



Michael Shanks

Stanford University

Shore Time — some archaeological thoughts
for exploring Art Design Place

mshanks.com

What do we know? What do we have? What do we miss? and What do we love?

What do objects and places tell us that words cannot?

What does a place like Fogo Island reveal about how humans have always made things?

Art Design Place — our orienting questions



Times Places Things — my archaeological topics today

some *archaeological* prompts, questions, propositions, frames, things to talk around

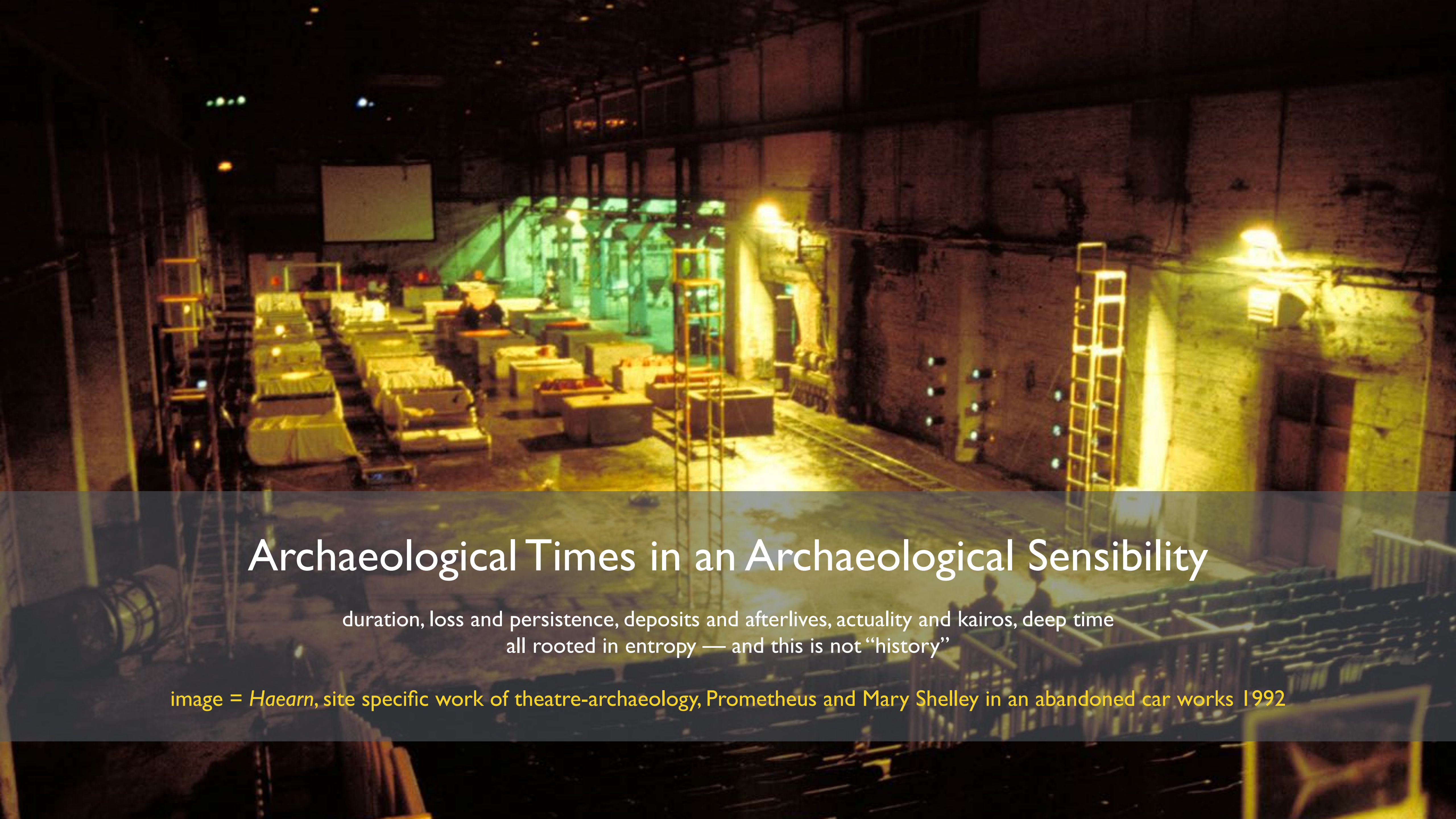
image = Gary Hill at the Colosseum Rome — site-specific theatre-archaeology — part of the Presence Project 2005

What time is this place? — this room

I have not been here before ...

and the room we are in, of the Loyal Orange Lodge from 1908, activates ...

