

Mesa Prieta Petroglyph Project Glossary

Abrading: Rubbing a rock surface, often with another rock, to produce a smoothed area. For example: to fill in a delineated space or smooth a pecked line.

AGL: Stands for Above Ground Level, measured in meters. Distance from the lowest point of an element or panel to ground level.

Anthropomorph: A human-like figure.

Anthropology: The science of the origin, culture, and development of human beings.

Archaic: Rock art made by hunter/gatherers 1,400-9,500 years ago (7,500 BC to AD 600).

Archaeology: The systematic recovery and detailed scientific study of material evidence of human life and culture in past ages.

Azimuth: Compass Facing

Basalt: Dark-colored, hard igneous rock found in New Mexico often deposited as lava flows or in vertical outcrops. A common medium for petroglyphs.

BLM: Stands for Bureau of Land Management. One of the Federal agencies in charge of managing public lands.

Cultural Landscape: An area made up of a distinct association of forms, both physical and cultural. A landscape approach focuses on the interrelation of the physical and cultural layers of a space. Rock art is a unique form of human expression in that it represents a total integration of these landscapes. The Pueblo landscape perspective is not limited to what the eye can see; it incorporates all that can be perceived including the thoughts and feelings of those who enter or have entered the landscape. An area made up of a dynamic association of forms that includes surface features (such as landforms, water sources, rock art images, and dwellings) as well as Pueblo thought and being.

Desert Varnish: A dark, sometimes reflective coating or patina made over time on rock surfaces through complex chemical processes involving many factors such as oxidation, mineral weathering, moisture, bacteria, and wind-blown pollutants.

Digital Photo: An image stored electronically.

Element: Singular human made mark created on a rock.

Escarpment: A long, more or less continuous cliff or relatively steep slope facing in one general direction, separating two level or gently sloping surfaces, and produced by erosion or faulting.

Geography: The study of the earth and its features and of the distribution on the earth of life, including human life and the effects of human activity.

GIS: Stands for Global Information System

GPS: Stands for Global Positioning System

Historic: Categorization any time after the Spanish came to New Mexico in 1540 A.D.

Incised: Sharp edge or line made deeply with a very hard instrument, such as metal.

Locus: One rock/boulder or cliff face with petroglyph(s) on a face. Loci-plural.

Mugboard: Data board used to identify field photographs with site, provenience, photo number and the scale of the photograph.

Orthographic: Maps or photos that have been corrected to fit the curve of the earth onto a flat surface (i.e. paper)

Panel: Combination of multiple elements (petroglyphs) on a rock face.

Patination: (See Desert Varnish)

Pecking: Marking a rock surface through its patination by hitting it with another rock, sometimes using a hammer stone.

Petroglyph: An image created on rocks by means of pecking, abrading, incising, scraping, or scratching. The most common form of rock art among the Rio Grande Pueblos.

Pictograph: A painted visual element made on a rock in a landscape or cave with natural pigments.

Prehistoric: Categorization any time before the beginning of written records. Up to 1540 A.D. in New Mexico.

Provenience: A defined field work area; a mappable portion of a site, assigned to a recording team.

Quadruped: Any four-legged animal, often unidentifiable in petroglyph categorization.

Repatisation: The re-covering of rock surfaces by desert varnish after the patina has been penetrated or otherwise scarred.

Rio Grande Style: Pueblo rock art from the period 1300-1600 A.D.

Rock Art: Images created upon rock surfaces in a natural setting in the form of petroglyphs and pictographs; a form of human expression with dynamic purpose and meaning that appears on rock surfaces in the landscape.

Scraped: Mark made by a stone or stone falling against a rock face. Scrapes are found only on the high points of rock surface.

Scratched: Mark made with sharp instrument, generally thin, shallow and sometimes very faint.

Spalling: A natural splitting away of a thin surface/layer of rock from a boulder.

Superimposition: The layering of one image or visual element on top of another.

Topography: The configuration of a surface including its relief and the position of its natural and human-made features.

UTM: Universe Transverse Mercator. Units are in meters. The 0,0 point is the intersection of the equator and the left edge of one of UTM zones. Positions are described with a zone number, easting distance and northing distance.