

Loewenmensch. The lion woman

Paulo Tiago Cabeça

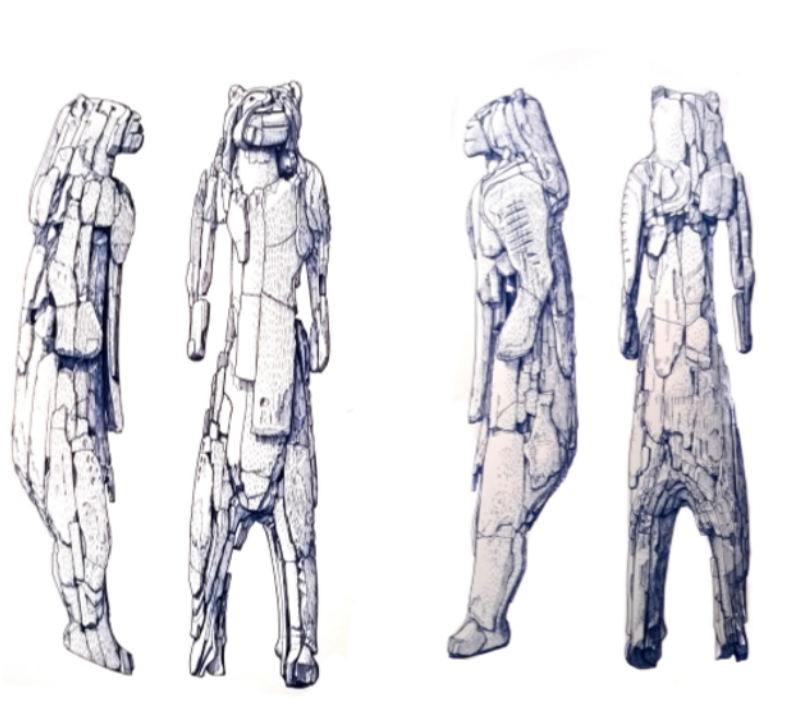


Fig. 1 Löwenmensch (Human - Lion)¹

¹In German, the original. [Image consulted on 30 April 2020.](#)

Abstract

This work continues the investigation published in *Laboratorios colaborativos*² and in *Academia Letters*.³ It is intended to elaborate a small reflection on one of the oldest productions of human figurative art, namely the figure in ivory commonly called “lion man” or “human-lion” *Loewenmensch* (*Fig.1*), and demonstrate why this may not necessarily be a male representation, but rather a female.

Keywords: Loewenmensch, Subconscious, Primitive art, Ceramic, Art philosophy

Expression material

Early we saw that João Luis Bucho⁴ (2011) refers⁵ that through clay, matter and creator establish a Near Development *Zone*, Vygotski (1987), which stimulates the perception, attention, cognition, sensation, and stimulation of the symbolic and the imaginary. Clay functions as the “transitional object” between the world of fantasy and reality. Mastering clay is an achievement. Especially for those who have never done so before. The transposition, which often occurs unconsciously, to the object that one molds of subconscious images allows us to dominate emotions, sensations, traumas, or anxieties. Thus appeasing, with an also therapeutic effect, the human mind.

Often, we are met with this *appeasing effect* on the artists and curious who manipulate clay, and the art representative of images and symbols in general. Starting a work of art is an imperative craving for the artist, a necessity almost as eating or drinking. When the work is finally completed and sees the light of day comes then this artist’s appeasement and tranquility, this feeling of embodiment that settles in the artist.

Mihael Budja⁶ argued that the emergence of ceramic technology was not related to the dynamics of agriculture, but may have been the opposite to succeed: “It is increasingly known that various forms of ceramic technology are attributed to eurasian hunter-gatherers long before sedentary social structures emerged. The invention of ceramic

²Cabeça, Paulo; Rodrigues, Paulo; Carrolo, Mariana. 2020. A criatividade como processo do consciente e subconsciente na Arte. A Barrística como caso de estudo. In *Antologia de Ensaio LABORATORIO COLABORATIVO: Dinâmicas Urbanas Patrimônio, Artes*. VI Seminário de Investigação, Ensino e Difusão. Publisher: DINÂMIA’CET-ISCTE. Pp. 295.

