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Reproduction, Simulation and the Hyperreal: A Case Study of 'Lascaux III'

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Reproduction, Simulation and the Hyperreal: A case study of 'Lascaux III' 2015-2017

Robert J. Wallis

In: Rozwadowski, A. and J. Hampson (eds) *Visual Culture and Identity: Using Rock Art to Reconnect Past and Present*. Oxford: Archaeopress.

List of Figures:

Figure 1: 1:10 scale geodesic model of the shaft in the *Reproduction* room

Figure 2: Miniature reproduction of the scene in the shaft in black pigment on wooden panel, below the 1:10 scale geodesic model of the shaft

Figure 3: Animation of a male cave artist

Figure 4: Two life-size 'hyperrealistic' reconstructions in silicone of Cro-Magnon humans by artist Élisabeth Daynès, positioned among the 'stone veil' replicas

Figure 5: The close association between image and cave surface has been meticulously reproduced, demonstrated here by the scene in the shaft

Figure 6: Black-and-white animation of a male 'shaman' artist wearing a scary mask in the *Seeing and Learning* room

Abstract:

The Lascaux International Exhibition, dubbed 'Lascaux III', is an international travelling exhibition which launched in 2012. The core of the exhibition is five 'facsimile' reproductions, using cutting-edge 'stone veil' technology, of those parts of the cave not displayed at the replica known as Lascaux II which is located near the original cave. Other elements of the show include a 3D film journey through and scale models of the cave interior, life-size 'hyperrealistic' reconstructions in silicone of Cro-Magnon humans by artist Élisabeth Daynès, interactive multimedia consoles and 'prototype' copies of artefacts from the cave complex. In this paper, I draw on Lindauer's method of critical museum visiting in order to examine the re-use, reproduction and simulation of the art, architecture and archaeology of Lascaux in the Lascaux III exhibition. As the original cave has been closed to the public since 1963 and the replica known as 'Lascaux II' lacks 10% of the art including the infamous 'shaft scene', a key strength of the show was the opportunity to view accurate facsimiles of this unseen art close-up and in the context of the topography of the cave wall, which is flattened out in photographs and other reproductions. None the less, the replicas and other reproductions in the exhibition raise interesting issues surrounding the 'authenticity' of visitors' experience and the reproduction superseding the original, which I approach in terms of Baudrillard's concepts of 'simulation' and 'hyperreal'.

Keywords: Lascaux, Lascaux III, reproduction, facsimile, authenticity, simulation, hyperreal

Introduction:

The cave of Lascaux in the Dordogne region of southwest France, found by chance in 1940 by four teenage boys, soon became known worldwide for its stunning prehistoric 'art'. Thousands of people visited the cave over the next two decades, their presence unwittingly destabilizing the delicate atmosphere, resulting in the proliferation of damaging algae and bacteria, and ultimately the closure of the cave for conservation measures in 1963. Since 1983 visitors have been able to view most of the art, around 90%, at what has become known as 'Lascaux II', a facsimile of the cave located underground near the original (Delluc & Delluc 1984). It is a sad but necessary irony that more people have seen Lascaux II, the copy, than the original. Extending the simulation outside of France for the first time, the Lascaux International Exhibition, dubbed 'Lascaux III', is a blockbuster touring show which opened at CAP Sciences in Bordeaux (13 October 2012 - 6 January 2013) and includes replicas of the remaining 10% of the artwork not included in Lascaux II, including the eponymous 'shaft scene'.

The exhibition has since travelled to the Field Museum in Chicago (20 March - 8 September 2013), the Houston Museum of Natural Science (18 October 2013 - 23 March 2014), Le Centre des Sciences, Montréal (17 April - 4 September 2014), and the Musée du Cinquanteaire – Jubelparkmuseum (Brussels 14 November 2014 - 15 March 2015). The exhibition returned to France for *Lascaux À Paris: L'Exposition* (20 May - 30 August 2015), when I visited. After a show at Palexpo, Geneva (2 October 2015 - 17 January 2016), Lascaux III then continued its world tour in East Asia, at Gwangmyeong, South Korea (16 April 2016 - 4 September 2016), National Museum of Nature and Science, Tokyo (1 November 2016 - 19 February 2017), National Museum of Kyushu, Fukuoka (10 July 2017 - 3 September 2017) and Shanghai Science and Technology Museum (1 November 2017 - 28 February 2018). The show then stopped in Johannesburg at the Sci Bono Discovery Centre (17 May 2018 - 20 January 2019) before returning to Europe, visiting Munich's Olympic Park (17 April 2019 - 9 September 2019) and most recently the Museum of Archaeology National of Naples (1 February 2020 - 31 May 2020). This long list of venues over nearly a decade offers an indication of the global success of the show, part of a broader phenomenon in which '[r]ock art plays a pivotal role in cultural tourism in all parts of the world' (Duval et al 2017: 1022). But the Lascaux III touring exhibition is also notable for the fact that a diverse international audience is keen to purchase tickets for an exhibition of cave art *replicas*.

