

An abstract black line drawing on a dark gray background. The drawing depicts a face in profile, looking upwards and to the right. The lines are expressive and sketchy, capturing the essence of the face and neck. The text is overlaid on the central part of the face.

LIMITLESS ART

CÔA &
SIEGA
VERDE



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EXHIBITION

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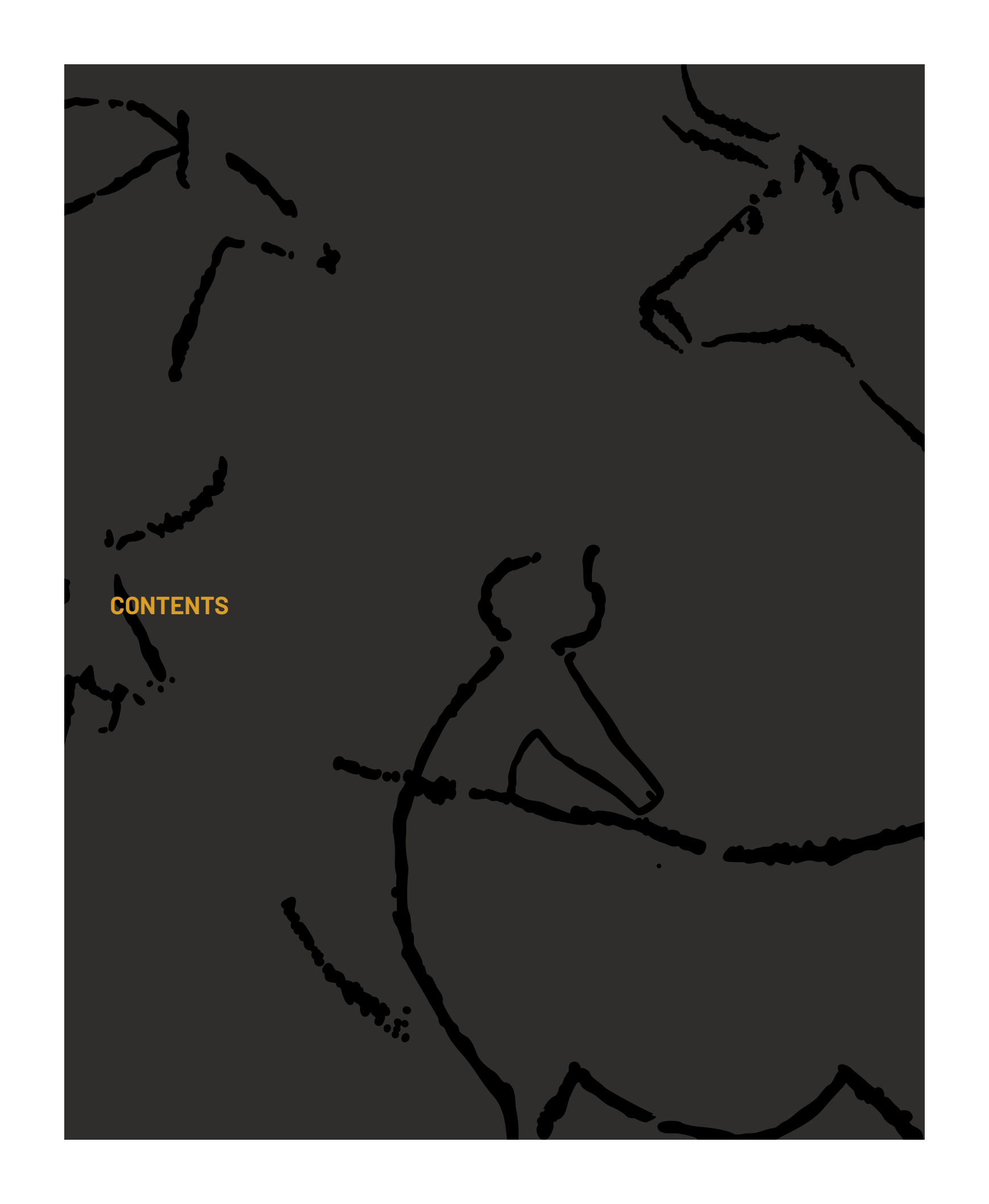
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In memoriam a Bruno Navarro



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VERDE

An abstract black line drawing on a dark gray background. The drawing consists of several thick, irregular, and somewhat jagged black lines. These lines form a complex, organic shape that resembles a stylized figure or a large, abstract letter. The lines are drawn with a brush-like texture, showing some variation in thickness and a slightly grainy appearance. The overall composition is minimalist and modern.

