

Sivs festskrift



Primitive tider

Sivs festskrift

Primitive tider

Spesialutgave 2023



Primitive
tider

Redaktører spesialutgave: Anja Mansrud, Ingunn Røstad, Unn Pedersen og Kristin Armstrong Oma

Spesialutgave 2023

ISSN 1501-0430

Postadresse:

Primitive tider

Postboks 6727, St. Olavs plass

0130 Oslo

Norway

Epost: kontakt@primitive-tider.com

Nettside: <https://journals.uio.no/PT/index>

Ombrekk: Marie Dave Amundsen

Trykk: Grafisk senter, Universitetet i Oslo

© CC BY 4.0

Forsideillustrasjon: Arne Johan Nærøy © Arkeologisk museum, Universitetet i Stavanger.

Foto s. 3 (neste side): Bodil Teig, Gyldendal.

Skrive for Primitive tider?

Primitive tider oppfordrer spesielt uetablerte forfattere til å skrive. Vi er interessert i artikler, kommentarer til tidligere artikler og rapporter (enklere, ikke fagfellevurderte tekster). Kanskje blir din artikkel neste nummers debatttema! Send inn ditt manuskript og la det få en faglig og seriøs vurdering av redaksjonen. Husk at hele prosessen kan være tidkrevende, så planegg i god tid.

Innleveringsfrister og forfatterveiledningen finner du på våre nettsider:

<https://journals.uio.no/PT/index>



Dear Siv,

Throughout the years you have inspired us all immensely, with your books, articles, talks in museums and beyond, and not least the many informal chats. You approach people like you approach the archaeological material, with curiosity and enthusiasm, seeing and supporting us at the different stages in our careers. You generously share your vast knowledge and keen insights. Combining a sharp eye with a kind and inviting attitude, you encourage people around you and make them aware of their strengths. With this book we hope to give something back to you as a token of our appreciation. Here is a collection of articles from researchers and museum staff you have encountered at different times in your career, and a Tabula reflecting your wide international network of colleagues and friends.

When sending out the invitation to a selected group to contribute with a paper to this collection, we made the order both specific and open, simply asking for ‘something you would like Siv to read!’ The invitation included texts to be peer reviewed, and more popularising, non-reviewed papers. The result is a mix of texts from scholars in various fields, including craft practitioners and designers. The outcome shows that the contributors have taken our request to heart, making this a personal book, with contributions both in English and all the Scandinavian languages on various “Siv-related” topics.

The book testifies to your huge impact, and how your thinking and publications have stimulated research in various fields. You will notice how the contributors have a secondary agenda, reminding you of all the research projects – big and small – and all the discussion and dialogue still ahead of you. We hope you will take these hints as subtle invitations towards further joint efforts and collaborations in the years to come.

The editors, Anja Mansrud, Ingunn Røstad, Unn Pedersen og Kristin Armstrong Oma,
on behalf of all of us

Tabula Gratulatoria

Marie Dave Amundsen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Ingvild Andreassen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Anders Andrén,
Stockholms universitet

Rica Annaert,
Ekeren

Arkeologisk bibliotek,
Universitetet i Oslo

Kristin Armstrong Oma,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Morten Axboe og Else Bojsen,
Virum

Irene Baug,
Universitetet i Bergen

Charlotte Behr,
University of Roehampton London

Birgitta Berglund,
NTNU

Jostein Bergstøl,
Universitetet i Oslo

Knut Andreas Bergsvik,
Universitetet i Bergen

Rosie Bishop,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Ruth Blankenfeldt,
Zentrum für Baltische und Skandinavische
Archäologie

Meriem Boulaziz,
Universitetet i Oslo

Heidi M. Breivik,
NTNU

Margareth Hana Buer,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Grethe Bjørkan Bukkemoen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Jørgen Tinglum Bøckman,
Veien kulturminnepark

Ellen Tjørnholm Bøe,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Claus v. Carnap-Bornheim,
Fahrdorf

Torben Trier Christiansen,
Nordjyske Museer

Barbro Dahl,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Volker Demuth,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Tania Dickinson,
University of York

Sigrid Alræk Dugstad,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Bettina Ebert,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Krister Eilertsen,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Øystein Ekroll,
Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeider

Kathy Elliott,
Universitetet i Oslo

Asbjørn Engevik,
Universitetet i Bergen

Per Ethelberg og Anne Birgitte Sørensen,
Museum Sønderjylland

Lars Forseth,
Trøndelag fylkeskommune

Per Ditlef Fredriksen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Ingrid Fuglestvedt,
Universitetet i Oslo

Kidane Gebremariam,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Berit Gjerland,
Førde

Lars Erik Gjerpe,
Universitetet i Oslo

Zanette T. Glørstad,
Universitetet i Oslo

Line Grindkåsa,
Vestfold og Telemark fylkeskommune

Anne-Sofie Gräslund,
Uppsala universitet

Sverre Christoffer Guldberg,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Svein H. Gullbekk,
Universitetet i Oslo

Sigrid Mannsåker Gundersen,
Viken fylkeskommune

Ingar Mørkestøl Gundersen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Ulla Lund Hansen,
Københavns Universitet

Sue Harrington,
Durham University

Åsa Dahlin Hauken,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Lotte Hedeager,
Universitetet i Oslo

Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson,
Uppsala universitet

Catherine Hills,
University of Cambridge

John Hines,
Cardiff University

Kari Loe Hjelle,
Universitetet i Bergen

Tove Hjørungdal,
Göteborgs universitet

Hege Ingjerd Hollund,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Alf Tore Hommedal,
Universitetet i Bergen