In this paper I offer a critical examination of the Lascaux III exhibition which I visited on two occasions, on 17 and 18 August 2015. I draw upon critical museum theory (e.g. Hein 2000, Hooper-Greenhill 2000, Moser 2010) and apply Margaret Lindauer's method of 'exhibition critique' (2006), which involves evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of an exhibition, and investigating the curators' stated and unstated goals. In contrast to the 'average' or 'ideal' visitor who is 'aimed at implicitly by the museum and addressed implicitly in the majority of such displays but is rarely identified explicitly', Lindauer positions the 'critical museum visitor' as one who 'unpacks the discourse of representation in collection displays' (Lindauer 2006: 203).

I focus on how the exhibition represents Lascaux as a 'masterpiece' and represents Lascaux III as a meticulous copy of an original work of art. I discuss how the reproduction offers new and exciting ways of engaging with the art, and the possibility of an 'authentic' experience of cave art via a replica, but I also point to the problematic tension between reproduction and authenticity in the exhibition. In his examination of how society constructs reality, Jean Beadrillard proposes that the copy can imitate or stand in for reality, a 'simulation', and that since the postmodern turn something fake and artificial can become more definitive of the real than reality itself, and so 'hyperreal'. Viewing Lascaux III, for example, without ever having the opportunity to view the original in its cave context, and yet finding a sense of 'authenticity' in this experience, indicates that the difference between the one and the other is blurred in the perception of visitors – including for myself.

Pre-visit Considerations:

Following Lindauer's method, I begin my discussion by considering the information available on Lascaux III prior to my visit. The 'Lascaux Expo' website for the show explains that:

Designed and built in France (Périgord) with the collaboration of the best prehistorians and the painstaking work of artists, painters and engravers, Lascaux - International Exhibition, offers an identical reconstruction of the decorated walls of the most spectacular sanctuary of Paleolithic art (<https://lascaux-expo.fr>).

The exhibition organisers are keen to foreground the meticulous work required to produce an identical replica. The language used indicates that Lascaux can be understood as a religious site, a 'sanctuary'. This is certainly plausible, and much has been written on this subject (e.g. Breuil 1952; Glory 1964, Davenport & Jochim 1988, Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998), but as an interpretation it can be questioned: alternative interpretations include art for art's sake (e.g. Halverson et al 1987), the idea that the art was produced purely to satisfy a human aesthetic need, and information storage (e.g. Mithen 1988), the idea that images of animals and perhaps their tracks and faeces, were used as didactic devices to educate the next generation of hunters. The text on the website also proposes that Lascaux is unique and the apex of all cave art. By contrast, it might be argued that every cave art site is unique and important in its own way, especially since Lascaux is by no means the oldest of cave art sites, whether in France, Europe as a whole, or worldwide (e.g. Aubert et al 2014; Henshilwood et al 2018). The proposition that Lascaux is unique is therefore questionable and that it is the apex of all cave art is a qualitative judgement, rather than a fact.

The text of the website goes on to state that:

This unique exhibition is the fruit of a marriage between cutting-edge technology and the art of excellence. The replicas exactly reproduce the topography of the rock walls based on a detailed laser scan of Lascaux. The

panels are identical to the originals in their characteristics: micro-relief, appearance, texture and final rendering (<https://lascaux-expo.fr>).

Here, the fact that the replicas are 'exact' and 'identical' are stressed. I take from this that the exhibition organisers wish to emphasise to visitors that the cave art they will see at the exhibition is exactly the same as what they would see in the original cave, including the 'micro' features of the cave wall surface itself. Understandably, this positive advertising is also a laudable attempt to 'sell' the show.

A different website, specific to the exhibition of Lascaux III in Paris, describes Lascaux as a 'prehistoric masterpiece':

For the first time in Paris, an exhibition retraces the incredible story of Lascaux and its discovery, providing an opportunity to see the masterpieces of the Sistine Chapel of Prehistory. The exhibition plunges the public into the universe of the cave with its life-size reproductions, an extraordinary virtual visit, scale models, archive footage, and interactive games so that the visitor experiences the unique Paleolithic cave art of Lascaux (lascauxparis.com).