CONTENTS

007	Preface
013	Introduction
019	Human groups and the occupation of the Douro Valley during the Upper Palaeolithic and the emergence of prehistoric art
033	The Douro Valley during the upper Palaeolithic environmental conditions and livelihoods
049	The palaeolithic art of the Douro Basin in the context of Southwestern Europe
067	Distribution and contextualisation of open-air Palaeolithic art of the Côa and Siega Verde ensembles
081	Characteristics and evolution of Palaeolithic art at the Côa Valley and Siega Verde sites.
097	Finiglacial art (Style V/Azilian). Characteristics of the art forms and contextualization of the Côa and Siega Verde ensembles.
113	Between Spain and Portugal. Schematic art in the middle and lower Douro basin
135	Iron Age representations near the western boundary of the northern sub-plateau: characteristics and their spatial and conceptual relationship
147	Shepherds, millers and other people. Historical rock art on both sides of the border
159	Côa Valley and Siega Verde. World Heritage Sites to visit

CÔA VALLEY AND SIEGA VERDE.
WORLD HERITAGE SITES TO VISIT

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In the late 1980s, Francisco de Sande Lemos did the impact study for the dam project that would dam up the final stretch of the River Côa, revealing the existence of late prehistoric rock art and engravings from the modern period. In his study, he recommended a more intense exploration and monitoring during the dam construction. In November 1991, near the place where the wall of the dam was starting to be built, Nelson Rebanda, the archaeologist in charge of this work, identified panel 1 of Canada do Inferno and recognised the Palaeolithic style of the engraving from the Mazouco horse he had discovered in the Douro Valley in 1977 and that was published in 1981 under the guidance of Susana Oliveira Jorge.

On the other side of the border, in 1988, a shepherd, Ángel Hervalejo, indicated the existence of some engravings to Manuel Santonja and Rosario Pérez, which were published and attributed to the Upper Palaeolithic in 1991 together with Rodrigo Balbín, Javier Alcolea and Primitiva Bueno. The studies started in those years made it possible to identify a large ensemble of Palaeolithic rock art along a kilometre of the left bank of the River Águeda, with the recording of nearly one hundred panels that feature around 700 engravings.

In the Côa area, although they were discovered in 1991, the announcement of the existence of engravings that were stylistically attributable to the Palaeolithic took place in late 1994, after the level of the Pocinho dam (built in 1982) was lowered and more engraved panels were discovered. The revelation of these events, in the context of the construction of a dam that meant immersing the rock art of the Côa Valley under more than 100 metres of water, initiated a period of debate that, in 1995, involved not only archaeologists but the entire nation and was extended internationally. The solution proposed by Eletricidade de Portugal—which consisted of building the dam, cutting and relocating some of the ‘most significant’ panels and submerging the others—went against the idea of the defenders of the conservation in situ of the art in the context of its creation. This

debate had wider implications in Portuguese society regarding the environmental impact studies of the economic development plans at national level and, in general, regarding the preventive policy on the conservation of cultural heritage.

After the sad episode of the attempt to directly date the Côa Valley engravings using inappropriate methods and with the announced objective of minimising their age, in early 1996, the Portuguese government, in the light of the opinion of archaeologists who pointed to the heritage importance of the Côa Valley art and the sites discovered, decided to abandon the construction of the dam and commissioned a report, coordinated by João Zilhão, that would scientifically and definitively establish their heritage value.

As a result of this decision and its implications on this region's development strategy, the Côa Valley Archaeology Park was created to study, protect and show to the public the most important ensemble of Palaeolithic rock art known in the world. In an area of around 200 km², there are more than 80 sites with rock art and over 1200 engraved panels. This area stretches along ca. 20 km of the River Côa and 20 km of the River Douro, upstream and downstream of the mouth of the Côa. The Côa Valley is a unique place thanks to its long artistic cycle that extends from the Upper Palaeolithic to the modern age.

