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Abstract for EAA's 2011

**From the Walls to the Grave:
Linking the Parietal and Portable Geometric Signs found in European Upper Paleolithic Art.**

The geometric signs used in France during the Upper Paleolithic show definite spatial and temporal patterning between the sites. This continuity suggests the geometric signs were being used with purpose, and that they were meaningful to those who created them. If they did indeed have significance, and were being used to convey information, then we could be looking at a very early form of graphic communication. This implies that there was a system, but how can we identify the manner in which the creators of these markings organized and utilized them?

There is a 15,000 year-old burial site in France which produced associated grave goods when excavated. Among these was a series of pierced red deer teeth, thought to have been used as personal adornment (Vanhaeren and d'Errico 2003, 2005). Each of these teeth is marked with a unique geometric sign, or a combination of two. These ornaments have the potential to clarify the organization of the signs from the perspective of those who used them, since each tooth gives us an idea of how the signs were divided, structured, and paired up by them, rather than by a modern researcher attempting to define typological categories. When these signs are compared with a database created for the parietal geometric markings in the same region, the parallels that appear, in both the single and paired signs alike, provide important insights for understanding the origins of modern symbolic behaviour including the capacity for graphic forms of communication.

Vanhaeren, M. and d'Errico, F. 2005. Grave goods from the Saint-Germain-la-Rivière burial: Evidence for social inequality in the Upper Palaeolithic. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 24, 117–134.

Vanhaeren, M. and d'Errico, F. 2003. La Parure de la Dame de Saint-Germain-La-Rivière et l'Origine Paléolithique des Inégalités. *Paléo* 15, 195-238.