimens) XV and XX and always associated with dot series (panels V, VI and XII), hand stencils (VIII, XX) or finger flutings (VIII, XV) (Fig. 2).

Figure 2: Location of the horse motifs in Fuente del Trucho.



2.1. Panel IV

Motif 1. The first horse motif (Fig. 3.1) was first published by Ripoll & *alli* (2001) and can be defined as a completed animal with an “M” shaped body, a small head, a stressed back curve, a prominent mane, massive hindquarters and a parallel pair of legs. This specimen seems to be located in a symmetric position with a male deer on panel VII, both of them with the same “M” shape, prominent hindquarters and two pairs of parallel legs². Its similarity to several horses in Siega Verde is clear (Alcolea, Balbín, 2007) and also to some specimens from the pre-Magdalenian phases in Penascosa or Canada do Inferno (Baptista, 2001; Baptista & Santos, 2010; Baptista, Santos & Correia, 2008).

2.2. Panels V and VI

The frieze in panels V and VI, on a vertical rocky ledge, was the place chosen to represent three of these motifs in a horizontal development, in the manner of an apparent scene. It is worth noting that motif 2 is oriented to the right while motifs 3 & 4 look to the left, framing the dot series between them.

Motif 2. Panel V depicts a horse’s head oriented to the right (Fig. 3.2). It is quite simple in its morphology, although it is possible to see a typical fallen muzzle and a well-marked jowl, following conventions already described for Lower and Middle Solutrean in Parpalló, La Pileta, Cueva de Jorge or Abrigo del Moro in the Mediterranean basin or even in La Meseta (La Griega) or in the Côa Valley (Penascosa 3, Ribeira do Piscos 1).

Motifs 3 & 4. At one of the edges of the dot series and close to a trefoil sign in panel VI, (Fig. 4), there appear two horses’ heads (VI.1, VI.2) with an erect mane and striped long hair looking to the left (Fig. 3.3-4). Despite their close positioning, the use of some conventions (such as the striped pattern) and the same colour tone makes it possible to point out several morphological differences. The first head (VI.1) has a more elongated muzzle and a much more marked jowl, the chest line is vertical and the upper part of the neck describes a curved trace instead of a rectilinear one as in the second horse. The forehead is straight in horse VI.1 and convex and shorter in horse VI.2. The striped pattern is also different. In the first horse the lines are arranged close together, converging at the same point (located in the lower-left part of the chest), while for the second horse there are fewer lines and they are depicted following a separated parallel distribution. In both cases, the line of the back is continued by a development of the external line of the mane.

These are the only ones in the cave depicted on a vertical wall (the so-called frieze).

Motif 3 is directly associated with a trefoil sign (as well as a complex dot series), a connection that is already known in some other cases in which horses are linked to triangular-like signs, such as in Le Portel or Pasiega C (Fig. 5).

2.3. Panel VIII

Motif 5. A possible horse³ with long nape and nostril is represented, associated with 5 finger marks and a right-hand stencil (Figs. 3.5 & 6). One again, the horse motif is uncompleted. It represents the head, neck, part of the chest and the back, but not

→

Figure 3: Horse motifs in Fuente del Trucho: 1. Panel IV; 2. Panel V; 3-4. Panel VI; 5. Panel VIII; 6-7. Panel XII; 8. Panel XV; 9. Panel XX.

→

Figure 4: Tracing of the frieze (panels V and VI) and detail of the horses’ heads.

2. In 2001, this animal was defined as an “acephalous horse”, but digital treatment of the image has allowed us to document a small and elongated head as well as the remains of an antler, so its identification as a horse must be discarded.

3. Villaverde suggests that it could be a bovid representation. In another paper, together with this author, we will discuss both interpretative possibilities.

