Pictorial and visual elements are special types of archaeological data that transgress boundaries: between us and the past and between the material and immaterial. Traditionally, images have been discussed in terms of what they represent, mean or symbolize. In this volume, the authors explore other ways in which images affect and engage the beholder and the modes in which they are entangled in past worlds.

The articles comprise examples from various regions and time periods and include a diverse array of topics including northern European rock art of the Neolithic and Bronze Age, anthropomorphic aspects of ceramic pots and figures in gold, erotic themes on children's burial vessels, and nineteenth-century rock art created by quarantined sailors in Australia.
ENCOUNTERING IMAGERY
Encountering Imagery
Materialities, Perceptions, Relations

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About the authors
Pictorial and visual elements are special types of archaeological data that transgress boundaries; between the past and us and between the material and immaterial. Imagery communicates with the observer in elaborate and often unforeseen ways. What special powers are embedded in the pictorial that seem to hold so much promise and mystery? In what ways can we study how images affect and engage the beholder, and how are images actively entangled in past social worlds? Archaeological approaches to prehistoric images have traditionally circled around representation, symbolism and meaning. By and large this has resulted in a focus on interpretations with contextually inferred meanings set within hermeneutic, phenomenological or evolutionary frameworks. In recent years, however, other ways of exploring imagery have been discussed within cultural studies and visual theory (e.g. Mitchell 1996; 2005; Evans & Hall 1999; Rose 2001; O’Sullivan 2005). Common themes are the multi-sensuous aspects of the imagery that involve issues of materiality and aesthesis, emphasizing that in many cases images evolve into something with qualities of their own.

Within anthropology and archaeology, in contrast, there are discussions of the possible agency of art and the pictorial (e.g. Gell 1998; Knappett 2002). Indeed, both objects and imagery are entangled in the social. Nonetheless, despite the power that past imagery seems to have over our minds in the present day, the study of past imagery is still theoretically and methodologically underdeveloped in archaeology (e.g. Hamilton et al. 1996:281-307; Aldhouse-Green 2004; Bradley 2009; Cochrane & Russel 2007). We need to elaborate on the different roles that the images may have in the social. That is, how can imagery work as actants and initiate or evoke thoughts and actions that are not originally intended, and how can it result in new, unintended and unforeseen consequences? There are a great number of approaches and elaborate theories on how to understand the pictorial in the social and humanist sciences. In
this introduction, we discuss a few that we believe have the greatest potential for archaeological studies. In this volume, we aim to engage with these issues and highlight the manifold, and hitherto less employed, methodological and theoretical ways in which imagery may be understood.

Art and imagery

In traditional Art History images are generally assumed to have a content, something that needs to be decoded or unlocked (Cornell & Fahlander 2002:74). One typical example in this tradition is Panofsky’s study of art as iconography (the identification, description and the interpretation of the content of images) and iconology (the analysis of the meaning of that content). Despite quite substantial criticism (e.g. Kubler 1962:127f; O’Sullivan 2005:15) iconological approaches in archaeology are generally concerned with questions of identifying what the imagery is supposed to represent, and in the second stage, to interpret how such an image may fit into a cultural cosmology or ideology. But of course, not all archaeology of imagery has worked along traditional art history; there have been several attempts to explore various (post)structural and semiotic approaches of prehistoric imagery as well (e.g. Nordbladh 1980; Tilley 1991; Mulk & Bayliss-Smith 2006:39-42). Images have much in common with words, but the strict formal relationship that Saussure and Jacobson identified in language is not really transferable to practice, things or images (Olsen 2011:40). Despite the lack of a strict visual grammar, semiotic approaches can nonetheless be useful as a way of bypassing the tyranny of meaning and representation of imagery. Leroi-Gourhan’s (1967) work with Palaeolithic cave art can be inspiring here as a study of abstract signs rather than preconceived ideas about the depictions of animals and humans. From such a perspective it may be easier to distinguish patterns and relations that are otherwise masked by classification and typology (cf. Fahlander, this volume).

Also phenomenological and metaphorical perspectives can reveal interesting relationships between the pictorial and the local landscape. Chris Tilley, for instance, has recently argued for a more holistic way for understanding prehistoric rock art: from a 'kinaesthetic approach', he argues, ‘the material medium – that is, the rock and its landscape context, is as fundamental in understanding the art as the imagery itself’ (2008:20). In a case study of the Simris petroglyphs on the southernmost coast of Sweden he suggests that the natural ‘wavy’ grooves of the rock were used in a narrative sense as alluding to a ‘frozen sea’. Tilley experiences imagery with the whole body, emphasizing that images are not simply for us to see but need to be experienced by all senses, including touch and feel. Although Tilley’s way of approaching the imagery is novel in some respects, it is still firmly grounded in post-processual ideas of context, symbolism and meaning.
Different ways of seeing?

A frequently quoted passage from Colin Turnbull’s paper on Bambuti perception describes how a pygmy when taken outside the jungle confuses a distant buffalo on the plains with an insect (1961:305). The argument goes that since he lived all his life in the thick and dense jungle he lacked a developed sense of perspective. Although the event probably is exaggerated (see e.g. Friedman 1994:11), it still raises the question of whether there are different ‘ways of seeing’ depending on milieu, knowledge and ‘cultural development’. Are there radically different ways of seeing that bias and distort our present appropriation of prehistoric imagery? New media, techniques and forms of producing imagery have certainly changed the way we ‘see’. John Berger, Walter Benjamin and others, for example, have pointed out the impact of modern inventions such as the camera which have affected the Western ways of seeing (1972:18; cf. Benjamin 2007:236-7). It is thus not surprising that the contemporary western worlds are typically regarded as ocularcentric and that the visual plays a fundamental role in our lives (Jenks 1995:1; cf. Jay 1993). However, this does not imply that imagery is less relevant in past worlds. Many historians have pointed out the important and intricate roles that images, especially in spiritual contexts, have played in the past (Hamburger 1997; cf. Göransson 1999). It would thus probably be a mistake to make a distinction between a prehistoric or ‘primitive’ way of vision from a modern one. Instead we need to recognize that different ways of seeing, understanding and communicating with and through images not only differs between different times and places, but also between contemporary groups of people. John Clarke (2003:4), for instance, has convincingly argued that ordinary Romans and the elite used and viewed mosaics and paintings in different ways. He demonstrates how the typical evocative Roman paintings and mosaics of ‘frivolous character’ worked as an indication of class and status rather than being ‘pornographic’ in a modern sense (1998; cf. Herva 2004; Dipla & Paleothodoros, this volume).

A main problem for archaeological studies of imagery is that their ‘secondary’ or ‘conventional’ meanings are normally unknown to us. Is it then at all possible to ‘see’ what the other is seeing? Berger (1972:7-8) has discussed the paradox that what we see does not always fit with what we know. A simple example is how the sun appears to revolve around the earth although we ‘know’ it is the other way around (cf. Matić, this volume). Indeed, the way we appropriate things and images depends on what we know or believe. The question can be formulated in terms of approaching images as ‘objects of recognition’ or as ‘objects of encounter’ (O’Sullivan 2005:1). Most of us have a tendency to recognize, identify, and understand images, but the encounter normally emerges first after we have failed to contextualize the image. Since archaeology mainly deals with images of unknown origin, context and intentions, it is perhaps better to resist the urge to recognize, identify and understand and instead ‘encounter’ imagery. Mats Rosengren (2012) has used Plato’s Cave allegory to illustrate how art historians and archaeologists have approached Paleolithic cave art as objects...
of recognition. He argues that the archaeologists have been too occupied with the ‘origins’ and the background of the paintings, that is, what animals the paintings illustrate and represent, how naturalistic and accurately they are portrayed, instead of discussing what the practice of making images (the shadows on the wall) can actually tell us about the people crafting them. The recognition approach thus tends to restrict the creative, imaginary process of interpretation, and reduce it to a process of simply combining and depicting things that already exist in the world. There is little room for discussing difference, change and what images ‘really want’. It is only by encountering imagery that interesting effects can occur, from which we can learn something new about past worlds.

Of course, to treat images as ‘objects of encounter’ is far from a strict method or consistent approach with a given set of tools and ready-made concepts. The main point is to avoid focusing too much on making them ‘fit’ with what we ‘know’ and instead elaborate on archaeological ways to approach past imagery. As an alternative to trying to relate the pictured to a social context (secondary meaning) or as strict representations of something real or ideal, it seems more fruitful to discuss aspects of materiality, practice and aesthetics, and examine how imagery embodies not only effects of pasts worlds but is also an active participant in social structuration.
Encountering imagery: materiality, agency and representation

Since images generally appear to us as form and content it is not very surprising that the materiality of the pictorial is a somewhat neglected aspect. Imagery is material in the sense that it is made of matter by matter which forms integrated elements of the image as a materiality (cf. Alberti, this volume). As Bruno Latour and many others have argued the social sphere is not only an arena restricted to human discourse, but rather it is constituted in the relationships between humans and things (1999; 2005). In archaeology function, form and style are by tradition central concepts in the way we understand past material culture (e.g. Hegmon 1992). The concept of materiality, however, expands this understanding to also include a wider perspective of how these objects are integrated in the social (Fahlander 2008:131-6). For example, the materiality of a ceramic pot is often much more than its primary function as a vessel. A pot can be made to be crushed, to be put on display or to work as a surface for imagery, etc. The pictorial is no different in this respect but can have social implications beyond the intentions and ideas of producer and the consumer in a similar way to that of a certain object (cf. Mitchell 2005 on the concept meta-picture). The power of images not only lies in what it might represent or symbolise, but also in the way they interfere and are integrated in social life.

The discussions on the ‘socialness’ of things tends to centre on the question of ‘material agency’ rather than on the material itself, and its potential social implications (Tanner & Osborne 2007; Ingold 2012). Alfred Gell (1992) has suggested that the lavish decoration on the Trobriand canoes worked as an extension of the producer’s agency which, he argues, was an implicit but significant factor in trade and barter negotiations. He describes the imagery of the canoes as ‘a means of thought-control’ (1992:44). An analogous example concerns the early practice of writing, for instance, the way ancient Greek was printed as long rows of letters without spaces between the individual words. One effect of this practice was that the content became revealed first when spoken out loud. This phenomenon promoted the idea that the author, in a literary sense, ‘put the words in the mouth of the reader’, and thus governed the reader by using text as a remote control (Svenbro 1997:10).

The idea that images work as a prolonged arm of the initiator is indeed an interesting path to pursue, but it is important to also consider any unforeseen or unintended effects of imagery. We need to take into consideration the long life of certain imagery and how it may be used, abused, changed, modified and ‘misunderstood’ by different people over time (cf. Nilsson this volume). One such case has been discussed by Per Cornell (2011), concerning the relations between painted images of cities and the formation of the medieval cities in Europe. He points out how the images of the cities of the American colonies during the early period of contact was illustrated according to certain artistic conventions rather than being accurate depictions. But when these images returned to Europe they become ideals of how cities should look and the
artistic convention thus became practice. Although it seems evident that images as well as other materialities play important parts in the social sphere is it important to understand that such ‘agency’ is not as much an inherent property as it is a potential of affecting the outcome of a given situation (cf. Latour 2005:7, 159).

This type of social power that things and imagery seem to posses is referred to as ‘secondary’ agency (Gell 1998), ‘pseudo-agency’ (Knappett 2002) or aesthetics (Gosden 2001; Heyd & Clegg 2003). The concept of aesthetics signifies a broad range of ways in which imagery may impinge on people – not only in an affective or sensual way, but also in subliminal and more direct ways similar to the notions of material agency (O’Sullivan 2005:22-3). Aesthetics comprises all those aspects of images that may affect the beholder (e.g. a site of resistance, recalcitrance, particularity, strangeness, representation, imagination or pleasure), which is indeed hard to capture in words. In order to approach past imagery as objects of encounter we may need to find new ways of describing the aesthetics of material, colour, complexity, form and ‘style’ in general, and material relations in particular. This does not have to be in the form of abstract semiotic terminology or by formal analysis of content and form. One interesting approach that tries to capture the aesthetic effects of imagery is the distinction between studium and punctum suggested by Roland Barthes (1981). A punctum is a ‘wound’ or ‘prick’, something striking that sticks out from the picture, and which is poignant to the beholder. Barthes separates analyses of such qualities from the studium, which for him is ‘a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment’ to the depicted (Barthes 1981:26f). Barthes’ approach is indeed quite subjective because the punctum is often an individual, even temporary response, but it nonetheless emphasises a dimension in how images ‘talk’ and can be helpful to understand how certain additions or alterations of imagery can have unexpected and unforeseen results (see Frederick & Clarke, this volume).

Recently, the idea of images as primarily recognizable and representative has been challenged by a number of archaeologists who explore non-representational and relational perspectives (Cochrane 2005; Pollard 2005; Jones 2006; Maurstad 2012; see also Back Danielsson and Fahlander, this volume). Common denominators in these works include a desire to understand the visual potency of the images and how these interact with the viewer(s). The visual potency is considered to introduce phenomenological registers that clearly exceed representation. The lived present is of primary focus, bringing with it an enhanced interest in, for instance, practice, performativity, performance, embodiment and the body (e.g. Cadman 2009). Importantly, the lived present thereby becomes ‘…an open-ended and generative process...’ (Harrison 2000:499). Non-representational theories thus argue that representation and meaning downplay practice, and in extension events, to the degree that these are ‘drained for the sake of orders, mechanisms, structures and processes’ (Dewsbury et al. 2002:438). Instead, it is about letting things take place and to recognize the movement of things (Anderson & Harrison 2010, cf. Alberti and Cochrane, this volume). Thereby an
overarching meaning, interpretation and/or representation is avoided. Another tenet of these perspectives revolves around questions of the material itself. Materials need to be understood in processual terms and not as substrates and essential (Conneller 2011). Instead materials are best understood through what they do, rather than what they are, and ‘the processes by which the properties of past materials emerge reveals configurations of past worlds; particular articulations of the cultural, the natural and the supernatural’ (2011:125). Conclusively, it is thus the processes of formation that are primary, not the states of matter. Such perspectives are accompanied by an ontological re-orientation. In Ingold’s terms (2010:92), there is an ontology of relations, not of substances (cf. Latour 1999; 2005; Barad 2007; Alberti & Bray 2009 on alternatives to an ontology of substances).

The outline of the book

The principal theme of this volume is to explore ways of dealing with imagery other than through representation, symbolism and meaning. The perception of imagery encompasses a great number of aspects, but our aim is to focus on the way images and the pictorial worked in the past, as well as how they affect us in the present. The articles in this volume do this from a number of different perspectives and by no means constitute a coherent body of thought. They comprise examples from various regions, time periods and diverse subject matter – spanning from north European Stone and Bronze Age rock art to anthropomorphic aspects of ceramic pots and figures in gold, Egyptian wall paintings, erotic themes on children’s burial pots as well as quarantined sailors’ rock art of nineteenth century Australia.

The first text by Benjamin Alberti, Cut, pinch and pierce. Image as practice among the early formative La Candelaria, first millennium AD, Northwest Argentina, explores the concept of perspectivism applied to anthro- and zoomorphic ceramic vessels. Alberti argues that these objects need to be perceived as animate and mobile actants instead of as static objects. They are thus changeable and always in motion. This aspect is important since it suggests that different kinds of bodies, ceramic or animal, human or non-human, can be regarded as ontologically equivalent. Decor and imagery are thus not simply ‘added’ to the objects, but both meaning and material are extensions of practice.

A similar notion of vitalism is also addressed in Ing-Marie Back Danielsson’s contribution, The rape of the lock. Or a comparison between miniature images of the eighth and eighteenth centuries. Back Danielsson contrasts gold foil figures of the eighth century with miniature portrait pendants of the eighteenth century through Mitchell’s concept meta-picture. While miniature portrait pendants of the eighteenth century were meant to be static and still portraits, eighth-century gold foil figures were figures in flux; inconsistent, transformative and always incorporated in acts of
doing. In this respect they were ontologically equivalent to certain human beings. However, it is concluded that when both categories were engaged and manipulated in different performances they shared vitalistic and/or animistic characteristics.

Anne Clarke’s and Ursula Frederick’s paper *In loving memory. Inscriptions, images and imagination at the North Head Quarantine station, Sydney, Australia*, explores nineteenth-century petroglyphs on the sandstone cliffs above Sydney Harbour. These carvings were made by people who had just arrived in Australia and who were then taken into quarantine; thus being material markers of existence in a specific, liminal environment. Although the carvings reveal information about the names of ships, ports of origin, or names of crews and passengers, and as such is a valuable historical archive, other information can be gained through the material. The authors suggest that the making of marks in the sandstone cliff served as a technology for remembrance.

Rock art is also the topic of Per Nilsson’s paper *The beauty is in the act of the beholder. South Scandinavian rock art from a uses of the past-perspective*. Nilsson discusses the re-use of Bronze Age rock art sites at three different places in southern Scandinavia. From analysing the different finds and features at these places, such as hearths, fire-cracked stones and also houses, he suggests that the secondary use of the rock art sites may be understood as a method for communicating with the past. Through this continuous dialogue or process altered meanings of rock art figures were created.

In Fredrik Fahlander’s paper, *Articulating stone. The material practice of petro-glyphing*, rock art is viewed from a non-representational perspective, suggesting that petroglyphs are better understood as material articulations than narrative or symbolical expressions. In his study the materiality of the rock and the production processes are emphasized (e.g. patchworks, unfinished motifs, re-cuts and hybrids). The approach is exemplified by a horizontal stratigraphy of a panel in which different phases of imagery are distinguished. Such recognitions allow Fahlander to discuss how changes in practice, as well as different motifs, are related to each other and the materiality of the bedrock.

Courtney Nimura’s paper also concerns Bronze Age rock art. Her paper *Rock art and coastal change in Bronze Age Scandinavia* is inspired by Gell’s theory of art and agency. She explores the relationship between rock art and coastal change in southern Scandinavia. Nimura maintains that the rock carvings were not only directed towards a living audience, but also to the seemingly capricious nature of water itself. Based on a number of rock art localities in Østfold, Bohuslän, Uppland and Simris she argues that the carvings were considered to have ‘magical’ powers. The increase in rock art over the course of the Bronze Age is argued to have been due to stress over the receding shore-lines, and that the carvings were created as a means to halt this process.

Andrew Cochrane’s contribution, *The immanency of the intangible image. thoughts with Neolithic expression at Loughcrew*, focuses on the imagery of the Loughcrew passage tombs, Ireland. He argues that the motifs perform as sources for invention and belonging, which sometimes served as being creative and reasonable and at other
times played at being inept and unreasonable. Gaps and absences were thereby created within the appearances of the world. Such processes could lead to affections of both engagement and disengagement. The performances connected with the tombs are maintained to be carnivalesque in character, relating in specific ways to the site and its imagery.

Ylva Sjöstrand’s paper, *A quest of questions. On the paradigm of identification within rock art research*, also scrutinizes the idea of representation in Stone Age imagery. Sjöstrand emphasizes the importance of reflection and the often complex relations between an image’s meaning and its pictorial content. As an alternative, Sjöstrand suggests that some motifs, such as the common elk figure in circumpolar rock art, work as a key symbol which does not need to have any particular essence, but can be employed as a vehicle for the mind for a variety of purposes.

In *Metaphors and allegories as augmented reality. The use of art to evoke material and immaterial subjects* Dragos Gheorghiu seeks to explore how art metaphors may be used to evoke different visualizations of procedures or events. This augmentation of reality allows the real and the artificial to merge, developing the imagination of the performer. From the example of the multi-period site of Vadastra, in the south of Romania, it is demonstrated how closely related metaphors may result in immediate bodily and sensorial perceptions and evocations.

Ruth Nugent’s and Howard Williams’ paper, *Sighted surfaces. Ocular agency in Early Anglo-Saxon cremation burials*, also explores the link between imagery and bodily experience. Moving away from thoughts of cremation urns as reflecting early settlers from Germanic areas, the authors seek to explore the imagery of decorated pots in terms of material agency and the urns’ haptic and visual qualities, mediating memory and mourning. They suggest that the decoration was made to establish and maintain an idea of the dead person as a sensing and sighted subject even after the cremation was fulfilled.

Burial pots are also the point of departure in Anthi Dipla’s and Dimitris Paleothodoros’ text, *Selected for the dead. Erotic themes on grave vases from attic cemeteries*. Their study concerns the relationship between erotic motifs on funeral vases and the buried individual. It has been assumed that the erotic imagery of the pots was perceived in the same or similar ways as was intended by the producer. However, the authors argue that the choice of erotic images must have had other symbolic meanings, especially where the burial pots of small children are concerned. Such cases suggest that the imagery refers to presumed activities, expectations or fantasies for the dead.

Uroš Matić’s contribution, *Out of the word and out of the picture? Keftiu and materializations of ‘Minoans’* also concerns imagery from the Mediterranean area. Matić discusses the Egyptian notion of ‘Keftiu’ and ‘Minoans’ based on wall-paintings of Eighteenth Dynasty Theban tombs. In his discussion, using the visual grammar of Alfred Gell, he argues that the interpretations of the imagery lack an understanding of decorum, context and restricted knowledge of the tomb visitors. Matić suggests
that the Keftiu were associated with the Egyptian notions of ‘north’ and ‘Asia’, and thus did not refer to ‘Minoans’ only.

The final text in the volume, *Designed surfaces* by Ole Christian Aslaksen, focuses on the concept of design as observed in a study of turban rimmed bowls from Balkan and Central Europe. The polysemic nature of the concept, Aslaksen argues, has eluded the interest of archaeology. Design has been comprehended as if it were a simple synonym for the word ‘construction’, and the many definitions that have been formulated in order to pin down the concept has thus been overlooked. This lack of awareness leads to serious implications when discussing mass-produced materials, as for example the turban rimmed bowls. Aslaksen suggests that common and ubiquitous materials can benefit from an expanded awareness of the concept of design.

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References


Encountering Imagery


Cut, Pinch and Pierce

Image as Practice among the Early Formative La Candelaria, First Millennium AD, Northwest Argentina

Benjamin Alberti

Abstract In this chapter images are argued to be motions—motile extensions of practice—rather than static representations or vehicles for communicative acts. The images in question are anthropo- and zoomorphic ceramic vessels from the La Candelaria archaeological culture of first millennium AD northwest Argentina. The argument made draws on the theory of perspectivism developed by anthropologists working with groups in the Amazon basin. Combining this theory with insights from new, “vitalist” theoretical approaches in archaeology opens up the possibility that process united disparate practices, in which bodies of all types—ceramic or flesh; human or non-human—are ontologically equivalent. As such, images are not separate layers of meaning applied to a material foundation but both meaning and material are extensions of practice.

Introduction

Visual imagery can be understood to work in a number of registers. Most commonly, archaeologists have taken it as symbolic expression, inventive ways to substitute for language or communicate ideas (Bahn 1998; Whitley 2011). Similarly, imagery can be understood to be organized in an isomorphic sense to social structure and ideology (e.g. Shanks & Tilley 1992). There is also the question of how imagery actually works: what is it that moves us or works on us? Cognitive impact, conceptual play, or the affect of the abduction of complex intentionalities and the establishment of social relations are some candidates (e.g. Gell 1998; Lau 2011; Malafouris 2007).

Which register is appropriate for understanding the material that interests me – anthropo- and zoomorphic pots from first millennium AD northwest Argentina (e.g. Fig. 1)? What such approaches share in common is a focus on a particular type of audience and a finished object – on the effect of a completed work or image on a separated subject or recipient. There is latent, however, another possibility: that the visual imagery communicated and worked at the level of practice. I argue that the imagery in the pottery communicated not solely as a completed object aimed at
a particular audience but was efficacious insofar as the practices associated with its production – and the place of those practices in a broader world of practices – were specifically embodied and understood. Drawing on an approach within Amazonian ethnography, I illustrate by discussing a parallelism between the incisions and moldings on pots and the painting of bodies, activities which can be understood as instances of non-representational image making.

In this chapter I would like to reverse some of the basic assumptions that underlie studies of artworks in archaeology, that images in their finished forms are predominantly about communicating, undergirding identities, and structuring social relations. The essence of my argument is this: images are motions. That is, the underlying principle that guides the appearance of things – in the case I discuss – is one of transformability. Images must obey the logic of this principle in at least two ways: first, the image functions in a motile fashion – it does not sit still. The image is motile because one cannot trust either meaning or matter to “be” in a consistent way precisely because transformation is the default mode. An image cannot, therefore, represent statically and in any straightforward sense. And second, the image itself must be a motion. That is, it is never complete – in fact, the goal is not completion, but rather to participate in the wholesale repetition of acts and practices that forestalls or directs change. The image is not itself a static thing.
I claim, then, that what these pots depict and how they depict is better thought of as practices than static images. The pots do not represent anything within their archaeological context (clearly they do to us); they are congealed action, acts, and practices. Moreover, they are performative co-conspirators in a world conceived as founded on practice and not substance, as we would understand it (for similar approaches that challenge a substance-based ontology, see Alberti & Bray 2009; Barad 2003, 2007; Latour 1999, 2005; Witmore forthcoming). The communicative act occurs during the making. Doing the art is where the meaning lies, not in the finished object. Furthermore, I will use a central conceit to make my argument, one adapted from Amazonian ethnographies. What you do to a pot when you make and decorate it is equivalent to what you do to a body when you modify or work on it (Alberti 2007). This is not an analogical usage but rather a theoretical one: it is a tool for thought to get around a conceptual issue.

Fig. 2. Map of northwest Argentina including extent of the La Candelara material. Map constructed by the author.
The archaeological materials around which I make my argument are pots and human mortuary remains from La Candelaria archaeological culture (Fig. 2). First named as a culture in the 1930s by Alfred Métraux (1930), the material is found predominantly in Tucumán and Salta provinces of northwest Argentina, in the foothills of the Andes (see also Heredia 1968, 1975; Ryden 1936). The “core” area is the Yungas or “bosques tropicales” (tropical forests) in Tucumán, which is an intermediary ecological zone between the high valleys that lead to the Andes and the Chaco lowlands to the east. They are one of a mosaic of cultures from the area and period. The material ranges in approximate date from AD 0 to 1100, is widely distributed but never particularly densely present. Sites consist mainly of sherd scatters overlain by later Santamariana material. Architectural elements are ephemeral, although urn, direct, and the occasional cist burial are fairly common and from which a number of important collections of material have been constituted. Whole vessels are almost exclusively from excavated burial contexts or collected from such contexts (when that information is available). One intriguing element is that form and iconography both share elements with other, presumably more “Andean” cultures, but also lowland themes. There are no jaguars, but peccary, frogs, and birds abound. As a result, its position relative to the lowland-highland direction of influence has been debated (Ortiz & Ventura 2003).

Image as communication, bodies as social constructions

In presenting his study of Goldwork and Shamanism, Reichel-Dolmatoff (1988) suggests we cautiously use an ethno-archaeological methodology to get back to the intentions and norms that guided the makers of pre-Hispanic objects. He then provides commentary on the possible shamanic associations of the images depicted on the wonderful works of gold at the Museo del Oro in Bogotá, Colombia.

It is common to interpret imagery in this way, as symbolic expressions of underlying beliefs (e.g. DeMarrais 2007; González 1977). An object is divided into support and image (in the present case, it would be a pot and its decorative elaboration). The object, then, in such an approach embodies a dual process of meaning making: initially, a pot is formed from clay, water and temper by a maker; at some point afterwards the same or another maker inscribes lines or pinches additional clay into shapes that are applied to the body of the pot, and finally, after firing we have a finished pot. From raw material, to functional object, and finally to functional object plus image.

Objects – especially decorated or elaborated ones – are also said to materialize beliefs or ideologies. Objects are the making solid of ideas or ideologies, their materialization (e.g. DeMarrais et al. 1996). They can then “act” by reinforcing sociopolitical structures, reminding us of our place. Their specific materiality becomes a key part of their ability to take on this role: large, hard monuments, or the apparent durability of fired ceramics, reinforces claims to truth and power. The assumption driving theories
of art objects or artistic production in archaeology has thus been largely that the objects are about communicating and undergirding identities and/or social relations. When faced with a body of material such as the La Candelaria pots, the question, then, naturally becomes what is the purpose or impact of the pots as images? In what ways can they be said to communicate or support social relations or identities?

There is an interesting parallel here to how bodies are conceived within a broadly social construction frame. Recent approaches to embodiment in archaeology stress the vulnerability of the body to constructive practices, as well as the idea that cultural meanings are inscribed onto biological bodies (see Joyce 2005; Boric & Robb 2009). In an influential work, Sofaer (2006) has written that the human body can actually be treated analytically as equivalent to material culture; essentially plastic human matter can materialize the effects of social norms through practices, such as grinding or carrying heavy weights, through its changing form and development. Both the conceptualization of bodies and that of artworks rely on the imposition of meaning by an agent or subject onto a dumb object or body. There is assumed to be a common physical substratum to the world that is acted upon by different cultures in different ways, constructing social bodies and artefacts. This model, as Ingold (2010:92) has shown, is hylomorphic – the notion of the imposition of form onto dumb matter by a human agent: “Form came to be seen as imposed by an agent with a particular design in mind, while matter, thus rendered passive and inert, became that which was imposed upon.” Reversing Sofaer’s premise, releasing the body from the social construction model may well serve also to bring the object (the pot) along with it and allowing its associated “imposed” image which is rendered complete and fully dead, to be conceived differently.

Bodies and pots as ontological equivalents

The hylomorphic model does not work in Amazonia: neither the body nor matter is considered an inert, stable substratum for human play. In typically Western substance ontology, people and things are quite distinct. People are animated by mind; things are variously inert, animated, if anything, by external forces that are demonstrated by mechanical movements and growth. The broad range of Amazonian theories of bodies and persons and objects are quite different, as Amazonianists have been indicating since the 1970s onwards (Seeger et al. 1979; Turner 1995; 2009; Vilaça 2009). One claim is that bodies are the seat of difference, the root of perceptual difference among peoples and other beings, in differentiation from a Western focus on mind as the arbiter of point of view (e.g. Viveiros de Castro 2010). If you change body you change perspective, and a changed perspective is indicative of a changed body. One manifestation of this metaphysics is the theory of perspectivism, developed by Viveiros de Castro (1998; 2004a; 2010) and colleagues (Lima 1996; Vilaça 2005, 2009). The
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The basic idea behind perspectivism is that there is one way that all beings perceive their world, but multiple worlds – one epistemology and multiple ontologies. This is what Viveiros de Castro has referred to as “multinaturalism,” a metaphysical claim that reverses common Western assumptions. Whereas the notion of cultural construction, for example, envisions multiple views or interpretations – ways of knowing – depending on culture and background, but one natural world that is being interpreted or given meaning, perspectivism acts on the assumption that all peoples and animals have the same way of seeing the world but see different worlds. In this view, many species have a point of view or perspective given to them by their bodies. Bodies are the product of behavior, habits, foods, and so on, that are species-specific. But all species are united by a common background of undifferentiated subjectivity that existed before specific differentiation. One sees oneself and one’s kind as same – humans being the model – and others as different. Inter-species transformation is a constant threat; one usually signaled by a change in one’s perspective – seeing something strange that one ought not, such as a tail or jaguar spots on a family member (Vilaça 2009; Viveiros de Castro 2010). The world is not a solid, unchangeable substratum to behavior but is the product of one’s practices.

In Amazonian perspectivism, the default mode would appear to be transformation: work must be done to keep things stable. One’s perspective – and we could extrapolate from this to a generalized relational ontology – is inherently unsteady precisely because you can never tell if your perspective is your own as the world will change in accordance with it. While some anthropologists continue to conceive of body practices among Amazonians, broadly construed, as the construction of a social person in opposition to a “dumb biological individual,” to use Levi-Strauss’ terminology (in Fortis 2010:480; e.g. Turner 2009), the recently popular theory of perspectivism allows for an alternative to the hylomorphic model. If transformation is constantly feared, and bodies are the root of one’s being, then acting on or with the body is both a means of ensuring bodily integrity but also a means to transformation. The notion that bodies become enculturated through human action – as the hylomorphic model has it – does not fit the ethnographic accounts. When an individual body is worked on it is not in order to rid the body of its animal essence, i.e. it isn’t culture working on nature, human on matter. Rather, it’s about particularizing a too general body (Viveiros de Castro 1996:131), differentiating it from other groups and other species.

Chronically unstable bodies

I have written elsewhere (Alberti 2007; Alberti & Marshall 2009) that the burial and ceramic evidence from La Candelaria suggests a concern with “chronically unstable bodies” (Vilaça 2005). I argued for an equivalence between bodies and pots, both of which demonstrate a concern to shore up an uncertain and untrustworthy
materiality (see Figs 3 and 4). La Candelaria bodies were variously marked, shaped through cranial modification in life and then disarticulated, mixed, and burned at death. Pots show an equal concern with the instability or plasticity of form, in which biomorphic protuberances, exaggerated or fantastical bodies proliferate. The pots are a discourse, I argued, on the instability of matter illustrated through the treatment of bodies in life and death.

![Fig. 3. Chronically unstable bodies: modified crania from La Candelaria urn burials (redrawn from Rydén 1936, Figs 144 & 147).](image)

But that could introduce an additional problem: are we now talking about social construction? Is the world a world that is brought about through human thought and action? That would be an error. As Viveiros de Castro (2004b) has shown, such a position brings us full circle to a single world of brute matter and variously wrong interpretations of it. Bodies are inherently social, but not as an opposition between a common physical substrate and culturally specific ways of understanding that body. Fortis (2010:481), in a study of Kuna body and design, has argued that “Amerindian aesthetics deals with a particular way of conceiving the body.” To be human is to have an appropriate body, a body that has come into being through particular actions and through the help of designs inherent to it.

A parallel can be drawn: in arguing against the hylomorphic model, Ingold (2010) and others (Alberti 2007) have claimed that social construction leaves the object as dumb. To release the body can also imply releasing the object, the pot, usually considered in the same way as the imposition of a human design (cultural) onto raw material, giving it meaning. Extending the Amazonian model as I have to pots, and adding Fortis’ contention about aesthetics and design, results in a pot that is enabled, brought into being, through appropriate actions and the relationship it entails with other beings. Design is inherent in the pot, just as it is in the body. It is not something imposed on the pot – or on matter itself.
The inherent dynamism of the world

Viveiros de Castro does not rate artefacts or objects in his account. They appear as “cultural instruments,” but secondary to the human-animal transformative relation; mere props for the action. Other anthropologists disagree, however, arguing that in a number of groups cultural artefacts preceded humanity’s differentiation, actually providing the raw material in many cases that transformed into humans and animals (see contributions to Santos-Granero 2009). Body ornaments, for example, can be key to the complex play of visibility/invisibility that characterizes shamanic practices. According to Miller (2009:61), black bands of internal (invisible) and external (visible) body beads among the Mamaindê define the subject, “conferring upon her consciousness, direction, intentionality and memory.” The beads are not intrinsically visible or invisible – their status results from the “visual capacity of the observer,” that is, her perspective.
There are also interesting parallels to perspectivist thinking that are emerging in methodologically scientific archaeology. In a recent book on materials analysis, Conneller (2011:3) argues for a radical châine opératoire approach: the properties of an object that are considered essential are historical and socially specific, related to the techniques for engaging with materials. More to the point, she argues that “properties cannot be uncomplicatedly grasped by an analyst because they arise through the process of people’s very different interactions with matter” (Conneller 2011:8). In other words, certain properties remain invisible due to perspective and equipment.

Conneller’s work is part of a growing trend towards a contemporary form of vitalism, a desire to see materials as properly lively and not slaves to form. Ingold (2010:92), who is representative of this new approach, wants to replace substance ontology “with an ontology that assigns primacy to the processes of formation as against states of matter.” In this, Ingold (2010:92) aims to generalize from the notion that skilled practice is not about “imposing preconceived forms on inert matter” but rather about “intervening in the fields of forces and currents of material wherein forms are generated.” Ingold’s world is that of a generative flux, a relational ontology, not a substance ontology. The perspectivist world inverts the hylomorphic model: the substratum – solid ground to us – can be flipped. Ingold’s and Conneller’s emphasis on skilled practice in a shifting world of materials when combined with the perspectivist insistence on the inherent instability and shifty nature of bodies and hence perspectives suggest a further step: that matter in general can be conceived of as performed into being through practice. If this is the case, then images – as practices – are onto-generative (productive of reality) and not simply assigned meanings or simple representations.

Performative bodies, performative practices

If worlds are formed by practice, then what is an image? What kind of practice is it? Gell (1998:199) in Art and Agency makes the argument that Marquesan art is a technique for enhancing the person (Fig. 5). When the same designs used on people appear on house posts, they do not stand for that principle, they are not an analogue or metaphor, but are themselves enactments of it: the house post becomes a means of enhancing the house. I have argued that the same is the case for the La Candelaria pots – modifying or enhancing the body obeyed a perspectivist logic of resisting transformation. Pots, when marked as bodies, were being treated in the same way. That is, marked faces or bodies were enactments of a protective principle and not representations of it.

In relation to Amazonia, Viveiros de Castro (1996:131) writes: “Bodies are thought of as deeds not facts.” There is a widespread emphasis on the fabrication of bodies in Amazonia. Kinship is conceived as active assimilation through fluids (Conklin & Morgan 1996; Vilaça 2002; Viveiros de Castro 1996:131). Memories are written in
flesh. As such, the body is more performed than given (Viveiros de Castro 1996:132). Bodies suffer a broad range of enhancement, designed to continuously support one perspective and prevent a shift to another. Affects – behaviors, foods, actions – are one way to stay the same as those around you. The surface of the body is fully social as well as a direct indicator of your true self, such as your health or emotional state.

![Image of a tattooed native from the Marquesas Islands](Wikipedia File PSM V37 D632).

The wide range of practices that target the surface of the body include body painting, face painting, lip piercings, ear piercings, cheek piercings, as well as enhancement with body adornments, masking practices, and so. Bodies are also kneaded, massaged, and manipulated in various ways to ensure appropriate growth and prevent ontological predation – lose of perspective – at the hands of the animals.
and spirits (accomplished through various means and manifested as sickness and death). Bodies are created through these external interventions; they are “a graphic and physical penetration of society in the body” (Seeger et al. 1979: 15, as cited in Fortis 2010: 482), where “decoration is part of the creation of the body” (as cited in Fortis 2010:483).

If we read “pot” in place of body, the image begins to make sense. We can see the skilled practices applied to the forming, shaping, and molding of the pot. No two pots are identical although broad classes separate them. More-or-less recognizable motifs exist, although rarely unambiguously. The way in which the clay was manipulated or enhanced includes extensive incised marks (Fig. 6) that resonate with face painting designs. Incised lines are not limited to facial features, and are used to indicate other features of bodies, often in combination with molded or applied pieces. Molding and applications are widespread and often anthropo- or zoomorphic in theme, but rarely easily recognizable except, on occasion, as features of the face. Decorative techniques and use of material unites apparently disparate forms.

Pierced clay is relatively common – lips, ears, and especially the nose; even in the smallest example care is taken to pierce the clay through and through. Nostrils, eyes, and occasionally mouths are indented, as were non-identifiable elements (Fig. 7). The marks and lines visibly reference the maker or makers of the pots. They and their instruments are an integral part of the image as practice, lending
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their perspective to the task of transformation. Tools have left their trace: the ends of small bones leave distinctive indentations; tubular indents for eyes may have been made with bone or hollow sticks. Incisions often show an uneven surface or shape that corresponds to a quasi-circular tool applied at an angle. The same tool may have been used for various features on the same piece.

Figs. 7a & b: Pierced nose and lip on face of anthropomorphic pot, Museo Arqueológico El Cadillal. Excavated from a funerary context, Dique El Cadillal (Berberian et al. 1977). Photos: Benjamin Alberti.

Clearly, choices were made. The piercings obviously resonate with the piercing of human bodies. But why incise instead of paint? The question, I argue, is moot: the image is it not about representing a practice that exists elsewhere, but about a new practice that emerges in company with this material. The piercings are deceptive, I think: they are not referring to a body prototype, a real body somewhere else. The pot’s emergent properties – fully relational and inclusive of the maker and tools – are the target and means of the specific transformation. The marks are different to marks on a body because these are different images, different on-going material practices, or technologies – clay is pushed aside, indentations are made, the surface solidifies in ways human bodies do not. They are referring to process, acts, performances. Bodies and pots are not the same substance or matter waiting to be enhanced: rather, they are equivalent because they obey the same ontological principle of motion.

A final clue to how to think of these pots as images is offered by the Amazonian ethnographies. Design can be inherent to bodies and personhood (Fortis 2010; Lagrou 2009). Lagrou (2009) writes of design among the Cashinahua, where free floating images can cause bodies to change shape, and designs are integral to the development of children. For example, face painting designs on neophytes are painted with broad lines to ensure that propitiatory songs can enter their permeable bodies (Fig. 8). Design or image is not a representation of the source of transformation but the act of transformation itself.
Conclusion: Imaging making

The notions of skillful making and châine opératoire are important reminders that completed pots are never a given. A host of decisions, strategies, ideas, experiences, and material constraints are negotiated on the way to a complete object. But the assumption often remains of an increasingly elaborated object accumulating social and symbolic significance alongside technical efficacy. The connections established across domains, such as potting and metal working (Gosselain 1999), or potting and burial (Sillar 2004), are often couched in term of metaphors attached to the technical processes. The steps in the châine opératoire become “the locus of symbolic discourse” (Gosselain 1999:205).

My argument is different. Technical acts do not comment on each other metaphorically but are ontological equivalents; they are the same process. The technical elements and tool kit – bones of birds or animals, sticks, stones for burnishing, etc. – are not metaphorically pointing to other activities and ideas but are ontologically part of the image itself. So, when I say images are practices I do not mean to come down on the side of practice and against the side of the finished object. That would simply restore the balance between the terms. Rather, I mean to do away with finished objects altogether. Reichel-Dolmatoff (1988) used ethnography as direct historic analogy to reconstruct the past lives of his golden objects. I am more interested in the theoretical possibilities than the analogical. The principles I develop from perspectivism are ontological in nature. Everything, therefore, must be inflected by this logic: all is movement, or instability. Static forms or images in a world underwritten by a logic of motility and transformation make no sense. And it is not just the image that is motile but image making itself. Ingold (2011:210) quotes the artist Paul Klee, who wrote, “Form is the end, death […] Form-giving is life.” To cut, pinch and pierce are ontological, transformative acts and an on-going process of image-making in which even finished forms are only ever apparent.

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Notes

1. In this chapter I write about “Amazonia” in quite general terms, given the huge variety of groups in the region. The area is incredibly linguistically and ethnically diverse (see Hornberg & Hill 2011). My reasons are twofold: analytically, it is useful to cast the net broadly in order to set up a contrastive case that highlights the point I want to make about the archaeology; and Viveiros de Castro (2010) in his work on perspectivism is clear that what he is after is a system of thought rigorous enough to confront the preeminence of other traditions of thought that have dominated anthropological theory. Insofar as his theory resonates with approaches that adopt various forms of animism in archaeology (e.g. Brown & Walker 2008; Harrison 2012), the differences lies in how he approaches the material: not as a resource for analogy building but as a source for theory building (see Alberti & Marshall 2009). To do so requires general statements, nor particular cases. He has been criticized by other established Amazonianists for his generalizing approach (e.g. Turner 2009).

References


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The Rape of the Lock
Or a Comparison between Miniature Images
of the Eighth and Eighteenth Centuries

Ing-Marie Back Danielsson

Abstract This paper discusses Scandinavian gold foil figures from the early part of the Scandinavian Late Iron Age (AD 550-1050) as well as miniature portrait pendants of the eighteenth century. The paper examines the possibility of comparing the two categories of objects, and what may be gained by contrasting historic and prehistoric images. The comparison is made through using Mitchell’s concept meta-picture as a theoretical tool. It is highlighted that the relationality between image and beholder is decisive for how respective objects were comprehended and treated. However, despite the fact that the two analyzed materials were part of different scopic regimes and regimes of practice, they share vitalistic and/or animistic characteristics.

Introduction
This paper discusses two different kinds of images and makes a comparison between the two. The first type of image is miniature portrait pendants from the eighteenth century and the second is small gold foil figures from eighth-century Scandinavia. They may be described as miniatures and they are both concerned with human/oid bodies. Further, they have received various bodily treatments. Miniature portraits of the eighteenth century may be equipped with locks of hair of the portrayed, kept on the reverse side of the miniature portrait pendant. Gold foil figures, on the other hand, may at times be pierced in vital organs, dressed with necklaces or belts, or they may have possible phallic features added to them.

Of course, the main title of this paper is taken from Alexander Pope’s (1688-1744) famous mock-epic poem ‘The Rape of the Lock’. The poem was written in the eighteenth century when miniature portraits became more popular and widespread among the elite. In Pope’s poem a lock of beautiful Belinda’s hair is raped, or stolen, by the Baron. It was written in response to an actual incident where a lock of hair was cut off without permission, resulting in a breach between two aristocratic families. The poem was meant to make a satire of the follies and vanities of the upper stratum of
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society. It also proves how body parts of different genders and classes were perceived as having certain powers and significance, and manipulating, removing or violating these expressed relations of power (see for instance Pollack 1981; Kristeva 1995; Singh 1990). Body parts of gold foil figures have also been manipulated in some instances, and the violating of these might also be seen as an expression of power relations, albeit different from those of the eighteenth century. It must be pointed out here that the word “rape” is used to describe actions that are violent and not, as is frequently the case today, necessarily connected to sexual acts. Despite the thousand years that separates the two materials, this paper forms an experiment in contrasting them with each other. The theoretical tool employed to enable the comparison is Mitchell’s concept of the meta-picture (2005). It is thereby demonstrated how the relationality between image and beholder results in different, and sometimes similar, understandings and treatments of them. When contrasted it becomes clear that eighth-century gold foil figures are not identifiable, still portraits of Late Iron Age Scandinavian divinities. On the other hand, miniature portrait pendants of the eighteenth century are indeed meant to be static, still portraits. However, the evaluation equally allows reflecting on these pendants as non-static items. As meta-pictures both materials share vitalistic and/or animistic characteristics, perhaps evoking feelings of uncanniness.

Image as meta-picture and materiality as meta-thing

For archaeologists, material culture is the prime departure of analysis, for any questions or query they might have about humans in the past. Needless to say pictures are a part of material culture, although it has been claimed that prehistoric imagery is overlooked by archaeologists (Cochrane & Jones 2012). Are there differences between images and other forms of material culture? If so, what do these consist of? Do images exert special powers or, rather, do we endow them with special powers? Were images always like this? What would the definition of an image be? W. J. T. Mitchell (e.g. 1996; 2005) has discussed these questions and matters at length. According to Mitchell images are ‘any likeness, figure, motif, or form that appears in some medium or other’ and is taken for a picture (Mitchell 2005:xiii-xiv). In addition, pictures are understood as ‘complex assemblages of virtual, material, and symbolic elements’ (Mitchell 2005:xiii).

While Mitchell recognizes that images make demands, awaken desires, repulsions, etc., and as such may be perceived as living entities, it is important to understand that images are only living through our perceptions of them. Indeed the living image is a metaphor, a meta-picture, ‘a secondary, reflexive image of images’ (Mitchell 2005:10), highlighting the relationality of image and beholder. This is where the meta-picture becomes relevant for archaeologists who focus on the materiality of things. Materiality also places an emphasis on the relational aspect between human beings and things, which Meskell (2006) has described as co-presence, and Keane (2003) as bundling; Latour (1991) has also described things as co-producers in, for instance, arts and styles.
When turning the relationality of image (or thing) and beholder into our focus of interest, it is pertinent to ask whether this relationality would be the same throughout history and prehistory, and indeed the same for all human beings. Of course, it is not, for a number of reasons. Our present day societies place an emphasis on the visual, partly a result of us living in a literate context (e.g. Ong 1982; Classen 1993). For us eyes and sight are conventional and focal vehicles of identity – our semiotics of identity (Pollock 1995:590). A modern Western example of this would be a piece of material covering the eyes (for instance opaque sun-glasses), working as a way of hiding and transforming one's identity. An equally sized piece of material covering your knee or part of your cheek simply would not have the same effect.

Whereas it may be suggested that the relationality is universal, the manner of relating is different throughout history and prehistory. Is it the case that a literate society gains a specific relation to images or pictures, due to vision being its semiotics of identity and equally its constant focus on ‘reading’ and producing such images (that is, writing words)? Research has proved that there are major differences between literate societies and societies with oral literacy. These differences manifest themselves in a variety of ways, especially in terms of how the body and society remembers, creates, structures and perceives the world (Ong 1982; Classen 1993; Pollock 1995). Again, whereas literate societies place an emphasis on the visual, other societies may use other forms of bodily senses as their focal vehicles of identity. How may the bodily senses and organs have been used to structure the world, and to remember? Was there a reliance on the oral and aural, as with the Kulina in South America (Pollock 1995), or the olfactory, as with the Ongee of the Andaman Islands (Classen 1993), or on temperature, as with the Totzil of Mexico (Classen 1993; cf. Haaland 2004)? On colours, as with the Colombian Desana (Classen 1993) or on luminosity (cf. Herbert 1984)? Ultimately, what I am arguing here is that Western societies tend to read images, pictures, material culture, and indeed people, as if they were texts, waiting to be read. This means that the phenomenon of study is actually grasped only through the lens of specific Western images, ‘text-images’. In so doing, ‘the dominance and priority of visual perception in Western epistemology’ is maintained (Bassi 2011:43). Borrowing from Jay (1988; 1993), this ocularcentrism prioritizes discussions related to reading and writing. By reading material remnants, we fail to see them. Although admitting it is perhaps a far stretch, Bassi argues that ‘the archaeologist “reads” what these pre-literate humans would have written about their monuments had they been able to do so...the figure of reading the past resists the fading of its object in the interest of fixity, durability, and universality’ (Bassi 2011:44). This kind of reading of past remains is also found in archaeological works using a materiality perspective (see Bassi 2011 for examples). Using Mitchell’s argument that the living image is a metaphor, materiality corresponds to the meta-picture, or rather a meta-thing, a reflexive image of things. This secondary image needs to take the relationship between picture/thing and beholder into consideration, since it is this relationship
that creates the meta-picture or meta-thing – it is not the picture or the thing itself that does this. Mitchell (2005) elegantly demonstrates the many ways in which the relationality between image and beholder may be expressed. But, importantly, he also underscores that images or pictures need not only involve analogues with human attributes. Instead pictures may also connect to ‘features of vitality, animation, and desire (at minimum, appetite)’ that emanates from the vegetal and animal kingdom (Grønstad & Vågnes 2006). It cannot be assumed that an image or picture ‘thinks like us’; they may have inhuman qualities (Grønstad & Vågnes 2006). With this in mind, two seemingly unrelated and incongruent image types will be explored and discussed.

Miniature portraits of the eighteenth century

At the turn of the eighteenth century it was popular for society’s upper crust – the nobility and bourgeoisie – to own miniature portrait pendants. By the mid eighteenth century the taste for miniature portraits had also spread to the upper middle class. The art of miniature portraits, however, evolved far earlier than this. In Britain it started in the first half of the sixteenth century, with migrating book painters from Flanders (Coombs 1998; Walker 1998). They were at that time only connected to royal circles. The earliest miniature portraits looked more like stylized icons than real portraits, and they sometimes had inscriptions in Latin (Walker 1998).

The first known portrait miniature is of Henry VIII (1491-1547), and it is dated to the years 1524-6. The miniature is painted in watercolour on vellum in the same technique as the richly decorative initial letters in medieval book paintings. The watercolour or gouache technique was also used on ivory to produce miniature portraits. Such portraits were normally covered by glass and set within a frame or a capsule (Rönnerstam 2000), as in the example of Otto Carl von Fieandt (1758-1825) presented below (Fig. 1). The framing was of utmost importance for keeping the portrait intact. Without protection the surface of the watercolour painting could easily be damaged, since the portrait miniatures were usually worn or carried around (Frondelius 2010).

The tradition of portrait miniatures steadily declined in the nineteenth century with the invention of the camera. The photographic image took the place of portrait miniatures (Rönnerstam 2000). During a period of transition, portrait miniature artists were engaged to colour black-and-white photographs. Portrait miniature artists also tried to paint portraits in a manner imitating that of the camera. John Tagg (1988) has thoroughly discussed the ways in which the photograph was used to create truths, where the invention of the machine, the camera, was pivotal in the process. Through the machine, it was believed that a neutral device did the observing, catching moments of truths. Of course, the spread and use of photography came to be very different from that of miniature portraits (for more on photography see for instance Tagg 1988; 2009).
Here we begin to note how the concept miniature is avoided when photographs of people (or any other thing) are discussed. This is in some respects remarkable, since both portraits of photographic quality and portraits in other materials could be, and were, carried around as mementos of dear ones. They served in this respect the same purpose. Then why the rejection of the concept miniature? Why are not photographs miniatures? Perhaps this hints at the limitations the concept ‘miniature’ has? (cf. Alberti, forthcoming). Miniature is in itself a fairly modern word, coming from the Latin word minium, meaning red lead which was used to colour the initial letter in medieval books. Or can it be suggested that the usage of the word miniature implies a certain distance, or a specific relation, between beholder and object? The choice of calling something a miniature could be an expression of different relationalities. Photos are persuasive and authoritative (again, see Tagg 1988), and are frequently referred to as living entities. This is evident in phrases such as: ‘- This is my house…’, ‘- These are the Rocky Mountains…’; ‘This is me as a kid’ when looking at photos. A man who wanted his wife’s portrait painted by Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) showed Pablo a photo of her with the words ‘-This is my wife’ which allegedly received the reply: ‘- Well, isn’t she small’. His reply highlights how our relation to photographs is saturated with a belief that photos are truthful, they are the reality. Ultimately, this demonstrates the importance of taking the relationality between what we today choose to call object and person into consideration, if we are to understand prehistoric, and present, ways of living and being.