³Cabeça, P.T. (2021). *The Venus of our anxiety. The first art was visceral*. *Academia Letters*, Article 454.

⁴Psychologist. Expressive therapist. *Master in creativity and innovation*. Consulted on December 29, 2018

⁵Bucho, João Luis. *Expressive therapies and clay: vehicle of self-knowledge, creativity and expression*. Institutional Repository of the Fernando Pessoa University. Master’s dissertations. 2011. Consulted on 29 December 2018. Available [here](#).

⁶Ditto.

technology in Europe is associated with the elaboration of female and animal figures in the Gravetian period, 26000 years BP”.⁷⁸

J. Svoboda (2008) commenting on Soffer, Adovasio, and Hyland (2000) stresses that “the essence of the upper paleolithic anthropomorphics, dressed or naked is that they are centered on the female figure”. Budja for his part cites Vandiver, P. B., Soffer, O., Klima, B., and Svoboda, J. as authors of a theory on the beginnings of the invention of the ceramic production process⁹ that was precisely the first figurative representation¹⁰ in clay that cause the invention of ceramics by humans.

From the subconscious to the transcendent

Jiří Svoboda points out¹¹ that paleolithic Venus figures, even those of materials other than ceramics, were found “located near fireplaces (...) is natural, since these were the centers of almost all activities carried out”. Throwing them into the fire, the element of power, strength and transformation, one receives a *magical* response back, in the form of bursting (thermal shock) or hardening of the clay (ceramic cooking). This artistic manifestation of the subconscious, also referred by psychologists (Aragon, Rodrigues 2005), materializes subconscious imagery in clay, but could also manifest anxieties, enthusiasms, and fears in stone, wood or ivory. The attempt of humans to manipulate the objects of their restlessness: *animals* and *woman*, which enclosed both the Darwinians *survival* and *reproduction* (genetic survival).

Svoboda J. (2008) states in the gravetian the profusion of female images is evident: “On the other hand, the pancontinental comparisons of female statuettes throughout Eurasia documented a striking similarity in the shape and design of some of them. For Gamble (1982), these relationships may reflect long-distance interactions, formation of pancontinental entities and networks of alliances, or interregional migrations”.¹²

⁷BP means Before Present - before radiocarbon dating in the 1950s when this process became feasible, conventionally day 1 January 1950.

⁸Budja, Mihael - The transition to farming and the ceramic trajectories in Western Eurasia - from ceramic figurines to vessels (p. 183). Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. Consulted on 19 February 2019. Available [here](#).

⁹The. Soffer, J. M. Adovasio, and D. C. Hyland. 2000. The “Venus” Figurines. Textiles, Basketry, Gender, and Status in the Upper Paleolithic. *Current Anthropology* Volume 41, Number 4

¹⁰Pamela B., VandiverOlga Soffer, Bohuslav Klima, Jiri Svoboda (1989). The Origins of Ceramic Technology At Dolni Věstonice, Czechoslovakia. Consulted on 8 of January 2018. Available [here](#).

¹¹Svoboda Jiří. 2008. *Upper Paleolithic female figurines of Northern Eurasia*. In: ed., PETRKOVICE. The Dolní Věstonice Studies 15, Brno. 193-223

¹²Svoboda Jiří. 2008. *Upper Paleolithic female figurines of Northern Eurasia*. In: ed., PETRKOVICE. The Dolní Věstonice Studies 15, Brno. 193-223

Long-distance interactions and cultural sharing may be one of the reasons for the similarity between shapes, designs and images. In particular, the profuse female representation. Even if we consider displacements of thousands of kilometers, among adverse geographies, monstrous predators, diseases, and all kinds of accidents. There may also be a similarity of expression if creativity is considered a conscious phenomenon but *subconscious*. If so we could be faced with a response *biologically* common in all humans. This need for visceral *expression* would always give rise to externalizations and responses that in its materialized form would be very close to each other, in all humans, regardless of the geography or the possible generational or intergenerational contacts.

