Museum of the Viking Age
Exhibition experience
Encountering the museum’s magnificent contributions to our global heritage will be the experience of a lifetime.

The Museum of the Viking Age is new generation of research museum aimed at creating outstanding educational visitor experiences by combining world-leading research, unique Viking Age collections and visionary architecture with absorbing, dynamic exhibitions and other public programmes.
The new building will secure our world heritage for future generations. The museum will be three times larger than it is today.
Three Chapters in Time

The Museum of the Viking Age presents the epic Scandinavian story of the Vikings as it unfolds by researchers and scientists. In three chapters, each dealing with one century of history, the museum explores the development of this stunning age from c. 750 to c. 1050.

Chapter 1, “Around 800”, introduces the Viking Age. Visitors get familiar with its worldview, cosmology and beliefs, the social structure, the trading and raiding culture of the Vikings themselves. They also discover how much one phenomenon, burials, influences much of what we know about the Viking Age.

In Chapter 2, “Around 900”, the narration joins the Vikings as they set sail to conquer and explore. This is the era of Scandinavian expansion, to the East and West, as well as to the North Atlantic. In the Scandinavian homelands, trade flourishes and wealth accumulates.

In “Around 1000”, a new order rings in a new era. With growing urban centers, and the introduction of a monetary economy, Viking society changes into a more regulated society with new beliefs and rituals. Christianity becomes an important vehicle for royal power, and as the old Viking beliefs disappear, Norway, Denmark and Sweden become medieval European kingdoms.
Narratives about the Scandinavian world, based on remains from the Viking Age, written sources, humanities, natural science and others, can tell us about everyday life, ideas and attitudes, kings and wars.
OVERALL EXPERIENCE
CONCEPT
Key Narrative Drivers

Collection, Architecture, Interpretation

Three key narrative drivers are used to immerse the visitor into the world of the Viking Age.

The first among these drivers is the collection exhibited in the museum. The surrounding architecture also plays a major role in the creation of atmospheric storytelling. Last, but not least, are the interpretive methods, used to transmit knowledge that is not evident to the naked eye.

The stunning new architecture of the Museum of the Viking Age connects the two arms of the old monumental building with a circular hall. A main concern when working with such a “shelter of history” is how to integrate the architecture into the narration without degrading its beauty and conception. The materials of the building have been chosen carefully to embrace the atmosphere of the Viking world, and so should all additional elements and fixtures.

The control of light throughout the building will support the idea of a changing world. Projections of landscapes and other “environments” onto the curved walls will additionally support the main narrative.

Artefacts are contemporary witnesses of a time long gone. They “speak” about people that have died and societies that have changed. They transmit technical knowledge and convey complex emotions. Therefore, it is the museum’s main task to let the objects speak. The long list of tools that can be used to bring the Viking Age to life, starts with the right light settings and the arrangement of artefacts within a “scenic context”, and ends with augmented contexts and descriptive animations.

The visitors should not be left out in the reconstruction of the Viking Age. Interpretive methods will promote the interactive transfer of knowledge and participative storytelling.

Via digital and analog stations, visitors are invited to take part in the journey through the Viking Age. They learn to act like a Viking and to think like a researcher.
OVERALL EXPERIENCE CONCEPT

Architecture

Collection

Interpretation
A Changing World

The Museum of the Viking Age will address the entire Viking Age within one overarching narration. It will show how the Scandinavian world evolved during this period, and invites the visitor to experience this change with all their senses.

The upper floor immerses the visitor into the Viking world itself, the lower floor also includes "a research area" which will enable the visitors to understand how we know what we know. This “backbone” of the museum gives the visitor the opportunity to interact with research and researchers, and explore the questions posed and methods used by experts to uncover knowledge about the Viking Age. They can also find out whether research results confirm or reject popular beliefs and representations of the Vikings, as well as understanding why research is never-ending; there is always more to know and discover.

Main narrative “A changing world”

This larger narrative will be told through smaller narratives in a dynamic dramaturgy, based on rhythm and change in atmospheres, in a constant dialogue between the emotional and rational. The aim is to raise a continuous sense of curiosity and engagement, a constant shift in perspectives, to unravel the Viking story from both a mythological/cosmological and an archeological perspective.

To achieve the effect of movement and convey the idea of time in space, several scenographic tools are taken in use.

Timeline

A timeline, wrapped along the inner wall on the top level, escorts the visitor along their journey, offering strong chronological reference point. The time line also helps to break down the 300-year long story into its core content components and strengthens the dramaturgy of the experience “a changing world”.

Light

The light level of the exhibition, together with a background soundscape, will support the overarching impression of change and transition. The two main gallery halls will undergo a constant, gradual shift in tone and atmosphere. This will range from a bright, daylight atmosphere, where the beauty of the real objects is revealed, to a moody, darker setup where scenographic projections will engage visitors in a dramatic narration. The radial array of elongated windows is controlled by automated blinds and contributes to the change in atmosphere. To further facilitate a dramatic change, an additional light source is considered to achieve full brightness.