Anne Karin Hufthammer og Svein Indrelid,
Universitetet i Bergen

Randi Håland,
Universitetet i Bergen

Nelleke IJssennagger-van der Pluijm,
Fryske Akademy

Xenia Pauli Jensen,
Moesgaard Museum

Tuija Kirkinen,
University of Helsinki

Arild Klokkervoll,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Egge Knol,
Groninger Museum

Kyrre Kverndokk,
Universitetet i Bergen

Grete og Arnvid Lillehammer,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Anders Lindahl,
Lund University and University of Pretoria

Julie Lund,
Universitetet i Oslo

Ole Madsen,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Bente Magnus,
Oslo

Anja Mansrud,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Toby Martin,
University of Oxford

Sonja Marzinzik,
Bavarian State Archaeological Collection

Lene Melheim,
Universitetet i Oslo

Trond Meling,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Marianne Moen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Marte Mokkelbost,
Universitetet i Bergen

Michael Neiß,
Lunds universitet and Aarhus Universitet

Karen Høilund Nielsen,
Aarhus Universitet

Camilla Nordby,
Universitetet i Bergen

Linda Nordeide,
Viken fylkeskommune

Astrid J. Nyland,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Arne Johan Nærøy,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Sigmund Oehrl,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Terje Oestigaard,
Uppsala universitet

John Olsen,
Vest-Agder-museet

Unn Pedersen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Grethe Moéll Pedersen,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Alexandra Pesch,
Zentrum für Baltische und Skandinavische
Archäologie

Aina Margrethe Heen Pettersen,
NTNU

Christopher Prescott,
Universitetet i Oslo

Lisbeth Prøsch-Danielsen,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Linn Eikje Ramberg,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Morten Ramstad,
Universitetet i Bergen

Andreas Rau,
Zentrum für Baltische und Skandinavische
Archäologie

Katja Regevik,
Vest-Agder-museet

Håkon Reiersen,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Martin Rundkvist,
Uniwersytet Łódzki

Bente Ruud,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Solveig Sølva Rødsdalen,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Christian Løchsen Rødsrud,
Universitetet i Oslo

Ingunn M. Røstad,
Universitetet i Oslo

Margrete Figenschou Simonsen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Ole Jacob Stalheim Skagen,
Oslo

Dagfinn Skre,
Universitetet i Oslo

Brit Solli,
Universitetet i Oslo

Marte Spangen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Kathrine Stene,
Universitetet i Oslo

Randi Stoltz,
Bergen

Nils Ole Sundet,
Agder fylkeskommune

Olof Sundqvist,
Stockholms universitet

Birgit Tansøy,
Vestland fylkeskommune

Espen Uleberg,
Universitetet i Oslo

Hege Vatnaland,
Stavanger

Marianne Vedeler,
Universitetet i Oslo

Tingvatn fornminnepark,
Vest-Agder-museet

Vibeke Maria Viestad,
Universitetet i Oslo

James Walker,
University of Bradford

Anna Wessman,
Universitetet i Bergen

Sara Westling,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Nancy L. Wicker,
University of Mississippi

Ingrid Ystgaard,
NTNU

Torun Zachrisson,
Upplandsmuseet

Mari Arentz Østmo,
Universitetet i Oslo

Hanne Lovise Aannestad,
Universitetet i Oslo

Innhold

Fagfellevurderte artikler:

What's in a symbol? Some thoughts on the enigmatic triquetra <i>Alexandra Pesch</i>	11
What happened in the hinterland? A batch study of early bucket-shaped pots from the 4th and 5th centuries AD in Southwest Norway <i>Per Ditlef Fredriksen og Anders Lindahl</i>	23
Magic, metallurgy and embodied powers Nordic folklore, empowerment and deification in material culture <i>Terje Oestigaard</i>	35
Ogna kyrkje på Jæren Eit blikk på ei arkeologisk utgraving <i>Alf Tore Hommedal</i>	45
A rune-like carving on a terra sigillata bowl from the early medieval cemetery of Deiningen, Bavaria <i>Sigmund Oehrl</i>	59
Flying riddles Disentangling animal style elements on Merovingian-period bird brooches <i>Ingunn M. Røstad</i>	71
How to become an Iron Age weaver An experiment based on a new analysis of a tablet-woven band with animal motifs from Snartemo II (Agder, Norway AD 500) <i>Randi Stoltz</i>	81
An early set of clasps from Østabø in Sandeid, south-western Norway <i>Håkon Reiersen</i>	87
Giving mixed signals On gendered readings of Late Iron Age figurines <i>Marie Dave Amundsen og Marianne Moen</i>	97
Mesolithic cross-crafting Experiments with the manufacture of bone blanks from elk metapodials <i>Anja Mansrud</i>	107
Damen i Viken En folkvandringstida kvinne frå Lovö, Sverige <i>Torun Zachrisson</i>	123

Crossing crafts, merging arts	137
A new find of a 9th century AD Oseberg-style hanging bowl suspension mount from Jarlsberg, Vestfold, southern Norway	
<i>Zanette T. Glørstad</i>	
"Hørte du kor hardt dei i Hafrsfjord slost; berserkar bura (...), ulvhednar ula"	141
Dyrekrigarar, kjønnsroller og ontologisk status i jernaldersamfunnet	
<i>Kristin Armstrong Oma og Arild Klokkervoll</i>	
The Old Norse <i>goði</i> and his ring	157
<i>Olof Sundqvist</i>	
The power of beauty	173
The Oseberg ship burial and its <i>finurlighet</i>	
<i>Unn Pedersen</i>	
The medieval landscapes of Bergen	183
Enhanced knowledge through vegetation reconstructions and pollen data from multiple sites	
<i>Kari Loe Hjelle</i>	
Andre artikler:	
Å møblere et langhus	195
<i>Bente Magnus</i>	
På vej mod smeltingen...	203
<i>Morten Axboe</i>	
Levende formidling	209
Å formidle fra hjertet til hjerter	
<i>Ellen T. Bøe</i>	
Spinnehjul under radaren	217
De eldste spinnehjulene i Norge	
<i>Åsa Dahlin Hauken</i>	
Siv som faglig guru	225
Dypdykk i et lite utvalg av hennes fabelaktige reise i utstillingsverdenen	
<i>Bente Ruud og Kristin Armstrong Oma</i>	