Since 1996, fulfilling one of its main missions, the Côa Valley Archaeological Park has offered tours of the rock art. These tours, led by specialist guides, are done using 4-wheel drive vehicle and visit three of the main Palaeolithic rock art sites, Canada do Inferno and Ribeira de Piscos from the Côa Museum, Penascosa and the Castelo Melhor reception centre. The system for visiting the Côa Valley engravings is in equilibrium with the conservation of the art and its natural context and aims to help visitors to see the engraved motifs, sometimes superimposed on the same panel and difficult to interpret or made using very fine incisions. The guides take advantage of the journey to the sites to present other points of heritage, natural and cultural interest in this region. During the tour of the engravings,

the guides use explanatory sheets that make it possible to identify the motifs on the panels visited, based on the surveys carried out. The fact that the three sites are visited in this way means they underwent minimal intervention to preserve the conditions of the discovery, while elements that facilitate the visit have been created using local materials (schist and wood).

For logistic and conservation reasons, there is a limit on the number of visitors per day and site. Given the specific nature of each site and the orientation of the panels, the tour times are chosen according to the best natural light to observe the engravings so they can be seen as well as possible. The Canada do Inferno and Ribeira de

Fig. 1. Tour accompanied by a guide at Penascosa rock art site (Photograph by António Jerónimo; Côa Parque Foundation).



Piscos sites are only visited in the morning, when the panels are lit by sunlight that hits the surface to a greater or lesser extent. The Penascosa panels, on the other hand, are located on the right bank of the river and in the shade in the morning, so this site is only visited in the afternoon. There is also a night tour option at the Penascosa site using LED lights.

At Siega Verde, ever since very soon after the discovery and its publication, several activities have been carried out aimed at protecting the archaeological area. The administrative delimitation consciously establishes a broader area with the aim of including, in addition to the sites themselves, their surroundings and the landscape in which they are located. In 1995, the Siega Verde site was equipped with a warden service. The conservation and protection practices put into effect include active and passive surveillance of the site using cameras, the delimitation of the visitable area and the establishment of an exclusively guided tour system. As a whole, all these measures can be said to have minimized the risk of anthropic damage to the enclave as far as possible. With the same spirit, in parallel to the research and protection work, an entire series of interventions are planned at Siega Verde aimed at allowing the public to enjoy the site. In this regard, it is worth pointing out that the rock art site is part of an extensive plan for the dissemination of the archaeological heritage of Castilla y León that hundreds of sites in our region have benefited from in recent decades. The Government of Castilla y León's Ministry of Culture declared it an 'Asset of Cultural Interest' in the Archaeological Area category in 1998.

A year earlier, in 1997, in Portugal, the Ministry of Culture's Directorate-General for Cultural Heritage created the Portuguese Archaeology Institute to manage Portuguese archaeological heritage and, within it, the Côa Valley Archaeological Park as one of the departments of this public institution. The 'Archaeological Sites of the River Côa Valley', the rock art sites and two archaeological sites are classified as a National Monument, with protection areas having been established.

The legal protection of the Côa rock art concluded with the sites classified as national monuments in 1997 being included on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The classification of the Côa Valley rock art sites as UNESCO World Heritage on 2 December 1998 was the culmination of a process that would indelibly mark in Portugal the place of archaeology in society and, in general, the management of cultural heritage, confirming the importance of the art of the Côa and the correctness of the Portuguese government's decision to cancel the Baixo Côa dam project and protect its art in situ, in its natural context.