Again, the uniqueness of the art as a 'masterpiece' is stressed, a problematic art historical term usually associated with the 'genius' of a male artist. As a number of scholars have argued, the prehistoric 'artists' would not have understood their work as art in the modern or even Renaissance sense of the term (e.g. Staniszewski 1995), so to use this art historic term is problematic and misleading. The religious context for Lascaux is also emphasised, specifically as 'the Sistine Chapel of Prehistory'. The analogy is anachronistic, of course, but these sorts of 'sound-bites' are certainly crowd pleasers.

The website goes on:

This is an exhibition suitable for all publics. For families as well as adults since Lascaux also raises questions about art and aesthetics. It's an exhibition for the general public where philosophy blends with art and science provoking thought about the nature of beauty, aesthetics, and the origins of art (<http://www.lascauxparis.com/en/>).

Despite having stated previously that Lascaux is a 'masterpiece' and 'the Sistine Chapel of Prehistory', here the text takes a different tack, asking prospective visitors to think for themselves about Lascaux in relation to art, aesthetics, beauty and the origins of art. This is a more interpretative rather than didactic approach which is more in tune with the new museology promoted by such thinkers as Hein, Hooper-Greenhill, Lindauer and Moser.

In summary, the online orientation material on the exhibition is focused on the art of Lascaux as a 'masterpiece' and the origins of art, as well as the science and technology behind the reproduction. These themes are repeated in the book

accompanying the exhibition, *The Many Metamorphoses of Lascaux – The Artist's Studio: From Prehistory to Today* (Lima 2012), where the panels of cave art are described as '20,000 year-old masterpieces' (Lima 2012: 75), and the work of the modern copyists is described as 'meticulous', 'rigorous' and 'objective', so that 'the works of the prehistoric masters, in their astonishing beauty, their utter perfection and their full complexity, are brought to life once more for the visitor' (Lima 2012: 75). One of these contemporary 'Plastic Artists' working at the 'Perigord Facsimile Studio', Valérie Mathias, states, 'I see a single artist at work, with assistants maybe' and 'there isn't much that we could teach them today' (quoted in Lima 2012: 79). Aurélia Teixeira adds, 'my feeling is that there was a desire for beauty among the Lascaux painters' (quoted in Lima 2012: 83). The aim to reproduce Lascaux accurately by scientific means is of course important and the reflections of the contemporary artists working on the facsimiles are insightful and compelling. But these views from the present are projections onto the past. Arguably, the original artists, if we can call them that using this modern term, would not have seen themselves as the first artists or as 'masters'. Thus far I have discussed the promotional material on Lascaux III available on websites and the way the art and today's replicas are discussed in other published literature. I next reflect on my visit to the show.

The Exhibition:

Lascaux III is huge, requiring a minimum floor space of over 790m², and in Paris this was suitably accommodated by the Paris Expo Porte De Versailles exhibition centre. As is typical of such major city exhibition centres, the Paris Expo is some distance from the city centre and huge, with over 228,000m² of exhibition floor space. What it makes up for in space, though, the Paris Expo lacks in ambience. Vast, featureless, industrial and characterless like an airplane hanger, Lascaux III was unfortunately dwarfed by the venue, so that the exhibition lacked both intimacy and atmosphere, a million miles away from the original cave setting, achieved at least in part by Lascaux II. There were extensive queues to attend the popular show, on both days that I visited, and the popular Lego exhibition on display simultaneously in the exhibition space next door offered an anachronistic pairing. Audio guides are standard at blockbuster exhibitions today and the one at Lascaux III, which was well synchronized with each exhibit, added to the exhibition significantly, embellishing upon the text panel displays. The free pair of 3D glasses handed out by a docent when buying a ticket was a requirement for viewing the film shown in the *Reproduction* section.

