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presents

CHILDREN OF PREHISTORY



Written by Pedro Lima & directed by Emma Baus
Produced by 13PRODS for France Télévisions

52' & 90'

Logline

What if children were the great overlooked group of prehistory?

Through cutting-edge archeological discoveries and an investigation into an adolescent who died 26,000 years ago, this remarkable documentary reveals their daily lives, educational experiences, recreation, the role they played in rituals, and even their possible involvement in cave art—radically transforming our understanding of Paleolithic societies.



Summary

As fascinating roamers of the steppes and explorers of caves, the boys and girls of the Ice Age were playful and curious, just like the children of today. But they were also given responsibilities at a very early age and, from the moment they were physically strong enough, were called upon to help with daily tasks such as carving tools, hunting, fishing, gathering resources, and carrying out household chores.

From a very young age, these children learned—through mimicry and playful interactions, or during formal active-learning sessions led by older peers—the skills essential to their survival in a world where adults could die at any moment... And where infant mortality was also rampant.



Children were also in the deep caves, where they left their handprints and helped decorate the walls—a true mystery surrounding the origins of art and spirituality. Yet the role of children in Paleolithic societies has long been underestimated by science, or even completely written out of history. **Even though they would have accounted for nearly half of the population in the hunter-gatherer camps during that Ice Age.** The main reason for this absence is **that physical traces of their existence and actions are very rare among the objects that have survived to the present day.**

Furthermore, most experts have long considered the role of children to be of little interest and have turned their attention away from it.

But things are changing: in recent years, **an archeology of childhood — often led by women** — has been emerging from excavation sites and laboratories. At many European sites, new observations are being made and older findings are being reinterpreted in order to establish a connection to children.



Experimental archeological studies, combined with the use of cutting-edge technologies, confirm the previously unrecognized role of children in certain activities. Other studies—paleoanthropological and genetic—reveal what they looked like physically and challenge many common misconceptions.

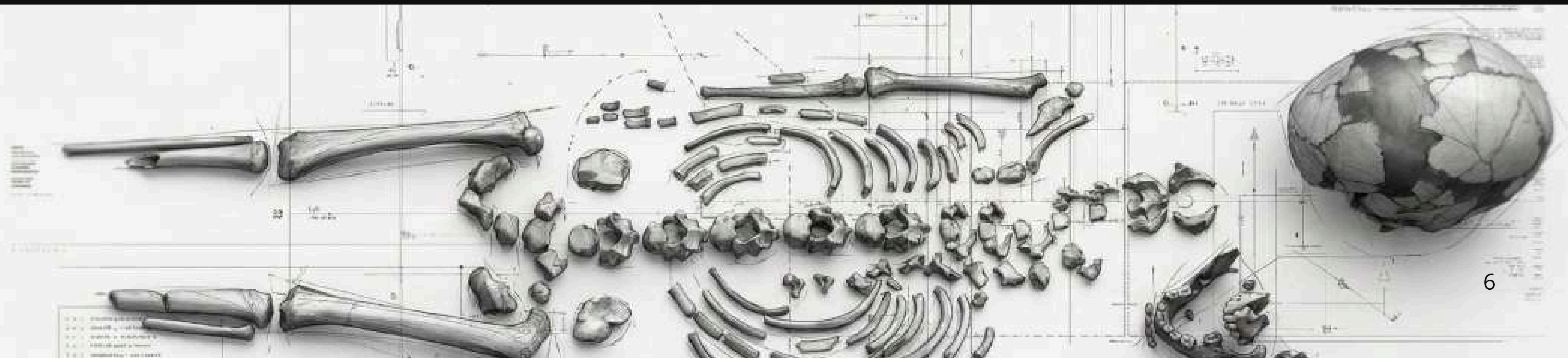
This documentary film takes the form of a **unique investigation conducted throughout Europe to meet archeologists at work.** Filming takes place at **exceptional excavation sites in France** (Seine-et-Marne, Occitanie, the Basque Country, Ardèche...), as well as in **magnificent decorated caves in Spain** (the Cantabria region, near Santander), and even at **fascinating sites in the Czech Republic (Pavlov), Monaco, and Italy (Liguria).** Scene by scene, **the world's leading experts on prehistory paint a picture—for the first time—of Paleolithic children,** by revealing a moving portrait of them—people who are at once so similar to those we know, yet immersed in environments and societies very different from our own.



