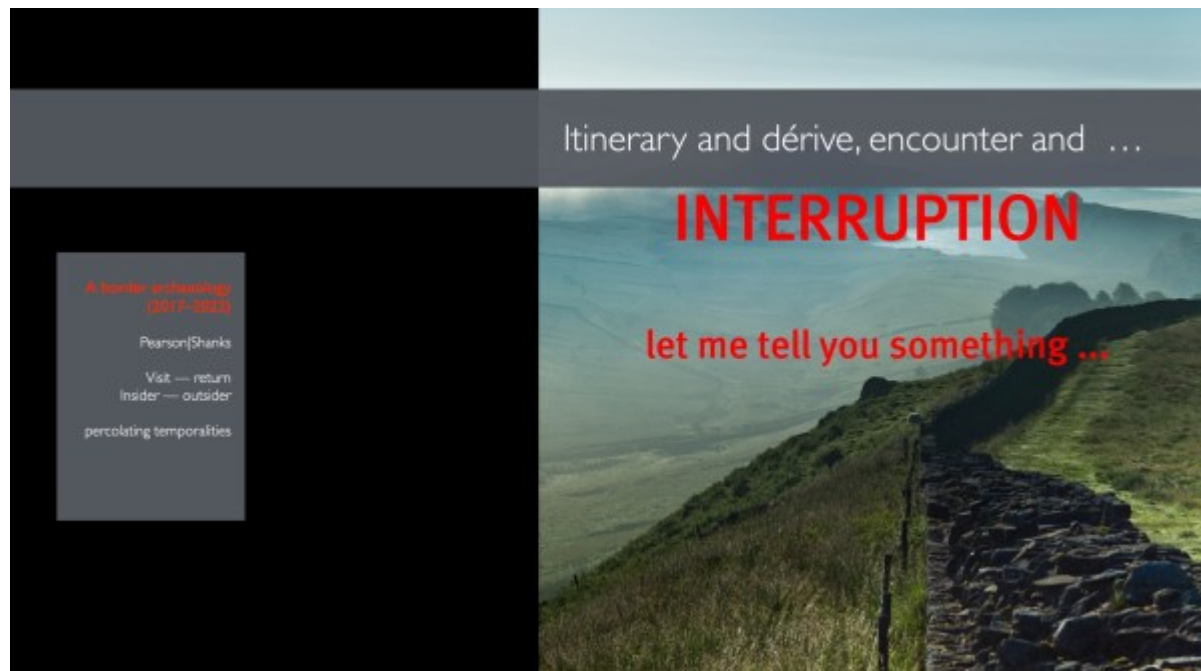


# DEEP MAPPING



I'm in a workshop about Deep Mapping, delivering the opening keynote. A fascinating gathering (Venice and online), organized by Cristina Manzetti (University of Cyprus), and Valentina Mignosa (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Digital and Public Humanities (VeDPH)).

The topic is an old favorite of mine, developed in my theatre/archaeology with Cliff McLucas and Mike Pearson from the early 90s. It is inspiring to see how a great concept has flourished, and with much potential when we are more-than-ever concerned with our relationships with environment, with milieu.

# Deep Mapping Dialogues: Towards a Systematic Deep Mapping Approach in Archaeology and History



**September 24, 2025**  
(online - all times are given  
in Central European Time)



Maps – diagrams that bring together different kinds of information connected with space and place, land and topography. They can help us navigate and get around. They can be used to administer, manage, and control. They can be sparse and targeted (a map of a city transport system), or rich in information that offers many possible uses (the digital maps on our smart mobile media devices).

Topics explored by the contributing members of the symposium were archives and their organization through spatial information; multimodal, multipurpose and multivoiced maps; digital transformations offered by the likes of GIS; the relationships of maps to community and purpose; and processes of mapping, what and who gets involved. Some studies took us back to antiquity (Pausanias's tourist-guide itineraries, his *periegesis*, for example), some looked to the future of cultural mapping. Some questioned just what a map might be.

For me, this was an opportunity to reflect and sum up some personal projects, to figure out just what I might be doing in the way of deep mapping, and looking ahead, on the basis of this summation.