Room 1: The Lascaux Cave

The first of the four main areas to the exhibition, *The Lascaux Cave*, comprises text panels, photographs and a large-screen film, introducing the region, the cave, its discovery, authentication of the art, popularity with visitors, ensuing algal growth and necessity of closure. This is important context for visitors to understand why the original cave was closed and why Lascaux II and III have come about. But the displays were rather traditional, lacking colour and rather text-heavy for most visitors who during my visits tended to pass through the room fairly quickly, without engaging closely with the displays. The film states that the Perigord region 'is truly the Pays

D'Homme, the Home of Mankind', and 'Lascaux is the showpiece of this exceptional ensemble' of cave art in the region, 'called the Sistine Chapel of prehistory but in fact for us it represents much more than that'. Lascaux is arguably the most important and certainly the most feted of the art in the Dordogne, and it is of course relevant for exhibitions to emphasise their importance of the subject. But visitors might interpret these superlatives incorrectly to mean that Lascaux, rather than Africa, is the true origin of humanity, its art culturally pre-eminent over early hominid fossil remains. Perhaps this criticism is a stretch and most visitors will understand that the claims are hyperbole. But the additional comparison with the Sistine Chapel and that Lascaux is 'much more than that', is indeed a stretch, albeit echoed as I have discussed in other sources such as on the website and in the book accompanying the show.

Room 2: Reproduction

The next room is entitled *Reproduction* and treats the history of the reproduction of Lascaux. Following the closure of the original Lascaux cave in 1963, the first reproduction in 1980 focussed on La Salle des Taureaux (the Hall of the Bulls) and consisted of life-size colour photographs projected onto a base which reproduced the shape of the original cave wall (now displayed at the Musée des Antiquités Nationales in Saint-Germain-en-Laye). This project in reproduction then led to Lascaux II, a full-scale replica of the the Hall of the Bulls and the Axial Gallery, those parts of the cave where the majority of the art (90%) is located. Lascaux II has the advantage of being sited less than a kilometre from the original Lascaux at the Centre International de l-Art Pariétal Montignac-Lascaux (CIAPML), so visitors can get a sense of the location of the cave in its landscape. Around 250,000 people visit Lascaux II each year. The replica is very convincing, restored annually in winter by a team of artists from the nearby Perigord Facsimile Studio (Lima 2012: 61). Descending into this 'cave' is not unlike visiting such original caves as Font-de-Gaume and Abri de Cap Blanc, but at Lascaux II the 'giveaway' is the smooth, unrealistic floor of the cave and the bespoke, controlled lighting. None the less, I'm sure I am not the first to have overheard visitors leaving Lascaux II talking enthusiastically about the experience as if they have just seen the real thing.

The *Reproduction* room at Lascaux III begins with a new 3D film taking visitors on a virtual journey through the cave, first as it looks today, then with a reconstruction of how it may have looked in prehistory and finally an 'original' model of the entire cave looking from behind the rock face. These digital reproductions of the cave are a technical feat, enabling visitors to get a sense of the interior, past, present and as a whole. Watching through 3D glasses while sat in comfort, the journey through the cave lacks the awkwardness and darkness of a real cave, something which is achieved in Mario Ruspoli's 1980s, grainy, atmospheric films of Lascaux (shown later in the exhibition, but on a woefully small screen). The 3D is effective but the simulated tallow lamps burn too brightly and are positioned too regularly in the 'cave'. Such spot-lighting gives also gives the impression that the imagery was meant to be viewed like art in a gallery. Thankfully there is not an attempt to imagine what the original artists looked like as they painted, but the contemporary artists who worked on the replicas are inserted into the film instead. The multi-angle, all-

encompassing, panoptic digital model offers the ultimate in hyperreal experience, but unrealistically the artwork is also shown from behind a transparent rock face.

The main space of the *Reproduction* room is occupied by 1:10 scale geodesic models of the cave, with text panels, vitrines and interactive displays, giving an insight into the reproduction of Lascaux II and Lascaux III (Figure 1). The geodesic models are unadorned, without the colouring of stone and lacking the associated artwork, for visitors to appreciate the contours of the cave interior. Certainly, this gave a really good sense of the exact three-dimensional shape of the cave interior – the context for the art – which it is impossible to show in photographs. Perhaps it is too much to expect the cave art imagery to be shown on the models as well. But it was rather jarring to see below each geodesic model, a miniature reproduction of the art in black pigment and on wooden panels, separating the artwork from its precise location (Figure 2).

Small black and white animations accompanied some of the geodesic models, the one for the scene in the shaft showing an imaginary cave entrance and a cave man with long hair and a bushy beard wearing black overalls, who climbs a rickety wooden ladder in order to sketch a horse (Figure 3). This representation is striking for reinforcing negative stereotypes of the prehistoric painters as brutish and unkept, especially in children's books (e.g. McCord 1977), their art and technology unsophisticated and cartoonish; in direct contrast to the complexity and sophistication of the art at Lascaux as painstakingly set out elsewhere in the exhibition.

