

Aesthetics in Balkan prehistory: a materials-based perspective

Abstract

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The proposal for discussion is that a material aesthetics characterised many structures and objects in later Balkan prehistory and that there were two main roots of this aesthetic – (1) brightness and colour; and (2) precision design, often based upon geometric thinking, the both underpinned by exoticity. It is proposed that this sensuous, body-based appreciation of harmonious forms spread out in communities, from the craftsman to the users and their visitors, constituting a *habitus*-based aesthetics. This aesthetic was materialised in everyday life in two ways: as continuity with the past and as pleasing, harmonious, formal relationships. One route to social power in Balkan prehistory was through the appropriation of exotic objects of high aesthetic quality. Examples of the aesthetic of colour, brilliance and exoticity will be provided in the fields of textiles, ornament production, finely decorated pottery and metal objects.

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