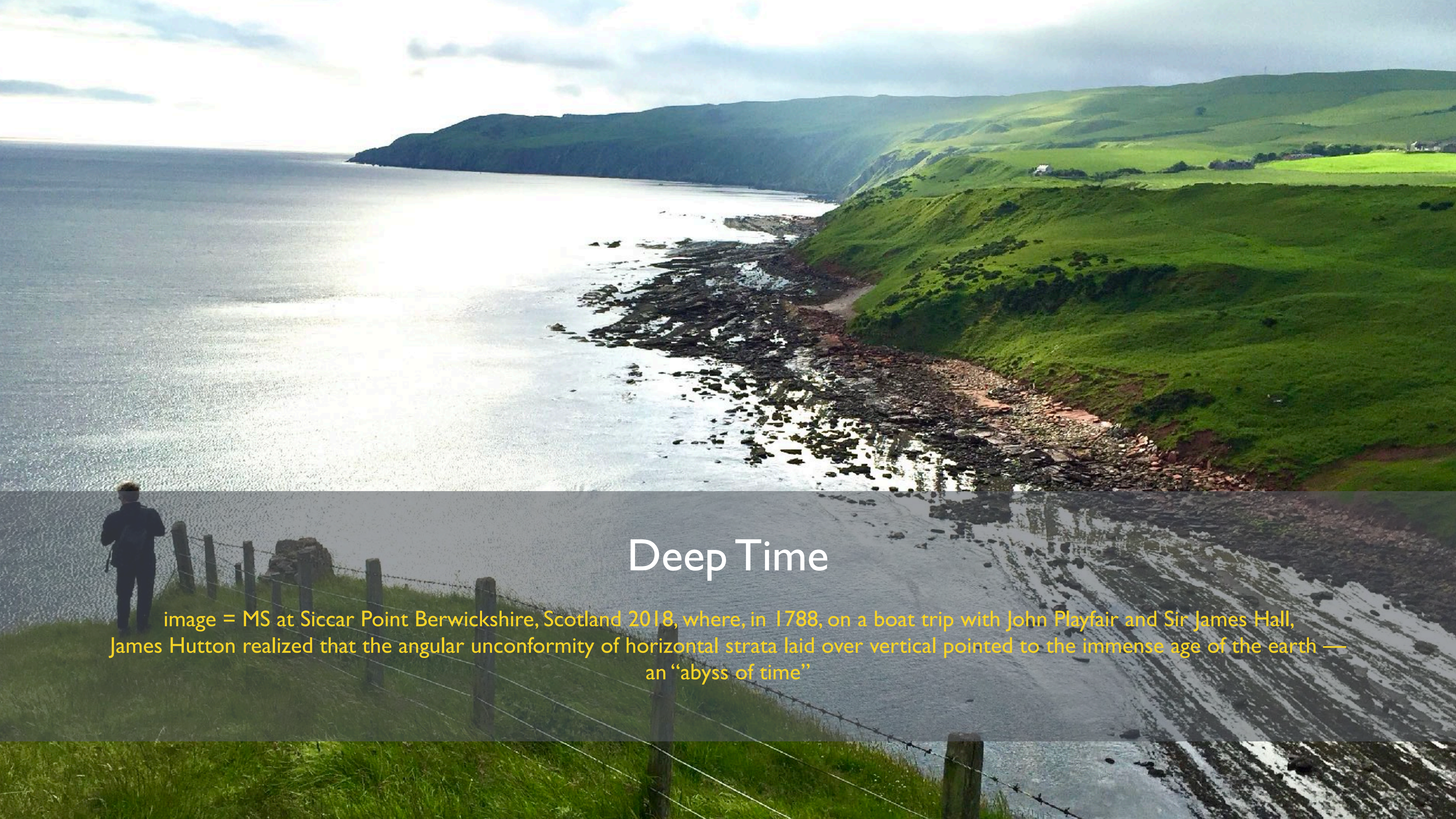
I) Topic — Times



Archaeological Times in an Archaeological Sensibility

duration, loss and persistence, deposits and afterlives, actuality and kairos, deep time
all rooted in entropy — and this is not “history”

image = *Haearn*, site specific work of theatre-archaeology, Prometheus and Mary Shelley in an abandoned car works 1992



Deep Time

image = MS at Siccar Point Berwickshire, Scotland 2018, where, in 1788, on a boat trip with John Playfair and Sir James Hall, James Hutton realized that the angular unconformity of horizontal strata laid over vertical pointed to the immense age of the earth — an “abyss of time”

The question to ask of anything is
— for how long, for and with whom, to what end or purpose?