Text panels and visual displays elsewhere in the *Reproduction* room highlight the time-consuming and cutting-edge 'stone veil' technology used to map every minute detail of the cave digitally and reproduce it materially, at an incredible '1800 hours per stone veil'. Vitrines also contained exhibits of original tools, pigments and drawings used by Monique Peytral when painting Lascaux II in the 1970s. They look strangely 'authentic', the historic Lascaux II simulation somewhat 'dated' technologically, as the latest, more sophisticated Lascaux III takes its place. I left this room highly impressed by the quality of the Lascaux III reproduction technology, the value of being able to see scale models of the cave interior, and the historical insight into the making of Lascaux II, but with a sense of concern that the original Lascaux was ironically overshadowed by these successive wonders of modern and postmodern creativity.

Room 3: The 'Stone Veil' Replicas

The core of the exhibition is the room containing the five facsimiles of Lascaux III: the 'Panel of the Imprint', 'Panel of the Black Cow', 'Frieze of the Stags' and 'Panel of the Crossed Bison' from the so-called 'Nave', and the isolated 'Shaft Scene'. A complete laser, micrometric scan of the cave enabled the reproduction of the paintings and engravings by hand. These may be 'copies' of ancient images, and they are brilliantly done, but they are also exquisite contemporary art in their own right. The paintings are striking and carefully spot-lit, while the engravings are highlighted in blue outlines every few minutes when the artificial 'cave' lights are darkened. The

engravings are less obvious to the untrained eye, so the modern technology really enhances the viewing experience here. These accurate, painstakingly-made copies are the real highlight of the show. This is the closest visitors will ever get to seeing the real Lascaux. The stone veil technology simulates both the texture of the cave wall and position of the artwork upon it, features which are otherwise flattened out and framed misleadingly by photographs in books (e.g. Aujoulat 2005[2004]). Visitors are afforded the opportunity to get very close to the imagery and at eye level, which would not be possible with many of the paintings in the original cave or at Lascaux II. A positive at Lascaux II, however, is that 'The Hall of the Bulls' and 'Axial Gallery' are contained within a facsimile of the cave environment so that visitors see the art from approximately the same level that prehistoric people would have done. Lascaux III, by contrast, offers no illusion of being in a cave. The floor is flat and carpeted and each stone veil is held by an intrusive metal frame which obstructs certain viewpoints; the looped ambient soundtrack of dripping water is anachronistically coupled with lift music, accompanied at the Paris Expo by noisy air conditioning.

Among the stone veils of Lascaux III are four life-size 'hyperrealistic' reconstructions in silicone of Cro-Magnon humans, a child, two women and an older man, by artist Élisabeth Daynès (Figure 4). It is interesting that the curators of the exhibition chose the term 'hyperreal' – in Baudrillardian (2004) terms, when something fake and artificial comes to be more definitive of the real than reality itself – to refer to these reconstructions. The display asks visitors, 'How do you imagine the Lascaux artists?'. The audio guide challenges the stereotype that 'cave men' were 'ragged barbarians or scruffy brutes' and Daynès' figures correct the gender imbalance shown in other artistic reconstructions, yet for all their realism these silicone models look bland, colourless and dull rather than 'well groomed and stylish'. Added to this, the man in the diorama is shown with a spear, reinforcing the stereotype of 'Man the hunter', one that is slow to change. The misconception that cave art is about hunting is misleading too, since many of the large animals depicted in the art were not typically hunted for 'food' (Bahn 1988).

The audio guide singles out the scene in the shaft as 'one of the most famous prehistoric scenes'. The replica of this part of the cave is perhaps the most striking of them all, not only because it is not shown at Lascaux II (Figure 5). An important formal property of the shaft scene is arguably how the cave artists were influenced in their choice of where to paint, and possibly what to paint, by virtue of certain pre-existing natural features in the cave wall. The artist(s) used a cupule as the basis for the eye of the bull, natural ridges where the horns are located, and a distinct bulge in the rock to emphasise the bulk of the animal's form. These subtleties are lost in photographic reproductions, but they are striking in the replica because the close association between image and cave surface has been meticulously reproduced. Upon closer inspection, the replica also shows how the artist(s) used engraved lines, as well as pigment, to enhance elements of the outline, a technique used in other caves in the Vézère Valley too, such as at Font du Gaume.

