

STUDIO UPDATE – SPRING 2022



This academic year I am on sabbatical leave finishing three long-running projects and planning to focus more on applications of the archaeological imagination to matters of common and pressing contemporary concern, especially through design foresight and futures literacy.

This is why I have put to one side my critical commentary on all things archaeological and made few posts here at mshanks.com and at archaeolog.stanford.edu.

Borderlands

The three projects have all been decades in the making. **Borderlands** is an exploration of the concept of bordering through encounters and engagements in an archaeology of the northern edges of Europe, discontinuities and transgressions in empire, industry, sovereignty, rationality, corporeality. It has not gone as well as intended this year. I was hoping to spend more time following up fieldwork in the English-Scottish borders, but Covid made access to facilities and archives difficult. The pandemic has prompted an unexpected turn too – towards an inspection of mobility and contact here in and around the North Sea, and indeed towards an environmental aesthetics, following what is now quite a commonplace that the sea, winds, clouds, atmospheres are ambient and connecting media.

Theatre/archaeology

So I have brought the border explorations to bear on a new book with Mike Pearson, a summary of our works in **Theatre/Archaeology** since our last book in 2001. A portfolio, a commentary on this hybrid field, an outline of the potential that lies in the *(re)articulation of remains as real time event*. We interweave excursions and chorographies, fieldwork and survey, site specific productions of Aeschylus and Shakespeare, design ontologies of automobiles, animated archives, media archaeologies. With an emphasis on practice and making, concept, agency and project management, we show how we have come to do theatre/archaeology. But we offer not so much a methodology or a playbook as a *creative pragmatics* of critique and intervention in matters of common and pressing concern – where what is needed is not the preservation of the past but the redemption of past hopes.