Portraits and locks of hair as tokens of love and affection

Many portraits in miniature – with locks of hair – have survived to the present day. They are kept by collectors and may also be seen at museums in Europe and North America. The Swedish National Museum has the largest collection in the world, with over 5,300 miniature portraits. For comparison, the National Museum of Finland only has some 250 miniature portraits.

Portraits were commissioned to celebrate both family and romantic love, and they were also exchanged (Zohn 2011). As already mentioned only the upper class could afford having portraits made. Both miniature portraits and locks of hair – at times joined in a pendant – worked as tokens of love and affection that could be – and were – carried around.

Although locks of hair were popular in elaborate lockets in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, often hidden from view, such hair locks were made more visible during the eighteenth century both as elements of jewellery or pendants, and as singular items in themselves in the form of bracelets or fob chains (Cooper 1971; Walker 1998).
Added and incorporated manipulations – analytical tools

While not denying that miniature portrait pendants of the time show slight variations in the shape of the pendants, painting fashion, how hair locks are worked into specific patterns, or even show lack of locks, they have one thing in common: the painting (and hair work) is protected by glass. You are meant to look at the portrait, and carry it with you. The portrait/body and body parts/hair locks are to remain intact, undisturbed by touch and time. This, I argue, is a central quality of the miniature portrait. Once manufactured it was not to be manipulated or crumpled up, but to be looked at and admired from a certain distance – portrait and hair remaining the same, untouched and untouchable.

The painting and hair locks of the miniature pendant were of course portrayed in the then current upper-class fashion. This means that the portrait from a modern perspective has certain specific traits, which for us may seem more or less natural and perhaps less in agreement with how the painted person must have looked in real life. For analytical reasons I refer to this practice as producing objects with incorporated manipulations. *Incorporated manipulations* are made at the same time as the object itself is made, and this practice is typical for miniature portrait pendants as well as gold foil figures. The second kind of manipulation is referred to as added manipulations. *Added manipulations* are, as far as I have been able to find, only connected to certain gold foil figures. Added manipulations are made after the birth of the object, and may consist of adding details to it, piercing the object, or crumpling it up. Many gold foil figures, but not all, have received such treatments.

In the following I will describe one specific miniature portrait pendant in some greater detail with regard to its incorporated manipulations. This pendant has been chosen since museum experts claim it to be typical and representative of the miniature portrait pendants that were popular among the elite in the late eighteenth century.

**Otto’s looks and locks – incorporated manipulations**

The miniature portrait to be discussed in some detail here is of Otto Carl von Fieandt (1758-1825) and from the year 1791 (Fig. 1). von Fieandt was from Finland, and he worked for the King Gustav III (1746-1792) of Sweden due to his expertise in drawing military maps. He was sent to France by the Swedish king to map the route of travel of the French army. When Otto was in Paris, he had his portrait painted by the Swede Jacob Axel Gillberg (1769-1845). However, the different parts of the pendant were made by several artisans each being an expert in the details of his/her craft. von Fieandt came from the parish of St Michel in Finland, and the pendant was bought by the Finnish National Heritage Board from the very same parish in 1921 (Frondelius 2010). This indicates that Otto brought the pendant back with him, to Finland, after his mission abroad.
The painting of Otto is protected by glass, as noted earlier. On the backside of the pendant a lock of Fieandt’s hair has been plaited into a symmetrical pattern. The plaited lock is also protected by glass. The golden frame with the bow on top of the pendant is typical of the portrait miniatures of the time.

![Miniature portrait of Otto Carl von Fieandt](image)

Fig. 1. Miniature portrait of Otto Carl von Fieandt – front to the left, back to the right. The miniature is 3.8 cm high and has a width of 3.1 cm. Photo: Museiverket/Jan Lindroth. Source: The National Board of Antiquities, Finland.

Although the portrait probably would be reminiscent of how Otto looked in real life, his appearance is portrayed or manipulated in certain, specific ways. Otto's face is that of a middle aged man. He is well-dressed and has a fashionable and aristocratic wig in a greyish off-white colour, typical of the time (Fig. 1). Only the skin of the face is visible to the viewer. His skin tone is portrayed as pale, although the cheeks are contrastingly rosy looking, perhaps indicating a healthy or a blushing appearance? Otto probably had side-burns – one is shown on his left cheek that seemingly is both greyish and in his natural hair colour (brown). The darker hue beneath the nose and on his chin indicates that Otto would have had a covering beard and moustache, was it not for the fact that he had shaved properly.

Otto looks at you with rather large, friendly and/or affectionate eyes and the lips of his mouth are slightly turned upwards, indicating a smile. Despite the fact that Otto's clothes look formal and uniform-like, his outer garment is unbuttoned at the top, although a white scarf (?) prevents you from any further encounters with skin.
His friendly and/or affectionate appearance suggests a certain degree of intimacy with the viewer of the portrait. Its smallness, too, forcing you to take a closer look, makes it a private affair. You are meant to look at Otto, and Otto looks back at you, in a presumably known, intimate fashion.

Otto’s looks and locks are protected by glass, underlining the visual as the primary sense to experience the pendant. By placing the plaited lock on the reverse of the pendant an illusory three-dimensional effect was accomplished. The face is up front, shown to you and others in your proximity, and the back side of Otto’s head, the hair, is closest to your body, invisible to others but known to you. The backside is also connected to intimacy since it revealed Otto’s true hair colour beneath the wig. The pendant is meant for someone close to Otto, someone who knew him as someone dear. Despite the intimacy and the visual focus, bodily engagement with the pendant would also have meant caressing or kissing a hard, cold surface (glass), rendering the portrait of Otto and his hair lock unchanged in appearance.

In contrast to the miniature portrait pendants, I will now discuss the miniature images from the eighth century AD. Although these miniatures, too, were meant to be looked at, their variety of both incorporated and added manipulations suggests that they must have been approached differently to modern miniatures; that is, they imply a different relationality.

An overview of gold foil figures

Gold foil figures are known from Denmark, Sweden and Norway, and are generally dated to the Vendel Period (AD 550-800). They are tiny and have a length of c. 1-2.5cm, and weigh less than one gram, commonly c. 0.1-0.15 g (Gullman 2004). These thin gold foils may show human-like single figures, pairs, and at times also animals (Figs. 3-5). A few may be highly stylized, and may also have loops, indicating that they have been worn as pendants, just as the pendant of Otto.

The majority of the figures are stamped with the use of bronze patrices whereas others may be cut from very thin gold foil (Lamm 2004:109). Depictions of gold foil figures are known in literature from the eighteenth century (e.g. Sperling 1700; Sjöborg 1791). Only through archaeological excavations in the twentieth century were the circumstances and contexts in which gold foil figures were recovered recorded in more detail. The most frequent place of recovery for the figures has been in connection to special buildings or workshops (e.g. Helgö, Slöinge, Borg, Uppåkra, Svintuna, Vä, Husby; see Fig. 2). However, they have also been recovered in a bog (Tørring), secondary within burials (Bolmsö, Visingsö, Ulltuna) and in or as hoards (e.g. Hög Edsten, Nørre Hvam) (Andréasson 1995; Back Danielsson 2007:194-195). More than 2,800 gold foil figures have been recovered on the island of Bornholm, Denmark (Lamm 2004: 125), but other places have produced anything from a few to several hundred figures.
Whereas, of course, there are a great number of topics that can be, and have been, discussed with regard to gold foil figures (Watt 1991; 1992; 2004; Hauck 1994; Lamm 2004; Back Danielsson 1999; 2007; 2010), I will in the following concentrate on the bodily manipulations the figures have undergone. The find circumstances of the figures have not provided the opportunity to date them more closely (see Lamm 2004 for dating discussions), which means that it is not possible, unfortunately, to suggest that certain gold foil figures appear at certain times.

Fig. 2. Map of Scandinavia with the geographical locations of patrices and gold foil figures, Borg and Kongsvik, Norway, not included. (After Watt 2004:168, figure 1.)

Despite the fact that gold foil figures may seem great in number, it must be emphasized that they have not been retrieved from the normal, average, everyday settlement/area. The locations, as well as the metal itself and the painstaking ways it has been manipulated, speak of specialized knowledge and an upper stratum of society. The same is true for the miniature portraits, described above.
Gold foil figures – manipulations of bodies

What manipulations have the gold foil figures undergone? As mentioned earlier, two kinds of manipulations may be noted. The first consists of incorporated manipulations made at the same time as the figure itself, that is, the exaggeration or abbreviation (manipulation) is part of the patrinx used to make the foil figure. The second kind of manipulation was made after the figure was stamped, or occasionally cut out of a foil. These include dressing the figures with necklaces (Fig. 3c) or belts, piercing the figures, adding possible phallic features (Fig. 5), bending the lower part/legs of the figures implying a seated posture (Fig. 5), and the like.

Incorporated manipulations

Incorporated manipulations of the figures mainly include manipulations of features of the head, hands and/or arms, and jewellery. Starting with the head most of the figures have enlarged eyes and noses (Figs. 3 a-c). It must be pointed out that the enlarged or bulbous eyes and enlarged or rolling-pin-like noses are not restricted to gold foil figures, but can be found on other Late Iron objects such as figures, for instance, on a mounting, a yoke finial, a runestone, and on pendants over an extended period of time (Back Danielsson 2007:123-134). Elsewhere, I have argued that these features ultimately signalled the time and occasion for imminent transformations, the purposes of which was most probably to perform certain ceremonies relating to marriage, death, prophesy-making (the Norse sejdr), and/or birth (Back Danielsson 2007:135, 205 and cited references, cf. Skre 1996).

Lips and ears of the face are seldom specifically marked or enlarged. Despite the absence of lips, gold foil couples are commonly described as kissing and as being in love (see elaborate discussion of this in Back Danielsson 2007, Part One). Enlarged lips are only known in one case to my knowledge, and here two opposing figures seem to be engaged in the consumption of food (Back Danielsson 2007, fig. 10; see also Lamm 2004:81). Apart from manipulations of the head, hands and/or arms may be exaggerated. This may be because their position was important, as in gestures or as in placing emphasis on hands holding things, where these things might be enlarged as well (as in drinking goblets, for instance). The importance of gestures in non-literate or oral societies has been noted by many researchers (e.g. Ratke & Simek 2006; Watt 1992; 2004). A few gestures are similar to those shown on Christian figures on a variety of objects from continental Europe (Watt 2004:204-209), others are seemingly entirely Scandinavian phenomena.

The jewellery of the figures, in the form of arm-rings, brooches (such as disc-on-bow brooches) and necklaces, is also enlarged. Since it is known that jewellery carried significant details in pivotal stories or ceremonies (e.g. Magnus 2001) it is not surprising to find these elements exaggerated.
Added manipulations

Stamped figures, as well as cut figures, have occasionally been dressed up with golden necklaces and/or golden belts (Fig. 3c; see also Watt 2004, figures 14 and 18). A few examples of crudely executed figures have been further equipped with possible phalluses (Fig. 5), and/or appear to have been stabbed by golden items (see figure 31, b-e, in Watt 2004:200). Importantly, the added-on jewellery or paraphernalia – the golden strips – when separated from the figures would probably be interpreted by archaeologists as an artisan’s or smith’s waste, and therefore considered of lesser importance. However, since this so-called waste – in the form of foil fragments – was recovered in the same positions as most of the foil figures in the case of Uppåkra, for instance (Larsson & Lenntorp 2004:25), it is possible to conceive of these strips or fragments as important as a variety of props for divine and miniature beings. Or, indeed, they were like highly stylized and crudely executed divine beings themselves (see figure 18, g-k, in Larsson & Lenntorp 2004:26).

Fig. 3a (left) A gold foil couple from Svintuna, Östergötland, Sweden. Couples are prominent at locations such as at Helgö, Slöinge and Borg (The National Historical Museum). 3b (middle) This figure from Uppåkra has the characteristically rolling-pin-like nose and carries a lance/sceptre (Watt 2004: 177 fig. 9). 3c (right) An Uppåkra figure with caftan clothes, dressed with an added golden collar? The figure carries a short pointed sword as well. Other figures – not only of gold foil – are known to have been dressed in golden collars, and such collars also adorned human beings (Watt 2004: 172 fig. 3a).

Uppåkra – the rape of the foil

A few gold foil figures, cut out of a thick gold foil and recovered within a special building in Uppåkra, Sweden, show traces of carved patterns (Fig. 4). Their at times crude cutting opens up for experiencing the figurines as other-than, or more-than, human entities. In figure 4 it is notable that figure e has been bent in the middle, perhaps in order to remind one of a seated posture. Its face has also suffered two
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blows with a sharp pointed object. These marks might equally be interpreted as the making of bulbous eyes, indicating trance and far sightedness (see Back Danielsson 2007). Figure a has also been cut in the arms and in the feet. Do these marks add animalistic qualities to the figure, such as wings on the arms, and the figure’s feet an animal’s cloven hoofs? (cf. the gold foil figure from Eketorp, Sweden, with tightly held ‘invisible’ arms in a tip-toe position and with a possible feathered or fur-like garment).

Consider further figure 5, where additional foil figures from Uppåkra are shown. Some of these are strip-like figures that have golden features added to them. These attachments have been interpreted as phalluses (Watt 2004:199-200). It is equally possible, however, that the piercing of the figures indicates and facilitates a penetrating movement. For the second figure from the left, this could have taken the form of an ongoing intercourse with a loose phallus which the caretaker could manoeuvre and

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Fig. 4. Uppåkra gold foil figures that appear to have clothes, or other paraphernalia, engraved. Enlarged. Photo: Bengt Almgren. Source: Watt (2004:198).
The Rape of the Lock

direct. The third figure from the left could apparently be stabbed repeatedly in the heart-region. Also note that these strips are bent, possibly symbolizing a seated posture.

Fig. 5. Gold foil strips from Uppåkra (although the one on the left is from Bornholm). There are also noticeable similarities between the above strips and gold foil figures recovered on Bornholm, though these had loop holes enabling them to be worn/hung. Enlarged. Photo: Bengt Almgren. Source: Watt (2004:200).

Comparison: similarities and differences between the two materials

*Material, manufacture and manipulation:* One of the most obvious similarities of the two materials is that they are material expressions of a particular stratum of society – the upper class. Gold foil figures were made of gold and miniature portrait pendants were partly made of gold too. Gold can be seen as everlasting – it preserves its surface intact for centuries, constantly glittering and shimmering, providing normal atmospheric conditions prevail (Back Danielsson 2007:187 with references). The glass of the miniature pendant is hard and protects the appearance of the portrait and
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text continues here
in the shape of statues or something similar (Steinsland 1983:85). This accentuates the special position and role the artisan held at the time in question. Only through the expertise of the smith/artisan could certain human bodies and divine bodies receive the correct treatment/paraphernalia that were required for them to perform in intended and, perhaps, unintended ways. Following Alberti (this volume), gold foil figures and human bodies were ontological equivalents.

Miniature portrait pendants only have incorporated manipulations – that is manipulations made at the time of the portrait making. They include taking locks of hair from the portrayed and painting the person in certain, specific and perceived fashionable ways. Gold foil figures, on the other hand, have both incorporated and added manipulations. The added manipulations, in the form of stabbing, piercing, crumpling and ‘dressing’ them up, speak of lives that differed from those of the portrait pendants.

_Gazing versus doing:_ A major difference between the materials involves two agential verbs: gazing and doing. The miniature portrait pendants are, despite the bodily manipulations, very much reliant on seeing. The portrayed looks at you and you look back at this person. Since the portrayed seemingly knows that someone close will be looking back at him/her, the look of the portrayed has an air of intimacy. You are not meant to manipulate the portrait. The visual is the prime sense with which to engage with the miniature.

If miniature portrait pendants are mostly connected with seeing, gold foil figures are connected with doing. The figures are seemingly doing things, such as standing in a tip-toe position, sitting, kissing, drinking, etc. Their appearance has equally required action of the person handling and gazing at the figure. At times the figures have been stabbed, crumpled up, dressed up, etc. Both the manufactured figure and the handling person seemingly had to do things. Whereas gazing versus doing can be said to be a major difference between the materials, it can equally be declared to be a similarity. It is as if both images (or rather the meta-things or meta-pictures) brought with them certain actions that were dictated by the images themselves. A person looking at you results in you looking back at the person. A human-like figure engaged in different activities, perhaps experienced as divine, godly, uncanny, human as well as animal-like or vegetal-like – perhaps all aspects at the same time – could have resulted in you doing things to the artefact.

_Size:_ Both materials share the property of being rather small. However, this does not have to mean that they are miniatures – that they are representations in a smaller form of something bigger. The two materials discussed are far more independent, elusive and enigmatic than that. However, that does not mean that size is unimportant. The choice of size brings with it certain desirable and perhaps also unintended effects.
Small figures or bodies may evoke emotions within the handler or viewer, such as wonder, awe and/or empowerment (see Bailey 2005:29, 33). But equally, I would argue, encountering something small, reminiscent of human-like, or god-like, bodies (gold foil figures) or someone you know (portrait pendants) may give you feelings of humbleness and empathy, that is the small, tiny entity/living being needs you to take care of it.

Making things/entities in smaller sizes requires expertise, and furthermore very often that certain characteristic of the body is abbreviated. Abbreviation commonly holds that certain marks or elements are only considered necessary in a specific context (Proschan 1983:14). This abbreviation invites disparate significata which opens them up to interpretational plurality (Tonkin 1979:245). With such techniques, paradox and power is manifested and exerted, inviting and generating a possible array of mixed and enhanced feelings. To be able to relate to such significata is to be powerful (Tonkin 1979:245). This, I would argue, is especially pertinent in the case of stylized gold foil figures, at times worn as pendants. These luminous, crudely and abbreviated figures were for an uninitiated person hard to relate to in intended or desired ways. A miniature portrait of Otto, on the other hand, probably would have been recognizable as a portrait of someone known in certain circles.

Conclusions

The era during which miniature portraits were most popular belongs to the Enlightenment, a period connected to major changes in society. This time also saw the invention and growth of a number of regulating institutions, the result of intensified categorizations and taxonomies of existences in the world (for instance Foucault 1977). It is also the time of the birth of the individual, a person alone responsible for his/her actions before the law (e.g. Jones 2007:28 with references). The increased emphasis on the visual – the gazing – is connected to the panopticon (see more in Foucault 1979). The eighteenth century also saw the emergence of the concept of good taste, and efforts were made to theorize all the sensuous opinions of the modern subject – the aesthetics (e.g. Holmgaard 1996). In literature of the time, the behaviours and ideas came to be commented upon, and at times criticised. I have already mentioned Pope’s ‘The Rape of the Lock’, but it is also appropriate to mention Jonathan Swift’s (1667-1745) novel, Gulliver’s Travels. Gulliver’s travels took him both to the land of Lilliput and to Brobdingnag, the country of giants. In a context where criticism of society was under surveillance, different phenomena were made evident through satirical exaggerations, enabled by the manipulation of sizes relating to the human body of Gulliver himself. However, the satires cannot only be seen as critical comments on society. They may also be regarded as creating space for negotiating people’s identity and positions in several axes of power, both on an
individual level as well as on a collective one. Both the miniature portraits and the gold foil figures may be scrutinized with such recognitions in mind. In Jane Austen’s (1775-1817) novel *Sense and Sensibility* it is demonstrated that portrait miniatures are important characters and in the plot they serve as both truthful and deceitful agents in matters of love and loyalty (Hardy 1976), thus implying agency of the portraits.

The people of the eighth century had very different relations to images, divinities, living entities, animality, humanity, not least themselves and their own body and being in the world. Probably, gold foil figures not only involved humans, but also divinities as well as the vegetable and animal kingdom. As per usual, the figures have been categorized and also at times identified as gods, where the later Norse literature has acted as key. Be that as it may, many figures cannot be categorized or identified into such a matrix. In this context it must also be pointed out that gold foil figures rarely wear clothes that are portrayed in such a way that they may be used to identify the male or female sex/gender, the way in which we today stereotypically categorize human beings. In her study of garments in the Late Iron Age, Mannering (2006:42-43) could only categorize less than ten percent of the Danish gold foil figures as being of either sex and having corresponding clothes, and c. 40% of the Swedish gold foil figures. Since the bulk of the figures may not be attributed to the male or female sex/gender, this way of categorizing does not seem to have been relevant. The clothes of some figures, when discernible, have in some instances been found to represent real clothes, since elements from the garments have been retrieved archaeologically from burial contexts (Mannering 2004:72). This implies that certain garments are connected to specific transitional circumstances such as those between the world of the living and that of the dead. Other non-gendered garments, such as feather-like attire, have likewise been suggested to be connected to other transitional activities such as prophesy making (e.g. Fischer 1974). The fact that the garments and jewellery of the figures have their counterparts in real life or life among human beings (Mannering 2004:212) underscores the specialized knowledge of the artisan who would have had close encounters with these clothes and the ceremonies in which they participated. The gold foil figures point to the Late Iron Age materialization of something for us immaterial, a divine being. Gold in whatever form indicated a numinous presence, and the artisan possessed the expertise with which to transform gold in a variety of executions. The figures worked as performing objects that were manipulated in different ways in performances or stories. When made and engaged, the figures were transformed into subjects that obliterated our modern boundary between living and static dead matter. The smith/artisan was the creator of this being with agency. Without the artisan’s abilities, expertise and intimate knowledge of human and divine ceremonies, performances and bodily practices there would be no gold foil figures. The gold foil figures were instrumental in creating, explaining, and protecting the then current world and cosmos.
Both the miniature portrait pendants and the gold foil figures illustrate how the relationality between image and beholder create a specific meta-picture or meta-thing, where this relationality is dependent on a number of issues, some of which are accounted for above. What, then, can be gained by comparing two materials that are so far apart in time? In this case I chose one object from the eighteenth century, as described above a century whose societal changes had great impact on, and created, the sensuous person. By contrasting the two materials it was easier to understand how the gold foil figures should not be considered figures that can be identified. They are simply not still portraits of Late Iron Age divinities. Instead I pointed to the importance of acts of doing – figures doing things, and artisans/humans doing things to the figures, and of course artisans doing things to humans (dressing them up, for instance, in jewellery). Returning to Bassi’s criticism of ocularcentrism and archaeologists preferred methodology to read the past, gold foil figures are not about fixity, durability and universality. They are instead figures in flux, fickle and distinctive.

The comparison has also revealed that the disparate materials have a few things in common despite different scopic regimes, practices and ontologies. Their small size, manipulations and luminous appearances could have aroused both desire and repulsion and may also have created haunting images, evoking the other-worldly side of things and life.

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References


Encountering Imagery


Archives

In Loving Memory

Inscriptions, Images and Imagination at the North Head Quarantine Station, Sydney, Australia

Ursula Frederick & Anne Clarke

Abstract One hundred and fifty years ago, on a sandstone cliff high above Sydney Harbour, Australia, a number of individuals began carving the rocks and making their mark upon the land. The people who made these inscriptions were amongst Australia’s first migrants and free settlers who were put in quarantine. The Quarantine Station was established in 1828 to manage and control the spread of infectious diseases in the nascent colony of New South Wales. Who were these people and why were they compelled to mark their presence in stone here? In this paper we explore the words and images inscribed at the North Head Quarantine Station. They are, we suggest, an historical archive of passengers, ship’s names, and ports of origin as well as markers of passage and acts of memorialisation. An evocative testimony to lives held in suspension, we discuss also the profound effect of seeing these inscriptions and realising that for some of their makers the journey remained unfulfilled.

Introduction

A slowly fading inscription scored into a sandstone boulder at the North Head Quarantine Station, Sydney, records the names of three, or possibly four, people – John, Alice Oliver and George (Fig. 1). Dated to July 1893 the inscription prompts immediate questions: who were John, Alice Oliver and George? Were they a family? Under what circumstances did they find themselves in quarantine? Where did they come from and how did they get here? What prompted someone to inscribe their names amongst all the others on the edge of this cliff? Did they survive their time in quarantine, or is this a memorial to loved ones taken? Just one of over a thousand inscriptions, some singular, some collective, some formal, some informal, some visible, others tucked away from common sight, this example nonetheless illustrates the affective pull and power that a simple list of names and an associated date can exert, drawing the viewer into a visual and haptic interaction between this particular moment
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and the present of the past. In this paper we consider how the images created by the texts, motifs and design structures of the historical inscriptions at the Quarantine Station effect a process of communication between past and present, creator and observer, landscape and location.

Would the inscription described above and all the others that surround it spark our imaginations and engage our senses if it was located inside a church or some other public building where commemoration and memorialisation is anticipated and expected? Are we moved instead by finding something unfamiliar in the dramatic and abrupt physicality of the North Head cliffs and in and around the dark and multi-layered fabrics of the historic Quarantine Station infrastructure? In short, to what extent does the landscape and the spatial conditions of place play a role in our affective encounter with the traces the past has made? These associations; the interplay between the singular instances of inscription, the clustered groups of inscriptions, the physical and cultural landscapes of quarantine, filtered through our own responses to these contexts of mark-making, form the focus of this exploration of an assemblage of images located within a highly specific historical context.

Fig. 1. Inscription at Old Man’s Hat, North Head Quarantine Station, Sydney, Australia. Photograph: Ursula Frederick.

Maritime connections

Like many nations in the southern hemisphere, Australia was founded in an age of European expansion propelled by maritime technologies. Beginning in 1606 the continent called Terra Australis was discovered, mapped, and settled in a piecemeal
fashion by the Dutch, the French and the English. Prior to European colonization, another maritime culture – the Macassan fishermen of Indonesia – undertook regular voyages to northern Australia for the purposes of trade with Indigenous peoples (Macknight 1976). This maritime history is reflected in the country’s settlement patterns, archaeology, built environment and the genealogical heritage of its population. Even today major political, environmental and economic issues are framed by the vast stretches of ocean that surround the country.

Early settlement of the British colony centred on the anchorage of Port Jackson, a natural harbour which is now part of the greater city of Sydney. The colonial town of Sydney was deeply reliant on shipping for penal transportation, supplies and communications from Europe (Karskens 2009). Unsurprisingly then, life in this early colony and the landscape within which it flourished, was consequently shaped by the people, news and goods that arrived from overseas. Through their actions, the early colonists wrote this history of sea transportation into the fabric of their fledgling settlement. In addition to the wharves, roads and buildings springing up to service the growing colony, a complex of fortifications was constructed on the perimeters of Sydney Harbour (Boyce 2008). Arguably, one of the earliest defensive measures was the development of a Quarantine Station on North Head at the entrance to the fledgling settlement (Foley 1995).

During the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries thousands of ships passed through the Heads and entered Sydney Harbour. Approximately 580 such ships were quarantined at North Head during the 156 years (1828-1984) of the Station’s operation (Foley 1995:11). More than 13,000 people passed through the quarantine system staying for periods that varied from short stays to several months. The location and geography of the area made it difficult for people to abscond. A stone wall was built along the eastern boundary of the Station, while the surroundings of bush land, steep cliffs and the choppy waters of the Harbour provided an even greater disincentive to escape. Needless to say, many people never did leave. Some 572 individuals were buried in one of the Quarantine Station’s three burial grounds (Foley 1995:11).

Today there is a wealth of material, in the form of historical records, architectural infrastructure and material culture, which offers insight into the formal procedures and institutional activities undertaken during the service history of the Quarantine Station (Freeman et al. 2000). In addition to the activities normally associated with quarantine, archaeological evidence demonstrates that a well-established practice of mark-making was also in place (Fig. 2). The traces of these actions remain with us today in the form of inscriptions engraved and painted onto and into the natural Sydney sandstone. These inscriptions might be considered simultaneously as images and as historical texts as the great majority of them incorporate some form of writing such as initials, personal names and titles, place and ship names and company names.
Encountering inscriptions
Standing at the very edge of the Quarantine Station today the first thing that strikes you is the beauty. The city skyline of Sydney dazzles in the distance and the harbour waters change colour under the passing cover of clouds, going from a deep, glistening azure to a dull grey topped with the choppy white foam of breakers pushed along by inshore winds (Fig. 3). The horizon is wide open and in a slight turn of the head from east to west, you can take in a sweeping 180 degree vision from the open Pacific Ocean, past the craggy coves and cliffs of the Heads, past the intricate bends and indentations
of Middle Harbour and all the way into the haze rising above the modern suburb of Mosman. Within this expansive vista you cannot help but feel both privileged and small. Perhaps it is then, after you have had a moment to take in the breathtaking splendour of the scene, that your eye will catch a glimpse of something else. There, in the rock at your feet, mingled in with the sand and small, wiry Banksia bushes, whose delicate scent is carried on the breeze, a name appears etched in the surface. You soon become aware that just a little to your left, a great sprawl of words and maritime motifs stretches across the rocky platform and towards the edge of the cliff (Fig. 3).

![Fig. 3. View to Sydney city across the Harbour. Inscriptions at Old Man’s Hat in the foreground. Photograph: Ursula Frederick.](image)

Under the warmth of such pleasant circumstance it is difficult to comprehend the harsh realities of life in quarantine and the state of suspension between sickness and health, life and death, arriving and departing experienced by the various identities inscribed here. We cannot quite imagine the conditions under which these souls shared this very same outlook but it is their presence, nevertheless, that press upon us a poignancy and sense of longing (Stewart 1993; Clarke et al. 2010) that is difficult to divorce from the view ahead.

Although we may not immediately recognize this feeling as such, at the heart of such affective encounters lies the hermeneutic impulse. This “archaeological imagination” as it is sometimes called (Thomas 1996:55), reflects an urge to understand the past in our present state of being. While this process may include ‘the art of understanding something that appears alien and unintelligible to us’ (Gadamer 1986:141) it also
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offers an opportunity to ‘catch sight of ourselves’ (Gadamer 1986:130) and ‘become conscious of something shared’ (Gadamer 1985:151).

Our first engagement with the inscribed cliffs overlooking Sydney Harbour may be likened to Tilley’s (2008:16) account of Simrishamn carvings where ‘there was a dialectic at work between the rock itself, and its landscape location, and the positioning of the images carved on it’. Tilley (2008:17) goes on to point out that ‘the images had a direct influence, agency and power in themselves: they set people in choreographed motion around them. And this force of the image was quite independent of verbal exegesis- of talking about meaning...

Just as Tilley talks of the carvings having agency today, we suggest here that the sandstone rocks into which the Quarantine Station inscriptions were engraved, also carried an agency in the past, by directing where people might begin to carve as well as constraining and encouraging the specific characteristics of the inscriptions such as their orientation, depth, shape and size. We may find in this approach a correspondence with Gell’s idea that an art object’s source of power relates to how it is ‘construed as having come into the world... [that is] their becoming rather than their being.’ (Gell 1992:46). One might take this to mean the technology and tools, the way an artwork is made (Tilley 2008:28). In the case of the Quarantine Station this might entail how the inscriptions were carved, whether people employed specialist masonry tools and what formal techniques of production were used. But to our minds, an emphasis on becoming also exerts an inquiry into why these inscriptions were made in the first place and further, in the context of this volume, what is the work they perform today in guiding our attention not only to the happenstance of history but also to the current political reality of people smuggling and the arrival of asylum seekers in small wooden boats from across the seas between Indonesia and Australia?

In tackling the coming into being of the inscriptions we find that we cannot separate the affective dimension of what is the becoming of the archaeological record. Like Barthes’ (1981:27) concept of punctum, those intimate, uncoded details found in photographs that prick the viewer into a private response to something recognized, remembered or experienced, the visual and textual elements contained within the inscriptions also elucidate an emotive reaction from the observer. Russell (2007:71) describes this interpretive process as ‘the externalization of individual and social expectations of past and meaning onto the archaeological record’ as a form of representation. Thus, through our hermeneutic endeavors we are creating images of the past. It is this image – one of the archaeological imagination – that is also the subject of this paper. Moreover, our encounter with the Quarantine Station inscriptions may be seen to operate at different scales and the sensations and insights that inform our understanding have a multiplicity of origins. As Williams noted (2007:280), in his phenomenological account of how an archaeological and anthropological research team engaged with place at Leskernick on Bodmin Moor in the United Kingdom,
working in a particular landscape engenders a feeling of intense familiarity, even identification with a setting replete with names, memories and historical associations. He goes on to state:

By attempting to understand the nature of the encounter and experience that contemporary practitioners enjoy with the physical remains of the past, we begin to reveal the background noise that instructs much of what they do (Williams 2007:281).

At the Quarantine Station the interplay and recursive movement between our archaeological imaginations, the form and content of the inscriptions, the intense physicality of the Quarantine Station setting with its dramatic viewscapes, and the historical contexts of production all contribute to the image of the past that we experience. Acknowledging this congruence, what follows is a discussion of the image as individual inscriptions, inscription assemblages, and the landscapes of quarantine.

The historical context of quarantine in New South Wales, Australia

In the early days of the NSW colony passengers and crew entering Sydney Harbour were quarantined on their ships (Foley 1995:10). A land-based quarantine encampment was initiated in 1814, under the authority of the governor, in response to a ‘contagious and malignant disease’ that broke out on the convict ship *Surry* (Sydney Gazette, 1814). It was not until several years later, however, that a quarantine facility was established on the North Head, some distance from the emerging city. The first ship to be quarantined here was a convict boat called the *Bussorah Merchant* in July 1828 (Foley 1995:18). Along with many cases of fever and other respiratory illnesses an outbreak of smallpox had occurred during the long voyage from England (Dunn 1828).

On arrival the convicts and their guards were housed in tents on the shore of the cove for several weeks. However, it was not until the late 1830s that a more permanent establishment was developed following the allocation of Government funds (Foley 1995:25). Although first set up in the early days of the Australian colony the Quarantine Station remained in service until 1984, a period which encompassed such events as the Federation of Australia, two world wars, a local outbreak of the plague in 1902, the introduction of air flights to Australia (a period reflected in the built fabric and current heritage interpretation of the site), the Vietnam War with the use of the site for “Operation Babylift”, the White Australia policy and as a reception centre in the 1970s for refugees and illegal immigrants from the Pacific (Freeman et al. 2000:87-88, 95).

The bare statistics of quarantine history at North Head provide some sense of the scale of migration to Australia and of the importance of disease control and management in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A period when global
mass migrations were just beginning, it was also a time when medical science was still developing and disease treatments such as antibiotics had yet to be discovered. Quarantine was a major tool of governments around the world as ships and their passengers became vectors for the spread of contagious diseases (Bashford 2004, Markel 1994, 2007). The fabric of the site, the buildings, grounds, medical facilities, shower and luggage handling areas, and class-based accommodations (consisting of first class, second class and Asiatic quarters) remain as a material testimony to the changing histories of national identity, shipping and transport technologies, medical practice and global networks of migration, quarantine and disease control.

The inscriptions
The presence of 1000 or so inscriptions created from 1835 to the 1980s can be placed in relation to this background. The inscriptions provide an archive of ship’s names, ports of origin, dates of arrival, names of crew and passengers and give some indication of the diverse ethnicity of migrants with inscriptions in Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Dutch, Greek, Hebrew and Arabic, in addition to those in English. The presence of inscriptions in languages other than English from the late nineteenth century onwards gives historical depth to the multicultural nature of Australian society, often perceived as a mid to late twentieth century phenomenon.

The repeated use of maritime symbols and motifs such as life buoys, anchors, ropes, steering wheels and shipping company insignia all speak to the central role of the sea and maritime voyages in the experience of those migrating or returning to Australia. A hint of the passing of time and the impact of changing technologies is indicated by one small barely noticeable inscription placed amongst late nineteenth and early twentieth century ship names and ports of origin. It depicts an arrow-like speedbird logo and the letters BOAC, denoting the British Overseas Air Corporation which operated from 1939 to 1974.

Borders, framing devices and the use of regular-sized fonts are used to create a sense of formality and structure, echoing the commemorative and memorial plaques found on official monuments and gravestones. Others, inscribed in a flowing cursive script seem to mimic handwriting and a more spontaneous process of commemoration and marking of presence. Love hearts speak to romance and love, whether lost at sea, left behind or newly discovered and Masonic symbols and Stars of David are indicative of belief systems and social alliances practiced beyond the temporary confines of quarantine.

Although Sydney Hawkesbury sandstone is not a hard rock, the scale and intricacy of such inscriptions demonstrates both a degree of skill and an investment of time and labour. Some inscriptions are likely to have been formally commissioned by the ship’s crews or their companies (Clarke et al. 2010:81, Fig. 4). The names of stone
masons or sculptors are included in a number of the more formal inscriptions, for example W. COH-HLAN, SCULPTOR (Fig. 4, C). The friable surface of the sandstone also created a medium for bas-relief sculpture. Two sculpted heads, one of a sailor and one eroded and indistinguishable are set in round frames scooped out of the sandstone to resemble a pair of commemorative medallions or coins. The time spent to create inscriptions coupled with a degree of playfulness and humour, as a very personal response to the circumstances of quarantine, are evident in an inscription which reads, RMS (Oct) (1895) Cuzco, In Loving Memory of Irish Stew (Fig. 5).

![Fig. 4. Inscriptions from the Wharf precinct, North Head Quarantine Station, Sydney. Photographs: Ursula Frederick.](image)

The Quarantine Station inscriptions as assemblage and landscape

Today the grounds that were once the Quarantine Station reveal two distinct areas of mark-making activity. One is situated in the immediate vicinity of the Wharf buildings which we might call the hub of the Station itself. The other is in an area of bush land called Old Man’s Hat, located 500m south east of the Station infrastructure and delimited by sea cliffs (Fig. 2). At the main Quarantine Station site 854 inscriptions have been recorded in eleven distinct locations or precincts (Thorp 1983a, 1983b;
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NPWS 2000). The location and content of inscriptions were documented during an inventory project carried out in 1983 when the Quarantine Station ceased operations. The Old Man’s Hat (hereafter OMH) assemblage is located a short walk from the managed grounds of the old Quarantine Station facilities. A fieldwork project commenced (by the authors) in 2010 has so far recorded 207 inscriptions. Another 30 or so inscriptions are estimated to occur along the cliff edges. As yet, these have not been recorded as they require safety harnessing equipment to be accessed.

Many of the inscriptions incorporate a date and Fig. 6 shows the numbers of inscriptions produced in 10 year increments from 1835-1983. In the Quarantine Station assemblage 22% of the engravings have an identifiable date associated with them and a further 2% have an ambiguous date such as Jul. 14 or 28.8.41 (Thorp 1983a:14-15). At OMH the figures are similar with 20% of inscriptions having a clear date and a slightly higher percentage (8%) with an ambiguous date. Fig. 6 compares the two assemblages and shows that the OMH assemblage is much more temporally restricted with 48% of the dated inscriptions occurring between 1910 and 1919. This period encompasses outbreaks of Spanish influenza from 1918-19, smallpox from 1913-1917 (Wotherspoon 2008) and tuberculosis associated with soldiers returning from Europe during the First World War (Freeman et al. 2000:65-66). At the Quarantine Station proper, the inscriptions are more temporally

Fig. 5. RMS (Oct) (1895) Cuzco, In Loving Memory of Irish Stew. Inscription at Old Man’s Hat. Photograph: Ursula Frederick.
spread with dates ranging from 1835-1983 (Fig. 6). There are two peaks in the dated inscriptions here, the first occurs from 1910-1929 when 26% of the dated assemblage was created and then much later from 1960-1979 when 23% of the dated assemblage occurs. The later period of dated inscriptions is interesting because it post-dates the main period of maritime quarantine from 1828-1920 and coincides with the period of decline in use of the Station facilities (Foley 1995:127). For example, only three ships were quarantined between 1950 and 1975 (Freeman et al. 2000:65). 1960-1979 encompasses the later period of air quarantine when people arriving without appropriate vaccination certificates were quarantined (Freeman et al. 2000:68) and when evacuees from Cyclone Tracy and refugees escaping from the war in Vietnam were also housed at the Quarantine Station (Freeman et al. 2000:68). Further research will enable the temporal variation in inscription production to be examined in association with the peaks and troughs in migration patterns, changes in health policy, and major and minor disease outbreaks. This data shows that the OMH and Quarantine Station assemblages are not temporally separated, suggesting instead a continuous landscape of mark-making production, rather than two isolated precincts created at different times.

Today however, the separation of the two areas of inscriptions is emphasized by the amount of vegetation re-growth on edges of the managed grounds and gardens. Access to the OMH inscriptions requires a degree of bush bashing and rock scrambling, firstly through a tangled thicket of dense tree re-growth and then across
a zone of lower vegetation where sandstone heath plants have re-grown obscuring the sandstone surface together with many of the inscriptions. The ways in which the landscape of the Quarantine Station has been managed since it was transferred to a land management authority in 1984 (the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service) has a direct impact on our engagements with and experience of the inscriptions. As noted in the 2006 Heritage Landscape Management Plan (Thompson Berrill Landscape Design 2006:14-20) the priority has been the conservation of natural plant and animal communities in an environment on the fringes of the city where development impacts have reduced the integrity and prevalence of those communities. The Plan notes that since 1984 vegetation re-growth has been encouraged within the previously managed and cleared grounds of the Station itself. Aerial photographs from the 1940s provide further evidence that the landscape of Old Man’s Hat previously had more rock surface exposed. Furthermore, these photographs show definite paths between the Quarantine Station and the cliffs, where the inscriptions cluster, which are no longer discernible today.

So to a certain extent some of our sensory engagements with the landscape of OMH arise out of contemporary rather than historical practices and policies of land management. The sense of separation and isolation from the Quarantine Station facilities, of being in a wilder, more natural setting hidden out of sight from official surveillance, have been amplified by changes in the re-growth of vegetation.
since 1984. This impression of remoteness and natural context makes the special
discovery of inscriptions as they emerge from a thicket of bush (Fig. 7) seem all the
more extraordinary. This, we would suggest, presents an example of the dialectic
engagement Tilley (2008) refers to, where our encounters with the past emerge out
of an entangled and multi-layered relationship with the present.

The largest assemblage of inscriptions at the Quarantine Station is located in what
is referred to as the Wharf area (Freeman et al. 2000:110). The Wharf is situated in
a small sheltered cove on the western flank of the North Head peninsula. It is here,
in the relatively protected waters of Spring Cove that ships would disembark their
passengers. Hence, the Wharf was the first landing and primary access point for those
entering into quarantine. It is here, along the low sandstone cliff face running from
the waters edge up an incline to the accommodation quarters, that Thorp (1983a:13)
identified and recorded 451 inscriptions. A section of this cliff was quarried and cut
in the early 1900s during building development for the jetty and rail shed (Thorp
1983a:33; Freeman et al. 2000:113, Fig. 20) and as a result a large proportion of the
inscriptions are vertically oriented towards the viewer at a 60-90 degree angle from
the ground. A lesser number of inscriptions lie on isolated sandstone boulders and
platforms outcropping with a horizontal aspect. There are at least 180 initials and
names inscribed along this cliff face. There are also a large number (73) of highly
formalized inscriptions such as those depicted in Fig. 4. These inscriptions are
contained within a structured framing device which acts to separate the inscription
from those surrounding it. The framing device is not a visually uniform feature but
was instead fashioned to different sculptural effect and shape. It might comprise a
line channeled into the rock to create a rectilinear shape or it may be a circular form
rising from the parent rock as a bas relief. There are also more decorative framings
that resemble plaques and shields. In this way the content of the inscription – names
of crew, passengers, shipping companies, dates of arrival, ports of departure and other
maritime motifs – becomes both enclosed within itself and demarcated from other
markings.

Many of these inscriptions were originally decorated with coloured paints (Thorp
1983a:14). A conservation project in 2006 and 2007 by the current managers of
the site the Mawland Group restored a sample of the inscriptions to show their
polychromatic design. This act of restoration draws the viewer’s attention to the
formal inscriptions, most of which sit within the height of an adult’s eye line. This,
together with a low metal barrier along the base of the cliff, now creates the effect of
being in a gallery where the viewer is set apart from the artworks on display. It seems
here that the formality evident in the Wharf inscriptions is in a direct dialogue with
the way that the built landscape was used to formally structure the initial human
experience of arrival under conditions of quarantine. After leaving their ships at the
wharf, people were put through a structured sequence of events. They moved from
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the disembarkation building where they were inspected by medical staff, their luggage was removed and sent to the autoclaves for steam cleaning and then each person was sent to the shower block to shower and be disinfected.

At Old Man’s Hat the configuration of the landscape offers a very different atmosphere. It provided an open area for people to explore and a different kind of canvas on which to place one’s moniker. Stepped rock platforms and irregularly scattered sandstone boulders provided relatively flat surfaces on which to sit and engrave. Vertical cliff faces accessed via narrow ledges, formed another venue for place-marking for those brave enough to stand literally on the edge of the continent, one step away from a 100m plunge into the sea below. Inscriptions here are less densely clustered than those at the Wharf and the sheer expanse of the area has enabled many carvers to create inscriptions covering large rock platforms. Nevertheless, superpositioning occurs to a greater degree here than along the sandstone cut at the Wharf and many of the inscriptions are localised on the large sandstone platforms that run to the cliff edge. One large inscription 250cm long and 120cm wide has been engraved in a flowing font reminiscent of handwriting. The depth of the line alone (10mm at its deepest) indicates the carver’s commitment (Fig. 8A). It reads:

S.S. Gunga,
W.R. Fleetwood
Aug 1885

Although, the assemblage at OMH also contains formally structured inscriptions set within framing devices similar to those found along the Wharf, there is a greater sense of freedom and informality created by the interplay between the inscriptions and the physicality of the location. The high visibility of less formal inscriptions, the superimpositioning of inscriptions and their density along the cliff edges are all suggestive of a change in tempo for people taking time out away from the confinement of the Quarantine Station. Old Man’s Hat sits within an expanse of rocky bush land, physically separated from the ordered, controlled landscape of the Quarantine Station proper. To the east, there is a never-ending view across the Pacific Ocean, and to the south the city of Sydney offers the promise and potency of a new and different life. The broad canvasses and expansive possibilities for life beyond the boundaries of confinement seem to have created a greater freedom of expression in the form of the inscriptions. Moreover they both invite and suggest a different physical relationship with the landscape. You can walk on and around them, sit next to them or even lie against them basking in the sunlight. In short, the inscriptions at OMH invite a different kind of bodily engagement than those at the Wharf. This closeness to the materiality extends to a haptic desire to trace the grooves of the lines engraved into the sandstone with one’s fingers. Indeed, this is one technique we used during our fieldwork to record highly eroded and barely visible letters and numbers. We found
that our ability to identify these fading marks of presence was sometimes enhanced by the simple act of closing our eyes and allowing other senses to engage with, and identify the shape of the inscription. This is not say that we literally imagined the data we were recording but more that the mind’s eye allowed us to form a cognitive connection between the feel of the shape being traced and the identity of the letters or numbers. People doing the field recording would say “this feels like a ‘T’” or “that feels like 1895”. This is perhaps not a technique found in the textbooks of conventional archaeological methodologies but nonetheless demonstrates the communicative potential of non-visual sensory engagements.

Inscriptions at the artefact level

As archaeologists used to thinking about human action at the levels of society, state, and culture it is a unique experience to encounter material evidence that is directly identifiable to a single person. By comparison with material traces that are forged anonymously, the inscribed name is an indexical link to another individual which lends the inscription a rare communicative efficacy. It is almost as if the humanity of the past is confronting us directly. Faced with these names we cannot help but be curious about who these identities once were.

If we return to the inscription of the SS Gunga noted earlier (Fig. 8A), we naturally read the three lines of the inscription as associated information. Presumably W.R. Fleetwood was a voyager on the steam ship Gunga. We might also assume either that the mark is some record of his life and/or death. Either he arrived safely in Sydney in August 1885 or he died at sea or in quarantine around the same time. The placement of the inscription, at the very edge of the sea cliff might lend support to the latter. Or perhaps Fleetwood, like many a landlocked sailor desiring a return to the sea, spent hours carving his name as he sat gazing wistfully to the southern oceans beyond the Heads. There are, of course, many possible answers to how this inscription came into being and it is the role of the archaeological imagination to consider the most probable. In this instance, the historical archives provide information that assist us in this process.

The SS Gunga featured regularly in the shipping news of Australia’s capital cities. From its first launch on September 11, 1878 at Glasgow the Gunga regularly travelled between Europe and the southern oceans and along the coastal waters of Australia. During 1885 it sailed in and out of Sydney four times before being placed in quarantine. On its return from Fiji and Noumea on August 17th five cases of dengue fever were reported as being discovered on the Gunga (Cleland 1918). According to shipping records of the time, the master of the ship was a W.R. Fleetwood (State Records Authority of New South Wales, 1885:468). Such information brings a new perspective to the aforementioned inscription. We now know that Fleetwood was in
command of the *Gunga* even though his position is not denoted in the inscription. Perhaps Fleetwood’s stature accounts for the scale of the inscription.

Although apparently the signature of a single individual the polysemic character of the inscription is revealed when Fleetwood’s role is understood. It is possible that the inscription refers not only to Fleetwood the man but to the entire ship, as a collective body under his charge. In this sense Fleetwood’s name functions like the name of the shipping company, a date or other details commonly ascribed to denote the particularities of a voyage. Subsequent shipping news suggests that this was likely the last time that Fleetwood captained the *Gunga*. Although not a memorial to his death - by October of that same year he was captain of the *Wentworth* (State Records Authority of New South Wales: 1885:469) – the inscription may well have been made to mark his last voyage on the *Gunga*.

Figs. 8A and 8B. Two inscriptions relating to SS *Gunga*, on different rock platforms at Old Man’s Hat. Photographs: Ursula Frederick.
As we have signaled previously the size and depth of the inscription, its position and its neat cursive script means that the inscription is (and was) highly visible to those venturing to OMH. Because these features are not especially common in the Quarantine Station assemblage it is intriguing to note that a similar inscription occurs in the OMH vicinity, about 100 metres away down the rugged escarpment on a lower rock platform overlooking the headwaters. Given the content of this inscription, we would suggest that the *Gunga* Fleetwood Aug 1885 inscription invited mimicry. This second inscription (Fig. 8B) uses a similar triple line arrangement, ornate, cursive script and grand scale. It reads:

SS Gunga
J E Meaburn Com
Sept 1885

The historical record reveals that Meaburn became the captain of the *Gunga* immediately following Fleetwood. He had been in command less than a month when on September 26, 1885 the *Gunga* was once again placed in quarantine (*The Argus*, 1885:6). On this occasion smallpox was feared after a crewman became ill. Meaburn was later charged with committing a breach of the Quarantine Act for progressing well into the Harbour without notifying the health authorities of the threat onboard his ship (*South Australian Register*, 1885). What may we elaborate from knowing this history and knowing that Fleetwood’s inscription was already in place? Did Meaburn feel the need to state his newly acquired authority over the *Gunga* by adding his name along with Com (short hand for Commander) to the OMH gallery of inscriptions? Was his inscription, obviously visually derivative of the other, an act of respect or one of rivalry? The presence of two spatially separated inscriptions, similar in style and referring to the same ship only one month apart, prompts us to query the relationship between the two inscriptions and the interplay between the material and historical records.

If we turn our attention to a specific inscription at the Wharf precinct in the main Quarantine Station we find a more formal treatment of commemorative mark-making. These inscriptions share a distinctive unity in terms of their compositional structure, form, decorative embellishments, placement, and the nature of their content. In keeping with these features, one particular inscription heralds the arrival of the *Samuel Plimsoll*. This inscription (Fig. 4D) is located on a rock face approximately three metres above the ground. The rock has been hewn away to produce a rectangular plaque with a curvilinear top in bas-relief. The shape of the inscription resembles a headstone and its vertical position resembles a wall plaque. A star motif and the word SHIP has been engraved at the top. Below it there are a series of names framed within an ornate triangular pattern. The name of the ship “SAMUEL PLIMSOLL” appears at the very top and in a descending hierarchical order appears the name of
the captain, the first and second officers, the purser, and the matron. The remaining people on board are recorded as “EMIGRANTS” and number “462” and below this their date of “ARRIVAL JUNE 11TH 1879” is noted. The words have been evenly spaced and centred and the letters themselves are of a consistent size, case and font. At the bottom of the list, and unusually aligned to the right there appears the name “JOHN HOWIE”.

The inscription reveals a professional craftsmanship and the mark of the chisel is evident in the rock that surrounds the bas-relief. Aside from the information it reveals about people associated with the ship, it shows different conventions of naming and ordering which may tell us something about the social conventions of the day. For example, both the captain and the matron are accorded formal address (CAPT. R. BOADEN, MISS JONES), whereas the crewmembers are listed with initials and surname but without a title. John Howie is the only name that appears in full, and just as it is set a part from the other names compositionally, no title or position is assigned to it.

The historical archives both supplement and complicate our reading of this inscription. The Samuel Plimsoll ‘... sailed from Plymouth for Sydney on March 21 with 465 emigrants’ (The Sydney Morning Herald, 1879:4). Although twelve of those travelling died on the journey another three were born at sea. One of those who did not survive the journey was William Howie, the infant son of Agnes and John Howie, a stonemason from Scotland. The archives note that in total 456 emigrants landed while the Quarantine Station inscription lists 462. These numbers confer if we conclude that the named individuals in the stone inscription count themselves amongst the total. This would suggest a desire to communicate the sense of community amongst those who made safe passage.

What is most remarkable, if we read the inscription and the historical text alongside each other is the extent to which absence plays a part in the inscription’s materiality. In the first instance we may surmise that John Howie was the mason who was either commissioned or took it upon himself to undertake the engraving. It is hard to know how difficult his task may have been but we might imagine. Howie may well have exerted himself physically because the rock in which the inscription is located is at an awkward angle and at a height that would have required some climbing. But how difficult must it have been to work on an inscription in which he could not include his own son. This particular inscription is, afterall, a commemoration of those who survived the journey. In carving those three numbers 4 6 2 Howie must have felt acutely aware of their significance. In knowing a little more of the inscriptions understory we too become aware of the loss that this act of remembrance enfolds within it. And as such the very lines in the rock that make up these simple characters take on a greater poignancy.
There is another striking absence within the carving, which occurs in the list of the noted individuals. The name of the ships surgeon – Pringle Hughes – is a glaring omission. As the surgeon-superintendent Hughes had the important role of supervising and maintaining the health of the ship’s passengers. We might well ponder the circumstances for his exception when we consider that the ship’s matron – Mary Jones – does appear.