In order to leave the architectural shell pure and untouched by functional substructures, a large scale area light is considered as part of the central wall. It will act like a sun that brings or removes light from the space, controlling the overall atmosphere.
The timeline offers a chronological reference for the visitor, guiding her journey through the galleries.

A constant change in mood and atmosphere gives rhythm to the visit. A bright atmosphere reveals the sheer beauty of the objects, while lower light levels and projections unravel the stories of the Vikings in context.

A single large-scale area light is suggested as a suitable tool for controlling changes of atmosphere, and giving rhythm to the experience. One light source, acting like a sun that keeps or removes light from the space, leaving the architecture untouched.

The idea of movement and change is supported by the existing windows. Automated blinds will support the narrative, opening or screening the space from daylight.
Two Modes. Plain vs. Dramatized

The artefacts are the main protagonists of the museum. They are all that remains from a living world that disappeared hundreds of years ago. To fulfill their role as mediators of the past, they are placed into context, augmented with interpretation, and surrounded by animations. But although imagining the past is important, it is just as important to reflect on the present. These objects have outlasted the world to which they once belonged, and time has left its marks on them. The visitor should be able to experience these objects in their own right, as they are now – the way we have inherited them.

Over the course of the exhibition, the visitor travels from the dark scenes of a funeral towards the bustling life of a city. Simultaneously the Viking Age itself moves relentlessly towards its own demise. This contrast is reflected in the two main exhibition modes: the Plain and the Dramatized. In an automated rhythm, the scenery switches between a daylight room with plain objects, to a dramatized stage with obscured windows and large-scale projections.

Plain
This setup relies on brightness to showcase the objects in their own sheer beauty, as well as in the research area, with its various methods for exploring “How we know”.

Dramatized
Darker tones, give room to the land of imagination, of legends and myths. The artefacts come to life -in space- by scenographic projections and surrounding audio-scapes.
OVERALL EXPERIENCE CONCEPT
Object Stories

The Museum of the Viking Age curates a collection of unique and astonishing artefacts. The most outstanding objects will be displayed along “The Highlight Track”: a fast track through the museum that includes the “not to miss” treasures of the Viking Age.

The authentic artefacts will fascinate, activate and motivate visitors to explore the narratives and gain insights into the research process.

Artefacts will often also play a major role in thematic narratives, helping to create an understanding of the contexts to which they once belonged.

Sometimes their role will be more like works of art, with their own story and highly intrinsic aesthetic value.

Holistic Representation of the Viking Age – Contrasts of Status and Legacies

Collection vs. Unique object
The museum is striving to create a holistic presentation of the Viking Age, thus the exhibitions will not only display the heritage of the wealthy and powerful, but also of the common people. But people and their objects are not equally represented in the collections, so sometimes absence is showcased as well. Artefacts can sometimes be exhibited alone to highlight uniqueness, while at other times the relationship between artefacts forms an important part of the dramaturgy. Similar artefacts may be exhibited together to show volume, and they can also help to convey stories and shape the overall narrative.

Highlight Track

**Around 800**

- The Gustafson Sled
- Animal-head Post
- The Oseberg Wagon
- The Oseberg Prow
- The Oseberg Ship

**Around 900**

- The "Buddha" Bucket
- The Hoen Hoard
- The Gokstad Ship

**Around 1000**

- The Gjermundbu Helmet
- The Langeid Sword
- The Dynna Stone
Interactive Media Strategies

The media strategy is have been developed to include of a mix of immersive, hands-on and interactive media solutions that make the artefacts speak volumes. We wish to give the visitors the opportunity to co-discover the wonderful objects, actively take part in telling their stories and even assess and question the research.

Examples of this approach include both placing transparent screens between visitors and objects so that information layers can be added, as well as placing e-ink graphics behind and around artifacts so that contexts can be provided. This function can also be provided by the use of large atmospheric projections around the Gokstad and Oseberg ships, as well as an immersive landmark projection behind the Tune ship.

At the science level, we foresee the participation and hand-on experiences to be key. Visitors will get to take part in the analysis of artefacts and explore archeological puzzles themselves.

The ships themselves should also be treated with augmented reality using binoculars where they can be seen to “come to life” in different scenes and vantage points.
OVERALL EXPERIENCE CONCEPT

Map based
Geographic stories over time can be told in a multi-user interactive experience

Model Augmentation
By using models of objects, visitors can interact with things that would otherwise be off-limits.

E-ink-Panel
By using a layer of dynamic e-ink graphics, the exhibition can become less static and more dynamic.

Immersive
By providing spaces where large projections can be interacted with, the visitors can be brought back in time, to the time of Vikings.
Design Strategy

The overall design strategy for the Museum of the Viking Age focuses on defining a strongly holistic experience. The Scenography will work in synchronization with the architecture, operating seamlessly to enhance the narrative power of the given space.