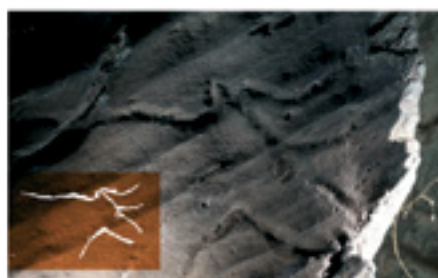
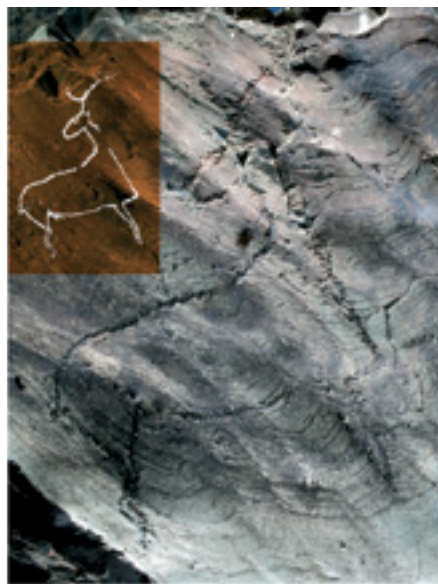
Furthermore, UNESCO included the Prehistoric Art of the Côa Valley on the World Heritage List in the fastest classification process in history, considering that the request was submitted by the Portuguese government on 24 June 1997 and endorsed in Kyoto on 2 December 1998. The justification, in the form of classification criteria, was twofold:

- the Upper Palaeolithic rock art of the Côa Valley is an exceptional example of the sudden development of our creative genius during the dawn of human cultural development;
- the rock art of the Côa Valley is an excellent illustration of the social, economic and spiritual life of our prehistoric ancestors.



Fig. 2. Cover of the Siega Verde guidebook for the visually impaired. (Photograph by Jesús María del Val)

Fig. 3. Palaeolithic representations on the Siega Verde visit itinerary. (Photograph by Pedro Guimarães. Regional Government of Castilla y León)



In 2010, at the 34th session of the World Heritage Committee held in Brasília, the declaration of the Côa Valley open-air Palaeolithic rock ensemble (Portugal) was extended to the Siega Verde archaeological area (Salamanca, Spain), being included on the World Heritage List with the joint and sole name 'Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in the Côa Valley and Siega Verde', with the justification based on the same criteria.

As a result of the intensity and complementary nature of the work to re-search, conserve and enhance the value of the Siega Verde site, the archaeological area has, over time, found its deserved international recognition. In addition to its inclusion on the World Heritage List, Siega Verde is part of the Council of Europe's "Prehistoric Rock Art Trails' Cultural Route", which brings together the most important ensembles of visitable places with prehistoric rock art in Europe, and in which the Côa Parque Foundation has participated since 2020.

The programme to enhance the value of Siega Verde began a few years after its discovery, in 1991, when it was equipped with signage. In 1997, a tour itinerary was set up, where it is possible to visit 14 panels that include the most interesting Palaeolithic representations. The route is accompanied by a field guide that describes, in detail, each of the 14 selected spaces that make up the visit itinerary. As part of the firm commitment to make the site accessible for everyone, there is a copy of the guide for the visually impaired complemented with an audio guide. In this version of the guide, all the panels on the route are depicted in large format

and explained, which, in turn, makes it easier for the site's guides to explain the artistic representations of the place to those with reduced mobility from the Archaeological Classroom, given the complicated topography of the archaeological site.

Tours have been done in small groups with specialist staff ever since the site was marked off with a fence in the 1990s. Apart from promoting its conservation, this strategy puts into practice the theories on heritage interpretation that stress that the best method of transmitting cultural heritage to the public is one that includes guided services. There are also night-time tours of the site in the summer, making it seem even more magical and surprising visitors even more as they explore the panels and engravings.

Since 1997, the Siega Verde site has benefited from an Archaeological Classroom built in the vicinity of the rock art, which has undergone ongoing work to remodel and enlarge the

building and to update and increase its didactic content. The discourse of the exhibition naturally highlights the peculiarities and characteristics of Siega Verde and, by extension, of open-air Palaeolithic rock art. The Archaeological Classroom features a detailed explanation of what we can see at the site, revealing the prehistoric periods in which the engravings were created and providing visitors with detailed information about the ways of life of the people who made them.