The facsimile of the shaft is also notable for including the rhinoceros which is often left out in many published photographs of this 'scene' in books. Close inspection reveals the strikingly modern air-brush effect to the rhino (executed by spraying rather than painting the black pigment made from manganese dioxide), which is also lost in photographic reproductions. The shaft is a cramped and awkward place to access and work, a reality which would be inappropriate to reproduce in an exhibition setting. While this sense of being in the shaft is lost, a feel for it is offered in the scale model in the previous room. The audio guide emphasizes that 'this scene is very strange', 'it's a mystery', 'we don't know' what it means, and 'prehistorians give it different interpretations'. Aside from the black-and-white animation of a cave artist in the previous *Reproduction* room, visitors have to wait until the next room, *Seeing and Learning*, to find out more about meaning and interpretation.

Room 4: Seeing and Learning

Seeing and Learning is the final space to the exhibition and the largest of all, examining the history of scholarship, how the artwork has been analysed and understood, and the future of Lascaux including the plans at that time for the visitor centre now known as 'Lascaux IV'. One display considers the dating of the artwork, specifically how new techniques have extended the earliest dates of the cave from 15,000 – 17,000 BCE to around 20,000 BCE. The contributions of early scholarship are set out: Breuil thought the art, rather simplistically, related to hunting magic, while Leroi-Gourhan suggested the cave was a 'sanctuary' and that the art followed a logic, exaggerating this to conclude 'At Lascaux I truly believe that they were close to writing'. An audio-visual entitled 'The Black Cow and the Procession' usefully points to the 'complex artistic decisions' made by the artists including representations of movement. The meaning of the imagery is referred to as having a 'symbolic purpose', 'labels of the group', co-operation between individuals, and 'filling spiritual or intellectual needs of the community'. The displays recount these views but insist, even-handedly, that no single idea can explain Lascaux entirely.

In the section 'We Are Cro-Magnon', a cluster of screens show looped films of nine French experts talking about the significance of Lascaux. Brigitte Delluc, for example, proposes the ancient painters were 'just like us', with a 'sophisticated culture', while Gilles Delluc thinks that we and they have the 'same intelligence' but reduces this common mind to a concern with four basic aspects of survival: 'food, disease, sex, God and religion in broadest sense'. One might ask how then, with these preoccupations, did they have time for 'art'? Jean Paul Jouary, by contrast, takes a simplistic evolutionary view that they 'felt' and 'believed' before they 'thought', suggesting that the art was inspired, like an Abstract Expressionist painting, rather than planned objectively as it may have been. But Jouary does, intriguingly, reverse the traditional view that art makes us human, by proposing instead that we became human through our art. Denis Vialou, on the other hand, draws on a different Modernist school, that of the Surrealists, talking about Lascaux in terms of 'symbolism', the 'subconscious', 'dreams', 'theatre', 'story' and 'myths'. These sorts of ideas may bring us closer to understanding Lascaux; they may not. But the other experts, disappointingly, reproduce hackneyed stereotypes of Lascaux as a

'masterpiece' (Muriel Mauriac), a 'treasure' and the 'model by which to judge all other painted caves' (Jean-Michel Geneste).

The perspective of Monique Petral, the artist of Lascaux II, is notably unconventional, neo-shamanic (Wallis 2003) even:

I had a dream in which a shaman from the past brought me clay...I had to work in harmony with him, the original artist, and how he painted 20,000 years ago'...'[I] put myself in the hands of the shaman from my dreams' [and] 'often left the cave staggering and disoriented, feeling as if I were drunk.

The diverse views of international scholars, whether on that controversial topic in rock art studies of shamanism (e.g. Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998; Dowson 2009; Wallis 2002, 2013), or not, are regrettably lacking.

The theme of reproduction running through the exhibition is especially prominent in the *Seeing and Learning* room, where there are displays on how Lascaux has been photographed and filmed since its rediscovery, among touch-screen consoles and copies of artefacts found in the cave complex. The interactive display on the shaft scene, for example, highlighted as 'A Scene Beyond Comparison', enables visitors to scan over and zoom in on the artwork. The question, 'What is the scene about?' is posed, yet this may not be a 'scene' at all, nor contain a narrative in the modern sense. The possibility that the human figure is a 'spiritual leader' or 'shaman' is explained but this complex socio-political role (e.g. Harvey & Wallis 2016) is reduced to another black-and-white animation of a male artist wearing a scary mask (Figure 6). Positioned at an appropriate height to engage children, this use of a lively animation may have had this specific audience in mind. But it remains problematic that the animation is cartoonish and simplifies the sophistication of the imagery as well as the shamanistic interpretation of cave art (Wallis 2019, in press). Added to this, the reification of the cave artist as male serves to diminish the correction of gender imbalance in Daynès' sculptures.