Everything is Remains — an archaeological sensibility



Deep Mapping — Conversation not Cartography

big, slow, sumptuous, partisan, unfinished
layered inscription of place through memory and mediation, archive and performance
assemblage, not mimesis

image = California, a deep map (42' x 7') — Cliff McLucas for Three Landscapes Project, Stanford 2001

— as in memory

— hauntology

the personae of host — ghost — visitor

We are all Archaeologists now — working with what remains

2) Topic — Places

rooms, as places, are temporal topologies — foldings, entanglements, percolations, gatherings
gatherings that implicate the future in two senses

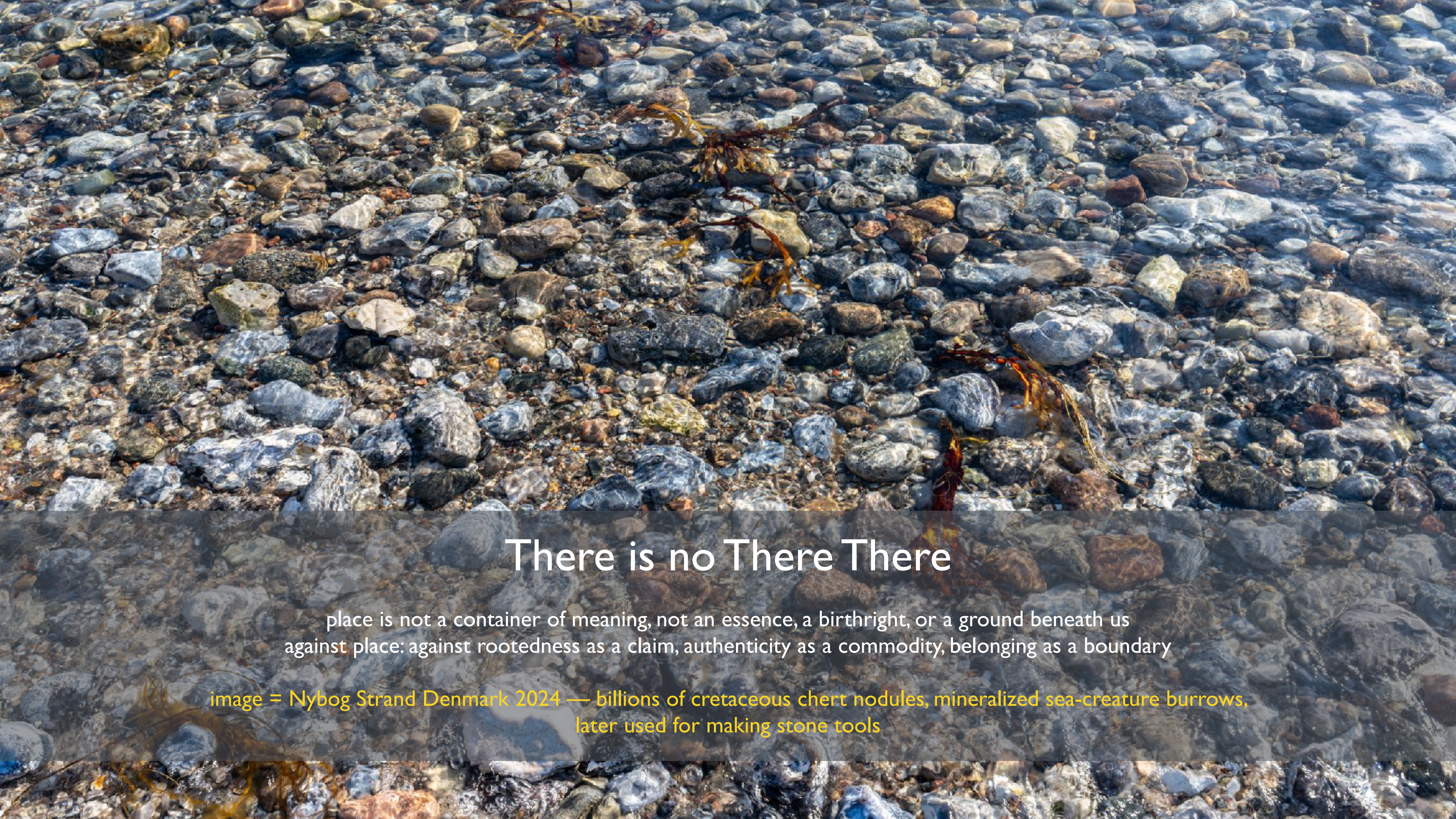
1) we restore and conserve with a care for the future

2) the future determines the now — just ask what is happening here now?