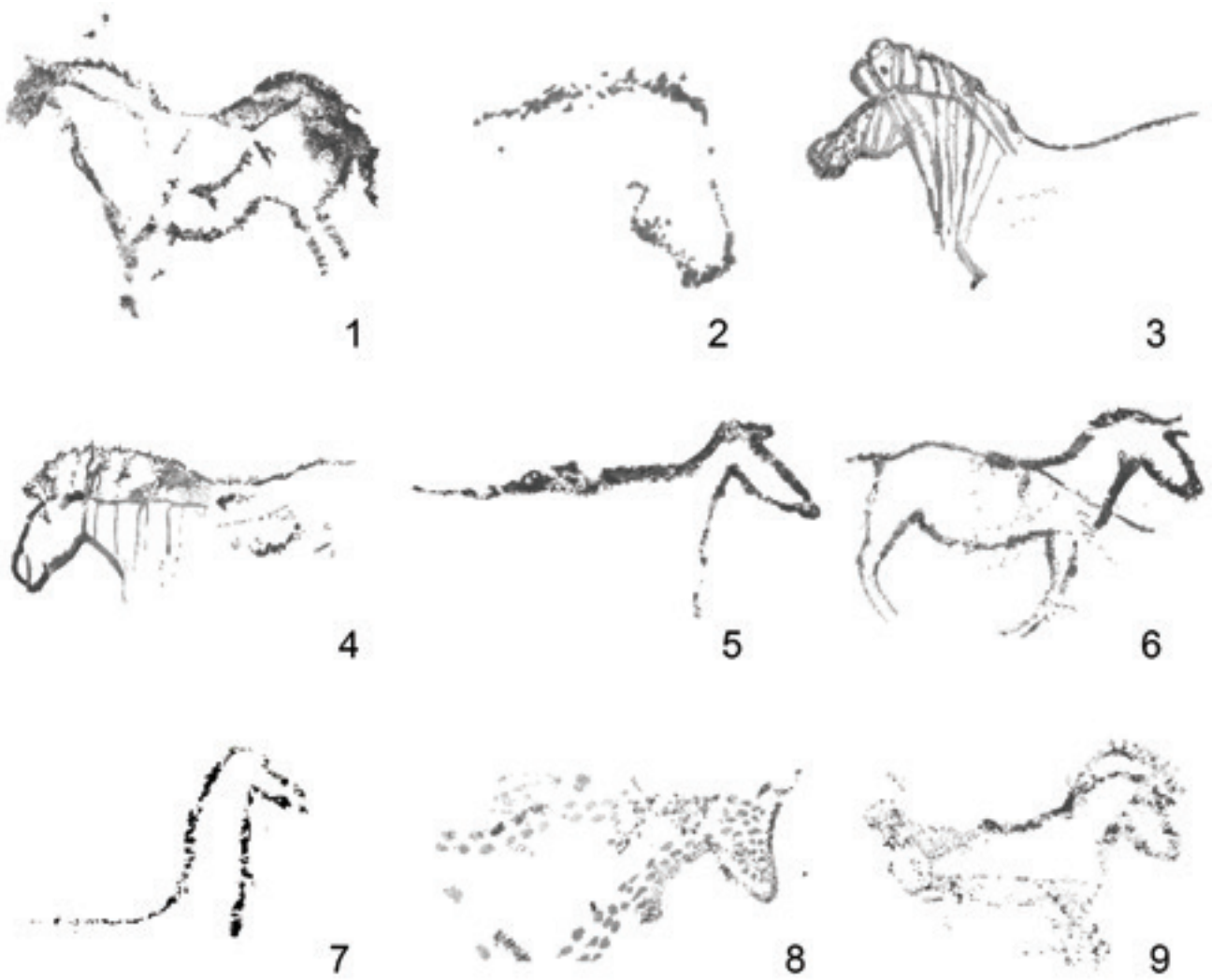




Figure 5: Association of horses with triangular-like signs in:
1. Fuente del Trucho; 2. Le Portel (after Lorblanchet); 3. Pasiega C (after González Sainz and Balbín).

