Poster

Analytical techniques: Deciphering a 100,000 Year Old Ochre Processing Workshop at Blombos Cave, South Africa

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Abstract

The conceptual ability to source, combine, and store substances that enhance technology or social practices represents a benchmark in the evolution of complex human cognition.

Excavations in 2008 at Blombos Cave, South Africa, revealed a processing workshop where a liquefied ochre-rich mixture was produced and stored in two Haliotis midae (abalone) shells 100,000 years ago. Ochre, bone, charcoal, grindstones, and hammerstones form a composite part of this production toolkit.
The application of the mixture is unknown, but possibilities include decoration and skin protection.

In this poster we present the analytical techniques used to decipher the contents of the oldest known containers and the associated processing tools.

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