and consider — what did “thing” originally refer to — a gathering

Temporal Topologies — implicating the *future*

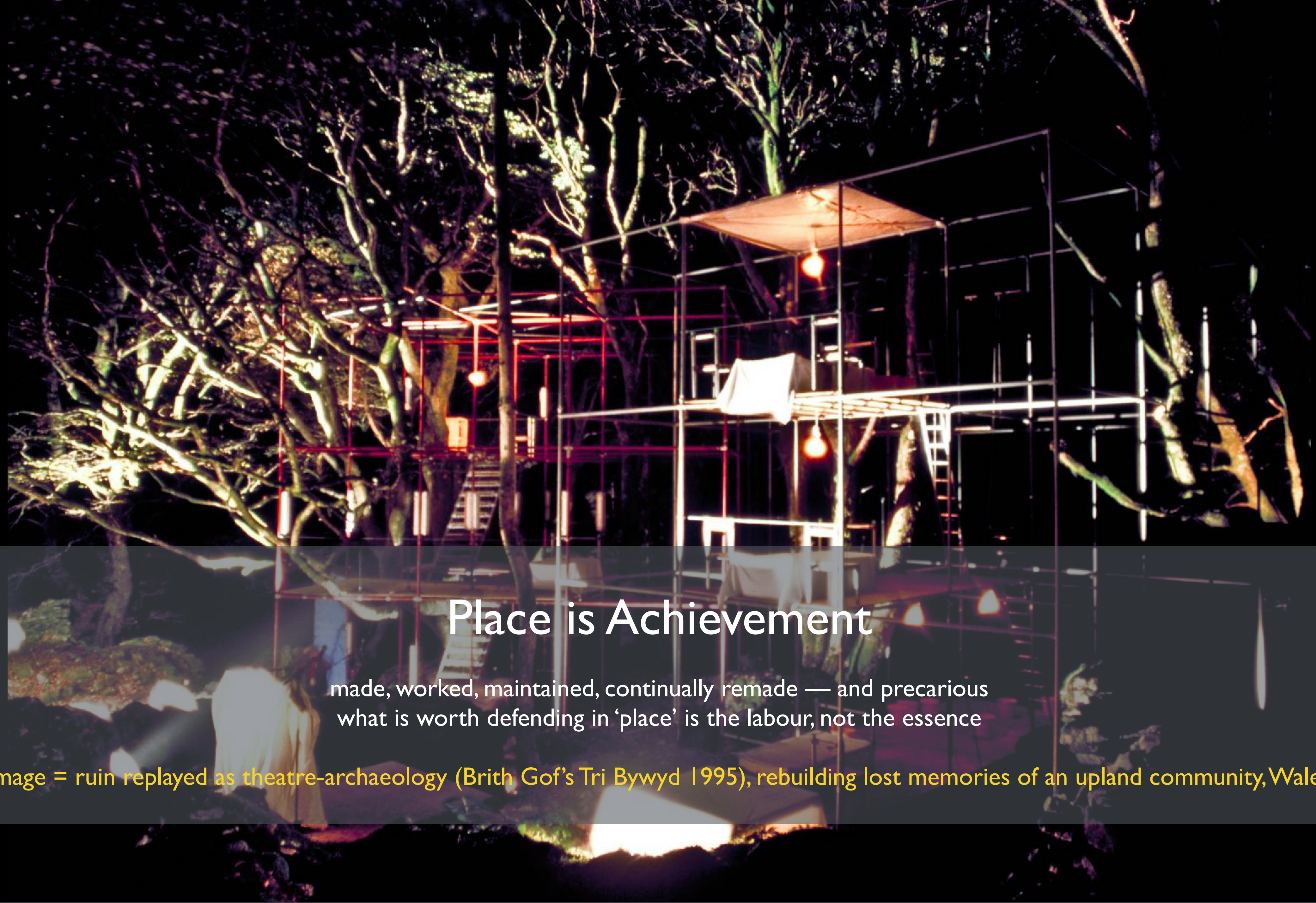
image = Göbekli Tepe Türkiye — an architecture for gathering that anticipates farming communities — this is the actual story of something that never happened — an agricultural revolution in the eleventh through eighth millennium BCE



There is no There There

place is not a container of meaning, not an essence, a birthright, or a ground beneath us
against place: against rootedness as a claim, authenticity as a commodity, belonging as a boundary

