



Riccardo Venturi

An Encyclopedia of Silences. John Berger visite la grotte Chauvet



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The Vertical Line

John Berger and Simon McBurney

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MAE-700



STRAND STATION



PICCADILLY RLY

Over four nights in February 1999, the writer and art historian John Berger, Theatre de Complicite's director Simon McBurney and the actress Sandra Voe conducted an intimate 30,000 year old journey, inscribing a downward line through time 30 metres below central London. They began at the disused Strand Station on the line which ran between Holborn and Aldwych. This compact disc and booklet describes, in their own words, a little of what they saw along the way.



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Artaingel Theatre de Complicite



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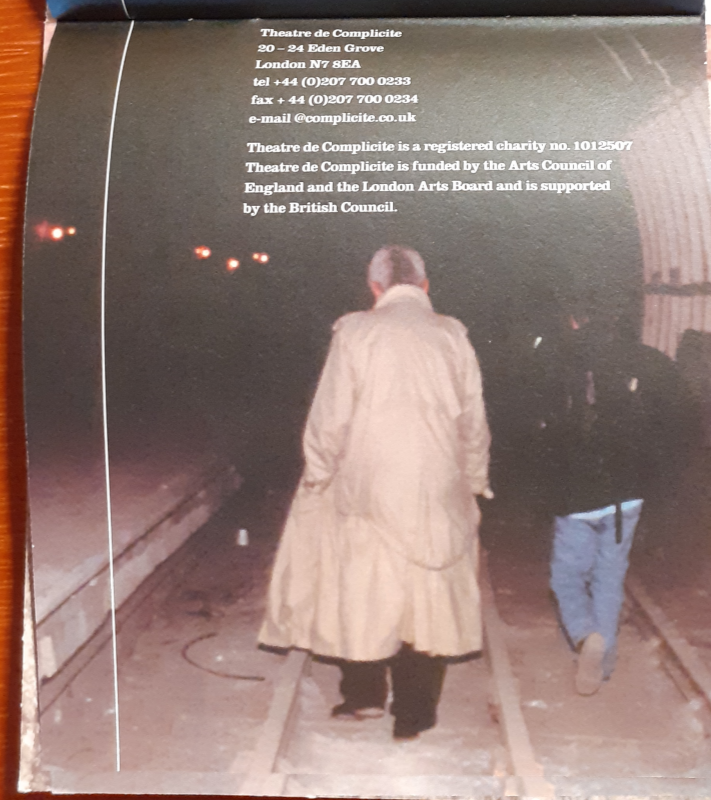


