Land of Extremes

BY NEAL V. HITCH | Special to this Newspaper/Imperial Valley Press

The science of paints and pigments

Early pigments are naturally occurring minerals that people have been using to make paint for thousands of years. The result of combining minerals creates red, yellow, and white colors, which are considered at the root of art in the world. In various regions around the world, pigments are found in rocks, rivers, and clay. The most vivid colors, like those in the Chumash Cave art, and the El Castillo Cave in Spain date to 40,000 years ago, and they are made with earth pigments.

Ochre in one of the most common minerals on the planet. It can be found as earthy clays. In an explosion, the turn your blood is red. As a pigment, it is known as ochre.

When ochres are mixed with a binder, they can be used as paint. Yellow paint comes from yellow ochre: iron oxide with water in it. When heated, the water evaporates and the ochre becomes red. Red ochre is also found naturally or in hematite. A yellow paint can also be made with heat, even without fire. The pigment begins to dehydrate at a given region. In various regions around the world, pigments are found in rocks, rivers, and clay. The most vivid colors, like those in the Chumash Cave art, and the El Castillo Cave in Spain date to 40,000 years ago, and they are made with earth pigments.

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