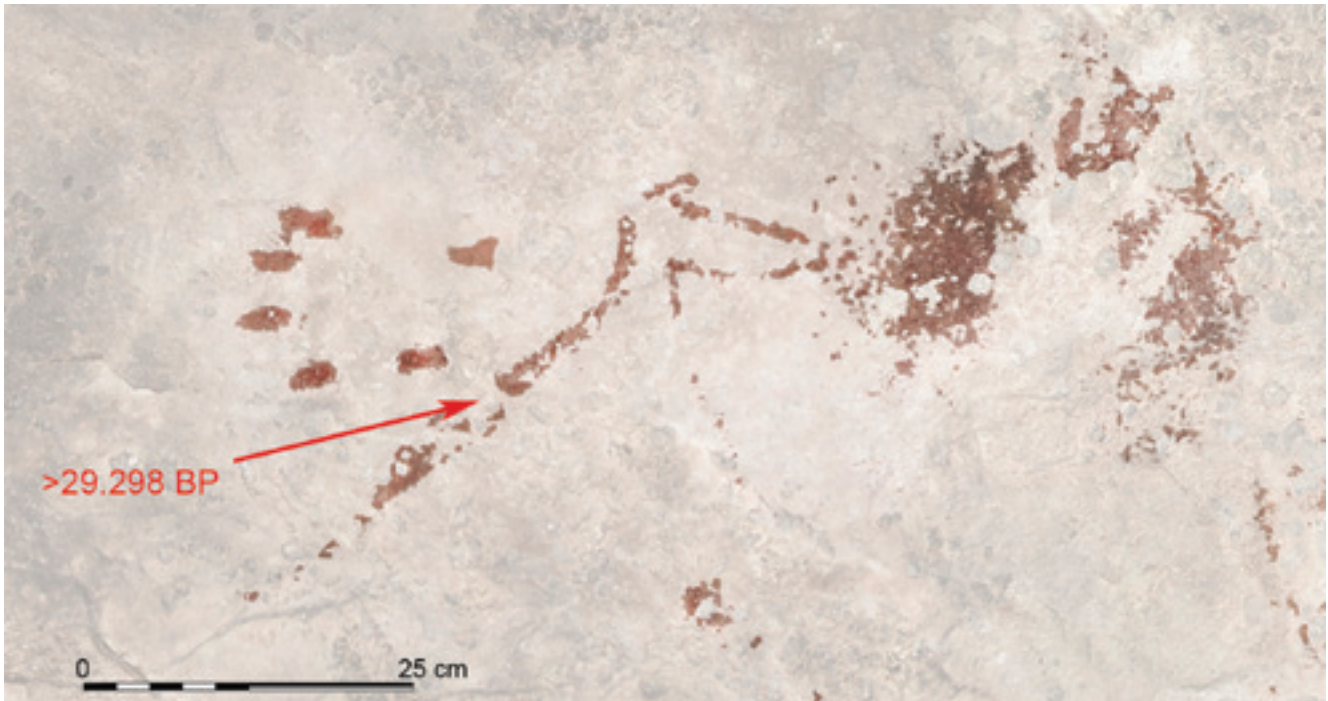


Figure 6: Digital tracing of Panel VIII. Horse directly associated with a right-hand stencil and finger-tip marks. The arrow points to the place where the U/Th sample was taken.

the hindquarters, belly and legs. The stylistic conventions used are quite interesting: the muzzle is quite long and tight, with a convex shape for the jaw and a rectilinear development for the forehead, and a prominent projection of the frontal upper part of the head (mane, ears?). It also has a very short neck with a concave shape in the upper part, linked with a straight back reinforced by a double or thicker line.

What is surprising is its almost total similitude with another zoomorph motif in sector C2 of La Pasiega, also associated with two curved dot series and a triangular sign (González Sainz & Balbín, 2002; Utrilla & *alli*, 2012, p. 534, fig. 7; Utrilla & *alli*, 2014a, p. 130, fig. 10; Hoffmann & *alli*, 2017, p. 57, fig. 9) (Fig. 5.3).

2.4. Panel XII

Motifs 6 & 7. Two horses are represented in panel XII, located on the ceiling (Fig. 3.6 & 3.7 and Fig. 7). Their backs face opposite directions. Motif 6 depicts a complete horse, characterised by a lack of detail, a pronounced cervical-dorsal curvature and open parallel line-shaped legs. A straight line on its chest could be interpreted as a bone spear-point.

The global morphology of the motif, following the Parpalló sequence (Villaverde, 1994), suggests it could be classified in the Lower/Middle Solutrean. A sample for its dating by U/Th was taken in 2016 (by Hoffmann and his team) from a calcite crust over the motif's forelegs. The oldest date for FT16b is 25,40 Ka BP.

Motif 7. This represents only a small elongated head with a long-curved neck, without any detail. It could fit Style II (Gravettian/Lower Solutrean) according to its sinuous dorsal line and the small and elongated head. A notable parallel can be found in a horse from Meravelles (motif M-3) (Villaverde, Cardona & Martínez-Valle, 2009, p. 768, fig. 3. M3).