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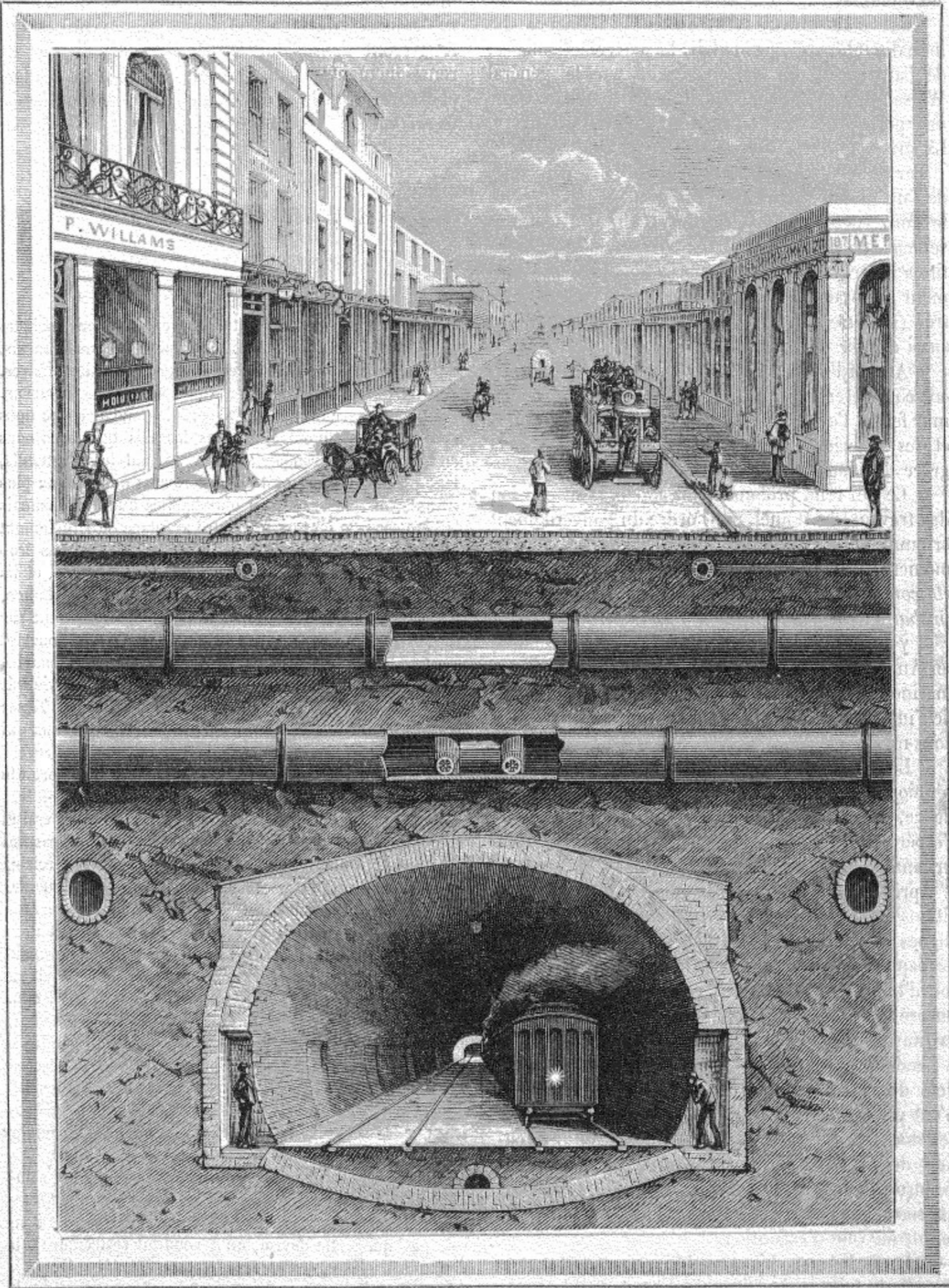
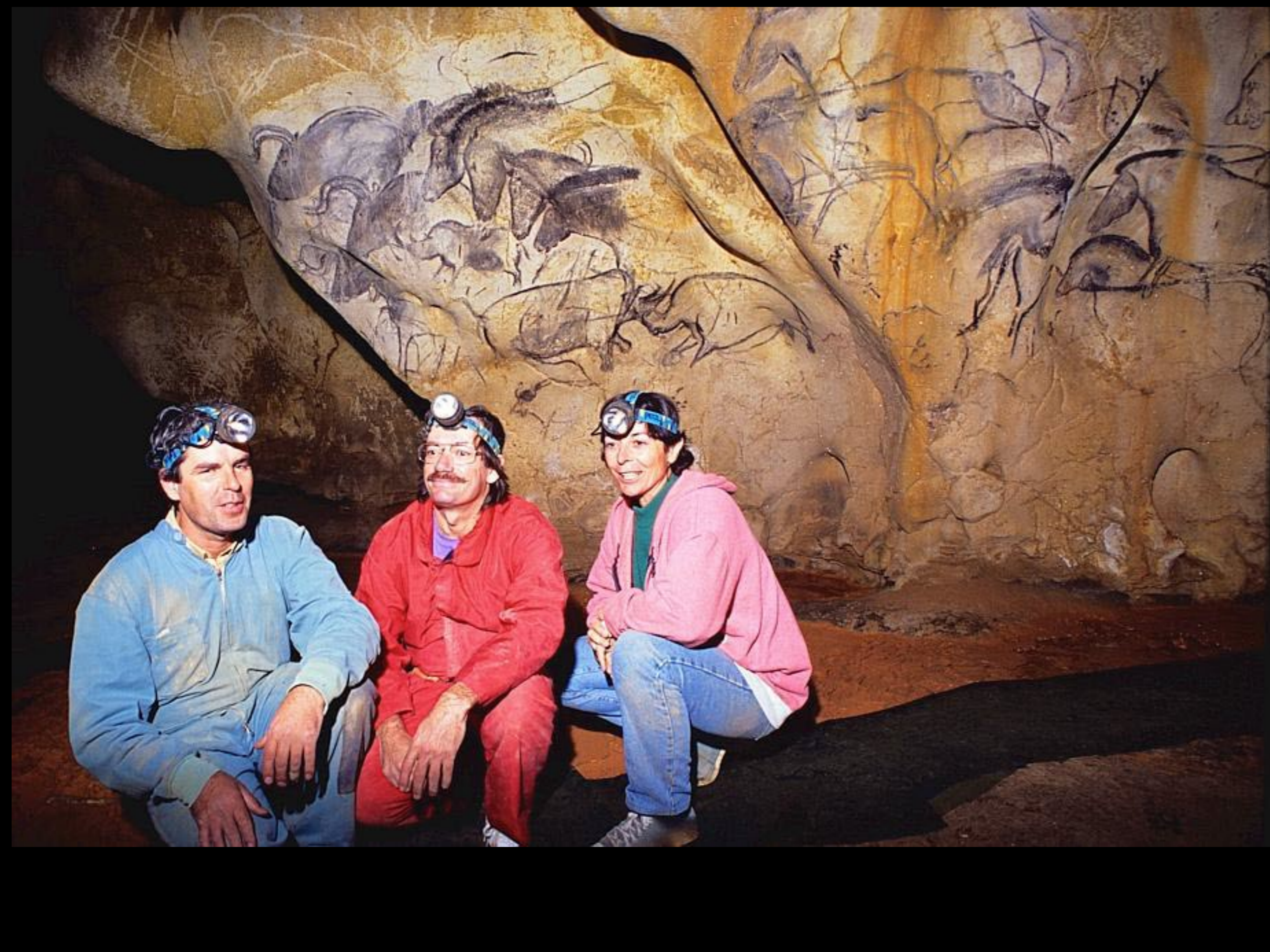