The ultimate aim is to create an iconic spatial image that unravels the story of the Viking Age and offers many layers of interpretation. A spatial experience to be explored along several thematic routes, inviting visitors to return and delve deeper into the endless narratives.

Spatial Image

The space holds the story of the rise and fall of the Vikings over the course of three centuries; the birth and the development of a society on the one hand, and the archeological discovery and on-going research on the other. The spatial images created by the architecture and the scenography together underpin the duality of narration and research. The adopted design approach should therefore be dynamic and responsive.

Light levels vary dramatically. Bright spaces, where natural light is reinforced by artificial lights, are envisioned to showcase artefacts displayed for their own sheer beauty and in the workshop areas reinforce the research identity of the museum. In contrast, dimmed light levels, with darker tones, can be used to enhance the narrative side of the experience. Large scenographic projections, together with dramatic light choreography takes visitors back in time, letting them live for a while the life of a Viking, and instilling life into the artefacts.

Content on demand

The complex narrative structure of the museum is nested in an array of different interpretation layers to allow for multiple experiences of different durations, working both on the large scale of spatial images, as well as on the smaller scale of exhibits and interactive experiences. The overarching approach to storytelling relies on smart technologies triggered by visitor presence and visitor interests. Artefacts are treated as the drivers of the narrative and can play many roles; they can be shown for their sheer beauty, then augmented on demand, through the lens of media to unveil their purpose and meaning, or staged in the larger context of the Viking story, and finally they can presented and used as archeological evidence. The content-on-demand approach empowers visitors, allowing them to choose the narratives they want to follow, to select the type and amount of information they want to delve into, eventually creating not one, but several, multifaceted visions of the Viking Age.

Flexibility

The fixtures, such as showcases, interactive stations, artefact archives, media tables etc., should be designed to withstand the test of time, but also be flexible, so that they can be easily replaced and renewed. Inherent in the concept of a research museum, is the intrinsic belief that knowledge is constantly evolving. Therefore, the museum design should always be able to accommodate change. The Museum of Viking Age should be dynamic, both in regards to atmosphere and through time, able to be renewed and rearranged, in both appearance and content. Design flexibility is a key element and should be carefully considered from the beginning. The definition of a design system that operates from the large scale to the scale of details is a fundamental asset.

To fulfil this intention, a modular system of fixtures is envisioned, and should be defined in detail in the next phases of design development. All exhibition design elements should be designed using the minimum number of different components. Diversity is created through the addition or subtraction of modules. Modularity should be adopted on different layers, both for structural elements as well as media solutions. A system of flexible modular components, a sort of exhibition “tool kit”, is recommended as the only viable solution to withstanding the stress of time and for accommodating the evolution of new exhibition technologies, without the need for making critical changes.
OVERALL EXPERIENCE CONCEPT

media enhanced atmospheres
telling stories in space

artefacts interpreted, choreographed,
staged, augmented

exhibits as a kit of parts to be
assembled and re-configured in time,
flexible from layout to detail,
open ended from fits-outs to media

subtle, seamless design
focusing on the sheer beauty of the artefacts
Layers of Narration

The world of the Viking Age becomes more understandable with the usage of different narrative layers. In different layers of perspective, the museum takes a closer look at the motivations, needs, and actions of the Vikings themselves. But it also helps the visitor to understand how we actually gain knowledge about these long-gone times. Finally, it encourages the visitors to understand the role of the past in our present and future.

Different interpretation layers place the objects into a range of immersive and interactive contexts, while the layers of scientific research evoke a broader sense of the Viking Age itself. They all help the visitor to understand artefacts as part of a broader context, explaining what we are actually look at, and what it is that we do not see.
The museum’s interpretational approach is based around the narrative technique: “Close up”.

The technique reflects the approach used by the museum’s researchers when they look at the Viking Age. Research brings us closer to the past; it reduces the distance and makes the Viking Age understandable and meaningful to the people of the present. It also invites visitors to engage, intellectually and emotionally. We can recognize ourselves in the shared human experience and we can be surprised and amazed by the strange and unexpected. “Close up” includes specific events and everyday life, but also gives us the opportunity to highlight the details and the uniqueness of small artefacts and objects. Thus, we observe from the present while also getting up close to the past.

Science is also part of this. We place the Viking Age under the microscope. We study its “molecules”, every rune, every coin. We also use exhibitions to invite the audience to experience, feel and wonder about how the world gave meaning to different people during the Viking Age and why they acted the way they did.

Layers of interpretation and exhibition

Layers of scientific research

Geopolitical: What did the world look like?
Cultural: What did this artefact mean to the people?
Social: Who was the owner? Who discovered the artefact?
Contextual: What else was found? What was absent?
Technical: What is it made of? How was it made?
The Three Viking Ships

The three ships (Oseberg, Gokstad and Tune) will naturally play a major role in the dramaturgy of the exhibition. This story is divided into four main parts; The ship building, the sailing ship, the burial ship, and the discovery of the ship. In the introduction hall the visitors experience the discovery and excavation of the Oseberg ship, entering the new museum they meet the Oseberg ship as a burial ship, the Gokstad ship as a sailing ship and finally the Tune ship in the story of ship building. Even though each ship has its own main role in the story, it should be clear that they all have had the four different roles during their life spans.

exhibition devices

**Binoculars**
Via the binoculars the ships and their crew come alive and can set sail to be viewed at a distance, in full scale and full context.