A final loss that is made evident is the time that the passengers of the *Samuel Plimsoll* spent waiting to reach their final destination. Their liminal state is encoded in the interstices between the 11th of June recorded in the inscription and the 30th of June listed as their arrival in the official Sydney records (State Records Authority of New South Wales, 1879).

These examples demonstrate how, when we come closer to individual inscriptions, the realities of life in quarantine and the human condition come into focus. When we see, for example, the names W.R. Fleetwood, J.E. Meaburn and Miss Jones the inscriptions come to embody a real person with a real history. Similarly, a single inscription may take on the presence of a collective body, as in the case of the passengers and crew that sailed into Sydney on the RMS *Cuzco* in October 1895 (Fig. 5) or the emigrants of the *Samuel Plimsoll* (Fig. 4D). Invariably, some inscriptions are more ambiguous in who they represent. An inscription detailing the arrival of the RMS *Himalaya* into quarantine on April 24th 1897 lists only 17 individuals despite having 62 passengers and 268 crew (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1897, see Fig. 4C). This is an example of an inscription, which although noting certain persons, is less about the individual than about the social order and status of a select group. While those that travelled with these 17 individuals no doubt shared their voyage, they are left out of the group which effectively symbolises the journey and quarantine of *Himalaya*. Thus many of the inscriptions simultaneously unify and ally individuals at the same time as they divide. This example may reflect a difference in the social classes of those on board the ship, because ‘the voices of the state and higher-status individuals are often louder than those of common sailors’ (Stewart 2006:6). Even though the inscription may privilege the presence of some names over others, in doing so it casts light on the fact that some names are missing.

**Inscribing presence and absence under conditions of quarantine**

We have drawn attention to the role of absence in some of the inscriptions of the Quarantine Station. This is due in part to a sense of loss that penetrates this landscape, as we understand it, both as a place of quarantine and an extension of the maritime cultural sphere. Absence and separation are exemplified in the dislocation of the sick from the healthy and in the bodies that never arrived but instead were buried at sea.
Functioning variously as poems, warnings, commemorative gestures, playful light-hearted acts, declarations of existence, deeds of remembrance or simply a way to while away the time, the inscriptions were clearly made to different purpose. Nevertheless they remain as materializations of presence, absence and memory. With the passage of time and the hindsight of historical knowledge, for those of us who view them today, each and every inscription inevitably becomes a memorial. Like wandering through a graveyard, there is a pathos that comes naturally in knowing that the names that once stood for the living must now stand for the dead.

Yet even in the present of the past the Quarantine Station was a landscape redolent with death and sickness. We find some evidence of this spectre of death pervading the inscription activities of the living. The formalised technologies of inscription, the conventions of names and dates and the framing structures all contribute to a stylistic transformation of rocks hewn into metaphoric cenotaphs. The presence of mass inscriptions in two discrete locations contributes to this sensibility. Like cemeteries they lie on the perimeters of the site, pushing at the boundaries of existence in the Quarantine Station landscape.

The memorializing elements of the Quarantine Station inscriptions are evident not just in the self-conscious form of the images but also in the role that they played in the past and continue to play today. In writing about the contemporary practices of creating private memorials in public spaces, Gibson (2011:150) notes that eventually the people commemorating the dead or the event die themselves and the role of the memorials transforms: ‘Memorials serve an important remembering function not because they restore living memory, but because they symbolically articulate and engage with the fragility and temporality of living memory’s mortality.’

Memorials serve an important remembering function not because they restore living memory, but because they symbolically articulate and engage with the fragility and temporality of living memory’s mortality. Buchli and Lucas (2001:80) see memorials as active agents in the processes of remembering and forgetting, in their view memorials do not merely recall memories but they actively create and produce them. Gibson further suggests (2011:151) that memorials in places other than the immediate sites of death can act as biographical spaces for remembering. The Quarantine Station inscriptions seem to contain these configurations of space, biography and memory production. That is, our understanding of this place is shaped by what we know to have happened here.

What we find from looking at the inscriptions is that there are discernible patterns in the content and form they adopt. But in considering these inscriptions either as individual or collective expressions we must be conscious not only of the trace itself but of the actions that lead to its formation. Gadamer’s work on the hermeneutical experience of art is instructive to this line of thinking. He emphasizes first that art is not only an object but an event that occurs. As Bruns (2002:61) clarifies ‘this is not an event that merely reproduces an original production; it is the emergence of the
original itself.’ Taking this as our cue, we view each assemblage of inscriptions as a suite of performative gestures that collectively accrue. Each and every individual act of inscription is an occurrence of the once and future inscription and where ‘every repetition is as original as the work itself’ (Gadamer 1989:122). In short we are proposing that over the course of the Quarantine Station’s history its inhabitants were experiencing their own hermeneutic engagement with the past(s) that came before them. Thus what we encounter at the level of assemblage is a ‘reshaping produced by its actualization’ (Risser 1991:105) an active involvement of the makers/viewers in the inscriptions they made/saw. By its very nature those hermeneutic encounters were obviously different to ours today. Because of their confinement and liminal status, as well as the difficult quarantine circumstances, no doubt they were far more aware of the frailties of existence. In such situations, what might otherwise seem like an incidental signature becomes a profound declaration of human identity and presence. Consequently, the performative nature of the inscription process, and what we might call its reiterative character attest to the continual re-use of the site as the stage for acts of remembrance and for the continuation of life itself.

What is essential to gain from the level of assemblage, is that the repeated act of inscription is an accepted and established practice. It is possible that these mark-making practices alleviated personal insecurities and served to build a sense of community. Discernible patterns in the content and form of the inscriptions lend this conclusion some weight. Moreover the virtual encouragement of this practice at the Spring Cove Wharf, and under the immediate watch of the Station authorities, leads us to believe that the inscriptions were perceived as serving some kind of institutional purpose. It is possible that this mass of inscriptions was presented as a sort of welcome wall or honour roll. Considered at a communal level such simple measures might have helped to promote social cohesion and maintain a sense of control at a time when life itself seemed uncertain. Although in many respects they utilize an iconography associated with remembrance, we imagine that the inscriptions were a strategy for coping and commemorating life in a landscape ripe with uncertainty.

By imprinting place-names such as Liverpool, Southampton and Batavia into the ground in which they arrived, the landscape of the life left behind came to coexist in the landscape of their present. In this way also the naming of ships brings the maritime passage and the sea itself into material substance. With the destination not entirely fulfilled the journey itself is made to matter. Furthermore, because some people survived and others did not, the commemoration of the living began to coexist with the commemoration of the dead (Petts 2003:202). Consequently, the communities of the past, present, dead and living all came to be incorporated into a wider discourse that is the Quarantine Station landscape. Furthermore, these linkages underscore the liminal quality of the quarantine experience as a state of being which is echoed in the environment itself: a site comprising bush and settlement, land and water, survival and death.
Conclusion

We have proposed that the mark-making that constituted the Quarantine Station inscriptions are a form of writing and image creation. It is possible that they functioned as some kind of material marker of passage in a spatially, temporally and culturally liminal environment. Most likely they represent both declarations of existence and ‘technologies of remembrance’ (Jones 2003:68). To paraphrase Ricoeur (2002) they all at once give a place to the dead and make a place for the living. And because, in Heidegger’s terms (cited in Ricoeur 2002:250) such repetitions are not static reconstructions of the past ‘but an actualization over again’, these inscriptions and the landscape in which they operate remain as memorials of becoming.

We also sought to explore how the power of past imagery is enhanced and amplified by the specificities of place. Although it is difficult to imagine the emotional and physical hardship many of those quarantined will have suffered there is no doubt that the atmosphere of the Quarantine Station today is a little heavier because of its history. What makes this place particularly evocative are the hundreds of inscriptions, made by people kept in quarantine, that remain visible today. The names, most clearly, are metonyms for the bodies that passed through here. The Quarantine Station landscape is, in a manner of speaking, one large memorial to the people who lived and died here.

In keeping with the notion of becoming that Gadamer’s hermeneutics and Gell’s notion of agency outlines it is important to note the past’s future, that is, that ‘the past context has become the present context’, Thomas (1996:61). In other words the inscriptions tell us something more than the names of people and ships that passed through the Heads into Sydney harbour. They tell us of the human motivation to record their very existence. They also remind us that ‘even though what has happened cannot be made not to have happened, the import of what has happened is not determined once and for all’ (Ricoeur 2002:252). Perhaps it is this, our own desires to communicate with and through the past, to understand and make of it our own stories that makes our archaeological engagement with the image such an affective experience afterall.

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Notes
1. The main Quarantine Station site was leased to the Mawland Group in 2006 and was subsequently restored and renovated for contemporary use. Currently the Mawland Group operate the site as the Q Station a tourism venture incorporating luxury accommodation, restaurants, a visitor's centre and conference venue facilities.
2. In light of their historical significance and their vulnerability we do not mean to suggest that the inscriptions should be treated this way today. Historical photographs suggest that these inscriptions were treated more casually in the past and such activities were likely.

References:


State Records Authority of New South Wales, 1897, *Shipping Masters Office; Passengers Arriving 1855 - 1922; NRS13278, [X143-146] reel 439-440*.

State Records Authority of New South Wales, 1885 *Shipping Masters Office; Passengers Arriving 1855 - 1922; NRS13278, [X175] reel 468*.

State Records Authority of New South Wales, 1885 *Shipping Masters Office; Passengers Arriving 1855 - 1922; NRS13278, [X176] reel 469*.


The Beauty is in the Act of the Beholder

South Scandinavian Rock Art from a Uses of the Past-Perspective

Per Nilsson

Abstract South Scandinavian rock art is one of prehistory’s most impressive and complex expressions of figurative material culture. But a question that is seldom discussed is how the rock art sites and motifs were used and interpreted after the tradition of making figurative rock art had come to an end. This is especially interesting since excavations at rock art sites have revealed a high number of finds and features from later periods as well. In this article I will discuss some of these excavation results from three major rock art regions in southern Scandinavia: the Himmelstalund-region of south-eastern Sweden, the Tänum-area on the West Coast of Sweden and the Danish island of Bornholm. My proposal is that the finds and features found at rock art sites can be interpreted as the material remains of a dialogue with the past. My aim is to broaden the understanding of rock art, and I believe that we should not limit our research to the way the figures were used and interpreted in their Bronze Age context.

Introduction

In this article I would like to discuss the possibility that rock art sites from the south Scandinavian Bronze Age were still being used in different ways after the tradition of making figurative rock art had come to an end. Rock art in this sense is very special compared to most other forms of figurative material culture because of the simple fact that the pictures have usually not been moved from their original context. This phenomenon makes it possible not just to discuss why rock art was made and how the motifs can be interpreted, but also how the motifs and the rock art sites themselves have been used. The title of this article is more than a travesty of the well-known saying, it also marks my intention to focus on the actions taking place at the rock art sites rather than the motifs themselves. This focus on the user and the user’s actions is at the very core of the so-called uses of the past/use of history-research. Most studies within this broad research field have focused on the uses of the past by different actors in historic and modern times (summed up by Aronsson 2004; c.f. Nora & Kritzman 1996). But there has also been a major interest in these topics within archaeology, which I will return to later in this text. If the rock art figures from the Bronze Age
really did make an impact on people during later periods, how can we study this impact? I believe that the best way to examine this is by studying if possible reuse or continuous use of the rock art figures has left any material traces behind. And the most informative way to study this is by an examination of the archaeological excavations undertaken at rock art sites.

Fig. 1. Map showing the location of the rock art sites discussed in the text.

Excavations at rock art sites

Luckily enough there has been an increasing interest in excavating rock art sites in Scandinavia (Bengtsson 2004; Goldhahn 2006; Kaul 2006; Ling et al., in press). Most of the excavations have been conducted at sites where the motifs have been dated to the Bronze Age, and several of the finds and features can be dated to this period. But a significant number of finds and features from later periods have been found as well, a phenomenon that has seldom been discussed. In the following I will present some examples of excavations at rock art sites in southern Scandinavia, the focus being sites that could still have been used after the tradition of making figurative rock art had come to an end. I will start with excavations from my primary research area, the rock art region of Himmelstalund in the south-eastern part of Sweden.
One of Scandinavia’s densest concentrations of rock art is to be found around the now regulated rapids in the river Motala ström, west of the town of Norrköping. Here most of the rock art sites can be found on rock outcrops in the flat agrarian landscape of the present day. What makes this region special compared to other rock art areas in southern Scandinavia is the close connection between rock art sites and contemporary grave fields and settlements (Lundström 1965; 1970; Stålbo 1994; Kaliff et al 1995; Borna-Ahlkvist et al. 1998). During the last decade several dissertations on different aspects of the Bronze- and Early Iron Age societies in this region have been published, as well as more detailed studies and excavation reports (Kaliff 1997; Stålbo 1998; Borna-Ahlkvist 2002; Wahlgren 2002; Coles 2003; Fredell 2003; Ericsson and Nilsson 2007; Nilsson 2005a-b, 2007, 2008a-b; Nilsson 2010a-b; Tilley 2008, Helander 2012, etc.).

Only a few excavations at rock art sites have been conducted in the Himmelstalund-region since Arthur Nordén conducted groundbreaking rock art research here in the 1910s-20s. When Nordén was searching for new rock art figures he describes that in many cases he had to remove thick layers of topsoil to find the figures. In quite a few cases he noted motifs that were covered with thick layers of fire-cracked stone, charcoal and soot. He also excavated several heaps of fire-cracked stones (burnt mounds), on top of or in close connection with the rock art sites. The main aim for Nordén though, as well as for most of the rock art scholars working in this area, has been to bring about new documentations of earlier known sites and/or discovering new rock art. Later excavations with the expressed ambition of studying the relationship between rock art sites and contemporary (or later) remains have been rare (cf. Lødøen 2006:5). Another problem is that in quite a few cases the search for rock art figures has thoroughly removed all remains of uses of the rock art sites in later periods.

Excavations at Himmelstalund

The best known rock art site is the Himmelstalund-site itself, with some 60 panels featuring more than 1,700 figures (Selinge 1985:110f; Nilsson 2008a). Although the rock art figures at the Himmelstalund-site were discovered during the first half of the nineteenth century, the first scientific investigation did not take place until 1871 (Nordén 1925). In 1903 it was documented by Oscar Almgren and the then Crown-Prince Gustav Adolf, and during the first two decades of the twentieth century more thoroughly by Arthur Nordén (1925). Since then the rock art site of Himmelstalund has been documented on several occasions (Burenhult 1973; 1980; Selinge 1985).

A few excavations have been conducted at the Himmelstalund-site in recent years where settlement remains from the Early Iron Age have been found, both to the south and the west of the rock. South of the rock a small three-aisled house was found on a natural ledge between the rock and the nearby river, Motala ström. The house consisted of three pairs of trestles and two pits filled with burnt clay were found along
its walls. A row of post holes, which might have signified a confined area between the rock and the river, were found at the western gable-end of the house. Charcoal from one of the post holes inside the house was dated to 45BC-25AD (Cal 1 sigma). Settlement remains were also discovered some 100 metres to the west of the rock art site consisting of hearths, pits and a couple of filled in wells (Fig. 2). Five 14C-datings from this site indicated that the settlement had been in use between 350 BC and AD 235 (Cal 1 sigma) (Ericsson and Nilsson 2007; Nilsson 2008a-b).

A small excavation has also been conducted just beneath one of the major rock art panels. Two hearths were found, about a metre or so away from one of the best known motifs at this site (Fig. 3); a deeply carved geometrical figure (or perhaps a net?) associated with a human carrying a spear. The two hearths were dated to the pre-Roman and Early Roman Iron Age (90 BC-AD 20, AD 135-230, Cal 1 sigma). Nordén noted that some of the panels at the Himmelstalund-site were covered by a layer of fire-cracked stones and black sandy soil and that several of the figures had been damaged by fire (Nordén 1925:49f). When the panel beside the two Iron Age hearths was documented in the beginning of the twentieth century, at least a part of it was covered by a thick layer of soil (Prince Gustav Adolf 1904). Unfortunately it is not possible to determine whether this layer also contained fire-cracked stones. One question that arises relates to the connection of the two hearths with the adjacent
rock art panel. Were the hearths consciously located by the rock art panel or had the motifs been forgotten or lacked significance when the fires by the rock were lit? The time interval between the two hearths is too great for them to be contemporary with each other, so the hearths belong to two chronologically separate occasions. As the two hearths are both contemporary with the settlement remains to the south and west of the rock it is reasonable to suggest that they can be associated with activities carried out in connection with these settlements, regardless of whether or not the activities were of a ritual or more everyday nature.

![Fig. 3. Two hearths were found beneath one of the panels at Himmelstalund. Photo: Per Nilsson.](image)

If the hearths had been dated to the Bronze Age the connection between them and the panel had seemed pretty clear. But what was the role of the rock art figures during the Iron Age? Did the figures still make an impression on people or were they perhaps simply forgotten? Nevertheless, it is interesting to note the existence of remains of a more substantial settlement from the Early Iron Age in close connection with one of the major rock art sites in this region. What we haven’t found yet are finds or features from the period when the rock art activity was most intense, e.g. Bronze Age Per III-VI (Wahlgren 2002:238f). Perhaps a settlement from this period is yet to be found, but it is also possible that the Himmelstalund-site is yet another example of a major rock art site apparently lacking finds and features that are contemporary with the rock art (Goldhahn 2006:92).
Encountering Imagery

Excavations at Leonardsberg

Another major rock art site situated about a kilometre to the west of Himmelstalund is Leonardsberg (Fig. 4). Here, rock art figures can be found on many of the rocks and rock outcrops in today’s agrarian landscape. When Arthur Nordén made excavations and searched for new rock art sites here he noted that there were layers of fire-cracked stones covering rock art figures and motifs damaged by fire just as the case was at Himmelstalund. Nordén actually found traces of fire-related activities at many of the rock art sites he investigated, not just at Leonardsberg and Himmelstalund but also at other sites, like Skälv, Egna Hem and Borg (Nordén 1925; cf. Wahlgren 2002:258). At one of the rock art sites in Leonardsberg he excavated a large burnt mound that partly covered a rock art panel. During the excavation he found a button from the Late Bronze Age. For Nordén this was a clear indication that many of the burnt mounds could be dated to the Bronze Age (RAÄ 46, Nordén 1925:64, LM50). Since Nordén’s excavations in the 1920s only one excavation has been conducted at this site, when a burnt mound beside one of the panels was excavated ten years ago (RAÄ 29, Wahlgren 2002).

![Fig. 4. Rock art figures covered with fire-cracked stones at Leonardsberg. From Nordén 1925.](image)

In the course of the excavation it became apparent that the burnt mound was a grave from the Late Iron Age. Five hearths were found under the grave, and they were interpreted as parts of a larger system of hearths. Two of the hearths were dated to the Roman Iron Age, (AD 240-340 and 206-410, Cal 1 sigma). But a layer of soot,
situated on top of the panel, was dated to the Late Bronze Age, (900-800 BC, Cal 1 sigma). It is interesting to note that the rock art sites at Leonardsberg have been repeatedly used in different ways since the Bronze Age up to the Late Iron Age.

Excavations at Fiskeby
At Fiskeby a large grave field with more than 500 burials was excavated in the 1950s (Lundström 1965; 1970). The grave field was established in the Late Bronze Age and it continued in use until the Late Iron Age. What is especially interesting about this grave field is that it was located just beside a rock art site. The excavators were explicitly searching for rock art during the excavation but only one of all the graves covered a rock art panel. They also noted that no graves were placed on the rocky surfaces that divided the grave field. When more graves were added during the Iron Age the grave field expanded to the opposite direction of the panels (Lundström 1970:116). It therefore seems likely that the motifs were noted and in a sense also respected during the Bronze Age as well as during the Iron Age (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5. The grave field at Fiskeby. The graves were located just beneath a rock outcrop with rock art figures. Photo Per Lundström 1952. Copy from the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities.
Encountering Imagery

Rock art excavations from other regions

The question is: was the continuous use of rock art sites after the end of the Bronze Age a widespread phenomenon? A number of excavations at rock art sites have been undertaken in different parts of southern Scandinavia, and in a study from 2004 a list of 30 excavations at rock art sites in Sweden and Norway was presented (Bengtsson 2004; cf. Nordström 1995). It is interesting to note that many of the finds and features found at these excavations can actually be dated to periods later than the Bronze Age. The dateable motifs in this region have mainly been dated to the Bronze Age, with a possible continuity throughout the pre-Roman Iron Age in some areas. One example is that the major part of the dateable potsherds found at excavations in the county of Bohuslän on the Swedish west coast was typologically dated to the Early Iron Age (although it can be hard to distinguish between LBA and EIA ceramics). At three of the excavated sites - Drottninghall (Scania), Kalleby (Tanum, Bohuslän) and Hällby (Uppland) - potsherds were also found that should probably be dated to the Early Iron Age or Migration Period (Nordström 1995:31). Other examples are stone pavings where carbon samples from the site Högsbyn in Dalsland were dated to the pre-Roman Iron Age/Early Roman Iron Age, (350 BC-AD 60, Cal 1 sigma) and the Early Middle Ages (AD 1060-1400, Cal 1 Sigma). In Bohuslän two flat stone constructions/pavings were possible to date, and they were both dated to the Iron Age; RAÄ 1371 in Tanum (390-170 BC) and RAÄ 446 in Tossene (50BC – AD 180). Another common feature found at rock art sites are hearths and layers of fire cracked stones, which were found at nine of the 30 excavations. At the site RAÄ 897 in Tanum a hearth was dated to 200 BC–AD 130 and a bead from the Roman Iron Age was found in a layer of fire-cracked stones at the same site. Bengtsson suggests that the layer could have been placed by the rock art more by chance, but also points out the possibility of a contextual relationship between the rock art and the layer of fire-cracked stones during the Roman Iron Age. What is interesting is also that only one of the hearths found at rock art sites in Bohuslän has been dated to the Bronze Age, according to the list from 2004. Another example is from Drottninghall in Scania where a hearth dated to the Late Iron Age was found beneath one of the panels (AD 560-780, Cal 1 Sigma).

A number of excavations have been conducted during recent years at the Tossene-site in Bohuslän on the West Coast of Sweden (Bengtsson and Ling 2007; Håkansdotter et al. 2010; Kegel 2010; Ling et al., in press). There are many interesting results from these excavations, but what is especially important for my concern is the possible use of the site during the Iron Age. At one of the panels there is a fascinating motif of a warrior-like figure caught in an acrobatic pose and in front of this panel two hearths were found. The hearths were dated to the Late Roman Iron Age (AD 250-410 and AD 250-420, Bengtsson & Ling 2007:45). The similarity between the latter site and the hearths found at Himmelstalund is striking. Later excavations at the site have also
revealed potsherds that could be dated to the Roman Iron Age, and the excavators see clear parallels to another excavated rock art site at Svarteborg with dates from the same period (Ling et al., in press; Munkenberg 2004). The Tossene-site was located in a surrounding that was rich in natural resources during the Bronze Age as well as during later periods. A relevant question raised by the excavators is therefore whether it was the place itself rather than the rock art figures that attracted people to the site (Ling et al., in press).

One last example is from the Danish island of Bornholm, where excavations at rock art sites have been carried out during recent years (Kaul et al. 2005; Kaul 2006; Sørensen 2006). At the site Madsebakke a cultural layer at the ‘entrance’ to the panel was dated to the Early Roman Iron Age (AD 0-150). Pot-sherds from the same period were also found. During the later part of the Iron Age, about AD 200-600, a grave field was established on top of the rock at Madsebakke. A house structure from the Late Iron Age was also found in close connection with the rock art site. House structures were also discovered at a minor excavation at Lille Strandbygård, on the southern part of the island. Here, two successive house structures dating to the Iron Age were found just beside the rock art (Fig. 6). The entrance to the house(s) was most probably placed just by the decorated panel (Sørensen 2006:73).
Different uses of rock art sites during the Iron Age

The examples above have shown that in many cases there exists a clear spatial relationship between rock art sites and later remains, such as barrows, grave fields and settlements. But is it possible to determine whether this spatial relationship also reflects a contextual relationship? And does this have anything to do with the fact that rock art is a figurative form of material culture? In some of the abovementioned examples the excavators seem to have been convinced of a contextual relationship between the rock art and the adjacent remains at the time of the excavation. But when the $^{14}C$ datings arrived the idea of such a contextual relationship was often questioned. To determine whether the relationship is contextual and not only spatial is of course always a challenge and it is important that each site is studied within its own specific context. But I do believe that we should be more open to the possibility of the existence of such a relationship, especially when it comes to excavations at rock art sites. Or, put in a more provocative way: is it possible that rock art figures have become such a strong pictorial trademark for Bronze Age-culture that we can no longer acknowledge their importance during later periods? In the following I will present some more examples of spatial relationships between rock art sites from the Bronze Age and remains from the Iron Age – a relationship that I propose could have included a conscious use of the sites and figures.

Iron Age graves at rock art sites

In a dissertation from 1987 Ulf Bertilsson states that the location of Iron Age graves on or adjacent to rock art panels in Bohuslän was a conscious act (Bertilsson 1987:149). This relationship is also discussed by Bengtsson and Ling, who admit that they are a bit puzzled by the strong presence of Iron Age activity at rock art sites (2007:48). The disappearance of the figurative rock art coincides with the first general impact of agriculture in Bohuslän. Bengtsson and Ling regard the rock art sites as reflections of mobile/seasonal activities during the Bronze Age, and propose that this system was altered during the Iron Age when a more agrarian system was established. They suggest that the rock art sites were then reused or revitalized within the agrarian tenure system, although no new (figurative) motifs were made (Bengtsson and Ling 2007:48-49). If this is correct, it is worth considering the simple fact that it must have been the visual qualities of the pictures that made such a revitalization possible. There are several examples from the Himmelstalund-region of what can be interpreted as a conscious location of grave mounds close to rock art sites, for instance at Borgs Säteri (RAÄ 16-17), where there is a complex relationship between Iron Age barrows, burnt mounds and rock art panels (Nordén; 1925:82f; Wahlgren 2002:149). Worth noting is that several of the barrows classified as burnt mounds turned out to be Iron Age graves after excavation. To add some complexity
to this, there are also examples of burnt mounds from the Bronze Age/Early Iron Age that have been reused as graves during the Late Iron Age (Nordén 1925:83).

Rock art from the Iron Age
The rock art tradition in the Himmelstalund-region has been dated to the Bronze Age, with a possible continuation throughout the pre-Roman Iron Age (Wahlgren 2002:179). Perhaps a few of the motifs in the Himmelstalund-region can be dated to the very Late Bronze Age or Early pre-Roman Iron Age. But a brief survey of the panels documented by Nordén shows few of the chronological traits from this period that have been identified in other regions, such as horse riders with rectangular shields or ships with bifurcated stems (Kaul 2004:310, 394f). In other areas, like Tanum in Bohuslän, Bornholm and Trøndelag, there are several examples of ship figures that can be dated to the pre-Roman Iron Age (Kaul 2004:394f). Johan Ling has recently shown that at least 130 of the ship figures from the parish of Tanum could be classified as ships from the pre-Roman Iron Age (Ling 2008:196). If this dating is correct, it is also conceivable that other, older motifs could have been re-carved and revived during this period as well.

Fig. 7. The runic inscription from Himmelstalund. Photo: Per Nilsson.

Runic inscriptions on rock art panels
An interesting example of a direct encounter (or perhaps dialogue?) with the rock art figures at Himmelstalund is a line of runic inscriptions carved on the same rock as the earlier mentioned geometrical figure, some metres to the north-west of the two Iron Age hearths (Nordén 1925; 1932). The line of runes consists of
5-6 (reversed) characters of the older futhark and has been interpreted in several different ways (Fig. 7). The most likely interpretation is Braido or Brajdo, which could refer to a woman’s name meaning ‘the wide or the broad’ (Svante Lagman and Patrik Larsson, runologists, personal communication 2007). Another alternative is Buajdo, i.e. ‘I did’. The authenticity of the runes has been discussed, but if genuine they could have been carved as early as AD 200-300 – although a later dating to AD 400-500 is also reasonable. Other examples of runic inscriptions on rock art panels can be found in Tanum and Utby on the Swedish West Coast, as well as in Kårstad in Norway (Gerdin and Munkenberg 2005; Mandt 2005; Ling 2008:72-73). What is most interesting when considering the phenomenon of runes on rock art sites is the clear visual connection between the two types of inscriptions. What is important to note, though, is that this was not a widespread custom, and there are in fact only a few examples from the whole of Scandinavia. The act of cutting runes on rock art sites can therefore be interpreted as a conscious act, performed by individuals most likely affected by the rock art figures narrative and pictorial qualities.

**Fire-related activities at Rock Art sites**

Traces of fire-related activities have been found at many rock art sites. In the parish of Askum in Bohuslän no less than 71 of the 247 sites showed traces of fire damage (Bengtsson 2004:37). In some cases rock art figures have even been destroyed by fire. Whether or not this damage should be regarded as contemporary with the rock art can be hard to determine. Nordén held that some of the fire-damages and layers of fire-cracked stones found in the Himmelstalund-area could be dated to recent periods. But he interpreted the majority of the layers and heaps of fire-cracked stones as being contemporary with the rock art. Another suggested explanation for some of the fire damage found at rock art sites is that it represents traces from Bronze Age cremation ceremonies (Goldhahn 2007:261f). As we have seen, these features can be dated to a number of different periods. But my own proposal is that the number of fire-related activities dated to the Iron Age at rock art sites indicates that at least some of the damage could have been caused during this period, too. During the Early Iron Age there seems to have been an emphasis on different aspects of fire, and hearths and other features are found in large numbers not just at rock art sites but also at settlements and grave fields. One alternative is that the hearths found at rock art sites ought to be regarded as remains from resting shepherds. This has recently been suggested as a possible explanation for the large number of isolated hearths dating back to the Late Bronze- and Early Iron Age (Petersson 2006:169; cf. Bengtsson & Ling 2007:49). I think it is reasonable to interpret the main part of the hearths and layers/heaps of fire-cracked stones at rock art sites as consciously located (cf. Kaliff 2007:105). There is of course also the possibility that some of the hearths were lit by
resting shepherds. The large scale herding system was established during the Bronze Age and it is therefore likely that the rock art sites located within the grazing areas were connected with special beliefs or myths during the Iron Age as well.

Discussion – can the past become a problem?

The south Scandinavian Bronze Age societies have most often been interpreted as hierarchical and stratified (Kristiansen & Larsson 2005). According to this interpretation the older (monumental) structures, such as barrows, cairns and major rock art sites played an important role for the reproduction of the society. But what role did these monumental places play when the Bronze Age-culture came to an end? By the very Late Bronze Age, or Early Iron Age in some areas, the thousand-year-old tradition of making figurative rock art was coming to an end. A relevant question is how long the memory of this tradition and the places connected with it remained when rock art figures no longer were being made?

Since the early 1990s there has been an increasing interest in discussing how and why different monuments were used and/or reused during later periods. This field of research can also be seen as a subdivision of a broader discussion concerning different conceptions of time and memory within archaeological and anthropological research (e.g. Van Dyke & Alcock 2003; Lucas 2005). Another subdivision is the biographies, or life-histories, of certain types of prehistoric remains, mainly different kinds of monuments (e.g. Kopytoff 1986; Holtorf 2000-2007, 2008). A number of articles and monographs have been published and the history of research on the subject of reuse is now quite extensive (Bradley 2002; Lucas 2005; Jones 2007; Thäte 2007, etc.). In Sweden, the discussion has mainly focused on the way barrows or burial grounds were used or reused during later periods (e.g. Artelius 2004; Munkenberg 2004; Larsson 2005; Strömberg 2005; Artelius and Lindqvist 2007; Tegnér 2008; Thäte 2007). One exception to this is Borna-Ahlkvist’s discussions of how people during the Late Bronze Age could have related to older houses, or house ruins at Bronze Age settlements (Borna-Ahlkvist 2002; cf. Gerritsen 1999). Another aspect of this is the reuse of house sites for Iron Age graves discussed by Thäte (2007:102f).

The reuse of older graves and settlements, or depositing/sacrifices in such locations, has most often been interpreted as a legitimizing act, as a way of demonstrating the rights to use or inhabit a certain area (Thäte 2007:31f). But these places could also have been regarded in a different way. And there are some interesting discussions of other, perhaps more problematic views of the past. One example is Borna-Ahlkvist’s discussion of how decaying houses could be regarded as still inhabited by the feared spirits of the ancestors (Borna-Ahlkvist 2002:189; cf. Holtorf 1999:443f; Tegnér 2008; Tilley 2008:251f). Another view is given by James Whitley in the article ‘Too many ancestors’, where he gives a critical response to the widespread use of the
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ancestors in explaining why monuments were reused in Britain. He suggests that we should look at alternative hypothesis for the reuses and depositing at monuments, which includes the offerings to, and worshipping of, what he calls aliens and previous races (Whitley 2002:124).

Can the past become the ‘Other’?

During the Bronze Age, as well as during the Early Iron Age, a number of grave fields and settlement sites were established, while others were abandoned (Petersson 2006:20ff). This holds true for the life histories of many of the rock art sites as well. Not all of the rock art sites were used during the whole of the Bronze Age, at least in the sense that new figures weren’t added continuously. There are also examples where additions to older rock art figures were made during the course of the Bronze Age, perhaps to make them appear more modern or relevant for their beholders (Fredell 2003:229). But how are we to understand these abandoned places and remade figures? Is it possible that some of them had become connected, or loaded, with negative connotations? Could, for example, the deliberate coverings of rock art panels with layers and heaps of fire-cracked stones be interpreted as an example of a more problematic relation to the past? One way of discussing this is by considering if the past sometimes could have been regarded as unwanted, or at least as something one no longer wanted to be associated with. This phenomenon can also be described by using the philosophical term the ‘Other’. The question I would like to address is if the past, and the pictures connected with the past, at times could have been thought of as the ‘Other’? The use of this term has a long history and it was used already by Hegel, in describing how one’s Self is always constituted by the meeting with the ‘Other’.

Within post-colonial theory the concept has been used to describe how the West treated, or understood, the people in colonized countries (e.g. Fanon 1962; Said 1978; Bhabha 1994). With influences from post-colonial theories, the concept has also been used within Swedish archaeological research. One example is a discussion regarding cultural meetings and different uses of the concept of the ‘Other’ by Cornell and Fahlander (2002:27; cf. Cornell & Fahlander 2007). The term has also been used to discuss how archaeology has given the past an exotic touch, as something fundamentally different from ourselves (Källén 2004:22). Another influential concept, once introduced by Homi K Bhabha, is the notion of ‘the third space’ (Bhabha 1994). The third space can be defined as an area where an encounter of two distinct (and unequal) social groups takes place, and where culture is disseminated and displaced by the interacting groups, making way for the invention of a hybrid identity (Ikas & Wagner 2008).

Within rock art research different aspects of the use of the ‘Other’ and the third space have been discussed by Lise Nordenborg Myhre (2004) and Johan Ling (2005).
Nordenborg Myhre introduces the concept of a ‘trialectic archaeology’ as a critical answer to what she defines as a dialectic use of the ‘Other’ in centre-periphery theories (2004:5, 29). Ling discusses whether the cultural meetings that took place at some of the maritime rock art concentrations on the West Coast could be interpreted as a kind of third space, where cultural identity was created and communicated by the act of making rock art (2005:455). Ling uses the third space to describe a kind of mental space that was created by human encounters in real physical places. The question is whether it is possible to regard Bhabha’s notion of the third space as a real physical space? This is something that has been discussed by Fahlander (2007:23). As stated in the beginning of this paper, my own aim is to study the possibility of a continuous use of the rock art sites employing a use of history-perspective. This means that I will focus on the user and especially the user’s actions. The only way to study these actions with archaeological methods is if they have left any material traces behind. Since the material traces I am studying are contextually located at rock art sites, it would be very wrong not to include their place-specific aspects. So in a sense I use the notion of the third space in a somewhat similar way to Ling, e.g. as a description of the physical spaces where encounters took place. Ling’s definition of the third space could perhaps also count as a good description of the rock art sites that were being reused in different ways during the Iron Age, but with one important difference: the encounters/dialogues taking place at the rock art sites were no longer conducted between humans from different areas, but between humans and the places and figures from the past (cf. Jones 2007:3). It is also possible that people during the Iron Age could have regarded the rock art figures as symbols made by the ancestors.

The disappearance of the south Scandinavian Bronze Age culture as well as the adjoining tradition of making figurative rock art has been explained as the effect of a number of combined factors. Kaul suggests that the disappearance of the rock art tradition was caused by a number of societal changes combined with, or caused by, massive changes in the societies north of the Alps. He also puts the disappearance in connection with possible religious changes at the end of the Late Bronze Age (Kaul 2005:43). I would like to add another aspect to this by regarding the disappearance not only as a passive adjustment to external factors, but rather as a conscious act, performed by different groups on different occasions. For example, there are several rock art motifs from the West Coast of Sweden that can be dated to the pre-Roman Iron Age while the tradition according to the same typology seems to have vanished in the Himmelstalund-region by this time. I propose that by the conscious act of not making (figurative) rock art anymore the Early Iron Age societies in the Himmelstalund-region dissociated themselves from the old tradition. But the rock art figures – or the rocks themselves – continued to be important during the Iron Age, as shown by the reuse and revisits at many of the rock art sites. This renegotiation of the meaning of the sites can also be viewed as a kind of dialogue with the past, probably
understood by people during the Iron Age as a dialogue with the ancestors. In times of cultural change in particular, places and pictures connected with the past, such as grave fields and rock art sites, can become loaded with both positive and negative meanings. In other words – the past can become the ‘Other’.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to discuss how rock art sites and rock art figures from the Bronze Age were used after the figurative rock art tradition had come to an end. Excavations at a number of rock art sites have revealed several finds and features that can be dated to periods later than the Bronze Age. I propose that this continuous use of rock art sites during later periods can be thought of as a kind of dialogue with the past. The outcome of this dialogue was that the rock art figures continued to hold a meaningful, yet transformed meaning. During this process the rock art sites could become loaded with both positive and negative connotations, and it was through this process – or dialogue – with the pictures from the past that this altered meaning was created. In my paper I have tried to focus on the actions taking place at the rock art sites rather than on the symbolic meaning of the pictures themselves. I believe that this focus on the user and the user’s actions can be a fruitful way to discuss how rock art figures, as well as other forms of figurative material, have affected their beholders not just in their original context but also in an extended time perspective.
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Encountering Imagery


Archives

Articulating Stone
The Material Practice of Petroglyphing
Fredrik Fahlander

ABSTRACT The present text elaborates on the material and processual aspects of making petroglyphs during the early Bronze Age in Northern Europe. The focus is set on the relations between materiality and the ‘chaîne opératoire’ rather than in terms of representation, symbolisation or style. It is argued that patchworks, unfinished motifs, re-cuts and hybrids are more interesting ways to understand the complex relations between the social and the ritual aspects of petroglyphing. The approach is illustrated by a horizontal stratigraphy of the Hemsta panel in the parish of Uppland, in southern Sweden. Here a sequence of at least three separate phases of activity is distinguished. The study emphasizes the changing importance of space, depth and size in the process of making and arranging the motifs – suggesting that the development is a part of a social and ritual turbulence resembling the process of hybridity.

Images of the material
In recent decades a number of archaeologists, anthropologists and social scientists have shifted perspectives in which the human and the material are being conceptualised. The ‘material turn’ in the Humanities and the Social Sciences has resulted in an increased emphasis on what the material does to us rather than how humans deal with things (Latour 2005; Webmoor 2007; Fahlander 2008a; Knappett & Malafouris 2008; Olsen 2010). Much of the discussion focuses on the question of material agency, that is, pointing out how certain material objects can work as extensions of human agency (e.g. smoke alarms, speed bumps, or automatic doors) and even ‘replace’ human actors, such as in the case of barbed wire eliminating the need of a shepherd (Latour 2005:77). In archaeology and anthropology, this power to evoke social effects has been discussed in relation to a variety of subjects, e.g. elements of the natural environment (Fahlander 2003), Roman pottery (Gosden 2005), Mayan roads (Normark 2006) or olive oil (Meneley 2008). Despite the obvious similarities to material culture, such symmetrical perspectives have only been employed to a lesser extent when it comes to imagery (cf. Hamilton et al. 1996:281-307; Latour & Weibel 2002). One influential example is the work of Alfred Gell (1998), especially his study of the imagery of the
Kula canoes in terms of semi-conscious mind-control. Gell argues that the lavish decoration carries a ‘secondary agency’, prolonging the general intentions to achieve a good deal (1992:44). Considering the great powers Gell attributes to art and imagery it is no surprise that his arguments have been adopted in rock art research (e.g. Tilley 2008:47; Bradley 2009:53; Ling & Cornell 2010).

However, aside from this potential to ‘harbour’ agency, imagery, like any other materiality, may also have unforeseen effects beyond the intentions of the producer. Images can ‘grow legs’ as Thomas Mitchell puts it; they can be misunderstood, misused and have unintentional effects (1996:73). Such aspects in the lives of images are certainly interesting to pursue – especially considering the long life of certain imagery of the past. Such a perspective partly displaces the role of intention, context, meaning, symbolism and representation and instead emphasizes ‘what an image really wants’. For instance, in what ways can imagery affect the production of new images? How do their biographies intersect with other practices and ways of thinking? What are the effects of the practice of depicting, illustrating and making images? How was social life affected by the accumulation of images? In order to pursue such questions of ‘the materiality of the imagery’ this text elaborates from a relational perspective on Bronze Age petroglyphs in terms of materiality and handicraft. In this case, the materiality of the rock is intensively mixed and intertwined with the actual crafting procedure and thus advocates an integrated perspective. The study focuses on the elements of the imagery as actants, discussing how displacements in quantity, size and depth may be as important for understanding the craft as the motif itself. Since petroglyphs are produced over quite long time spans, I will mainly focus on small scale and local developments rather than pursuing general issues of Bronze Age rock art. This ‘microarchaeological’ approach is illustrated by a horizontal stratigraphy of the Hemsta panel, a small site of petroglyphs outside the city of Enköping, about 100 kilometres north-west of the Swedish capital of Stockholm (Fig. 1).

The materiality is the message

It might seem contradictory to discuss the materiality of petroglyphs since in a strict sense they constitute a void; but of course, the medium, the rock, is an essential aspect in order to understand both the practice and the roles of the imagery in the social structuration process. In Bronze Age rock art studies, various iconological perspectives have dominated the research which emphasizes the understanding of the motifs in relation to their primary and secondary contexts. For instance, on a regional level several scholars pointed out the importance of the landscape to understand the petroglyphs, such as the close association with water and the shoreline (e.g. Nordenborg Myhre 2004; Ling 2008; Gjerde 2010). Others have considered the materiality of place, that is, the particular context or ambience surrounding the petroglyphs (e.g.
Goldhahn 2002; Jones 2006; Coles 2011). On the micro-level, some have focused on the ‘canvas’; the rock-face itself and its properties in terms of colour, cracks and fissures (e.g. Bradley et al. 2002; Wahlgren 2004; Tilley 2004).

Fig. 1. Map of southern Scandinavia with the location of the sites mentioned.

However, notwithstanding the level of scale and generalisation, the search for a ‘proper context’ tends to lock the understanding of imagery into smaller or larger ‘frames’. This prevents us from understanding how local issues are related to the big picture in various ways, and to recognise how different spheres of life are rather entangled, criss-crossing conceptual boundaries. Thus, the traditional interpretative focus on context has been questioned in the last decades by archaeologists, geographers and anthropologists who instead explore various non-representational and relational perspectives (e.g. Fahlander 2003; 2008b; Jones 2004; Cochrane 2005; Ingold 2006; Henare et al. 2007; Anderson & Harrison 2010). A main inspiration to the relational approach is found in actor-network theory and the notion of a ‘flat’ ontology which tries to bypass the kind of binary thinking that has plagued rock art research (e.g. real – ideal, mobile – sedentary, Bronze Age – Neolithic, material – immaterial, general – particular, local – global, death – fertility, ritual – social, etc).
Instead of seeking such a priori order ‘waiting to be unveiled, decoded, or revealed’ (Anderson & Harrison 2010:19) non-representational theories emphasize the relational aspects of social and material actants; e.g. materialities (artefacts and natural), humans, deities and animals. For instance, the different images pecked in rocks do not primarily need to represent something ideal or real, but may in fact be both depending on the circumstances (cf. Cochrane & Russell 2007; Alberti and Bray 2009).

From a non-representational perspective we may approach the petroglyphs as a meaningful practice – but not necessarily as a communicating or narrating device. Instead of investigating primary or secondary intentions behind the motifs we can focus on material qualities, sizes, elements and techniques and discuss the ways in which images are integrated and important parts in social structuration. The materiality is clearly of importance in this case (cf. Sognnes 2001:16; Bradley et al. 2002). Although similar images have been both painted and carved in other materials, the choice of medium for petroglyphs has certain qualities that may be as important as the motifs themself. There are great differences between pecking an image in stone compared to carving the same image in other materials (cf. Conneller 2011; Cummings 2012). The material aspects of the rock ‘offer’ – in Gibson’s terms (1979) – three major affordances: to begin with, it is a hard material, which means that it takes time to peck images into stone. This implies that images are not randomly scribbled down, but that the size, depth, level of detail and style are carefully considered. A second aspect is the static nature and immovability of the rock, which together with its material qualities suggests a sense of endurance and promise of eternity. Thirdly, by being a resilient matter it may to a certain extent prohibit intentional or unintentional destruction. These aspects are all profoundly intertwined with the actual craft of making petroglyphs and thus endorse an integrated perspective.

Working with rocks

Even though the focus in rock art has generally been put on the pictorial content, it has been suggested that the actual practice of making petroglyphs may have been the primary purpose (e.g. Moberg 1969:13; cf. Bradley 2009:63). Such a perspective does not necessarily imply that the visual result was unimportant, but rather adds yet another dimension to our understanding of why the images were made on rocks. Moreover, the resilient aspect of the rock also suggests that the petroglyphs can be discussed in terms of time and energy investment. From such a perspective, one large boat may thus be equal to two smaller ones and vice versa. It also implies that re-cutting a previous motif may be regarded as equal to pecking a new image because it represents basically the same effort.

An energy-expenditure perspective on the petroglyphs also opens up possibilities for ‘comparing’ single motifs or whole panels or sites similar to how Tainter (1978)
once compared burials in terms of energy investment. On the one hand, such an assessment makes sense from a ritual perspective, in which the effort of making images on rock is equivalent to a votive-offering (Pinch & Waraksa 2009; cf. Malmer 1989:18). On the other hand, from a social perspective, such a practice can in a similar way be viewed in terms of competitive practice between individuals or groups. From the latter outlook we may need to add time as a factor (how fast one could make a motif), and also aspects such as quantity, size, location, originality and aesthetics in a way that is similar to how modern graffiti works (e.g. Gottlieb 2008; cf. Aldhouse-Green 2004). There is, however, little point in discussing the possible reasons behind the making of petroglyphs on a general level. Considering the many different social and material contexts in which they appear, and the long history of the tradition, it would be pointless to single out one reason that is valid for all regions and time periods (cf. Goldhahn 2006:71).

We need not, however, choose ritual perspectives over social ones. Instead, it is more interesting to discuss certain particular instances where one perspective may be more prominent than the other – as well as circumstances where they seem to intersect. In order to narrow and focus the discussion I will consider a few particular examples (i.e. patchworks, unfinished motifs, re-cuts, and hybrids) related to the craft of making petroglyphs.

Patchworks, unfinished motifs, re-cuts & hybrids

One interesting category concerns later additions and transformations of older motifs. A panel in the parish of Hemsta, outside Enköping, contains one such example of an animal and a boat that have been conjoined into what seems to be an intentional hybrid (Fig. 2a). Such combinations are relatively common in the circumpolar hunter rock art tradition. For instance, Sjöstrand (2011:123) suggests that the transformations of boats to elks and vice versa at Nämforsen are primarily the result of ‘interaction’ with previous carvers. It is indeed an interesting hypothesis, especially considering the relatively high frequency of boat-animal hybrids in those contexts. The merging of different motifs may hint at a grammatical relationship whereby the conjoined unit becomes something other than a boat-elk. Another interesting category of re-use of previous motifs is one that may be discussed in terms of ‘short-cuts’. Consider, for example, a boat motif (Boglösa 416) that apparently has made use of a natural groove in the rock instead of hammering out the hull (Fig. 2c). This and other similar uses of the natural cracks and fissures in rocks have in some cases been interpreted as narrative traits to illustrate movement etc. (e.g. Bradley et al. 2002; Goldhahn 2005b:592; Tilley 2008). However, viewed from a practice-oriented perspective, such instances nonetheless represent less energy investment and may qualify as short-cuts. Another type of later modification concerns possible re-cuts of older images. These
are also difficult to prove, but it has been argued that the varying depth of certain individual motifs in some cases was caused by them being renewed (cf. Nordbladh 1980:11). At Hemsta there is a possible example of a boat of which a part of the keel has been pecked much deeper than the rest (Fig. 2b). As such, it may thus be an example of both re-cutting and an unfinished project. Wahlgren has argued for the use of re-cuts as a narrative tool by which certain motifs of a panel can be switched ‘on’ and ‘off’ (2002:185, cf. Malmer 1989:10; Nordenborg Myhre 2004: ch. 6). But of course, re-cuts may also be interpreted from a practice-oriented perspective as a way to save time and effort.

Fig. 2. Examples of possible patchworks, unfinished motifs, re-cuts and hybrids (all from Hemsta, outside Enköping). Top right: (2a) A boat joined with an animal (photo: F. Fahlander). Top left: (2b) A boat motif showing signs of re-cutting? (photo: F. Fahlander). Lower left: (2c) A possible ‘cheat’ or shortcut, using a natural groove for the hull? (Kjellén id: 416.2ACBHemsta). Lower right: (2d) A detached row of crew-lines of an unfinished boat? (photo: F. Fahlander).

The category of ‘unfinished’ motifs is also interesting in the sense that they may hint of the sequence in which the different elements were cut – especially if we can assume that the most important aspects also set the frames for the whole composition of a motif. One interesting element is the so-called crew-lines in the boat-like images. What the vertical lines on these particular motifs are supposed to represent has been debated, the most common interpretation is a crew of paddlers, but it has also been suggested that they refer to construction details of a catamaran or outrigger canoe (Elgström 1924; Kjellén & Hyenstrand 1977:64). At Hemsta there are a few examples of what seems to be ‘crew-lines’ without a hull or keel (Fig. 2d) as well
as several cases where the depth of the lines differs from that of the hull. Do such instances suggest that these lines were the first to be pecked? If that is indeed the case, it then follows that the number of lines may actually determine the length of individual boats. It also suggests that they are a more important aspect of the boat motif than one would expect.

Incomplete motifs are also interesting because they may indicate the possibility of material hybrids. The example of crew-lines ‘without a hull’, for instance, may once have been complemented with paint or some other sticky substance? Whether the petroglyphs have been painted (Tilley 1991:138) or ‘filled’ with substances (Yates 1990) is a recurrent theme in rock art research, but complementary use of different materials to compose a motif is rarely discussed. Of course, this kind of ex nihilo argument is problematic since no such instances are known. The notion is, however, actually supported in a three-dimensional scan of an ‘incomplete’ animal motif on a panel (VF 68) at Västra Frölunda, south of the Swedish city of Gothenburg (Fig. 3).

The animal consists of a pecked tail, neck and head but appears to lack a body that would join the limbs together. The depth of the other limbs refutes the possibility that the body has simply weathered away and it is very likely that the motif is unfinished since the body is less likely to be the last to be pecked since all other limbs stem from
it. However, when the panel was subjected to laser scanning, the detailed 3D-image revealed traces of horizontal scratching on the area around where the body should have been cut (Fahlander 2008c). This suggests that the animal indeed once had a body that at a later stage was erased. However, it is obvious that the body was never cut into the rock, but is more likely to have been made of paint, clay or another sticky material, which at a later point had been scratched away. The possible occurrence of material hybrids is indeed interesting. They provide a link between different rock art traditions and put the category of seemingly incomplete motifs in perspective.

Patchworks, unfinished motifs, re-cuts and hybrids are all important aspects when discussing the material and practical side of petroglyphs. However, to be of any analytical use they need to be studied in relation to other aspects and not as singular instances. I will therefore conclude this discussion by addressing one example of how a relational perspective can be helpful in order to establish horizontal stratigraphies of individual panels. A time-line allows us to discuss the ‘chaîne opératoire’, that is, how subsequent motifs relate to the materiality of the rock as well as earlier motifs. It facilitates a more detailed platform from which we can discuss possible relations between the material, the social and the ritual, as well as between the local and the regional.

Sequencing difference, displacements and change

That many rock art panels are the result of a cumulative development is today widely recognised and only a few minor panels can be argued to constitute an intentional composition made by one person at one point in time. The varying styles, erratic alignments and several cases of superimposing motifs suggests that most panels are the result of the recurring efforts of several individuals over time (Goldhahn 2006:71; cf. Fahlander 2012). Both Moberg (1965:32) and Nordbladh (1980:28) have compared the process with the horizontal development of burials grounds. Precisely as new graves needed to be related to previous ones, each new motif needed to relate in some way to the previous ones and the available area. This implies that it is possible to establish a time-line from the very first to the last motifs of a particular panel. Such a horizontal stratigraphy would allow us to discuss changes and displacement in practice over time and thus establish differences for further interpretation. As a practical example of how such a stratigraphy may prove informative I will discuss the local development of a special panel on the Hemsta outcrop (Fig. 1).