Fig. 2. — Ce qu'il y a sous le pavé de Londres.

Conduite de gaz. — Conduite d'eau. — Tube pneumatique pour les dépêches. — Égouts. — Tunnel et railway métropolitain.



“Part theatrical event, part archaeological dig, the Vertical Line was an oratorio of faces, voices, darkness and light; a one-off excavation for small groups down 122 spiral steps into the bowels of the disused Strand tube station, where a sequence of audio-visual installations culminated in a live performance on seven occasions”

Michael Morris, co-director de l'association culturelle Artangel, livret du CD The Vertical Line

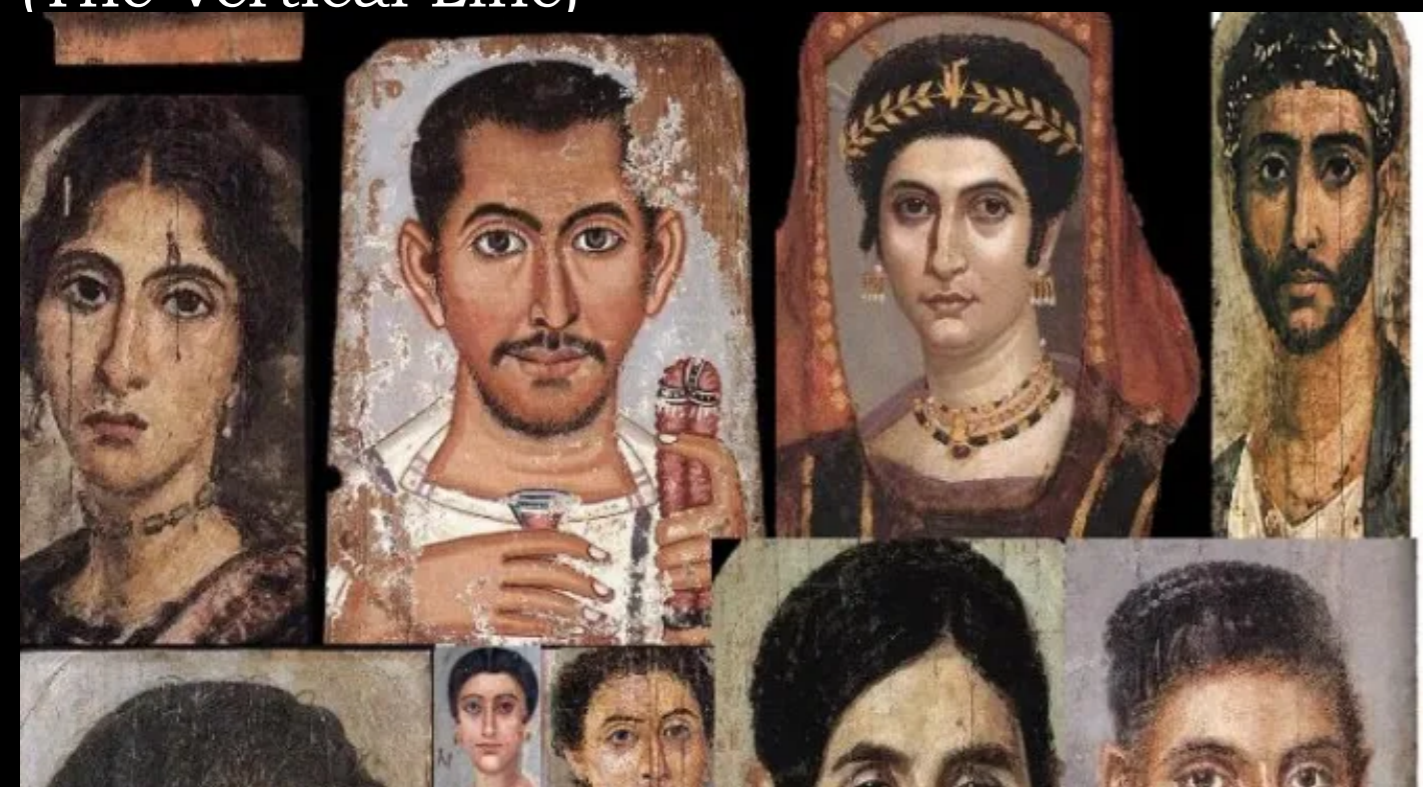


“They appeal for nothing, the Fayum faces, they ask for nothing. They look at us and their look says / We know we are alive. / And you are alive because you are looking at us” ;

“We are among the human and we’re also amongst the dead. Nothing to be afraid of. The dead make you very welcome” ;

“Why haven’t they aged, these portraits? They could walk through the door at any moment”

(The Vertical Line)