**Augmenting Windows**
From the augmenting window, visitors can investigate the ship from a research perspective. How was it built, how was it used, and most of all: How do we know?

**Interactive models**
The interactive models allow for hands-on learning about the ship's construction and sea worthiness.

**E-ink info panels**
Smart e-ink panels provide in-depth information about the artefacts and allows visitors to delve deep into a multi-layered archive of information.
**OVERALL EXPERIENCE CONCEPT**

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**life on board**

**Oseberg Ship**

The real Oseberg ship, displayed in the beginning of the new museum, focuses a moment in time – the funeral on board the “burial ship”. It conveys Viking rites and the cosmological order of Viking culture through the staging of a reconstructed Oseberg ship burial.

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**burial**

**Gokstad Ship**

The Gokstad ship deals with life on board a Viking ship. It enables the visitors to understand the outward-looking nature of the Vikings, their relationship to the sea and the factors that contributed to their overseas journeys.

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**finding**

**Tune ship**

The Tune ship offers the visitors an “inside view” of the technology behind the Viking ships. It deals with the different skills and techniques involved in building and equipping a Viking ship, and the economics behind the construction of these stunning vessels.
OVERALL EXPERIENCE CONCEPT

Around 800

The Discovery

Cosmology

The Weavers

Artful Animals

Trade and Networks

Norvegr

Raids

Expansion

Oseberg Ship

From the Living to the Dead

The Viking Expansion

The Oseberg Ship

Around 800

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Target groups

Explorers
Explorers can experience the unique and magnificent world heritage of the Viking Age at Museum of the Viking Age.

Viking enthusiasts
Museum of the Viking Age provides Viking enthusiasts with many opportunities to meet like-minded people and experts, and to immerse themselves in the Viking Age.

Inspiration and reflection
Museum of the Viking Age is an inspiring oasis with its stunning architecture, beautiful artefacts, impressive cultural treasures and handicrafts from the Viking Age.

Standard Tour
This tour addresses tourists and locals who are seeking knowledge and the opportunity to immerse themselves. The visitors in the broad category have extremely diverse levels of knowledge. They will make use of many interpretive interfaces at the museum, and will generally set aside relatively large amounts of time for their visit.

Vikings Enthusiasts
This route is used by the Viking enthusiasts. They consist of professionals and history enthusiasts, but also of fantasy fans, gamers and people interested in historical reenactment. They closely monitor their field of interest and spend more time than usual in the museum. They want to be able to access cutting-edge expertise and the latest in research.
Family Weekends
The track designed for families focuses on all interactive and interpretive stations of the museum. Parents will get the support they need to make complex content interesting and understandable to their children. Families and groups of friends can participate in the "The Great Viking Journey," a playful children’s experience through the museum. Parents and kids will also spend a lot of time in the "Explore!" area on the lower exhibition level, and take part in outdoor activities in the courtyard.

Highlight Track
The earth beneath our feet is full of treasures. It contains evidence of lives lived long ago. In the quest for understanding the past, the remains of the living matter just as much as the places where they are found, the earth they are buried in. The Discovery casts a light on all kinds of archaeological work and methods, with the discovery of the Oseberg ship as a central theme. A true-to-scale floor graphic, in the center of the space indicates the position of the ship and the treasures found in the excavation trench. It displays the diversity and amount of things buried on the ship. The visitors experience the extent of the ship burial in direct comparison to their most familiar scale: the human body.

The two side walls are covered with the side views of the Oseberg ship. One showcases the ship in its original context. The opposite site illustrates the ship buried in the ground when it was found in 1904. Both wall graphics function as a thematic introduction to the anterooms behind.
An engaging journey for visitors, where they will experience a variety of fascinating Viking Age artefacts in a context of research-based knowledge.
The Discovery

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Examples of Artefacts

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VISITOR JOURNEY

Holistic research of the Viking age
This Anteroom gives the visitors an overview of multi-disciplinary research methods used to unveil the world of the Viking Age.

The Oseberg excavation
Graphic presentation of the Oseberg ship burial and its contents, as it was found in 1904.