The power of beauty

The Oseberg ship burial and its *finurlighet*

Unn Pedersen

Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History, University of Oslo

“...the stern and prow are adorned with excellently carved ornaments [...] The whole thing has been magnificent, but not suited to withstand a serious contest”, Gabriel Gustafson wrote shortly after the excavation of the Oseberg ship burial in 1904 (Gustafson 1906:133, my translation). Although highlighting the ornate woodcarvings, he quite explicitly dismissed the significance of the decorative animal art. Through this, the Oseberg ship was excluded as a proper Viking ship; the beautiful vessel considered unsuited for sea crossings. Gustafson’s statements certainly had an impact, and set the tone for investigations and interpretations of the ship and the burial for many years to come. They were replicated by Haakon Shetelig, who argued that the ship itself had several shortcomings as a seagoing vessel, “...further underlined by the abundant and magnificent equipment, that this is a vessel intended for minor journeys in calm waters and good weather” (Shetelig 1917:341, my translation). The fact that the elaborate items were found in a grave with two women seems to have lent weight to their arguments (Pedersen 2024). The one assumed to be the main person has often been portrayed as the less significant wife or mother of a powerful chieftain or king, and an art loving receiver and collector of passive art produced by skilful men (e.g. Shetelig 1920; as critically discussed by Mandt 1992 and Arwill-Nordbladh 1998). The second woman has

largely been ignored, after being described as a servant or slave.

Elna Siv Kristoffersen has played a vital role in challenging such views, demonstrating that both animal art and women played decidedly active roles in Iron Age society (e.g. Kristoffersen 1995, 2000a, 2000b, 2010). Through academic and public outreach in museums, and beyond, she has shared insights that have brought us closer to the influential and mighty women who once had an intimate relationship with elaborate ornaments and their material messages (e.g. Kristoffersen 2015; Kristoffersen and E. S. Pedersen 2021; Kristoffersen and U. Pedersen 2021). Strongly influenced by Kristoffersen’s works, I will explore how our narratives of the well-preserved Oseberg-grave from AD 834 would have been formed if it were Kristoffersen’s perspectives, and not those of Gustafson, that had set the tone of the discussion of the grave, its versatile content, and the buried persons.

Kristoffersen pictures an Iron-age society where power extends beyond physical strength and human control, where beautiful items played an active role. Accordingly, she is among those who have challenged the predominant models of power within archaeological discourse that see “...power as primarily a quality of an individual, usually of the male variety and primarily founded



Figure 1. The Oseberg ship with the decorative woodcarvings in animal art as exhibited in the Viking ship museum.
© Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo.

upon control over means of violence...” (Lund et al. 2022:33).

By investigating how this worked out in the case of Oseberg, I will suggest that political scientist Joseph Nye’s concept *soft power* might offer insights, described as “the ability to obtain preferred outcomes by attraction rather than coercion or payment” (Nye 2017:2). His concept, which highlights intangible aspects of power, originates from a widely different context, namely present-day international relations and United States of America’s foreign affairs (Nye 1991). It may, nevertheless, serve as a tool to think with in a Viking-age context, and may help us to rethink a period where *hard power*, for example swords and violent plundering, have had a strong standing in academic and popular presentations. The concept might open our eyes for other power mechanisms than the ones that have dominated Viking-age research for far too long (as called for by Lund et al. 2022). It can help us put words to what we actually observe in the material remains from the burial rituals at Oseberg.

A restart: Oseberg reconfigured

That at least one of the women was a powerful ruler is a premise here, in contrast to Gustafson’s and Shetelig’s view. The monumental grave mounds material remains, and in particular items for textile production, lead Gustafson (1906:130-132) to conclude that the deceased was a woman, even prior to the osteological examination, of what turned out to be two skeletons, proved him right. The ship burial is otherwise strikingly similar to the one with a male skeleton from Gokstad, build around AD 900 (Nicolaysen 1882; Bonde and Christensen 1993), which has been interpreted remarkably differently (Mandt 1992; Arwill-Nordbladh 1998), in particular with regard to the buried persons’ political role (Pedersen 2008; Moen 2011). While men in Gokstad and other monumental Viking-age burials are consistently portrayed as mighty rulers based on their elaborate graves, most

researchers have been hesitant to extend such an interpretation to Oseberg (Pedersen 2008; 2024). Although frequently described as queen, closer reading discloses that, until quite recently, this has been in the sense of queen consort, widow queen and/or a king’s mother, primarily operating in the private sphere. In many ways, the women met the same fate as the animal art, being brushed aside shortly after the excavation, labelled in a way (queen, servant, art) that made them insignificant or irrelevant in the political realm by researchers of that time. Gustafson’s brief assessment from 1906 was in both cases highly influential and had an enduring impact (see e.g. Klindt-Jensen and Wilson 1965:23-24). It took more than a century before the ship was fully recognised as a robust, solid seagoing vessel (Bischoff 2019) and the buried were acknowledged as ruler(s) (Pedersen 2008, 2017, 2024; Moen 2011; Sigurdsson 2017:113; Gjerpe 2023:131). How different could our understanding of the ship burial, and by extension the Viking-age society, have been if the material messages of the Oseberg burial had been acknowledged from the start?