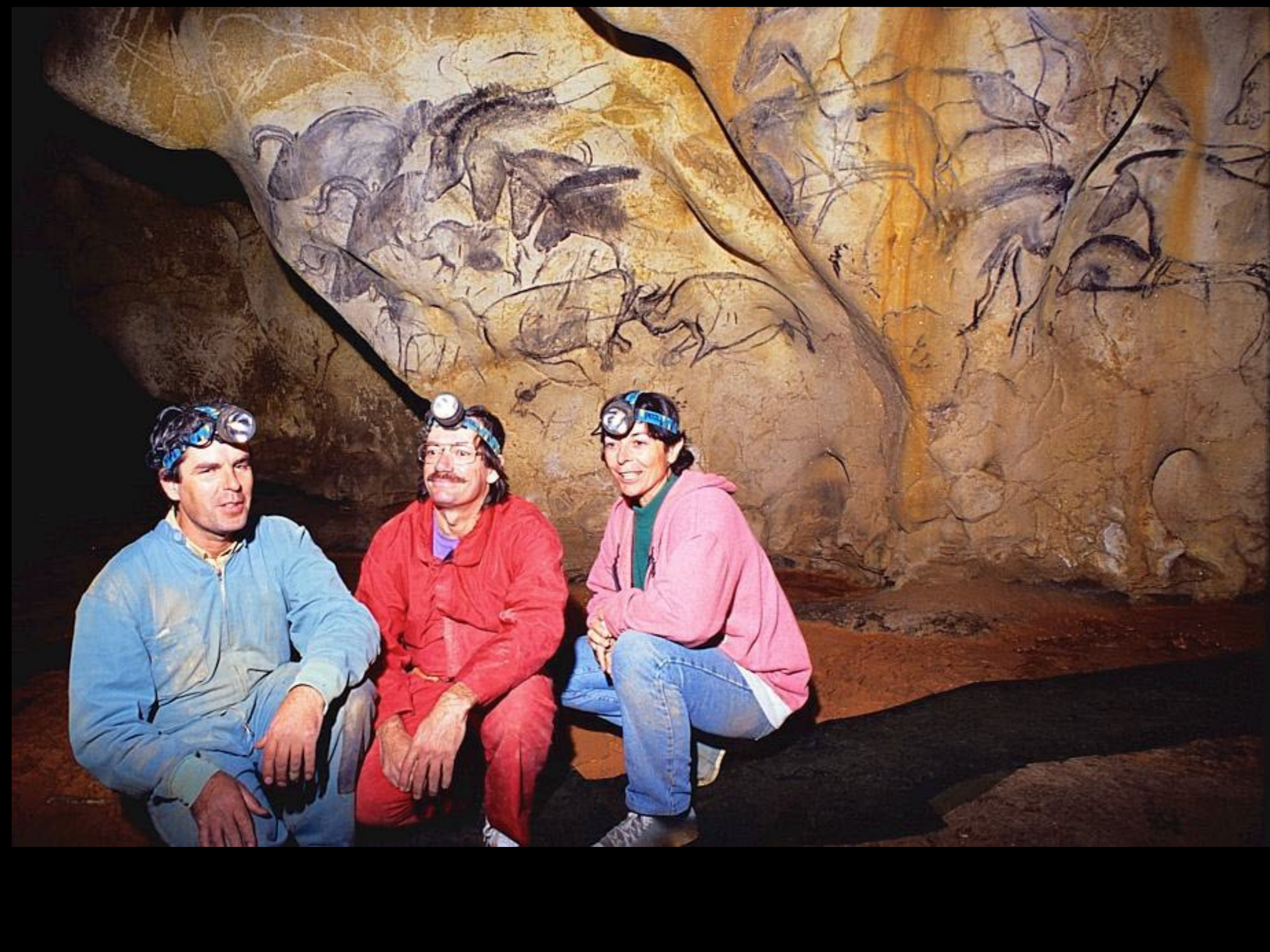


“Here, for obvious reasons, one says ‘Hello’ rather than ‘Good Evening’ or ‘Good Morning’”

The Vertical Line

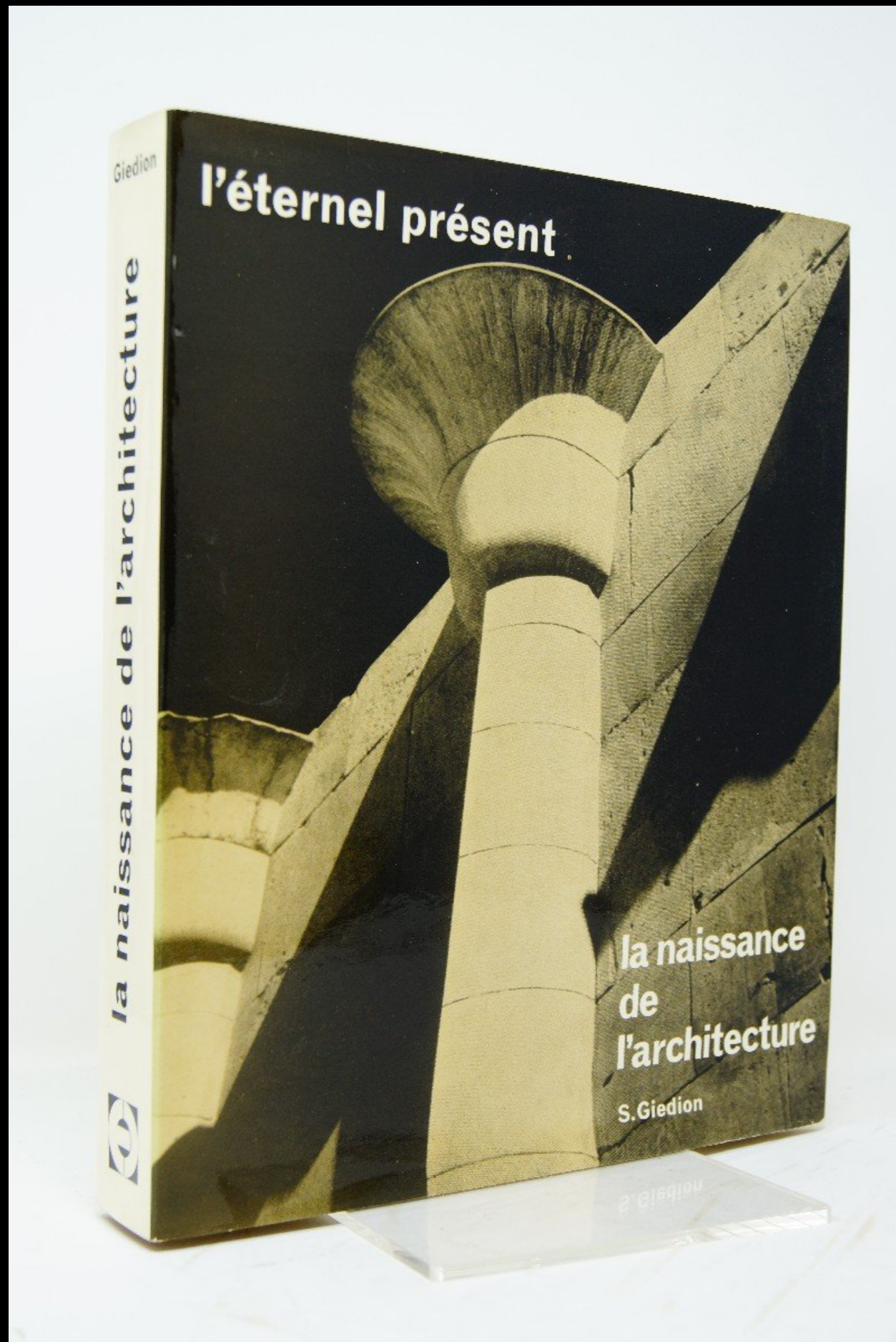
« Men carved this tunnel 90 years ago, out of the blue clay which surrounds us. There are no tunnels without deaths. They were migrant workers, Irish mostly, and the names of the dead are forgotten. But in the silence they are here » (Berger and McBurney)