With the same aim as the Siega Verde Archaeological Classroom, opened in 1997, which seeks to complement the information provided by the guides during the tours of the rock art sites, the Côa Museum, designed by the architects Camilo Rebelo and Tiago Pimentel, was also opened in July 2010. This architectural project replaces the initial idea that used the scars from the excavations carried out to establish the wall of the dam designed by Fernando Maia Pinto. The project chosen from the international competition in 2003 is located downstream from the initial one, on top of a hill that dominates the confluence of the Côa and the Douro, at the confluence of two World Heritage Sites: the rock art of the Côa Valley and the vineyard landscapes of the Alto Douro region and is the only one that deals with open-air Palaeolithic art and its archaeological content, forming one of the largest permanent exhibition spaces in Portugal. The concept of the work is its integration into the landscape, achieved thanks to its underground spaces and the use of mineral pigments, imitating the irregularities and natural tones of the local schist and enabling it to be integrated into the landscape from the confluence of the Côa and the Douro.



Fig. 4. Night-time guided tour of Siega Verde (Photograph by J. J. Fernández. Regional Government of Castilla y León)



Fig. 5. Outside of the Siega Verde Archaeological Classroom (Photograph by Pedro Guimarães . Regional Government of Castilla y León)



Fig. 6. Outside of the Côa Museum
(Photography by António Jerónimo;
Côa Parque Foundation)

The aim of the Côa Museum, however, is not to substitute a tour of the rock art sites at the Côa Valley Archaeological Site, which form the real open-air museum, being the sites chosen by the ancient Côa Valley artists. It is thus established as a point of entry to begin discovering rock art, or a point of departure, to reveal the sites that are not open to the public, other cultural heritage in the region, as well as the everyday life of the artists and to explain the natural factors that made it possible for this art to be conserved over tens of thousands of years. In 2019, the Côa Museum joined the National Network of Living Science Centres, made up of 20 science and technology venues throughout Portugal. The Living Science Centre and Côa Parque Foundation Educational Services carry out activities fo-

cused on the cultural and natural heritage of the Côa Valley, designed for both schools and the general public.

The Côa Parque – Foundation for the Safeguarding and Development of the Côa Valley, also known as the Côa Parque Foundation, was created in 2011 to manage the Côa Valley Archaeological Park, created in 1996, and the Côa Museum, created in 2010. It was founded by the Directorate-General of Cultural Heritage, Turismo de Portugal, the Portuguese Environment Agency and the Secretary of State for Science, Technology and Higher Education, the Côa Valley Municipality Association and Vila Nova de Foz Côa City Council. Its main aims are to protect, conserve, research and disseminate the art of the Côa Valley and other heritage in the area of the archaeological park, combining the appeal of the museum with the public tours of the rock art sites.

The Côa Valley Archaeological Park Special Programme has recently started to be prepared. The Directorate-General of Cultural Heritage, together with the Côa Parque Foundation and the University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, has been tasked with defining the rules to safeguard and enhance the value of the archaeological heritage, the territory of the Côa Valley Archaeological Park and creating the systems and legal framework needed for the regional planning and management.

With the priority of diversifying the tourism offering, other ways to visit Côa Valley's heritage have also been being developed in recent years. A kayak excursion that beings in Canada do Inferno makes it possible to see some of the panels that are difficult to access and not found along the river, located in the middle of the Pocinho dam, and to visit the Fariseu site. At this site, in 1999, one year after the Palaeolithic art of Côa was classified as World Heritage by UNES-



CO, an exploration near panel 1 revealed the existence of a sequence of archaeological layers with remains from the Upper Palaeolithic on an engraved panel. This stratigraphic relationship made it possible, for the first time, to date the engravings and confirm the stylistic attribution. This situation occurred again in 2020, with the discovery of a superimposition of figures created using pecking and abrasion, characteristic of the older phase of Côa art, covered by layers from the Upper Palaeolithic, and, in particular, a representation that is one-of-a-kind in the context of Palaeolithic engravings: a male aurochs over 3.5 metres in size, which can be spotted during the kayak tour. These recent discoveries, unlike panel 1, submerged by the Pocinho dam and presented as a replica in the Côa Museum, can be seen during this tour, confirming the importance of this site for the dating of the open-air art that is expressed on a monumental basis, from the beginning of the Upper Palaeolithic period.