The area south-east of Enköping comprises a cluster of petroglyphs that originally were situated close to the shoreline, approximately 20-25 metres above the present sea level (Plikk 2010). The petroglyphs in this area comprise all of the common figures (cup marks, boats, human figures, animals and abstract figures) of which the majority can be dated to Bronze Age periods I to V (Ling 2012:76). One especially
interesting site with petroglyphs is the Hemsta panel (Boglösa RAÄ 131:1), which was a rocky islet, situated within a shallow cove during the Bronze Age (Fig. 4). The altitude above sea level (25.2 m.a.s.l.) suggests that this rock was submerged until the end of the third millennium BC when it gradually became visible above the surface. The outcrop comprises a number of boat motifs, human-like figures, animals and a few ‘encircling’ formations (e.g. the so-called ‘chair’ at Hemsta). The majority of the petroglyphs, or at least the boat motif, seem stylistically to belong to the Early Bronze Age although a few may in fact be older (Kjellen & Hyenstrand 1977:105; Ling 2012).

![Map showing the location of the Hemsta panel with adjusted water level](image)

Fig. 4. The location of the Hemsta panel with adjusted water level (c. 20 m above present level). The dots represent panels with figurative motifs in the area (adapted and modified based on Wessman 2011). The pattern of pecked panels is indeed suggestive and is by no means randomly distributed.

The general dating methods based on style and altitude above sea level are, however, only helpful to a certain extent. They are only able to offer an approximate date of the period when the site was in use, but it does not help us to establish a sequence between individual motifs (the difference in altitude between the lowest and the highest-placed petroglyphs at Hemsta is only about a metre). The same goes for stylistic differences, which are too general to be applicable on such a detailed scale (for example, there are at least 15 different types of boats pecked on the Hemsta
outcrop alone). Instead, we can employ some of the previously discussed craft and material related aspects of the petroglyphs in order to establish a sequence of events. In this case I will focus on the uppermost and possibly most prominent part of the site, which comprises a number of boats of varying sizes and styles, as well as a few animal figures and cup marks (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5. Part of the Hemsta outcrop, Boglösa 131 (Photo: Kjellén, id: 131.1LICBshHemsta).

A horizontal stratigraphy of the Hemsta panel
What is immediately striking in Kjellén’s photo, the punctum of the panel in the words of Barthes (2000:27), are the two columns of deep pecked large boat motifs stacked on top of each other (Fig. 5). But looking in more detail we find at least three or four different types of boats, of which some clearly superimpose others. It is interesting to note that Kjellén (1975), Kjellén & Hyenstrand (1977), Coles (1995; 2000), and Broström (ms.) have interpreted the same panel differently over the years (compare Fig. 5 and Fig. 6). A three-dimensional scan would certainly provide more information about carving depth and alternative interpretations of certain details, but the panel is, however, currently painted which eliminate any closer examinations with the aid of laser scanning or photogrammetry. In this example, I have used the most recent interpretation made by Broström (ms), which seems most detailed and accurate. When appropriate, I have also consulted the documentation of Coles (1995:58; 2000:18) and additional photos from Kjellén’s archive.
By studying different qualities such as superimpositions, style, size, depth, alignment, possible hybrids as well as how the different motifs relate to each other and the natural rock face it is possible to identify at least three different phases of activity on the panel (illustrated by different colours in Fig. 6). It is, of course, a tentative suggestion which omits some motifs while emphasizing others. It is also important to note that this example by no means aspires to capture the full developments at the site. There is much other imagery on the same and other sites parallel to this particular panel. The aim is rather to emphasize how the particular – when studied in detail – can be revealing about more general developments.

Fig. 6. Part of the Hemsta outcrop and the sequence of phases coloured in red, blue and green (Boglösa 131). Motifs that are indeterminable with regard to the sequence are in grey and black indicating differences in depth (Image based on original gray-scale documentation by Broström, from Ling 2012:41).

The starting point for the stratigraphy is the superimposing elements. Although it is difficult to determine by objective means which motif overlaps the other (Forsberg 1993:201-2), in this case it is evident that the largest boat (blue) – as well as one (or two) of the smaller boats (green) beneath it – superimpose the two shallower pecked boats with hatched hulls (red). These latter examples are clearly different from the others in terms of both technique and style. Boat motifs with hatched hulls are scarce; there is another one a few metres away on the opposite side of the rock, and single examples are found in the Norrköping area (Wåhlgren 2004:163) and in Bohuslän on the west coast of Sweden (Baltzer 1881:pl49:2; cf. Elgström 1924:289). Considering the varying contexts in which they appear, hatched hulls seem not to be a chronological feature (cf. Kjellén & Hyenstrand 1977:51ff; Burenhult 1980:52f). The hatched boats at Hemsta also differ from the others in other ways: they have an unusual shape of both the ‘stern’, which is
almost straight with no keel or rudder extension, and the front, which culminates in a ‘pointy’, single extended ‘prow’. Furthermore, they are shallowly pecked in thin lines (perhaps they became superimposed because they were barely visible?). The prow of the left one also extends over the natural crack in the rock, which subsequent boats never do. The one farthest to the right is also conjoined with an animal figure (cf. Fig. 2a). These examples suggest that both boats and probably the animals belong to the earliest phase of the panel. In fact, the diverging style together with the case of joint boat-animal motifs may indicate a Neolithic date (cf. Ling 2012:43).

The next phase of petroglyphs comprises the two columns of large boats (blue). According to Ling’s chronology, they are of a typical Early Bronze Age style (2012:75). As previously mentioned, the largest boat in the right column superimposes the hatched ones and is thus clearly of later date. Because of their similar style, size and special formation in columns, the six (or more?) large boats with hammered out hulls are grouped together into one phase. An interesting aspect of this phase is the solid and distinct impression of the motifs. If anything they articulate a sense of domination and order compared with the other smaller and less organised boats. What is also striking is that they seem to cover as much area as possible within the frames of the natural cracks and previous petroglyphs. In fact, there is no better place to place them if you want to make them big and impressive. This phase also introduced the stacking of ships, which are a common feature at both Neolithic and Bronze Age rock art sites (Fahlander 2012). A few metres away on the rock there is a column of seven boats stacked on top of each other. It is also interesting to note that a number of smaller (green) boats cluster in pairs below the larger blue ones in what seems to be an intentional formation (cf. Coles 2000:57ff). These boats differ in several respects from the blue ones and therefore constitute a third phase. Like the large blue boats, at least one of them superimposes a red, hatched one, and must thus be a later addition. That these are later than the large blue boats is evident from the one crammed in between two blue boats. The angle of the prow has clearly been adjusted in order not to interfere with the previous boats. The boats of this phase are generally small, of varying alignment and distinguished by the compact, almost square style, with a flat hull, long pointed prows and extended keels. Kjellén and Hyenstrand (1977:105) suggest that the extended keels and prows possibly make them stylistically more recent than the large blue ones, which would perhaps indicate a break in continuity in the use of the panel.

A matter of size?

In addition to the three basic groups of boats there are two further distinct motifs that call for attention. One is the boat (light blue) between the two columns of blue boats, and the other is the contour-pecked boat (black) on top of the right stack. In the first case it is obvious that size and space are important parameters, which may
possibly overrule formal stylistic aspects of the motif. The available rock surface has large unused areas, but still many petroglyphs are crammed together, like the case of the green boat between the blue ones in the right column. The way its keel and alignment have been adjusted is one of many indications that superimposing has been avoided. With the exception of the shallow pecked hatched boats natural cracks in the rock have also generally been ‘respected’. The boat placed between the two columns of stacked boats (light blue) is indeed a prime example of this. It is crammed into the available space and the angle of the hull and alignment is clearly adjusted to maximize its size (best visible in Fig. 5). In this case, the slightly rounded hull is most likely due to the attempt to maximize the size in relation to the available area. In most other respects this motif is similar to the blue ships (although facing the opposite direction and with slightly more inward-turned prows) and is thus probably a late addition within the same phase. We may therefore begin to suspect that there is more to the seemingly random distribution of boats than first meets the eye. The way the motifs relate to each other, as well as their size and place on the rock, seems typically more important than the style and shape of its elements.

The contour-pecked boat (black) on top of the right column may support this impression. It is a confusing example since it in one way so clearly relates to the other blue boats, yet is still of a different style. At other sites, like Nämforsen, contour-pecking is generally regarded as a chronological trait (Forsgren 1993:224), but in this context, this type of boat is placed in the same period (I) as the large (blue) boats with hammered-out hulls (Ling 2012:75). It may be tempting to cluster this boat with the other contour-pecked boats (grey) on the left of the panel. They are probably older than both the blue and the green ones because they seem to be superimposed by the larger ones. The one on top of the column is, however, clearly a different type in style, depth and size and in terms of craft and energy investment, which altogether suggests that the style of the hull is not primarily a chronological aspect here. One explanation may be that it is in fact a half-finished motif, i.e. that the hull was hammered-out as a late stage in a process. However, considered together, the two boats are actually likely to be part of the basic idea of stacking boat motifs on top of each other. However, in the case of the left one, there simply is not any room to fit it on top of the other three. There are two further aspects to consider here: the first is the difference in size from the largest at the bottom to the smallest on the top. In the case of the right column this may be due to the available area between the cracks in the rock, but this is not the case of the left column. There are few clues for us to understand why they differ in size in this manner, but the formation suggests that the sequence begins with the largest boats at the bottom. In the case of the left column, the final number of ships does not seem to have been taken into account. This interpretation is also consistent with similar concerns and adjustments made at other sites with stacked boats, such as Boglösa 73:1, situated a few kilometres north of Hemsta.
Relating or representing?

It would probably be a mistake to completely dismiss the importance of style when relating the different motifs to each other. Style and form are certainly chronological variables to some extent, but the point I wish to make is that we need to consider other aspects as well. Aside from what the boat-motifs are supposed to represent (emblemic—assertive style, or real—ideal construction details), the materiality of the rock itself indicates that there is indeed a ritual dimension of the practice. For instance, if we set aside the asymmetrical ontology in which the human and material are separated, we may consider the prospect of a relational ontology in which certain materialities (objects, animals, images etc.) may be ‘animated’ and charged with certain powers (Ingold 2006; Hill 2010). Perhaps it is possible to ‘trap’ something within an image; by producing it you have captured, imprinted, and appropriated something (cf. Burenhult 1980:92)? Such a hypothesis is supported by what seems to be an ‘untouchable’ status of the boat motifs. For instance, the boat motifs at Hemsta (except for the red) are adjusted to the natural cracks and fissures in the rock in order to be ‘intact’. From a ritual perspective this makes sense since a votive offering is generally a communicative ritual, performed in order to establish a durable relationship between the individual and the deity (Pinch & Waraksa 2009; Teske 1980:112). The materiality of the rock offers both a suitable resistance (representing the offering) as well as a promise of durability. Such an aspect is also sustained by the study of the boat motifs at Hemsta, which seem to seek an ultimate impact (size and quantity) without interfering with previous ‘sacrifices’.

But, of course, arguments can be made for both a ritual interpretation and a social one. The superimposition of the hatched boats, for instance, must be regarded as an intentional iconoclash. The dominant impression of the large boats ‘takes over’ the surface in a way that suggests a competitive scenario in which some previous petroglyphs are erased or ‘killed’ (cf. the animal at the Frölunda panel). This suggests that ritual and social aspects of petroglyphing are intertwined and perhaps even inseparable. It does not necessarily imply that the carvings are ‘a bit of both’. Rather, they articulate more of one than the other according to fluctuating local circumstances.

Bruno Latour has argued that images often produce interesting social effects the moment when they transgress the division between representation and reality (2002; Weibel & Latour 2007). The complex variations of the Hemsta panel may thus be an example of both ritual and social competition that over time have unforeseen consequences in each field. For instance, what happens when a ritual communication is ‘intercepted’ by others – perhaps without the knowledge of its original intentions? Like archaeologists of today, different communities of the past might have tried to interpret, ‘crack the code’, imitate, but also attempt to cover up or destroy the imagery of the Other. It is easy to imagine a fluctuating relationship between the ritual and social articulation over time between different groups.
The stacking of boats in the Hemsta example is consistent with such a scenario in the way that they ‘lock’ the area and prevented new additions from being made. This aggressive tendency is not present at all in the next phase, when smaller (green) motifs are added to the previous scene (cf. Coles 2000:63). In a way they give the impression of relating to the previous large motifs similar to the way in which secondary burials were sometimes added to prominent grave mounds.

We may thus begin to see the contours of a social background to the displacements of the petroglyphs at Hemsta. It is easy to picture how different ‘communities of practice’ in the flux between Neolithic and Bronze Age lifestyles aggregated at the shallow cove for a variety of reasons. It would not be surprising if such a state of hybridity was to some extent articulated on the rock panels (Fahlander 2012). The materiality of the rock, its permanence and hard but durable medium, certainly play a significant role in such a process.

**Conclusion: Displacements in material enunciation**

The imagery of the Other is always tricky to handle because it often ‘talks back’ to us in quite a direct manner, sometimes even surpassing the rhetorical power of the written text (cf. Berger 1972). This is certainly the case of the south Scandinavian Bronze Age petroglyphs, which have spawned a wide range of more or less plausible ideas as to their inherent meaning and symbolic content. In this text I have tried to bypass the fallacies of the traditional iconological and interpretative approaches and have instead explored the material and practical aspects of petroglyphing from a non-representational perspective. By studying the petroglyphs as material articulations we may be able to discuss the social circumstances in which they were crafted, leaving to one side the problem of what they may represent or depict. Images are tricky in this way because it is often too easy to let the apparent content of an image direct the way a particular articulation is understood. For instance, the number of ‘antagonistic’ scenes (e.g. ‘armed’ or ‘phallic’ human figures) occur much less frequently in the Enköping area than on the Swedish west coast (Wessman 2010:105). Looking at the figurative and narrative dimensions of the Upplandic petroglyphs it is thus easy to get the impression that it was a less conflict-ridden area. However, the iconoclash of the panel at Hemsta and other localities in the vicinity with similar arrangements of boat stacks (e.g. Boglösa 73:1) suggests the opposite. This is but one example of how a focus on the materiality of the image tells a story that is different from iconographical and representational approaches. Viewing the development of the Hemsta panel as a series of material articulations allows us to discuss both ritual and social aspects as interwoven in the practice while simultaneously avoiding some of the dichotomist thinking in rock art research.
The non-representational approach applied here also seeks to ‘unpack’ the south Scandinavian tradition from the Bronze Age ‘black-box’ by focusing on relationality before context. It also hints at a much more heterogeneous and hybrid background – at least in the earliest phase – which may not necessarily need be related to a continental Bronze Age culture alone, but also includes aspects of the so-called northern tradition of petroglyphs. Instead of approaching the petroglyphs from Enköping as a Bronze Age cultural expression, they seem upon closer examination to be a much more complex phenomena articulating a rather unstable and changing social situation in which different individuals and groups are involved (Fahlander 2012; cf. Sognnes 2001:125). Such an approach allows for a wider perspective in which the local is seen in relation to the regional rather than being parts of a whole.

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Abstract

Marine imagery comprises a large portion of the motifs currently found on Bronze Age rock art in Scandinavia. This imagery has often been discussed in terms of religion and cosmology. This paper departs from Alfred Gell's work on art and agency and asks: if rock art has agency, is it possible that this could also be used to affect elements of the environment? In certain regions of Scandinavia makers of rock art had an obsession with marine imagery which in some regions correlate with more extreme coastal change. This suggests that the connection between marine imagery and the shoreline may not be just cosmological but also associated with environmental change. Proposed cosmologies in the region involve elements of the environment, so environmental changes might have caused inhabitants to renegotiate their cosmological views. This paper looks at three examples that highlight this possible connection.

Introduction

The Bronze Age (BA) rock art of northern Europe has often been discussed in terms of cosmology and religion. In recent decades these cosmologies have convincingly linked coastal rock art sites, marine imagery and watery landscapes. Along the coasts of Scandinavia in the BA, post-glacial land uplift (isostacy) caused the shoreline to ‘retreat’ (shoreline displacement) in many regions. Though shoreline data has for some time been used to date rock carvings, the social effects of this environmental change are also now being discussed. This paper proposes a model that connects shoreline-associated cosmologies with environmental change and social action. It asks if there is a greater intensity of marine imagery in those regions that experienced extreme coastal changes after the last Ice Age. If there is, then this may suggest the connection between marine imagery and the shoreline may not be just cosmological but also associated with environmental change. This relationship may have altered the purpose of the placement of rock art as the shorelines disappeared. This paper will first review cosmologies proposed by among others, Knut Helskog and Flemming Kaul. It will then look to the anthropologist Alfred Gell for a theory of the agency of art. The proposed model will then be discussed in regards to two study areas that experienced environmental change based on the recent detailed studies of Johan
Ling: Bohuslän (west Sweden) (Ling 2008), Østfold (southeast Norway) (Vogt 2012) and Uppland (east central Sweden) (Ling in press). It will also look at Simris parish, Skåne (south Sweden), where marine imagery occurs, but minimal shoreline displacement took place (Fig. 1).

Relevant cosmological theories and environmental change

Rock carvings constitute the largest body of pictorial information from Scandinavian prehistory, and have often been the foundation for cosmologies proposed in the BA. Christer Westerdahl (2006:8) has gone so far as to say, ‘To an illiterate tradition pictures like rock carvings is a prime form of exhibition’ of prehistoric cosmologies. Cosmological theories have historically been inspired by a range of sources from Egyptian religion (Sprockhoff 1955) to Norse mythology (Gelling & Davidson 1969) and have gone through varying phases of popularity in the history of research. In the 1970s and 80s religious theories dominated interpretation but were less concerned with integrating these cosmologies with the surrounding landscapes and other archaeological
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phenomena. Today this is commonplace. Throughout Scandinavia marine imagery comprises a large percentage of the motifs on BA rock carvings: in Sweden alone we know of at least 15,000 examples. Marine imagery is also dominant on portable bronzes: in Denmark over 800 ship images have been found on a minimum of 420 ornamented bronzes (Kaul 1998:257). There have been several recent publications that have sought to contextualize rock art imagery with cosmologies that revolve around elements of the environment. Among these are Helskog’s (1999) proposed ‘shoreline connection’ based on rock carvings in northern Norway and Kaul’s (1998) tripartite cosmology based on portable Danish bronzes.

In 1999 Helskog published an article entitled ‘The Shore Connection...’. In his study he analyses the locations of rock carvings in northern Norway. These carvings are categorised as the ‘Northern hunting tradition’, though are not devoid of marine imagery. A large percentage of these carvings in northern Scandinavia are found in the shore zone or are strongly associated with water. Helskog suggests the placement of carvings was determined by religious beliefs, such as those drawn from Arctic aboriginal and other circumpolar populations. This cosmology paints a picture of three worlds, and the shoreline is the point of connection between these three worlds. They are the sky as the upper world, the land as the middle world and underwater as the lower world. Helskog relays that ‘Spirits in other dimensions are ‘contacted’ by people in order to gain control over animals, resources, diseases, people, spirits, life... Could, then, the shore...represent the appropriate place for rituals that connected people with the worlds of the spirits?’ (Helskog 1999:79). He argues that the rock images are inseparable from the landscape they inhabit and therefore their placement near the water’s edge was based on the belief that this was a site of communication (see also: Lahelma 2005a-b; Wrigglesworth 2007, 2010).

Denmark lacks the large open-air rock faces so prevalent in the Norwegian and Swedish post-glacial landscapes and so inhabitants chose instead to ornament bronze objects. Kaul (1998) has created a tripartite religious system derived from meticulous observations of these Danish portable bronze artefacts, which has been adopted and tailored at various rock art sites throughout south Scandinavia (see also Skoglund 2010). The marine imagery portrayed on the bronze objects is not limited to ships; many are part of scenes with representations of water and eel-like animal shapes. The bronze ship images have often been discussed in relation to the southern tradition of rock carvings and the two media are both considered in Kaul’s system, which he applies in south Scandinavia. His model is largely based on the movement of the sun. In his system, he argues that at night the sun is drawn under the sea by a ship, and in the daytime is drawn across the sky by chariots and horses in a representation of the cycle of a day, a season, a year or possibly even a lifetime. The differences in medium, complexity and size of the carvings on bronzes versus rock make it implausible to make direct compositional comparisons; but the overwhelming presence of marine imagery
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on both is obviously striking. For Kaul, as for Helskog, the shoreline is important as a transitional site between the sky and sea, between day and night.

In fact many archaeologists are dealing with religious systems that involve elements of the environment. Hans Bolin (2000:171) argues that the ‘location of rock art near lakes, rivers and watercourses suggests that the theme of water was a central element in the ancient mythological belief system’. These systems give importance to the shore, sea and the movement of the sun, which they see reflected in the rock carvings and portable bronzes. Another example can be taken from Vincent Vieira’s (2010) model, which connects sea-level change, mythology and rock art. This study was conducted on the eastern side of Lake Onega, northwest Russia, where the swan motif appears in rock carvings. His viewpoint is similar to that of Helskog as the distribution of rock carvings in this area is also deliberately shore-bound at the convergence of land, water and sky. Rising lake levels occurred as a result of climatic cooling and evidently may have submerged earlier Onega sites (2010:259). Vieira proposes that the frequency of the swan motif may have been a ‘...cognitive attempt to resolve external challenges within the context of an existing mythological framework...the swan may have been perceived as the most powerful agent for the intended reversal or control of such [environmental] challenges (or as a solution for their effects)’ (2010:259-60).

Cosmology by definition is a reflection of a social group’s understanding of their world: how it came to be and how it functions. It is comprised of a series of explanations, a mode of understanding the world around oneself. And these proposed cosmological systems do revolve around the environment. Yet in certain areas of Scandinavia in the BA the environment, especially in the coastal zone, was unstable. In areas such as Bohuslän and Østfold, the present day shoreline is nearly 15–20 m below that of the BA (Hygen 2000:22). In southwest Uppland, shoreline altitude was 25 m.a.s.l. c. 1700 BC but dropped to 15 m.a.s.l. by 700 BC (Ling in press:16). In other areas, such as southeast Skåne, the change was relatively small. This paper does not focus on arguing for or against established theories of BA cosmologies as presented above. It does however assume that BA understandings of the workings of the world would have been in direct relationship with the environment and argues that the production of rock art was a part of this relationship. Assuming that the cosmological beliefs just presented were so bound to the environment and specifically to the shoreline, how then would shoreline displacement affect these cosmological beliefs? And what kind of reaction would the changes inspire?

These questions have more often been proposed in regard to the south Scandinavian Mesolithic. Lars Larsson (2004) suggests environmental change might have been a factor in the deposition of portable art and the placement of graves. He proposes that prehistoric peoples would have been forced to reconsider their understanding and view of their world as the environment changed. Larsson argues that the environmental changes were extreme enough to have been recognised in the landscape, and would
have been psychologically jarring. He writes that ‘being forced to change one’s physical
map from one generation to the next must have had consequences for the mental
map’ and therefore the changes must have not only had practical but also symbolic
consequences (Larsson 2004:223). By connecting the distribution of rock art sites,
with graves and finds of amber pendants, he observes that each feature was deliberately
placed near water. Larsson (2004:223) wonders if this action was a ‘means to try to
achieve balance in a changing world’. In his proposition the deliberate placement of
special objects might have been the intentional use of ‘art’ to have an effect on the
environmental changes. This brings us to the anthropologist Gell.

Agency, rock art and environmental change

Anthropologists have always played a large part in the interpretation of prehistoric art.
Their theories once dominated the discussions of the role of art in societies, whether
prehistoric communities or the traditional societies in which they conducted their
studies. But from the 1970s, they began to give art objects a more powerful role in
society. They began to view them ‘as integral to the processes of reproducing social
relations and of developing affective relations with the world’ (Morphy & Perkins
2006:10). Gell advocated this view. He claimed that art objects are more than just
players in a structuralist system of signs and meanings, words and language. At the
time of publication, Gell took a fairly controversial stance by rejecting the idea that
art was just a formula for symbolic communication (see Morphy 2009 for opposing
viewpoint).

His alternative approach has interested scholars and influenced rock art studies
in the last decade (recent examples: Bradley 2009; Ling & Cornell 2010). Gell
proposed that art objects exert agency among members of a society. He suggested a
new system of relations comprising the actions performed by both objects and agency.
This he describes is primarily that of agency. He defined humans as ‘primary agents’,
and artefacts as ‘secondary agents’. In his system, humans use artefacts to distribute
their own agency in the world, to ‘distribute their agency in the causal milieu and
thus render their agency effective’ (Gell 1998:20). Therefore art is an active part
of society created within a matrix of social relations. Gell argued that if art objects
have agency, they could have an effect or even cause an effect on members of society.
Gell also discussed this type of agency in terms of ‘magic’. Magic, as he describes it,
is not sorcery or supernatural action but the act of affecting and manipulating social
relationships. Ling and Cornell (2010:33) have recently asked:

Could the socio-ritual actions described by anthropologists as ‘magic’ or ‘magical rituals’
be broadly similar to the action behind rock art? Magic is an active social process,
mediating between society’s ideological ‘structure’ and pragmatic ‘individual’ action
Encountering Imagery in the landscape. Thus, magic, in contrast to religious rituals, is intended to alter and transforms social positions in the landscape, [and] brings about some desired practical result without the interference of supernatural beings.

Though Ling and Cornell use Gell’s conception of agency to discuss social positions, the model that I am proposing uses Gell’s system and asks: if rock art has agency, and this agency can be used to have effects on human relationships, is it possible that this agency could also be used to affect elements of the environment? At the very least it seems possible that the placement and purpose of rock art was altered to reflect the receding shoreline. The environmental changes would have posed problems as traditional world-views had to be reassessed. One possible way of arresting the process or reformulating their ideas was the creation of ‘art’. 

Fig. 2. General distribution of ship carvings in Scandinavia with names of sites discussed in the text. Map constructed by the author.

In order for this proposition to be viable, it must be accepted that inhabitants would have perceived environmental changes in the BA. Archaeologists over the last two decades have looked to, among others, cognitive studies (Mithen 1996, 1998; Renfrew & Morley 2009), anthropology (Ingold 2000) and landscape studies (Tilley 2004;
Tilley & Bennett 2008) to assess perceptions of environmental change. These studies have also affected the way we think about human-environment relations. Jim Leary (2009:228) argues that environmental fluctuations such as sea-level changes cannot merely be categorized as a challenge to ‘overcome’; rather the changes and their effects are ‘indivisible’ from the both the landscape and its inhabitants. To relate this sentiment back to the previously proposed theories: if cosmologies are inherently tied to ones understanding of their environment, it seems logical that changes to this environment might require one to renegotiate these understandings. Leary subscribes to the view often discussed by Tim Ingold (2000) that the relationship between human and environment is a complex weave of perception and cognition in which human and environment are inseparable. Therefore, environmental changes would not have simply caused an effect but rather that the effects of these changes would have been an ‘integral part of their world’ that may be reflected in the production of rock art (Leary 2009: 235).

If we suppose that environmental change might be reflected in art production, we must concern ourselves with testing this proposal. We know that marine imagery in rock art, predominantly images of boats, generally (but not always) appears near water (Figs. 1 and 2). In order to establish a connection between such images and coastal change, we must look at those regions where we know more drastic changes occurred. It seems possible that there would be more marine imagery in those regions than in areas where change was minimal. We must look at the complexity and frequency of motifs. We must also look at the timeline of production. Rock art production may have intensified in areas where shoreline displacement was obvious. On the other hand, it may have diminished in areas where this environmental change was not so visible. That is because rock art played an active role in relations between people and the ‘natural’ world.

Case studies: Østfold / Bohuslän, Uppland and Simris parish, Skåne

In north Scandinavia Helskog champions the importance of the shoreline as early as the Late Mesolithic. In south Scandinavia, the cosmological importance of the shoreline probably begins in the Early Bronze Age (EBA). The BA south Scandinavian sites have varied chronologies: rock carvings at Østfold in Norway and the neighbouring Bohuslän in Sweden continued to be produced into the Pre-Roman Iron Age (PRIA). Here the coastal change was extreme. Uppland, in east central Sweden, presents a similar scenario. Here the majority of the images were created in the BA Period III, but sites were re-used and images grew in complexity in the Late Bronze Age (LBA) and into the PRIA. Others such as at Simris in Skåne, southeast Sweden have a shorter chronology, perhaps ceasing production prior to the LBA. In this region coastal change was minimal. Let us look at these regions in more detail.
Marine imagery and shoreline displacement

It is common to consider Østfold and Bohuslän (including the World Heritage Site at Tanum) together, although they are divided politically between two countries. This region has been amply researched and is probably the most discussed and published rock art region in Scandinavia (Coles 2005; Hygen & Bengtsson 2000; Ling 2008). Most recently David Vogt (2012) has updated the existing catalogue and registered over 470 sites in the Østfold region in the most extensive survey since that of Sverre Marstrander in 1963 (which only covered the Skjeberg area). The 5000 sites in the Østfold and Bohuslän region comprise around 75,000 individual images, and these numbers increase each year (Coles 2005:17). Most of the rock panels with carvings are visible in the landscape and were located in close proximity to the sea in the BA, or at a minimum close to watery locations such as wetlands (Bengtsson 2000; Ling 2008; see Vogt 2012:40-1 for opposing viewpoint).

Ling’s (2008) highly detailed study Elevated Rock Art reconstructs the BA coastlines in areas of northern Bohuslän enabling a new analysis of rock art distribution in the BA landscape. Ling has shown that c. 70% of sites were located near ‘shallow bays, estuaries and inlets’ in the BA. In the EBA, the shorelines were c. 16-17 m.a.s.l., c. 14 m.a.s.l. around 1300-1200 BC, falling to 10-11 m.a.s.l. by the end of the BA (2008:111). Many of the sites show a long chronology of use. At Torp, Skredsvik, Bohuslän, the chronology begins as early as the Late Neolithic and continued throughout the BA and into the PRIA (Bengtsson & Ling 2006; Bertilsson & Bertilsson 2006). As sea levels fell, new rock faces and new sections of already carved panels became available for use and it is clear that BA people took advantage of this. This is apparent at Runhäll in Ryk. The first ships carved on the panel originate as early as Period II, but the majority were carved on lower sections of the panel from Period III until the end of the BA at which point the sea no longer touched the rock face (Ling 2008:87-91, see especially the reconstruction, p. 138).

Of the 75,000 images in the region, the boat/ship is the most common, with over 10,000 having been recorded (Hygen & Bengtsson 1999; Ling 2008; Vogt 2012). The ship images dominate the shore-bound panels, whilst other motifs such as human figures and cup marks are generally found on higher ground (Bengtsson & Ling 2007). What is striking is the diversity of forms. The ships vary in size, from 20 cm to over 2 metres (Coles 2005:22). They range from the ‘single line type’ to the more ornate animal headed prows. Crews are represented by simple strokes, or are adorned with any number of designs from cup marks to large spirals. In certain situations human figures referred to as acrobats are depicted jumping off the ships and others are seen blowing lurs while still others are posed in an adorant position. These various depictions and their sheer quantity are representative of the long chronology of their production. Their connection to watery locales is obvious. Perhaps it is true that ‘the coastal strip
or shore may be regarded as a special place with special environmental conditions for social action’ (Ling 2008:232). And these social actions would likely have been renegotiated to consider the receding shoreline. As John Coles (2005:101) asserts:

> Sea-water had an important role but one that changed over time; a landscape studded with rock carvings linked to the existing sea-level would be altered and probably lose much of its contemporary purpose as the waters withdrew in discernible and inexorable patterns...The important point in all this is that the coasts of Bohuslän and Østfold were not fixed, they were mobile and societies had to accept the variability and be prepared to adapt and develop concepts originally inappropriate to the conditions.

Ling’s (in press:2-3) most recent work was conducted in southwest Uppland where he measured over 80 figurative rock art carving panels containing over 2,000 ship images. This work was preceded by, among others, Coles (2000) and Einar Kjellén (1976) who also recognised the relationship between the carvings’ placement next to the BA shorelines. Coastal change was also visible here, with shorelines in 1700 BC at c. 25 m.a.s.l. falling to c. 15 m.a.s.l. by the end of the BA in 700 BC (Ling in press:16). Ling’s assertions in this region are similar to those from Bohuslän. Carvings were created in what was a BA seascape and many of them were located at the water’s edge. Of the relationship between sea and rock carvings in the Rickeby and Hemsta areas, Ling (in press:25) emphatically states: ‘Nowhere else in Sweden is this relation so obvious’.

Just as in Bohuslän, many of the figurative rock carving panels were partially covered by water when they were first carved, yet carving continued even when the shoreline became detached. This is especially apparent at Boglösa 138:1. Here the first ships were carved just above the shoreline on the rock face, with the lower section carved after EBA Period II and the majority of the images carved from this period onward. Interestingly, when the sea was no longer touching the panel (and in fact was already 100m west) there are images from Period V (in press:25-31). This process is echoed at Boglösa 141:1, where the majority of the ship images (of which there are 60) were carved onwards from Period II-III (in press:31-33). PRIA carvings are more rare than in Bohuslän (only 4 of the figurative panels in Ling’s study), but Ling (in press:16) attributes this deficit to the lack of suitable rock faces between 15 and 5 m.a.s.l. The carvings in southwest Uppland generally followed the disappearing shoreline, though depending on the altitude of the panels, shoreline displacement would have occurred at different periods in the BA. The majority of the panels relate to Period III yet Ling (in press:76) notes that though production in the LBA period IV-V decreases, the images become ‘highly innovative and elaborate’ and these images were mainly carved onto panels already established for rock art production as opposed to using new panels that would have become available by the displaced sea.
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Marine imagery and minimal shoreline displacement

The rock carvings of Skåne have also had a long history of research, beginning with Carl-Axel Althin in 1945, Stig Welinder in 1974 and Göran Burenhult’s extensive documentations in 1973. These studies comprise the initial recordings of the well-known sites such as Sweden’s largest burial cairn Kivik, the collection of panels around Simrishamn and the inland site at Järrestad. More recently Sven-Gunnar Broström and Kenneth Ihrrestam (1996, and 2011 additions) produced a comprehensive inventory of the Simris parish rock carvings, Coles (1999) has reinvestigated Järrestad, Chris Tilley (2005) has explored the entire Simris parish (see also Skoglund 2005) and Kivik has also been reassessed (Randsborg 1993; Goldhahn 2009). Österlen, this southeast region of Skåne, falls in the area of the Scandinavian isobase maps where little postglacial uplift is shown to have occurred, due to its distance from the Fennoscandian glacier’s thickest point (see Ekman 1996, Eronen et al 2001). Southeast Skåne and the area around Simrishamn is less well-studied than its southern or western counterparts, where such investigations as the Ystad Project have paid special attention to prehistoric environmental changes. Björn Berglund (1991:73) does assert that on the southern coast of Skåne sea levels were generally c. 2 m.a.s.l. than the present day shore and Björn Gedda (2007:20 as cited by Ling 2008) claims sea level was c. 2-3 m.a.s.l. at the onset and 1 m.a.s.l at the close of the BA. The shoreline purportedly withdrew at a faster rate for a short period from c. 1300 BC yet these smaller changes (c. 7mm/year) would have been more difficult to perceive as opposed to those in Bohuslän or Uppland (Mörner et al. 2009).

Yet despite the lack of coastal change, the carvings in the vicinity of Simrishamn and the grave carvings at Kivik, approximately 15 m north of this area, are both coastally located. Kivik is 75m in diameter and the cairn is high enough to be seen from the sea (Tilley 2004). The Simris 19 ship carvings are considered to be chronologically similar to Kivik’s ship carvings, and these are dated to the EBA Per I or II (Per III at the very latest) (Kaul 1998:78; Skoglund 2005). The simpler panels with fewer ships can be typologically dated to Period III and earlier. By Chris Tilley’s (2004) account the combined Simris panels can boast at least 83 ships. More recent calculations show this number to be closer to 100 (Riksantikvarieämbetet 2011). The main panel (Simris 19) is less than 3m from the shore. When you stand on the rock face you can see almost 180 degrees of sea in front of you despite the presence of a main road and a parking lot (Fig. 3). The panel is predominated by 45 ship and 53 axes but only c. 10 cup marks. The ships are generally aligned perpendicular to the coast, though in certain clusters they appear upside down or in pairs with their keels or stems facing each other as if they are turning a circle around an imaginary axis.
Though Järrestad is not a coastal site, scholars have treated it as part of the network including Kivik and Simrishamn (Tilley 2004) for in the right weather you can in fact spot the sea from this slightly higher ground. Järrestad 4, just inland of Simrishamn, contains less marine imagery than at Simris 19. Cup marks, of which there are 338, predominate on the panel. And though the 29 boats / ships are still prominent, the focus seems more geared towards human activity (Tilley 2005:153). Järrestad is covered in 96 feet and 90 foot soles, which are rarely represented elsewhere in the region. It also contains the one human representation in Skåne, the famous dancer / swimmer (Bradley 2000; Coles 1999). The carvings could have been produced up to the LBA and the site is also associated with burials of that date (Coles 1999:178-9), though other rock carvings in the area originate from the EBA (Järrestad 4) (Kaul 1998:91). Peter Skoglund (2005:113-115) has discussed the superimpositions of carvings on other carvings and combinations of motifs, which he imagines is a representation of changing meanings of the motifs. He sees a divergence in BA ideology in Period II, when the symbolism of the axe diminished, yet the ship symbol continued being created. So although Järrestad perhaps has a longer chronology than Simris, the intensity of marine imagery and its relationship to a marine environment are weaker.

Fig. 3. View from rock panel Simris 19 looking out at the water (Photo: C. Nimura 2010).
Concluding remarks

How should we interpret this comparison? The motifs and chronologies of these sites behave differently. Bohuslän and Østfold both have a direct relationship with the sea; they experienced drastic coastline changes and they have a chronology that extends into the PRIA. Uppland also has a direct relationship with the sea and shoreline displacement. There are less LBA and PRIA carvings than in Bohuslän and Østfold though the later carvings increased in complexity and were carved on reused panels. Ships, however, dominate the Simrishamn carvings, are directly related to the sea and have a shorter chronology. Production ceases earlier in this area where the sea-level change had little effect on the coastline. Järrestad is situated inland; it has a longer chronology dominated by foot soles and cup marks, and seems to have a stronger relationship with nearby burial mounds. It is feasible to apply some of the cosmologies discussed in this paper to any one of these sites, but the evidence also suggests that shoreline displacement may have instigated a renegotiation of these cosmologies. Perhaps in areas that experienced little shoreline displacement the production of rock art was not affected so drastically. In areas where the coastline was receding, the intensity of the production of marine imagery might have been a reaction to environmental change.

The theoretical model introduced in this paper is being considered in the author’s current research. In this work a new database has been created in one Geographical Information System (using ArcGIS 10) by combining the heritage agency databases from Denmark (Kulturarvsstyrelsen: Fund og Fortidsminder), Norway (Askeladden) and Sweden (Riksantikvarieämbetet: Fornsök). The database includes all archaeological features registered by the three agencies but focuses on rock carvings from the Mesolithic through to the PRIA. This database enables a pan-Scandinavian investigation of the occurrence of marine imagery and other figurative imagery in rock carvings. General shoreline data is also included at both a national and regional level. The database uses isobase maps and prehistoric shoreline approximations based on known relative sea level changes from published sources. There are other factors to consider than general isostatic and eustatic fluctuations. Absolute sea level and relative sea levels must take into account bathymetric gradations in the coastal areas. These data should provide an idea of where the sites were located in proximity to the BA shoreline, and possibly help illuminate how visible the coastal changes might have been. This methodology is geared toward analysing a broader picture of Scandinavian rock carvings but also allows for local and smaller regional scale differences, of which many became apparent in the building of this database (see Sörman and Wessman 2011 for a theoretical discussion of the intersections of micro and macro scale research in BA Scandinavia).

Of course there have been many other explanations for the placement of rock carving panels containing marine imagery in what were once seascapes, and these
are important to note. Westerdahl (2005) has written extensively on taboos in the maritime sphere. Others have focused on the possibility of marking BA ship landing sites or sea markers. Many champion the shorelines as sites of maritime rituals and performances (Ling & Cornell 2010), as ritual expressions (Hauptmann Wahlgren 2002), as sacred places (Helskog 2004; Mandt 2001) or centres for trade/meeting places (Malmer 1981; Grønnesby 1993; Randsborg 1993; Bengtsson 2004; Kristiansen & Larsson 2005). Yet in any of these examples, it is without a doubt that the maritime environments of Scandinavia played an important role in the large-scale networks of BA life. At the coast and along inland waterways boats would have been used to travel, transport goods and possibly deliver the dead to their resting places. The maritime sphere was important in everyday life and this importance must have also had a symbolic, cosmological or religious nature. Often we explain the purpose of cosmological and religious systems in terms of a society’s need to find stability and understand phenomena that would have baffled the prehistoric human. Fluctuations in the maritime arena such as shoreline displacement would therefore have played a part in the nature of this entwined relationship.

Two main questions must be asked, which must be posed at different scales of analysis. The first is whether maritime imagery was always associated with the water’s edge and whether different designs were employed in inland areas. On a general level this can already be seen in distribution maps derived from the three heritage agency databases. Particularly in south Scandinavia the ship image occurs mainly in coastal areas or along inland waterways and lakes. The second is the relationship between rock art production and coastal change. This raises a still more fundamental issue. By considering existing theories of cosmologies in both the southern tradition and northern tradition of rock art we are led to champion the importance of the shore and watery environments. By using Gell’s theory of art and agency the proposed relationship between rock art and coastal change can be contemplated on a smaller regional scale. In doing so, it seems plausible that the carved rocks were directed not only to a living audience but also to the unpredictable character of the sea itself.

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References


The Immanency of the Intangible Image
Thoughts with Neolithic Expression at Loughcrew
Andrew Cochrane

Abstract The power of images has played a fundamental role in the projects of both modernity and archaeology. Since the seventeenth century the past has been understood by the politics of display and visual documentation. Archaeological practice has progressed with modern visual technologies and scientific revolutions, creating standardised media. This has, however, created a situation whereby representational understandings of all things in the past dominate – to end with a representational interpretation is understandable, to begin with one is problematic. Such practices are most prevalent in accounts of motifs and passage tombs in Ireland. This paper moves beyond mere representation and the idea that things are passive, and instead offers a narrative of the Loughcrew complex, that is more collaborative and dynamic.

Contrasts
Some like to approach imagery from the Neolithic as if it harbors hidden messages or access to unseen places. In many narratives, images often adhere to a belief in an analogous universality that is always there, just beyond and waiting patiently to be revealed. Searching and then discovering such invisible realms and meanings is by no means a bad thing. Some scholars, however, start with an a priori assertion that they are already there, with approaches often framed by modern representational understandings. In many accounts, people seem to step from intangible worlds, in order to represent their experiences as visual symbols. In such proposals the material world – as distinct from humans – influences little in the process of representation. Materials appear transparent here; they simply serve as the substrate upon which representations are overlaid. This material substrate is imagined as an inert, stable and unchanging entity patiently awaiting the action of thoughtful humans. What would archaeology look like if we did not start with such conceptions of imagery? What happens when we consider different elements in the world as influential partners within expression? Would we still draw the same conclusions, or would other narratives be possible? This paper works along such questions by discussing the Neolithic complex of Loughcrew, which has been the subject of representational approaches for many years.
Loughcrew, or Sliabh na Callighe, is one of Ireland’s most magnificent archaeological environments. It is located at the western end of County Meath and incorporates a complex of passage tombs and decorated rock panels distributed across the four neighbouring hilltops of Carnbane West, Carrickbrac or Newtown, Carnbane East and Patrickstown, in an area measuring 3km from east to west and 600m from north to south (Cooney 2000a:159; Fraser 1998:206; see Fig. 1). Regarding the dominance of representation in accounts of the Neolithic,¹ I think I understand why some people want to present a world of symbols; it is after all comforting. To live without indices is destabilising – as I discovered earlier this year in the United Arab Emirates, through my inabilities to decipher the signs. Destabilisation is not, however, necessarily negative and this paper moves beyond a paper that I wrote a few years ago (Cochrane 2005), to further explore potential relationships created by images. I use movement by people in and around the tombs and decorated stones as a starting point for a more than representational understanding of the site (see Lorimer 2005; Thrift 2008; Anderson & Harrison 2010).

Some expect one medium to replay what has already been given in another; the creation of original and copy – semblance and return (Doel 2010:119). There is an idea that some archaeologists can discover a true or more correct world of realities lying behind a veil of appearances (Cochrane 2009a; Latour 2010). At a most honest level, however, images are sometimes just images. They can be stimulated by references to other images and they can perform. They do not always just represent – in fact they can create situations whereby they only present with there being nothing behind them – often dissimulating that they have nothing to conceal (see Cochrane 2006). Within such approaches, the image is acknowledged to be autonomous enough to abolish prescribed referents, creating a performance where the image is much more than applied representation. Here, the image is not passively awaiting overlays of meaning. Images are not about a thing – they are the thing.

Images often like to be looked at. Associations between archaeology and the modern regime of vision have recently been much debated (e.g. Cochrane and Russell 2007; Thomas 2010). Indeed, with the perceived ocular supremacy, it is argued that other senses have been neglected and under explored in archaeological interpretations (Witmore 2006). Here, I will incorporate positions of ‘visuality’. The term was first used in academia by the historian Thomas Carlyle in the mid nineteenth century. Opposed to panopticism and modernity, Carlyle strove to understand the past through visual narrative, to use visuality for performing or contesting a worldview (Mirzoeff 2006:54). Carlyle deplored attempts at the physiology of vision, and described the spectator less as a see-er and more as a Seer, thereby allowing more expressive and emotional visions. For Carlyle, visuality incorporated amongst other things, the sound effects, the drama, the complexities, the poetics, the images, the narratives, the taste, touch and the aroma of the past (Mirzoeff 2006:54-7). Although I acknowledge that
it is impossible to sense a past, this is an understanding of visuality that I employ here in exploring Loughcrew.

Why some people might have been stimulated to perform with the site and tombs will be proposed by considering first the personality of Loughcrew, that is how the environment influences what people do and think (see also Robinson 2012; Ingold 2000:257-8). I will review the possibility that materials can create carnival type environments when they wish – meaning that they can subvert, invert and deceive the norm (see below). The passage tomb motifs will be analysed as a flux of images and illusions that may have influenced in the Neolithic. Although there is indication of some people continually interacting with the summits of Loughcrew from the Mesolithic through to the Neolithic, there is currently no settlement evidence available from either period (Cooney and Grogan 1994:13; Kimball 2000:31). The passage tombs and engraved images were therefore probably removed from the context of daily life, possibly thought of as being placed in a liminal zone (van Gennep 1960), involving then as it does now, a strenuous physical exertion in order to reach the summits and the passage tombs. Contact with the passage tombs may have been temporal and in some instances physically and emotionally hazardous, potentially acting as some form of integration or separation.

Fig. 1. Schematic plan of Loughcrew demonstrating the locations of the passage tombs (adapted from Cooney 2000a: fig. 5.10).
Previous accounts of the Loughcrew complex have addressed individual motifs and how they are related to burials and materials, the entire complex with the locations and orientations of specific passage tombs, and movements of people through and around the monuments (e.g. Herity 1974; Cooney 1990; Thomas 1992; McMann 1994; Shee Twohig 1996). Here, I build upon these previous ideas of environmental context and motif location with physical and visual engagements to develop a further argument that includes the possible sequences, differences, improvisations and repetitions that are being performed by the passage tombs. It is suggested that both the sequential images, the topography of the Loughcrew summits and the passage tombs themselves establish visions, gazes and glances that are only ever anchored in the present (see Gell 1992:173; Hirsch 2004:37; Cochrane 2009a; 2009b; 2010). I consider how the repeated alteration of the sites in the Neolithic (their present), among particular persons, was the result of the ways in which beliefs were continually established or improvised. By repetitively participating with the passage tombs, some people were devoting effort to be able to frequently ascertain the currentness of beliefs about events. Although we can never know what these were, we can detect themes, possible perceptions, generalities and repetitive actions; it this through some of these elements that I construct narratives.

Recently, Thomas (1990; 1992; 1993; 2001) has explored the view that distances and explorations into spheres of knowledge are expressed not only through the internal architectures of the Loughcrew passage tombs, but also via the locations of specific motifs. By moving further into the inner areas of the passage tomb, the spectator is challenged with increasingly channelled movement through more complex spatial
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divisions (Thomas 1990). This is argued to occur in order to facilitate the accumulation and manipulation of communal and ‘ancestral authorities’ (Thomas 1992:146). By incorporating representational textual analogies, Thomas proposes that the motifs acted as symbolic media by which approved knowledges could be ‘read’ by and for particular members of society, possibly as part of an extended revelation (1992:143, 146, 154). The differing motifs on individual stones are described as being for different people or people at different temporal stages of a particular performance or practice (Thomas 1993:87). Thomas (1992:146, 154) does, however, stress that the interpretations and meanings of the motifs may have been fluid, multiple, and capable of change as a result of the ambiguity inherent in abstract images (see also Bradley 1995; Hensey 2012). I build upon these previous ideas of motif location with physical and visual engagements in order to develop a further argument that includes the possible sequences, differences and repetitions that were being performed by the passage tombs.

Loughcrew

On a clear day the panoramic views from the summits of these hills give a view of Ireland from sea to sea, about its narrowest part (Shell and Roughley 2004:22). Loughcrew stands out as a key complex of Neolithic imagery, having yielded over 124 decorated surfaces on passage tombs, and 20 examples of open-air rock art (Shee Twohig et al. 2010). This is one of the earliest known decorated sites in Ireland, and the only place where passage tomb motifs and rock art co-exist, within the same immediate environment (Shee Twohig 2012:125). The cairns are located on an east-to-west axis, with an almost linear structure, with smaller tombs arranged near larger focal ones. In this respect the Loughcrew passage tombs can be compared to the Boyne Valley sites (Cooney 1990). There are currently over 30 passage tombs in the Loughcrew complex and many of these are engraved with motifs, particularly on the internal structural stones and occasionally on the kerbstones. Patrickstown Hill is thought to have had a further 21 cairns, but that they were totally demolished with no remaining traces before 1864 (Conwell 1864:48; Brennan 1983:69). Shee Twohig (1981:94, figs. 213-41; see also Frazer 1893) recorded over 100 decorated stones (124 decorated surfaces), although the original number was probably more, and has argued for a distinctive Loughcrew style of imagery.

The topography at Loughcrew consists of a dominant elongated ridge orientated south-west/north-east on the interface between the areas of the Boyne/Blackwater and Shannon river systems. The outcrop projects out of the Lower Silurian rocks (Palaeozoic siltstone), mudstones and fine sandstones, with some of these grits being used to construct the majority of the passage tombs in the Loughcrew complex (Coffey 1912:79; Herity 1974:55; Cooney 1987:94; McMann 1993:23); to the south and
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west of the hill are the comparatively low, undulating, limestone plains of County Meath and Westmeath, and to the north slate rocks occupy the low areas around Lough Ramor (Conwell 1864:43). From the summit one can see the mountains at the coasts of Carlingford and Sligo (Conwell 1866:355). The summit was estimated to command a view of at least 37 miles all round on a clear day, and specifically chosen as a special place for this feature (Conwell 1866:356). The passage tombs are situated along the curving spine of the ridge. The central component of the complex resides above the 214m contour line, covering an area of approximately 3.5km east-north-east/west-south-west and about 400m to 1km north/south (Cooney 1987; 2000b). The passage tombs are centred on moderately flat-topped summits and are similar to the Boyne Valley passage tombs in that the smaller sites are clustered around larger tombs. The Loughcrew complex is also similar to the Boyne Valley in that it is located between two river systems, namely the Boyne and Shannon.

![Diagram of Carnbane East and West]

The undulating, steep and flattish features of the topography have been argued to directly affect and influence a person’s visual experience through its contrast and transformation (Fraser 1998:212; see Fig. 2). The flat features of the summits are only apparent when one reaches the tops of the hills. It is interesting to note that most cairns
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are located on the margins of the summits, although exceptions do occur (e.g. Cairn D is in a hollow and T is on the summit). This creates a visual ‘island’ whereby the internal spaces are framed by the steeper banks on the periphery of the summits and by the cairns, which in turn physically and visually block-out the external spaces (see Shell and Roughley 2004; Shell 2005; Shee Twohig et al. 2010; Kondo 2011; Shee Twohig 2012). Fraser (1998:212-14; see Fig. 3) has suggested that these topographical and created features possibly demarcated eight focal areas or as I propose ‘islands’ within the Loughcrew Hills. The summits form ‘islandscapes’ (Cooney 2004:145), special places where striking features of the land are embellished and special things created and collaborated with to enhance links, whilst also delineating boundaries to these liminal places (Bradley 2000:36). After Whittle (2004), we might therefore describe these aerial locales as ‘islands-that-float-to-the-sky’. Indeed, some people may have regarded mountains and hills as part of the sky rather than just the land (Watson 2004:60).

In following Thomas’s (1993) desire to create narratives that address more humanised interactions within the environment and associated materials, Fraser (1998) discussed the physical stresses involved in ascending the Loughcrew summits and the additional difficulties that would be incurred by leading animals, carrying objects or maybe people in a ‘state of crisis’ (Foucault 2002:232), such as the elderly, pregnant women, the sick, or perhaps the dead. Scaling these slopes might also have impacted upon notions of time and space. The act of climbing might have incorporated different senses of time than were generally used within the daily round. Bloch (1977) has commented that more than one sense of time can often exist within a group of people (see also Gell 1992; Lucas 2005; Cochrane 2009b). It is suggested that routine activities may be influenced by the seasons, such as knowing the right times to conduct certain events, whereas special activities may involve notions of time that are distinct from or distort the seasons (Bloch 1977). For instance, the summit tops at Loughcrew are generally cooler in temperature than the surrounding lowland areas and can be covered in snow when low-lying areas are not. This climatic feature might deliver the impression that the passing of seasons is respectively progressed or delayed as one rises up the slopes, with the developmental stages and annual cycles of fauna and flora being different to the lowland ones (Watson 2004:60; see Fig 4). Experiencing the Loughcrew Hills with differing climatic conditions and visibility distorted by atmospherics, may have lead to concrete testaments to the specialness of the summits.

