

David Sucec, BCS Project

David Sucec was our speaker for April. He spoke extensively about the archaic Barrier Canyon Style rock-art that is found throughout Utah. Mr. Sucec was accompanied by one of the photographers, Craig Law, whose brilliant photography was featured in the presentation.

Barrier Canyon Style prehistoric paintings were created by Archaic Native Americans perhaps as early as 8000 years ago. The art is unique, featuring a preponderance of anthropomorphic figures. These are called spirit or ghost figures because they often lack arms and legs. These figures are usually placed high on the canyon walls and seem to be looking down over their realm. They often have antennae and oversized goggle eyes without pupils. Some are wearing headdresses such as feathers or crowns. One of these is the Holy Ghost figure at the Great Gallery. The Holy Ghost figure is eight feet tall. It has a parallel line motif, painted and scratched. It is obvious that an individual artist painted this because of its individual style.

There is often a connection between these spirit figures with plants and animals. Spirit figures are depicted holding snakes, turtles, birds, and lizards. Cougars, eagles, horned toads, and leopards appear with many of these spirit figures. One figure shows rabbits running up the spirit's arm, birds are flying over the arm, and rice grass is growing out of the spirit's finger. Another site features a figure with a human body, bird's feet, a sheep's head, and a snake's tongue.

Smaller figures of humans called citizen figures are always elongated...always moving, dancing or hunting. Animals; including birds, sheep, dogs, rabbits, and snakes are always depicted as being very friendly with humans.

The art is clearly very spiritual and displays motifs of shamanism. There is a universality of the creative unconscious which is apparent in the Barrier Canyon Style and connects it with art around the world.