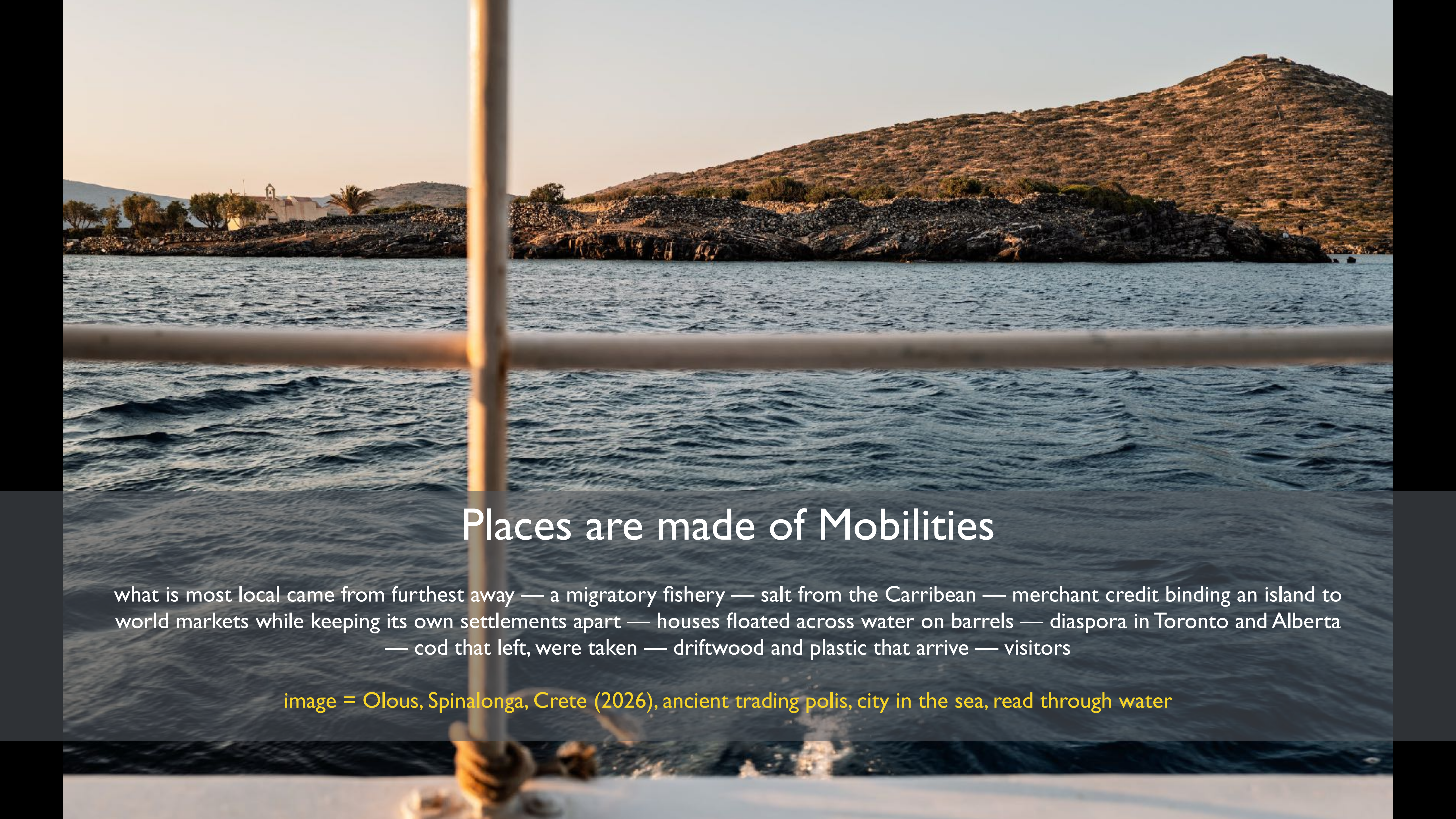
image = Nybog Strand Denmark 2024 — billions of cretaceous chert nodules, mineralized sea-creature burrows,
later used for making stone tools



Place is Achievement

made, worked, maintained, continually remade — and precarious
what is worth defending in 'place' is the labour, not the essence

image = ruin replayed as theatre-archaeology (Brith Gof's Tri Bywyd 1995), rebuilding lost memories of an upland community, Wales