Made to impress

Numerous visitors to The Viking Ship Museum have experienced the strong impression that the Oseberg ship makes (Figure 1). The ship *is* stunning, and it is hardly speculative to assume that the outstanding object with elaborate carvings in animal art had an effect on 9th century viewers as well (c.f. Kristoffersen 2000a:267). It must have made an impact both when in use as a vessel, and when reused as a scene for an extraordinary burial ritual (Gansum 2002; Price 2010). Even a century or so after the burial, when the mound was opened by people targeting the burial chamber (Bill and Daly 2012), they engaged with the delicately carved stem, ending in a snakehead (Brøgger 1917:21). First by unearthing it, and then cutting it off, suggesting that this decorative and communicative part of the ship still mattered.



Figure 2. The first baroque animal-headed post in Shetelig's terminology, elaborately carved and then covered with metal appliques. © Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, photo: Ove Holst.

To Gustafson and Shetelig the splendour spoke against this being a proper seagoing Viking ship, as we have already seen, and they obviously assumed that functional items and art belonged to two different and separated fields. Nevertheless, Shetelig (1920:2-3) actually acknowledged that art had a very high reputation in Viking-age society, and he was close to a radically different interpretation, more in line with perspectives developed later by Kristoffersen and others. He

pinpointed the "...intended baroque and wild effect..." of the animal-headed posts (Figure 2) and the "...peculiar elastic power in the ornament-animals and a captivating, almost magic tension in the composition" (Shetelig 1920:277-278, my translation). Then, building upon later law texts he argued, "the dragon-head on the ship has accordingly had magical capability, being able to scare off supernatural beings" (Shetelig 1920:278, my translation),

expanding the interpretation to the animal-headed posts. This line of argument built up to his conclusion that the woodcarvers worked within the local worldview, thus underlining the Nordic anchoring of the visual language, despite some foreign impulses. Unfortunately, he did not extend this line of thought to the buried persons. I find it likely that the view of the grave at Oseberg would have been different from then onwards if he, and the following generations of researchers, had allowed these insights to influence their interpretations. Shetelig, and others, could have then realized that an art-loving widowed queen living at a proper distance from the royal court (Shetelig 1920:2, 331) was a far too narrow reading of Oseberg.

Expressive objects

The missed opportunity is underlined by Kristoffersen's (1995, 2000a, 2000b), Lotte Hedeager's (1999, 2004, 2011), Maria Domeij's (2004), and Michael Neiß' (2009, 2022) influential contributions, demonstrating that objects in animal art played exactly this kind of active role in Iron-age society. Kristoffersen's article "Expressive Objects" highlights the power of material culture stemming from its multivocality and ability to express several layers of meaning, and moreover, its ambiguity – that some levels can hide others (Kristoffersen 2000a:265 with references). She notes that there has been a tendency to neglect beautiful objects when discussing how material culture works in social contexts, in line with the observations made above. Studying elaborate Migration-period items in Style I, she brought to light that some of their effects may operate outside time, such as visual experiences evoked by emotional responses. Many who have engaged with the excavated and exhibited Oseberg ship can support her view. Other effects are dependent on context, such as the animal figures' magical ability to penetrate the object and change it completely, referring to ideas of transformation and the agency of non-humans in Iron-age society (Kristoffersen 2000a:270-271). Barely visible features are essential in Kristoffer-

sen's influential re-interpretations, underlining that large-scale transformations of our narratives of the past may be based on tiny details.

The value of these reorientations for the understanding of the Oseberg burial has recently been demonstrated by Margrethe K. H. Havgar's (2019; 2020) analyses of the ship. She established that the motifs within the Oseberg ship differ from the motifs on its exterior, making a distinction between an anthropomorphic sphere observing those aboard and an animalistic sphere, targeting those on its outside, interpreted as the familiar/known versus unfamiliar/unknown, within a complex framework of associations. Havgar's study underlines that the beautiful objects in Oseberg worked in a social context and communicated with different audiences. They expressed messages that we only in part understand today, while highly relevant in 9th century Scandinavia, where voyages into unknown worlds undoubtedly affected many. The study emphasizes the importance of reinvestigating more of the carved objects in Oseberg. Here, I will use the ornamented objects as a point of departure for the following, more general, exploration of *why* impressive and expressive objects characterise this ruler-burial from the early 9th century. I will do so by taking a closer look at the Oseberg woodcarvings and their context, starting up-close and gradually widening the scope.

Creating beauty and magic

Kristoffersen (2010) has introduced the wonderful Norwegian word *finurlighet* to a global audience in one of her publications on animal art, emphasizing that its connotations to artfulness, intricacy, and subtlety capture the creative forces involved in the making of hybrid motifs found in Migration-period masterpieces. Building on Alfred Gell's (1992) enchanted technology and his distinction between things that are beautifully made, versus the beauty found in nature, she argues that "...the intricate patterns in the Germanic animal art are complicated simply because they are difficult to make

and thus ascribed to magic” (Kristoffersen 2000a:268). This brings us back to Shetelig’s (1920) discussion of the animal-headed posts in Oseberg, which he connected to magic, although within a different explanatory framework and with limited consequence for his overall interpretation of the ship burial. In line with the distinctive Migration-period items studied by Kristoffersen (2000a), the artisans seem to have strived to make each of the animal-headed posts unique, with an individualistic appearance, in contrast to the major trend in Viking-age crafting, aiming at larger series of quite similar items (Callmer 1995; Pedersen 2016). To extend Kristoffersen’s terms *expressive* and *finurlighet* to this little group of eye-catching items seem highly relevant. The ambiguity and multivocality of material culture comes into sight, quite literary, most explicitly in the so-called *the first baroque animal-headed post* (Figure 2). The general shape undoubtedly portrays an animal’s head, then the artisan carved hundreds of animals into the surface, also making room for metal appliques of various types, which were finally mounted on the surface to a much larger extent than planned for, covering part of the meticulously carved surface. This is certainly a complicated and beautifully made thing. *Finurlighet* lingers both on and below the surface.