Such features may confirm a worldview, at some level, in which the Loughcrew Hills are regarded as part of a cosmological *axis mundi*, where heaven and earth meet; acting as ‘hierophanies’, that is something that reveals itself to be special (Eliade 1964:32, 268). Following a less representational approach, Foucault (2002:231-33) describes these sites as ‘heterotopias’, that is a counter-site which can simultaneously juxtapose in a single place several places. These zones also contest and invert a place
while being outside all places, even though one can locate them in a physical reality. These summit tops or island settings may have subverted life, as often happens within the carnivalesque. For example, in discussing the possible significances of some ‘natural’ places, Bradley (2000:27) describes how mountain locations are sometimes used for role reversals in overturning the norms of life. At the Loughcrew summits, at particular times, some people may therefore have inverted their normal relations and disrupted how they thought about themselves, others and the world in general. How these themes interact with the passage tombs and associated imagery will be discussed in more detail below.

Fig. 4. Atmospheres of experience at Loughcrew. Top: a wall of low-cloud hides the surrounding environment. Bottom: looking south from Carnbane East (digital photo: author).

Disruption, sympathy and construction

There is currently a lack of direct datable evidence for the Loughcrew complex and estimated dates generally range from c. 4000-2800 BC (McMann 1994:526). This situation has led Cooney (2000a) to propose a speculative three-phase sequential model for the Loughcrew complex, based on Sheridan’s (1985/6) developmental scheme. Cooney (2000a:159) believes that such an approach is useful as it allows one to further appreciate how the complex evolved through action. Sheridan’s (1985/6) developmental scheme is also supported by some of the spatial relationships of the
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cairns. For instance, both Cairns J and L, Carnbane West, share the same orientation to the south-east, diverging by only 5m (McMann 1994:529; Fraser 1998:207). As the entrance to the smaller Cairn J is mostly blocked by the larger Cairn L, it is unlikely that Cairn J was built later than Cairn L. I will not, however, include Sheridan’s (1985/6) date estimates as the current shortage of chronological data makes it almost impossible to break down the speculative stages for passage tombs in general at Loughcrew, beyond a 3800-2800 BC (or fourth to third millennia BC) time-frame. As with the Boyne Valley passage tombs, County Meath, the larger Loughcrew tombs seem to be built after most of the smaller ones (contra Herity 1974:84-7), with most being built in the first two phases.

In phase 1, we witness the construction of cairns less than 15m in diameter on Carnbane West. These sites are located in two focal zones that are delineated by knolls that form a northwest to southeast barrier. Similar tombs are also located on Carnbane East on the western slopes and near the summit of this ridge, leaving the centre area clear, while Cairn U is situated on the junction of a flatter and higher area. Cooney (2000a:159) suggests that the three possible small passage tombs (Cairns X1, X2 and X3) at the western edge of Patrickstown ridge also belong to this phase. The passage tombs within this phase appear to emphasise and be sympathetic to the pre-existing features of the summits (Fraser 1998:216-17).

Within phase 2, we notice the construction of passage tombs of intermediate size, with cairns varying from 15m to 20m in diameter. On Carnbane West, the topographic northwest to southeast divide is further enhanced by the construction of three passage tombs, two of which form a pair on the knoll ridge (Cairns G and F), while Cairn H is placed to the northeast on the flatter slope and takes ‘centre stage’. Cooney (2000a:159) has commented on the visual impact which the conglomeration of Cairns F, G, H, I, J and K would have created for spectators, and how the positions of the tombs close together would have restricted views of what lay beyond (see also Fraser 1998). Cairn M is located on the top of the Newton ridge to the southeast of Carnbane West. Combined with the construction of Cairn S on Carnbane East, the tombs in this phase draw the spectator’s attention to the more level areas at Loughcrew.

It is during phase 3 that we witness the construction of the larger passage tomb cairns within the Loughcrew complex. These sites include Cairn D at 54m in diameter, and Cairn L at 40m in diameter on Carnbane West; Cairn T at 35m in diameter on Carnbane East and Cairn Y at 30m in diameter on Patrickstown Hill (Herity 1974:41-55). Whereas the earlier smaller passage tombs are positioned in sympathy to the topography, being located on raised knolls and on the periphery of flatter areas, the later larger passage tombs are sited in the centers of these previously open areas and therefore dominate in a ‘constructive’ manner (Fraser 1998:217). Although it should be noted that Cairn T also dominates one’s focus in that it occupies the highest summit in the complex at 276m above sea level (Herity 1974:42). It has been suggested that some of these focal passage tombs replaced earlier smaller sites, and also included
old decorated ‘rock-art’ stones, as seen in Cairn T (e.g. Shee Twohig 1996:74; Cooney 2000a:161; see below). This then might obscure or invalidate Fraser’s (1998) sympathetic through to constructive sequences. Interest with visual impact is not only suggested by the size of the cairns, but also by the inclusion of quartz, as is seen with a quartz standing stone at the northwest edge of Cairn D, on the very point of the escarpment of the hill, being on the western edge of the whole complex (Conwell 1873:50; Cooney 1996). Focus would also have been enhanced by the increased removal of local woodlands near and on Loughcrew during the Neolithic period (Fraser 1998: 222). The curving inward of the kerbstones, to highlight the entrances to the interiors of some passage tombs, is regarded as conspicuous expression rather than visual concealment (Conwell 1864:49).

This phasing of the passage tombs demonstrates that they were not all built at the same time, rather there were repetitions, episodes, and punctuated performances over time. The settings of the tombs in the final stages draw the spectator’s attention to the more level areas at Loughcrew, creating ‘stage’ settings. It is noteworthy that as soon as one creates a stage, there is gaze and distance, performance and otherness, although particular interactions can subvert or abolish these dimensions (Baudrillard 2003:27).

Of the 31 cairns now visible at Loughcrew today, 7 have intact ground features, while 21 have remaining interior fragments and 17 have partial or complete kerbs (Cooney 1990:743; McMann 1994:526). Many of the motifs are deteriorating (15 cairns still have motifs today) and many more have been lost to the human eye in the last hundred years as a result of weather conditions, erosion, modern afforestation and even by flourishing nettles (Conwell 1866:365). The surviving images on these passage tombs do not present the same ‘mature’ plastic style that was observed at the Boyne Valley passage tombs, and appear more as a collection of random images that are ‘crowded onto surfaces in a busy and seemingly unfocused manner’ (O’Sullivan 1993:30). Following O’Sullivan’s (1996a:87) typological sequence, none of the motifs progress beyond the Step 1 standard images, with the plastic aspects of the stones rarely explored. Due to restrictions of space here and preservation issues, I will only focus on the dominant Cairn T and its motifs within the complex. I do this to further understand some of the actions and dramas that may have been played out at within the complex in its later phases when all the cairns were in place. Before engaging in the specifics of the archaeology, I will briefly introduce the concept of the carnivalesque.

Lusts and actions

In attempting to appreciate the Loughcrew summits, I have been drawn to the notion of the carnivalesque and its pervasive and influential imagery. The word ‘carnival’ often evokes thoughts of an amusement park, Disney World, or public
event in Notting Hill, London. Historically, however, carnivals in Europe were quite different affairs. For instance, although they share the same ideas of merriment with their modern counterparts, European medieval carnivals were much more all-encompassing. Contemporary carnivals are diminished examples of the physical lusting, mutating and mutilating activities that were played out during some previous carnival environments (see also Gilmore 1998). Mikhail Bakhtin was one of the first authors to coin the term ‘carnivalesque’ (1968). He describes the carnivalesque as something that is created when the themes of the carnival subvert, distort and invert habitual or established life. In carnival, all that is marginalised and excluded, such as the mad, the scandalous and the uncertain, takes centre stage and liberates in an explosion of otherness (Stam 1989:86). In this environment, ‘negative’ bodily expressions such as hunger, thirst, defecation and copulation become a ‘positive’ corrosive force; life enjoys a symbolic victory over death. Bakhtin (1968) argued that folk-humour based societies in early modern Europe created manifestations of the carnivalesque that laughed at and mimicked those in authority, who believed that mentalités, history, destiny and fate were static and unalterable. The carnival is not ‘irrational’; it is the bodily immersion into false façades, monstrous creations, feasts, corporeal comedies and protocols, games and dramas, parodies, performance and imagery. It is the overlay of many things at once, it is the world turned upside-down, razing and generation coupled with comic, sensuous and abusive performances. It incorporates unbridled juxtapositions, grotesque ruptures and impugnation between perceived binary oppositions and their parodies; it is the routine with fantastical images. Thus it creates an environment where ‘everything is pregnant with its opposite, within an alternative logic of permanent contradiction’ (Shohat and Stam 2001:35). Within carnival, all barriers, norms and prohibitions are temporally suspended (Bakhtin 1968:15). The carnival incorporates a different kind of communication, based on free and familiar contact (Bakhtin 1968:17; Stam 1989:86). The term ‘carnivalesque’ therefore refers to the carnivalising of normal daily life fluctuating within fleeting permanence. It incorporates a number of themes and these can be summarised as follows:

(a) The activation of life and love and the actualisation of myths, with communal and cosmic reunions.
(b) Emphasis on sacrifice through the concatenation of life and death.
(c) The idea of bisexuality and the practice of transvestitism as a release from imposed sex or gender roles. This can also incorporate same-sex orientated practices.
(d) A celebration of the grotesque, excessive bodies, orifices and protuberances, with a rejection of decorum and polite speech.
(e) Subversion through the world being turned upside-down, emphasising the permanence of change.
(f) Anti-aesthetics that illuminate heterogeneity and the oxymoron, while erasing boundaries between spectators and objects or performers (Stam 1989:93-94).
Yet the carnivalesque is not only a Western, pre-Renaissance tradition; ethnographic examples discuss some people who have special performances for overturning ‘good’ order and respectable aesthetics. For instance, in the late twentieth century the Sioux of North America developed ritual clowns or *heyoka* to violate conventional expectations. The *heyoka* are noted to perform seemingly ‘foolish’ acts; in an example a man is described as riding backwards on his horse with his boots on backwards so that he is coming when he is really going; if it is hot he covers himself in blankets and shivers as if cold, and *always* says ‘yes’ when he means ‘no’ (Tedlock 1975:106). These performances were anticipated to entertain, but more importantly to open up the spectators through a mixture of laughter and panic, to a desired experience (Tedlock 1975:107). In such examples not *everyone* has to invert or participate, they can watch if they like (sometimes at personal risk), while the marginal is briefly brought to the centre. In a sense there are no ‘real’ spectators within carnivalesque environments (be they Western or otherwise), as all near are immersed within it; they live in it with ‘normal’ life ceasing to exist during its time-span (Bakhtin 1968:7). Through performance the carnivalesque creates more than imagined realities, it is life itself, but influenced via certain patterns of play (Bakhtin 1968:7).

Some studies show that often when one finds inequalities of power, wealth and status, one also finds practices that ‘turn the world upside-down’ (e.g. Tedlock 1975; Gilmore 1998; Bailey 2005). I will take the theme of a world inverted, and demonstrate how it is played out by the architecture of the Loughcrew passage tombs and settings themselves. For example, when one enters a passage tomb, there is a sensation of entering the earth itself, or a different ‘other’ place. This feeling of a world inverted is *magnified* by the processes of engraving images and by overlaying motifs with other motifs. Through unfinished and ongoing processes (see Gell 1998:80; see also Zeki 1999:32), senses of permanent resistance are literally etched away, as one engraves a potentially permanent and timeless stone. The possible application and erosion of natural pigment (via liquids?) may also have subtly evoked energies against diverse authority that was opposed to change (for discussions on pigments see: Breuil and Macalister 1921:4; Shee Twohig 1981:32-5; Bradley *et al.* 2000; Card and Thomas 2012). Whether these authorities were the dead, mythic entities or elders will remain unknown. We can, however, argue that the idea of the carnivalesque allows people to move beyond the limits of representation and fixation. At Loughcrew there are two episodes of the superimposition of one motif with another (Jones 2004:209, Fig. 21.6). The superimposition of motifs in this context may be a sublime interaction of a world layered upon layer and turned upside down, the celebration and animation of life in a place of the dead. Such a proposition recalls Nietzsche’s description of a Dionysian fête, in which the revellers under the influence of narcotic drinks forever exult in the transformation of appearances (Stam 1989:89). This paper incorporates Jones’s (2004; see also O’Sullivan 1986; Eogan 1996) position, but was
initially inspired by C. S. Lewis’s (1971) paper ‘meditation in a toolshed’, in which he stressed the differences between looking at and looking along a particular idea. I am concerned that past models regarding passage tomb motifs have focused more on the structural forms of motifs than the processes that helped produce them (see also Jones 2004:202-3). They therefore are more about looking at the forms rather than looking along the processes. Indeed, Conkey (1982) stated that archaeologists tend to focus more on the ‘secretions’ of a process (that is the structured motifs), because they do not know how to deal with the process itself (see also Thomas 2004:145-161). The motifs on the Loughcrew passage tombs offer a unique opportunity to focus on these processes of secretion as they were produced in chronological sequences. By citing specific examples from Cairn T, Carnbane East, I will demonstrate how the initial creation of images and the superimposition of particular motifs may be viewed as the performances of creative carnivalesque principles. Particular stones are described in detail to emphasis the repetitions and differences that are played out at Loughcrew.

Fig. 5. Cairn T protruding from the top of Carnbane East when approached from the north west (digital photo: author).

Cairn T
This cairn is the focal tomb on Carnbane East and is a classic cruciform passage tomb 10m long. It is also a stalled structure similar to Site J at Dowth, Boyne Valley (Herity 1974:41). Cairn T, c. 35m in diameter, is visually noticeable from the lower plains surrounding Loughcrew and from most of the uneven topography below the hills themselves (Herity 1974:42; Fraser 1998:214; see Fig. 5). Interestingly, as one reaches near the summit of Carnbane East, from any direction, Cairn T and the other cairns disappear from view. It is not until one is three-quarters of the way up that the cairns appear again. This feature creates a visual capitalisation of the natural aspects of the hill architecturally creating an additional visual and physical boundary
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for particular experiences (Fraser 1998:215). The cairn is delineated by a series of ice-boulders, most of which have been split in half, to form a kerb. The entrance constitutes a V-shaped in-turning in the kerb, with the façade emphasised by setting increasingly larger stones towards the entrance (Herity 1974:42).

Fig. 6. Cairn T as seen when approaching from Cairn V – note the flattish area between the cairns (digital photo: author).

Both Conwell (1866:372) and Rotherham (1895:311) reported loose quartz lumps outside the entrance and base of K29, or the ‘Hag’s chair’ (Conwell 1866:371; see below). The quartz outside the entrance was located in three oval settings cut into yellow clay, each c. 4.6m in diameter (Rotherham 1895:311). The occurrence of an oval setting could have created a stage for specific performances, that may have allowed certain people to appear momentarily raised or above others. Such site specific performances may have been highly charged with emotions, with intoxicant / psychoactive fuelled carnal actions, used as powerful tools to enhance experiences. The quartz may also have been adapted for its impact (especially if illuminated by fire, moon or sunlight), for the feel and smell of it (especially when struck), and its contrast with the surrounding areas. Whether it stimulated such reactions or not, it does suggest that some people were actively participating with the environment and being adapted by it for different purposes. Interestingly, oval settings have been found
directly in front of the entrances and façades of Knowth Site 1 and Newgrange Site 1, County. Meath (M. O’Kelly 1982; Eogan 1996; Cochrane 2006). The mixture of demarcated oval platforms, imagery and quartz is very reminiscent of Knockroe, County Kilkenny (O’Sullivan 1996b:13; Cochrane 2012:185), and Torbhlaren, Argyll, Scotland, where quartz and clay is actively involved in the performance of motif production and reception (Jones 2012:87). Conwell (1872:91) also described a wall of quartz three feet high and approximately two feet in thickness around the entire base of the cairn. Regrettably, due to undocumented restoration work in the 1940s, there is no surviving evidence for it (Shee T'wohig 1981:214; 1996:73; McMann 1994:537). Here the passage tomb is described in its current state. Two stones stand upright flanking the opening to the passage, on top of which there is a large lintel block, completing the façade and orientated south-east towards the Boyne (McMann 1994:535; see Fig. 6). The central octagonal chamber (c. 2.5m in diameter) is constructed from four large orthostats and it has three adjoining recesses. The overall width of the chamber is 5m and each recess is built from three stone slabs consisting of an upright end-slab and two side-slabs resting on their edges. This structure is roofed by corbelling (to a height of c. 3m) covered by a flat stone slab. All the recesses and main passage have a high sill (c. 0.5m high); above each of these there is a limestone lintel that interlocks with the uprights of the central chamber.

In total there are 19 decorated orthostats, two decorated sillstones, eight decorated roofstones and one decorated kerbstone at Cairn T (Shee T'wohig 1981:214). The entrance to the passage is demarcated with a sillstone marked with irregular motifs (including three parallel arcs), and with the passage facing edges of C1 and C15, which both have some short lines, cupmarks and circles. In the main passage, nearly all the orthostats contain motifs. Located near the entrance on the left hand side are two heavily decorated stones, with L1 having motifs covering the entire front face of the stone, producing a striking arrangement of dots and concentric circles (see Fig. 7). Similar designs are presented on the nearby jambstones, while R5 and L5 are similar yet with more concentric circles and cupmarks (Shee T'wohig 1981: figs. 232-34; 1996: 73). Interestingly, R5 and L5 mark the last part of the passageway into the main chamber, and it has been suggested that the cupmarks were deepened artificially by chalk and stone balls, such as those found in Cairn L (Conwell 1866:368-9), being repeatable inserted into them (McMann 1993: 28; contra Frazer 1895). These repeated interactive performances are thought to possibly be part of processes that dissolve perceived boundaries during ‘normal’ or altered-states of consciousness (McMann 1994:541). Indeed, the repeated action of deepening of the cup-hole may have been experienced as a circular tunnel extending into the surface of the stone (Bradley 1995:113). Such acts that incorporate the inversion of surfaces fit well with discussions of the carnivalesque. Certainly the experience of being inside Cairn T is of ‘visual overload’, with the mind literally saturated by the plethora of motifs present
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(see Fig. 7). Cacophony is not the right word – but it is one that springs to mind. Such intensity of imagery may have created emotionally charged interactions for the viewer, whilst challenging or perpetuating accepted beliefs.

Fig. 7. Motifs in Cairn T creating visual interruptions (digital photo: author).

All the chamber orthostats contain motifs and predominantly demonstrate circles and arcs, with a poorly picked radial also on C5 and meandering lines on C15 (Shee Twohig 1981:214-5). Sills 1 to 3 also have similar motifs, being located at the entrances to the cells. In reviewing these meandering lines, Coffey assumed a representational position and remarked that they were ‘sun-snakes’ (1912:88). This statement was not, however, qualified, and one hundred years later some still describe such images as representing ‘snakes’ (e.g. Robin 2012:146). Instead, we might be better considering what these meanderings that alternate from convex to concave actual do. For instance, they explore the surface tensions of the stone, and emphasise a suggestion of volume. Movement is stimulated by contrasting rigidity with gesture, and in a sense the meanders create items of content that are identical with themselves. Movement and distortion may also have been enhanced via fire, with the flickering light creating a play of shadows (Lynch 1970:40). Such illumination would work well with emphasis augmented by liquids, be they deliberately applied, or merely created by breath and condensation (Cochrane 2008). Such occurrences, with hearts racing from exertion, can develop
relations. Within such movements, images do not represent other imagined things; they are what they are.

Cells 2 and 3 both show some repeated concerns that can help us appreciate the ways in which the tomb was experienced, the histories of its creation and its relationships. Both cells are heavily decorated, and it has been suggested that some motifs deliberately occur in relation to sunlight. This is the case for Cell 2’s central stone, C8, where particular motifs are illuminated by direct sunlight at the equinoxes (Brennan 1983; O’Brien 1992). It has been suggested that the reflected sunlight then illuminates the roofstone (Brennan 1983:169). There are, however, inherent dangers in focusing on the particular images that are highlighted by the sun, as a result of the extensive OPW (Office of Public Works) restorations that altered the original shape of the entrance (McMann 1994:537).

In terms of decoration, Shee Twhohig (1996:74) has noted that fine, coarse and medium point methods were employed with C8 (see Fig. 7, lower right images). The particular images made with medium point continue under the supporting corbels, and suggest that the other fine and coarse images were made whilst C8 was in situ. Similarly, three grades of picking tool were used to create the panel on the roofstone in Cell 2 (Shee Twhohig 1981:217). This roofstone has imagery all over the underside face. As the motifs continue beyond the supporting corbels, it is likely that the stone was decorated before being placed into the passage tomb (Shee Twhohig 2012:131), and in this respect it is similar to the right-hand recess roofstone in Newgrange Site 1, Co. Meath (see C. O’Kelly 1982:181). Furthermore, Shee Twhohig (1981: 216) has commented that it would have been very difficult to decorate an overhead slab so extensively. Indeed, today the images are best seen when lying on one’s back with one’s feet facing towards the passage entrance, and this is how Shee Twhohig (1981: 216) described them. This feature has led Thomas (1992:149) to comment that only those people who had access to the deeper areas of the passage tomb would be able to engage with these images. The motifs on the roofstone are varied and generally ‘haphazardly’ placed, especially near the centre (Shee Twhohig 1981:217, Fig. 238). As the images are basic abstract geometric, and as they do not conform to the modulations of the stone’s surface, we can place this roofstone within step one of O’Sullivan’s (1996a) sequence.

Similar themes are played out on underside of the cell lintel in cell 3, which has a picked dot with six radiating lines, while the underside of the roof slab has an incised image consisting of parallel zigzags (Shee Twhohig 1981:217). These angular incised motifs are thought to have occurred before the later picked motifs in the passage tomb (Jones 2004:209). The stone also has a fresh surface, again with clear well executed images made with tools of varying sizes, possibly at different times and by different carvers (Shee Twhohig 1981: fig. 238, Plate 36: Shee Twhohig 2012:134). They therefore indicate episodes of superimposition. Its location on the underside
of the roof slab, in an inaccessible position, suggests that the image was produced before the stone was set in place (Shee Twhig 2012:135). These images highlight not only changes within the tomb (Robin 2010:391-2; 2012:150), but also broader partnerships of action.

In the entire Cairn T passage tomb, radial images dominate, being present on 37% of all the carved surfaces. Shee Twhig (1996) has commented that Cairn T demonstrates a desire for coherence, with almost identically styled images appearing in juxtaposition to each other in the passageway, with the 4 main orthostats in the central chamber also having similar imagery. Such symmetry fits well with Foucault’s (2002:235) definitions of the roles that heterotopias may play. The juxtaposition of similar images creates a space of illusions that exposes and enhances the partitioning and ordering of movement within the passage tomb, whilst simultaneously reflecting and inverting the random, messy and jumbled aspects of life. Interesting, Cairn T appears to also juxtapose the outside hills within. For instance, it presents the greatest number of examples of ‘landscape-rock art’ type carvings, particularly cupmarks and cupmarks enclosed by rings, in the complex (Shee Twhig 1981: figs 232 and 233; Evans 2004:49). Many occur on surfaces that are weathered; this suggests that they existed on rocks that were exposed outside before being placed inside the passage tomb and joined by the later passage tomb images (Shee Twhig 2012:135). Such a proposition is possible at Cairn T, as the roof survived mostly intact before restoration, and therefore protected the internal motifs from weathering.

To the north of Cairn T and on the exterior is located K29 or the ‘Hag’s Chair’. This kerbstone has imagery on its front and back face. The top of the central part of this kerbstone is believed to be artificially cut to create the chair appearance (Shee Twhig 1981:217; contra Conwell 1866:371), and the inlaid cross on the ‘seat’ surface may have been cut by surveyors engaged in the ‘Trigonometrical Irish Survey’ (Frazer 1893:321; cf. McMann 1993:27). Six inverted boxed ‘U’ shapes and several double ‘U’ shapes and circles, one with central dot exist on the front face, and there are two roughly executed concentric circles on the back (Shee Twhig 1981:217). The occurrence of images on the inner-face of the stone, hint that others may occur on the unexplored inner-faces of the passage tomb, meaning that they were not intended to be seen (Shee Twhig 2012:136). If images are not viewed, the act of creation might be more important, than the finished piece. Considering that K29 is the third largest kerbstone, decorated and such a prominent feature, it is surprising that it was not placed diametrically opposed to the entrance, as is seen at some of the Boyne Valley passage tombs (e.g. K52, Newgrange Site 1). That images are presented on the outside of the passage tomb does suggest that they were intended to be seen by spectators in public. Such display may have allowed the passage tomb to operate within working nets of opening and closing that both isolated and rendered it penetrable. Performances with these external images may have incorporated differing or mirroring gestures and permissions than the internal motifs.
Repetitions, differences and stereotypes

With the exception of Cairn T, a recurring theme within a majority of the passage tombs at Loughcrew is the prominence of the right sides of the passage tomb as you enter deeper into it. In some instances this is emphasised by the right cell being larger than the others (e.g. at Cairns H and U), and in other examples the central cell on the right side is larger (e.g. Cairns I and L) (Herity 1974:42; Shee Twohig 1996:78; McMann 1994:532). Indeed, the right sides of the passage tombs often contain other distinguishing features such as the stone pillar and basin stone in Cairn L, and the basin/slabs in Cairns H and I. The right cells are often more elaborately decorated (Herity 1974:42, 123), with the sill stones or backstones being the most visually striking, such as is seen in Cairns H, L, I, and U. In multi-celled passage tombs, the cell in juxtaposition to the elaborately decorated right cell, is sometimes also stressed with prominence, such as in Cairns I and L. Here, we might be witnessing the priority of dexter over sinister. Shee Twohig (1996) has highlighted these occurrences and suggests that they constitute a choreography of the practices or performances that may have occurred within the passage tombs. Shee Twohig (1996) also noted that that the left cells are dominated by circular images, with the right cells demonstrating a greater array of images. Whether this is tantamount to more ‘complex’ panels is open to debate. Thomas (1992:146-7) creates a basic division and considers spirals, meanders and dots as ‘simple’ with concentric circles and lozenges as more ‘complex’ arrangements. Thomas proposes that ‘simple’ arrangements are rarely found on the same stone as the more ‘complex’ ones (1992:149). In attempting to challenge the dichotomy of ‘simple:complex’, Shee Twohig (1996:79) has argued that although ‘simple’ spirals and ‘complex’ lozenges do not occur on the same stones, spirals and concentric circles do (on 14 stones). She also notes that concentric circles and lozenges only occur on six stones in total, and therefore make the distinctions less impressive and removes some of the assertions of Thomas’s spatial depth analysis (1992: fig. 11.3).

Thomas’s (1990; 1992; 1993) proposals create situations in which space as well as spectator are controlled. For Thomas the Loughcrew passage tombs act as the ‘gradual multiplication of bounded spaces... [creating a] greater subdivision of the audience, depending upon how far they were allowed to penetrate into the monument’ (1990:176). The shapes of the passage tombs enforce a linear pattern of movement within the passage way and physical penetration into the chamber is dictated by the orthostats and by crossing a ‘symbolically-laden’ forecourt entrance (Thomas 1990:174; 176; 1993: 85). In some instances a person has to actually crouch down to enter and even lie down to see particular images (Lynch 1973:155). The physical aspects of such movements, of touching the stones and motifs, may have created tactile understandings, which vision alone cannot provide. These acts would incorporate the pores and skin and may have assisted in developing dynamic experiences of the motifs (see also Knappett 2006:240). When touching a stone, if you wait long enough
the pulse in your hand can create the sensation that it is beating - for me this is oddly satisfying. Within Thomas's (1990) depicted scheme ‘lower ranked individuals’ or more ‘subservient’ persons were only allowed to the outer-parts of the passage tombs. Thomas’s (1990; 1992; 1993) studies are therefore centred around an ‘inside:outside’ dichotomy, being concerned primarily with the passage tomb interiors. Thomas (1992:145) does not consider external or public engagements other than commenting that there may have been prescribed patterns of spatial movement between the cairns, possibly a linear based one (see Cooney 1990), with the limited intervisibility between some individual passage tomb exteriors indicating possible sequential encounters. For instance, as one could not visibly see the entrance to Cairn H from the entrance of Cairn L, Carnbane West, one would have to physically move nearer to it (see Fig. 3).

As a response to studies that privilege the interiors of passage tombs, Fraser (1998) suggested that greater importance lay in the larger-scale and possibly more frequent encounters that could have occurred in the spaces between and outside the passage tombs at Loughcrew. For Fraser (1998: 209), the public spaces were not only able to add legitimation to specific practices, authorities and beliefs, but also they were able to challenge or subvert them, as a direct result of the public nature of the places and events. The spaces in between the cairns (see Fig 2 and Fig. 9) become ‘theatres in the round’ (Bradley 1998:116) acting as foci (see also Sharples 1984:116), and as with all good theatrical performances, incorporated elements of apprehension, risk and danger. The notion of risk and danger is amplified if one imagines the Loughcrew summits to be liminal zones where the dead or spirits dwelt or to which they had access. As with all theatre spaces, they are designed to produce systems of simulation and illusion of place and persons (Pearson & Shanks 2001:117; see also Turner 1982). Indeed, it is within liminal spaces that all performances operate (Pearson & Shanks 2001:53). By incorporating notions of performance, simulation and the carnivalesque, we can begin to create more emotional narratives. Things may have happened within the open spaces, involving larger numbers of people; more people than the passage tombs could hold. The availability of the open spaces and the framing by the topography and cairns may have stimulated action. As such, we can imagine some people acting with less physical restrictions on movement, deploying festive laughter to momentarily enjoy a notional victory over the spirits and death, over all the perceptions that restrict and maybe even oppress within the daily round (see Stam 1989:86). By deploying carnival ideas people may have overcome the confines between passage tomb, cairn, hill topography, bodies that are alive or dead, whole or cremated, and the world in general. Bakhtin describes these events as ‘interchange’ and ‘interorientation’ and proposes that ‘eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body – all these acts are performed on the confines of the body and the outer world, or on the confines of the old and new body. In all these events the beginnings and end of life are closely linked and interwoven’ (1968:317).
A taste for the unexpected

We do not have to settle for interpretations that depict either some people operating within the passage tombs, or conversely only performing outside the cairns. By developing the models presented by Thomas (1990; 1992; 1993; 2001), Shee Twohig (1996; 2012) and Fraser (1998), we can begin to speculate that different people were doing different things and sometimes even the same things, but in alternative settings. The Loughcrew settings may present permanence in flux with punctuated shifts in orientations. Within the passage tombs the activities may have been more formalised, with spatial distinctions, barriers and the motifs creating fluid, improvisational and interactive types of communication. Outside the passage tombs these activities may have been temporally suspended, with the carnival-like modes in the focus ‘island’ areas and oval settings erasing the boundaries between spectator and spectacle. We can maybe imagine a celebration of life creating unique perspectives that were no less important than seriousness or even tears (as seen at some modern Western funeral practices). Carnivals can certainly be transgressive, creating an ‘irrational’ yet real state of happiness, from miserable situations or locations (Stam 1989:101, 119). Indeed, the apertures to the passage tombs themselves conform to carnivalesque modes in that they can instantly invert from an entrance threshold into an exit one, with entry leading to exclusion and openings becoming closings (or vice versa).

Fig 8. Interchange at Cairn T – sunset and cloud (digital photo: author).
The Loughcrew passage tombs act within rhythms of continuity and rupture. The motifs, passage tombs, covering cairns and focus ‘island’ areas simultaneously embody, reflect, contest and invert spaces and place, visually and physically. These features were not static, sanitised and sterile. The motifs perform as sources for invention and belonging, sometimes being creativity and reasonable – at other times, they played at being inept and unreasonable, creating gaps and absences within the world. Such performances lap over each other yielding an abundance of fresh impressions. These processes can lead to an escalation of display, engagement and disengagement. This can create feelings of destabilisation, and can also create an increase in the material production of images. These anxieties can produce subversive and inversive technologies or strategies. The motif and the passage tomb within a specific location might therefore be an intensification of expression, discourses and materials that helped support and distort perceptions in direct and indirect ways. Mounds and motifs may also have embodied different expressions of temporality that deny transformation as a forward striving force, instead being more about (dis)continuity and reduplicating reorganisations. The motifs are manipulations with stone, rendering presentations in rather than representations of the world. Motifs are therefore events in their own right and not subservient to an invisible immutable symbolic original – that is located just out there, or over there, or behind and below. Passage tomb images are an emergent novelty within tastes of unexpected hesitation and possibility.

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Endnote
1. Such approaches to passage tombs have been dominant for over 150 years. They are representational and stipulate that things and meanings lie behind or just beyond the image – through the cracks if you like. They mostly subscribe to textual understandings – and often can be very expressionistic and poetic. Ultimately based on the idea that an image can represent something else – be it an ancestor, text, creature, hybrid, language, face, god, swastika, plant, celestial phenomenon, worldview or another image, like a hallucination. This sample list is by no means exhaustive: Wilde (1849); Deane (1889-91); Coffey (1912); Breuil (1921); Macalister (1921); Mahr (1937); Crawford (1957); Herity (1974); Brennan (1983); Thomas (1992); Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1993); Dronfield (1995); Tilley (1999); Nash (2002); McCormack (2012). For a comprehensive review see: Hensey (2012:161-8).
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Encountering Imagery


A Quest of Questions
On the Paradigm of Identification within Rock Art Research

Ylva Sjöstrand

Abstract This paper scrutinizes three common rhetorical steps met with one proposal each. Firstly, it is proposed that asking is telling, or, in other words: that our principles of analyses are hidden in the forms of our questions. Secondly, it is suggested that this way of thinking is especially evident when it comes to archaeological analyses of images in general, and rock art research in particular. The third proposition concerns the lack of an in-depth discussion about 'what it means to mean something', which has generated collective claims of truths within the archaeology of images. This doxa is referred to as 'the paradigm of identification'. By taking examples from research concerning rock art this paradigm and some of its latent assumptions are exposed.

Introduction
Images are, without a doubt, the most momentous and at the same time most mysterious product of the human mind. Images can be made of such things as paint or ink, but also of thoughts or expressions. By using images, we can deliver clear and concrete messages as well as conceptualize feelings so unconscious that we can only barely grasp their substance. When discussing images we thus try to take hold of a phenomenon that operates as much on the outside as in the inside world. This is because an image is able to signal and symbolize at the very same time. Pictures serve as a means for interaction with the Other as well as for communication with the self.

In pondering images in this manner, a string of questions immediately arise. How are images related to language? Can we achieve the same information from a picture as from a sentence of spoken or written words? Is the meaning of an image located inside or outside its material manifestation, and is this significance something that has been set up by the picture's maker, or something that has been attached to it later on by the observer? We might also reflect upon what property an image must have in order to represent. Should we consider the object duplicated as the image's content, or are meaning and motif connected to each other in a more complex manner? Moreover, an exploration of images will connect the discussion to issues associated
with aesthetical values. In this respect, we must decide whether we believe in the existence of good and bad works of art, and what, in such cases, we think defines these oppositional types.

Variants of these kinds of problems have been handled within formal logic, philosophy and aesthetics since the days of Socrates. So much work has been done on the epistemological aspects of images that just a brief history of research would fill several volumes. However, this massive effort has not lead to any conclusions of a general nature. The solutions to the problem of understanding the relation between images and language are, for example, innumerable (for different suggestions made by prominent scholars, see Wittgenstein 1922 § 2.161, 2.171, 4.01; Cassirer 1946:31; Langer 1984:103ff). As I and many others have claimed, this multivocality is certainly not a problem. In fact, it is a necessity (Bale 2010). Theories or explanations that cover all aspects of images as a phenomenon cannot – and should not – exist. Any attempt to create such a string theory of aesthetics will be an effort very much in vain.

This statement might seem like a rejection of the philosophy of art, but that is not the intention at all. I do not wish to express some kind of sophistic pessimism about the capability of humans to understand their own creation. Nor do I claim that the nature of images should be seen as something belonging to what Russell or Wittgenstein would label as ‘the unspeakable’. By stressing that images are a phenomenon that can only be questioned, never answered, I wish to point out the importance of an articulated discussion concerning the very problems that we – as archaeologists dealing with aesthetical features – are putting to our source material. I strongly assert that an increased awareness of our own inquiries will lead the archaeological discussion on images into a somewhat new direction. In this article, I would thus like to suggest that archaeologists should put more effort into questioning their images than into trying to answer what they represent. On the following pages I will try to communicate the arguments that form the basis for this claim.

All right, one might think, the fuzzy approach outlined above seems frighteningly familiar. That archaeologists should ask more than they are answering is a message that has been preached before. In fact, producing question marks that are just leading towards nothing was the poststructuralist's standard solution to all archaeological problems. This path has, thank goodness, come to an end and it would be a mistake to reverse in our own tracks.

To keep those of you who share this opinion from stopping to read right away, I do not declare the impossibility of achieving knowledge about the past by studying images. When I say that asking is telling, I simply argue that we might achieve more knowledge than we think if we abandon our ambition to find answers concerning an image’s meaning, origin or cultural roots. In order to verify this statement, e.g. prove the importance of well-articulated questions when it comes to the archaeological treatment of images, I would like to start from the most basic point of departure
thinkable. Therefore my request for more questions will have its foundation in a definition of the very subject of examination. In short I will begin by asking; *what is a question?*

Asking is telling

‘Every question is a proposition.’ That is the main sentence of the first chapter in *Philosophy in a new key* written by the American philosopher Susanne K. Langer. Langer was, and still is, the doyenne of American pragmatism. As familiar with formal logic as with the philosophy of mind, she stands out as an innovative and challenging thinker who has not received as much attention as she rightfully deserves. Langer’s declaration of the nature of questions can be understood as the very fundament on which her proceeded thinking relies. Her explorations of the symbolic language – the mechanisms of reason, rite and art – are focused on finding new ways to problematize general semantic concepts (Binkley 1970:456; Bufford 1972:19). This will become more evident as we return to some main strands in Langer’s thinking later on. Right now it is nevertheless time to clarify how a question can possibly be the same thing as a proposition.

There is no doubt that these two types of judgements may appear as different from each other as one can possibly think. When we ask something, we expose our incompleteness and lack of knowledge. When we make statements we, on the contrary, prove ourselves capable of telling something about the world. In short, it seems like a contradiction in terms that a wondering of what X is can be the same as a declaration of X’s constitution. If we, however, follow Langer, we might see this from a different point of view. As she puts forward, a question is a postulate *because the way in which a question is asked limits and disposes the way that every answer—right or wrong—may be given* (Langer 1984: 5). If we, for example, are asked what the central figure on the rock painting at Fltraîuet (which can be seen below) is depicting, we may answer; ‘a reindeer’, ‘an elk’, ‘a mammal’, ‘a dog’, or whatever else that we believe is accurate. We might be right, we might be wrong, that is not of importance here. What is interesting, however, is what happens if we reply something like ‘this rock art figure does not depict anything.’ In that case, we would most likely be accused of being disrespectful or just trying to be smart. The questioner feels called to repeat her problem. ‘How then’, she will probably ask, ‘can the rock art figure carry meaning?’ If we then counter, ‘the rock figure carries no meaning at all’, we would have caused a serious conflict. The one that addressed us will most probably feel dismissed and we will be suspected for making light of the question or just being unconstructive. The reason for the questioner’s reaction is simple indeed. She will find our reply disturbing because *we do not answer, but reject, her problem.* Our response destabilizes the basic assumptions that she has taken for granted. We are challenging the idea that
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a picture always depicts something, that a definition of that ‘something’ is equal to a declaration of the image’s content and that the motif in a picture are synonymous with the picture’s meaning. These premises have been presumed to such a large extent that they only find expressions in the forms of her questions. Or, as Langer herself puts it:

‘A question is really an ambiguous proposition; the answer is its determination. There can be only a certain number of alternatives that will complete its sense. In this way the intellectual treatment of any datum and experience and subject, is determined by the nature of our questions, and only carried out in the answers. In philosophy this disposition of problems is the most important thing that a school a movement or an age contributes. This is the ‘genius’ of a great philosophy, in its light systems arises and rule and die. Therefore a philosophy is characterized more by the formulation of its problems than by its solutions of them.’ (Langer 1984: 4).

As Langer has shown, our question carries our principles of analyses, which imply that our answers may express just what these principles are able to yield (Langer 1984:4). It is hoped that this clarifies why I emphasize the urgency of analysing the main issue that has pervaded the archaeological treatment of images for a long time. My focus is on one particular problem, a problem the majority of us consider as the most basic, intuitive and essential of all wonders connected to aesthetical features. It is, of course, the problem of significance – the (re)quest for meaning.

To concern ourselves with meaning is, I believe, nothing but a fundamental procedure in our engagement with aesthetical objects. As scholars in neuroscience found out decades ago, humans comprehend his/her perceptions through categorisation and it is thus no wonder that we, when standing in front of an image, immediately try to figure out what this may signify (see Marr 1982; Gärdenfors 1998). We want to classify what we see, get the hazy cluster of sensorial stimuli to make sense. I certainly do not wish to criticise this act as such. What I do like to highlight is that archaeologists have been treating the topic of meaning in a fairly standardized way. We have limited our questions to the one that goes ‘what is the meaning of image Y’ and seldom tried to answer how on earth it is possible that image Y is capable of meaning something at all.

In our hurry to define the meaning of an image, we have forgotten the fundamental topic of our study. We have not asked things such as how the concept of meaning should be understood, nor how meaning is being produced, or why the very same object alters in significance according to the situation that surrounds it. When reflections on these matters are overlooked, we strongly limit our theoretical awareness. We ignore the payload of symbolic theory that is attached to our question.

The consequences of this passive approach are serious. When we limit our questions to ‘what is the meaning of image Y’, our answers will turn out very similar. The reason is that our replies will reproduce the theoretical fundament that is needed if the question should be considered sensible. Every answer will thus bear a particular shape, it will
be cast in a particular frame that reproduces and legitimates the theoretical horizon that was established along with the question. When asking ‘what is the meaning of image Y?’ some scholars may say z, some z¹ and others z², but no matter how different these suggestions may look at first glance they will rely on the same basis and thus reproduce the same proposition. For that reason I find it possible to talk about the answers in terms of a paradigm.

Before sketching the content of this paradigm it is, however, important to verify its existence. In order to do so or, in other words, prove that different answers to the question of meaning reproduce the same theoretical foundation – I would like to take an example from my own field of research, namely rock art studies. I have mainly focused on the Stone Age rock art from northern Sweden and in particular have studied the interpretations that have been articulated concerning the rock painting from Flatruet, Storsjö parish, Härjedalen (Sjöstrand 2011:145). This panel contains figures that can be given a relative date to the periods usually labelled Forsberg’s phase II, III and IV, which indicates that the figures were made on separate occasions many hundreds of years apart in time. To give absolute dates is very hard, not to say impossible, but generally speaking the earliest figures on Flatruet can be dated to around 3000 BC, and the most recent to 2000 BC (for chronological considerations see Forsberg 1993:219-21; see also Sjöstrand 2011: 113f for further discussion).

Fig.1. The rock painting at Flatruet located in Härjedalen in north western Sweden. Photo: Christina Thumé.
The rock painting at Flatruet

The panel in question can be seen in Fig. 1. As we can see, the painting contains twelve elk-figures, one clear and two less obvious anthropomorphic forms. We also have one bear-like beast, an evocative composition, a zigzag line, and finally two creatures resembling fish. This description is probably held to be intuitively true; in any case, it is only partially correct. That is, if we think about it, we do not see any elks, bears or fish at all. What we do see is innumerable dashes, dots, lines and fields of colour. We have only related theses lines and dots to each other so that they form what we perceive as figures, e.g. definable shapes. Then we have put these forms together so that they constitute an ensemble that makes sense, a unity that we call a composition (Rosengren 2006). Let us note that nebulous cognitive mechanisms stand behind our ability to take the step from perception to cognition. Let us, moreover, label this capacity to make elks out of patches of colour as an act of pattern recognition.

Given that we approve of a particular pattern recognition, that is, come to agree that the image contains the figures defined in the computation above; I dare say that a very limited number of us would be satisfied. In other words; even if we admit that a defined cluster of lines and spots can be perceived as an elk-, human- or fish-figure, I think most of us are still wondering how this perception should be comprehended. We wonder how the thing described should become a thing with significance. To be satisfied with a pure naming of what we see, e.g. saying that the figures are elks or fish, would be the same as identifying a combination of letters in a medieval manuscript, but then neglecting every attempt to find out the language in which the text was written and what the words themselves signify. The majority of us would not dream of overlooking this procedure. Thus, as we face the rock painting we want to take the step from determining its content to interpreting what this content might indicate. In this way, we formulate our theory of meaning.

It is hoped that this general account of our interaction with rock art clarifies why I believe that our search for meaning is intuitive and connected to our ability to go from perception to cognition. In order to demonstrate my main assessment - that different answers regarding the meaning of the rock painting at Flatruet reproduce the same latent idea about the concept of meaning itself – we need to examine how the rock art panel at Flatruet has been interpreted. Let us therefore take a look at how different scholars have answered the question about the meaning of the panel.

The proposal of oldest date, and which possibly has the most supporters, is that Flatruet illustrates an elk hunt and that the imagery was created in order to bolster the outcome of this activity. This idea is applied to several rock art features within northern Scandinavia, especially Nämfforsen, the large area located on the cliffs within the Ångerman River. This rock carving cluster has been interpreted as an enormous trap since it has been suggested that the prehistoric hunters chased the animals over the cliffs and into the streaming water (Hallström 1960). Scholars that put forward
this theory claim that the prehistoric people ascribed to the carvings the ability to
attract the elks to the cliffs.

Another common answer to the question of the meaning of Flatruet is that the
anthropomorphs, formally interpreted as hunters, should instead be seen as depictions
of ritual specialists. This idea is also widespread within research into northern rock art,
and has often being supported by the use of anthropological analogies. The likeness
between the human figures at Nåmforsen and the depicted shaman from Siberia has
been taken as a strong indication of this theory (Lindqvist 1994). Advocates for this
idea have argued that the painting at Flatruet indicates that the prehistoric societies
of northern Sweden had a social structure in which the shaman played the leading
role. The third of the most widespread suggestions is that the image depicts a tripartite
cosmos and that we see the upper, middle and lower world depicted on the panel.
The purpose of the rock art was to mediate this cosmological structure and serve as
an axis mundi that connected the different worlds (Helskog 1999; Myrholt 2010).

These three interpretations are of course schematically referred. Still, they are
fully representative examples of the three dominant lines within in rock image
research. I allude to the idea that the painting bears witness to a sympathetic hunting
magic, an existence of shamanism or altered states of consciousness or a religious
belief in a tripartite cosmos (Layton 1991). To claim that these views are separated
by waterproof bulkheads would be an exaggeration; still it is no overstatement to
say that these interpretations are often set against each other (see discussion in
Fandén 1996; or compare Goldhahn 2002:48 with Günter 2009:28). It is therefore
interesting to note that none has the power to exclude the other two. My point is
that all three interpretations are supported by the description that came out of our
pattern recognition. There is nothing in the picture that makes it impossible to see
the human figure as a depiction of a hunter, but, on the other hand, there is nothing
to contradict the idea that the very same figure should be seen as a shaman either.
None of the suggestions put forward regarding the meaning of Flatruet renders the
other interpretations false or incorrect.

Consequently, it is possible to state that the three most widely accepted interpreta-
tions deliver logically equivalent proposals on how the Flatruet rock image should be
understood. The term ‘logically equivalent’ is used to indicate the fact that the three
schools of interpretations receive their validity through the same chain of arguments.
This is because they all collect evidence for their statements of what the rock painting
means by determining its content. Those who claim that Flatruet shows an elk hunt
are making their theory valid by identifying the human figure as a depiction of a
prehistoric hunter, and those who go for the shamanistic approach recognize the
very same rock carving as a depiction of a ritual specialist. While some archaeologists
see hunters and elks at Flatruet, others see rituals and spiritual interaction. When
arguing about what a particular image means, the issue of debate is rather what the
image should be seen as a depiction of.
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Since the main interpretations of Flatruet are all focused on the question of meaning, they are cast in the same frame. The frame or perspective that is being put forward by rock art research is characterized by the assumption that an image’s meaning is possible to discern if the observer undertakes a careful study of the motifs in a given panel. Accordingly, meaning is comprehended as something that can be uncovered through an act of denotation. For that reason, it is possible to talk about the answers provided by the field of rock art research in terms of ‘a paradigm of identification’. When it comes to the archaeological handling of images I would say that the paradigm of identification is constantly reproduced in our interpretations. Keeping my examples to localities from northern Sweden, it is easy to see that the debates regarding these rock art sites have been carried out within this particular theoretical framework. Main issues of debate have been whether the anthropomorphic figures at Nämftorsen should be seen as hunters or shamans (Lindqvist 1994:126-37), if the animals at Glösa should be categorized as reindeers or elks (Olofsson 2004) or if the painting in Åbosjön depicts a bestiality scene or a transformation-act between a human and a mammal (Bolin 1999:151; Myrholt 2010:27). In short, the search for meaning has been mixed up with the attempt to recognize the image’s motifs. The examinations of the prehistoric images from northernmost Scandinavia have therefore been reduced to a constant search for the objects that once constituted their raw models.

The preoccupation with the question of how to identify a figure bears witness to the meaning-theoretical perspective that impregnates the paradigm of identification. What is being exposed is that meaning has often been considered something that is synonymous with the motif of an image. An image, like a rock art panel, has consequently been seen as a proxy for the thing it depicts. An image of an elk thus ‘means’ an elk since it makes us associate it with a real elk, as well as the elk idea. In itself, the image is mostly an apparition, a shadow on the cave’s wall (see discussion in Rosengren 2006 and Rosengren in press). It is the image’s ability to reflect its object that makes its mediation of meaning possible. The philosopher Mats Rosengren has emphasized the resemblance between this approach and Plato’s idea of Mimesis. According to Plato, images are representatives of phenomena in so far that they are duplicate matters of the real world (Nichols & Lyons 1982; Blinder 1989; Gebeauer & Wulf 1995; Auerbach 1998; Bale 2010). As pointed out by Rosengren, the platonic idea of mimesis has been established as an epistemological foundation within rock art research. He notes that:

‘Much of the research on cave art has been devoted to determining what they represent. Is the horse in the black theatre in Niaux the first image of a Merens pony? Are the oblong shapes carved into the Grotte Cosquer, the flooded cave on the Mediterranean coast, really seals? Is it a hyena or a bear that towers over what seems to be a panther in the Grotte Chauvet?’ (Rosengren 2006: 27f, my translation).
The quote above concerns upper Palaeolithic cave art, particularly from the valley Dordogne, located in the south-west of France. This is not by coincidence; in fact, several of the most important investigations on this material are permeated by the paradigm of identification. One example is the influential article ‘The Signs of all Times’ written by David Lewis-Williams and Thomas Dowson (1988). What is being stressed by these scholars is that several designs typical of upper Palaeolithic cave art, like zigzag lines, spirals or parallel lines, can be defined as so-called ‘entropic signs’. Entropic signs are to be understood as universal sight-perceptions that come to the subject when her experiences are made within an alternate state of consciousness. In neurological studies, contemporary test-persons have sketched these kinds of designs after waking up from a hallucinogenic state of mind (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988:202). According to Lewis Williams and Dowson the resemblance between such drawings and cave paintings indicates that the making of rock art was connected to trance (Fig. 2). As they are influenced by Mircea Eliade’s works, the existence of trance in rituals is seen as a strong indication for shamanism (Eliade 1974). If Lewis-William’s and Dowson’s argumentation is analyzed, it becomes clear that it is constructed as an Aristotelian syllogism. What the authors are saying is that:

- Since image X (a cave painting) can be identified as image Y (an entopic sign)...
- And image Y can be identified as an expression of phenomena Z (experience during trance)...
- It is possible to state that image X can be seen as an expression of phenomenon Z.

Much can be, and has also been, said about the link between shamanism and trance. Some scholars have pointed out that Lewis Williams and Dowson overemphasize the use of trance within the ritual practices of rock art. Others have called attention to the problematic aspects of understanding hallucinations during trance as pure neurological sensations that are universally human and not situated by culture to any extent at all (Layton 1988). These objections are interesting indeed and can be the point of departure for a number of challenging discussions. To go further into them here, however, would take us way too far from the line of arguments that I wish to undertake in this article. My aim is not to argue against Lewis-William’s and Dowson’s conclusion as such. In fact, I find it plausible that the people that made the cave art were engaged in rituals that included hallucinations. What I would like to analyze is rather the assumptions and axiomatic hypotheses that make up the foundation of their theory. In particular, there is one part of Lewis-William’s and Dowson’s syllogistic type of argumentation that I find most urgent to analyze. That is, the fact that the authors are claiming that cave paintings are entopic signs, which in turn are expressions of trance. Meaning and motif is thus perceived as a corresponding pair of entities. These two instances are seen as qualities attached to the image.

To comprehend meaning as something that ‘is’, as an entity, is the most serious consequence that has followed from the paradigm of identification. The idea that
meaning is something that comes with a picture (rather than something that comes out of it) makes our investigations ‘flat’. This ‘flatness’ is due to the fact that we become incapable of examining how an image operates, and when meaning is seen as the property of the motif, it becomes very hard to admit that two depictions of the same phenomenon are perfectly capable of referring to different things.