Human-lion

The sexual dimorphism in the lion species of the pleistocene *Panthera leo spelaea*, inhabitant of Eurasia, defended¹³ by scientists such as Diedrich and Rathgeber who claim: “lion P. l. spelaea should have shape similar to the contemporary African lion P. l. leo. Both were, respectively, inhabitants of open environment and did not use caves.”

However this thesis is not consensual. If on the one hand the theory of the same sexual dimorphism could be reinforced:

We found à that “cave lions”¹⁴ and modern lions shared an ancestor 500,000 years ago and that the two lineages probably did not hybridize after their divergence.¹⁵

Similarly, the evolution of its contradictory would also make sense:

it has been suggested that male lions did not have the characteristic mane of modern males. Perhaps the possible lack of this sexual characteristic in male cave lions have induced or strengthened reproductive (sexual) isolation between these forms.¹⁶

¹³Cashews G. Diedrich & Thomas Rathgeber (2012): Late Pleistocene steppe lion *Panthera Leo spelaea* (Goldfuss 1810) skeleton remains of the Upper Rhine Valley (SW Germany) and contributions to their sexual dimorphism, taphonomy and habitus, *Historical Biology: An International Journal of Paleobiology*, 24:1, 1-28

¹⁴“Cave Lions” in the original, designation commonly attributed to *Panthera Leo Spelaea*.

¹⁵Manuel Marc & Barnett, Ross & Sandoval-Velasco, Marcela & Yamaguchi, Nobuyuki & Vieira, Filipe & Zepeda Mendoza, Marie Lisandra & Liu, Shiping & Martin, Michael & Sinding, Mikkel Holger & Mak, Sarah S.T. & CarÃe, Christian & Liu, Shanlin & Guo, Chunxue & Zheng, Jiao & ZazulaGrant & Baryshnikov, Gennady & Eizirik, Eduardo & Koepfli, Klaus & Johnson, Warren & Gilbert, M.. The evolutionary history of extinct and living lions. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. 117. 201919423. 10.1073/pnas.1919423117. Consulted on July 23, 2020. Available [here](#).

¹⁶Idem.

There are those who defend the existence of a mane in both branches of the species and those who do not. If exists, the representation of this “lion man” was wrong in the genre because the *Loewenmensch* does not appear to have a mane. But if we consider that there is no mane in the cave lion, we are faced with a new paradox: if most of the human sculptures found (ceramic, bone or stone) were female, why would *Loewenmensch* necessary be a male?...Art is an expression and therefore a necessity. It is as fundamental as breathing, eating, drinking, sheltering from the cold. Animals also demonstrate creativity. Kaufman A.B., Butt A.B., Colbert-White E.N. & Kaufman J.C. (2011) establish as the premise of their work around the neurobiology of animal creativity, the definition of creativity according to humans from Plucker & Beghetto, (2004). In the same text and referring to animals, they ensure that “the whole theory of creativity in humans is applied point by point to animal creativity (...) eliminating the parts that do not apply.” Chimpanzees¹⁷ manifest creativity. They create and use basic tools; orcas develop extremely complex hunting and predation techniques using fluid dynamics to hunt seals¹⁸ or tonic immobility to hunt sharks.¹⁹ These observations reinforce that creativity may be a *biological* phenomenon. The way creativity seems to arise, usually spontaneous and without consciously cause, it is described in the studies of Andreasen N. C. (2011)²⁰ which states that we are confronted with the conclusion that creative thinking emerges from the subconscious rather than the conscious process. Laura Sanders²¹ in ScienceNews describes²² an experience²³ of Manish Saggarr²⁴ of Stanford University that can lead us to the conclusion that creativity arises, apparently, from the cerebellum and thus will be a phenomenon as primitive as this organ, which dates back to our *primate state*.

If we also consider human or animal existence reduced to its essentials, we will have two major Darwinian anxieties: *survival* and *continuity*. And if this synthesis is eventually the

¹⁷Nathional Geographic. Photo Ark., 2015. Chimpanzee. Retrieved May 4, 2020. Available [here](#).

¹⁸Lindblad Expeditions-National Geographic. 2018. Wave Hunting: Prey Orcas on Seal. Antarctica Consulted on May 4, 2020. Available [here](#).