These perspectives certainly challenge the understanding of the carved items from Oseberg as an art collection and animal style as mostly decorative. Such interpretations were upheld for a long time (Graham-Campbell 2021:7), despite more nuanced interpretations being presented. Viking-age scholars from various disciplines have emphasised the role of elaborately crafted items as gifts and the means for establishing and maintaining hierarchies (e.g. Gurevich 1968; Glørstad 2012). Decades ago, Gutorm Gjessing (1943) stated that magic permeates the Oseberg burial, arguing that the carved animal heads on the bed staffs had apotropaic significance, building on Norse folklore. He interpreted several objects, including the animal-headed post, as tools in a religious cult, leading to the conclusion that one

of the buried was a cult leader. This reasoning was further developed by Anne Stine Ingstad (1992), who saw the main person as the goddess Frøya’s incarnation, while Gunhild Røthe (1994) suggested that the animal-headed posts might have been used actively in the rite of passage following death. Jan Bill (2016) activated Gjessing’s ideas, arguing that the animal head were used in apotropaic rituals, also building on an interpretation of the Borre style as an embodiment of Norse thought and apotropaic in meaning and function, set forward by Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson (2006, inspired by Kristoffersen). Zanette T. Glørstad (2008) has argued that the crafting of Oseberg’s ritually charged items might have been associated with the ability to bring out the inherent life and magic in the wood, drawing on ethnographic cases and Norse written sources, and emphasizing the high mythological competence of the artisans. The term “charismatic object”, inspired by Max Weber’s thinking, has also proven to be a valuable tool for exploring elaborate objects from the Viking Age and beyond, and their ability to arouse awe and carry collective narratives that created and maintained power relations (Vedeler et al. 2018).

Recently, Marie D. Amundsen (2021) has demonstrated how useful Manuel DeLanda’s distinction between properties and capacities is when exploring Migration-period gold. Emphasising that capacities elicit the potential embedded in things and their relations, she has shown how well suited the perspective is for investigating malleable and re-workable precious metal. Returning to the ambiguity and multivocality of the animal art, I will argue that the perspective is valuable in exploring a visual language that escapes any capturing, in the past and the present. Thus, a reason why the beautiful and expressive objects played such a major role in the Oseberg seems to be that they served to make visible the innovative, creative, and powerful forces surrounding the buried women, which also worked independently of human control.

Creativity all around

Shetelig connected the animal-headed posts, and other remarkable carved items, to skilled artisans, all assumed to be male, without further due. Envisioning them as the masters of The Vestfold School, he established a trend, and other scholars have later imagined prominent craftsmen behind Oseberg's masterpieces (e.g. Klindt-Jensen and Wilson 1965:48). Among Shetelig's lasting contributions is the identification of knowledge transfer between the woodcarvers, and the dialogue it must have entailed. Moreover, by including other types of materials, he pinpointed the cooperation and inspiration across crafts, comparing the woodcarvings to ornamental metalwork, highlighting that the same motifs were to be found, although in different scales (Shetelig 1920:58-59, 280-294). Comparing shared motifs across crafts he was most likely inspired by an earlier work on Migration-period pottery, where he identified the loaning of techniques from work in other materials, and the thinking in other materials transferred to clay (Shetelig 1905:81-89). These lines of thoughts were brought up again by Kristoffersen and her colleagues, highlighting that meetings across different materials stimulated creativity and innovation (Fredriksen et al. 2014). These cross-craft perspectives have served as a key for unlocking the dynamics behind the craft innovations of the early Viking Age (Pedersen 2020).

Oseberg stands out in the Viking-age material, due to the unique conditions preserving wooden items and other organic materials usually lost. The creativity expressed by the woodcarvings is still easily recognizable in workshop assemblages. Today, in contrast to in Shetelig's time, we do have detailed knowledge from excavated Vestfold workshops (Pedersen 2016), and different types of cross-craft environments (Pedersen 2020). Heimdalsjordet, close to the Gokstad mound, is among them (Bill and Rødsrud 2017), demonstrating that the communities making the ship burials were highly involved in working across materials. However, taking into

account the distinct use of patterns characterizing Oseberg, and the fact that the ship itself was made in Nord-Rogaland or Sundhordaland (Bonde and Stylegar 2009), there was undoubtedly craft communication or mobility across considerable geographic distances. The same is demonstrated by numerous sites with evidence of interlinked creative crafting across Scandinavia (e.g. Ashby and Sindbæk 2020). Collaboration seems to have been essential for Viking-age craft innovation, like Sarah Croix et al. (2019) has convincingly argued for Viking-age towns, suggesting that crafting was one of the driving forces of early Viking-age urbanism. What the urban workshop waste underlines is that these creative communities not only produced beautiful items for the elite, but also for a rather wider spectrum of society (Pedersen 2016), just as Oseberg has long illustrated, where masterpieces are found along with simpler decorated items. Accordingly, the visual language was widely distributed, although not understood by all, as demonstrated by copies with misunderstood motifs (Shetelig 1920:46-58; Fuglesang 1987).

