

FACT SHEET 05: Abstract Images

- Recent pictures from Historic Scotland photographer Mike Brooks highlighted similarities between the face of the Orkney Venus and carvings on an Orkney cairn.
- The figure's face has heavy eyebrows with dots for eyes. Engravings on a lintel in the Holm of Papa Westray chambered cairn have similar markings and use of the so-called 'eyebrow' motif – but abstracted from any other human features.
- The massive Maeshowe-type tomb is sub-rectangular in plan, measuring some 38m long by 20m wide and has 12 side chambers
- The lintel in the south-west extension shows a series of pecked arcs and cupmarks.
- The closest parallels to the Papa lintel decoration outwith Orkney may be the Boyne Valley in Ireland, and specifically the magnificent tomb of Knowth.
- This heavily decorated tomb, with a lot of spiral decoration also show similarities to the famous Pierowall Stone, also from Westray.
- Despite the fact that the Papa tomb is an impressive sight, its remote location to the north-east of Westray, and the fact that it can only be reached by private boat hire, means it is well off the track for most visitors to Orkney.