¹⁹Nathional Geographic. 2020. How orcas hunt great whites fascinates biologists. Consulted on 4 May 2020. Available [here](#).

²⁰Nancy Coover Andreasen is an American neuroscientist and neuropsychiatrist. M.D.; Ph.d. President of the Neuroimaging Psychiatric Consortium, University of Iowa School of Medicine, *Carver College of Medicine*.

²¹Laura Sanders neuroscience writer. Doctor In Biology university of Southern California.

²²Sanders, Laura. May 28, 2015. *Cerebellum may be site of creative spark*. ScienceNews. Consulted on March 26, 2020. Available [here](#).

²³Saggarr, M., Quintin E-M, Kienitz E., Bott, N., et al. Pictionary-based fMRI paradigm to study the neural correlates of spontaneous improvisation and figural creativity.

²⁴Teacher Assistant, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, Faculty Member, Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design (aka d.school), Stanford University.

representation of *animals* and *women*, then there could be no greater justification, in favor of this thesis, than the image commonly known as the *lion-man*.

The “Lion Human”²⁵ (in the German original Löwenmensch) in many references called “lion man” is, as far as we know, one of the oldest known works of figurative art. Dating from 40,000 BC, it was discovered in numerous fragments in southern Germany in 1939 and since gradually assembled up until 2013. The human-lion is a Aurignacian sculpture of mammoth ivory. The image represents a human body, with a lion’s head. Its dimensions are 29.6 cm high, 5.6 cm wide and a thickness of 5.9 cm and was discovered in the Hohlenstein-Stadel²⁶ cave. The beast transvestite of human or the human dressed as a beast, may certainly be an expression of the subconscious. A need to interfere with the environment. An urgency to master forces of nature that subjugated and conditioned us as fragile humans. If so human-lion is certainly the most approximated correct designation, because, *man lion or woman lion* (lioness) would be as legitimate as perfectly plausible.

Conclusion

Art is an expression, as fundamental and necessary as eating, drinking, sheltering from the cold. Humans through art and creativity transport from the subconscious, images of their anxieties. Art allows to manipulate these anxieties as *if we were playing* with them. By playing the human learns to manipulate his fears. Perhaps he discovers solutions to his problems and for the gigantic and deadly adversities of nature. The two representations most often present in art, since the Paleolithic, are animals and women. These animals usually represented preys and the most dangerous beasts. The feminine figure represents the women who generates life and continuity (genetic survivance). The figure Löwenmensch, *human-lion* may be a *lion-man* but, if we want to be concise, and considering the above, is much more likely to be the representation of a lion-woman.

²⁵Outstanding figure of the collection of the Museum of Ulm, Germany.

²⁶World Heritage site since 2017. Consulted on April 30, 2020. Available [here](#).

References

- Absolon, K. (1949). The Diluvial Anthropomorphic Statuettes and Drawings, Especially the So-Called Venus Statuettes, Discovered in Moravia: A Comparative Study. *Artibus Asiae*, 12(3), 201-220. doi:10.2307/3248385
- Alencar E.S., Fleith D.S. (2003). *Recent Theoretical Contributions to the Study of Creativity. Psychology: Theory and research*, University of Brasilia. Vol. 19 n. 1, pp. 001-008.
- Aragon, Soraya Rodrigues. 2015. *Art as an expression of feelings and emotional catharsis in therapeutic processes*. *Psicologia.pt*. Consulted on 14 March 2019. Available in http://www.psicologia.pt/artigos/ver_opiniao.php?codigo=AOP0370
- Bucho, João Luis S.M. Cruz. 2011. Expressive therapies and clay: a vehicle of self-knowledge, creativity and expression. Master's work. Fernando Pessoa University. Port
- Budja, Mihael. 2016. Ceramics among Eurasian hunter-gatherers> 32000 years of ceramic technology use and the perception of containment. Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, SI
- Budja, Mihael (2007). *The Dawn of Ceramics*. Narodni Muzej Slovenije, Ljubljana
- Budja, Mihael (2006). *The transition to farming and the ceramic trajectories in Western Eurasia - from ceramic figurines to vessels*. Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. Consulted on 19 February 2019.
- Cabeça, Paulo Tiago. 2018. Uma nova abordagem à barrística portuguesa: a influência do projeto “Aldeia da Terra” na conceção de uma nova linguagem artística. Tese Mestrado. Universidade de Évora. <http://hdl.handle.net/10174/23337>
- Cabeça, Paulo; Rodrigues, Paulo; Carrolo, Mariana. 2020. A criatividade como processo do consciente e subconsciente na Arte. A Barrística como caso de estudo. In *Antologia de Ensaios LABORATORIO COLABORATIVO: Dinâmicas Urbanas, Património, Artes. VI Seminário de Investigação, Ensino e Difusão*. Publisher: DINÂMIA'CET-ISCTE. Pp. 295. <http://hdl.handle.net/10071/20764>
- Cabeça, P.T. (2021). The Venus of our anxiety. The first art was visceral. *Academia Letters*, Article 454. <https://doi.org/10.20935/AL454>.
- Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Lisbon, Lisbon.

