

Paleoart: Visions of the Prehistoric Past, 1830-1980

Zoe Lescaze , Walton Ford (Contributor)

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Dinosaurs Are Forever

A pictorial history of paleoart

It was 1830 when an English scientist named Henry De la Beche painted the first piece of paleoart, a dazzling, deliciously macabre vision of prehistoric reptiles battling underwater. Since then, artists the world over have conjured up visions of dinosaurs, woolly mammoths, cavemen, and other creatures, shaping our understanding of the primeval past through their exhilarating images.

In this unprecedented new book, writer **Zoe Lescaze** and artist **Walton Ford** present the **astonishing history of paleoart from 1830 to 1990**. These are not cave paintings produced thousands of years ago, but modern visions of the prehistory: **stunning paintings, prints, drawings, sculptures, mosaics, and murals** that mingle scientific fact with unbridled fantasy. The collection provides an in-depth look at this neglected niche of art history, and shows the artists charged with imagining these extinct creatures projected their own aesthetic whims onto prehistory, rendering the primordial past with dashes of Romanticism, Impressionism, Japonisme, Fauvism, and Art Nouveau, among other influences.

With incisive essays from Lescaze, a preface by Ford, five fold-outs, and dozens of details, the book showcases a stunning collection of artworks plucked from **major natural history museums, obscure archives, and private collections**, and includes new photography of key works, including Charles R. Knight's seminal dinosaur paintings in Chicago and little-known masterpieces such as A. M. Belashova's monumental mosaic in Moscow. From the fearsome to the fantastical, *Paleoart: Visions of a Prehistoric Past 1830-1990* is a **celebration of prehistoric animals in art, and a novel chance to understand our favorite extinct beasts through a new art historical lens**.

Paleoart: Visions of the Prehistoric Past, 1830-1980 Details

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From Reader Review Paleoart: Visions of the Prehistoric Past, 1830-1980 for online ebook

Bill says

Another book more for looking at than reading, although the captions are interesting and informative. Reading those and some of the text made it clear that the book's main point was to examine the different ways artists have chosen to depict dinosaurs, and how those choices were not just artistic but also influenced by earlier depictions, archeological remains, and the culture and times they lived in.

Peter Tillman says

Illustrated review here:

<https://www.apollo-magazine.com/dinos...>

More: https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/ar... Whoa!

"What child is not obsessed with dinosaurs, at least for a while? For me the years of dragging my long-suffering parents around the dinosaur galleries at London's Natural History Museum came just before my (also common) obsessions with the ancient Egyptians and then astronomy. Yet, while a broad fascination with all three of these areas remains, it is dinosaurs that still bring out in me a childlike sense of awe. ..."

Well, "me too." Sounds really cool, just the book for dino-nerds like me. Wish list.....

Corinna Bechko says

Absolutely gorgeous in every way. The reproductions are exquisite and the text is interesting and informative.

Miriam says

Coincidental trivia I happened to learn by looking up lindworms at the same time as reading this:

The head of a 1590 lindworm statue in Klagenfurt is modeled on the skull of a woolly rhinoceros found in a nearby quarry in 1335. It has been cited as the earliest reconstruction of an extinct animal.

Paleomegafaunartistical!

Mehsi says

Paleoart, one of my favourite kinds of art.

I saw this beast of a book at Library #3, and so he had to come with me, just in case someone would take it (I first bring back my old books, look around on the ground floor's new releases, and then go out again to do some walking/shopping). RIP my shoulders. :P

See how people drew prehistoric scenes, sometimes with evidence, but more often with just imagination, a few bones, and some witness reports. Yep. And still these guys and girls (not many of those, but there are girls who do/did this) did an amazing job. I just love seeing their view on dinosaurs. It is a shame that many of these paleoartworks (if that is the correct word) are being thrown away/dismissed due to them being often inaccurate. Which I think is just silly. So what if the art isn't 100% accurate, these people still stuffed endless hours and days and weeks into drawing what they felt was a dinosaur or a prehistoric human. You aren't throwing other art out because it is inaccurate? So why this one?

Plus I think their art, especially the later paleoart (1950-1980), is much better than the art of dinos in this year and age. Especially those in the beginning years, they barely had anything to back them up they tried their best to make something awesome. And sure, at times it looked really weird and silly, like someone was trying to fuse a couple of animals together and make something decent from that. :P But then again, these days dinosaurs have FEATHERS. My dear terrifying dinosaurs are suddenly chickens and turkeys and make me laugh instead of make me go ooohhhh and ahhhh and argghhhh.

Of course paleoart isn't only dinos, it is also cavemen/prehistoric men. The scenes shown in this book were pretty awesome, at times sad, at times powerful, quite a few times a bit bloody (but that is good, as I am sure it wasn't all sunshine and flowers back then).

This was a really gorgeous book, I loved it, but just a shame of the giant walls of text. Really. Sometimes you would have a whole page with just tiny text. And sure, the text was often interesting-well ish- but it was a struggle to read them. I would rather have a whole book with gorgeous (or weird or even wtf) paleoart. There was enough text under each image telling us a whole story without the need of all that other text (at least that is my impression after reading both the endless texts and the texts under the images).

But all in all, this is one heck of a book, it is a shame it is superexpensive or I would have bought it to add to my bookcollection. I would recommend it if you have an interest in paleoart/dinosaurs/cavemen.

Review first posted at <https://twirlingbookprincess.com/>

Lynn DiFerdinando says

The imagery is one hundred percent TOP NOTCH. It is so good I could barely look away. Also the cover has a scaly imprint which DELIGHTED me.

I had some minor issues with the written portions. For one, she almost never said what page a painting she was talking about was on (and they mostly weren't on the same page) so then when you ran into the painting later you were confused and had to flip back to see if the names matched up. Also, while the information was new and interesting - how it was a tradition to grind up ammonites in medieval Britain for medicine, or the story of how they rebuilt the paleoart murals of the Berlin Aquarium, for example- I found myself drifting away in boredom anyways sometimes.

BUT. It is a coffee table book. The writing doesn't HAVE to be great. The IMAGES do. And they 100 percent are. She did a wonderful job curating the painting selection, spanning from 1830-1990. The painting selection get a little leaner after the 1950's, until the resurgence of interest in dinosaurs began.

This book is only about traditional media, and it works well to show how trends and art style evolved over time, I would LOVE to see a section or a whole other book about the resurgence of paleoart in the age of digital art and the internet. There's so much good paleoart out there and it deserves to be seen by everyone!