I have elsewhere shared some of the anxiety I have long experienced with mapping, for as long as I can recall – an anxiety of deciding just what to put on a map [Link]. A fascination as well as an anxiety. By the 90s I had teamed up with Cliff McLucas and Mike Pearson, art directors of Brith Gof Theatre, in what we called deep mapping. Brith Gof devised site specific works, on location, in a village chapel, a disused quarry, deep in a forest plantation, on the streets of Cardiff city, and not in theatres. We took our lead from William Least Heat-Moon's *PrairieEarth: (a Deep Map)* (1991), his dense, layered account of Chase County, Kansas USA. And from early modern antiquarian exploration, with its chorographic impulse to bring together everything you might ever want to say about a place – a personal favorite is John Wallis's *Natural History and Antiquities of the County of Northumberland* (1768). Based in west Wales and with an eye on the disunity of a so-called United Kingdom, our focus was quite explicitly upon experiences of inhabitation and authority, of ownership and dispossession.

## Deep Mapping – some features

Deep mapping embraces **polyvocality and juxtaposition**: farmer's stories beside geological strata, personal journeys beside archival documents. It is **performative and unfinished**: more an encounter with place than a report on it. It shows how

a map can be text, event, and archive all at once – a rehearsal of layered meanings rather than a fixed representation.

## Deep Mapping – a definition

Deep mapping is the **layering, in performed event, of traces, memories, and narratives into open, polyvocal cartographies that expose the entangled pasts and presents of place while rehearsing possible futures.**

## So what?

Deep mapping matters because it refuses the map as a tool of control and turns it into a stage for memory, encounter, and imagination. It doesn't close things down with coordinates and boundaries. Instead, it layers fragments, voices, and times together – archive and anecdote, ruin and invention, the personal and the political.

Its power lies in showing that places are never singular. They are always contested, always polyphonic, always unfinished. In this sense, deep mapping is both critique and creation: it exposes how power inscribes itself into landscapes, but also opens space for other stories, other futures.

Looking forward, deep mapping offers a different cartographic imagination at a time when GIS, data visualisation, and heritage industries dominate how we picture land. It can be pragmatic – a way for communities to articulate identity and negotiate heritage. **Performative** – through walks, itineraries, and storytelling. **Speculative** – layering pasts into presents to prototype possible futures. And **Transdisciplinary**, surpassing academic and professional fields of expertise – drawing artists, archaeologists, geographers, social scientists, earth scientists, natural historians, environmentalists, and citizens in body politic into shared experiments.

Where does this take us? Toward maps as conversations, not statements. Toward practices that help us live with complexity and contradiction. Toward methods of *staying with the trouble* – rehearsing how we might inhabit landscapes marked by loss, conflict, and resilience, while keeping open the possibility of renewal.

A creative pragmatics for acting with the world [\[Link\]](#) [\[Link\]](#)

Here's my keynote.

And here are the abstracts – such a rich repertoire.



“Suddenly, over the slope, as if tethered to a cord of air drawing quickly upward, came a Northern Harrier, motionless but for its rising. ... If I could be that hawk for one hour I'd never again be just a man.”

– William Least Heat-Moon

That moment speaks to the aspiration of deep mapping: to transcend narrow human perspective, to attune to place in a more expansive register, and to let landscape, memory, and inhabitation reconfigure how we see ourselves.

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# OVER YOUR CITIES GRASS WILL GROW



**Sensitive light-touch upcycling of an old locomotive works.**

**Curated rewilding and planting for biodiversity.**

Working with the past, bridging past and present. Designing landscapes with sensitivity to ecosystem.

Manifestations of an archaeological sensibility and acting-with nature [\[Link\]](#).

The opening in 1998 of the bridge across the Storebaelt, connecting the two biggest islands in Denmark, brought to an end the ferry business between Nyborg and Kørsor.

The old Danish State Railway workshops by the ferry landings have been turned into Nyborg Destilleri with Restaurant Remisen, while the landscaping witnesses the absence of past urban industrial transport systems with an aesthetic of return of wild plant species.

Environmental aesthetics [\[Link\]](#). Green urbanism.