2.5. Panel XV

Motif 8. A not very visible red line could be defined, with a degree of doubt, as part of the frontal part of a horse's head (Fig. 3.8). Nevertheless, the view cannot be discarded that it could be part of some other animal representation or even an uncompleted sign, similar to those defined as trefoils. In any case, the red line would delimit the head and chest while the inner part seems to be filled by yellow dots. This is the only one-horse motif that would have a concave forehead, similar to one from Cueva de las Estrellas (Collado & *alli*, 2019, p. 25, fig. 6). It is also interesting to highlight that this motif is on the ceiling, next to black hand stencils and a large group of complex dot series.

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Figure 7: Horses from panel XII associated with dot series.

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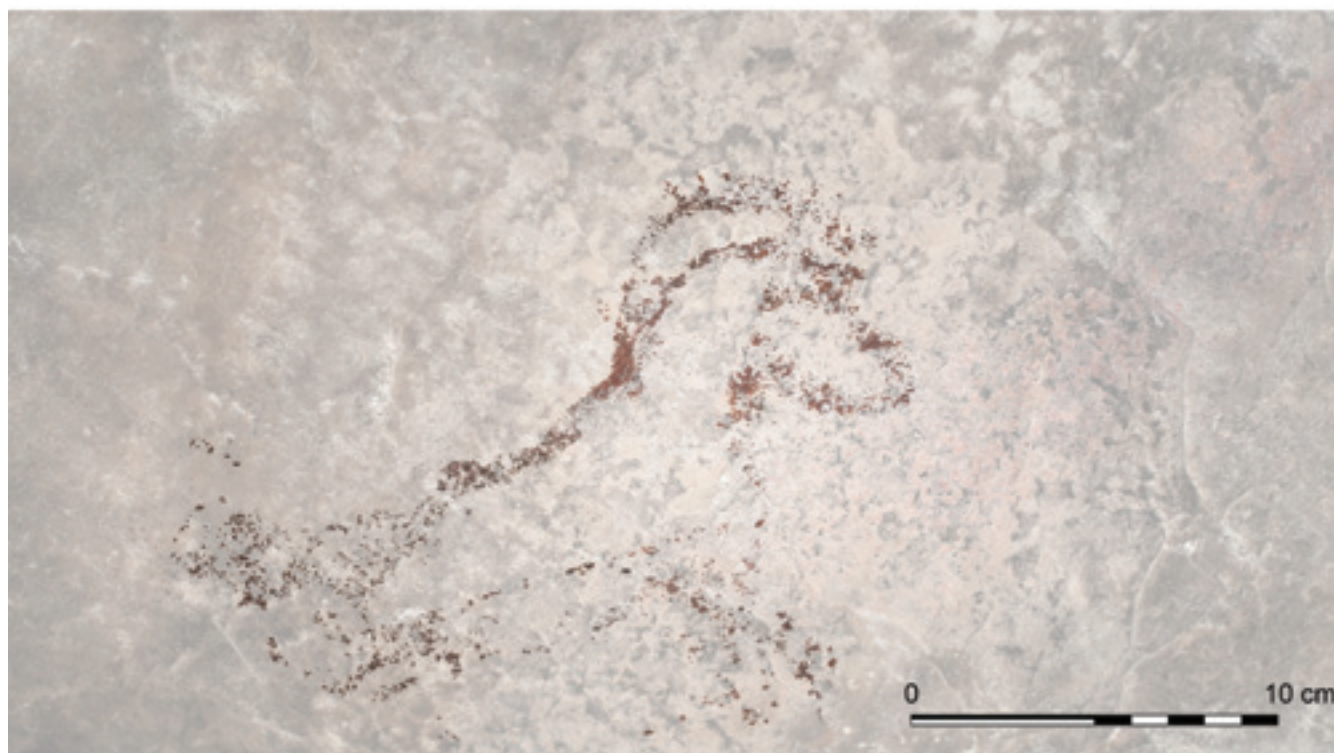
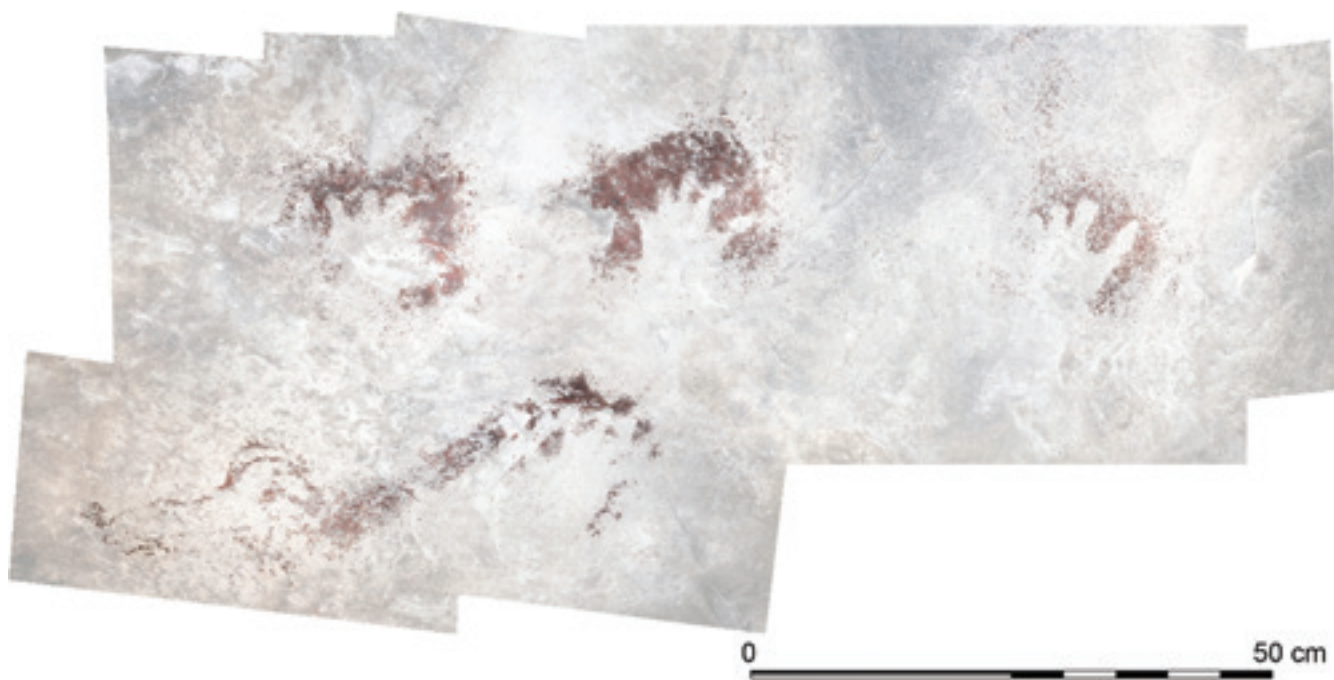
Figure 8: Doubtful horse head filled with dots in Panel XV.