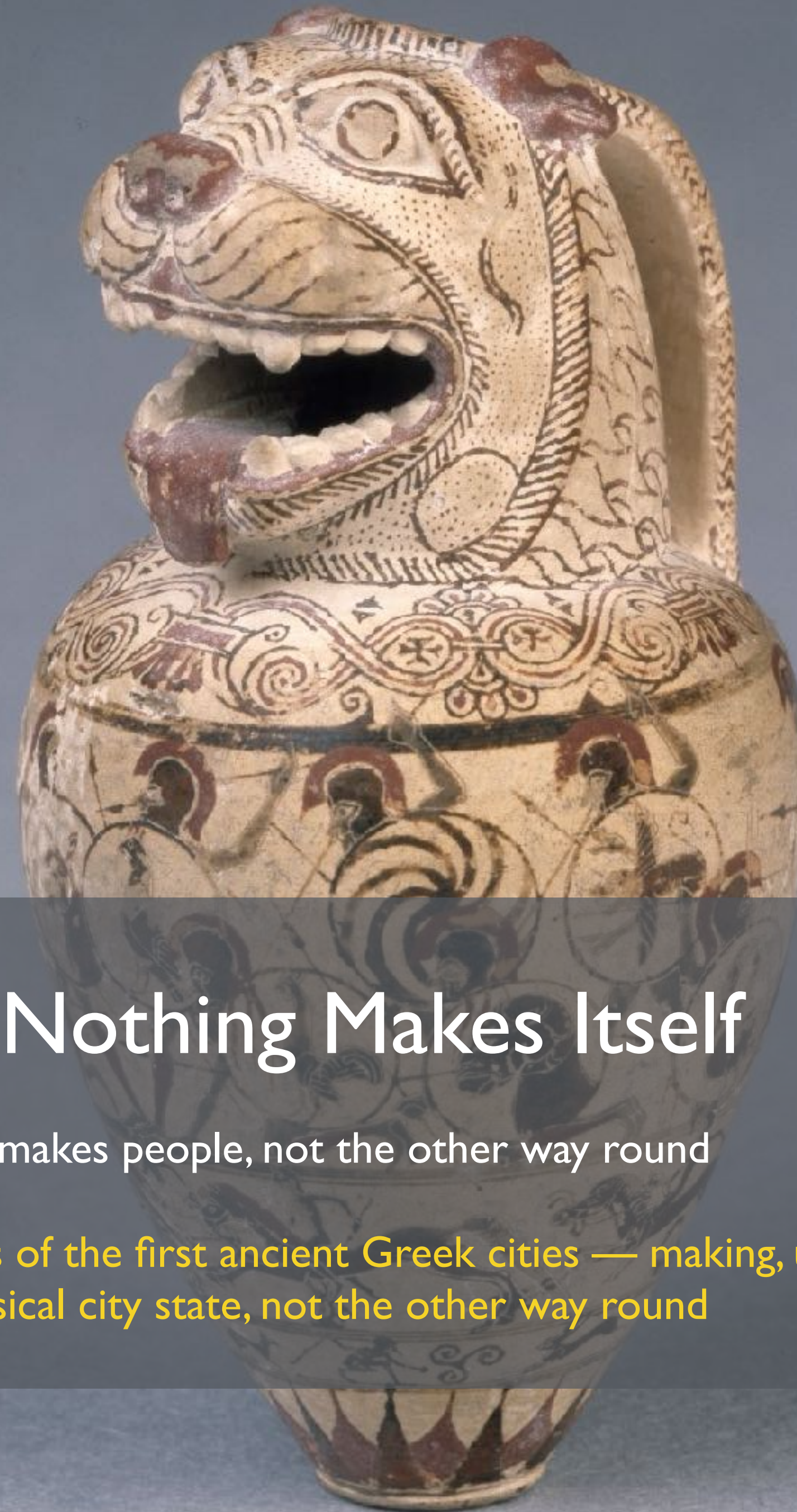
Places are made of Mobilities

what is most local came from furthest away — a migratory fishery — salt from the Carribean — merchant credit binding an island to world markets while keeping its own settlements apart — houses floated across water on barrels — diaspora in Toronto and Alberta — cod that left, were taken — driftwood and plastic that arrive — visitors

image = Olous, Spinalonga, Crete (2026), ancient trading polis, city in the sea, read through water