« Help us now to imagine that we are surrounded by stone walls, rock walls, rocks, and that above us there are one hundred meters of solid limestone »



« The darkness is like the darkness in this railway tunnel where I'm standing, and the silence... the silence is the same. Listen to it »

“Ah! That was probably the first human cry in this cave for 25,000 years”



“And everything was so beautiful, so fresh, almost too much so. It was as if time had been abolished, as if the tens of thousands of years of separation no longer existed, and we were not alone, the painters were here too. We could feel their presence. We were disturbing them”, *The Vertical Line*

“There is no sky in a rock, so there are no horizons and no right-way-up and no upside-down. Everything in the rocks, like in our sleep, is packed, tight”

“This is the darkness of rock. The other darkneses are more or less empty. This darkness is full” (Berger 2003)

« Ce que le rocher lui disait, c'est que les animaux — comme tout ce qui existe — sont à l'intérieur du rocher et qu'avec son pigment rouge sur ses doigts, il était, lui, en mesure de les persuader de venir à la surface de la paroi, à la surface-membrane, de s'y frotter et d'y laisser la trace de leur odeur » (Berger 2002)

« Tout le drame qui, dans l'art ultérieur, devient une scène peinte *sur* une surface avec des bords, se concentre ici en une apparition qui est sortie à *travers* le rocher pour être vue » (Berger 2003)



“Ces nomades avaient la conscience aiguë de constituer une minorité infiniment moins nombreuse que les animaux. Ils étaient nés, non pas *sur* une planète, mais *au sein même* de la vie animale. Ils n'étaient pas gardiens des animaux ; les animaux étaient les gardiens du monde et de l'univers autour d'eux, un univers qui ne s'arrêtait jamais : au-delà de chaque horizon, il y avait toujours plus d'animaux”

J. Berger, *Première visite à la grotte Chauvet. Une (pré)histoire peut en cacher une autre*, dans “Le Monde Diplomatique”, août 2002, pp. 20-21



« Applied to art, the idea that the early is primitive is naive. The first paintings — and these are the first paintings we know in Europe — they whisper something which is unexpected. There was no fumbling at the beginning »