The soil as a treasure chest
This Anteroom theme is the history of the excavation of the Oseberg ship and the story of the original Viking Ship Museum.
The earth beneath our feet is full of treasures.
A true-to-scale floor graphic, in the center of the space indicates the position of the ship and the treasures found in the excavation trench. It displays the diversity and amount of things buried on the ship. The visitors experience the extent of the ship burial in direct comparison to their most familiar scale: the human body.
The exhibition starts with a staged funeral procession that reaches its apex with the Oseberg ship at the vanishing point in the distance. The visitors enter the room, joining the end of an imagined funeral procession where the skeletons of two women conclude the scene. Lined up in front of them are three sleds, four animal head posts and an astonishing wagon. All were funeral gifts found on board the ship. While walking by, the visitors discover upright showcases alongside the procession along the outer wall. Shadows of people appear in them every now and then, giving the impression of observers of the ritual. The showcases present a selection of graves from the entire Viking Age. They represent a wide spectrum of grave traditions, social classes, genders, and ages. As diverse as the people saying goodbye to those who died, were their ideas about the afterlife. Luminous human figures appear “magically” as an overlay to the graves and their objects. These “ghosts” represent the owners of the grave. These “spirits” leave the showcase depicting the way they were buried, connecting each display to an abstract idea of how the Vikings might have envisioned the journey to the afterlife.

This first part of the exhibition gives the visitors the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the different mindset, beliefs and ideas of the people of Viking Age.
The young girl and her horse.

The hunters from Mesætre and a dog

The woman from the north.
The sleds, wagon and animal-head posts form a line in the burial procession that reaches its apex at the Oseberg ship. At the end of the procession rests the skeletons of two women, the main protagonists of the scene.
The Oseberg Hall
The Oseberg ship floats in space as if it is sailing into the hereafter. The visitors circle around it like satellites in its orbit. The journey leads down the ramp from the upper to the lower level bringing the ship closer and closer into the sights of the visitors. Augmenting binoculars and transparent screens offer insights and changing perspectives about the ship itself.
The Oseberg Ship

The Oseberg ship was found in 1904 outside Tønsberg in Vestfold. The archaeologists who excavated it quickly realized that this was the most spectacular Viking burial ever found. It remains the most important and valuable find from the Viking Age. Scientific dating of the ship indicates it was buried in 834. Even after 1000 years beneath the earth, and 21 years of conservation and restoration, the ship still consists of over 90 percent of its original timber. The Oseberg ship will naturally be one of the major attractions of the museum.

All the Viking ships have had several roles in their "life-spans", and the Oseberg ship will be presented and staged in its role as a burial ship. Projections along the curved wall and beneath the ship itself will emphasize this moment in its life-story, and shape an immersive narration.

The ship will also be displayed solely in light to capture its sheer beauty, as an impressive heirloom of a bygone era.

This bright and plain mode, presents the ship in its own sheer beauty. The lighting also emphasizes research and its methods. Under the mirror-surface beneath the ship, the visitors can see the skeleton of one of the horses that was found in the excavation trench outside the Oseberg ship.

The ship appears in a dramatized setting with dimmed windows and large-scale projections. Through immersive light and movement, the ship comes to life as a burial ship.
Darker tones give room to the land of imagination, of legends and myths. Different scenes from the life-span of the ship are visualized. The main emphasis of the Oseberg ship is its role as a burial ship.
The Oseberg Hall

On reaching the lower level of the Oseberg Hall, four interpretational tools are employed to reveal details and provide different close-up perspectives on the ship.

While the upper level presents the ship in an emotiional setting to evoke a contextual narrative, the lower level explores the ships through the eye of different research viewpoints. The four interpretational tools support this perspective with different scales of augmentation.

The binoculars reveal hidden layers of knowledge, for example through an x-ray-view of the vessel. From the augmenting window, visitors can experience the ship in action, based on the results of experimental research. The interactive models allow for hands-on learning about the ship’s construction, sea worthiness and use.

The e-ink info panels offer deeper information of a scientific as well as an interpretive nature.
VISITOR JOURNEY

Oseberg
the burial ship

The burial ship

The excavation

Viking way of death

The burial mound

Context
the burial ceremony

Interactive models

Detail
Evidence of navigation

Augmenting
windows

Interaction
Oseberg style

In-depth
Unsung stories

Panoramic
projections

E-ink display

Binoculars

Unsung stories
The Oseberg Hall

The Osebergship is the most valuable and rich finding of the viking age. By the help of a mirroring surface underneath the ship it is made possible to contemplate its sheer beauty from all sides.
When the illustrating projections are turned off, and the light beneath the mirror turns on, the visitors can find the skeleton of a horse under the hull of the Oseberg ship. It is one of 15 horses, found in the Oseberg burial mound.
The Core and the Central Wall

The treatment of the core has particular relevance from a contextual and a spatial perspective.

On the narrative side, the core represents a break in the clear defined atmosphere that characterize the two main halls.

The central wall is a fixed spatial reference, an anchor. It sets a different context, apart from the main ship halls.

The two spine walls connect the floors together, but at the same time, they divide the space in two distinct compartments.

Their special set up, as well as inner narrative, is distinct and disconnected from the storytelling that defines the two main spaces. The core is a parenthesis, a spatial and a narrative break.

The Thousand Swords installation connects the core and the floors together.

