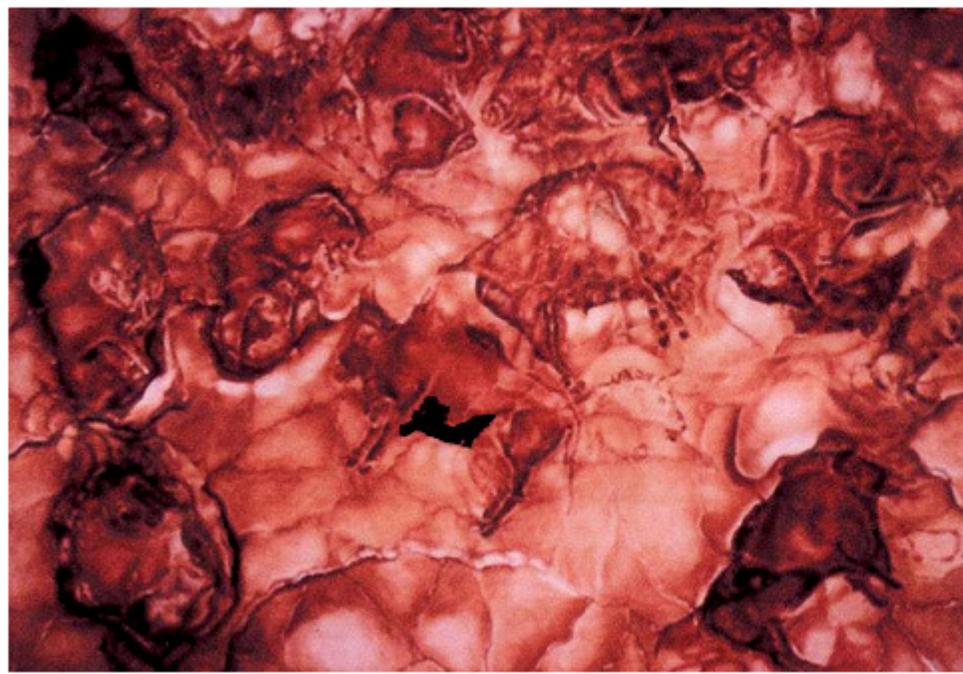


Focus on Art – Is it Art or is it Abstract? A précis of the talk given by Malcolm Dobson (04:07:11)

Is it art or is it abstract? – This conundrum arose from the Quest photography challenge when the subject was “Abstract”. It also prompted the poignant comment that: “Not everything is what it seems!”

Monday 4th July - Remembrance Day – it certainly is for myself as Wakefield Camera Club allowed me to provide the entertainment for that evening’s discussion entitled Focus on Art. The evening was to provoke discussion and ideas with a light-hearted look at the interaction of art and abstract over the ages. This was no history lesson (because I’m not good at that!!) simply a study of what could be considered abstract art.

Having set the scene for the evening with one man’s view of the discussion; we set off to define both art and abstract – art was seen as REPRESENTATION and abstract - thoughts, perceptions, concepts etc. was seen as SYMBOLS.