In a wider political framework: rulers surrounded by beauty

Animal art was a visual language actively used by the uppermost elite in Viking-age society, regardless of gender. The highly elaborate rune stone from Jelling, combining text and visual language, raised by king Harald Bluetooth, serves as a striking example. Widening the scope, it is noteworthy that Charlemagne's chapel in Aachen was described by contemporaries as *plurimae pulchritudinis* (of exceptional beauty) and *opere mirabili constructa* (raised with astounding art), as pinpointed by Anne Pedersen (2012:77) in a discussion of the remarkable 10th century royal complex in Jelling, Denmark. Moreover, that such building works are described as to "improve and beautify the kingdom", in Einhard's celebration of Charlemagne's life *Vita Karoli Magni*, written shortly after his death (McKitterick 2008:8). There might possibly be a link between the two early 9th century rulers' burials, as pinpointed by

Shetelig (1917: 249); Oseberg might have been inspired by Charlemagne's spectacular burial in Aachen AD 814, where he was placed sitting on a throne of gold.

Why was it so essential for rulers with ambition on the North European political scene to beatify their realm? I will return to Nye's *soft power*, highlighting that attraction can be a valuable tool for leadership, and a way of "...getting others to want what you want" (Nye 1991:31). To attract people was essential for Viking-age rulers, as illustrated by elite residences undoubtedly gathering many, for example the central places of Skringssal, Tissø, and Uppåkra (Skre 2007 with references). Moreover, ornate beautiful things were undoubtedly attractive to many, as established above. Nye (2017:2) emphasises that "...it is not necessarily better to twist minds than to twist arms", and pinpoints that soft power could work along with hard power. He has coined the term *smart power* on successful strategies where the two reinforce each other (see also Lund et al. 2022). As fun-fact for Norwegians, Nye was inspired by the Norwegian historian Geir Lundestad's description of the American influence in Europe as an "...empire by invitation" (Nye 2017:2 with references). More generally it may serve as a reflection that invitations played an important role in Viking-age Scandinavia, where the elite assembled many guests to feast (No. *gjestebud*), providing food and entertainment, creating lasting memories, alliances and hierarchies (e.g. Dillmann 1997). Likewise burial ceremonies, such as the spectacular mortuary drama at Oseberg, seems to have attracted and involved huge crowds, as we might actually observe in the tapestries originally serving as wall hangings (Price 2010; Vedeler 2019). Beautiful and expressive objects certainly played a role in such happenings, suggesting that these things that still draw humans towards them, were efficient tools for soft power. Just as the burial ritual at Oseberg underlines, the *finurlighet* of soft power is that it creates a community and stimulates cooperation,

while serving to establish or maintain someone's authority.

Conclusion

The power of beauty was much neglected by early twentieth century researchers, despite the fact that they emphasised (and admired) Oseberg's splendour. Since then Kristoffersen and others have opened new avenues for exploring beautiful and intricately crafted items. It seems reasonable to conclude that animal art plays such a prominent role in the Oseberg burial because people in Viking-age Scandinavia, and beyond, acknowledged and valued the power of beauty. It was no less than an obligation for the elite to surround themselves with splendour, give and donate beautiful items, and not least to create lasting memories, in life and death, supported by visual storytelling. I have also argued that ambitious rulers may have actively used beauty in soft power strategies.

The Oseberg ship burial illustrates the many different ways in which powerful visual language(s) was used to express meanings we can only partly grasp today. Following Kristoffersen and others, this was also the essence of the animal art back then. The *finurlighet* of the elaborate visual language is that it escapes any fixed message and has power in and of itself, beyond any human control, when first brought to life. In a society explicitly acknowledging the agency of material culture, this might have been a way of accepting that power, as well as life, was transient.

Bibliography

- Amundsen, M. D. 2021 *Glimrende gull. En utforskende studie av gull fra folkevandringstid i Rogaland, Vestfold og Østfold*. PhD-thesis. University of Oslo.
- Arwill-Nordbladh, E. 1998 *Genuskonstruktioner i nordisk vikingatid: förr och nu*. University of Gothenburg.
- Ashby, S. P. and S. M. Sindbæk (eds.) 2020 *Crafts and Social Networks in Viking Towns*. Oxbow Books, Oxford.
- Bill, J. 2016 Protecting Against the Dead? On the Possible Use of Apotropaic Magic in the Oseberg Burial. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 26(1):141-155.