Director's statement

This scientific investigation into prehistoric children draws on research teams currently conducting excavations and on very recent published findings, allowing us to envision sequences based on reality. The narrative unfolds alongside the scientific process itself, from a discovery at a Paleolithic site to laboratory analysis.

Structured in **five acts** linked by pivotal questions, the film paints a snapshot of Ice Age children at different stages of their lives. The first phase shows how these children, long overlooked, are now being studied **using new methods: mobile 3D scanning, bioarcheology, and DNA analysis.** The narrative then reveals **their role as essential members of society** (hunting, fishing, games), the emotional value that societies of the time gave them, and their involvement in artistic and ritual practices.



A bold approach

The artistic ambition of *Children of Prehistory* is to offer a contemporary approach, in step with advances in the archeology of childhood. It will convey the vitality of young Homo sapiens through a sophisticated and sensitive visual language that is neither merely illustrative nor childish—**driven by artificial intelligence tools** harnessed to serve an artistic vision, rather than automatic generation. **Illustrator Patrick Foch** was chosen for the quality of his **artwork**, his **scientific knowledge**, and his experience with these environments; he created the initial drawings, which were then refined **using AI**.



Fiction

Several aesthetic approaches were based on the same principle: **depicting humans as silhouettes, to maintain a sense of distance from these figures from the past and to enhance the film's poetic aspect.** The **realistic** approach takes this principle to its extreme, featuring **silhouettes backlit** against twilight scenes or the dim light of caves, sometimes focusing solely on fragments of bodies and gestures.



Science

The narrative is built on a close interplay between **scientific rigor** and the **tangible traces** left by Paleolithic children, with the **skeleton of the Monaco adolescent** serving as a common thread throughout. Created from a **3D scan**, this skeleton is **animated** to reveal, as superimposed layers, the markers of growth (bone lengthening, broadening of the shoulders, thoracic cage) along a timeline from childhood to adulthood, while **graphic overlays** display age, sex, and time period on screen, creating true “reconstructions” of prehistoric individuals.



