

“The Great Gallery: A Closer Look”

by
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Presented to
The Dixie Archaeology Society
January 14, 2015

Richard is a long time Moab Utah Resident and amateur archaeologist. He has traveled to the “Great Gallery” in Horseshoe Canyon over 30 times.

Horseshoe Canyon is located on an ancient migration route from Hans Flat to the LaSalle Mountains that is over 100 miles long.

Richard describes the Great Gallery as being over 100 yards long and is composed of many different “scenes”. Richard has broken the panel into 17 individual scenes or motifs.

The rock art in the gallery is estimated to be between 2000 to 8000 years old with the dates coming from various dating methods. The majority of the dates place the rock art to be from the archaic period (3000 to 5000 years old). A basket found in “cowboy cave” located near the great gallery was carbon dated to be 9000 years old.

The rock art style is “Barrier Canyon Style” (BCS) which is named after Barrier Canyon – the original name of the canyon. They are pictographs with primarily red colors and white accents. They are very large, some over 8 feet tall, anthropomorphs with no arms or legs. They appear as spirits or “other worldly”. These figures often have very large, prominent eyes. Often there are typical animal or anthros with arms and legs associated with the spirit figures. The anthros are in some sort of “action” mode – as in a ritual.

The images from the Great Gallery are well known. However Richard’s presentation showed the immense detail that are present in the rock art at this site that may easily be missed with a casual viewing of the images.

The photos used in this report are courtesy of David Mangels at www.fourcrowsphotography.com.



Figure 1 – an over view shot of the Great Gallery. Richard's definition of the gallery includes a panel to the left of the talus pile on the left side of the photo.



Figure 2 – the “Holy Ghost” panel – the most famous of the panels in the Great Gallery. The tallest figure is over 8 feet tall. The figures appear in perspective and coming forward with the “Holy Ghost” as the leader.

Richard discusses the Holy Ghost panel and the Great Gallery in this URARA publication - [http://www.utahrockart.org/pubs/proceedings/papers/28-01_Jenkinson -
Landscape Metaphor and Meaning in the Experience of Rock Art.pdf](http://www.utahrockart.org/pubs/proceedings/papers/28-01_Jenkinson_-_Landscape_Metaphor_and_Meaning_in_the_Experience_of_Rock_Art.pdf).



Figure 3 – a fragment from this panel was found in the talus pile beneath the panel. The pictograph from this fragment was dated to be 8000 years old.

It appears that a diagonal figure was not completed or faded away.



Figure 4 – There are two scenes in this photo. Close up of the images will be shown in the following figures.



Figure 5 – In this scene it appears as if the two “spirit” people are overseeing proceedings in the “real” world. We see sheep along with a coyote that appears to be herding the sheep. We also see two anthropomorphs that could be fighting – they each appear to be holding spears. All the figures are depicted in action poses.

This scene shows that these artists could paint in a very representational manner. The “spirit” motif was not an accident – this appears to be exactly what they wanted.



Figure 6 – The spirit images are decorated with white dots arranged in horizontal patterns. They have eyes. The sheep are going in both directions. The figure at the bottom center appears to be coyote.



Figure 7 – A close up of the “fighters” in an action pose.



Figure 8 – Here we again see two separate scenes. At the top right is a set of spirit figures with the main figure being composed of only red stripes. Richard speculated that there could have been another color used in the design that has faded away. A smaller figure appears to be coming out from the striped figure.

The large main figure is elaborately decorated with dots and short and long lines. He has eyes. Running along both of his sides are a wavy line (serpents or lightning?)



Figure 9 – A close up of the small figures from Figure 8. Even the small spirit images are simply decorated with some dots and horizontal lines. See the wavy line near the side of the large image on the right.



Figure 10 – The large figure on the left is again elaborately decorated. It has a headdress of very short and fine white lines. The neck region is decorated with white lines. There are wavy lines in the body area (serpents). The two straight white lines and the horizontal lines at the next form a “T”. An anthropoid appears to be playing a flute to the spirit person.



Figure 11 – Another portion of the Great Gallery showing a number of the spirit figures. The images from Figures 8 through 10 are shown at the far left.



Figure 11 – Richard pointed out that often the rock was “prepared” by scraping prior to the painting process. Here we see in the top left an area that appears to be “scraped” but not yet painted.



Figure 12 – The spirit person at the top left appears to have arms and is holding a spear. Another object is close by.

The figure on the right is decorated with lines and a “X” across his chest.

The figures again have eyes.



Figure 13 – This figure is again elaborately decorated. He has two “animal” figures inside his body – the one on the right with his mouth open. He also has two “serpents” and straight lines. A number of other figures also have smaller images inside their bodies.



Figure 14 – Another portion of the Gallery. Here the figures are decorated in a different manner – with broad horizontal stripes. One figure has a large “T” on his body.



Figure 15 – A close up of the images from Figure 14. Note the unique image that looks like a squash. The smaller spirit figure appears to have a white face.



Figure 16 – This is the “T” figure from Figure 14. He has eyes and two small spirit figures inside his body. A portion of the “T” looks like a serpent. Surrounding he figure are “animal” images and a wavy line (serpent).

Conclusions:

- There is a lot of rock art in Horseshoe Canyon and in the Great Gallery.
- The rock art dates from 2000 to 8000 years ago.
- There is a lot of variety in the various images.
- The images appear as individual – all are different.
- The artists could paint “representational style” images – sheep, humans – in action poses.
- However **the artist also painted what he believed not what he saw.**
- This must have been a great culture. The art is a window into the intellectual culture of the society.
- The society that produced the rock art was sustainable over a long period of time. It was non-materialistic with a rich intellectual tradition.

Publications by Richard Jenkinson:

[http://www.utahrockart.org/pubs/proceedings/papers/28-01_Jenkinson -
Landscape Metaphor and Meaning in the Experience of Rock Art.pdf](http://www.utahrockart.org/pubs/proceedings/papers/28-01_Jenkinson_-_Landscape_Metaphor_and_Meaning_in_the_Experience_of_Rock_Art.pdf). (In this publication, Richard discusses the Great Galley in detail.)

[http://www.utahrockart.org/pubs/proceedings/papers/30-03_Jenkinson -
Rock Art on an Ancient Migratory Route.pdf](http://www.utahrockart.org/pubs/proceedings/papers/30-03_Jenkinson_-_Rock_Art_on_an_Ancient_Migratory_Route.pdf)

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John Mangels