2.6. Panel XX

Motif 9. Finally, a new horse motif has been documented in panel XX on the ceiling, associated with four uncompleted hand stencils and a sort of long thick rectilinear sign. This new horse (Fig. 3.9 and Fig. 9) is formally almost identical to the completed horse in panel XII, with a marked dorsal curve and the ears ahead. Nevertheless, a mane (in a worse state of preservation) seems to have been added subsequently, bringing it closer to the horse motifs in panel VI.

Figure 9: Motif 9 associated with hand stencils and a thick straight trace. 2. Detail of the horse.



3. Chronology and parallels

As we have mentioned, the horse motifs in Fuente del Trucho have a varied typology that suggest different chronological moments (Fig. 10), although most of them can be assigned to a pre-Magdalenian phase (Gravettian and Solutrean).

The oldest horse representation would be the one from panel VIII, with an elongated muzzle. Its ancient chronology, Lower Gravettian (or even earlier), has been ascertained by a U/Th date (>29,298 BP) obtained from a calcite crust overlapping its dorsal line (Hoffmann & *alli*, 2016, 2017). Despite its similarity to some other bovid representations (the identification carried out by Villaverde), the lack of horns together with some other horse parallels (such as those from Pasiega C or La Haza) (González Sainz & Balbín, 2002, p. 170-178) lead us to a preliminary interpretation of the figure as an equid. Whatever the figure could be, its morphological conventions fit perfectly with a Gravettian date, confirming both the U/Th date and the stylistic aspects observed for the decorated plaquettes in Parpalló.