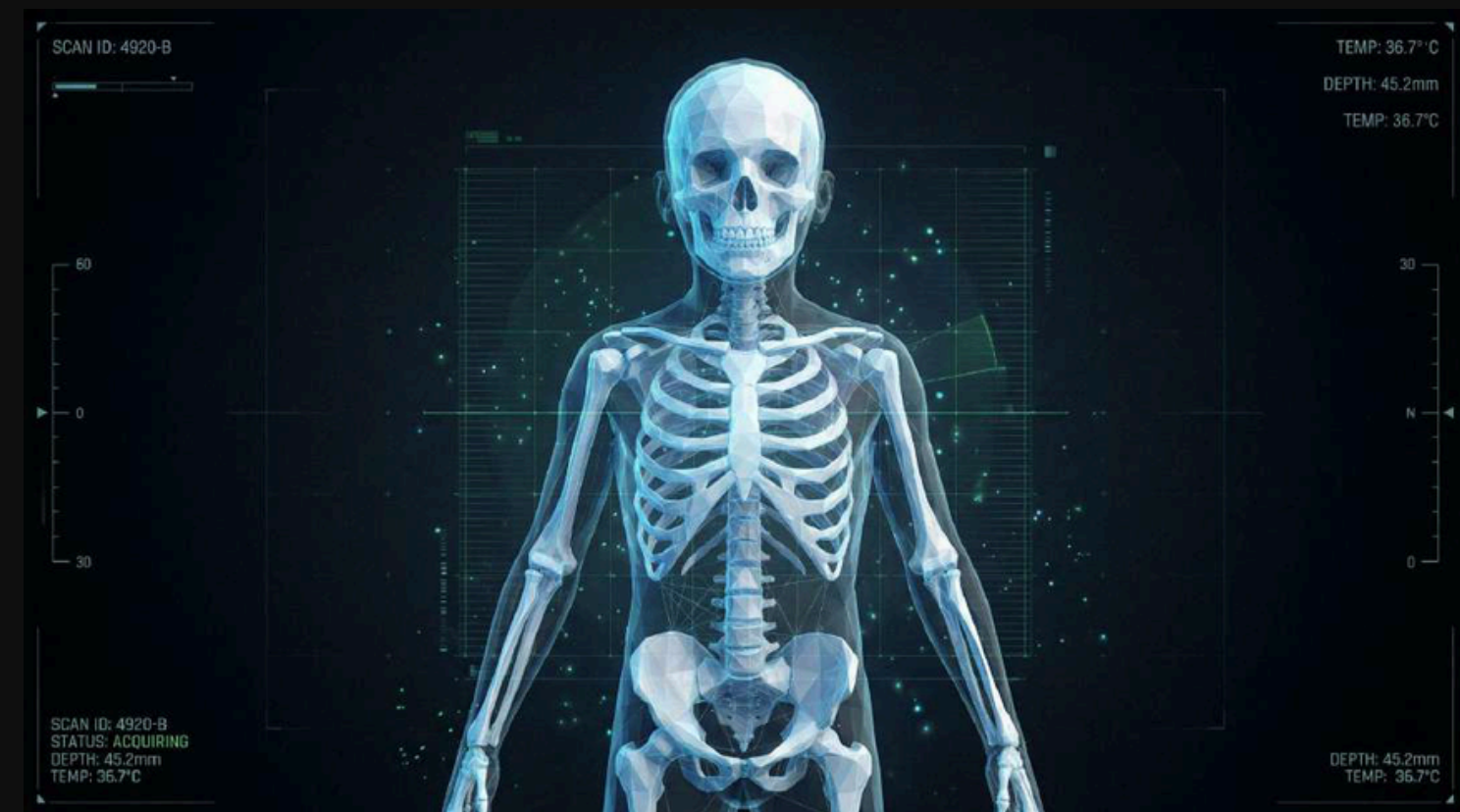
Filming locations

The map pinpoints the sites, traces the journey of the investigation, and connects the territories explored—from **France** to **Spain**, from **Italy** to the **Czech Republic**. Its graphic design evokes ice—cool textures, transparencies, and a deep monochromatic blue—and transforms the map into a poetic compass linking the film crew's journey to the older journeys of Paleolithic humans.



Scientific imagery

Virtual images provided by scientists will further enhance the film, particularly through **photogrammetry**, which makes it possible to **reconstruct 3D models** of decorated caves or children's burial sites in Italy. The Chauvet Cave, for example, has been **fully modeled**, allowing for the study of its 8,000 square meters outside of the two weeks per year when access is permitted—revealing, in particular, human and canid footprints that attest to a connection between a young human and a wolf 30,000 years ago. Other scans of excavated objects (tools, casts, skeletons) can be **incorporated into the 3D laboratory sequences to illustrate the researchers' findings**.



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Joséphine LETANG

Head of International Distribution & Marketing

j-letang@arteFrance.fr



Alec HERRMANN

Head of Acquisitions

a-herrmann@arteFrance.fr

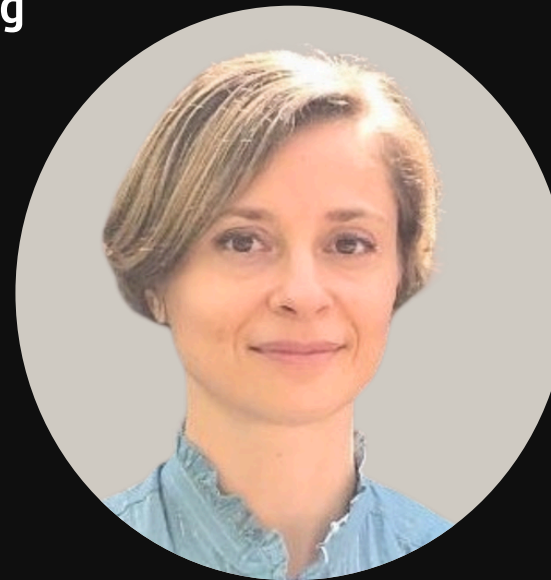


Audrey KAMGA

a-kamga@arteFrance.fr

Sales Manager

Canada, USA, South America, Israel &
MENA Region



Alexandra MARGUERITE

a-marguerite@arteFrance.fr

Sales Manager

UK, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece,
Eastern Europe, Asia

Africa: a-morel@arteFrance.fr



Franka SCHWABE

f-schwabe@arteFrance.fr

Sales Manager

Austria, Belgium, France, Germany,
Switzerland, Netherlands, Scandinavia,
Iceland, Australia, New Zealand