When undertaking our daily rituals we are constantly engaged with examples that confirm the delicate relation between meaning and motif. Even if we seldom reflect upon it, we have no problem accepting that an image usually represents something completely different from what is being depicted in it. Just to mention some cases, a stylized apple might mean a computer, a red cabin with white corners might be perceived as a trademark of the Swedish nation or a runestone can be a suitable emblem for signifying archaeology as a discipline. When it comes to investigations of aesthetical features from the past we nevertheless fail to remember this obvious truism. Instead we are looking for the meaning of rock art panel X as if meaning was a quality, and not a function, of the image.

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Fig. 2 Lewis-Williams and Dowsons illustration of the analogy between entoptic phenomena and elements within rock art from different times and geographical regions. Lewis-Williams & Dowson (1988:206).
Symptom and symbol

To see meaning as a function is my suggested path towards finding new questions for prehistoric images. Instead of asking what the picture is depicting we may question how the picture may have operated in the culture. This approach leads to a new way of comprehending images since it is the use of the motif, not the motif itself, that becomes the focus. When an image’s meaning is seen as a function, and not an entity, it also becomes possible to admit that an image that operates in different manners refers to different things. The panel of Flatrueut will thus not merely be seen as proof of the existence of shamanism, an elk hunt, or whatever a scholar might suggest. Instead, it will hold information about how the Stone Age society used the elk and human motif in order to conceptualize a variety of things.

That an image is capable of serving as a means for depicting abstract concepts is something that has been carefully studied by Langer. She has put a lot of effort into investigating and defining the different functions of visual features in order to understand how they operate. According to Langer, there are basically two kinds of semantic situations which have the right to bear the prominent epithet of meaning. She claims that any phenomenon, from words and images to sounds and lightning flashes, is meaningful when it operates as either a symptom or a symbol. If starting with symptoms, it is accurate to define them as indications of existence. This existence might be present, past or yet to come, but it is always there. For example, graffiti on a house wall functions as a symptom when it is taken as evidence of the presence of a particular group in the neighbourhood. The tag will then function as a visible sign for the creators, but they may no longer be occupying the place. The graffiti tag is thus meaningful in its ability to stand as a report for a state of affairs. But, the very same graffiti tag may also carry another, more extended significance. This different content is of conceptual nature and is being mediated in situations where the tag functions as a symbol. When the painting on the house wall is ascribed a symbolic meaning it does not refer to the particular group of kids who made it. On the contrary, it relates those kids to a cluster of other phenomena, for example suburban life, class and race issues or sub-cultural references. An image that functions as a symbol does not point things out as much as it pulls things together. It does not stand as a proxy for objects, but operates as a vehicle for the conception of objects. It is accurate to say that a tag that is perceived throughout a symbolic screen becomes a material key to the aspects of life that are truly impossible to depict. By using graffiti, one might picture the working class as a concept. This example shows that nothing is a symptom or a symbol in itself.

That every phenomenon can function in both ways is the most important aspect of Langer’s distinction between symptoms and symbols. A description of Langer’s semantic theory deserves a separate article rather than a few sentences. Although this account has been brief it is, however, enough to serve as a background for my final point. What I would like to stress is that when relating Langer’s distinction...
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to the scholars that have reproduced the paradigm of identification, it becomes obvious that they have comprehended images as pure symptoms. For example, Lewis-Williams and Dowson have seen the spirals and zigzags as proof of the existence of trance. According to their interpretation, the images are emblematic expressions of phenomena in the life world. But, no image is a symptom it can only function as one. If we accordingly include the fact that the image that operates as a symptom for Lewis-Williams and Dowson also has functioned as a symbol for those who once made the painting, something will happen to the final conclusion. My point is that even if zigzag or spiral designs really had their raw model in visions during trance it is obvious that the authors have failed to consider that these pictures not only reported, but also signified. Consequently, the paintings have a broader and more complex content than the one Lewis-Williams and Dowson identify through their analogy to entopic signs.

It is also possible that this symbolic function was a priority to the prehistoric individuals who once carved and painted in the caves. If the Palaeolithic people were actually reporting experiences achieved during their trance by carving or painting at cave walls, these images would, in my opinion, be much more heterogeneous. For, why should a person that wakes up from a hallucinogenic state just depict the initial stage that his/her fellows will recognize and have experienced themselves? Wouldn’t it be more interesting to tell about the individual, spectacular sights that were exclusive for that person? I think so, but I also think that it is very likely that the individual returning from a trance experience might have used spirals and zigzag lines in order to conceptualize his/her experience. The tricky part, however, is that we might use anything we like to conceptualize an object. As shown by linguists such as Fedrinand Sassure or Emile Beneviste, the relationship between a sign and the thing signified is by all means arbitrary (Beneviste 1995:72; Sassure 1977).

Concluding remarks

To see meaning as a quality – as something that is in the picture – makes it easy to comprehend prehistoric images as evidence for the existence of the phenomena depicted. In those cases we tend to fall into the paradigm of identification and believe that figures that (by analogies to anthropological sources) can be recognized as a shaman are unequivocal proof for the use of shamanism in the prehistoric society studied (Fig. 3). In the end, we will have problems seeing the depictions of shamans as a method of conceptualizing, and thus be in trouble when handling motifs that come in many different executions or that have changed over time. The elk motif in northern Sweden is a good example. Elks are found in various stylistic shapes, and the ideal for depicting elks has thus altered over time. This variation is a strong indication that the elk has been considered a key symbol that could be varied in order
to mediate a row of conceptual contents (see further reasoning in Ortner 1972 and Sjöstrand 2010; 2011).

Fig. 3 Anthropomorphic figures from north Scandinavian rock art panels are often identified as shamans. This interpretation is often justified by analogies to famous illustrations taken from early anthropological works. This analogy is taken from Lindqvist (1994:132).

In my opinion, archaeologists must be in possession of a theoretical framework that enables them to admit the full semiotic capacity of visual features. This ability is, however, poorly developed in a large part of today’s rock art research. The very basis of the problem relies in our constant request for meaning. When focusing on finding the meaning of rock art panel X we will find ourselves caught in a mimetic perspective that shows meaning as an entity tied to the motif. If we would like to avoid this perspective, this paradigm of identification, we need to undertake a careful mapping of our own ideas about meaning as a phenomenon. My own point of view is borrowed from Langer. I comprehend meaning as a function, and believe that we therefore must investigate how a particular image or motif has been contextualised, varied and practiced if we should be able to say something of its past significance. This point of departure has affected my investigations and cast them in a particular frame. To claim that this frame should be acknowledged as the true or correct one would be the same as falsifying everything that has been put forward in this essay. I have no problem admitting that my entire proposition is a result of my question. In fact, everything proclaimed is a direct result of my wish to know how an image is able to function in different ways and, consequently, may come to mediate different meanings. Like all scholars, my statements are the results of the problems I have chosen to address. I hope, however, that it has become clear that this choice is something that has been carefully made.
References


Metaphors and Allegories as Augmented Reality
The Use of Art to Evoke Material and Immaterial Subjects

Dragoş Gheorghiu

ABSTRACT The paper discusses the use of art metaphors to create an augmentation of reality. By using material metaphors positioned on archaeological sites, a hybrid of the real and the artificial is created in the mind of the performer, developing the imagination. In this way it is possible to better understand human behaviour, especially during rites of passage. A case study presents the archaeological site as a map where each metaphorical element exists in close relationship with the others.

As an experimentalist I am always faced with the problem of representation. While the re-creation of techniques like flint knapping do not pose great problems for visualization, the reconstruction of complex objects, like houses or settlements, is on a different scale altogether, and the problem of representation becomes crucial.

If one wishes to expand the area of anthropological investigation, to approach a subject outside the material culture such as, for example, ritual, one will discover the absence of scientific instruments capable of approaching this ‘invisible’ subject.

This inability to represent human behaviour was one of the central problems in the crisis ethnography underwent during the last decades of the twentieth century. To overcome this obstacle different solutions were offered, from thick description (Geertz 1973), to evocation (Tyler 1986) and allegory (Clifford 1986). These approaches, which tried to surmount the hermeneutical limitations, were also limited because, paradoxically, human sciences did not favour imagery. It is only during the last decades that visual anthropology developed (Pink 2006) and began to sensitize archaeology (Jones & McGregor 2002; Thedéen 2010). The new IT technologies offered new possibilities for using Virtual Reality to visualize the material culture from the past (Forte & Siliotti 1997; Barcelo et al. 2000; Forte 2010).

Although the iconic possibilities were vast, critical problems remained in the means and the subject of representation. The first is the capacity of the method to offer clear and minute detail on a reconstruction, with the inherent risk of a high
degree of subjectivity. The second is the lingering of the study of the past within the field of material culture. The danger of using Virtual Reality lies in the possible insidious slide into a hyperrealism of materiality where the final image belongs to the imagination of the illustrator.

Despite these risks, the new IT technologies have created visual instruments that can direct research along the lines proposed by postmodern anthropologists. Therefore Augmented Reality and Mixed Reality are the counterparts of the thick description, evocation, or allegory in the visual field. They are still under the sway of the iconic representation of the real, which obstructs imagination and, consequently, the potential alternatives of interpretation. The reality they try to augment or to amplify is a limited one due to its material nature, since contemporary science accepts as scientific only the facts which can be measured, which, in archaeology, are represented by the material archaeological record only.

Today Augmented Reality is approachable only by means of high technology (Choi 2010:54). To operate with such a method (Augmented Reality) requires specialized equipment (see Azuma et al. 2001; Choi 2010), which limits the access of the individual to the subject approached. Here the imagination of the performer is used only minimally, the individual receiving the information created by the author. However, one cannot dispute the immense potential of the hybridization introduced by this method (see Schnabel & Wang 2010:238). Because an art image alone could create a state of immersion without requiring sophisticated technology, the Augmented Reality using material metaphors positioned on archaeological sites creates a hybrid of the real and the artificial in the mind of the performer, developing the imagination.

Since visual augmentation is an allegorical method, which can lead to a more complex vision of the reality of the past, I have attempted in my experiments to identify methods of investigation that are less technological and more creative. If a material metaphor overlaps an existing object, or if that object is introduced into an allegory, then we can augment the information about it. As James Clifford (1986) once said: ‘Allegory draws special attention to the narrative character of cultural representations, to the stories built into the representational process itself’ (Clifford 1986:100).

Another method employed was to link various elements in a significant way, so as to produce an allegory, thus augmenting the meaning of the message. Since prehistoric material culture seems to have had a rhetorical structure in the shape of a network linking different categories (Gheorghiu 2001a; 2001b), and based on the relational theories of meaning (Bourriaud 2002; Bishop 2004; Gibbons 2009:96), I decided to use the concept of Augmented Reality in a novel manner, i.e. to create an allegory based on a network of separate meanings, which function as a visual augmented narrative. For this purpose I designed a set of metaphors as elements of the allegory whose meanings would complete each other. Thus, I have tried to evade the limitations of ’realist’ representations by using metaphors and allegories as potential instruments.
for interpretation. Sometimes these rhetorical figures created a non-discursive, immediate, perception, such as the one suggested by Stephen Tyler (1986: 130) describing evocation, and sometimes they created an extended discourse.

Case study: a site like a map

In order to approach the material culture and rituals of the past I started by exploiting the potential of the visual rhetoric already mentioned, i.e. viewing a site as an allegory composed of numerous metaphors, a sort of oversized map where each element exists in a tightly knit relationship with the others. This process meant that the elements comprising a site had to be evoked through the use of material metaphors such as art-installations or land-art objects. Vădastra, the site where I used this method, is situated near the Danube River in the south of Romania, and is characterized by several layers of dwelling, dating from early prehistory to modern times. Probably the most famous layer is the Chalcolithic one, which gave the name to the site. Here archaeologists (Mirea 2009) identified a tell-settlement with two layers of dwelling, with wattle and daub buildings ritually burned. The tell-settlement was positioned on a river terrace and one can infer the existence of perimeter ditches and palisades similar to other contemporary sites (see Comșa 1997) (Fig.1). Such a type of protective strategy for a south-eastern European Chalcolithic settlement implies the existence of a series of rites of passage (Gheorghiu 2008). One of the most intriguing ones was the intentional burning of the houses (Chapman 1999; Stefanović 2000; Gheorghiu 2006), a rite of passage whose meaning is still obscure to archaeologists. The houses excavated here were burned down and fragments of the fired walls were still visible on the soil surface up until a decade ago.

My goal was to analyze the evidence of the most important elements, both material and immaterial, belonging to the Chalcolithic layer, with the help of material metaphors, which would act as an augmented information stratum overlapping the reality of the site. This was achieved by a group of visual artists and myself, and finalized in the shape of a grand scale map-allegory composed of installations, land-art and monumental sculptures (Gheorghiu 2009a; Gheorghiu 2009b).

The visualization of the rites of passage was achieved in the form of an allegory of ritual protection: the paleo-river, the defense ditches, the palisade, and the ritual sacrifice of the house. After the visualization of one element, the second moment was its phenomenological experience. The river was created by positioning a coloured textile strip on the bottom of the paleo valley (Fig. 2). This land art had to be crossed to climb the terrace and penetrate into the settlement, therefore it had to be embodied by the performer. The rite of crossing the river was materialized as a suspended bridge (fabricators Adrian Șerbănescu and Ion Anghel, see Fig. 3). Because the double-walled palisades were difficult to build, they were suggested with textile
cloth dyed with vegetable colouring (Fig. 4). As for the rite of combustion, which was the most expensive of all the full scale experiments, this allegory was suggested by a textile coloured patchwork evoking the flames of the combustion (Fig. 5). To draw attention to the drama of this transformative rite of passage I employed the strong iconic metaphor of the human body (Preston Blier 1987:204), materialized in the shape of two huge characters, a male and a female, modeled by the sculptor Aurel Vlad. (Fig. 6). Their attitude suggested the fear and despair of humans confronted with natural disasters, this being a material metaphor evoking human emotions. The two anthropomorphic statues conferred on the allegory, and therefore also the original rites, human presence and stimulated imagination.

After installing the entire art composition in the landscape I followed its effect upon the group of experimentalists, artists and villagers who witnessed it. Some of the observers admitted they were moved by the message of the allegory and later perceived the site in a different way.

When analyzing the final work, one can observe it functioned as an instrument of evocation, and not of representation, because of the high degree of simplification of the forms, which were at the limit of iconicity. The allegory developed the imagination and allowed a series of solutions for interpretation of each of its elements. Metaphors allowed the materialization of the invisible cultural aspects, like the rites of passage, and permitted various solutions of interpretation. They also allow a phenomenological immersion in the artistic works, an experience which augments the reality of the authentic geomorphs or material culture remains. The problem of immersion in artificial reconstructions of reality is becoming an important issue in current archaeology. While some archaeologists propose an immersive simulation (see for example: Metamedia Lab* and a mediated agency in the virtual worlds, my proposal to experiment with material metaphors to develop an embodied imagination (Joy and Sherry 2003; Johnston 2011) represents a different approach. I believe the use of artistic metaphors could create an augmentation of reality through the generation of emotion (see Matravers 2001), which is a key element to understanding human behaviour (Kovach & De Lancey 2005), especially during rites of passage. My objective is to develop through various experiments the sensoriality (see Fahlander & Kjellström 2010) of the performer so as to be aware of the materiality and rituality of the past. It is my hope that this approach will expand the level of understanding of the material culture of the past.

Fig. 1. The river (Vadastra village 2002).

Fig. 2. The river as metaphor. A painted textile strip positioned in the paleovalley (Vadastra village 2006).
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Fig. 3. A suspended bridge across the river (Vadastra village 2005).

Fig. 4. A perimeter palisade suggested through a strip of textiles (Vadastra village 2006).
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Fig. 5. An allegory to suggest the burning down of a house (Vadastra village 2006).

Fig. 6. Two anthropomorphic clay figures in an attitude suggesting despair (Vadastra village 2007).
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References


Abstract  The art of early Anglo-Saxon cremation urns is rich, diverse and rarely explored beyond its presumed status as reflecting the earliest Germanic settlers in fifth-century eastern and southern England (Williams 2005a). We consider why and how decorated cinerary urns operated in funerals through their haptic and visual qualities. In particular, recurring overt and abstract depictions of eyes, as well as apertures in the urn body, suggest the cremated dead were perceived as being inherently sensing and ‘sighted’ even after their fiery transformation.

Introduction

Alluding in no small measure to Julian D. Richards’ (1987; 1992) ground-breaking investigation of the mortuary symbolism of early Anglo-Saxon urn form and decoration, Neil Price has recently noted what an ‘… extraordinary resource [Anglo-Saxon funerary urns] represent for the symbolic repertoire of early English mortuary behaviour’ (Price 2010a:xvi). This paper aims to build on this statement. Rather than seeking to decode urn decoration in the manner suggested by Richards, we explore the sensory agency of the art on cinerary urns in early Anglo-Saxon England. In doing so, the study draws upon recent debates that have foregrounded the active roles of imagery in constituting links with the supernatural and shared senses of past and present in Migration Period Europe (e.g. Behr 2010) and wider discussions of the material agency of art (Gell 1992; 1998). While this discussion has, to date, largely focused on metalwork, we argue that the decoration of cinerary urns held a commemorative significance in the mortuary arena by emphasising the pot as containing, protecting, storing and perhaps also ‘reanimating’ the dead. This was achieved through the selection of decorated vessels urns as containers for cremains. Inevitably, this paper cannot hope to explore the full decorative diversity found in the many thousands of cinerary urns recovered from cemeteries in southern and eastern England. Nor can we here explore all patterns linking motifs with the social identity of the urns’ occupants (but see
Richards 1987; see also Ravn 2003; Williams 2000). Nonetheless, we suggest that urn decoration was not simply (or indeed primarily) significant because of symbolic meanings assigned to individual motifs and their numerous combinations. Instead, urn art operated through the repeated selection of vessels with decoration that allowed a phenomenal potential for idiosyncratic design and expression. More specifically, we suggest that pot decoration, form, apertures and lids held a sensory agency to render them memorable and animated surfaces when handled, displayed and interred with cremains. This study suggests that decorated cinerary affected the senses of mourners, thereby constituting the selective remembrance of the dead.

Seeing through cremation

First, it is important to sketch a basic schema for interpreting early Anglo-Saxon cremation practice. Burning the dead during the fifth and sixth centuries in eastern England was a multi-staged funerary process. Cremation incorporated numerous multi-sensory performances, some of which leave traces in the archaeological record. Rituals involved a range of senses combined to make a memorable ritual transition for the living and the dead: movement, heat, sound, smell, tastes and touch. While each funeral might have varied considerably according to the social, economic and political identity of the deceased and survivors, in general terms the cremation burials we find in the archaeological record can be regarded as the result of corporeal transformations and memorable displays with a distinctive tempo, materiality and corporeality. These statements can be justified by the detailed osteological work of Jackie McKinley and Julie Bond investigating the cremation burials from Spong Hill (Norfolk) and Sancton (Humberside: Timby 1993; McKinley 1994; Bond 1996). Moreover, research by both authors has identified the importance of post-cremation rites as key stages of the funeral in which the cremains negotiated a distinctive corporeal identity through rituals of regeneration and ‘body-building’. In order to transform the cremains into a suitable ancestor and/or afterlife destination, post-cremation rituals regularly focused on collecting and enclosing a portion of the cremated bone within a cinerary urn, often with selected artefacts retrieved from the pyre. Sometimes artefacts were added following collection from the pyre: these were most commonly bronze or iron toilet implements and/or bone and antler combs. Such items share a connection with hair and the management of the body’s surface. They may have been placed with the cremains because they were inalienable from the deceased and to express loss and mourning by survivors, but perhaps also to rebuild a sense of the body’s surface lost during conflagration (e.g. Williams 2003; 2007). Moreover, the provision of an urn was key to the broader emphasis on containment and wrapping of the body found in both early Anglo-Saxon cremation and inhumation graves (Williams 2005b; Nugent 2011a). The re-building of the cremains was a crucial
stage in the selective remembrance of the deceased in which bonds were renegotiated between the living and the dead. Funerals were performances that impacted upon all the senses in order to honour and transform the dead and render them memorable to survivors. In particular, it is possible that cremation was a special use of fire that, rather than releasing or dispersing body and spirit, created and sustained a belief in the dead as sensing beings within the cremains and within the cemetery (Williams 2011).

A further important aspect of cremation ceremonies was the importance of animal sacrifice to provide both food placed on the pyre as well as whole animals to accompany the cadaver’s fiery transformation. Consequently, survivors were often retrieving both human and animal bones from the pyre, and it is possible that certain animals were more than investments of wealth, if intended to serve as guides or transport for the deceased. It is even possible that the early Anglo-Saxons regarded the dead as part-human and part-animal ancestors (Nugent 2010; 2011b; Williams 2001; 2005b). Hence the dead were composite persons, afforded a corporeality made up of multiple living agents – human and animal – and regarded as living on in, or being regenerated through, their material gathering from the pyre, inurnment and burial (Nugent 2011a).

We suggest the regeneration of the dead involved the creation of a sensing being from the cremains through specific sensory qualities, including sight. Animals interred with the dead as whole beasts (horses, cattle and dogs), might have provided the ‘eyes and ears’ for the dead following cremation, guiding them to the next world (Williams 2001; 2005c). Indirectly, the ‘body-building’ roles of combs and toilet implements might have also served to render the cremains corporeal and sensing. However, there are material clues to suggest that part of body-building cremains involved providing the dead with a new ocular, watchful presence.

Spectacle receptacles: the sensory topology of cinerary urns

In emphasising the importance of urns as encasing, reconstituting and regenerating the corporeal identity of the dead from their cremains, it is striking that in the large cremation cemeteries of eastern England, over 80% of vessels were decorated (Williams 2000:254). Once accessory vessels containing food and drink (and occasional cremated animal remains interred separately) are removed from consideration, an even higher proportion of decorated urns were used to contain the human cremated dead. Therefore, in ‘Anglian’ regions (East Yorkshire, the East Midlands and East Anglia), it was a conscious and habitual funerary choice to provide a decorated urn over an undecorated one.

Both Richards (1992) and Catherine Hills (1999) have noted that the grammar of early Anglo-Saxon cinerary urn decoration focused upon the upper surface. Moreover, when decorated, the motifs on urns commonly appear in registers, often
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with the same motif repeated sequentially around the shoulders/neck of the vessel. These registers acted to segregate or group specific motifs. Motifs lower down the body of the urn were also usually kept in tight formations, sometimes bounded within large chevrons reminiscent of metal vandykes from some contemporary buckets and drinking horns. Alternatively, decoration was divided vertically into columns. Either way, random scatterings of motifs are rare; indeed, there was generally a sense of order within the business of the overall designs, leading Richards (1987) to consider urn decoration as a symbolic grammar, communicating aspects of the deceased’s social identity, including status, age and gender.

Despite the incredible variability apparent in early Anglo-Saxon pot decoration, many urns had an encircling series of concentric decorative fields that could be seen best from above and in stark contrast to the conventions of archaeological illustration. Richards (1992) noted how designs showed similarities to contemporary annular brooches used in Anglian female costume. Hills (1999) made a crucial additional observation; that the motifs served to ‘frame’ the vessel-mouth, thus encircling cremains of animals and humans within. Hills remarked how this approach to urn art – and some of the individual motifs employed on urns – resembled concentric punch-marked surrounds on certain contemporary gold bracteates. Bracteate motifs encircled a central image of likely mythical and/or cosmological significance, including human forms with emphasised eyes and hair, riding on mythical beasts (Hills 1999:23-4; see also Behr 2010). Bracteate art has been regularly linked to an ideology of transformation embodying shamanistic themes, perhaps associated with an early stage in the cult of the Norse deity Odin (e.g. Hedeager 1999). While this theme is not universally accepted nor necessarily directly applicable to cinerary urn decoration (but see Williams 2001), Hills’ insight suggests that the decoration was apotropaic and active within the funerary context, framing and protecting the urns’ human and beastly occupants.

We can extend this line of argument further by moving beyond the similarity between bracteate art and urn decoration when viewed from a static position. Instead, what set urn decoration apart is that it was unlikely to have ever been experienced from a single vantage point. Instead, decoration and form operated together to create a distinctive, memorable haptic and visual micro-terrain for those making, using, handling and experiencing the vessel, including their use in funerary contexts.

Whether bespoke creations or selected from a range of pre-existing vessels, the multidimensional motifs stamped, incised or moulded onto urns created a tactile surface not only during creation but for anyone who handled them. Such decorative techniques created depth to the vessel surface; pits, ridges, striations, raised motifs that stand proud and, on occasion, deliberate holing. The urns’ fabric may also contribute to the visual and tactile quality of the vessel, whether gritty, grained, shiny, smooth or full of large inclusions. If considered from a perspective of embodied use, urns had a sensory surface rendering them visually and tactiley memorable to those
at the funeral. In other words, the ‘message’ of urn decoration cannot be decoded from a single viewpoint since it was not representational art at all and certainly not portraiture to honour the dead. Instead, it was intended to be experienced in order to be remembered through touch and sight.

The zoning of motifs may have been key to the mnemonics of urn decoration, enhancing the pot’s ‘sightways’. Sightways – visual and haptic paths created by lines and combinations of decoration – led the eyes and hands from register to register, around the circumference of the vessel. Indeed, examples of foot/hand prints, paw prints and/or hoof prints repeatedly stamped in a unidirectional procession around urns serve to highlight the way designs could deliberately lead the eye along a particular route (Fig. 1a). Even in designs without guiding motifs such as these, the eye is taken along pathways demarcated by horizontal lines or the linear repetition of a motif. This allows the viewer/handler to trace the original motion of the potter’s hand by following the sequence of stamps or incisions as they were impressed, one after the other. Thus the initial sense of being overwhelmed by the complexity and business of the design is brought under control as the viewer/handler’s eyes and hands are drawn along these sightways, which act to facilitate comprehension of the overall design and the piecemeal creation of this landscaped surface.

Sightways of the potter-artist are particularly noticeable in examples of misshapen, muddled or incomplete designs, which, for whatever reason, were not simply erased and re-started, but were fired, despite their poorly executed decoration (Fig. 1b). Asymmetrical designs such as these reveal the design sequence, with the ‘under-and-
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over’ effect of intermingling incisions and stamps or abrupt, squashed segments. Spoiled designs therefore reveal the animated quality of the vessel surface where the process of the designs’ creation and corruption can be traced. The sensory, temporary act of working with wet clay in these examples is allowed to be fossilised ‘warts-and-all’, leaving a trail of the potter’s original vision and the reality of its divergence; visual traces of things seen, imagined, remembered and corrected by the potter. We can see through the potter-artist’s eyes.

Some urns have direct evidence of repeated and deliberate touching as part of the urn decoration, created by fingernails or finger/thumb imprints. Other urns may have striations or sequences of pricking created by dragging or impressing the tines of combs (see below). The decoration operated as a mnemonic topology; the pits, bumps, ridges and incisions repeat like Braille beneath the fingertips. It may be noteworthy that the most common area of decoration is around the upper-body and shoulders. This represents the areas most likely gripped when using the vessel to store, carry or pour its contents, not simply the most visible areas when viewed from above. It could therefore be suggested that the location of designs may have also been pragmatic, aiding the grip of the person carrying, tipping or generally handling the vessel, whether as domestic ware or in its subsequent use as a cinerary urn.

The decorative schema may have been significant prior to the funeral if it was associated with the deceased in life, particularly if they themselves had created or purchased it. Alternatively, the dead person may have selected it specifically for their cremains prior to death. In both cases, the sight of the deceased, whether alive or dead, may have been a key component in selecting the urn. As the mourners retraced the mnemonic topology and the sightways of the vessel by viewing and handling the urn, they would have (re-)engaged with the ‘vision’ of the deceased, metaphorically seeing through the eyes and touching through the hands of the dead.

The choice of decoration was such a widespread tradition that it was inevitably an integral element of a funeral in this period; an expectation of funerary experience for mourners across eastern England, which may well reflect a shared sense of practice and ritual performativity. Conversely, and yet crucially, there was such a bewildering variety to the pots’ decoration that each vessel was almost-unique to each funeral, making its inclusion a specific statement linking mourners and the deceased. Where we differ from Richards (1987) is to suggest that this rested not so much on a pre-existing and discernible symbolic grammar, but upon an *ad hoc* contribution made by the urn’s biography, from its creation and history of use up to its eventual deposition, which made it a suitable commemorative medium. Therefore, tradition and individual expressions of social identity were integrated and mediated through the choice of decorated urns. It remains unclear, however, to what extent urns were attributed personalities and identities of their own via their production, use, exchange, display and deposition.
Eyes forward: urns as ocular corona

Other distinctively ocular qualities of urn decoration are also apparent, engaging both visual and haptic senses. Animal representations on urns (as argued for Style I animal art on late fifth and sixth-century metalwork) afforded the vessel and its cremains with ocular beings staring out at the viewer (see also Williams 2011). Moreover, combination and placement of motifs were sometimes arranged to create a sense of watching face-masks. It is also possible that many of the individual motifs, even where not arranged into discernible masks, were perceived as eye-like, providing cremains with an ocular corona.

Fig. 2. Cinerary urn from burial 2443 from Spong Hill, Norfolk with decoration including two animal stamps, each with prominent eyes. Redrawn by Howard Williams after Hills et al 1987:133.

From among the many thousands of recorded early Anglo-Saxon cinerary urns, there is only one fragmentary vessel with an unambiguous inscribed human face-mask, from Markshall, Norfolk, with a direct parallel from northern Germany (Myres & Green 1973:237, Plate LXX: Fig 10a). However, there are a range of other pots that, while lacking overt human representations, also convey an ocular presence.
The occasional depiction of animals is rare, found in only thirty-six examples from among the thousands of stamped urns known from eastern England (Briscoe’s type K3; Myres 1977a:50-1; figs. 358-9; Briscoe 1982:18; 1983:69; Eagles & Briscoe 1999). While some are simply the outline of the animals, the most common types, horses, have over-sized circular eyes (burial 2443, Hills et al 1987:133; burial 3114, Hills et al 1994:159: Fig. 2). Animals and wyrms, incised free-hand, with marked eyes also sometimes appear on urns, as with several examples from Lackford, Suffolk (Lethbridge 1951:30, 51).
Beasts with eyes are sometimes rendered in plastic decoration, such as the unique and enigmatic vessel from grave 67 within the cremation cemetery at Newark (Nottinghamshire) (Kinsley 1989:41, 118: Fig. 3). The pot is adorned with incised lines, stamps and hollow bosses in a variety of shapes. Two of the bosses represent four-limbed beasts, as if being viewed from above with their arms splayed out. Their muzzles and brow-ridges are distinguished and their eyes, noses and spine are marked out by stamps. One interpretation is that they represent bears’ pelts (Kinsley 1989:12) or else a ‘split representation’ (showing both sides of the beast at once), a form of representation known from some Style 1 animal art designs on metalwork (Kristoffersen 1995). These instances at least show that beasts with eyes were sometimes depicted on cinerary urns but also they provide a window into the possibility that more abstract decorative schemes might allude to human and beastly eyes.

Augmenting these instances of animal representation are zoomorphic bosses, discussed in detail by J. N. L. Myres. Sancton pot 2580 has sharp projecting bosses with beak-like heads and eyes marked out (Myres & Southern 1973:96-7; Myres 1977a:343, fig. 346; Fig 4a). Most famously, urn 285 from St John’s Cambridge has clear animal heads facing inwards towards the urn itself (Myres 1977a: fig. 243; 1977b: Fig 4b). In both instances, the beasts face the vessel, seemingly watching over its contents. Such designs were likely more common than these few surviving examples, since the tops of urns, where these fragile projections occur, are very susceptible to post-burial disturbance and truncation. For example, a vessel from cremation grave 201, Mucking II (Essex) presented three hollow spouts projecting upward from the upper-half of the vessel, interspersed with three solid necks. The solid necks likely had zoomorphic terminals but they have long been lost, presumably due to subsequent agricultural activity on the site (Hirst & Clark 2009:236).

Although these unambiguous instances of watching masks and beasts are rare, further instances of ocular designs hint at a wide spectrum of ‘watchful’ designs. Abstract inscribed, stamped and plastic motifs were sometimes combined to create watching faces, exemplified by urns from Thurcaston (Leicestershire; Myres 1977a:282; fig 250), Kingston-on-Soar (Leicestershire: Myres 1977a:343, fig. 346) and Castle Acre (Norfolk: Myres 1977a:215, fig. 155). An urn from grave 88 at Thurcaston has bosses seemingly incised with ‘fur’ created by lines projecting from a ‘spine’, as well as ‘eyes’ formed by pairs of stamps (Myres 1977a:247; fig. 200; P. Williams 1983:53: Fig. 5a). Owl-like faces between bosses appear on an urn from Loveden Hill (Lincolnshire: Myres 1977a:340; fig. 341: Fig. 5b); one of many face-masks created by arrangements of incisions, stamps and bosses (Fig 5c). Certainly, there are numerous urns employing bosses framed by standing arches and bossed arches which could suggest eyes with corresponding eyebrows. For example, urn 2306 from Spong Hill (Hills et al 1987:34, 95) has round bosses covered by arched bosses, interspersed with vertical feathered bosses. Returning to the urn from Newark grave 67 (Fig. 3), either side of the beasts
are bosses framed by standing arches, giving this very impression of ocularity. Two further arches cover four oval bosses in one instance and around six oval and five circular bosses in another. These arrangements represent eyes in a naturalistic way, but perhaps the aim was to create a corona of eye-like protuberances framing the urn.


Fig. 6. Cinerary urn from burial 2211 from Spong Hill, Norfolk. Redrawn by Howard Williams after Hills & Penn 1981:204.
It is difficult to unambiguously confirm these and others like them as examples of zoomorphic or anthropomorphic representations. Nevertheless, like so much early Anglo-Saxon art, we may be dealing with overt uses of ambiguity through non-naturalistic representation (see Dickinson 2002) and what applies to much of the ‘zoomorphic art’ adorning metalwork also applies to urn decoration. While urns with these purported ocular qualities always constitute a minority of the vessels found at any one site, they are not uncommon. Therefore, we might even speculate one step further to consider whether the majority of inscribed, stamped and plastic circles and ovals were part of the ocular emphasis of urn decoration. When faced with an urn such as 2211 from Spong Hill (Hills & Penn 1981:204, fig 118: Fig. 6), perhaps the overall designs of many decorated urns were created to give the sense of many eyes enwrapping the vessel and looking out in all directions. Just as a pot can be viewed from many standpoints, so the pot and its contents could view its environment from many angles as well. In this respect, sight could be exchanged between the viewer and the urned dead by human, beastly and monstrous sets of eyes.

Ocular citations: combs and pots

Pots were not alone in their ocular agency within early Anglo-Saxon cremation graves. As argued by Andy Jones for Bronze Age Scotland, urns might become memorable by citing other categories of material culture placed with the dead through shared decorative motifs and schema (Jones 2001). Eye-like decoration adorned many of the other items burnt with the dead as well as items included unburnt. For example, a significant minority of cinerary urns in many cemeteries in eastern England included fragments of bone and antler combs, often showing no signs of burning and some showing evidence of deliberate fragmentation prior to burial. These were not merely items of personal adornment that signified social identity in death but mnemonic catalysts, which facilitated remembering, forgetting and transformation (Williams 2003; 2007; see also Gansum 2003). Not only did urns and antler combs follow a parallel trajectory in their circulation and deployment in the early Anglo-Saxon cremation rite, but cited each other in three ways.

First, combs were used to make the incised decoration upon pots: pots were sometimes ‘combed’ to make their decoration just as heads and beards were during daily life. Therefore, pot-decorating and handling the pot at the funeral may have involved haptic engagements with the vessel comparable to grooming the body in life and the cadaver at the funeral. Placing comb-fragments in urns may have signified these acts of care and reconstituted the body in death. Second, urn motifs sometimes resembled combs, with standing arches and chevron arrangements reflecting the round-backed and triangular comb-forms placed in cinerary vessels. Third, some combs – barred zoomorphic varieties – were adorned with inward-facing animal
heads (not unlike the inward-facing bosses on the St John’s Cambridge urn mentioned above) and hence were ocular artefacts in their own right (Hills 1981). Significantly, the eyes of the animal heads upon barred zoomorphic combs were marked out by ring-and-dot motifs. Indeed, most early Anglo-Saxon antler combs, both single-sided and double-sided forms, were decorated with striking arrangements of ring-and-dot decoration that afforded them with similar ocular presence to the abstract circular motifs found on urns. Therefore, even when distinctive heads were absent, combs had ‘eyes’ similar to many stamp-decorated cinerary urns (Fig. 7).

Fig. 7. Double-sided antler comb (unburnt), fragment of a curved bone tube (burnt) and cinerary urn, all bearing ring-and-dot motifs, from cremation burial 1254 Alwalton, Cambridgeshire. Redrawn by Howard Williams after Gibson 2007:319.
Hence, pots and combs were not only placed together in cremation graves, they cited each other through their decoration. Like the cinerary urn itself, combs constituted the absent hair and flesh of the deceased and hence articulated and materialised the regeneration and embodiment of the deceased within the grave (Williams 2003; see also Williams 2007). Yet perhaps both pots and combs were not simply concerned with body-building. Through their connected decoration, they both may have contributed to the ocular agency of the cremated dead.

Opening and closing eyes: vessel holes and plugs

Moving beyond stamped and incised decoration, we now turn to deliberate perforation of the urn body as suggestive of ‘watching’ portals for the cremated dead. Deliberate post-firing holes have been observed in the bases and lower walls of 10% of urns from cremation graves (Richards 1987:154: Fig. 8a). In one case from the Newark cemetery, nine holes were made by two different implements, eight seemingly from the outside and one from the inside (Kinsley 1989:35). Gareth Perry has recently argued that pots were holed prior to their funerary use in order to separate liquid from solid matter held within the vessels, most likely during the production of beer or butter (Perry 2012a & b). Combined with use alteration evidence, it appears that some early Anglo-Saxon decorative vessels were used in production and storage rather than cooking and consumption. This interpretation contrasts starkly with the previous consensus that holed urns were a ritual act taking place during the funeral (e.g. Leahy 2007a:82; Richards 1987:77; Timby 1993:274-75; Williams 2005c) but there remains the possibility that the holes were created in both domestic and mortuary contexts.

Some holes were repaired with lead plugs and we are again faced with the question as to whether they repaired damage during the firing process, damage during use, or to fill holes created during the funerary ritual (e.g. Leahy 2007a:82: Fig. 8b). Perry (2012a) regards these as repairs to enable their reuse as cinerary urns and speculates that other holed urns may have been repaired with plugs made of organic materials which have not survived. Whether motivated by practical concerns to extend the use-life of the vessel, or to provide a container for the dead, it is evident that certain vessels were valued enough for them to be used to contain the cremated dead following repair.

For the purpose of this study, it is enough to note that, in addition to the mouth of the urn, other apertures were sometimes present, perhaps both open and sealed, among the urns chosen for use as cinerary urns. Creating holes in urns resonated with the act of decorating urns with ocular motifs, suggesting apertures through which the dead could see, hear and/or travel. Conversely, the plugging of holes matched the superficially-paradoxical practice of including items of hair management in cinerary urns; creating a sealed container for the cremains and a metaphorical ‘body’ or ‘skin’
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following cremation. While Perry’s prosaic interpretation is persuasive, we argue that vessel-holes and plugs were means by which the sensory presence of the dead could be either enhanced or curtailed during the funeral.

Eye lids
Cinerary urns could be covered with stones, flints and, at some burial sites, reused Roman tiles. Only a minority of cinerary urns appear to have received pottery lids and many cremation cemeteries have failed to produce any conclusive traces of lids. Perhaps urns often had wood, leather or textile covers (McKinley 1994:103). At Springfield Lyons (Essex), urn 6935 contained little soil from the time of burial, indicating it had received an organic covering, which would explain the subsequent collapse of the urn neck into the vessel itself which would otherwise have been full of back-filled earth (Tyler & Major 2005:44). Surviving ceramic lids from Spong Hill were decorated with comparable decorative schemes to their respective urns in their abstract and concentric character. From above, the lids continued the ocular theme, providing concentric circles which merged with those on the pot-walls, thus echoing the sightways on the urn body. Indeed, some had a single stamp at their centre, giving a striking ocular effect, as seen with pots 2483, 2531 and 2586 from Spong Hill (Hills et al 1987:131-2: Fig. 9). A unique instance of animal representation on a now-lost lid of a cinerary urn from the Newark cemetery extends this insight (Kinsley 1989:179; Milner 1853; Myres 1977a:67: Figure 286; Fig. 10b). The nineteenth-century
illustration of the urn shows two birds perched upon it, facing the same direction. Given the likelihood that urn-lids were only sometimes ceramic and might have been made of other materials, birds and beasts may have been more frequently placed atop cinerary urns, watching and perhaps protecting the urns’ contents, comparable to the boar and dragon crests of later helms (e.g. Meadows 2004).

A similar argument can be applied to the unique urn-lid known as the Spong Hill ‘chairperson’ (Fig. 10c). This clay urn-lid was surmounted by a three-dimensional model of a seated human figure, with over-long arms, and hands holding the sides of the head (Hills 1980; Hills et al 1987:80; 162). The figurine is 14.5cm in height and hollow inside (Hills 1980). Found within the early Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Spong Hill, the chairperson was made of comparable material to urns at this site and has been confirmed as early medieval by thermoluminescence dating. Despite the human appearance of the chairperson, there is a range of interpretations as to who or what this individual represents. Whatever its character, it remains a hitherto unique expression of a three-dimensional clay body from an early Anglo-Saxon funerary context. It is also highly possible that other examples may have been produced in perishable materials, particularly wood, and in that respect the chairperson may be the sole surviving example of a more commonly produced icon. The position of the hands might be regarded as drawing attention to the figure as both watching and listening. If we make the speculation that the Newark and Spong Hill lids are exceptional in their survival and are traces of a far wider commemorative practice
Fig. 10. A (top left): The human face-mask with moustache from a cinerary urn found at Markshall, Norfolk. Redrawn by Howard Williams after Myres & Green 1973:237, Plate LXX. B (top right) Cinerary urn and lid with two birds, from Newark, Nottinghamshire. Reproduced after Milner 1853. Not to scale. C (bottom): The Spong Hill ‘chairperson’ pot-lid 3324. Redrawn by Howard Williams after Hills et al 1987:162.
by which beasts and human figures attentively watched over graves, then we have a further way in which cremation burials possessed an ocular agency. It must be reiterated at this juncture that we have no further knowledge as to how urns may have been decorated beyond their surviving incisions, stamps and mouldings or for how long urns may have been kept above ground prior to burial (see Nugent 2011a for fuller discussion of this issue). If such figures were more common, they may have been used to protect the contents of vessels during daily use and to subsequently protect the cremains of the dead. Those attending the funeral would have witnessed their burial and the surmounting of graves with watching and listening beastly and humanoid presences may have further enhanced the animated presence of the cremated dead in the cemetery and the wider inhabited landscape.

Conclusion

Early Anglo-Saxon pottery has been discussed with regard to chronology, migration and economy. More recently the symbolism of form and decoration has been investigated by correlating motifs and dimensions with the social identity of those interred (Richards 1987; 1992; Hills 1999; Williams 2000; 2005b; Ravn 2003). Less attention has been paid to why decorated urns were chosen to accompany the cremated dead, although Gareth Perry’s on-going work is revealing the relationships between pottery use in settlement and mortuary contexts. Inspired by the arguments of Richards (1992) and Hills (1999), Williams (2005b) argued that the decoration created a framing, protecting and animated (and indeed animating) surface for the cinerary urns as part of the ritual process of transforming and commemorating the dead. Yet, as the quote by Neil Price at the opening of this study makes clear, there remains potential for further consideration of how art was deployed on cinerary urns to commemorate the dead.

This paper has proposed a specific set of connected arguments exploring how urns and their lids may have transmitted a sense of the cremated dead as memorable and perhaps also sentient and sighted, within their graves. Urn decoration, its haptic and ocular designs and motifs, and the treatment of apertures and lids were all aspects of an effective and variable commemorative medium used to store, inter and commemorate the cremated dead. The likely survival of pottery in the archaeological record, particularly in comparison with organic materials, may lead one to view cremation urns as selected for interment because of their robusticity and longevity in the ground. Yet it must be remembered that urns were capable of leaking and breaking as well as sealing and containing, and therefore were inherently imbued with a fragility and temporariness as bodies. The fluidity of movement and animation attributed to the cremated dead in this paper may have been enhanced by apertures and the fragility of the vessels themselves, allowing the conceptualised dead to flow and interface
with neighbouring graves and the living (Nugent 2011a). As such, urns not only constituted and sustained a sense of corporeality for cremains by simply sealing them in, but provided the dead with an animated, sighted presence capable of permeating their surroundings literally through breaking their boundaries, leaking through their ceramic membrane and metaphorically ‘watching’ through apertures and ocular motifs. Thus urns with such sighted surfaces emphasised the latent animated presence of the dead waiting within, who might have been thought to be watching over the living, learning and remembering, seeing and sensing. Thus myriad connections between the dead and the living may have been evoked by ocular motifs and urn-body apertures as sensory presences were created within and through cremains.

There is now diverse literature exploring the visual riddles and ambiguities of early Anglo-Saxon animal art (e.g. Behr 2010; Dickinson 2002; 2005; Leigh 1984; Gaimster 2011; Fern 2010; Pluskowski 2010) which have explored the protective roles of animals on dress accessories, weapons, armour and horse equipment, and its evocation of pre-Christian mythological themes. Yet further artefact categories, namely ceramics and combs, also appear to have been adorned with humanoid or monstrous eyes, staring out at the viewer. Indeed, circular punches are placed on a far wider range of artefacts than simply metalwork, and while purely abstract, might possibly evoke eyes. From pots to combs, buckets to weaponry, making artefacts ‘see’ was achieved by impressing and punching circular and lentoid shapes onto them. The challenge for considering the ocular qualities of abstract art is therefore not so much reading meaning into the art and the particular beasts and humanoid figures depicted. Instead, we must recognise the eye-catching and animated qualities of artefacts so decorated and the relationship between this art found on many different types of artefact and the commemorative contexts in which it was deployed. These are the qualities of the artefacts that may have made them efficacious singly, and in combination, when assembled during mortuary theatrics and deposition (see Williams 2011).

If early Anglo-Saxon urn decoration shares, at least in part, this theme, then its ocular emphasis – providing visual riddles and emphasising the eyes of those depicted – might be connected elements of a common cultural logic, one with origins that might even pre-date the adoption of animal art in early Anglo-Saxon England. Like the designs upon metalwork, urn decoration challenges the viewer to truly ‘see’, and asserts claims to the art’s wearer or wielder of seeing what cannot be seen. In a pre-Christian worldview, this art might have been a passport to supernatural realms during communal rituals involving the commemoration of the dead and sharing pasts. The use of the ocular art in the funerary context may have aligned with particular myths, memories and identities embodied within the art, and perhaps facilitating particular types of ritual performance involving visions of the past and the future (see Price 2010b).
This offers a new perspective upon the role of pottery as containers for the dead in past societies. Here, it is not simply a question of regarding pottery’s ability to contain, but viewing them as stores of potentially active, sensory material, with apertures opened and closed to choreograph access to the dead. Understanding early Anglo-Saxon pottery in relation to the sensory experiences it invokes, exemplified by the theme of ocularity discussed here, and its use to carry, inter and store cremains, challenges us to move beyond both utilitarian and symbolic perspectives. This involves considering cinerary urns not as mere metaphors for the body, but as distinctive instances where pots could become enchained to, and constitutive of, bodies that were growing and unfolding following the fiery transformation of cremation. In this capacity cinerary urns were more than an enduring container. Rather their decoration, perforation and fragility facilitated their used as sighted surfaces, by which the cremated dead could watch over the living and perhaps see into worlds beyond.

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References


Encountering Imagery


Selected for the Dead

Erotic Themes on Grave Vases from Attic Cemeteries

Anthi Dipla & Dimitris Paleothodoros

Abstract Erotic images in Attic pottery are usually studied as part of the iconographic repertory of vase-painters. This paper proposes a different approach. We choose to examine a number of specific tomb contexts containing, among other grave goods, vases bearing erotic images. We argue that in the context of burials, erotic imagery served as media for propagating contemporary views about the roles and interactions of the social sexes. In addition, erotic images are thought to convey the presumed activities, expectations or fantasies the living may have had, or wished, for the dead.

Introduction

This paper explores the choice of “erotic” scenes for a specific use (burial), based on evidence from vases discovered in closed archaeological contexts, namely graves of fifth century B.C. cemeteries in Athens. It forms part of a broader joint study which aims to systematically analyze erotic themes on some black- and red-figure vases or incised mirrors, all included as gifts in graves from cemeteries in Attica, as well as elsewhere in Greece (Corinth, Boeotia, Samothrace, Rhodes).

As a point of departure, we have chosen to limit our study to fifteen cases found in well published archaeological reports of finds from Attic cemeteries. Our list includes cases from the Kerameikos and Syntagma Square cemeteries in Athens, as well as from Eleusis’ Western Cemetery, plus a limited number of isolated tombs which have been published with a reasonable degree of accuracy. In order to systematically analyse the material, a number of criteria are of interest. Where possible, we include information of age and sex of the dead, which is considered essential to the expansion of this study. Further, the nature of other grave gifts associated with a particular burial, vase shapes, objects associated with explicitly male or female activities, such as strigils or mirrors respectively, and, especially, the iconography of other vases included (but see Kavvadias & Lagia 2009) may provide additional clues. As far as age is concerned, the small size of a burial pit and the use of a larnax may understandably point to a
child rather than an adult burial. Tomb contexts lacking any significant detail that would probably provide a clue for the identity of the deceased have been excluded.

Our approach is to some extent original, given that that the vases in question are of known provenance and function. Most studies dealing with erotic images in the Athenian iconographic repertory take it for granted that the clients responded to this imagery in a way quite close to the expectations of those who decorated the pots (i.e. Kilmer 1992; Lear & Cantarella 2008; Sutton 2009). Thus, the creation of corpora and sub-corpora of iconographic themes (that is, heterosexual courting, homosexual courting, heterosexual intercourse, rape, abduction) is considered the most appropriate way to examine erotic images. Exceptions are rare (i.e. Lynch 2009, who deals with erotic images on vases found in domestic contexts and Paleothodoros 2012, for erotic vases found in female tombs). This is a legitimate approach inasmuch as we focus upon the producer of images. Of course, it is taken for granted that the decorators of vases responded to the needs of their clientele.

Our approach opens a window to the real choices of specific clients, namely the people among the close relatives of the dead, who made the selection of objects to be put in the tomb (Paleothodoros 2012:23). We take it for granted that the choice is not void of meaning, but is dictated by a whole set of factors and relations, including religious obligations, ideology, gender and class roles. It might be objected that the availability of vases and the importance of shapes play a more determining role, than the preferences of those responsible for the burial. This might be true for distant areas, but not for Athens and Attica, because most of the pottery workshops producing painted pots were located in the heart of the city. Thus, it is obvious that the families of the dead were able to purchase whatever they wanted easily and quickly.

Although there are evidently some types of commissioned vases, such as the panathenaic amphorae, we can only but rarely detect vases made to an individual patron’s order for some special occasion (see in general Webster 1972). A modern school of iconographic analysis though attempts to draw attention away from the – so far dominant and exclusive – factor of producers and their background towards an exploration of the clients’ choices. Although we can rarely verify patrons or intended audience for Greek vases, we may nevertheless be able to specify choices of “clients”, based on particular themes recurring in certain contexts (for specific patronage of Geometric grave markers in Athens, see Dipla 2012:14). Whether addressing a foreign or a local market, images on Athenian vases reflect, at least to a certain degree, the Athenian ideology of gender roles. Another possibility to be taken into account is that of multiple or unintended viewers, providing a subjective reading, deviating from the meaning originally given by the vase-painter to the image.

The term “erotic themes” denotes, apart from representations of actual sexual intercourse, scenes of courting, or of sexual pursuit, which all may act as a prelude to sexual intercourse proper. In addition, we have chosen to include in this broad analytic
category, vases which depict mythological episodes with clear erotic overtones (see Paleothodoros 2012:23-24).

The mild “pursuit” of a lover; courtship scenes

On an *alabastron* from a grave in the Kerameikos cemetery (Kerameikos Museum 2713, Knigge 1964: pl. 59; Beazley 1971: 331 and 523; Knigge 1976: no. 20.23, tomb HW 198, pl. 19; Badinou 2003: pl. 80, no. A136; Stambolidis ed. 2009: no. 168.) [Table 1, no. 1] we find a scene of a man approaching a woman on the obverse, offering her a hare (a notorious love gift on Greek vases: Koch-Harnack 1983: 63-87; Schnapp 1997: 247-257 and 417-424), and a couple holding and caressing each other on the reverse. [Figs 1-3]. We argue below that such scenes of courting can apply to both prostitutes (*hetaerae*) and respectable women, Athenian brides and wives, in some cases, who act on the model of *hetaerae*. On the other hand, the woman seated and spinning, as she appears on the reverse, is usually considered as the very symbol of the virtuous housewife (that is, Keuls 1983; Williams 1983: 94-95; Lewis 2002: 62-65). The *alabastron* bears three inscriptions: between the youth holding the hare on the obverse and the spinner, we read either ΚΑΛΩΣ ΕΙΜΙ («I am good looking») or ΘΑΛΩΣ ΕΙΜΙ («I belong to Thallô»). Next to the spinner, we read ΗΕ ΠΑΙΣ ΚΑΛΕ («the girl is beautiful»), while atop the neck appears the potter’s signature: ΑΤΙΤΑΣ ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ (»Atitas Made [me] »).
Alabastra often bear courting scenes, both homosexual and heterosexual (See for example, Badinou 2003: nos A 79, A114, A 117, A 118, A 125, A 126, A127, A132, A140, A261, A286), or even scenes that might be classed as “visits to a brothel” (that is, Badinou 2003: nos A 253, A 256). Sometimes alabastra are offered as presents in such or similar scenes (that is, Badinou 2003: A 255, A256; see further ibid: 65-72 and pls 136, 138, 139, 143, 145; see also Dipla 2006:30). On the Kerameikos alabastron, we encounter a scene of mild pursuit of a lover, as opposed to wild pursuit: abduction/pursuit or sex. Other figured vases placed in the tomb bear Dionysiac and mythical scenes, such as the duel of Achilles and Penthesilea, which may have an erotic meaning as well (Knigge 1976: no. 20.9, pl. 19. See in general Berger 1992: 304-305 and nos 8-51, esp. nos 17 and 34).