The horse with an elongated muzzle in panel XII, similar to another from the cave of Meravelles, may also belong to the same Gravettian/Lower Solutrean moment, with morphological conventions that define Leroi-Gourhan's Style II.

A second phase, Lower-Middle Solutrean, may be represented by the head from panel V, with a remarkable curved jawbone and fallen muzzle, a convention also exemplified in Parpalló for that period (Villaverde, 1994). Fallen snouts and curved jawbones are well documented all along the Mediterranean façade of the Iberian Peninsula (Doña Trinidad in Ardales; Cueva del Moro in Tarifa) as well as in La Meseta (La Griega) or in the Northwest of the Peninsula (Foz Côa).

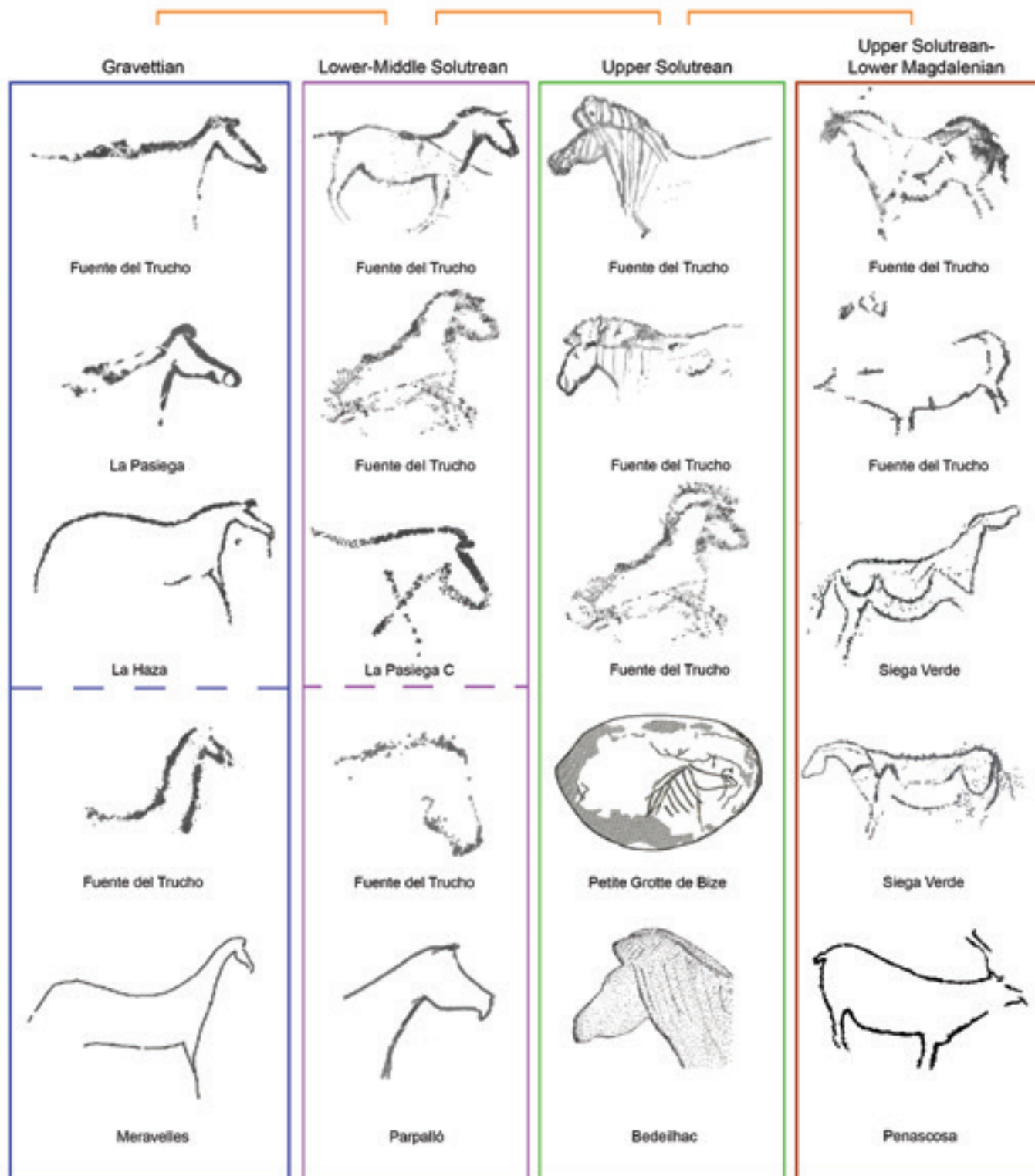
It is possible to identify a marked "duck bill" shape for horse in panel V⁴, finding a close parallel in Parpalló (plaquette 16113B), classified into a Lower/Middle Solutrean, as part of the third "*bec de canard*" stylistic variant proposed by Villaverde, Cardona & Martínez-Valle (2009, p. 781, fig. 12).