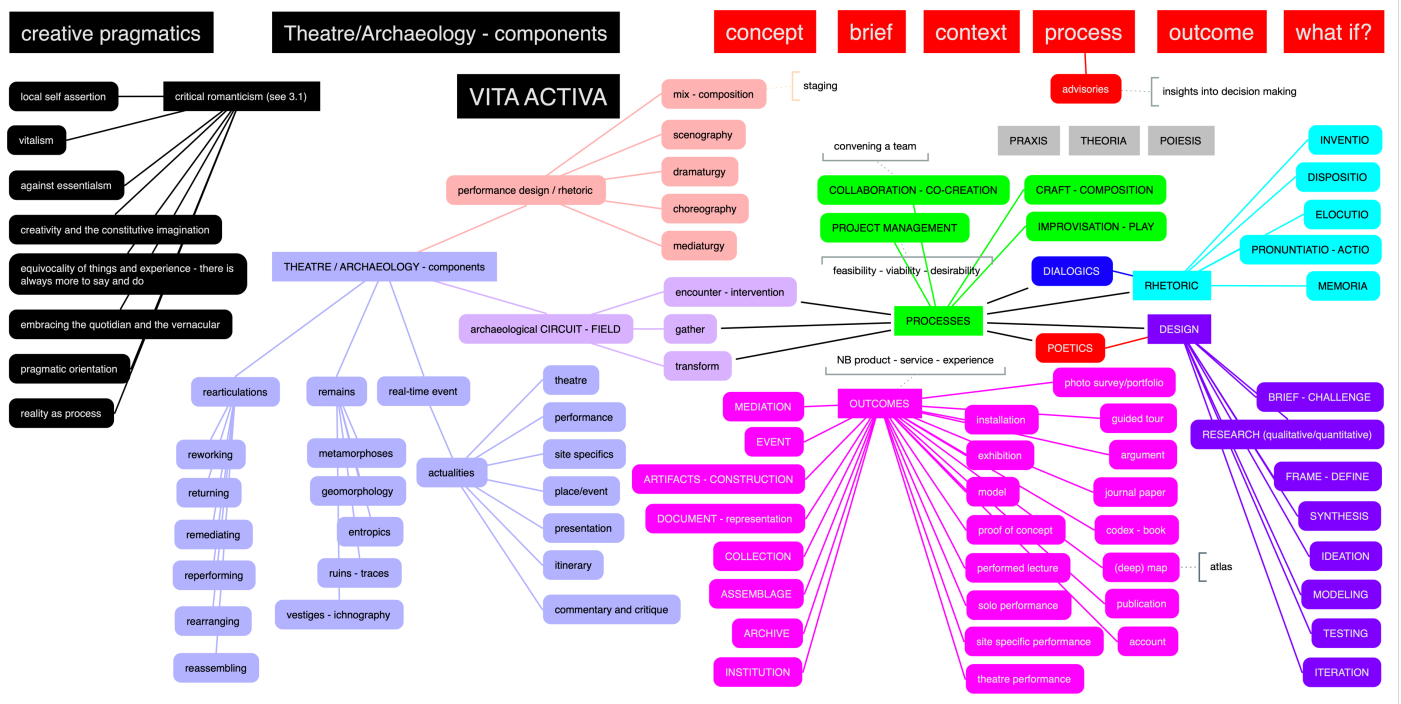
Greece and Rome

Greece and Rome. I have reported several times on this web site and elsewhere the progress of my project with Gary Devore, a new synthetic model of the working of Graeco-Roman antiquity. I have made many more comments on the current state of Classical Studies in a broader context of what is appropriately treated as a growing crisis in the academic humanities. Circumstances have so changed since we planned the project a decade ago. And we are responding and reworking. This last couple of years and more in online classes and an ongoing book club Gary and I have been testing out, prototyping *speculative fabulation*, modes of polyphonic storytelling, working through the constitutive (archaeological) imagination. We have many a previous draft; I believe the last is imminent.

Design foresight

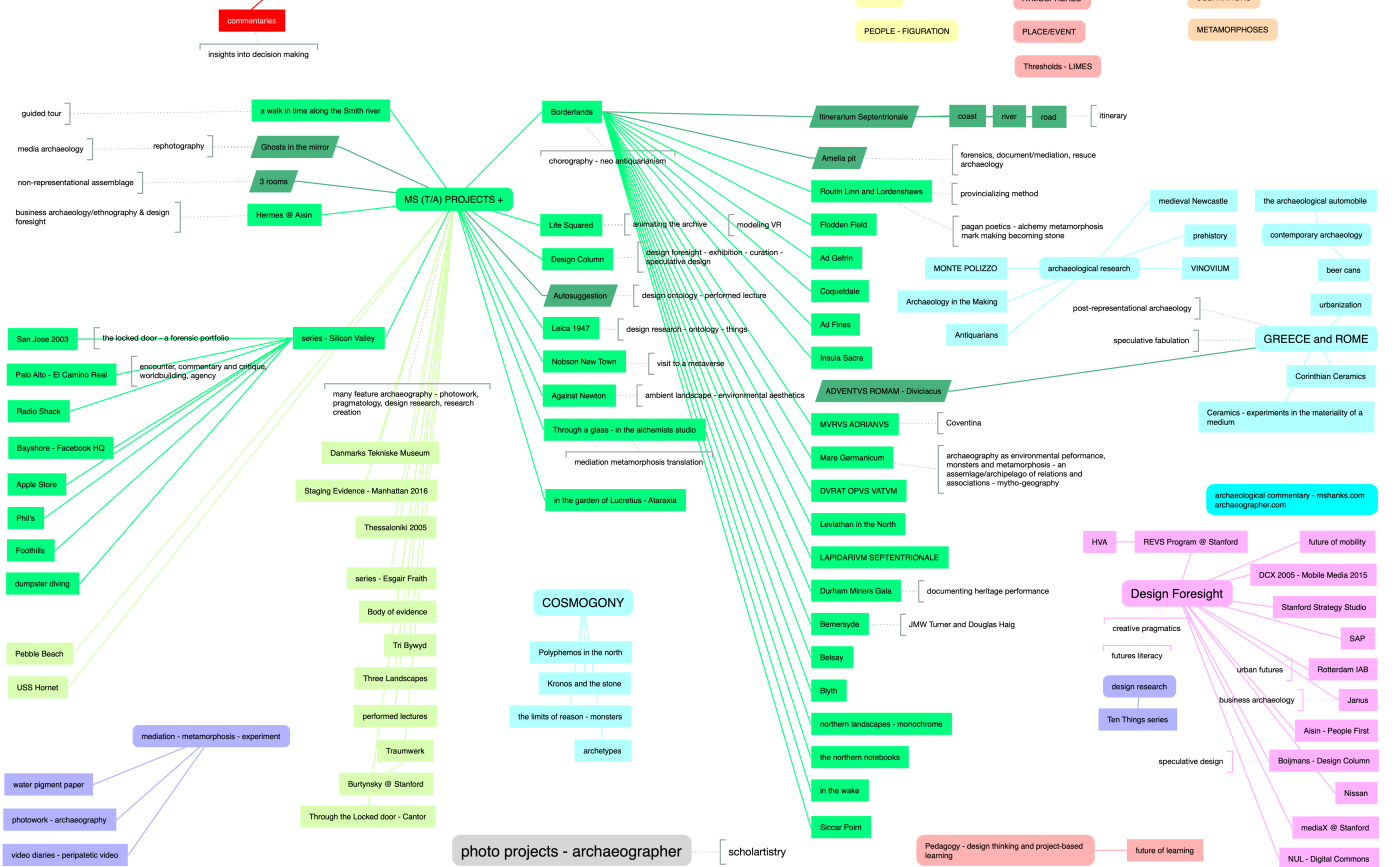
Looking to the future in a creative pragmatics. A counterpoint to the writing projects has been my growing interest in **design foresight**. Deep foundations lie in the Stanford research group involving Tamara Carleton, Bill Cockayne and Larry Leifer, Victor Taratukhin and Natalia Pulyavina further afield. This last year I have teamed up with Kimihiko Iwamura, and continued to work with Stanford mediaX offering workshops and scenario planning with several agencies and corporations – modeling futures drawing on archaeological insights into long term processes of innovation and change, agency and creativity (world building).