making and designing

3) Topic — Things



Making With — Nothing Makes Itself

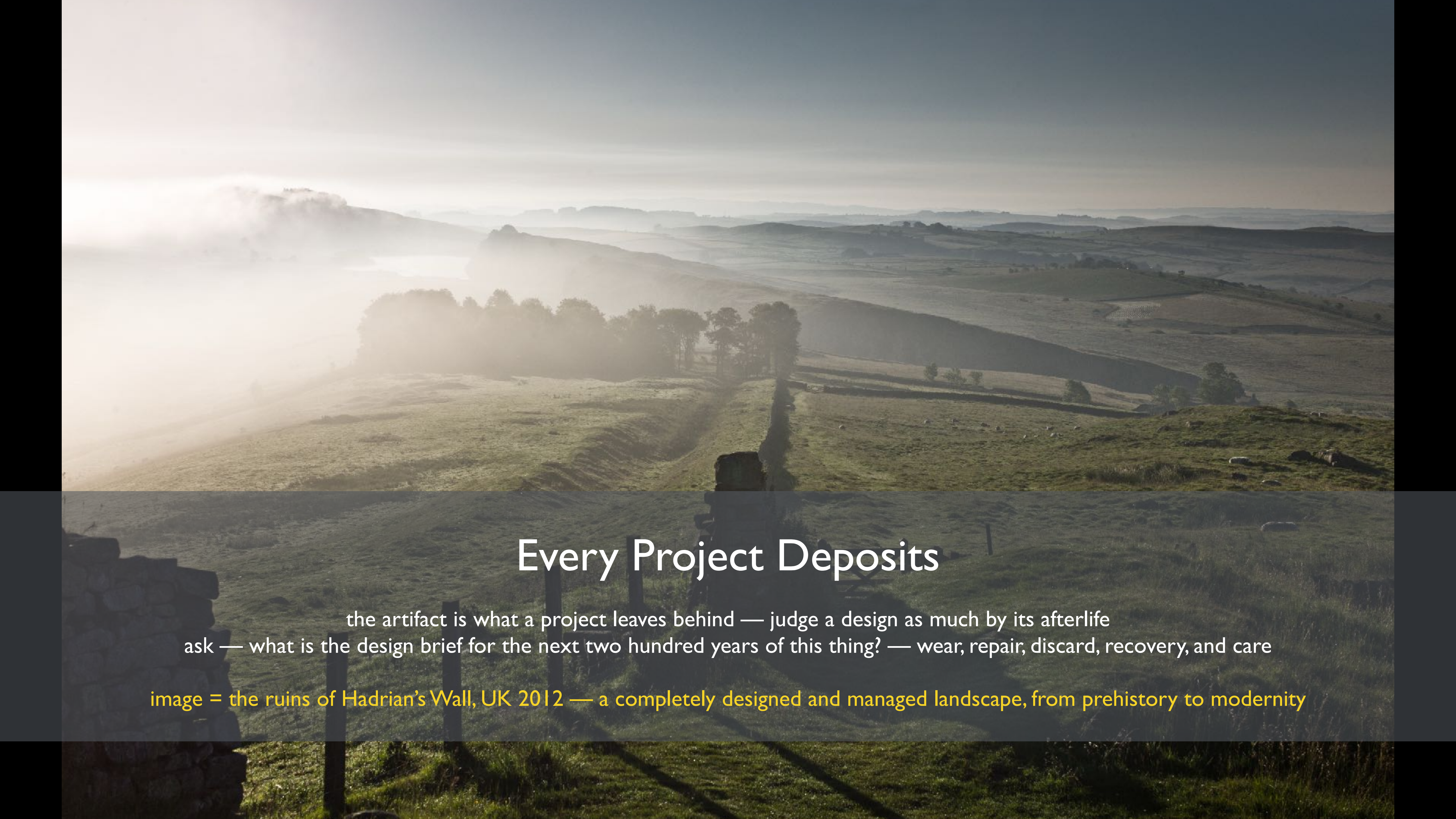
things gather — making things makes people, not the other way round

image = proto-Corintian perfume jar (625 BCE) from the times of the first ancient Greek cities — making, using, discarding such things was what gave rise to the Classical city state, not the other way round

encounter
visit
intervene
interrupt

Design — project management — a pragmatist proposition





Every Project Deposits

the artifact is what a project leaves behind — judge a design as much by its afterlife
ask — what is the design brief for the next two hundred years of this thing? — wear, repair, discard, recovery, and care

image = the ruins of Hadrian's Wall, UK 2012 — a completely designed and managed landscape, from prehistory to modernity

A photograph of a vintage teal open-top car, likely a 1930s model, with several people seated inside. The car is moving, as indicated by the motion blur in the background. The passengers include a man in a dark suit and a straw boater hat, a woman in a black quilted jacket, and another woman in a white jacket with a red floral pattern. The background shows a grassy area with other people and flags, suggesting an outdoor event like a car show.

Reenactment or Replay?

reenactment considers that authenticity comes in the imitation of the past — replay takes up the past for the present and future

image = Pebble Beach Concourse 2015 — a spectacle of the archaeological automobile

What do we know? What do we have? What do we miss? and What do we love?

Knowing: the epistemics of the trace, against history's monopoly on the past.

Having: the inventory, the assemblage, the gathering, the thing that exceeds its uses.

Missing: absence, discard, and whether loss is the only relation to what has gone.

Loving: care, maintenance, repair — and the politics of what gets kept.

The four *Archaeological* Questions

What do we know? Relationships and connections

Who is licensed to say what this place is — and by what instruments and media? Sign, film, the brochure, the residency catalogue, the keynote:
all are devices for producing a past and a place.

What does the record consist of, where most of what happened left no document?
Host, ghost, visitor? What does the visitor see that the resident cannot, and what does that licence cost? And vice-versa.