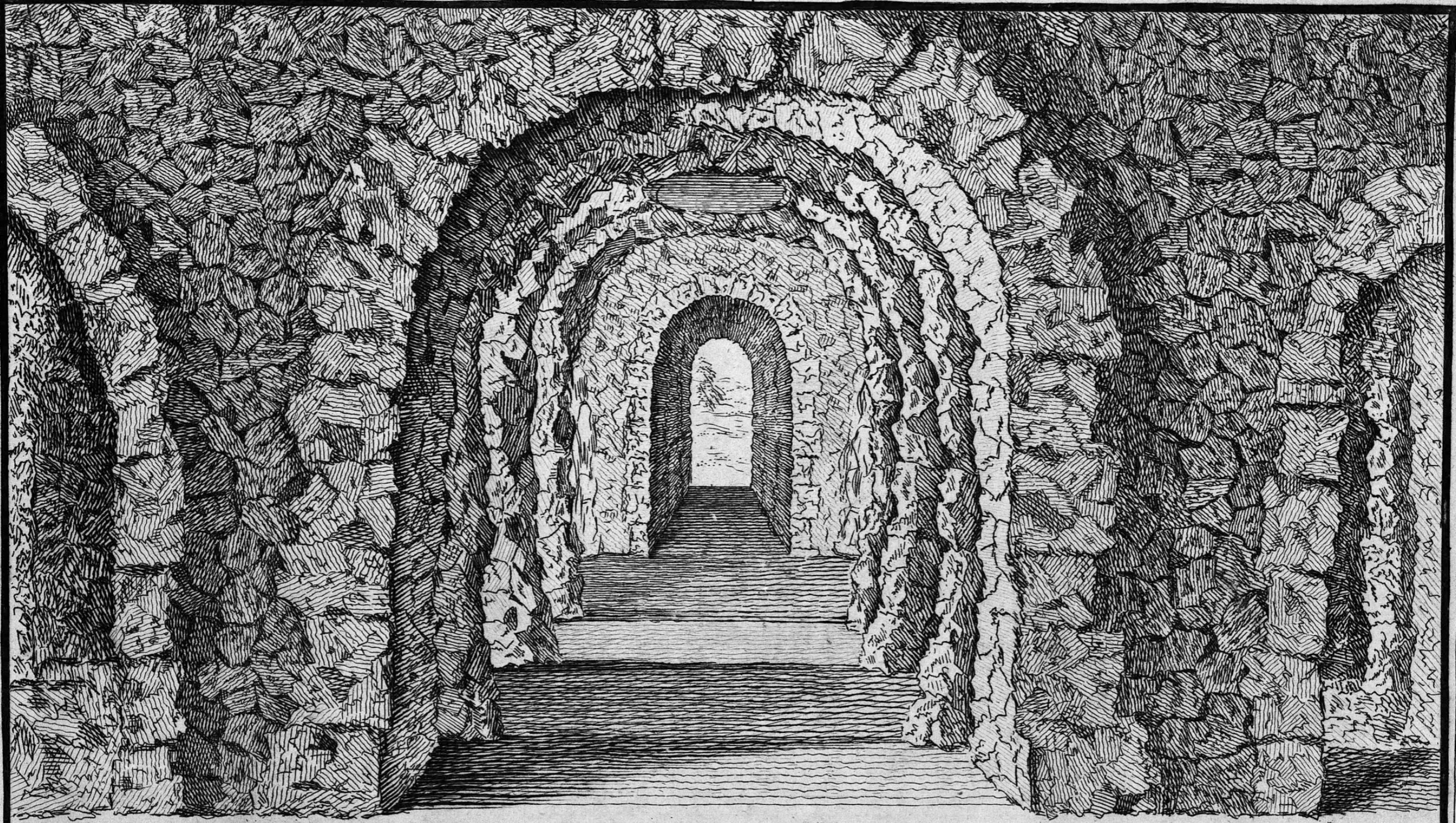
“À l’évidence, l’art ne commence pas par des balbutiements. Les premiers peintres et graveurs ont eu des yeux et des mains aussi raffinés que les artistes qui son venus plus tard. Dès le début, il y a eu une grâce. C’est bien cela le mystère, n’est-ce pas ?”

J. Berger, *La Forme d’une poche*, tr. fr. Anne et Michel Fuchs, Lyon, Fage Editions, 2003, 2021

« le temps qui nous sépare de ces artistes est au moins douze fois celui qui nous sépare des philosophies présocratiques »

(Berger 2003)





Sorle delin

A Perspective View of the Grotto.