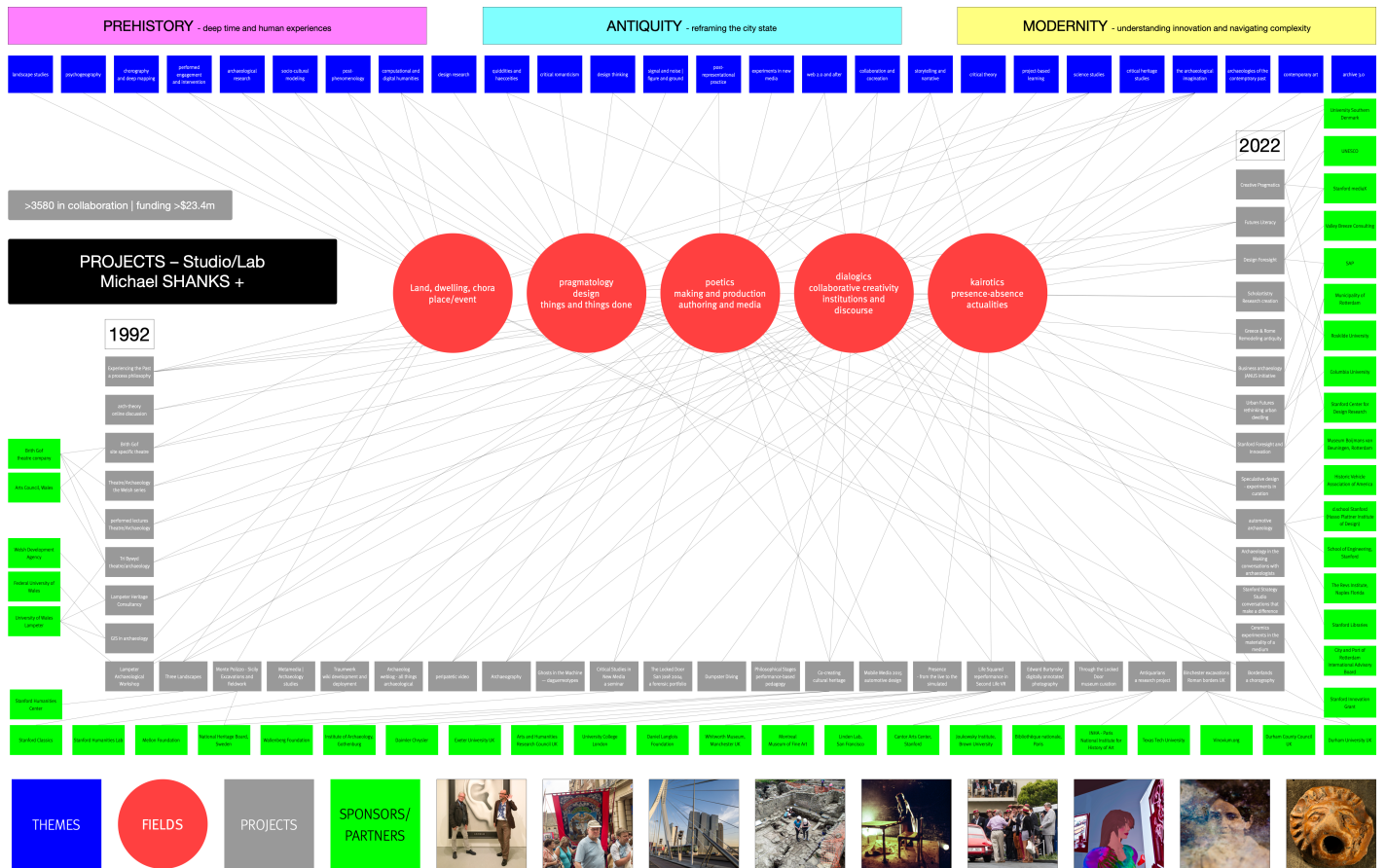
Below are some project mappings. Click on the image to load an enlargement.



Theatre/Archaeology: concepts and practices – outline of the structure of the new book with Mike Pearson

concept brief context process – outcome what if?





Two long term reviews of projects



Becoming stone – St Aidan's, Bamburgh, Northumberland



Fenestration – through a glass – Howick, Northumberland



Liquid stone – fractal landscape – Rumbling Kern, Howick, Northumberland