- Cashews G. Diedrich & Thomas Rathgeber (2012): Late Pleistocene steppe lion *Panthera leo spelaea*(Goldfuss 1810) skeleton remains of the Upper Rhine Valley (SW Germany) and contributions to their sexual dimorphism,taphonomy and habitus, *Historical Biology: An International Journal of Paleobiology*, 24:1, 1-28
- Gleitman H.,Fridlund A., Reisberg D. 2014. *Psychology*. 10th Edition.
- Lindblad Expeditions-National Geographic. 2018. Wave Hunting: Prey Orcas on Seal. Antarctica Consulted on May 4, 2020.
- Manuel, Marc & Barnett, Ross & Sandoval-Velasco, Marcela & Yamaguchi, Nobuyuki & Vieira, Filipe & Zepeda Mendoza, Marie Lisandra & Liu, Shiping & Martin, Michael & Sinding, Mikkel-Holger & Mak, Sarah S.T. & CarÃ³e, Christian & Liu, Shanlin & Guo, Chunxue & Zheng, Jiao & Zazula, Grant & Baryshnikov, Gennady & Eizirik, Eduardo & Koepfli, Klaus & Johnson, Warren & Gilbert, M.. The evolutionary history of extinct and living lions. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. 117. 201919423. 10.1073/pnas.1919423117. Consulted on July 23, 2020.
- Nathional Geographic. Photo Ark., 2015. Chimpanzee. Retrieved May 4, 2020. Available <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/c/chimpanzee/>
- Nathional Geographic. 2020. How orcas hunt great whites fascinates biologists. Consulted on 4 May 2020. Available in <https://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/animals-source/0000016b-f723-d5f3-a1fb-f7ff14210000>
- O. Soffer, J. M. Adovasio, and D. C. Hyland. 2000. The “Venus” Figurines. Textiles, Basketry, Gender, and Status in the Upper Paleolithic. *Current Anthropology* Volume 41, Number 4
- Pamela B., Vandiver, Olga, Soffer, Bohuslav Klima, Jiri Svoboda. 1989. The Origins of Ceramic Technology at Dolni Věstonice, Czechoslovakia. Consulted on 8 January 2018. Available in <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/246/4933/1002>
- Svoboda, Jiří. 2008. *Upper Paleolithic female figurines of Northern Eurasia*. In: ed., PETRKOVICE. *The Dolní Věstonice Studies* 15, Brno. 193-223
- Wittkover, Margot & Rudolf. *Born under Saturn*(1963). The new York Review of books. Reissue of 2006.
- Wojtal, Piotr & Svoboda, Jiří & Roblíčková, Martina & Wilczyński, Jarosław. (2020). Car-

nivores in the everyday life of Gravettian hunters-gatherers in Central Europe. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*. 59. 10.1016/j.jaa.2020.101171.

Academia Letters, July 2021

©2021 by the author — Open Access — Distributed under CC BY 4.0

Corresponding Author: Paulo Tiago Cabeça, tiagocabeça@sapo.pt

Citation: Cabeça, P.T. (2021). Loewenmensch. The lion woman. *Academia Letters*, Article 1665.

<https://doi.org/10.20935/AL1665>.