Steam locomotives once ran through this building.







The building fabric is kept raw and mostly uncoated, with many original details left visible. Original rail tracks remain (as they do throughout Nyborg). The spatial volume of the shed is conserved – a big indoor space. New insertions are recessive and legible against the historic shell. Copper stills are deliberately staged to be seen through the original north-facing locomotive doors—so passers-by read “production” from the street. Selected new skylights bring daylight deep inside.

The complex at Holmens Boulevard 11 was built 1865–1909 as workshops for DSB (Danish State Railways – freight locomotives and wagons) by the old Great Belt (Storebælt) ferry piers. Yellow-brick industrial architecture; the long “shed” structure survived largely intact after closure in 1998. The works also had a *rundremise* (roundhouse) with turntable (from 1890). The restaurant name “Remisen” nods to that railway history.

Past traces add to the character, the *haecceity* (hereness), the spirit of the place. The municipality also frames the project as maintaining a connection between town and harbor.





What is especially appealing about the plantings is sometimes called “New Nordic Nature” in landscape design – a blend of the New Perennial movement, ecological awareness, and climate adaptation strategies. It is both aesthetic and ethical: beauty that looks wild, but is deeply thought through, sustainable, and resilient.

One might call it a garden aesthetic of working-with nature, with the world.

Away from clipped lawns, regimented flowerbeds, and imported ornamentals, toward ecologically informed, semi-wild, biodiverse planting. Reduced mowing, wildflower meadows, and pollinator corridors.

One might note overlapping names and movements.

#### The New Perennial Movement

Associated with designers like Piet Oudolf (Netherlands), Henk Gerritsen, and Noel Kingsbury.

Emphasizes perennial plants, grasses, and long seasonal interest rather than short bursts of floral color.

Plantings are designed to look “naturalistic,” with plants intermixed rather than

grouped in rigid blocks.

Famous examples: the High Line in New York, Lurie Garden in Chicago, Oudolf's own garden at Hummelo.

#### Rewilding / Wild Urbanism

Responds to ecological concerns: biodiversity loss, pollinator decline, climate adaptation.

Gardens and parks are designed to look wild, but are carefully curated—"controlled wilderness."

Incorporates native species and ecologies, while also introducing resilient non-natives that can thrive in northern climates.

#### Naturalistic Planting Design

Developed especially in Germany, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia. Treats planting almost like an ecological painting—layers of groundcover, mid-layer perennials, and taller grasses. The aesthetic is loose, less formal, sometimes deliberately allowing for decay (seed heads, dried grasses left standing in winter) (I recall cultural geographer David Lowenthal promoting such a garden aesthetic in a discussion at our Interpreting Archaeology conference at Peterhouse in 1992 [Link]).

#### Climate-Sensitive Gardening

Aware of climate change, rising seas, droughts, and intense rains. Designers choose resilient, drought-tolerant, salt-tolerant plants (e.g. prairie grasses, Echinacea, sedums). Rain gardens, bioswales, and permeable plantings blur the line between engineering and horticulture.

#### Aesthetic: Semi-Wild Beauty

Designed naturalness: irregular drifts, mixed textures, grasses swaying with perennials, flowers peeking in irregular rhythms. There's a strong seasonal awareness—winter silhouettes, spring bulbs, summer meadows, autumn seed heads. Philosophically it draws upon a Japanese aesthetic of wabi-sabi (beauty in imperfection and transience) and the northern European tradition of valuing wild meadow and heath landscapes.































An old postcard of the ferry port dominated by railway tracks. The DSB roundhouse



and turntable is at bottom right by a rusty water tower, with the workshops behind.





















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# PHENOMENOLOGY — MAKING PLACE ONE'S PROPERTY



I have been visiting the island of Bornholm in the Baltic south of Sweden over the last few years – another exploration through an archaeological sensibility of the archipelago of the North Sea [\[Link\]](#). This year has involved something of a virtual conversation with the ghost of Chris Tilley. I heard that at the time of his death last March he was planning a visit, an expedition to the island, and I have been recalling the summer of 1988 I spent with him exploring archaeological experiences of prehistoric sites and monuments in Sweden [\[Link\]](#). Tilley had come to stand for what got called an archaeological phenomenology (he considered it anthropology, not archaeology) – close attention to embodied and located experiences of ruins and remains as a means of establishing connections and understanding of people in the past. I have been thinking again about phenomenology [\[Link\]](#).