- Bill, J. and A. Daly 2012 The plundering of the ship graves from Oseberg and Gokstad: an example of power politics? *Antiquity* 86:808-824.
- Bill, J. and C. L. Rødsrud 2017 Heimdalsjordet – trade, production and communication. In *Viking-Age Transformations: Trade, Craft and Resources in Western Scandinavia*, A. Z. T. Glørstad and K. Loftsgarden (eds.), pp. 212-231. Routledge, London.
- Bischoff, V. 2019 *Rekonstruktion af Osebergskibet. Form, konstruktion og funktion*. Ph.d., Det Kongelige Danske Kunstakademis Skoler for Arkitektur, Design og Konservering.
- Bonde, N. and A. E. Christensen 1993 Dendrochronological dating of the Viking Age ship burials at Oseberg, Gokstad and Tune, Norway. *Antiquity* 67(256):575–583.
- Bonde, N. and F.-A. Stylegar 2009 Fra Avaldsnes til Oseberg. Dendrokronologiske undersøkelser av skipsgravene fra Storhaug og Grønhaug på Karmøy. *Viking* 72:149-168.
- Brøgger, A.W. 1917 Osebergfundets historie. In *Osebergfundet Bind I*, A. W. Brøgger, H. Falk and H. Shetelig (eds.), pp. 1-119. Den Norske Stat, Kristiania.
- Callmer, J. 1995 Hantverksproduksjon, samhällsförändringar och bebyggelse. Iakttagelser från östra Sydskandinavien ca. 600–1100 e.Kr. In *Produksjon og samfunn. Om erverv, spesialisering og bosetning i Norden i 1. årtusen e.Kr.* H. G. Resi (ed.), pp. 39-72. Universitetets Oldsaksamling, Oslo.
- Croix, S., M. Neiß and S. M. Sindbæk 2019 The réseau opératoire of Urbanization: Craft Collaborations and Organization in an Early Medieval Workshop in Ribe, Denmark. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 29(2):345-364.
- Dillmann, F.-X. 1997 Kring de rituella gästabuden i fornskandinavisk religion. In *Uppsalakulten och Adam av Bremen*, A. Hultgård (ed.), pp. 51-73. Nya Doxa, Nora.
- Domeij, M. 2004 Det bundna - Djuornamentik och skaldediktning i övergången mellan förkristen och kristen tid. *Gotländskt arkiv* 2004/2005:146-154.
- Fredriksen, P. D., E. S. Kristoffersen and U. Zimmermann 2014 Innovation and collapse: bucket-shaped pottery and metalwork in the terminal migration period. *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 47(2):119-140.
- Fuglesang, S. H. 1987 "The Personal Touch". On the identification of workshops. In *Proceedings of the Tenth Viking Congress. Larkollen, Norway, 1985*, J. E. Knirk (ed.), pp. 219-230. Universitetets Oldsaksamling, Oslo.
- Gansum, T. 2002 Fra jord til handling. In *Plats och praxis: studier av nordisk förkristen ritual*, K. Jennbert, A. Andrén and C. Raudvere (eds.), pp. 249-286. Nordic Academic Press, Lund.
- Gell, A. 1992 The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology. In *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics*, J. Coote and A. Shelton (eds.), pp. 40-63. Clarendon press, Oxford.
- Gjerpe, L. E. 2023 *Effective houses. Property Rights and Settlement in Iron-age Eastern Norway*. Cappelen Damm Akademisk, Oslo.
- Gjessing, G. 1943 Hesten i forhistorisk kunst og kultur. *Viking* 7:5-143.
- Glørstad, Z. T. 2008 Skape liv - skjære skjebne? Kosmologiske aspekter ved vikingtidens "snekkergraver". In *Facets of Archeology. Essays in Honour of Lotte Hedeager on her 60th Birthday*, K. Chilidis, J. Lund and C. Prescott (eds.), pp. 421-432. Unipub, Oslo.
- Glørstad, A. Z. T. 2012 Sign of the Times? The Transfer and Transformation of Penannular Brooches in Viking-Age Norway. *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 45(1):30-51.
- Graham-Campbell, J. 2021 *Viking Art*. Thames & Hudson, London.
- Gurevich, A. Ya. 1968 Wealth and Gift-Bestowal among the Ancient Scandinavians. *Scandinavica* 7:126-138.
- Gustafson, G. 1906 *Norges oldtid: Mindesmærker og oldsager*. Cammermeyer, Kristiania.
- Havgar, M. K. H. 2019 *Gripping-Creatures on a Sailing Wind Horse*. Master thesis, University of Oslo.
- Havgar, M. K. H. 2020 Sessrúmnir og seilende vindhester: Skip som konsept i førkristen, norrøn verdensforståelse. *Viking* 83:85-95.
- Hedeager, L. 1999 Skandinavisk dyreornamentik. Symbolsk representasjon af en førkristen kosmologi. In *Et hus med mange rom. Vennebok til Bjørn Myhre på 60-årsdagen*, I. Fuglestvedt, T. Gansum and A. Opedahl (eds.), pp. 219-237. Arkeologisk museum Stavanger, Stavanger.
- Hedeager, L. 2004 Dyr og andre mennesker – mennesker og andre dyr. Dyreornamentikkens transcendentale realitet. In *Ordning mot kaos – studier av nordisk førkristen kosmologi*, A. Andrén, K. Jennbert and C. Raudvere (eds.), pp. 219-252. Nordic Academic Press, Lund.
- Hedeager, L. 2011 *Iron Age Myth and Materiality: An Archaeology of Scandinavia AD 400–1000*. Routledge, London.
- Hedenstierna-Jonson, C. 2006 Borre style metalwork in the material culture of the Birka warriors. *Fornvännen* 101:312-322.
- Ingstad, A. S. 1992 Oseberg-dronningen – hvem var hun? In *Osebergdronningens grav. Vår arkeologiske nasjonalskatt i nytt lys*, A. E. Christensen, A. S. Ingstad and B. Myhre (eds.), pp. 224–256. Schibsted, Oslo.
- Klindt-Jensen, O. and D. Wilson 1965 *Vikingetidens kunst*. Nationalmuseet, København.
- Kristoffersen, S. 1995 Transformation in Migration Period Animal Art. *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 28(1):1-17.
- Kristoffersen, S. 2000a Expressive Objects. In *Form, function & context: Material culture studies in Scandinavian archaeology*, H. Vandkilde and D. Olausson (eds.), pp. 265-274. Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm.
- Kristoffersen, S. 2000b *Sverd og spenne. Dyreornamentikk og sosial kontekst*. Høyskoleforlaget, Kristiansand.