A pivotal experience that also functions as vertical circulation system.

The core plays a key role on a functional level, managing the flows. It offers a shortcut in the visitor track, allowing visitors to descend quickly to the lower level, avoiding the ramps; or to the research area.

A suggested approach to the core defines the space contained by the central wall as a distinct area, in contrast to the vast open halls. Details and materials underpin the duality. The contrast to the concrete hall's open spaces is enhanced by the soft tones and tactile surfaces of the inner core.
The Core represents a break and interruption in the spatial narrative and forms its own narrative, a separate story from the rise and fall of the Viking Age. It assigns a private compartment to each of the iconic ships separating 800 from 900; it hosts a spectacular vertical connecting installation; it contains the ever-relevant story of violence. From a functional perspective, the Core offers a shortcut in the system of multiple visitor routes.
The Thousand Swords

The long showcase space that punctures the floor slabs and connects the levels together in the center of the building core, hosts The Thousand Swords installation.

This installation showcases a large array of swords from the entire Viking Age, displaying the evolution of sword types in the Viking Age in a scenographic choreography of objects.

A mass-display of artefacts suspended in space, sets the focus on object mounting, dramatic lighting, and even considers the possibility of adding subtle movement to the swords.

The installation is seen as a choreography of objects, envisioned as The Dance of the Thousand Swords, where the multitude of artefacts slowly move in the vertical space, narrating the story of sword making, highlighting the details and performing the movements of battle.

Particular attention is given to the detailing of the display case, because of its large size, and because the swords need to be kept in a humidity-controlled space. The case should be accessible to facilitate object mounting and installation maintenance. Necessary substructure and interface should take advantage of the case side panels.

A gigantic display connects three floor levels and creates an impressive spatial image out of suspended artefacts. A subtle movement of the swords enables a changing viewpoint and focus.
The Core offers the visitors a multi-layered experience centered around the topic of war, battles and warriors in the Viking Age. Contemplation, interaction and self-reflection mesh with each other.
Equipped for War and the Battle

The area called Violence, brings visitors into a world of warfare and atrocities, displaying beautiful weaponry and unveiling a multitude of fascinating stories. A series of installations showcase life in an era regulated by the survival of the fittest.

**Equipped for war**
Part of the Violence area contains an installation located in the two niches adjacent to The Thousand swords showcase.

**Rotating weapon rack**
One of the niches is used to display the vast weapons collection. Taking advantage of the depth of the given space, a rotating tray display is proposed to showcase different weapons sequentially in a loop, acting like a mechanical weapons rack.

**The Warrior**
The parallel niche is used as an interactive media display. Here visitors can equip their own warrior, choosing from a selection of digital 3d weapons, learning not only about different battle equipment and their use, but also about the social implications of violence, through the bios of each character.

**The Battle**
Developed as a scenographic media element, The Battle brings visitors onto the battlefield, right in the middle of a battle scene. Located along the side wall that cuts through the Core, the installation, with sound and visitor tracking, provides an engaging experience for the visitors.
Equipped for War. The Warrior
Interactive media stations explore the relationship between violence and society. Dress a warrior, equip him for battle, learn about his life and role in society.
Hidden Treasures

The area called Hidden Treasures deals with a fascinating side of the Viking world: hoards. This chapter is still part of the violence section, hoards were often connected with raids and their story is deeply interwoven with stories of violence.

This gallery is located on the bottom of the Core area in a secluded space.

The need of solving circulation issues and allowing for large numbers of visitors at a time, springs from the special nature of the main attraction: the Hoen Treasure, Norway’s largest gold hoard from the Viking Age. The most suitable solution, considered the nature of the given space, is to exhibit the treasures in a large wall showcase.

A vertical arrangement of the treasures allows for the stunning choreography of objects and maximizes visibility, also during peak hours, supporting a seamless circulation flow.

Access and exit points should be defined and perhaps controlled, with each one of the two accesses having only one specific function. It will be necessary to specify how the spatial image conveys the idea of a remote, secret space, an underground cave.

Specific ceiling and wall treatments must be designed and adopted to create this spatial effect.

The anatomy of a Viking treasure
What is a typical Viking treasure? How was it collected? What do objects tell us?

The greatest hoard
The Hoen hoard, in its own sheer beauty, but also broken down into its specific components.

Stories behind treasures
Often treasures were hidden in the ground and never reclaimed. Who hid the treasures and why?
The scenography focuses on bringing the ship to life, setting it in a scenic context and highlighting various aspects of its original function as a sailing ship. Life on board can be seen looking through the augmenting media windows. Large-scale projections act as a backdrop, showing weather conditions, water levels and waves, silhouettes of crew members, or mythological figures.
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The Gokstad Ship

The story the Gokstad ship tells, is the story the Viking sailing ship and life on board. With its sleek and elegant shape combining tradition, technology and purpose, the Gokstad ship could be used for many different purposes. It could be sailed and rowed, and was made for long-distance travel. Raiding and trading were only two possibilities. It could have also transported a complete household to a new life abroad.