Last week I came across the work of Oluf Høst, a twentieth century painter (1884 – 1966) who made his home on the island at Gudhjem (God's home).

A lifelong motif in his art is a farm, Bognemark. He painted and repainted the place over decades. The works hang together as painterly explorations of weather,

atmosphere, light, seasons, with occasional appearances of ghostly figurative forms, and the constant of an abstract infrastructure – the composition of farm buildings.

The constraint of iterative focus upon a subject is a familiar conceit in the arts. Høst was very aware of Cezanne's series of still lifes and especially the paintings of Mont St Victoire, of Monet's many studies of the cathedral at Rouen. I have used this device myself in a series of some 3000 photographs, taken over a decade, of an apple tree near our place in Northern California – [\[Link\]](#) [\[Link\]](#).



Oluf Høst. Bognemark, Gudhjem, Bornholm.





So what is the connection with phenomenology – that philosophical and methodological concern with the qualities of (human) experience?

The conceit of iterative return to the same subject shifts focus from represented subject matter (a farm, a bowl of fruit, a mountain, a tree) to processes of experience, to how we relate to things, to modes of engagement and mediation – cognition and attention, evaluation and sensation in experience of things, and their transformations through text, image, sound, touch. These are all matters of phenomenological concern.

Høst's journals show that the farm was his personal inspirational locus for such (phenomenological) explorations in his meticulous attention to qualities of located experiences via the proxy of pigment and paint.

And Bognemark was also a metonym – for the north, a correlative for Nordic experiences-in-place.

“A sky can be both yellow and blue: a fairy tale.”

“Bognemark’s western extension late in the year must be the color of nature itself: old age, sun, and moisture.”

“Look, how blue is the wind.”

“Cézanne did not engage with the hazy four-dimensional; he proceeded along the exhausting path of experience.”

“Intense textural sensation – intimate textural sensation – a sense of material.”

“Blue is the basic Nordic tone.”

Tilley was little concerned with mediation. While his writing sometimes adapted what one might call documentary and somewhat academic thick description, he did not discuss media and style [\[Link\]](#).

Tilley was very much concerned, even obsessed, with mode of engagement. To achieve a transcendental immediacy of experience (of ruins and remains) he held that one must live in place, make place the everyday, return and focus attention in an *embodied familiarity* with one’s place of interest, one’s subject of study [\[Link\]](#) [\[Link\]](#). Tilley is one with Høst in this emphasis upon familiarity. And upon the transcendental – experiences (of places and things) that take us out of the ordinary and the local.

Høst’s works make me think of another aspect to this mode of engagement.

One can legitimately say Høst was obsessed with Bognemark (The Oluf Høst Museum even held an exhibition under this title a few years back). He bought it in the 1930s to make sure only he had access to the place to paint it (a fellow painter,



Niels Lergaard, also had his eyes on the place). He invented the farm's name. He visited every day – it was just up from his house by the beach and harbor at Gudhjem.

The farm was very much Høst's property. He desired to own the experience. Originally called Skovly, after purchase in 1935 Høst renamed it Baunemark, Bågnemark, then Bognemark. Reference is probably to *bavne*, a beacon on high ground used by Vikings to warn of war. The renaming was part of the long process of making the place mythical – transcendental.

The phenomenological tension is between the individual and intimate qualities of experience, and concepts, values, aspects that transcend. Høst's transcendental was nature, the north, and long term inhabitation. For Tilley it was embodied and located qualities of experience that connected past and present, the shared features of experience in the human condition [Link].

As part of this phenomenological engagement Tilley set up home in the landscapes he loved and studied. Høst took the further step of making home his personal property – the abstraction of the commodity.

**What is to be done when there are neither options? When one might never be at home in place?**



"I must have this for my sole use."