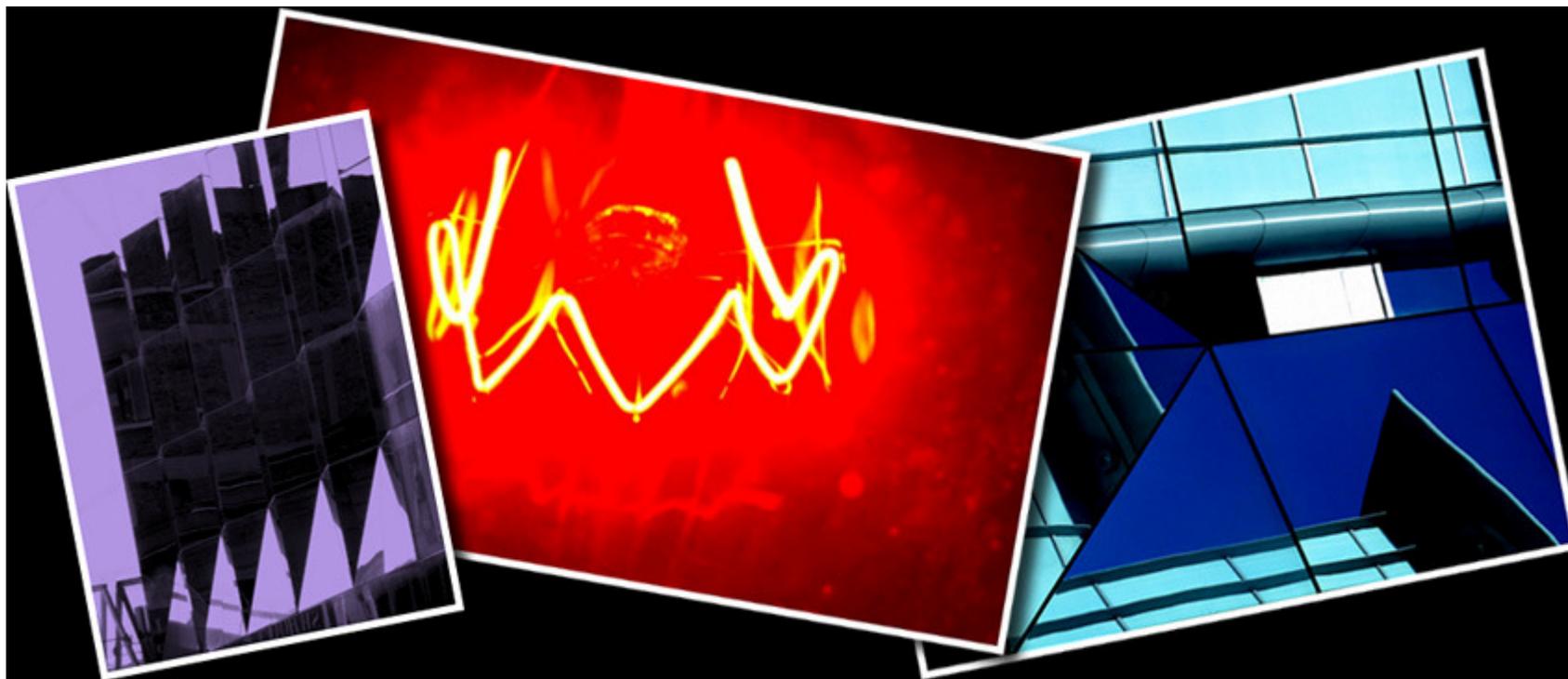


So, into the dark ages, cave paintings where it all began! Pictographs, drawings / paintings on cave walls from 15,000BC can be seen in French caves (and others too). Are these paintings the forerunner of Graffiti – now considered a “modern art”? A piece of Greek sculpture, 2,500BC, is a minimalist portrayal of a head which would be well received today as a piece of modern abstract art. In Ilkley there are examples of early artisans work dated 2,000BC – nobody knows what they are all about so the representational symbols remain abstract. But how can these things be abstract when you can touch them? It’s because they are symbolic and representational. Many topics in this discussion were illustrated by well known artists’ paintings, for example Hieronymus Bosch 600 years ago created many surrealist works, one of which was his garden of earthly delights – this work has been emulated by Mark Mumford with a 21st century rendition of Hell.



By the sixteen hundreds the "camera obscura" was developed – for those who want to know more about that, see the website (Wikipedia or Google). Many artists used this tool to save time sketching and return quickly to their studios to paint their traced images – so, were these artists really painters and not necessarily draughtsmen?
As the camera produced higher quality images so the artists embarked on experimental work, much of it coming under the heading of

Impressionism until the 1900s to the present day where we have a veritable shopping list of artistic groupings. Abstract covers many of these, including Impressionism, cubism, junk art,... etc. "Junk Art" is useful because anything could go in there and maybe binned!! Many photographers now use Photoshop to emulate the artists techniques viz oil painting; pencil sketches, bas relief etc. Graffiti too is a recognised art type, again appearing under Abstract – this is not all bad and some excellent works can be seen which can improve otherwise mundane townships. Thus photography has affected art, but the converse is also true - without photography we would not have the knowledge that we do have of the artists' techniques. Long may the art / photography liaison continue!



Art is what you want it to be – attention grabbing!