Life on board was not comfortable, but the northerners’ long tradition of living by and on the sea had taught them how to survive at sea. The Gokstad ship is part of the Highlight trail.

Large-scale backdrop projections on the curved wall behind the ship, set the ship in a scenic context, illustrating the ship in different situations, letting the visitors experience its sea journeys and adventures.

Interacts devices scattered around the ship help extend visitor knowledge about the vessel and offer extensive in-depth information about its history and its use. Media-enhanced binoculars allow visitors to look at the ship from afar, for example, from the upper level, and explore details of the ship’s interior, or the hull planks.

3d-models that can be touched offer a sensorial experience, and learning through physical engagement.

Augmenting windows are time portals that display life on board the Viking ship, taking visitors back time.

The Gokstad ship was built around 890 in the Oslo fjord area, and was probably not very old when it was used as grave ship. With its high hull, 16 pairs of oars and sturdy mast and sail, it was very versatile. It may have been used simply for its owner’s travels, but would have been suited for warfare or raids, as well as for trade. It would also have been a reliable vessel for migrants transporting their farm tools and animals to a new life overseas.

Key objects: The Gokstad ship. Equipment from the ship: dead eye rigging blocks, shroud needles, anchor stock, oars, etc.

NAVIGATION IN FOREIGN WATERS

The sea was vast and the Vikings had very few, if any, navigational tools. Yet they, and many others, were busily navigating both at home and on foreign waters. Having someone on board who had made the journey before – either a skipper or a pilot – may have been a useful precaution. Many coastal names describe the appearance of landmarks, indicating that the landmarks were important for wayfinding.

LIFE ON BOARD

Viking ships were open vessels and life on board offered little luxury, but probably plenty of boredom. Sailing along the coasts offered the possibility of making landfall at night when safe. Tents may have been taken on board, or the sail itself may have been be rigged as a tent, either on board or on land. We don’t know much about their clothing, but rain clothes and sleeping bags were probably made from oilskin and would have been necessary for journeys in cold waters. Graffiti carved on floor planks and game boards reveal how people passed the time.
Atmospheric storytelling

- Storm Coming
- Open Sea
- Life on Board
- The Passage of Time
- Starmaps
- Battle Scene.
The Gokstad Hall

When reaching the lower level of the Gokstad Hall, four interpretational tools are again employed to reveal details and offer different close-up perspectives of the ship.

While the upper level stages the ship as a living vessel crossing the sea, the lower level sets the main focus on research methods to explore “How we know what we know”. The four interpretational tools support this perspective with different scales of augmentation.

The binoculars reveal hidden details of the ship that show us more about life on board.

For example, the “graffiti” someone carved into the deck. From the augmenting window, visitors can experience the ship in action, based on results of experimental research methods.

The interactive models, for example of a Viking shipyard, allow for hands-on learning about the ship’s construction and the economics behind it.

The e-ink info panels offer in-depth information of a scientific, as well as an interpretive nature.
VISITOR JOURNEY

Gokstad
the sailing prodigy

Navigation

Sails and mast

Starmaps

Panorama projections

Augmenting windows

Context
Life on board

Interactive models

Detail
Human traces

Binoculars

Interaction
Open sea hull

E-ink display

In-depth
Hidden stories
The Gokstad Ship

The Gokstad ship is the epitome of a Viking ship: powerful, sleek and elegant, combining tradition, technology and purpose. It could be both sailed and rowed and was made for long-distance travel.
The Tune Ship

The evolution of the Viking ship was driven by necessity – changes were made in response to a rapidly changing world, with new demands and opportunities. The visitors should reflect on why we develop and change technology.

The Tune Ship tells the story of the Viking ship itself and how it was made. The main components of a Viking ship are presented, as well as the steps involved in their construction. Step-by-step it becomes evident how and why they were so well-adapted to the sea.

This area of the museum focuses on the Vikings as craftpersons, using the example of ship-building as a major undertaking that required organization and expertise.

It also examines the resources that were necessary to build a ship; the many oak trees, the large amounts of iron, the gigantic woven cloth for sails. Where did it all come from, and how were the various components made?

The screen indicates where the different highlights are located once they are out of sight.

A sliding screen enables the visitor to scan through the story of the Tune ship. By moving the screen over the ship, the visitor uncovers details about construction of Viking ships and the materials that were used.
VISITOR JOURNEY

The Crafts(wo)men.
The story of the thousand hands that produced this specific element of the ship. Meet the crafts(wo)men behind the sails.

The Resources
Powered by nature:
What resources were needed to manufacture the various parts of the ship? A chain of operation between nature and craft.

Functionality
The crown of creation:
The evolution of the Viking ship
The splendid interplay of all elements. The success of the ship stems from the sum of its parts.