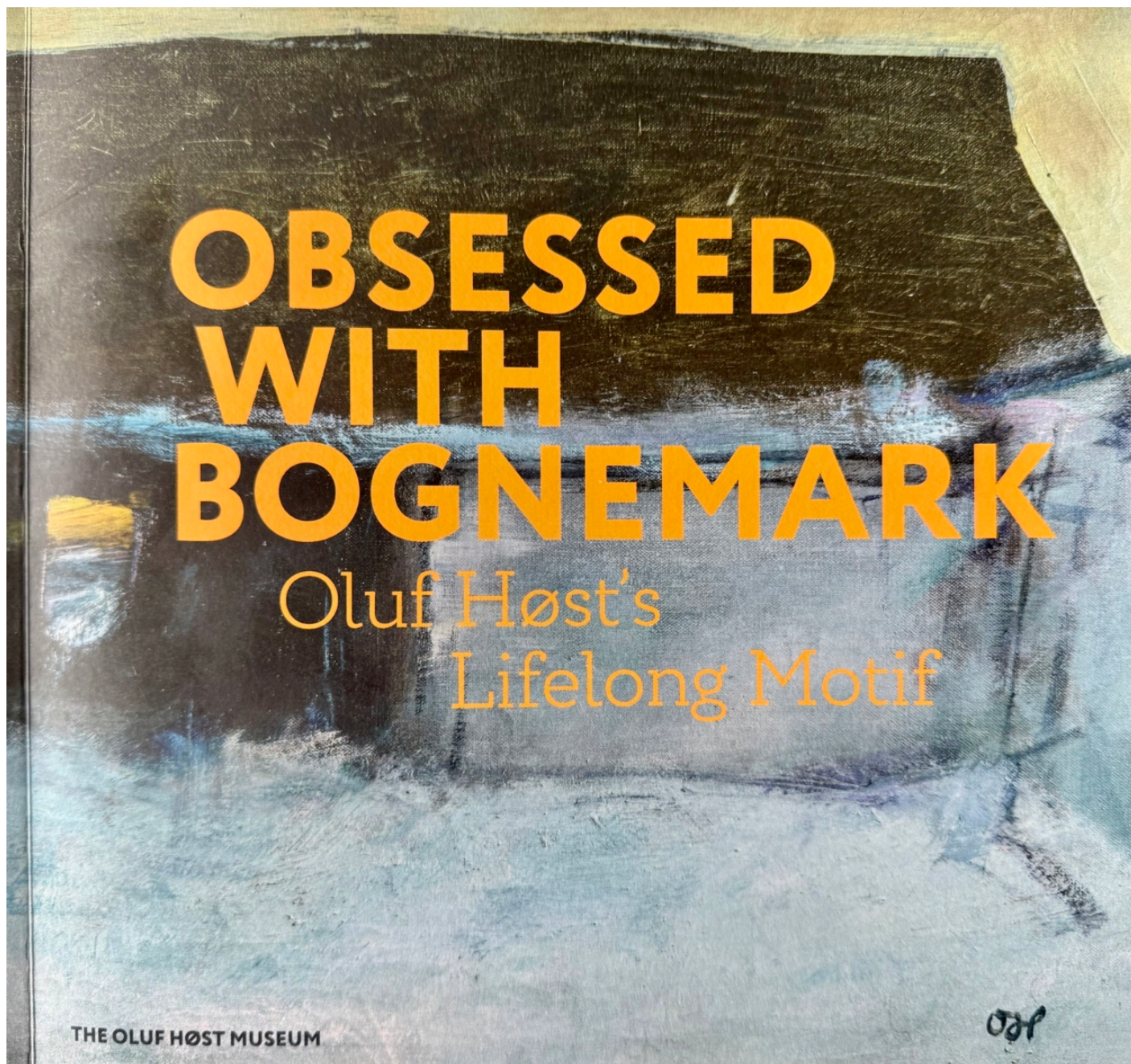




Norresân, Gudhjem, Høst's house, now the Oluf Høst Museum.

"Well, it's a beautiful house, but how bourgeois" – comment made by rival artist Niels Lergaard who was prevented from painting Bognemark by Høst's purchase.





The book accompanying the exhibition held in 2020.