In any case, different scholars have proposed a diverse chronology for the so-called "*bec de canard*" horses: Gravetto-Solutrean (Guy, 2000, 2003), Lower and Middle-Ancient Solutrean and including Gravettian moments (Villaverde, Cardona & Martínez-Valle, 2009); or an even more ancient dating based on an engraved plaquette from an Aurignacian level in Bouil-Bleu with a "duck bill" horse motif (Petrognani, 2013, p. 152, 2015).

Nevertheless, despite the fact that the more ancient representations could be dated into the Aurignacian, this convention would have reached its maximum development during Lower-Middle Solutrean. The morphology and tipometry of the horses in Fuente del Trucho suggest they are closer to the Solutrean specimens from Parpalló (being more proportioned) than to those from Aurignacian found in French caves (with an elongated muzzle and strangled neck).

The lack of a mane or anatomical details, parallel-opened legs or a less marked dorsal curve determine the classification of the completed horse from panel XII and that from panel XX in the second phase. The morphological conventions are similar to those observed for the engraved horse on the wall in Parpalló or the painted one in Cueva Ambrosio (panel II, horse 8), both of them covered by Upper Solutrean

4. Given a certain wide variability for this sort of convention, already defined for quite a lot of French and Iberian sites (Chauvet, Cosquer, Mayenne-Sciences, Roucadour, Croze-à-Gontran, Gargas, Pair-non-Pair, Doña Trinidad, La Pileta, El Moro, Ardales, Les Meravelles, Nerja, Parpalló, La Griega, la Pasiega A, Askondo, Siega Verde, Penascosa...), it is possible to think about a close interrelationship also for motif 3, despite the lack of an objective and global definition for this sort of figure (Villaverde, Cardona & Martínez-Valle, 2009; Hernando, 2013).



levels. This points to a Solutrean phase (Ripoll & *alli*, 2006). The statistics for parallel-opened legs by Villaverde classify the majority of these motifs as Lower-Middle Solutrean (54 specimens) and Middle Solutrean (22 specimens), although there are some at Solutrean-Gravettian levels (for example, the specimen from the large painted block associated with a dot row).

←

Figure 10: Stylistic parallels for horses from Fuente del Trucho. La Pasiega after González Sainz and Balbín; la Haza, after Egizábal & García Díez; Meravelles and Parpalló after Villaverde; Bize after Sacchi; Bedeilhac after Breuil; Siega Verde after Balbín and Alcolea; Penascosa after Baptista and Gomes.

A third group comprises the striped mane horses from panel VI, characterised by anatomical details: mane and stripes.

On the northern slopes of the Pyrenees, a marked mane and striped neck were also featured in a painted horse in Bedeilhac (Ariège) (Breuil, 1974) and in an engraved horse on a pebble from la Petite Grotte de Bize (Languedoc-Rosellón) (recovered by Genson in old archaeological campaigns) attributed to an Upper Solutrean level after Sacchi (1986). Nevertheless, it would proceed from an uncertain stratigraphic origin (Gravettian or Solutrean) after Djindjian (2013). The mane of the horse from panel XX could be an addition at this stage.

A fourth group appears in the motif of panel IV, originally identified by Ripoll (Ripoll & *alli*, 2005). It could be classified in Late Solutrean-Lower Magdalenian period. It is characterised by an “M” shape line in the belly and massive hindquarters with an open-parallel pair of legs. These conventions were also applied in 28 pecked horses in Siega Verde (Salamanca), although in these cases the jawbones are more marked and thus Style III has been suggested (Balbín & Alcolea, 2007). Given these features, a Style III (Final Solutrean/Lower Magdalenian) is proposed. Notched points recovered in Fuente del Trucho are an excellent parallel to those from Chaves (dated in 17,615±72 BP / 21,566-21,011 calBP, D-AMS 023793), so they could correspond to the stage when these horse motifs were depicted.