Elsewhere in this section it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish the authentic from the reproduction. Of approximately 50 artefacts displayed, I counted that less than half are genuine. The majority are 'prototypes' made by Jean-Michel Geneste and Serge Maury for the film *Les Gestes de la Préhistoire* (1998). This is an iconic film, offering a compelling sense of Lascaux's art in its original context in a way which has now only been eclipsed by Werner Herzog's 3D movie celebration of Chauvet, *The Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2010). But it is interesting and notable that in the Lascaux III exhibition Geneste's 'prototype' artefacts outnumber the originals and that this fact is hard to see; only a close read of the small print in the text panels reveals what is 'prototype' and what is real. Apropos, exiting through the gift shop, memento prints of the artwork are available, as postcards, as posters, but it is unclear whether these are reproductions of the original Lascaux or reproductions of the replicas, Lascaux II and Lascaux III. This blurring of the boundary between what is authentic, what is reproduction and what is replica, warrants further analysis.

Reproduction, Simulation and the Hyperreal

Writing in *The Guardian* on Chauvet II (opened 2015), the art critic Jonathan Jones (2015) exclaims 'Don't fall for a fake: the Chauvet cave art replica is nonsense', and 'you wouldn't pay to see a Rembrandt copy – why is ancient art treated so callously?'. Another reviewer thinks that the '[d]igital photography, laser imaging and 3D-printing techniques have meant the Lascaux 4 facsimile is more an expert forgery than a copy' (Bryant 2016). Jones neglects the importance of replicas of cave art for sharing this material with an enthusiastic audience which for the most part is unable to see the original caves. And there is nothing wrong with copies per se (e.g. Foster & Curtis 2016). As James (2016: 520) points out, the principle of copying is ancient: Roman statues copied Greek works and historical casts such as those in the cast court of the Victoria and Albert Museum were pivotal in the development of Classical archaeology. Replicas are, however, a compromise which arguably cannot replace the original context of the cave and its environs. While the 3D film and geodesic models at Lascaux III offer useful context for the imagery, the display of the stone veils recalls that of the modern art gallery, so that the context of the cave itself and its landscape setting, are lost (for further discussion of the archaeological and cave context of Lascaux, see Wallis in press). At Lascaux II and Chauvet II, the replicas are located not far from the original caves, so visitors can get a sense of the landscape setting, but even there one cannot appreciate the specific view from the cave entrance, nor of course the architecture of the cave (ff. James 2016: 524).

When assessing the value of replicas of cave art, James proposes that visitors should consider two questions, the one technical, the other ethical: first, 'Can replication compensate for closing an archaeological site?', and second, 'Does replication distract or detract from the original?' (James 2016: 519). Lascaux III does compensate for closing Lascaux, not only because on conservation grounds there was no other option but to close the original cave, but also the replicas are superb and the closest most will ever get to the original. But at the same time, Lascaux III both distracts and detracts. The interpretive material for Lascaux III is very much focussed on the quality of the art, its status as masterpieces, the origins of art, and the scientific accuracy of the replicas. At Chauvet II, James (2016: 524; also 2017) makes the related point 'that fascination with the "art" prevents visitors from considering its place in the life of the time'. Daynès hyperreal mannequins at Lascaux III help visitors to identify with the cave artists, but the emphasis on hunting and the sense of mystery in the interpretation oversimplifies their lives as preoccupied with survival and superstition. It is difficult to imagine the ancient painters without recourse to stereotypes, as exemplified by the black and white animations.

At the time of my visit, a film at the end of the Lascaux III exhibition presented the plan for the *Montignac-Lascaux Parietal Art international Centre*, focused on 'new image technologies and virtual mediation', offering visitors an 'authentic discovery of the origins of art'. This centre, now known as Lascaux IV, and attracting 'record visitor numbers' (Connexion Journalist 2017) opened in 2016 and reproduces the temperature, lighting conditions, air pressure, smell and sounds of the cave. The multi-million Euro investment in this project evidences

the importance of cave art to the French national heritage. This is part of a broader trend for exhibiting cave art replicas and the popularity of viewing them elsewhere in Europe, such as at AltaMira (opened 2001) and Chauvet II. This, in turn, is part of a broader international phenomenon of reproducing cave art and other rock art imagery in other media, from images of South African rock paintings on t-shirts and dinner table place mats (Dowson 1999), to the ubiquitous Kokopelli on car bumper stickers in the American Southwest (Hyder 1999). Pertaining to Lascaux, 'the Lascaux Carpet', is a high-end rug design woven by Marcel Zelmanovitch and shown at his Galerie Diurne in Paris in 2016, a year after the Lascaux III show (Upward 2016: 37): 'the Parisian painter – rug editor invites to a reflection on the very first artistic gesture' (<https://www.diurne.com/en/lascaux-exhibition/>). With the proliferation of these diverse replicas, reproductions and creative reinterpretations, I'd like to close by considering Baudrillard's (2004) theorising of postmodern simulation and simulacra more closely.