What do we have? Things and experiences

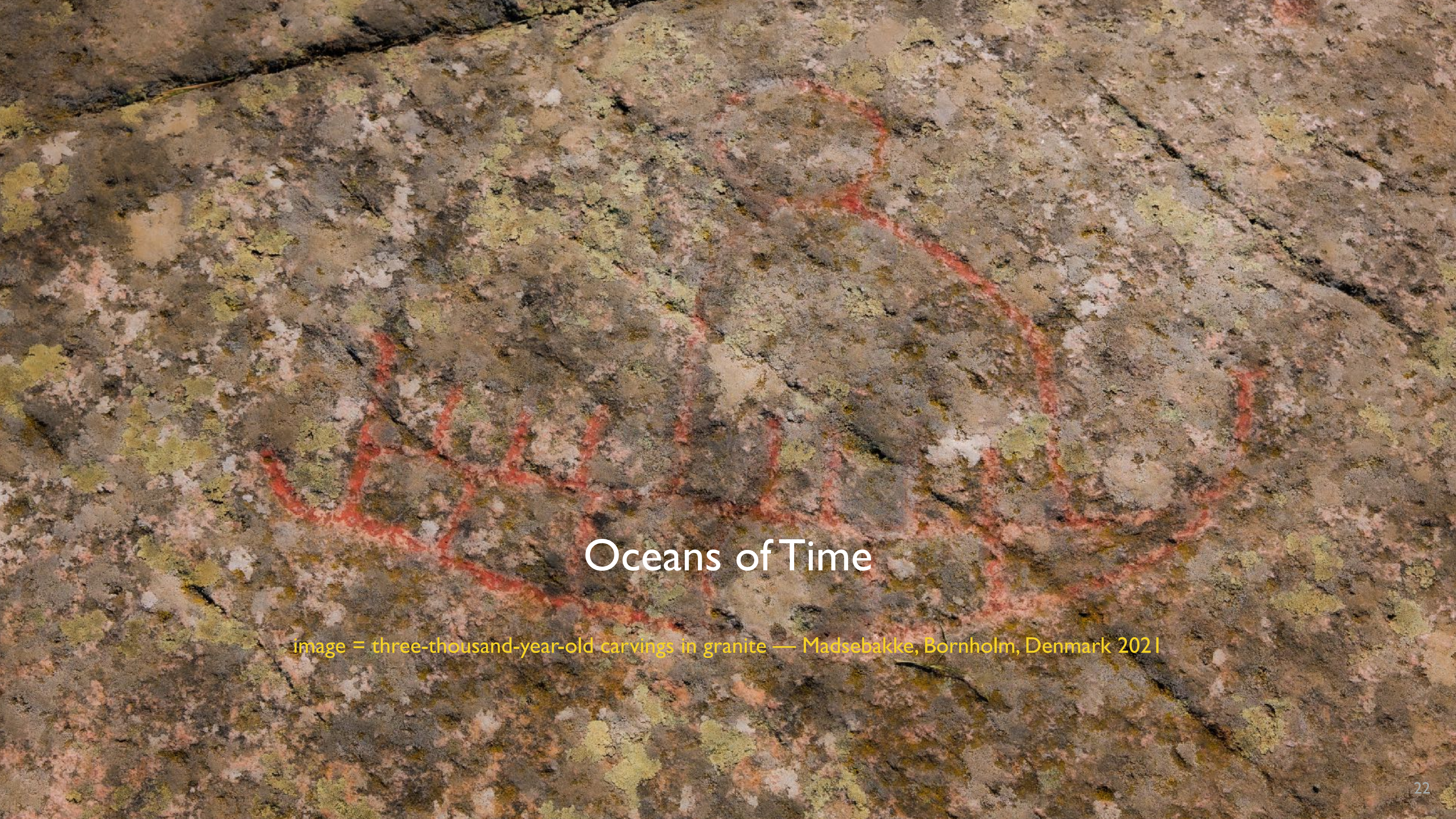
What do our things know that we don't? What would it be to approach an artefact as an artisan does, before approaching it as evidence?
What is the design brief for the next two hundred years?

What do we miss? Dynamics of presence-absence

Does 'belonging' name an attachment or a claim to presence — and who is included and excluded by it?
Is loss the only relation available to what has gone? What is the alternative to both preservation and mourning?
Is a particular place better described by what happened and what stays or by what comes and goes?

What do we love? Matters of care and curation

Who does the maintenance? If love is a labour rather than a sentiment, who performs it?
What would it mean to design for ruin and afterlife? Döstdning — care for what comes next.
Can a community be built, or only kept going — and is that the difference between an engineering plan and a design project?



Oceans of Time

image = three-thousand-year-old carvings in granite — Madsebakke, Bornholm, Denmark 2021