In 2021, a new kind of tour started, in a solar-powered boat, more focused on the natural heritage of the Côa Valley. The route starts at Canada do Inferno and allows visitors to see not the engravings but the geological context and different animal and plant species that populate the lower Côa down to the mouth at Ribeira de Piscos.

Another particular feature of the site in Salamanca, on the other hand, is its management model, as it is managed through a partnership agreement between various authorities: city councils, which own the area and the infrastructures, and the Government of Castilla y León, which is responsible for conservation and protection and that has, in turn, entrusted the organisation of tours of the site, the Archaeological Classroom and the organisation of workshops for schools to the local action group ADECOCIR, the Association for the Development

Fig. 7. Room B at the Côa Museum (Photograph by José Paulo Ruas)



Fig. 8. Kayak used for the tours from the Canada do Inferno site to the Fariseu site (Photograph by António Jerónimo; Côa Parque Foundation).

of the Region in Ciudad Rodrigo. This successful formula has driven the integration of local entities and action groups in managing the area.

One of the aspects we are most pleased to share regarding the dissemination of Siega Verde and the Côa Valley is the implementation of school activities. The visit to the sites includes various workshops for students, while, in addition—and perhaps this is the unique part of it—the site guides also visit the schools.

Close collaboration has been a key feature of the achievements in management and the extensive research, conservation and outreach work that has taken place at Siega Verde and the Côa Valley, going back to the years before the joint declaration as World Heritage, with the successive experts and managers responsible for studying and managing the heritage. This collaboration has yielded joint scientific meetings, technical and educational publications such as the regional map of cultural and natural resources, numerous exhibitions that include the Foz Côa and Siega Verde findings and the joint entry agreed in 2013.

In short, we can confirm that the strategies and activities that have taken place in recent years at Foz Côa and Siega Verde, geared towards their management and dissemination, are continuous and sustainable, that they are closely linked to the local region and its local agents and, in turn, that they aim for the internationalisation of the site areas, linking both sites even

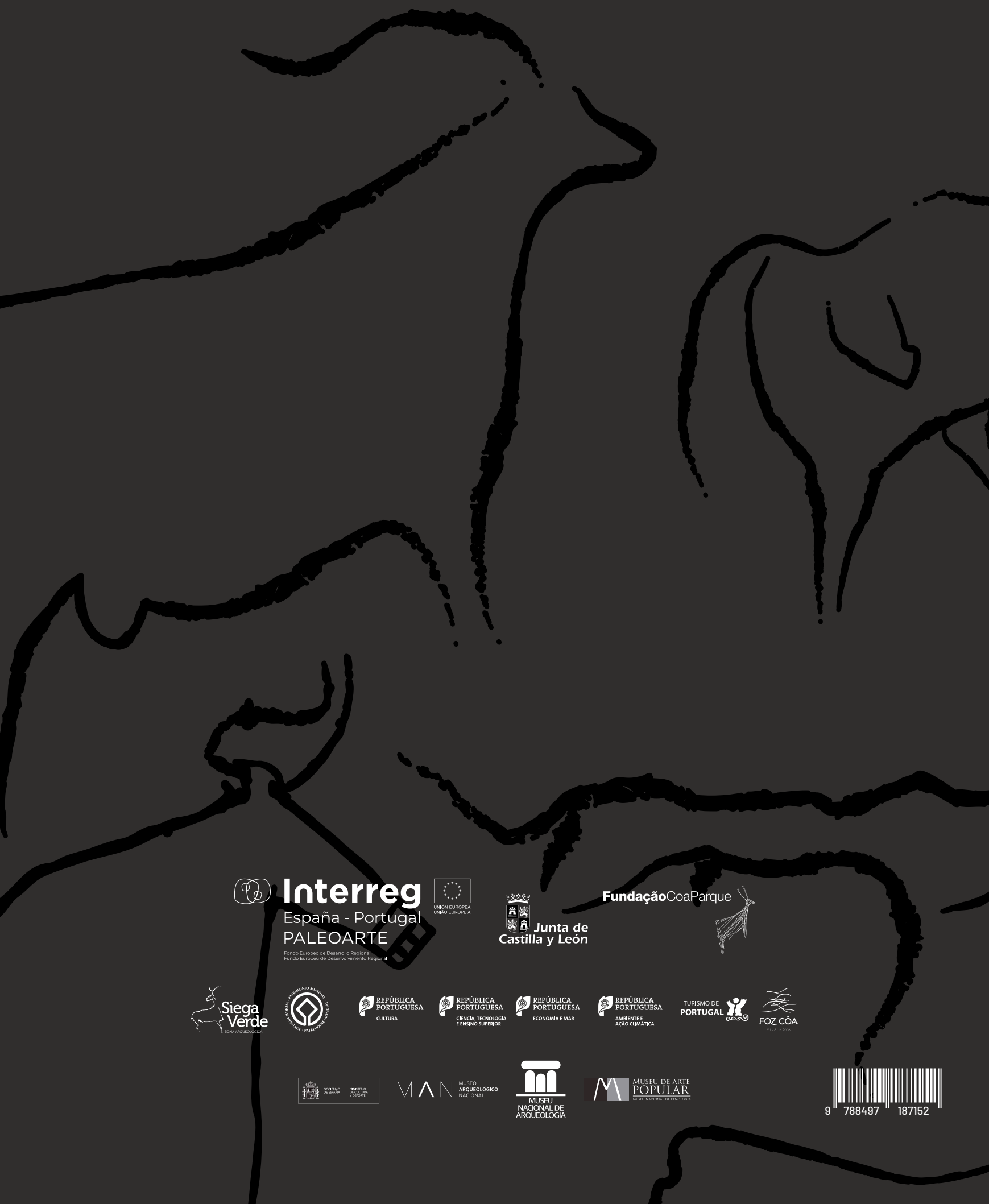
closer together. One of the aims of the cross-border rock art from Foz Côa to Siega Verde is to carry out virtual tours of the sites, using panoramic digital photography and augmented reality resources, as well as *El Arte de la Luz* [‘The Art of Light’], a project carried out in 2010 and 2011, with a travelling exhibition that publicised the values of the sites, the similarities and likely relationships in the Palaeolithic period that explain the resemblance of the areas, which, in turn, jus-

