

Prehistoric man went to the movies, say researchers

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The ancient Aboriginal rock carving known as 'Climbing Man' (C) is shown in this photo taken on the Burrup Peninsula in Australia in 2008. Prehistoric man enjoyed a primitive version of cinema, according to Austrian and British researchers, who are currently seeking to recreate these ancient visual displays.

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Rock engravings from the Copper Age found all over Europe in remote, hidden locations, indicate the artwork was more than mere images, researchers from Cambridge University and Sankt Poelten's university of applied sciences (FH) in Austria believe.

"The cliff engravings... in our opinion are not just pictures but are part of an audiovisual performance," Frederick Baker of Cambridge

University's Museum of [Archaeology](#) and Anthropology said in a statement Tuesday.

"There was still no moving image but (the pictures) created sequences like in animation... this was not just a treat for the eyes but also for the ears, as these rock engravings are especially found in locations with particular echoes.

"In this sense, the rock engravings are not just static images but pictures that created a story in the mind of the viewer -- just like at the cinema," said Baker.

Cambridge University and FH Sankt Poelten have now launched a "Prehistoric Picture Project" with Weimar's Bauhaus university in Germany to recreate these films, using computer technology to establish the sequence of [images](#) and animate them like in a cartoon.

The "movies," dating back to 4000 to 1000 BC, often depict fights, dances or hunts, but interestingly never show death and rarely portray women, the project's coordinators said.

The project is being conducted in Valcamonica, in Italy's northern Lombardy region, where the highest concentration of such engravings -- some 100,000 pictures -- can be found.

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