According to the osteological analysis, the tomb belonged to a girl of 12 to 14 years old. It is inconceivable that this person was a prostitute, as it was argued in the first publication of the tomb-context, on the sole evidence of the iconography of the alabastron (Knigge 1964:108-109). It is more probable that she was an unmarried girl of free citizen status, who was given this vase as a compensation for the pleasures of love and marriage that she would never enjoy in life.
In a similar scene on a red-figured lekythos from Kerameikos (Kunze-Göttel, Tancke & Vierneisel 1999: no. 278.8, tomb S27, pl. 53) [Table 1, no. 2] the man offers the woman a pouch, i.e. money, which she seems not to accept (Fig. 4). Men offer pouches to women on several heterosexual scenes of courtship. It is usually considered that the woman is offered money for sex (i.e. van Reden 1995:197-211; for men with pouches, in erotic, as well as commercial settings, see Meyer 1988). However, in some disconcerting variants of the motif, as for instance a cup in San Antonio Museum (Shapiro et al. 1995:172-173, no. 37) the active role in purse-offering is reserved to the woman, while in other cases (most notably on the alabastron once Berlin 2554: Beazley 1963:553, no. 123; Ferrari 2002: figs. 3-4), the woman is represented as a respectable housewife, spinning. Spinning women offered pouches have also been identified as *hetaerae*, although scholars are obliged to assume that they mimic respectable women, in order to create to their clients the illusion that they mate with free women (Rodewalt 1932; Rosenweig 2004:68-71; Wrenhaven 2009. For a critical discussion of the concept of the “spinning prostitute”, see Paleothodoros 2012:27, with further references. Dipla proposes a different explanation, as discussed below). Such a reading is not supported by the literary evidence on prostitution in ancient Athens, and should be rejected. Thus, it appears that at least in some cases, the pouch need not denote a commercial transaction, but might also serve as a symbol of the power of money in human relations, or as a sort of economic phallus that signifies the power of man to dominate the woman, irrespective of her real social status (Keuls 1983:229; Keuls 1985:264). Other scholars point out that the painters seek to denote the unity of the household, with the man bringing in the money, as his wife produces clothing (Brundrick 2008:300-301).

On the other side of the lekythos, a similar (or the same) man offers the woman a flower (Fig. 5), which she is ready to accept. The aforementioned scenes have been chosen to accompany a dead person. The tomb was well furnished with painted vases, among which two black-figured *alabastra*. The presence of painted *alabastra* is an indication that the dead was of female sex, since this type of decorated pot is always associated with women and the female world (Badinou 2003: *passim*, and 51 and n. 6 for references on the rare cases where stone *alabastra* appear in male tombs). Subjects on the painted vases include the Judgment of Paris and, most interestingly, Peleus struggling with Thetis (see below).

If the woman offered a pouch can be identified as a *betaerae* and she accepts the offer of the customer, she may participate in a banquet held by men in the *andron* of their own house, where they may play the *aulos* or the lyre sitting on the client’s dining couch, as for example in two scenes from child burials (male?) in the Kerameikos (Tomb HTR66: Kunze-Göttel, Tancke & Vierneisel 1999: no.29.2 pl. 11 2; Tomb HW 213: Knigge 1976, no. 181.1, pl. 35 2, respectively), or lie with them naked and prepare for sex. The *andron* is an exclusively male space, the public room of the *oikos*, a
point of intersection between the domestic interior and the civic exterior. The private banquet known as *symposion* is set in the *oikos*, but does not belong to it; it actually brings the brothel into the house, holding nonproductive, liberal sexual pleasures, without violating the productive sexuality of the housewife and other respectable women of the *oikos* (Corner 2009: esp. 61-67, 78-79).

On the tondo of a red-figure cup from a Kerameikos tomb (Brandgrab in LZBA: Kunze-Götte, Tancke & Vierneisel 1999: no. 443.4, pl. 78) [Table 1, no. 3], a man and a woman recline on a banquet couch half-naked, clad only in *himation*, the woman also in some sort of bra (Fig. 6). They look intensely at each other’s eyes, like the couple on the aforementioned alabastron. The vase comes from a tomb quite rich in vases, several painted. The inclusion of three pyxides, one painted, probably with a nuptial scene, might point to a female burial.

In these *symposia*, men consume wine, as well as women. *Hetaerae* are shared equally among men, under the rule of equality and freedom that they enjoyed in the community. Scenes of lovemaking are almost exclusively restricted on drinking vessels, intended for personal viewing during *kommos* and *symposion* (Sutton 2009:84-85; also Corner 2009:70-71). Conversely, some brothels strived to emulate a sympotic atmosphere (see also below). There is a profound preference for anal sex (or even torture on Late Archaic vases), which may be explained from a wish or fantasy about completely dominating the female sexual partner (Stewart 1997:157-165; Stambolidis ed. 2009:207-220; Sutton 2009:79).

![Fig. 6. Athens, Kerameikos Museum 3990, red-figured cup. After Kunze-Götte, Tancke & Vierneisel 1999, pl. 75. The Wild “Pursuit” of a Lover; Peleus’ Struggle with Thetis.](image)
As was noted above, the lekythos of women (hetaerae?) approached by men (prospective customers?) in the Kerameikos cemetery (Table 1, no. 2), was chosen to accompany as a gift the same grave with a black-figured alabastron bearing a scene of Peleus struggling with Thetis (Kunze-Görte, Tancke & Vierneisel 1999, no. 278.9, tomb S27, pls. 53-54). Scenes of struggle and/or pursuit appear on other painted alabastra, as well (Badinou 2003: nos A 16, A333, A 38, cf. also the celebrated epinetron E55, where the struggle is combined with nuptial scenes).

According to the myth, Peleus pursues the Nereid Thetis who refuses to marry him, and he has to grab hold of her and not let her go despite her various metamorphoses into various beasts, such as a snake, a tiger, a lion etc, or natural elements, such as fire, in her struggle to escape (marriage). Here (Figs 7-8), Peleus has grabbed and holds firmly Thetis who metamorphoses in her struggle to escape, symbolically alluded to by two leaping lions either side of the couple, in the presence of Cheiron -on whose advice Peleus managed to subdue Thetis- who bears two lit torches, as in wedding procession scenes (see in general Vollkommer 1992: esp. nos 78-190, 194,195; on torches in the wedding ceremony, see Oakley & Sinos 1993: 26).

Apart from the possibly female burial just discussed, Peleus’ struggle with Thetis is to be found in another tomb in Kerameikos (Table 1, no. 6), which also contained a pyxis showing women spinning, as well as a bronze mirror (Tomb HTR 38II: Kunze-Görte, Tancke & Vierneisel 1999:66-67, pl. 39-41, no. 242), and thus was probably the tomb of a woman. One of the three feet of another black-figured pyxis in this burial (Kunze-Görte, Tancke & Vierneisel 1999: no. 242.8, pl. 40) bore a typical
scene of Peleus struggling with Thetis, here adopting the disguise of fire (flames over her left arm) and a snake coiling around Peleus and biting him on his back, among two fleeing Nereids (Fig. 9).

The abduction/pursuit as a form of wild marriage; hunting and domesticating a “bestial” woman

The struggle forms part of a series of “rape” scenes in Athenian vase painting of the late sixth and the fifth century BC, such as the extremely popular scenes of Theseus or mere ephebes pursuing women with the intention to “rape” them, as well as scenes of gods pursuing or abducting mortal men and women (Käempf-Dimitriadou 1979; Sourvinou-Inwood 1987; Neils 1994: section XII, esp. nos 286-287, 289-290; Cohen 1996; Stewart 1997:168-171; Dipla 2009). These may have served as an alternative representation of wedding and may have expressed prevalent social notions about how erotic/marital union should be.

In the struggle form the episode becomes one of the most frequently depicted in Late Archaic and Early Classical vase-painting. This lies in absolute contrast to the literary record, where the actual wedding is celebrated with emphasis throughout (Vollkommer 1992:268-269). It seems that artisans and poets focus on different aspects of the same theme (wedding). The struggle verbalizes what marriage is all about: subduing the potentially dangerous wild nature of the woman so that the ideal bride can emerge. Iconographically, the struggle stands between abduction and pursuit: the pursuer has taken hold of the pursued that however dynamically resists. Thetis’ resistance actually pulls struggle and pursuit themes close together. A comparison of the proportion of pursuit to abduction in all mythological rape scenes of the same period reveals a marked preference for pursuit, which emphasizes the feature of the woman’s resistance to “rape”.

Apart from myth, iconography and ritual bear good evidence that abduction was considered as a form of wild marriage. It represented a gamos in its basic form, a sexual union. Abduction scenes often share nuptial iconography and, conversely, abduction iconographic elements invade wedding imagery. Such are the motifs of cheir-epi-karpo and of lifting the bride onto the chariot, which form such a substantial part of representations of the Athenian wedding. Furthermore, we know that the wedding ritual involved abduction in some places and it is possible that these motifs are both relics of an actual mock-abduction ritual. (Oakley & Sinos 1993:42; Sourvinou-Inwood, 1987:140-141). Abduction (and mock-abduction) symbolizes, as an act of violence, the expected roles of man-woman: control, or rather renewed control from father to husband, through the transfer of κυριεία rights from the father, the woman’s original κύριος, to the husband (Harrison 1968:30-32) and submission (Oakley & Sinos 1993:131-132).
Pursuit scenes follow the hunting iconographic scheme: the pursuer is presented as a hunter and the pursued as his quarry (Lissarrague 1991-2:234; Sourvinou-Inwood 1987:138). Persistently in Greek literature, from Archaic down to Hellenistic times, women are portrayed as part of wild nature, emotionally unstable, prone to extremes and so in need of control (Carson 1990:138-139, 142, 156, 160). The pursuit thus visualizes the notion of female animality. Women are, “bestial” and they can only be assimilated into civil life through marriage (Carson 1990:143-144, 151-153, 163; Oakley & Sinos 1990:11-12; Gould 1980: 53). The same notions of wild union, resistance and final defeat of wild nature, appear even more outspoken in the struggle. A clue that the struggle may have been considered as a wild form of erotic pursuit is its combination on the same vase with a generic ephebe pursuit (Athens, NM 215301: Beazley 1963: 1155.1), or with two scenes of heterosexual and paederastic courtship on a cup by Peithinos (Berlin, Staatl. Mus. 2279: Beazley 1963:115.2; Stewart 1997: figs 95-97), which is pursuit in its civilized version, as noted above.

Possible scenes of Peleus' struggle with Thetis; between mythical and generic
The motif of Peleus struggle with Thetis, or of an abduction which bears close resemblances to it, but without specific attributes (wild animals etc. into which Thetis transforms herself, dolphins held by the companions) appears on several vases from Athenian tomb contexts. Interestingly, in many cases, the subject appears on vases found in child burials, both female and male, inasmuch as we can presume the sex in most cases from other finds and/or their iconography.

Inside the jar containing the infant burial 10, recently excavated at the cemetery of Mornou street, at Avliza, in the ancient district of Acharnai (Table 1, no. 7), there was found among other painted vases, a black-figured lekythos with a scene of Peleus struggling with Thetis (Platonos 2003-2004: 423-425). Thetis holds a wreath that
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may evoke nuptial imagery in her left hand (Reilly 1989:424-426) and metamorphoses into a lion, attacking Peleus from behind. Two fleeing Nereids complete the composition. Notice the branches with leaves on the background, apparently alluding to the wilderness of the landscape. Other objects found in the tomb include a *pyxis*, which along with the iconography of the painted vases (women in Dionysiac context) denote that the child was probably of female sex.

More undiagnostic is the iconography of the vases found in a child burial from the Kerameikos cemetery (Table 1, no. 8), which was furnished with two black-figure lekythoi, one of which with a scene possibly of Thetis by Peleus, though with no specific attributes (Knigge 1976, no. 68.7, tomb SW 93, pl. 38). It was painted by the Haimon Group, as several other examples from the Kerameikos and Eleusis cemeteries (Table 1, nos 8-11) all employing the same iconographic formula: the abductor, probably Peleus, bends forward, almost in a wrestling pose, and grabs firmly rather than lifting away Thetis (?), though neither she nor her fleeing companions bear any attributes directly related to the struggle (Figure 10). The same branches as on the Acharnai lekythos, with white fruit (or once also trees, Table 1, no. 10) spread in the background. The iconographic scheme applied in these scenes is unmistakably that of the struggle, though not specifically identified (although so done by modern scholars, i.e. Beazley 1956: 550, nos. 319-328). As in *ephebe* pursuits, where the mythical archetype of Theseus abducting - most probably - Helen provably degenerated at some point beyond certain recognition and ultimately into a generic scene, likewise here the original mythological narrative seems to have faded into more or less generic representations. This process must be attributed, in both these cases, to their paradigmatic value for gender roles, as outlined above. They represented such popular perceptions about the union of (young) men and women that the generic personae seen behind the mythological ones eventually came to the foreground, probably without erasing the original mythological context. Sourvinou-Inwood (1987:136) is probably right in noting: “the difference between fully mythological scenes and generic ones is a matter of emphasis towards the mythological paradigm or towards the generic youth”.

It is not possible to define the sex of an infant buried in Kerameikos from the burial gifts (Table 1, no. 9). The most notable find is a black-figured lekythos bearing a comparable scene of abduction, probably of Thetis by Peleus, and possibly also by the Haimon Group (Knigge 1976: no. 45.2, tomb SW 4, pl. 48). No less unknown is the sex of a small child buried in a larnax in the West Cemetery of Eleusis (Table 1, no. 11). The tomb contained among other finds a black-figured lekythos with such a generic abduction on the model of the struggle (Mylonas 1975:115-121, pl. 385).

Similar scenes of struggle without attributes can be found in adult tombs, too. Tomb HW 129 in the Kerameikos (Knigge 1976: no. 122.1, pl. 31), probably of an adult, contained a lekythos with the same type of struggle, likewise by the Haimon Group,
as well as a black-glazed skyphos, of the so-called „owl“ type (usually associated with the andron and banquets, see Lynch 2011: 87-88 and 235-236). The same iconography appears on a lekythos from Tomb HW 138 (Knigge 1976: no. 98.2, pl. 28), which also belongs to the production of the Haimon group, as does, probably, another one, retrieved from a definitely female burial in the Kerameikos (Tomb HW 126: Knigge 1976: no. 137.2, pl. 32), to judge from the skeletal remains (Table 1, no. 10).

Peleus as an ephebe in erotic pursuit

Peleus has additionally been portrayed in Attic vase-painting as an ephebe in erotic pursuit, as an alternative representation of his struggle with Thetis, modelled on Theseus’ pursuits and differentiated from them only through the dolphin that Thetis or her companions may carry, or by inscriptions (Vollkommer 1992: nos. 54-58).

An excerpt from what could probably be regarded a scene of Thetis’ pursuit by Peleus can be found on a red-figured pyxis from a child burial in Kerameikos (Tomb HTR 95: Kunze-Götte 1993:79-88, pls. 11-12; Kunze-Götte, Tancke & Vierneisel 1999:24-25, no. 57.3, pl. 15) [Table 1, no. 12]. The pyxis, a vase shape par excellence associated with feminine beautification, is usually found in female tombs, although other grave gifts from do not shed any more light to the sex of the deceased child. The pyxis bears the figures of five Nereids fleeing to an altar, by a palm tree (Figs 11-12). They are identified as Nereids by the fish set against the background, or held by one of them. Thetis may be identified not with the one holding the dolphin and rushing from the left, as Kunze-Götte (1993, 85) believes, but with the one closest to the altar from right to left, a direction reserved in Greek painting for figures of significance. She looks round, evidently to her pursuer, assuming a gesture of alarm (McNiven 1982:125-127 [R31B9]). Fleeing to an altar is a typical arrangement in
rape scenes. Iconographically, several mythological pursuits, i.e. Zeus after a woman, or Boreus & Oreithyia, are set in a sanctuary, sometimes even specified as Artemis’ sanctuary by the addition of a palm tree (Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1979: nos 204, pl.1 [with a palm tree], 212, pl. 13, 343, pl.30, 361, pl. 30 [with olive tree]). This seems to be a recurring mythological motif, since similarly abducted chorouousai for Artemis are reported (i.e. Persephone by Hades; Calame 1977:176-77). On the Kerameikos pyxis, the sanctuary may have been meant as Artemis’, in association with the palm tree (Sourvinou-Inwood 1991:99-122; Sourvinou-Inwood 1987:144-145 and nn. 90-92).

Presumably this is a scene of Peleus pursuing Thetis, although Peleus is omitted. This may provably happen in such “excerpts” of popular themes, therefore readily identified, although some figures, even protagonist, are left out (for example, Klytaimestra with an axe features alone in excerpts from Aigisthos’ murder by Orestes; Dipla 2000:161; conversely Paris may be left out in scenes of his Judgment; Berger 1992:187; on figures comparably acting as as a pars pro toto in Geometric art, see also Dipla 2012:10 and n. 9). If Thetis’ pursuit is indeed meant to take place in Artemis’ sanctuary, it may have served once again paradigmatic purposes –could it be a girl’s burial after all?- in paralleling the woman’s removal from the fatherly oikos and from her life as a parthenos, under the protection of Artemis Kourotrophos (Calame 1977:189-190 and n. 33; contra, Kunze-Götte 1993:81-84, who prefer to see sepulchral rather than nuptial overtones in this and other abduction scenes), through sexual union, purpose and result of the pursuit, or wild marriage, as we have seen.

Scenes of sexual act; a woman’s and a man’s perspective

On either side of the handle of an askos from the Kerameikos (Table 1, no. 4) we find two couples copulating in two of the most popular sex positions on Athenian vases: the “missionary”, legs high up, and the rear-penetration position [Fig. 8] (Tomb WP 7 aussen: Kunze-Götte, Tancke & Vierneisel 1999: no. 499, pl. 89. Stambolidis ed. 2009: no. 180). It is almost certain that the painter of the vase had in mind a scene taking action in a brothel, or in a banquet context, involving a pair of prostitutes and their male customers (so, for instance, Keuls 1985:176-178, fig. 160; full discussion of the askos, in Hoffmann 1977:4 and Paleothodoros 2012:28-30). Yet the inclusion of the vase in a tomb-context with nuptial overtones raises the question of an alternative, feminine reading of the image. Indeed, the askos was found along with a nuptial bowl, showing the preparations of the bride and a statuette of a small boy. Taken together, the nuptial bowl (a shape always connected with brides: Sgourou 1997:72), the askos and the statuette, point to female sexuality blossoming in the context of wedding, and having the creation of male offspring as its ultimate goal. They all allude to the expected accomplishments of a girl, which were never fulfilled because of her sudden, premature death. These roles include her being a respectable wife, but also seductive like a hetaera for her husband.
In fact there seems to be a trend in the second half of the fifth century to mix the iconographies of the respectable (brides) with the disreputable, *hetaerae*. Hetarae may appear in activities of the industrious housewife, such as spinning (It has already been noticed [p. 000] that many scholars consider it possible that not all accosted women offered presents, even purses, are hetaerae; on that point the authors of the present study are in disagreement; See also Paleothodoros 2012:25-27). Conversely, on a scene of gift exchange, normally reserved for *hetaerae*, an inscription identifies the woman as “nympe kale”, a beautiful bride. Aphrodite or Eros may be shown participating in the bridal preparation, suggesting the strong appeal of female adornment. The bride’s beauty can be manipulated to inspire passion in the groom and ensure childbirth. This notion is best illustrated by the juxtaposition of betrothal and procession to the bridal chamber (an Eros visible through the open door is shown sliding down the bed) on the two sides of a *loutrophoros* (an exclusive nuptial vase shape). The underlying message is that marriage, which begins with the *engye*, aims essentially at bearing (male) offspring, ensured by the bride’s power to arouse desire (Dipla 2006: 22, 27-30). Beautiful and seductive, brides can be accosted, pursued, “raped”, and tamed in the process of supporting the social system as mothers of future citizens. These social norms seem to be acknowledged and promoted by the female members of the family who choose the vases to escort the maidens in their graves.

The choice of scenes of sexual act seems to point beyond the approval of female sexuality in the context of marriage. It might also denote an active expression of sexual desire, on the part of women, presenting a female, subjective reading. Aristophanic comedies illustrate vividly, even if distorted, women’s insatiable appetite for sex.
Some evidence on vases showing women taking the initiative might point in the same direction (Palaiothodoros 2012:27, 34). The premature death of the Athenian girl of Kerameikos, whose life set before it had the chance to culminate, deprived her not only of the honor of married life and motherhood, but also of the joys of marital sex.

A child tomb may also contain a vase bearing an overtly sexual scene. Thus, a burial discovered during the Metro excavations in the Kerameikos (Tomb 1010: Parlama & Stampolidis 2000:293-304, see esp. no. 289, 298-299; Stambolidis ed. 2009: no. 180) [Table 1, no. 5] would bear, quite unexpectedly, a black-figure lekythos showing a heterosexual orgy on banqueting couches, in a sympotic context in which, after the customary consumption of wine and food, the customers proceed to consume prostitutes, as already noted. Two large couches in the middle of the scene bear three couples each, engaged in sexual intercourse (Αφροδίτης σχήμα, κελητίζειν, ερωτοπαίγνια, that is missionary and jockey position, and foreplay respectively). On the left and right end of the scene three more couples covered in bedspreads on the floor, either copulate “from behind”, or merely watch the couples on the couches (Glazebrook 2009: 36-37) [Fig. 15]. The presence of onlookers and the number of couples involved (nine in total) might even suggest a brothel scene. According to Stansbury-O’Donnel (2006:236), the viewer of the vase might actually identify with these spectators. Furthermore, masturbating figures flanking such sexual scenes illustrate their pornographic effect, reflecting ironically back on the viewer (Sutton 2009:80).

A brothel could also be a temporary setup, visiting the customer, rather than vice-versa. Conversely, two surviving building complexes in Kerameikos, identified as porneia, seem to have contained at least two andrones and possibly also to have tried to emulate a sympotic atmosphere in their courtyards (Glazebrook 2009:35-46). On another black-figure lekythos from the same tomb a banqueter reclines with his naked courtesan in the andron of his house, as in the cup from the Kerameikos burial discussed above. These two scenes depict favorite male pastimes that involved feasting and sex, therefore it is more probable to identify the deceased as a boy rather than a girl. This is a reminder that iconography might fit the sex, but not the age of the deceased, because it is actually used to provide the dead person with the very symbols of adult life, where the pleasures of wine and sex have a prominent place.

The Judgement of Paris; Fulfilling the Role of a Beautiful Bride

From a girl’s point of view, a burial shaft of small dimensions in Ilioupoli, Attica (Pologiorgi 1995), contained the cremated remains of a child, and, among other finds, a splendid red-figured alabastron, bearing the image of a richly clad lady looking at her own reflection into a mirror and approached by a servant [Fig. 16]. The painted alabastron and its subject point probably to a girl buried in this tomb. The image on
the alabastron is not a “portrait”, but rather a projection of the dead girl into a future state of her lost life, that of the beautiful bride, which was never attained.

Among other finds in the aforementioned Kerameikos burial, possibly female and from around the same opening years of the fifth c. BC with the scenes of mild and wild pursuit (Table 1, no. 2, above), was retrieved a black-figured lekythos bearing a scene of the Judgement of Paris (Kunze-Götte, Täncke & Vierneisel 1999; no. 278.5, pl. 53), the emblematic mythical beauty contest (Kossatz-Deissmann 1992:186-188). Paris, holding a lyre, is shown fleeing to the right and looking round to Hermes, heralding the file of goddesses in the typical order: Hera offering an apple (?), Athena offering an owl, and Aphrodite, the goddess of love, sex and beauty, offering a little Siren. Although the element of the goddesses’ seductive appeal and of the triumphant apple prize, proposed by Aphrodite, is not so common in Greek Classical art, the power of beauty and sexual attraction is nevertheless outlined and celebrated, through the selection and combination of themes in this burial, as an essential asset of a good bride, as long as it prudently serves the ideal of marriage and child procreation.


Eros as a Pursuer of Men and Women

Erotic vases are not absent from male tombs, as already noted in some possible cases. One particularly revealing case is the one excavated in Stadiou Street (ex Royal Stables) in Athens (Papasyridi & Kyparissis 1927-1928) [Table 1, no. 13]. The tomb belonged to a youth, who was buried along with a strigil and many painted vases or other goods. On a red-figured round aryballos, signed by Douris as a potter, and attributed to his own hand as a painter (Beazley 1963: 447, no. 274), two Erotes are
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closing in on a fleeing *ephebe*, who looks round to the one brandishing a scary whip, while he runs unknowingly straight into the arms of the second one flying before him. [Fig. 17] The youth paradoxically lifts off the tip of his *himation*, assuming the solemn gesture of “veiling” (drawn towards the face to cover it), reflecting the common practice of women properly covering their face outdoors when reaching a marriageable age and symbolizing more generally the sexual maturity and modest dignity of the figure assuming it, married or not (see Oakley-Sinos 1993:30 and 136-137 n. 51; Pemberton 1976:116-117).

Besides the signature of Douris as a potter, there is another inscription: ΑΣΟΠΟΔΩΡΩΗΕΛΕΚΥΘΟΣ, “I am the lekythos of Asopodoros”. This inscription was incised on the surface of the vase after baking, but it has been argued that it can be ascribed, on palaeographic reasons, to the vase-painter Douris himself (Papaspyridi & Kyparissis 1927-1928:108-110), not to the owner of the vase, or to the person who wished to present it to Asopodoros as a gift; it may therefore have been a rare instance of a commissioned vase, although it cannot be excluded either that the aryballos was a gift from the vase-painter himself to the young Athenian *kalos* who died prematurely. Whether the vase was a gift to the boy by a male *erastes*, or not, the decision of the family to include a vase with possible pederastic allusions among the burial gifts, is an interesting detail suggesting the acceptance of the custom by the boy’s relatives (on the issue of public approval of pederasty in Classical Athens see Lear & Cantarella 2008:175).

Fig. 17. Athens, National Museum 15375, red-figured aryballos. After Papaspyridi & Kyparissis 1927-1928, 97-98, plate 1 (drawing).

Eros features in pursuit of both youths (Hermary et al 1986: nos. 601-605; New York, MMA 28.167: Lear & Cantarella 2008:156, fig. 4.16) and women (Hermary et al 1986: nos 615, 616) in vase scenes of the fifth century. On two cups by Douris
(Berlin F 2305 and Boston 13.94: Lear & Cantarella 2008:157-158, fig. 4.17 and 4.18 respectively), he is even shown abducting (almost raping) a youth. As a pursuer Eros may personify the *persuasion* of either the pursued or the pursuer, acting as a mediator (Boardman 1958-9:171), as he often does in the courting scenes of the late fifth and fourth centuries, or maybe both, since there is evidence in support of both possibilities (Dipla 2006:29).

On a white-ground lekythos, again by Douris (Cleveland, Mus. of Art 66.114: *CVA* Cleveland 1: pls. 32-35.), Atalanta appears dressed like a bride, but well into running, one hand lifting the skirt out of her way, the other extended with palm open, as if to ward off the wreath with which an Eros presents her, springing powerfully behind her. In the other hand he originally held a whip, falsely restored as a sprig. A second Eros approaches her from the other side with more flowers for adornment; a third Eros behind the first one lurks hovering among floral sprigs. Notice the similarities in composition and the demeanor of the pursued with the Asopodoros vase. In both cases there seems to be no hope of escape from Eros, or from marriage for Atalanta, who despite her dislike of men will eventually be forced to succumb to marriage (So Boardman 1983:3-4, 16-17; followed by Buitron-Oliver 1995:437-440, who also emphasises the element of fear, by drawing attention to the similar bridal appearance of Iphigeneia in a scene by Douris of her sacrifice; Oakley 1995, 70).

![Fig. 18. Excavation of Classical Tombs in Syntagma Square. After Charitonidis (1958, pl. 25).](image-url)
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There are other surviving scenes by Douris, or other painters, where youths, like the one in the grave under discussion, are violently pursued, threatened with sticks, whips and knives (Athens, Nat. Mus. 15375: Hermary et al: 1986, 365a; Greifenhagen 1957:59, figs. 43-45; London, BM E 297: Hermary et al 1986: no. 365b; Greifenhagen 1957:60, fig. 46; Villa Giulia 42714: Lear & Cantarella: 2008:162-163, fig. 4.22). On a peculiar scene by Douris (Berlin, Staatl. Mus. F 3168: Hermary et al 1986: no. 600; Olshausen 1979:18-19, figs. 1-4) Eros pursues a youth threatening him with an object which might be a knife (Olhausen 1979:17-24), rather than a sandal (Greifenhagen 1957:57; Boardman 1976:287; Lear & Cantarella 2008:163). In these scenes we should see rather suggested the dynastic passion born in the pursued (Schefold & Jung 1981:194-195; cf. 201q see also Boardman 1983:4). The same passion may likewise apply to the pursuer, since Eros may be shown, foe example, stabbing mighty Zeus with a goad right in the back, while he is actually in the act of pursuing Ganymede (Berlin, Staatl. Mus. F 2032: Hermary et al 1986: no. 362; Kaempf-Dimitriadou 1979: 7 fig. 1).

Conversely, on a fragmentary pyxis lid from a funerary pyre discovered in an old excavation of classical tombs in Syntagma Square (pyre LXXII: Charitonidis 1958:50-51, no. 47, esp. no. 47.11, pl. 25) [Table 1, no. 15], we find two Erotes running, or flying after three surviving figures of women, in the presence of a solemn, statuesque woman that may be identified as Aphrodite (the two gods interfere either actively, or as mere onlookers, in scenes of divine pursuits, or Peleus’ struggle with Thetis; Dipla 2006:23) [Fig. 18]. The women run in alarm looking round to their pursuers. A wreath can be seen on the ground below the second Eros. Among the grave finds two other pyxis lids may point to a female burial.

A second pyre from the same Syntagma excavation (Table 1, no. 14), revealed another pyxis lid with the same subject (pyre LXXVII: Charitonidis 1958:13-14, no. 10, esp. no. 10.15, pl. 24): we can make out an Eros flying to the right and about to embrace a woman who runs into him, probably fleeing from another pursuing Eros, as in the case of the Asopodoros vase and Atalanta's pursuit. This is more probably the burial of a woman, as indicated by other grave finds, including two loom-weights and a loutrophoros (unmarried girl?).

The identity of women pursued by Erotes is vague: they could be either hetaerae accosted by lovers/customers, or parthenoi from ephebe pursuits, in the face of mixed iconographies of hetaerae and brides, as noted already. In this case the pursuing Eros may be considered acting as a mediator, or illustrating their own susceptibility to erotic passion (Dipla 2006:29-30). Scenes like these may actually denote an affirmation of female desire (as Paleothodoros 2012:34 believes); not necessarily per se, however, but again on specific terms, as a means to ensure procreation, inducing and thus serving male desire (on the two views, see Paleothodoros 2012: 34-35 and cf. Dipla 2009, esp. 122-124; a case study of fear of female sexuality).
Conclusions

We have considered above erotic themes, of mild and wild pursuit of a lover, or of sexual contact, on a number of Attic black-and red-figure vases. These were retrieved from burials in the Kerameikos and other cemeteries in Attica. They were found among other gifts, mainly in the form of clay gifts, vases, painted or not, and figurines that date, with few exceptions, from the first half of the fifth c. BC. From Table 1, we are able to conclude the following.

The burials in question do not bear any actual difference from the rest of burials in these cemeteries. Taking into consideration that Athenians seem to have exercised restraint and abstention from display of wealth in their graves in general (Morris 1992:103-127), we can find the whole range from “poor” to “rich” burials, judging by the quality of finds and/or their number, with as few as four to as rich as 30 or more grave goods, of variable quality. The number of grave gifts reveals the same degree of variation with regard to sex or age (children, ephebes or adults). We may only note that some child or infant burials have the least number of finds. Children or ephebe burials also comprise miniature figurines or vases and, understandably, clay toys or knucklebones, though not without exceptions. Erotic themes do not relate often to specific shapes (Athenian graves in general may or may not contain gender specifiers; Paleothodoros 2012:24). There is a marked tendency to gather many black-figure lekythoi together, many of which bear erotic images. With regard to erotic pursuit and abduction there is some evidence of preference for shapes associated with the female toilette, such as pyxides or painted alabastra.

Our current research has so far covered graves from Attica, but it would be interesting to expand it, at least comparatively, to other Greek necropoleis, too. Further osteo-archaeological analysis, where available, will allow determining sex and age more accurately in future. It will then be possible to build more reliable statistical graphs, with regard to the choice of scenes and thus reconstruct a certain context in which to evaluate this choice and ultimately the purpose served by this choice: acting as media for propagating contemporary views about the role and interaction of the social sexes.

Apart from reflecting the Athenian construction of gender roles, it has been argued that this choice may have had a symbolic meaning, as to the presumed activities, expectations or fantasies of the dead (or rather their relatives who have given them the funeral) about their love life, as set by contemporary social standards.

Scenes of mild pursuit, of courtship, whether of prostitutes or brides, selected for the female dead, once evidently an ephebe, are combined with the Judgement of Paris, the ultimate mythical beauty contest, underlining the approval of female sexuality. This approval was set in the context of marriage and child-bearing, and celebrated the joy of marital sex that the dead may have enjoyed in life, if not deprived of it by their premature death. The same goes for scenes of sexual act, or of the prelude to
it, associated with the tomb of a woman or a girl (?), and also possibly implying an active expression of female desire, suggesting a subjective reading by women viewers of the selected vase. Conversely, scenes of orgies in a sympotic context from the tomb of a boy (?) illustrate the prominent role of feasting and sex in male adult life, again expected, but never attained.

Several scenes of wild pursuit, presented through the myth of Peleus’ struggle with Thetis, or generic scenes of abduction, coined on the model of the struggle, are associated with female – or undiagnostic – burials whether adult, or child, or even infant. The theme probably expressed a *gamos* in its basic form, that is a sexual union, as opposed to an official one, the wedding. It probably promoted popular social notions about the expected roles of men and women in both sex and marriage. It spoke of female animality, resistance and then the final defeat of a woman’s wild nature, controlled firstly by her father, and then subsequently by her husband. Men on the other hand were susceptible to erotic passion which started early in their sex life, as ephebes engaged in pederastic love, as implied by the scene of Erotes, one with a whip, chasing a youth, presumably the owner of the vase and of the grave in which it was finally placed. Conversely, Erotes that pursued women probably derived from female burials, and seem to portray a female perspective on desire and suffering, which in turn once again possibly suggests an acknowledgement of female sexuality.

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CORPUS VASORUM ANTIQUORUM (CVA), from 1922


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LEXICON ICONOGRAPHICUM MYTHOLOGIAE CLASSICAE (LIMC), from 1981


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<th>Tomb</th>
<th>Type of Burial</th>
<th>Erotic vase</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Ker. HW 198</td>
<td>Inhumation of a girl, approx. 12-14 years old</td>
<td>RF alabastron: Youth and girl kissing; youth offering a hare to a spinning girl</td>
<td>10 black-figured lekythoi (dionysiac themes, gods and goddesses on chariots, standing or seated, and one with Achilles fighting Penthesileia)</td>
<td>A lamp, an oil-container, a jug, various miniature vases</td>
<td>500-490</td>
<td>Kriège 1976, 90-91, pl. 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Ker. S 27</td>
<td>Inhumation. Female (?)</td>
<td>RF lekythos: Youth offering a pouch to a girl; youth offering a flower to a girl; BF alabastron with Peléus struggling with Thetis</td>
<td>BF alabastron with a group of deities; BF lekythos showing the Judgment of Paris; BF lekythos with women dancing; BF lekythos with men and women; BF lekythos with an actor riding a dolphin</td>
<td>Black-glazed alabastron and 2 stone alabastra</td>
<td>500-490</td>
<td>Kunze-Götte, Tanke and Vierneisel 1999, 80-82, pls 52-54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Ker. Cremation in LZB A</td>
<td>Female?</td>
<td>RF cup: a couple reclining on a banquet couch</td>
<td>RF lid of a pyxis showing women (bridal preparation?), RF miniature lebes showing women and Nike; WG lekythos showing a woman and a youth; RF squat lekythos showing a siren</td>
<td>8 black-glazed vases (pyxides, squat lekythos, cup-skyphos, skyphos, bolis, one-handler)</td>
<td>430-420</td>
<td>Kunze-Götte, Tanke and Vierneisel 1999, 111-113, pls 74-75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Ker. WP 7 aussen</td>
<td>Inhumation. Female (?)</td>
<td>RF askos: two couples making love</td>
<td>RF nuptial lebes showing a bride receiving presents</td>
<td>Terracotta figure of a crouching boy, lamp, small black-glazed plate</td>
<td>450-440</td>
<td>Kunze-Götte, Tanke and Vierneisel 1999, 131-132, pl. 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Ker. 1010</td>
<td>Child tomb. Male?</td>
<td>BF lekythos: sexual orgy at a banquet</td>
<td>7 BF lekythoi (3 with Heracles fighting the lion, 2 with Dionysiac subjects, one with Athena killing a Giant, one showing a drinking party).</td>
<td>7 miniature black-glazed vessels, terracotta toys (a shepherd, dogs, ducks, horse, chariot), a shell, 69 knuckle-bones</td>
<td>490-480</td>
<td>Palamara and Stampoli -dis 2000, 293-304, no. 289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Ker. HTR 38 II</td>
<td>Inhumation. Female (?)</td>
<td>BF pyxis: the birth of Athena, the Judgment of Paris, Peléus struggling with Thetis</td>
<td>BF pyxis showing the departure of a rider, women spinning and Theseus killing the Minotaur, seven BF lekythoi (Theseus and Minotaur, man in symposium with satyrs, youth leading a bull, maenad dancing, warriors, Heracles and the bull, a standing figure)</td>
<td>Bronze mirror, Bronze nail, painted phiale, stone alabastron</td>
<td>510-500</td>
<td>Kübler 1976, 68-69; Kunze-Götte, Tanke and Vierneisel 1999, 66-68, pls 39-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Acharnai, Monnau str., pithos burial 10</td>
<td>Infant burial in pithos. Female (?)</td>
<td>BF lekythos: Peléus struggling with Thetis</td>
<td>4 BF lekythoi (including one with Satyr and maenad dancing and one with women at the idol of Dionysos); BF oenochoe with women dancing around Dionysos</td>
<td>Black-glazed pyxis, miniature skyphos, jugs and amphora.</td>
<td>480-470</td>
<td>Platonos 2003-2004, 425, fig. 208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Attributes</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Reference</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ker. SW 93</td>
<td>Child tomb in larnax</td>
<td>BF lekythos: abduction of a woman (Peleus and Thetis?)</td>
<td>BF lekythos, with a chariot scene (including women)</td>
<td>6 palmette lekythoi</td>
<td>490-480. Haimon Group. Cf. HW 129, HW 138, and here nos. 9-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ker. HW 126</td>
<td>Inhumation. Female (skeletal remains)</td>
<td>BF lekythos, abduction of a woman (Peleus and Thetis?)</td>
<td>BF Chariot scene, led by Hermes</td>
<td>Bronze needle</td>
<td>c. 490-480. Haimon Group? Cf. HW 129, HW 138, and here nos. 8-9, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Eleusis, I 17</td>
<td>Child burial in larnax</td>
<td>BF lekythos: abduction of a woman (Peleus and Thetis?)</td>
<td>3 miniature skyphoi (one with silhouette birds, two with floral motifs), 6 more BF lekythoi (Ajax and Achilles playing a game, satyrs and maenad, seated women, Gigantomachy with Athena, fight, women picking up fruits)</td>
<td>Eggshell, terracotta statuette of a rider, two black-glazed skyphoi, one black-glazed lekythos</td>
<td>1st quarter of the 5th c. Haimon Group? Cf. HW 129, HW 138, and here nos. 8-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ker. HTR 95</td>
<td>Child tomb in larnax</td>
<td>RF pyxis: Nereids fleeing (excerpt from Thetis’ abduction or pursuit by Theseus?)</td>
<td>BF chous showing a deer</td>
<td>Black-glazed alabastron</td>
<td>460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Athens, stables (ephebe?)</td>
<td>Male tomb (ephebe?)</td>
<td>RF aryballos: two Erotes chasing a boy</td>
<td>22 BF lekythoi with various subjects (mostly mythological and dionysiac, several with floral motifs), RF pyxis lid showing a Pygmy</td>
<td>Black glazed lamp, plate and skyphos. Bronze stirigl and traces of two garments</td>
<td>490-480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Synt. LXXVII</td>
<td>Pyre. Female?</td>
<td>RF pyxis: with Erotes chasing women</td>
<td>Fragments of 6 WG lekythoi and of several RF vases (including two squat lekythoi, a bell-krater, a loutrophoros, a pyxis, a plate, a lekanis lid and several closed shapes)</td>
<td>2 loom-weights, 3 pottery alabastra, stone alabastron</td>
<td>3rd quarter of the 5th c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Synt. LXXII</td>
<td>Pyre. Female?</td>
<td>RF pyxis lid: Erotes chasing women</td>
<td>Fragments of 4 WG lekythoi, 1 RF squat lekythos and two pyxis lids</td>
<td>Amphora, black glazed salt-cellar, and squat lekythos</td>
<td>3rd quarter of the 5th c.</td>
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Out of the Word and Out of the Picture?

Keftiu and Materializations of ‘Minoans’

Uroš Matić

Abstract ‘Minoans’ have been recognised as pre-Hellenic race or closed ethnic group in Egyptian representations of Aegean figures from Eighteenth Dynasty Theban tombs. Modern construct of ‘Minoans’ thus merged with an ancient Egyptian construct of Aegean foreigners. Previous approaches to Aegean figures in Theban tombs did not pay attention to decorum, context and restricted knowledge. By examining these concepts it is argued in this paper that decorum can transform restricted knowledge into available knowledge for the tomb visitors. The abducted meanings from these images materialized virtual reality different from reality based on the tomb-owner’s restricted knowledge. However, this abducted virtual reality can actually take the form of reality for those who lack specific restricted knowledge. Based on decorum analysis it can be argued that New Kingdom Egyptians perceived Keftiu and its inhabitants as quite close to their cultural concept of ‘north’ and ‘Asia’, observable both in visual and written evidence.

Fabricating ‘the Minoans’ through Egyptian images

Arthur Evans discovered and simultaneously created ‘Minoan’ civilization from the archaeological remains entangled with modernist metanarratives of ancient Greece as the cradle of civilization (Papadopoulos 2005; Hamilakis 2006:146‒149; Hamilakis & Momigliano 2006:27-28). He considered the term ‘Minoan’ to have been used in an ethnic sense already by ancient Greeks, as it appears as a toponym for traditional settlements on Crete (Evans 1921:1‒2). However, in 1900 when he made his discovery, Minos was known only from several quite later texts. Thucydides in the fifth century B.C. described Minos in ‘The History of the Peloponnesian War’ as the first navy lord, master of the Aegean Sea and Cyclades, and the first colonizer who fought piracy (Thucydides I. IV). Evans, clearly influenced, wrote that ‘Minoan’ Knossos had naval dominion over the Mediterranean Sea long before Venice (Evans 1921:25). However, there were no thalassocracies in the Late Bronze Age Mediterranean (Knapp 1993:333). The myth of a thalassocracy of Minos was probably invented by or for the Athenian overseas hegemony (Papadopoulos 2005:94).
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Maybe the most intriguing element of Evans’ metanarrative on the ‘Minoans’ was his use of the concept of ‘race’. Evans was a racist par excellence, stated by himself in his account from Bosnia and Herzegovina. He wrote that he did not appreciate the ‘égalitaire’ spirit of Bosniacs who warmly addressed strangers as ‘brat’ (brother) or ‘(kom)shija’ (neighbour), and that he believes in the existence of inferior races and would like to see them exterminated, but these were ‘personal mislikings’ (Evans 1877:312). He later wrote that craniometrical results and other bodily measurements may imply that in Minoan times a large part of the population belonged to the long-headed Mediterranean Race (Evans 1921:8). Evans also recognized ‘Minoans’ in representations of Aegean figures in Theban Eighteenth Dynasty tombs (Figs. 1-5). Providing analogies in archaeological material for representations of objects carried by Aegean figures in tombs of Senenmut, Useramun, Menkheperreseneb and Rekhmire he gave historical reality both to his construction of ‘Minoans’ and Egyptian representations.

Evans equated ‘Minoans’ with the Egyptian term Keftiu (kfts). This term is attested for the first Syrian figure in the first register of the scene with foreign figures in the tomb of Menkheperreseneb (Fig. 1) and in the case of Aegean type figures in the tomb of Rekhmire - where they are not labelled only with Keftiu (Fig. 2). Thus, ‘Minoans’ became Keftiu, and Keftiu became people who lived on Crete in the Late Bronze Age (Evans 1928:737‒748). Arthur Evans was not an Egyptologist, so he did not take into account that the Keftiu refers to a land, and not its inhabitants, as the word is written with the Egyptian determinative for land (Erman & Grapow 1971:122).
Different authors, such as Georg Steindorff and Harry Reginald Hall, like Evans before them, described physical characteristics (skin colour, hair, nose profile), approaching images in Egyptian tombs as distinct ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ types, strongly emphasizing their ‘European’ characteristics. Objects carried by the Aegean figures were described as objects of a particular archaeological culture (‘Minoan’ or ‘Mycenaean’) using analogies in the archaeological material (Hall 1902:162‒175; 1904; 1914:201; 1928:199‒206; Pendlebury 1930:82). Terms such as ‘race’ or ‘cultural area’ were used before the concept of archaeological culture, while the term culture was usual in the archaeology of 1920s (Jones 1997:16‒17). However, with the emergence of cultural-historical archaeology emphasis was put on archaeological culture as a clear determinant of a ‘people’. Material remains were undoubtedly read as remains of enclosed, unique ethnic groups as stated by Vere Gordon Childe in his definition of archaeological culture as the material expression of ‘a people’ (Childe 1929, V‒VI). ‘Minoans’ became ‘people’, now by definition, in an ethnic sense, and not a racial one.

Not all scholars accepted that the term Keftiu refers to Crete and that Aegean figures in Theban tombs were ‘Minoans’. Gerald Averay Wainwright argued that only 21% of objects carried by Aegean figures are Cretan. He identified Aegean figures in tombs of Senenmut (Fig. 3) and Useramun as ‘Minoans’ based on ‘Minoan’ objects they carry and the inscription referring to figures from the tomb of Useramun as coming from ‘all islands in the middle of w²d wr (sea)’. Then he excluded all these objects and the figures carrying them from the register with Aegean figures in the tomb of Rekhmire. As the accompanying text in the tomb of Rekhmire names Aegean figures as coming both from Keftiu and ‘all islands in the middle of w²d wr’, he thought that the non-excluded figures should represent Keftiu (Wainwright 1931:2‒7). This direct analogy is only one extreme of cultural-historical approach to Aegean images and objects they carry. John Strange, however, still referring to Aegean figures as ‘ethnic types’ and to their ‘culture, dress and racial characteristics’ completely discredited the
idea that images are relevant for the study of Keftiu. The term in some tombs refers to Syrian figures, or iconographically hybrid Syrian-Aegean figures, and sometimes it is followed by other terms such as ‘islands in the middle of $w\ddagger d\ wr$’. He concluded that Keftiu refers to Cyprus (Strange 1980:145-184).

Jean Vercoutter greatly influenced later scholars in his definite identification of Keftiu as Crete, and Aegean figures as ‘Minoans’ referring to them as pre-Hellenes (Vercoutter 1954:47-70). Later scholars influenced by his seminal work identified Keftiu unambiguously as Crete (Sakellarakis & Sakellarakis 1984:202; Strøm 1984:193; Wachsmann 1987:98-99; Panagiotopoulos 2001:263-265; Hallmann 2006). As for the term ‘islands in the middle of $w\ddagger d\ wr$’, several authors interpreted it differently as the ‘Minoan colonial empire’ (Strøm 1984:193), Cyclades (Sakellarakis & Sakellarakis 1984:202), a part of Keftiu territory or a neighbouring region (Wachsmann 1987:98-99), or a network of smaller communities not bound to one single territory (Sherratt & Sherratt 1998:339).

Contrary to identification of Keftiu as Crete and $w\ddagger d\ wr$ as Mediterranean Sea there are scholars who identified $w\ddagger d\ wr$ as the Egyptian delta, and therefore Keftiu as ‘Minoans’ settled in the delta (Nibbi 1975:9-49; Vandersleyen 1988:75-79; 2002:109-112; 2003:209-211; Duhoux 2003:211-228; MacGillivray 2009). Claude Vandersleyen emphasized in several of his papers that Keftiu is to be located in Asia according to his interpretations of references to this term in the Annals of Thutmose III and the topographical list from Kom el-Hetan. However, the identification of

Fig. 3. TT 71: Senenmut. Three remaining Aegean figures, facsimile (after Davies 1936: Pl. XIV).
w3ḏ wr solely with the Egyptian delta and Keftiu with other locations than Crete has been discredited (Quack 2007:334-336). The tradition of describing physical characteristics (skin colour, hair, nose profile) in Egyptian art in order to make ethnic attributions of figures was very influential. However, there were those who argued contrary, that Egyptian representations are not photographs of reality, concentrating on transference of figures, objects and iconographical elements and iconographical hybridization (Kantor 1947:42-55; Wachsmann 1987:4-12).

The images of Aegean figures were mostly used as an iconographical addition to a metanarrative of a bound unique ethnic group known as ‘Minoans’. However, the Late Bronze Age inhabitants of the Aegean and Egypt did not share their view of identity and ethnicity with western Europeans in the late nineteenth century and after. In order to better understand these images we should pay more attention to the context in which they appear together with the status and purpose of Egyptian art and the Egyptian view of Others.

Fig. 4. TT 39: Puimre. Four foreign figures, Syrian-Aegean hybrid figure third from the left, facsimile (after Davies 1922: Pl. I).

Aegean figures and objects as wrw and jnw

Aegean figures in Theban tombs are represented in scenes in which foreigners are depicted bearing different objects and piling them in front of Egyptian officials (Fig. 4). Foreigners in these scenes are ordered into distinct registers which are enclosed, like with a bracket, by a figure of a deceased individual to whom the tomb with these scenes belongs (Davies 1922, 1934, 1943; Säve-Söderbergh 1957; Porter & Moss 1960; Wachsmann 1987; Dorman 1991; Dziobek 1994; Hallmann 2006). So far, Aegean figures are known in tombs of Senenmut, Intef, Useramun, Menkheperreseneb
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and Rekhmire (Figs. 1-5). The term Keftiu signifying Aegean figures in the tomb of Rekhmire (as a place of origin together with the term ‘islands in the middle of water’) also appears in tombs of Menkheperreseneb and Amenemhab, but here this term signifies Syrian figures, some of which carry Aegean objects (Sethe 1909:908‒929; Breasted 1906:301; Davies 1943:20; Hallmann 2006:29-46). Aegean figures are distinguished by their reddish skin colour (similar to the skin colour of Egyptian men in iconography), curly hair, beardless faces, and breechcloths in the tombs of Senenmut, Intef, Puimre, Useramun and the first phase of the tomb of Rekhmire, and Aegean kilts in the tombs of Menkheperreseneb and the second phase of the tomb of Rekhmire. Syrian figures are recognised by a yellow skin colour, bearded faces and clothing which might be described as particular kilts different from those of the Aegean and long robes.

Hybrid iconographical figures are also known from these tombs. The earliest iconographical hybrid with Aegean elements is known from the tomb of Puimre (Fig. 4). The figure from the scene with four foreign princes in the tomb of Puimre shares elements in skin colour and hair style of Aegean figures and clothes of Syrian figures (Davies 1922:87‒92; Wachsmann 1987:29-30). Syrian-Aegean iconographically hybrid figures are known from the tomb of Menkheperreseneb where they occupy the second and third register of the scene with foreigners together with Syrian figures and only several Aegean figures (Hallmann 2006:30). So far the only detailed iconographical study, conducted by Wachsmann, observed that hybridity can be seen not only in depicted figures of foreigners, but also in the objects they carry. He also pointed to a high level of transference, a phenomenon in Egyptian art when objects, figures or entire parts of scenes are transferred from one scene into another to which it need not have been connected (1987:12).

Latest studies have put more emphasis on the events these scenes represent in order to better understand Egyptian foreign policy, and in this specific case Egyptian-Aegean interrelations and Late Bronze Age gift-exchange (Panagiotopoulos 2001). Available evidence suggests that these scenes represent an important moment in the professional lives of the deceased owners of the tombs. An overview of the titles held by the tomb owners suggests that they were high-ranking officials in temples and the court; overseers of temple estates, treasuries, granaries and workshops; high priests and viziers; commandants and generals (Davies 1922:28‒31; Säve-Söderbergh 1957:13; Schulman 1964:34-55; Dorman 1991:179; Dziobek 1994:62-101; Eichler 2000; Hallmann 2006). They belonged to a close circle of the Egyptian elite, and an even closer circle of the court elite, or what Kate Spence calls ‘court society’ (2007:276). Their tombs show a number of architectural, design and decorative similarities which singles them out from the rest of the population together with other officials buried in the necropolises of Dra Abu el-Naga, Sheikh Abd el-Gurna, Kohka and Qurnet Murrai (Fitzenreiter 1995:95). Their prestige was in their occupations, duties and
proximity to the king. The events in the palace they were part of were closed to those who were not part of the court society.