- Kristoffersen, S. 2010 Half beast–half man: hybrid figures in an animal art. *World Archaeology* 42(2):261-272.
- Kristoffersen, E. S. 2015 Møte med mennesker på høyden: tre fortellinger. In *Et Akropolis på Jæren? Tinghaugplatået gjennom jernalderen*, E. S. Kristoffersen, M. Nitter and E. S. Pedersen (eds.), pp. 177-181. Arkeologisk museum, Stavanger.
- Kristoffersen, E. S. and E. S. Pedersen (eds.) 2021 *Kreativitet & kunnskap: Krigersmed og husfrue i eldre jernalder*. Arkeologisk museum, Stavanger.
- Kristoffersen, E. S. and U. Pedersen 2021 *Det magiske smykket: En fortelling om tre gravhauger fra folkevandringstiden*. Gyldendal, Oslo.
- Lund, J., M. Furholt and K. I. Autsvoll 2022 Reassessing power in the archaeological discourse. How collective, cooperative and affective perspectives may impact our understanding of social relations and organization in prehistory. *Archaeological Dialogues* 29(1):33-50.
- Mandt, G. 1992 Hva styrer våre valg av tolkningsmodeller? Om fremveksten av et nytt perspektiv i arkeologisk forskning. *K.A.N. Kvinner i arkeologi i Norge* 13-14:78-113.
- Mckitterick, R. 2008 *Charlemagne: The formation of a European identity*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Moen, M. 2011 *The gendered landscape: a discussion on gender, status and power in the Norwegian Viking Age landscape*. Archaeopress, Oxford.
- Neiß, M. 2009 Fixeringsbilder inom en vikingatida praktspänneserie. *Aarbøger for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie* 2006:91-132.
- Neiß, M. 2022 *Förvandlingar i vikingatidens djuvornamentik. Del 1: En multiperspektivisk studie om figurknoppspännen av Birkatyp*. AUN 52. Uppsala Universitet, Uppsala.
- Nicolaysen, N. 1882 *Langskibet fra Gokstad ved Sandefjord*. Alb. Cammermeyer, Kristiania.
- Nye, J. S. 1991 *Bound To Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. Paperback edition. Basic Books, New York.
- Nye, J. 2017 Soft power: the origins and political progress of a concept. *Palgrave Commun* 3: 17008 doi: 10.1057/palcomms.2017.8.
- Pedersen, A. 2012 Nabo, fjende og forbillede - Danernes forhold til Tyskland i det arkæologiske fundbillede. In *Det 30. Tverrfaglige Vikingsymposium: Danmark og Tyskland i det 10. århundrede*, redigeret af Peder Gammeltoft og Niels Lund, pp. 55-82. Wormianum, Højbjerg.
- Pedersen, U. 2008 Dumme menn og troll til kjerringer. In *Facets of Archeology. Essays in Honour of Lotte Hedeager on her 60th Birthday*, K. Chilidis, J. Lund and C. Prescott (eds.), pp. 585-595. Unipub, Oslo.
- Pedersen, U. 2016 *Into the Melting Pot: Non-ferrous Metalworkers in Viking-period Kaupang*. Aarhus University Press, Aarhus.
- Pedersen, U. 2017 Vikingtidskvinner i maktens innerste sirkel. In *Dronningen i vikingtid og middelalder*, K. Kjesrud and N. Løkka (eds.), pp. 98-125. Scandinavian Academic Press, Oslo.
- Pedersen, U. 2020 Communication Through Creativity: The Vestfold School Revisited. In *Viking encounters. Proceedings of the Eighteen Viking Congress*, A. Pedersen and S. M. Sindbæk (eds.), pp. 399-412. Aarhus universitetsforlag, Aarhus.
- Pedersen, U. 2024 Another story? Returning to the Oseberg ship burial. In *Gendering the Nordic Past: Dialogues Between Perspectives* U. Pedersen, M. Moen and L. Skogstrand (eds.). Brepols.
- Price, N. S. 2010 Passing into poetry: Viking-Age mortuary drama and the origins of Norse mythology. *Medieval Archaeology* 54:123-156.
- Røthe, G. 1994 Osebergfunnet – en religionshistorisk tolkning. Hovedfagsoppgave i religionshistorie, Universitetet i Oslo.
- Shetelig, H. 1905 Spandformede lerkar fra folkevandringstiden. *Foreningen til norske fortidsmindesmærkers bevaring. Aarsberetning* 1904: 42-91.
- Shetelig, H. 1917 Skibet. In *Osebergfundet Bind I*, A. W. Brøgger, H. Falk and H. Shetelig (eds), pp. 283-364. Den Norske Stat, Kristiania.
- Shetelig, H. 1920 Vestfoldskolen. In *Osebergfundet III*, A. W. Brøgger, H. Falk and H. Shetelig (eds.), pp. 8-334. Den Norske Stat, Kristiania.
- Sigurdsson, J. V. 2017 *Skandinavia i vikingtiden*. Pax, Oslo.
- Skre, D. 2007 Towns and Markets, Kings and Central Places in South-western Scandinavia c. AD 800–950. In *Kaupang in Skiringssal*, D. Skre (ed.), pp. 445-469. Aarhus university press, Aarhus.
- Vedeler, M. 2019 *Oseberg: De gåtefulle billedvevene*. Scandinavian Academic Press, Oslo.
- Vedeler, M., I. M. Røstad, S. Kristoffersen and Z. T. Glørstad 2018 *Charismatic objects: from Roman times to the Middle ages*. Cappelen Damm akademisk, Oslo.