Baudrillard proposed a 'third order of simulacra' in our postmodern period in which we no longer need to distinguish between reality and its representation. In their analysis of visitor experiences at Chauvet II, Duval et al (2019: 2) propose that 'immersive rock art replicas are beginning to negotiate the hyperreal – the inability of consciousness to distinguish reality from simulation'. They think that '[a]s these 3D replications become more convincing, they lend themselves to simulations that are able to merge realities and times...Soon this may become an explicit aim of rock art replication (Duval et al 2019: 2). Interviewing visitors for Chauvet II, Duval et al (2019: 16) found that the experience garnered 'a sense of authenticity'. Viewing Lascaux III via stone veil facsimiles, a 3D film, 'hyperreal' sculptures of the cave painters and interactive media, for example, without ever having the opportunity to view the original, and yet finding a sense of 'authenticity' in this former experience (e.g. Jones 2010), also indicates that the difference between the one and the other is blurred. Are the 'stone veils' and other reproductions in the exhibition more definitive of the real than reality itself? Or as Duval et al (2019: 17) put it, are 'pretense, illusion and appearance...not sometimes more efficient or significant, and in the end, more real than the original?'

Well in the case of the stone veils at Lascaux III, the answer has to be no. Displayed in a large exhibition hall, where there is no illusion of being in a real cave, these devices while highly sophisticated remain artificial. And the replicas displayed at the Lascaux III show, like those at Lascaux II, do relate to the reality of the original and cannot be dismissed as Baudrillardian 'simulacra' where the copy has no relationship to reality and no longer even pretends to be real. But the 'prototypes' of such artefacts as flint tools and unworked deer antler displayed in the exhibition alongside a few original artefacts do blur the boundaries between the authentic and the reproduction, an issue reiterated in the shop where it was not clear whether postcards, posters and other reproductions of the art derived from Lascaux, Lascaux II or Lascaux III. Not only does the hyperreal come to stand in for the real in these instances, but the copy was, in my view, celebrated and foregrounded over the authentic artifact.

Conclusion

Only a select handful of scholars and other VIP's will ever see the original Lascaux. Only affluent travelers can afford to visit Lascaux II (and now Lascaux IV). A key strength of the Lascaux III show is the unprecedented opportunity for an international audience to view accurate facsimiles of the art. The 'stone veils' are superb, enabling close and sustained scrutiny of the paintings, with clear demarcation of the hard-to-see engravings, and an appreciation of the importance of the cave wall which is flattened out in photographs and other reproductions. The installation of the replicas in a large exhibition centre means that the ambience and atmosphere of the original cave is missing, of course. But the 3D film journey through the cave and the scale model miniatures of the cave interior, offer a tangible sense of the scale of the cave and location of the art. As Duval et al (2019: 16) suggest, a replica is not secondary to the original in every respect, rather, it is 'a new entity'. Bahn (2007) goes so far as to propose that the replica at Altamira exceeds the original cave in terms of accessibility, comfort and high-tech interactive interpretation. Lascaux III, too, is easy to navigate, has wheel-chair access, enables close-up, comfortable viewing under careful gallery-style lighting, and offers interactive displays in order to explore context and meaning. So in some respects, as Bahn (2007: 141- 142) argues, 'the replica outdoes the original'.

But in other respects Lascaux III is a missed opportunity and a disappointment. Persistent clichés could have been challenged, yet Lascaux is glorified in superlative and outmoded art historical terms as 'truly the Pays De l'Homme, the Home of Mankind', a 'prehistoric masterpiece', 'the Sistine Chapel of prehistory', 'the origins of art' and the 'universal and timeless symbol of the birth of art'. Facsimile artefacts situated among originals blur what is authentic and what is reproduction. And the exhibition's celebration of the scientific and artistic achievement of the stone veil technology becomes an end in itself, detracting from if not superseding the original Lascaux – the art, the cave architecture and the wider archaeological and landscape context. With increasing investment in replicas of cave art and rock art worldwide to a cosmopolitan visiting public eager to view this simulated past, the case of Lascaux III makes clear that it is important for archaeologists, art historians and other stake-holders to continue to monitor and engage critically with the reproduction and display of this archaeological heritage.

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