Letters from the Amarna archive are a valuable testimony of important events such as a court visit by foreign emissaries. These letters also show that foreign rulers did not travel around Late Bronze Age courts, but sent embassies to conclude deals, whether or not these were gift exchanges, political and military alliances or marriages (Moran 1992; Liverani 2001:71-76; Bryce 2003:78-79). However, these court visits by foreign embassies are known before the Amarna period, and exactly some of the New Kingdom Theban tomb scenes are visual representations of these visits by foreigners usually interpreted as foreign princes. Texts accompanying Aegean figures and objects they carry in some of these tombs refer to Aegean objects as jnw. Late Ramesside Papyrus Koller describes a ceremony on court in which jnw was presented in front of the king, officials and foreigners. The same papyrus also mentions that the official to whom the text is related was scared and his arm became weak because of the event (Gnirs 2009:28-29). The fact that the tomb owners represented it in their tombs is further confirmation of how important this event must have been.

However, among Egyptologists there is not definite agreement in what the term jnw actually means and how to interpret it. Some translations that have been put forward include ‘tribute’ (Müller-Wallerman 1983; Boochs 1984), ‘special deliveries’ (Redford 2003:246), ‘supply on denotative meaning level’ (Liverani 2001:179) and ‘gift’ (Bleiberg 1983, 1984, 1996; Panagiotopoulos 2001:270). The literal translation would be ‘something brought’ as indicated by the determinative and the fact that it is noun derived from an extended use of a passive participle (Redford 2003:246).

Edward Bleiberg analysed this term and its appearance from Old to New Kingdom and refers to it as an ‘official gift’, explaining it using the definition of the gift provided by Marcel Mauss in his seminal work. Bleiberg argues that jnw was exchanged between Egyptian king, other Egyptians and foreigners who were treated in the same way no matter the level of dependence to Egyptian state. He sees jnw exchange as an exchange on a personal level between the king and foreign rulers, chiefs, princes and kings. jnw was considered to have been an aspect of kingship and it was delivered directly to the king or his representative. The king also gave it to temples and necropolis workers; however, it was not part of wider redistribution (Bleiberg 1983:132-134; 1984:157-167; 1996:90-114).

If the interpretation of jnw as the gift in Mauss’ terms is to be accepted then we should question if jnw was actually exchanged as the gift according to anthropological definition. The prerequisite is that it is exchanged between equal partners of exchange, that it forms strong ties between them, that time plays an important role in its exchange and that the exchange is reciprocal (Mauss 1990). However, there are already problems in establishing personal ties, as jnw was not given to the Egyptian king only by individuals, but by groups also (Müller-Wollermann 1983:84). That the
partners were equal cannot be said according to available textual data and iconography, as we lack representations of Egyptian kings giving back any gifts to foreign rulers. This does not mean that an Egyptian king did not send any gifts at all; rather it means that these objects were not labelled as \textit{jnw}. Time did play an important role in the exchange of \textit{jnw}, as the available New Kingdom data point suggests that it was brought annually, most probably for the New Year’s festival. For this there are at least two testimonies, one is from the tomb of Menkheperreseneb, and the other from the tomb of Amennedjeh (Bleiberg 1996:95-96; Liverani 2001:180; Panagiotopoulos 2001:269; Hallmann 2006:10-14). That the exchange was not reciprocal is confirmed by the fact that there are no known records or representations of \textit{jnw} being given to foreigners by the Egyptian king, rather they are receiving \textit{t\textasciitilde w nj \textasciitilde nh} (‘the breath of life’) from him (Müller-Wollermann 1983:84).

In order to better understand the meaning of \textit{jnw}, especially in connection with the Aegean figures, it is important to take a closer look at how the \textit{jnw} bearers in Theban tombs are represented. First of all they are described with several phrases, such as the one referring to the fact that they brought \textit{jnw.sn hr psd.sn} (‘their \textit{jnw} on their backs’) in the tombs of Menkheperreseneb and Rekhmire (Strange 1980:45-51; Bleiberg 1984:157; Bleiberg 1996:91-92). They are described and represented as in proskynesis, that is \textit{sn t\textasciitilde} (‘kissing the soil’), with bent heads, that is \textit{m w\textasciitilde h tpw}, or by leaning towards, that is \textit{m ksw} (Boochs 1984:63). The representations of these body techniques are also known among Aegean figures in the tombs of Intef, Menkheperreseneb and Amenemhab (Säve-Söderbergh 1957:15; Hallmann 2006:29-45). Some authors consider this as proof that Aegeans were subject to Egypt or that they were vassals (Strøm 1984:192; Marinatos 2010:4). However, certainly no one could have approached the king without proper gestures, and these would not have to be interpreted as clear signs of political subjection (Bleiberg 1983:138; Panagiotopoulos 2001:272).

Aegean figures, Syrian-Aegean hybrid figures and Syrian figures labelled with the term Keftiu, are also referred to as \textit{wrw} in the tombs of Puimre, Menkheperreseneb and Rekhmire (Sethe 1909:1098-1099; Davies 1922:90; 1943:20; Hallmann 2006). \textit{wrw} should be understood here as the term for foreign princes, or ‘great ones’, deriving from \textit{wr} meaning ‘great, big’ (Erman & Grapow 1971:328-329; Müller-Wollermann 1983:84). If we understand them as rulers of foreign countries, here represented as bringing \textit{jnw}, we should not forget that later letters from Amarna suggest that rulers did not actually travel around in person, but sent emissaries and embassies instead as previously mentioned. This is indeed a problem if we remain on a problematic interpretative pathway such as the one from which we write our own world view into these images. Donald B. Redford argued that there is no single modern term or category to cover all occurrences of \textit{jnw}, and that it arises from a thoroughly Egyptian ideology. It is a peculiar term for home consumption (Redford 2003:246-247).
Egyptological studies of art suffered greatly from providing definitions of Egyptian terms by identifying images and words which follow them. The custom is to locate examples in tomb relief where the word in question lay above or immediately next to what we then argue was a representation of the object labelled by that specific word. Kent R. Weeks has criticised this line of thought in approaching Egyptian images. He argues that when Egyptologists find another representation labelled by the same term, but different from the representation considered to be significant, they keep their initial interpretation and start speaking about artist’s lack of skills in carving or painting or erroneous labelling of the figure by the scribe (Weeks 1979:62). The same case can be observed in previous studies of Aegean figures represented in the Theban Eighteenth Dynasty tombs. When hybrid figures emerge they are considered errors of the artist, and when some unexpected words label images they are considered erroneous too (Pendlebury 1930:82). However, there are also those who were aware of hybridism and transference, but still explained hybrid figures in ethnic terms (Hittites or ‘Syro-Keftians’), clearly ethnically defining them and classifying at the same time (Hall 1928:200-204; Wachsmann 1987:8). Some even went as far as to exclude Egyptian images as relevant for the study of terms such as Keftiu (Strange 1980:145-184). What is an even bigger issue in this case is that not only were the objects and words too easily connected or disconnected during the interpretation, but also that the object itself is problematic. Namely, what is represented, ‘Minoans’ as a ‘race’, ‘people’, or ‘nation’? Were there ever ‘Minoans’? Critics of Weeks point to the lack of context in these approaches to Egyptian images, and the problem of unaware ‘writing in’ of our world view. He offered numerous examples showing how these approaches fail when dealing with Egyptian images (Weeks 1979:65). Thus, I will continue below agreeing that the context of these images forms a starting point in resolving certain problems with images and words.

Restricted knowledge, decorum, secondary agency and reality of the virtual

The deceased witnessed and played an important role in an event within the restricted space of the palace. Not only were the scenes with foreigners an important event in the career and life of a tomb owner, but they were representations of a highly closed event, an event that formed the basis for knowledge restricted to many as previously argued. The term restricted knowledge was introduced in Egyptology by John Baines in order to better understand connections between power, knowledge and decorum (1990:20-23). It is known that foreign tributes, booty and gifts were brought by emissaries of different foreign countries, and that their presentation on/by Egyptian court could invoke curious ambiguities (Redford 2003:247; Feldman 2006:174-175). The most famous is the case of the letter of complaints of Kadashman-Enlil, king of Babylon, to Amenhotep III. Apparently, chariots sent as gifts from Babylon were
presented together with vassal tribute in a court ceremony in Egypt (Moran 1992:2). In these tombs all known scenes representing foreigners bringing objects to the Egyptian court are located in the traverse hall (Porter & Moss 1960). These tombs were regularly visited by family, friends and others who together with the deceased formed a community united in the cult of the dead and ancestral cult which served to secure the future existence of the deceased (Fitzenreiter 1995:96-97).

However, when looking at representations of these court-based events in the tombs, meant to be seen also by those who did not have the privilege to attend, we are left with Aegean princes bringing $jnw in exchange for the breath of life, even though we know that rulers were not present, but rather their emissaries. Restricted knowledge is here transformed by art into images appropriate for the tomb and its visitors. Next to the term restricted knowledge, John Baines introduced one more highly useful concept in Egyptological studies of visual and written culture. For Baines, Egyptian art was ordered by decorum which he explains as ‘a set of rules and practices defining what may be represented and pictorially with captions, displayed, and possibly written down, in which context and in what form’ (1990:20).

As a concept decorum may not correspond to any word in the ancient Egyptian language, but it is a principle observable in the material, actions and representations, and was probably deeply embedded not to require any formulation (similarly to Bourdieu’s habitus). According to Baines, parallels between decorum and restricted knowledge are important not only because of power relations but also because of the sacral character of a great deal of knowledge. Decorum is deeply connected to enacting and representing the proper order of the world. Baines views decorum as a ‘total social fact’ referring to the work of Marcel Mauss (Baines 2006:15-30). I would like to point out that decorum can transform restricted knowledge into more widely available knowledge by ordering how some things and events ought to look, and not how they really looked or did not look. Thus material culture plays a crucial role as an agent of these transformations and orderings.

Recent archaeological discussions have underlined the difference between material culture and materiality slowly but surely exchanging the former term with the later (Meskell 2004:1-7; Miller 2005:4-15; Tilley 2007:17-20), however, without any clear distinctions between the two (Fahlander 2008:129-131). The focus shifted from studies of meanings and symbols, thus material culture as text, to material culture as possessing agency, be that secondary agency, pseudo agency or human-like agency (Olsen 2003:95-96; Meskell 2004:4-9; Miller 2005:11-15; Fahlander 2008:131-136; Knappet & Malafouris 2008). Major theoretical background was found in the works of Alfred Gell (1998) and Bruno Latour (1999; 2005). Alfred Gell (1998:6) approached ‘art as a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it,’ rejecting a semiotic approach and arguing that art is not like a text. He puts more emphasis on agency, intention,
causation, result and transformation (Gell 1998:6). Moreover it was argued that post-humanocentric studies of agency of material culture cannot go together with hermeneutic perspectives dealing with meaning and interpretation (Fahlander 2008:131). This can easily stray away to, in my opinion, a quite dangerous dichotomy between language and materiality. We should acknowledge that materiality is bound up with signification from the start (Butler 1993:30). Proponents of Gell’s anthropological theory of art have stressed that even in his work semiotics are not completely an aside (Tanner & Osborne 2007:8-12).

Gell’s ‘art nexus’ is useful in explaining the effects of decorum in four basic concepts (prototype, artist, index and recipient) where prototype is an entity represented in the image, index is the art work/object/image, and recipient is the observer (Gell 1998). These concepts are in mutual agent-patient relation, thus allowing material culture (images) to affect the observer and to captivate him. The formula discussed in this paper would be:

\[
\text{[[[Recipient-A] \rightarrow Artist-A] \rightarrow Prototype-A] \rightarrow Index-A] \rightarrow Recipient-P.}
\]

The larger arrow at the end represents what is referred to as the core of the situation in which the index acts as agent towards recipients as patients (Gell 1998:59; Tanner & Osborne 2007:14). Here recipients would be both tomb owners (Recipient-A) and tomb visitors (Recipient-P). The key difference is that tomb owners, Egyptian artists (Artist-A), Aegean emissaries (Prototype-A) and the represented scenes (Index-A) are agents and tomb visitors patients. It is important to include here the agency of the tomb owner and his restricted knowledge which is here transformed into available knowledge (Index and abducted meanings). Inclusion of the tomb-owner’s agency explains why Aegean figures appear as wrw and the objects they bring as jnw. The problem with tomb-owner’s agency is in the fact that it is in parallel, if not colliding with, the agency of decorum itself, because canonical representations in ancient Egypt were manufactured by artists working within the tightly constrained parameters of a system of craft-specialized production and this canonical depiction took the primary ontology (the divine plan) as a prototype (Davis 2007:216-217). The artist would in this case be no more than a medium for the tomb-owner’s agency being primary.

Gell’s algebra used here could of course be further elaborated by adding the king and gods as primary agents; however I argue that their inclusion is already implied in decorum. Objects which were brought by emissaries or ambassadors from the Aegean as gifts to be returned by the Egyptian king are represented in Theban tombs as objects exchanged for the breath of life, and not reciprocal gifts, and brought by princes, not their representatives. This can be interpreted in different ways, and and these need not mutually exclude each other. It is very possible that the deceased
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represented scenes according to \( m^3t \) (order and harmony) and ideology of kingship, representing his king as an invincible universal ruler of the world. Egyptian canons of representation had a continuous role in legitimating the social and immutable and eternal cosmic order embodied in kingship. Kingship and cosmology were known to many beholders principally by pictorial representations and for some solely by them (Davis 2011:19). Mario Liverani argues that incoming goods labelled as \( jnw \) were used for propaganda purposes for the sake of control of inner Egyptian populace (Liverani 2001:180). Being that these events were highly unpredictable, as it was previously argued based on papyrus Koller and later Amarna letters, maybe the tomb owners wanted to control these events for the afterlife, when they were to continue their duties. If they were unpredictable in their life, like previously argued, why not bind them in image for the afterlife? This would probably be a magical relief. Nevertheless, what is crucial here is that all of this, however interpreted, is achieved via images.

The power/knowledge game was particularly important for the perception of reality. It is my opinion that restricted knowledge about court ceremonies and their participants can be understood as ‘reality’, and the abducted meanings construct ‘the virtual’. What is interesting is that virtual reality can in the end become as real as reality (Žižek 2002:11), and abducted meanings directed by the tomb owner through images as secondary agencies can be as real as restricted knowledge, at least for those who do not possess it. In simulating reality through representation/image as an artificial medium, what is necessary is to reproduce these features that make the image realistic from a spectator’s point of view (Žižek 2005:334). Images are thus not mirrors of reality, but what they share with mirrors is the power of transformation (Gombrich 1960:5). They can structure parallel social worlds perceived as realities. Here they transformed the reality of diplomacy into virtual reality of ancient Egyptian kingship and domination, and back again into the reality of the virtual for those who did not attend the ceremonies and lacked the restricted knowledge. Images materialized events according to decorum and the Egyptian privileged world view (spectator’s point of view). Thus, there are no true and false meanings of images; rather they are contextually true or false depending on the abduction. We ought to examine this boundary defining the real and the false. In the end several events can be simultaneously materialized with each and every materialization depending on the observer’s status and knowledge.

Conclusion: Towards a cultural ‘topography’ of the Aegean figures and Keftiu

Representations of Aegean figures and Syrian-Aegean hybrid figures are especially interesting from the point of view of decorum and materiality. Namely, Aegean figures are hybridised only with Syrian figures (Tomb of Puimre, Tomb of Menkheperreseneb); Aegean objects are transferred to Syrian figures and visa versa; the term Keftiu labels
Syrian figures in the tomb of Menkheperreseneb and Amenemhab (Fig. 5). Thus, it is clear that there is a predetermined connection between what we identify as ‘Aegean’ and ‘Syrian’; as there are no hybridisations of Aegean elements with other elements accept ‘Syrian’. As for transference, there are only a few examples of transference of other elements (non-Syrian) into registers with Aegean figures. Regarding hybridisation it was previously argued by Wachsmann (1987:8) that this is a consequence of an artist’s desire to vary colour scheme or a way to represent an unseen ‘people’ – Hittites. I disagree with the first idea because it explains only hybridisation, and not the quite specific transference of iconographic elements and accompanying texts as well (Syrian vessels into Aegeans scenes). Also, why would there be a hybrid figure among four northern princes in the tomb of Puimre? Why would the artist vary colour of only one of the four figures? Diamantis Panagiotopulos, referring to hybrid objects and transference, suspects that there was Egyptian incapability or indifference in clearly distinguishing foreign artistic traditions (2012:56). However, that there were entirely nonarbitrary decorum ordered transferences and hybridisations indicates anything but incapability or indifference. All these questions lead to the question of hybridisation fusing together unlike things, at least at the first glance.

Fig. 5. TT 85: Amenemhab. Syrian figures labelled as *kfrjw* and *mmnws*, third register, drawing (after Davies 1934: Plate XXV).
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Decorum is that which is clearly determining what is to be transferred and where and what can be hybridised. Since it is closely related to a culturally specific world view, it is interesting to question this connection between 'Aegean' and 'Syrian' further. The tomb of Puimre names the Aegean-Syrian hybrid figure as coming from the far north, from 'Asia' (Davies 1922:90). Aegean figures, together with Syrian ones, were associated with the lands in the north, while Nubian figures were associated with regions to the south in the tomb of Menkheperreseneb (Strange 1980:16-56). Turning to other evidence related to Keftiu, 'The London Medical Papyrus' mentions two spells in the Keftiu language and one of them was used against an 'Asiatic' disease (Strange 1980:99-101; Kyriakidis 2002:211-216). If we bear in mind that there are numerous examples in Egyptian magic where like is used to fight like (Ritner 1993) we can perhaps argue for one more element connecting Keftiu and Aegean figures with the Egyptian concept of 'Asia'. Maybe this is one possible way to understand the famous Aegean list on a statue base of Amenhotep III from his temple et Kom el-Hetan on the left bank of the Nile facing Luxor (Strange 1980:21-27; Wachsmann 1987:98; Cline & Stannish 2011). The fact that the terms Keftiu and tjnAyw, here associated with Aegean toponyms, can also be found in association with Syrian toponyms in Egyptian texts, doesn't necessarily indicate that Keftiu and tjnAyw can be physically located in Syria-Palestine in the Late Bronze Age (contra Vandersleyen 2003:210-211).

The connection between Keftiu and the north in Egyptian cultural geography, more precisely to the northern horizon, was already emphasized by Joachim Quack, who located Keftiu in the northern land of the gods, and identified it with Crete (1996:77-79). His conclusions are confirmed by decorum based analysis in this paper. The basic problem is that the majority of previous studies of Aegean figures depicted in Theban Eighteenth Dynasty tombs were used for occidental materializations of 'Minoans', and that those Egyptologists who pointed to associations of Keftiu with Syria did not pay too much attention to these images. Those, who did, however, continued materialising 'Minoans' as western. The problem in both cases is in the Orientalism of the disciplines. After analysing decorum in these representations it is better to call for a specific 'cultural topography' in order to explain why figures definitely coming from the Aegean world are associated with 'north' and 'Asia' in an Egyptian world view. Only cultural 'topography' can reconcile Minoan Crete as the homeland of the represented Aegean figures with the placement of Keftiu and tjnAyw among places in 'Asia'. If we move beyond our modern geographical definitions and order of things in the world, maybe we can grasp the otherness of past world views and diorientalize both Minoan archaeology and Egyptology.

The fact that images can be used to materialize profoundly different 'Minoans' (race, people, princes of a people, emissaries of a political unit in the eastern Mediterranean etc.) only adds to the idea that it is not reality entering an image, it was the image.
which entered and shattered reality, symbolic coordinates which determine what we experience as reality (Žižek 2002:16). Images of foreigners in the Theban Eighteenth Dynasty tombs functioned as secondary agencies for sure. Whether or not Aegean figures are interpreted as princes or emissaries, and their objects as gifts or jnw, depends on who perceives them and the knowledge he possesses about the event represented. In the end, perceptions of these figures differed between those who attended the court ceremonies and had restricted knowledge about them, and those who did not (including archaeologists). This was precisely the intention of the privileged tomb owner, and it was achieved visually, via imagery.

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Ancient sources

Designed Surfaces

Ole Christian Aslaksen

Abstract Design is an underexplored field in archaeology, but offers many possibilities as it is also, in essence, about material culture. In this paper I explore design theory as well as the meaning of the concept. ‘Design’ has several definitions, but the polysemic nature of ‘design’ also allows for a flexible analysis that addresses materials, production, ideas and socio-political contexts. In one sense design is problem solving related to everyday tasks. When addressing mass materials, perspectives from design can provide interesting angles. For example, the turban rimmed bowls of the Iron Age Balkans and Central Europe provide an interesting case for a design approach because of their commonness and ubiquitous nature. This study found that the surface of an object was especially important as it provided a common interface for locals as well as travellers.

Introduction

Design has much potential for providing a source of inspiration and becoming a useful concept for archaeologists, and the purpose of this paper is to explore some of these possibilities. Design professionals (including scholars) theorize and create the objects of tomorrow, while archaeologists, as Shanks (2007) points out, sit on millennia of design history. According to Highmore (2009:5), design is all around us. When engaging with the world we orchestrate it, we design it. In this paper ‘design’ is discussed at a conceptual level and a practical level in relation to a case study. Namely, the turban rimmed bowls (Fig. 1) of Early Iron Age Central Macedonia can be explored by taking a design approach.

Central Macedonia was a middle ground between a plethora of the Balkan cultures and Aegean ‘civilizations’ (see Horejs 2005:89). Design theory can provide a vantage point from which to study the layers of different types of mobility within the artefacts: ideas, material, technology, technique and styles moved between distant regions in the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. From the design perspective that emerged in this article, fluted-ware and turban rimmed bowls are interesting because of their commonness, their ubiquitouness, across vast expanses from the Central European plains to the north Aegean shores of Central Macedonia (Figs. 2 and 3). The label ‘Design’ could be placed on mass produced objects like Coca Cola bottles as well as rare, almost bespoke ‘designer objects’ such as a dress cult status
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amongst intellectuals (Bürdek 2005:25, 33, 38). Later, Dreyfuss was successful in this respect in America. He did, however, have an advantage over the Bauhaus movement as his designs were marketed in a burgeoning consumer economy rather than the bankrupt Weimar Republic. Today, according to the British Design Council, design is everywhere. Design, if seen as a visual and practical improvement of an object (Hunter 2011), could include airplane interiors (Dreyfuss 2007) and cities planned by urbanists like Le Corbusier (Engholm & Michelsen 1999:78-81). Currently, in an age of rapid environmental degradation, good design also means sustainable design (Bürdek 2005:84). In the consumer economy of today Human Centred Design fits objects to society employing ethnography and participatory design. Fast feedback from consumers can be collected with the help of inventions such as the Internet (Friedland & Yamauchi 2011). One could almost ask if the consumer is gradually taking the place of the designer.

That design is to some extent mass produced and non-unique is the most important point to be made. The rise of designed objects was a process tied to several factors like the advent of mass production and demand for aesthetically pleasing objects that were not priceless. Design was also seen as a means to reach something, exemplified with the Bauhaus movement’s aim of social synthesis. Design depends not only on the designer’s imagination but also on social conditions. Even if the rise of ‘design’ was connected to specific historical epochs, useful elements can be elucidated. There were no factories with assembly bands in prehistory, but in the Iron Age Balkans, for example, there was a wide distribution of turban rimmed bowls and water bird pendants. Even if not mass produced, these objects were produced in masses. This could be termed non-localized mass production as it was decentralized, the pots being produced at

Fig. 1. Turban Rimmed Bowl (Heurtley Photobase).
several settlements rather than at a central spot. While centralized production requires logistics of objects to distribute them, non-localized mass production required a flow of knowledge. While this point is explored in the case study, the non-unique nature of many archaeological artefacts makes design a plausible approach. Yet, the nature of ‘design’ has been subject to interesting discussions. What is design?

![Map of the Balkans](CIA 1972)

Fig. 2. Map of the Balkans (CIA 1972).

Design?

Heskett (2006) emphasizes that design refers to production, appearance and intention. In a design perspective the object could be said to be the totality of these factors. Heskett sums this up: ‘design is to design a design to produce a design’ (Heskett 2006:16). This quote captures the plurality of meanings of ‘design’ as well as its slippery nature. The first ‘design’ in the sentence is a noun that refers to a general idea about how something could be, while the second is a verb that refers to an action or a process of making. The third is a noun that refers to a sketch and the fourth is another noun that refers to an object (Heskett 2006:16-17). Design refers to physical objects as well as ideas. Flusser (1999; see also Cornell & Fahlander 2002) notes that ‘design’ is derived from Latin and means ‘about signs’. For Flusser (1999:17-21) design is where art and technology come together, a field where beauty and utility unite. Flusser has an interesting point regarding the outcome of this unification. He connects ‘design’
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to *having designs*, a scheme of trickery and deceit. Design adds value to things that have none or little *in sich*. Flusser grasps two important aspects recurring in the design literature: the crafts aspect and the art aspect. This brief etymological exploration reveals that design is an idea behind (intention) the looks (appearance) and the making (production) of objects. Yet it is also a trait and a symbolic dimension as much as something that renders an object useful.

Design is also a profession. Who is the *designer*, an artist, a crafter or someone else? This is perhaps as important to ask as what design is. Henry Dreyfuss is often seen as the father of American industrial design. Designers are in his view akin to ‘inventor-crafters-businessmen’, observers of ‘public taste’ and a link between the consumer and the engineer (Dreyfuss 2007:14). Dreyfus (2007:84), writing from a North American perspective, pointed out that design brings forth beautiful useful
objects that enter the life of most Americans. Design was thus fundamentally different from art, which not everyone could own. Dreyfus worked with both scientists and doctors, addressing questions related to ergonomics as well as economics to create objects that were better and more beautiful. The result of the designing Dreyfuss (2007) proposes could be called an everyday aesthetics. If Flusser’s (1999:17) notion of deceit is recalled, design could be defined as an outer dimension of an artefact, its looks. Yet, would not this outer dimension be contingent upon an inner dimension?

Designing

Knowles, in a tailoring manual for men’s wear, explains that pattern drafting is ‘a design process that involves taking the measurements from a person’s body or a body form, (usually) adding ease to these measurements, and then transferring the measurements onto a paper pattern’ (Knowles 2006:1). ‘Design’ means to conceptualize a body onto a paper sketch. Design is in this view what is between the mind and unmoulded matter, a process of making as much as an aspect of an object: designing.

Alesina and Lupton (2010) propose an approach to designing that starts with the material. Inspiration is sought in materials by ‘studying the properties and behavior of a physical substance to discover and invent forms and solutions’ (Alesina and Lupton 2010:4). According to Alesina and Lupton (2010:4), design is about solving problems: ‘Materials are like words. The richer your design vocabulary the more solutions you see and can express’ (Alesina and Lupton 2010:4).

Materials, as Norman (2002:189, 216) and Pye (1978:51) note, yield resistance and shape our opportunities, and thus further our social life when used in the form of objects. Pye (1978:11) distinguishes art from design on this criterion, noting that design is restrained by functionality while an artist freely paints what he or she wishes. For Pye (1978:55) designing is about solving problems related to how people perform tasks in a world of material resistance. In an example he looks into slicing bread (Pye 1978:50). Pye distinguishes between two types of constraints: mechanical and skilled, the former constant (i.e. the bread), the latter variable as it depends on the skills of a tool’s user (cutting with a knife). These constitute skilled systems and shape determining systems that relate to the choices made by the creator of that object, whether tacitly rooted in tradition or explicitly in a discourse. A shape determining system limits the motions required to use an object to reach a particular goal. These are of concern when an object is being made (Pye 1978:51).

The design process includes intention, production, form and function (Hardt 2006; Heskett 2006:16), and Pye shows how these are connected. In the design process, Alesina and Lupton (2010) emphasize stages such as identifying a problem, widen it, imagine scenarios, field research, brainstorming with materials, get inspired, sketching, testing, refinement, production and marketing. This has similarities with
the processes Michelsen and Engholm discuss (1999). They draw attention to the problem solving aspect of design, and argue that a design problem, for example a chair (addressing sitting), is a palimpsest of problems like ergonomics, materials, production etc. To address design problems, Michelsen and Engholm discuss several design processes like the NATO model which is defined by the stages of 1) research/definition, 2) sketching/alternative solutions, 3) conclusion/solution and 4) production. Approaches to design methods/process can be theoretical or practical, like the NATO formula of the post war era. At the other end of the spectrum, until 1927 the Bauhaus School, and the practically-minded leader Hannes Meyers, were concerned with discovering the nature of the object (Engholm & Michelsen 1999:152). In recent years, the communicative aspect of design has become more and more important. The surface is regarded as an interface which tells the user what the object is, but also yields symbolic values embedded in the artefact (Engholm & Michelsen 1999:160).

The material world is one that yields resistance when inhabited and shaped to fit the needs of people. As a process, designing could be problem solving. An important point that emerges from the problem-solving perspective is that design is related to shaping objects to become task relevant, to ease the performance of, for example, slicing bread. Materials are also shaped to tell people what an object should be, or what the maker has designated it to be. Importantly, the user does not always do as designated by the designer.

Reading design

Much like in archaeology, semantics is discussed in design (e.g. Bürdek 2005; Crilly et al. 2008; Krippendorff 2011; Tilley 1999). A well-designed product should tell the user what it is (Bürdek 2005:15). Yet after the product has entered the hands of the users, the purpose of the object is no longer under the control of the designer. It should be stressed that users are plural. Design could be seen as a form of mass media (Crilly et al. 2008:429). However, as a mass media, it addresses a heterogeneous mass audience. What the look of the product expresses is of great importance to the designer, but how it is encountered by the users is another matter.

Bürdek (2005:15-16) emphasizes that a well-designed object should communicate its identity to the user immediately. A good example is provided by Rusten and Bryson (2010:78): before developing their distinct bottle, the Coca Cola Company had a significant problem with imposters. As their soft drink was bottled locally in cities across the US, it was not hard to sell imitation Cola as Coca Cola. In 1915 a solution came: a distinct bottle that signalled the identity of the content (the authentic Coca Cola) in a clear manner to the consumers, who now immediately could recognize the authenticity of the soft drink they bought. Saddler (2001) discusses the notion of an ‘interpretive community’, a group of people who can ‘read’ a set of objects. Marketing ensured that Americans would recognize the Coca Cola bottle.
Yet there is not a one-to-one relationship between the intentions of the producer and user. Bürdek (2005:329) draws attention to this. The SPOKK project showed how different sub-cultures often employ the same products recombined, although the purpose of using these artefacts would be to define oneself apart from other sub-cultures and society. Using the same codes enables the members of a specific sub-culture to associate with each other and experience a sense of affinity and common identity. Some sub-cultures are related and draw on each other’s symbols making the borders between them less defined. Sub-cultures which are regarded as opposed to each other can in fact also use similar material expressions, and on some occasions they may look quite similar. The looks can deceive, perhaps especially if discussed out of context.

Archaeology and design

In archaeology design has been picked up by specialists in fields ranging from the Stone Age to Classics. Ahler and Geib (2000:804-805) define design as ‘the purposeful creation of a product to meet a specific goal under various constraints’. Earlier Binford (1965:205) used design to describe the form of a finished object. As in design studies, there is no single definition of design in archaeology.

Schiffer (et al. 2001:732), summarizing archaeological design inspired approaches, relates it to chaîne opératoire and object biographies. To a greater extent than for example the chaîne opératoire, archaeologies that employ design approaches emphasize connections between social and technological factors, power relations and gender in production processes: in short it regards the process of crafting as embedded within a larger social structure (Schiffer et al. 2001:732). These thoughts are echoed in Schiffer and Skibo’s later work on behavioural chains, which is presented as a ‘user friendly’ version of design inspired archaeology that includes use, maintenance, reuse, deposition and post manufacture processes (Schiffer & Skibo 2008:9).

Caple (2005:12-6), drawing on Horsfall (1987), argues that by backtracking the production sequence one would be able to elucidate a social process of production. Artefacts could, according to Caple (2005:18), be bespoke (rare and prestigious), crafted (occasional) or mass produced (by the thousands). Caple (2005:8) posits that function and form are tied to the choice of material and deals with the material of the materiality. An archaeological method of design emphasizes that object forms are created within material, technological, social and economic frameworks of constraining factors. Caple (2005) addresses this by following the life of an artefact biographically. In these respects his approach has similarities with that of Schiffer and Skibo (2008). Cornell and Fahlander (2002:74), using Flusser (1999) as a vantage point, draws attention to the possibility of using design as a bridge between different aspects like form and decoration as design would encompass style, form, material and technique. Cornell and Fahlander (2002:75) also discuss the art historian Kubler’s (1962) idea of sequence and series and notes that an object from a different time series can draw...
their decorative inspiration from a different sequence of (use-) related objects (i.e. that pot decoration could be inspired by mats). In a study along the lines envisaged by Cornell and Fahlander (2002:16-7) it would be necessary to include several artefact groups where different ‘fibres’ of style and modes of organization and production would connect artefacts. The idea of fibres is essential in ‘micro-archaeology’ (Cornell & Fahlander 2002), which posits that one can start to weave from the localized to explore larger contexts. Connecting larger complex social structures into the production of objects is also a component in the works of Shanks. Shanks has dealt with several aspects of design both in books (e.g. Shanks 1999) and at his website (Shanks 2012). He discusses how design is about transformation of matter, and thus a series of repetitious technological choices with a background in an active tradition that accommodates for innovation and creativity (which can only be recognized against tradition). Through ‘reverse engineering’ an array of social conditions can be elucidated from the design process of the design. Shanks describes the design of the Corinthian aryballos as ‘located within the work of the potter, acts of exchange and consumption, rituals of death and dedication’ (Shanks 2007). Could the artefact then be seen as the shape of society?

Design archaeology?

While there is no unified design discussion in archaeology, this brief presentation of design provides several points that can be discussed in relation to archaeological material. A vantage point could be to think about the design as both an idea (a design) and a production (designing) process aimed at solving a problem. A problem could be as mundane as slicing bread (Pye 1978). Design is mass-produced; its non-uniqueness is of importance. Design is everyday aesthetics, and unifies utility with beauty communicating what the object is supposed to be. What becomes of the matter moulded in the designing process depends on both the intention of the designer and on the proficiency of the user in ‘reading’ the artefact, which can be combined into new and unexpected contexts. An interesting point that should also be made is that designers address matter. Conkey (2006) points out that the material is often forgotten in studies of material culture. Can design bring in new perspectives in this regard? An important point made by Shanks (2007) is that objects and the shape of human society tangle. A pot could in this perspective say something about social fabric. The designed surface is a social interface and a meeting ground. These ideas are suitable in a case study of turban rimmed bowls. When approaching turban rimmed bowls as design, one could address ‘horizontal’ perspectives (if the design idea is conceptualized in other materials) as well as vertical perspectives (discussing steps in the designing process). While the discussion in the case study touches sites in other parts of the Balkans as well, Central Macedonia in Northern Greece is emphasized as this was a cultural and geographic meeting place in the Iron Age.
Points of discussion in an archaeological design approach could thus be:
- Mass-production and mass-consumption
- Designing and the appearance of the object, its design.
- Materials
- Social and political contexts
- Problem solving

A case study of fluted ware

In prehistory we are faced with wide distribution and often great quantities of objects that are more or less similar in terms of decoration and form. Mass production of non-uniqueness is a trait of design, and a perspective that should be discussed in archaeology. Roman coins fit this description well. This would even to some extent be true for Roman marble sculptures, as they could be mass-copies of Greek works in bronze. Further, archaeologists most often deal with everyday objects rather than the bespoke. Today, objects mass-produced in one place can be distributed across the globe, mass-communicating messages. In prehistory, the Late Bronze Age Uluburun ship’s load is a tangible expression of the great quantities of travelling goods (Pulak 1998).

The turban rimmed bowl of the Iron Age illustrates the journeys of pots and decoration techniques as well as aesthetics. This bowl type is found in Central Europe and all the way down to the shores of Northern Greece (Bulatović 2009:108; Hochstetter 1984:ill. 58). A fluted incurved rim, with almost horizontal or diagonal channels, is the defining trait of the turban rimmed bowl. It had a mass audience, even if not centrally produced, due to its wide distribution. Today, designs can be created in an office in for example California, materialized in China, with materials from several continents. The product, a cell phone or a pair of shoes, is then distributed across the globe to consumers via super tankers, trailers, trains and planes. In the Iron Age none of these transportation modes were available. Still we witness the wide distribution of certain types of very similar objects, for example turban rimmed bowls. The turban rimmed bowl provides a design problem as well as a mobility problem.

Before one could ask which problem the countless ‘proto-designers’ of the Iron Age tried to address with their turban rims, it is pertinent to ask how the turban rimmed bowls were made. The designing of the turban rimmed bowls was fairly similar at sites across the Balkans (for South Balkan see Hochstetter 1984) despite the fact that the settlement milieus were different. It appeared in several different cultures in the Balkans in the period ca.1300-500 BC. The turban rimmed bowls are found at flat sites such as Kalanik-Igrišće II in Croatia (Karavanić 2009:37) and the tell site of Kastanas (Fig. 4) or Limnotopos in the northern Greek Central Macedonia (Heurtley 1939:33), two quite different environments. Bowls vary in size but in general have inverted rims. Sometimes applied bosses can be found on their bodies. Within the wider fluted-ware assemblage of Central Macedonia, the burning can also
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vary. Whether brown or metallic grey, with or without fire clouds, a basic property was shared by objects that constitute the type turban rimmed bowls: designed by repeatedly drawing a finger or a broad round tipped tool across the rim when the clay was semi-dry and while turning the bowl slowly, a fluted rim design was conceptualized. In some instances, pseudo-turban rims can be distinguished. In these cases the fluted channels are so shallow that they do not affect the ‘plasticity’ of the rim, which means that they are not visible in the profile of the pot (Kovačević 2009: 56). When creating the channels, one would design a surface that defined the turban rimmed bowl: its designed surface.

In some instances, pseudo-turban rims can be distinguished. In these cases the fluted channels are so shallow that they do not affect the ‘plasticity’ of the rim, which means that they are not visible in the profile of the pot (Kovačević 2009:56). Bulatović (2009) divides fluted rims into two main categories. The first and earliest, stemming from BrD (c. 1300-1200 BC) north-eastern Hungary/South Slovakia, was signified by roughly horizontal channels, while the second was later known as far south as northern Greece and is signified by diagonal channels. Creating these channels required repetitive motions while the motions behind the diagonal channels were short, the horizontal channels would have required longer motions as they reach around the rim. The long motions were non-repetitive. This can

Fig. 4. The tell of Kastanas (Photo: Ole Christian Aslaksen).
be recognized as the horizontal channels do not resemble each other while the diagonal ones do. The fluting was the stage in the design process that distinguished turban rimmed bowls from other bowls. The clay had already been mixed and then treated and molded into a shape. In northern Greece and the Balkans, and further north in Central Europe, the former part of the design process was the same: the conceptualization of channels onto a bowl rim, giving it a trans-regional identity. While the idea of fluting, the design, was non-local, the clay was in most instances local. What does fluting resemble? The fluted handle could resemble a rope or a horn. It looks as if someone twisted it, and is often referred to as a twisted handle (Fig. 5). While fluted-ware, including the widespread turban rimmed bowl, did not reach southern Greece, there are some instances of Mycenaean handles that look twisted, known from LH Menelaion and Scimitari (Catling 2009:cat. no. 35A; Mountjoy 1983:pl.16 fig. 65b). In the latter case it was even painted. Handles with grooves that resemble twistedness is also found in Troy VII (Blegen et al. 1958:fig. 272, 19-21). Although a different medium, metal objects can actually be twisted. Neck-rings and needle heads could actually have been twisted while hot after the shape had been created from the metal. What came first, the fluted pottery or metal? In Central Macedonia in Northern Greece the fluted handles antedated the twisted neck-ring which appeared in the tenth century BC in Central Macedonia (Hochstetter 1987:37). The neck-rings were, however, known in large parts of Europe, and were most likely not influenced by fluted handles in Central Macedonia. The twisted design was conceptualized in several materials, the fine metal neck-rings probably belonged to the sphere of adornment. Perhaps one could have served a guest with a twisted neck-ring with a turban rimmed bowl? Diagonal fluted turban rimmed bowls look similar to a twisted neck-ring, and through their designed surfaces they connected.

Hochstetter (1984:194) proposes that an increase of fluted-ware at Kastanas after ca.1200 BC could suggest a process of ‘localization’: after first importing fluted pottery, the inhabitants of Kastanas began to produce their own. At the North Greek site of Kastanas, the turban rimmed bowl was developed (in layer 12) after the fluting design had been introduced (layer 13). This means that the idea of fluting travelled faster than some of the pot shapes, in this case the turban rimmed bowl. The design of the turban rim travelled to a Kastanas where the inhabitants already had a taste for fluted designs, however recent. The fluted-ware of Central Macedonia was previously referred to as Lausitz pottery by Heurtley (1939:129), who posited that the occurrence of this pottery indicated an invasion from the north. This is questioned by Wadle et al. (1980:262), who points out that the fluted-ware did not differ much from the local wares.

The fabric of the fluted-ware in Northern Greece is described as gritty (Heurtley 1939:98), and especially compared to the contemporary LH IIIC – PG pottery, it
was rather coarse. Hochstetter remarks that the fluted ware has a dark blackish core beneath an often well burnished grey or brown surface (Hochstetter 1984:188). Some of the fluted-ware shapes were also known in non-fluted variants like the kantharos, also known from the Bronze Age (see Hochstetter 1984:61). Cup bodies and jug handles are also frequently encountered to be fluted, the handles appearing to be twisted. These handles were often found at cut away neck jugs. The non-fluted versions of these could be wheel-made tying the form to yet another tradition, the Aegean. With locally mixed clay and an already trans-regionally shared decoration technique that was localized already, the ancient potters designed a trans-regionally shared design – the turban rimmed bowl.

A seemingly simple form, the designing of the turban rimmed bowl could illustrate the complex notion of design captured in the writings of Heskett (2006:16). Conventionally, designing is the process that leads up to the production of an object, the translation of a design idea into matter, which provides both opportunities as well as resistance. While the material and the designing of the turban rimmed pots took place locally, the design idea and method were trans-regionally shared. Designs (ideas) do not move by themselves, and it is perhaps timely to ask why these pots were successful in so many places. Why did the ancient potters at these sites engage in a non-localized mass production? What problem did they seek to address?

Design as problem solving is related to aesthetics and utility, or rather the unity of these. Fluting has no direct utilitarian function, while one can eat or drink from a bowl. By fluting a bowl rim the designer could possibly increase the chance of spilling
due to the shape of the channels. The incurved rim would in most incidences not permit pouring. A fluted jug handle could enhance the grip of for example a cut away neck jug. Such jugs never had fluted rims and were excellent for serving liquids. Likewise cups do not tend to have fluted rims. Were the rims then fluted because one did not pour or drink from these bowls? While this remains speculative, the fluting does in a general way limit the potential uses of the turban rimmed bowl – it offers resistance. Yet what did people see when they encountered a turban rimmed bowl?

The first answer would be something slightly different depending on the context. After all it was employed from Slovakia to the Aegean, presumably in dining. In the preceding Bronze Age there is evidence of connections to both the north and the south in Northern Greece. A good example is the Central European horse-bit from Toumba Thessaloniki in Central Macedonia (Andreou et al. 1996:582). In the burials of Vergina, ornamental double axe pendants were uncovered, and water bird pendants were found at Tsautitsa. These were known across the Balkans and even at Peloponnesus (Andronikos 1969; Casson 1924). Further, twisted neck-rings have also been found in Central Macedonia (Hochstetter 1987). These ornaments could have followed travellers, potentially taking part of a long distance network. Parallel to these journeys, one could also postulate a constant short distance movement fueled by intermarriage and local trade (see Andreou 2002). Intermarriage could have moved potters with design knowledge of fluting, while the design ideas or the receptivity towards them could have been transmitted through both long and short distance movement. As people encountered the pot designs ‘abroad’, they could perhaps more easily use them when they were introduced by the potters at home. A possibility could be that the turban rimmed pots addressed the problem of a lingua franca of dining across the Balkans and into Central Europe. Much of the pottery assemblage was not shared in this large part of Europe. There is ample proto-geometric pottery in Croatia unlike in northern Greece where they take part in an Aegean and a Balkan tradition simultaneously. Following Bürdek (2005) the non-unique turban rimmed bowl was combined into various unique local assemblages. Yet the designed surface of the pot provided a common interface for travellers from other places in the Balkans and Central Europe. This could have been a design problem solved with a seemingly simple pot produced in great quantities in many places simultaneously.

If the turban rimmed bowl connected disparate assemblages throughout the Balkans and Central Europe, it could be relevant to ask what kind of social context this happened in. Around 1200 BC, a series of collapses took place across the Mediterranean. In Southern Greece this was a faltering process, with brief revivals. In the long run, however, the Greek Iron Age saw the emergence of a different society culminating in the emergence of the Polis. While the southern Greek Iron Age is traditionally seen as a period of decline and social organization at a reduced level, there are no apparent long term setbacks at a regional level in Central Macedonia.
Although the settlements of Kastanas, Axiochori (also known as Vardarhofsta), Limnotopos (Vardino), Tsoutsitsa were destroyed by fires, and beyond the FYRO Macedonian border the settlement of Vardaraki Rid was moved to a nearby defendable hill (Heurtley 1939: 31-39; Mitrevski 2005: 101-102). However the disruption seems not to have spread to the neighbouring areas of the Langadas Basin and the Thermaic gulf (Wardle 2010). The settlement of Kibilin was surrendered at the dawn of the Iron Age, but generally there seems to be continuity into the Iron Age. In the long run there is no great decline in the number of sites along the Axios River (Besios et al. 1997) although the sites destroyed by fire were located in the hinterlands of the river.

The first written source that deals with northern Greece is the Iliad, conventionally believed to have been written in the Iron Age. The Paeonians count amongst the Trojan allies and dwelt on shores of the Axios (Hom. Il. 2.848-851) which according to Heurtley (1939: 36) formed the Priam’s western border. In the Classical period, Herodotus wrote about both Paeonians (Hdt. 5.16) and their neighbours the Macedonians (Hdt. 7.123-124). Northern Greece, rich in resources like timber and metals, also attracted Greek colonists in the eighth century if not earlier (Morris 2000:217; Tiverios 2008:4-5) making the region inherently multi-cultural. While it is hard to match up specific tribes from written sources with the archaeological material, it should be kept in mind that the North Aegean could have emerged as inherently fragmented in the Iron Age. New extramural cemeteries with rich graves appear at Paleo Gynaikokastro (Savopoulou 1987:530) and Tsoutsitsa (Heurtley 1939:32), and the large embanked sites referred to as tables surpass the Bronze Age tells in terms of size. Burials of a Bronze Age date have yet to be uncovered in the vicinity of the Axios while at Toubba Thessaloniki, a few comparatively inconspicuous burials have been uncovered in the storage areas of the large compound-like houses (Mulliez 2010:136-137). While there could well have been troubles along the Axios, the long term effect of the changes in the Iron Age was the rise of larger settlements and extramural prestige burials. In this context the connections with the Balkans were reproduced through fluted dining sets and adorning bird pendants and twisted neck-rings.

The fluted-ware has been seen as the hallmark of northern Lausitz invaders (Heurtley 1939:129), yet this invasion could have been rather limited (Wardle 2010). At Assiros and Toubba Thessaloniki there is no evidence pointing to conquest by hostile invaders although the inhabitants had fluted handles on some of their jugs. The movement of designs and designing methods does not necessitate a foreign invasion. Hänsel (2002) proposes a takeover by new elites at Kastanas as the settlement that preceded the destruction was weakened (layer 14a). However, the new elite did not discard local traditional handmade and wheel-made pottery, of which the latter resembled Aegean types. Even so, a new elite could have introduced a taste for fluted designs, which could then have spread in local short distance networks to, for example, Toubba in Thessaloniki. This explanation could work regardless of whether the elite
were migrant, or represented the adaptation of a new ideology by a group of locals. The turmoil indicated at sites like Kastanas and Axiochori could be a symptom of increased competition and a focus on individuals such as those buried with their embossed shields at Tsautsitsa (Casson 1926). This competition could have been spurred on by new elites.

Regardless of whether an invasion took place or not along the Axios, or had a wider impact, there seem to have been significant social changes at the dawn of the Iron Age, leading to new burial customs and settlement types as well as pot designs (for an overview of Kastanas, see Hänsel 2002). While the production of Mycenaean-style pottery and the use of marble-hilted swords suggests contact with the Mycenaeans until their demise (Wadle et al. 1980:253), the production of Balkan-style cooking pots, fine encrusted handmade kantharoi and the conspicuous Central European horse-bit suggests contacts with both the north and the south, making Central Macedonia a middle ground in the Late Bronze Age (see Horejs 2005). From the publications of Jung (2002: catalogue no. 164, 179, 316, 434-437, 491) and Hochstetter (1984: plate. 62.7, 64.10, 78.2, 99.3 and 99.7, and 102.1) it is evident that the ‘Flechtwandaus’ and ‘Leichtbau’ of layer 13, ‘Haupthaus’ (room 2) of layer 12, and the ‘Zentralhaus’ (room 1-3), and the ‘Folgebau’ (‘Westraum’ and ‘Vorhalle’) had both wheel-made pottery connected to the Aegean traditions as well as ‘Northern’ fluted-ware. The occurrence of wheel-made pottery and fluted-ware in the same buildings in the Iron Age layers suggest the role as a middle ground persisted despite disruptions. The new fluted-ware could have come with invaders or was transmitted through short distance contact, but the turban rimmed bowl offered the possibility of dining with travellers from both the north and the south with familiar bowls. The turban rims enabled the dwellers of Central Macedonia to communicate a belonging to the Central European and Balkan spheres, while at the same time take part in the Aegean sphere. A traveller from these regions could read a part of the local assemblage. Turban rimmed bowls, a meeting point for different Balkan and even Central European travellers, could have propelled the larger networks to the north.

To summarize, it could be said that local materials were moulded into a trans-regional shape, the turban rimmed bowl, in a social environment of increased competition. When the first channel was drawn on the rim of an incurved rim bowl in the design process, a choice was made regarding what the pot should become – a turban rimmed bowl. The fluted-ware assemblage of which it was a part could have been connected with metals through the design idea of twistedness. By mass-designing turban rimmed bowls across the Balkans at several sites, a non-localized mass production, a common interface could have been the problem that was solved by fluted designs on the pot surface. The solution was contingent upon design knowledge that emerged with other pot shapes in Central Macedonia slightly before the turban rimmed bowl was introduced. While the metal could actually be twisted and bent when hot, the
plasticity (Kovačević 2009:56) and the twistedness was obtained with a different technique when applied to pottery as clay yields a different kind of resistance from metal. Regarding the twisted design of the turban rim we could recall Flusser’s (1999:17) notion of design as deceit as it would have been impossible to twist the clay rim. Through the object surfaces the design could have connected rims and neck-rings. Both have wide distributions; could the mobility of one have spurred that of the other, or facilitated it, i.e. through its non-localized mass production did it create a surface for the other to travel on?

Concluding Remarks

A discussion of design can yield several interesting perspectives for archaeology. Its polysemic nature and background, when explored and discussed, offers the possibility of connecting seemingly disparate topics such as mass-production, the relationship between appearance and production, materials and socio-political contexts under one heading. Design emphasizes materials and resistance as well as the context, which could be interesting in a material culture perspective.

The non-unique and widely distributed objects that are encountered in e.g. the Iron Age can be approached as a design trait. Design adds aesthetics to everyday life, and well-designed objects help the users with daily tasks such as cutting bread. It is precisely this - daily life - that archaeology addresses best. In a design perspective looks are impossible to separate from the function of an artefact as this is what tells the user what the object is for. Design can be used to look at the object as a totality of production and appearance, as well as to break it up. As observed by Shanks (2007), design can also tie potting to politics: while looking into choices in the production process, one can also relate this to a larger social and political setting.

How could a design approach assist in elucidating an archaeological material? The critical moment in the designing of the turban rimmed bowl was when the channels were drawn, yet once produced the turban rimmed bowl was most likely immediately recognized tacitly by users who tacitly read it. Although situated in different cultures, the turban rimmed bowls of Central Macedonia allowed both locals and Balkan travellers to dine from familiar dishes (even if a proto-geometric jug must have looked ‘foreign’ to a Central European traveller). While the intentions behind designing turban rimmed bowls probably differed in northern Greece and Slovakia, the design that was amalgamated into the unique local contexts provided a known element for travellers even if implicitly (rather than explicitly) recognized. The designing of the decoration was, however, similar. In the modern world, the spread of a design can be achieved over e-mail. In the Early Iron it was tied to the mobility of people: elites on long distance journeys to secure trade agreements or warrior bands, shepherds, traders and sons or daughters to be married at the settlement next door. The latter
form of mobility in particular could transfer knowledge if the son or daughter had potting knowledge. At the same time crafters, or ‘proto-designers’, could have travelled to seek employment. With the turban rimmed bowl a trans-regionally shared design was designed in local clay. The design idea could be translated into metal as well even if metal and clay have different properties and was distributed more widely. This could have entrenched the idea of twistedness into the traditions of widespread communities. The designed surfaces of the turban rimmed bowl provided a meeting ground as well as a dish.

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Pictorial and visual elements are special types of archaeological data that transgress boundaries: between us and the past and between the material and immaterial. Traditionally, images have been discussed in terms of what they represent, mean or symbolize. In this volume, the authors explore other ways in which images affect and engage the beholder and the modes in which they are entangled in past worlds.

The articles comprise examples from various regions and time periods and include a diverse array of topics including northern European rock art of the Neolithic and Bronze Age, anthropomorphic aspects of ceramic pots and figures in gold, erotic themes on children's burial vessels, and nineteenth-century rock art created by quarantined sailors in Australia.