tifies the declaration as World Heritage of the Côa-Siega Verde group. The exhibition travelled to five World Heritage Sites: Salamanca, Lisbon (in the matchless setting of the Monastery of the Hieronymites), the Douro Museum in Peso da Régua and the Museum of Human Evolution in Burgos, near the famous ensemble of sites in the Atapuerca mountains.

The PALEOARTE (cross-border Palaeolithic art) project was approved in the 2nd call for the Interreg VA Spain-Portugal (POCTEP) Programme 2014-2020, with the participation of the Directorate-General of Cultural Heritage of the Government of Castilla y León's Ministry of Culture and Tourism as the main beneficiary, and the National Research Centre on Human Evolution and the Côa Parque Foundation as partners.

The most ambitious action in this project is the travelling exhibition on Palaeolithic rock art. A cross-border team was responsible for the script and design for the exhibition, which will be presented at the Popular Art Museum in Lisbon and the National Archaeology Museum in Madrid, accompanied by contributions from the authors of the content and the experts who were invited to prepare this catalogue. Studies and archaeological explorations have been done in this field, not only in the area of the two World Heritage Sites but also in the intervening geographical area. The results have already provided evidence of dense human occupation during the Upper Palaeolithic and confirm that the two concentrations of rock art belong to the same cultural group that exploited the ecological diversity of the limits of the Northern Plateau during the last ice age.

Since the discovery of the Altamira paintings in 1879 and the scientific community's acceptance of their age and, therefore, the artistic behaviour of our ancestors, the first testimonies of parietal art produced by human beings were, until very recently, exclusively located inside natural cavities in limestone in France and the Cantabrian Coast, which is why it was even asserted that it was an art exclusive to caves. The intense research in Portugal and inland Spain in recent decades showed, in contrast to that preconceived notion, that the artistic expressions attributable to the Upper Palaeolithic in open-air places are as numerous and of similar artistic interest as those found in caves. The Côa Valley and Siega Verde occupy a prominent role, among these open-air archaeological places, constituting the artistic areas with the highest number of Palaeolithic representations known to date.



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