

## Video: Stone ring structures found in Neanderthal cave in France continue to fuel reassessment of our once scorned hominid cousins

We haven't been very kind to Neanderthals since their remains were first unearthed in the 19th century, often characterizing them as lumbering dimwits or worse. Even today, their name is sometimes hurled at misbehaving members of our own species, though there is no evidence they engaged in any kind of prehistoric hooliganism.

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Well, with one exception, perhaps: What they did in Bruniquel Cave in southwestern France would certainly be frowned upon today. Hundreds of intentionally broken stalagmites were found there, arranged into two large, ellipsoid structures and several smaller stacks, during a time when — as researchers confirmed in 2016 — [only Neanderthals were roaming Europe](#). No one knows what these structures were for, but they suggest a tendency toward creativity and perhaps even symbolism.

No other structures of this kind have so far been discovered. But there have been many other hints that Neanderthal minds were occupied with things many researchers did not expect, says archaeologist April Nowell of the University of Victoria in Canada. The author of a 2021 book, *Growing Up in the Ice Age*, Nowell outlines the most exciting new discoveries in a 2023 article, "[Rethinking Neandertals](#)," in the *Annual Review of Anthropology*.

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