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THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL LIFE OF



# THINGS — BORNHOLM



## Hosts, ghosts, visitors

For some years I have been making archaeological visits to Bornholm, the Danish island south of Sweden. Rock art, unique prehistoric sites and monuments, medieval settlement, churches and castles, rune stones, fishing industry, cold war relics, an arts community since the nineteenth century, contemporary heritage and tourism. The mingling remains of many times, the palimpsests, the pasts-in-the-present, the archaeological potential of the island is considerable. My ongoing project focused on a northern border in Britain [\[Link\]](#) is expanding to take in the archaeology of the archipelago of northern Europe.

I heard last year at the tribute to Chris Tilley held at University College London [\[Link\]](#) that he was planning one of his phenomenological expeditions to Bornholm when he died. The archaeology is well-documented and extraordinary new finds are constantly emerging. Yet the research potential remains largely undeveloped, analytically thin, mostly trapped in nineteenth century thought. Tilley was good at spotting opportunities for reframing and reworking well-prepared source material.



Last week I revisited Madsebakke, a rock outcrop in the north of the island with a unique series of ship and circle motifs from the Bronze Age. In the last ten years many more carved outcrops have been found nearby around Hammersholm. Tilley's ghost was with me – this is the kind of landscape he relished [Link] [Link]. What kind of pattern might be found in the locations, the motifs of ships and sun wheels and cups? What insights might be gained into prehistoric experiences of *genius loci*?

I have always been focused on the *actuality* of the past – its presence-to-us-now. What struck me at Madsebakke was that the carvings had been recently cleaned and painted.







In cold light after rain.





Madsebakke – clear in this image is how the granite has been cleaned of lichen and the weathered grey-green surface bleached back to pink before the carvings were (re)painted.

This is what one of the ships looked like a few years ago – old paint wearing off, leaving the weathered surface.





In late afternoon sunshine. Becoming stone. From the series Oceans of Time 2021.

There's no evidence that the carvings would have been painted originally, and the practice of painting is questioned now on grounds of conservation/preservation. The state web sites explicitly say that carvings are not now painted; but here they are. (Mogens Jensen has posted a photo of the painting on his web site – [link](#) below). There's now a hiking trail one can follow from Madsebakke through the fields to Hammersholm connecting the many carved outcrops known in the vicinity ([\[Link\]](#) [\[Link\]](#) [\[Link\]](#) and below). I presume that this is the reason for the painting of the carvings – an interpretive purpose that visitors might actually see the much-worn motifs.

(There's a fine web site detailing this and other sites on Bornholm from local historian/archaeologist Mogens Jensen – [\[Link\]](#)).

Rather than conservation and interpretation, let's take up the matter of the *experience* of the carvings.



## Figure and ground – living stone

The red paint focuses attention on the motif, separating it from a background surface. To paint a motif in this way is to assert the primary significance of the relationship between figure and ground. What matters is the ship, the motif, the figure – this is why it is painted. So one knows what one is looking at. The assumption is that the rock carvers of old were carving *ships* (or whatever) on and into a surface.

What of the (back)ground? The qualities of the stone, the scorings made by ice sheets, the rolling surface, and the mosses, grasses, lichens, are treated as secondary at best, or irrelevant. So the conservator of the image destroys the living surface to see where to paint the motif, the ship.

This is an example, a manifestation of what one can call a **fallacy of representation** – that when one experiences a phenomenon such as this rock outcrop, one is experiencing *representations* of ships.

Of course this is also associated with an iconographic and iconological impulse, a neurosis even, that one should strive to identify the representation and make sense of it. Is this a magical ship carrying the sun across the sky? A reductive and forensic impulse too – solving the riddle of the stones, finding the answer, their meaning.

But there would be no ship without the rolling living stone upon which, into which, the ship is set. The rock is an integral component of the representation. This *relationship* of figure and ground is particularly significant when one considers not the representation per se, but the *process* of carving, *attending* to tool applied to stone, the *performance* of connecting ship, circle, wheel, cup, granite, lichen, moss, grass, rain, sunshine, wind, in lifeworld allegories of ocean and heavens, movement and mobility, organic and inorganic.

