

SECTION 4

Good morning, everyone. I've been invited to talk about my research project into Australian Aboriginal rock paintings. The Australian Aborigines have ⁽¹⁾ both real and symbolic images of their time on rock walls for many thousands of years. Throughout the long history of this tradition, new images have appeared and new painting styles have developed. And these characteristics can be used to categorise the different artistic styles. Among these are what we call the Dynamic, Yam and Modern styles of painting.

One of the most significant characteristics of the different styles is the way that ⁽²⁾ are depicted in the paintings. The more recent paintings show people in static poses. But the first human images to dominate rock art paintings, over 8,000 years ago, were full of ⁽³⁾. These paintings showed people hunting and cooking food and so they were given the name 'Dynamic' to reflect this energy. It's quite amazing considering they were painted in such a simple stick-like form. In the 'Yam period', there was a movement ⁽⁴⁾ from stick figures to a more ⁽⁵⁾ shape. However, they didn't go as far as the Modern style, which is known as 'x-ray' because it actually makes a feature of the internal

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⁽⁶⁾ as well as the organs of animals and humans. The Yam style of painting got its name from the fact that it featured much curvier figures that actually resemble the

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⁽⁷⁾ called a yam, which is similar to a sweet potato. The Modern paintings are interesting because they include paintings at the time of the first contact with European settlers. Aborigines managed to convey the idea of the settlers' clothing by simply painting the Europeans without any hands, indicating the habit of standing with their hands in their pockets! Size is another characteristic. The more recent images tend to be ⁽⁸⁾ or even larger, but the Dynamic figures are painted in miniature.

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Aboriginal rock art also records the ⁽⁹⁾ changes that occurred over thousands of years. For example, we know from the Dynamic paintings that over 8,000 years ago, Aborigines would have rarely eaten fish and sea levels were much lower at this time. In fact, fish ⁽¹⁰⁾ to appear in paintings until the Yam period along with shells and other marine images. The paintings of the Yam tradition also suggest that, during this time, the Aborigines moved away from animals as their main food source and began ⁽¹¹⁾ vegetables in their diet, as these feature prominently. Freshwater creatures didn't appear in the paintings until the Modern period from 4,000 years ago.

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So, these paintings have already taught us a lot. But one image that has always intrigued us is known as the 'Rainbow Serpent'. The Rainbow Serpent, which is the focus of my