Considering all the rock art representations in Fuente del Trucho, we can conclude that every U/Th date on the calcite crust overlapping the paintings indicates the Gravettian period, so it is necessary to classify the dot series, trefoil signs, the elongated muzzle horse from panel VIII and the red hand stencils in that phase (or in the previous Aurignacian phase for the dots series, dated in 31170) (Hoffmann & *alli*, 2017).

For the non-dated figures, such as the striped mane horse on panel VI or those with parallel-opened legs on panel XII, mobiliary parallels from Parpalló indicate a classification in Middle Solutrean (or even Upper Solutrean for those with a marked mane).

The horse from panel IV and deer from panel VIII (both of them identical, with massive hindquarters and “M” shaped line in the belly) have parallels with the engraved horses from Siega Verde, attributed to the Final Solutrean or Lower Magdalenian (Alcolea & Balbín, 2007).

4. Conclusions

There was a Mousterian settlement in Fuente del Trucho, but also occupation of the cave from the Initial Upper Palaeolithic, either Aurignacian (evidenced by carenated and nose-ended scrapers, strangled blades) or Gravettian (as indicated by backed edge blades, some multiple burins on retouched truncation). Gravettian occupation is also attested by dating: 26,020±150 (30,735-29,778 calBP; OxCal 4.3, IntCal 13) (Beta-392868) for a bone of the external survey in 2014; or even 31,880±220 BP (36,266-35,261 calBP; OxCal 4.3, IntCal 13) (Beta- 365760) for another bone from the transition level (*d/e*), just on the edge with Aurignacian, all of them AMS dates (Utrilla & *alli*, 2014a, p. 126, table 1). Most of the paintings (hand stencils, dot series, and possibly the exterior engravings) seem to fit with these periods, given both the stylistic and U/Th date parameters.

As indicated previously, a Solutrean occupation in the cave has also been documented by flat retouch tools and an AMS-C14 dating, in the edge with Gravettian: 20,800±100 BP (25,414-24,640 calBP; OxCal 4.3, IntCal 13) (GrA-29915) for a bone in

the inner archaeological survey. Notched points (*“puntas de escotadura”*), typical of the Iberian Upper Solutrean, present a notable similarity with those remains from the cave of Chaves, dated in $17,615 \pm 72$ ($21,566-21,011$ calBP; OxCal 4.2.3, IntCal13) (D-AMS 023793) (Utrilla & Laborda, 2018)⁵. This dating would be in accordance to the horse motif from Panel IV as well as the deer representation from panel VII (Fig. 10).

Although there is no painted figure attributable to the IV style of Middle and Upper Magdalenian, it is not possible to reject a Magdalenian occupation, given the discovery of tiny circular scrapers (typical of the French side during Upper-Late Magdalenian) together with other unguiform scrapers and the Teyjat points documented during the archaeological excavation. Furthermore, a TL dating obtained on a scraper, cracked by fire, gave $13,244 \pm 945$ (MADN-4624). All these elements point to a possible Middle and Upper Magdalenian occupation.

Summarizing, Fuente del Trucho was an excellent site for occupation (well oriented to the south-east, on a strategic hunting pathway, close to a natural spring, in the centre of the South side of the Pyrenees), attractive for prehistoric people from the Middle Palaeolithic and throughout the Upper Palaeolithic. The contemporary use of this space as an enclosure (700 sheep and goats) has messy archaeological record. Nevertheless, we still hope to find intact Palaeolithic levels by digging deeply in the interior lobe of the cave.

The horse representations seem to demonstrate a continued occupation of the cave during the Upper Palaeolithic (from the Aurignacian/Gravettian to Late Solutrean/Lower Magdalenian), as we can deduce from the different stylistic conventions observed on the figures. In any case, we do not wish to propose watertight compartments, taking into account the undefined stratigraphic location for portable art from Parpalló (Villaverde, 1994). On the other hand, there appears to be a wide margin between the Pre-Magdalenian phases.

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5. There is another (charcoal) ancient date (no AMS) from Solutrean level in Chaves: $19,700 \pm 310$ ($24,455-22,961$ calBP) (GrN-12681).

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