Cleansing, bleaching, painting sterilizes such a living past. All the dynamic energy of assemblage and allegory, of making sense in stone is reduced to a sketchy stylized red boat with a circle floating above it.

I recall a wonderful conversation in Göteborg with Johan Ling back in 2012, presented as a lecture dialogue. A leading expert on Scandinavian rock art, Johan

is interested in expanding the scope of rock art studies. We talked of how site-specific performance might be a way of thinking about rock art. *Performance design* – I would connect this concept too with some of Tilley's later work – treating as staging, dramaturgy, choreography these material/immaterial assemblages of motifs, actions performed with stone, sitings in the land, events and atmospheres, growth and weathering, concepts and stories.







Living stone in the early morning.

UT PICTVRA POESIS (Horace) – as imagery, (so too) poetics

Connie (Svabo) commented that the painting of the motifs is without poetry. Inept, uni-dimensional, kitsch. Evidencing an unthinking, though steady, hand at best. The rich, complex, living experiences of engaging-in-the-now with these remains and their milieu, the affordances they offer to various ends and purposes, including making sense and speculation, are attenuated, atrophied.



A poetry of imagery is, in contrast, a *poetics* of connection, association, elaboration – processes and performances.

## There's no way back – time and metamorphosis

The rock carvings on the way to Hammersholm are recently discovered. Many more likely lie concealed or have become unrecognizable (Mogens Jensen mentions more ships discovered only recently when he slipped on the wet surface and caught sight of them in an unusually oblique view). As one approaches Madsebakke from Allinge one passes a great cavity in the granite. This was once two carved surfaces, again with many ships. They were removed with explosives in 1884 and 1893 by the landowner.

Actually visiting the sites makes it clear that the possibility of a phenomenological engagement with these sites-in-the-land, with “what was” in prehistory is both minimal and wrong-headed. Too much is simply lost and transformed. And what remains is metamorphic – changing with weather, erosion, entropy, as well as innumerable cycles of growth of leaves of grass, of the slow-growing lichens in the grain of the granite. So one might not come up with a story of the prehistoric past. Instead one might describe the details of a repertoire of scenarios that one might still appreciate today. It is the life of things that endures and remains with us now as an invitation to such a poetics.





Becoming ocean.









Here were once many more carvings in the granite – blown up, quarried away, shipped out.

## Postscript August 11

But one may well ask – Enough of this talk about the way we encounter these fascinating remnants of a lost Bronze Age world – what are the carvings actually about? Ships carrying the sun across the sky in a long lost mythography of a Bronze Age religion?

Tilley's phenomenological engagement with remains such as these carvings on Bornholm involved, for me, a tension between the necessary contemporaneity of our experiences of remains and their somehow belonging to a distant prehistoric past that we seek to know [Link]. Tilley's bridge between past and present was embodied experience that the contemporary archaeologist shares with people in the past, but the past remained separate from the present, even as an exotic other land. As



mentioned, the fascination with sites such as Madsebakke is often premised upon a will to know, to document traces such that they might be seen and known, such that the representations may be identified, the past-as-puzzle forensically solved (the crossed wheel devices as sun symbols, for example). My emphasis upon the poetics of archaeological engagement aims to bypass this tension in an argument that the past per se has no definitive meaning or indeed existence that we might seek to know, but that doesn't mean people haven't acted as if it does. A archaeological poetics does not entail a focus upon contemporary "reception" at the expense of the "past-in-itself". It means that the archaeological project is not to tell stories **of** the past, but to work **with** remains, to make connections – to tell stories with and not of the past [Link to recent discussion about Lew Binford].

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## TOWER AND GARDEN







Lindisfarne. Tudor fort converted into country residence by architect Edwin Lutyens in 1901. His major project after this commission was to design the imperial government center of New Delhi. Garden designed by Gertrude Jeckyll. Replanting by the current charitable land owning agency, the National Trust, from original plans lost and found again in Berkeley University Library.

Archetypes.

TVRRIS

HORTVS

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# MAP ON A WALL



Border county of Northumberland





[Link] – Three Landscapes Project, Studio Michael Shanks Stanford University 2000