Historical people & Protagonist
from experimental archaeology

Historical Material & Imitations
by experimental archaeology

Reconstruction of the Original
function and results of ongoing research

The Tune ship offers not only the opportunity to contemplate the ship itself, but also to learn more about the building of Viking ships in general, as well as how the Vikings navigated these ships across the North Atlantic.
The Far North West

In this section, the story revolves around the question: What triggered the North Atlantic Scandinavian expansion, and how did it unfold? Moreover, how did the Vikings know where to travel and how to navigate?

The Scandinavian settled on the northern rim of the British Isles, from Orkney and Shetland in the north to Isle of Man in the south. They also settled on the Faroe Islands and Iceland, and in the late tenth century established settlements in Greenland, followed by outposts in North America.

Their settlement story makes an excellent case for the study of identity and cultural change.

Tools of Navigation

- **Phenomena of nature**
  - Wind directions, ocean currents and celestial bodies

- **Landmarks**
  - Names of landmarks memorized in poems and sagas.

- **Life under and above the water**
  - Animals as sources for orientation.
  - Facts, figures and stories about Viking Age animals.
The Stem Smith and the economy of the Viking ship
Tool wall:
A 3-dimensional infographic, with an arrangement of a Viking tools. They are arranged according to the work process of the blacksmith.

Example of Artefacts

Navigation and foreign waters
This immersive and interactive installation forms the background for the Tune ship. Visitors are invited to navigate like a Viking towards the “Far Northwest”. They stand on deck of an imaginary ship and point with their fingers at landmarks and other forms for orientation in the seascape.
The burial chamber from the Gokstad ship is located on the upper floor, in direct visual contact with the Gokstad ship itself. Visitors can actually enter this structure. And while the Gokstad ship is sailing within sight over the open sea, this chamber already prophecies its final destiny as a grave for its owner.
A New Era

While the two previous sections have focused on the Viking Age and its roots, this section is directed towards changes that point forward. The transition to Christianity, the growth of urban centers, the centralization of royal power including a monetary economy, are the central themes here.

The exhibitions also shows the culmination of Scandinavia’s political role in Europe, with Knut the Great’s North Sea Empire and the widespread alliances of the Scandinavian kings in the east and west.

The visitors learn why the Viking period ended and why the new era, the Medieval period, began.

The design of this last area reflects the upcoming urban structure of the new era. The skyline of showcases, that rise towards the end of the room, functions as inverted counterpart to the procession with which the exhibition started.

Sounds of church bells and bustling murmurs fill the room with a vivid atmosphere.

The visitors can choose different thematic paths towards the end, and understand the various influences that contributed to the end of the Viking Age.
**VISITOR JOURNEY**

**Landscape**
Representing the adoption of a new structure and the formation of a monumental construction.

**Thematic paths**
Proposes different thematic paths, representing the different perspectives on “the last act”.

**Finale**
Forming an open space at the very end, to showcase the last piece of evidence, the final object that brings all perspectives together.

**Artefacts**
The landscape approach is formed by several exhibition elements, in addition to objects.

**Interactive**
Small interactive stations to explore in-depth content.

**Sensorial chambers**
From soundscapes to smellscapes, different sensorial stations make the experience immersive.

**Self reflection**
Thought provoking moments, triggering a deeper understanding of history as a key to understanding our present and future.
A New Era

Thought provoking moments, triggering a deeper understanding of history as a key to understanding our present and future
Detail of the Highlight Track

The Highlight track provides a path through the exhibition, highlighting a small number of unique artefacts. It winds its way through the entire exhibition and, visitors following this trail, will feel that they have had a full museum experience, even if they spend a relatively short period of time on their visit.

The selected artefacts stand out from the crowd and are treated with a multi-faceted view. Most can be viewed in 360 degrees.

Every site offers different perspectives on the significance of the artifact, exploring different layers of interpretation and scientific research. Some Highlight sites can be augmented with either a visual context or an explanatory scenographic element. The augmentation will be steered by the visitor, and will magically transport the artefact into a different place or time.

Augmenting showcases enhance the interpretation of the artefact. Different layers of information can either place the object into a narrative setting or include explanatory interactions.
The 360° view of the Highlight track objects enables the visitor to view the showcases from different layers of perspective, interpretation and scientific research. Each side of the showcase reveals a different layer and context.

The arrangement of the different perspective layers can vary from artefact to artefact. The exposed nature of the arrangement makes them easily recognizable as being part of the Highlight track.
The Timeline

The timeline that bends around the inner core of the circular building is the backbone of the visitor journey. It gives the visitors a visual indication of the overall narrative. It also demonstrates that the Viking Age is a dynamic period, with interlinked developments and events through time. The timeline is built upon a shelf, on which years are indicated. Selected three-dimensional figures can populate the plinth. They mark different events in time and connect different places around the world. The visitor can trigger additional projections that illustrate the significance of the selected piece and moment in time. A trigger-wheel offers the possibility of switching between different points of view about an object or event. In doing so, the visitors are able to compare geopolitical, cultural and social perspectives and understand the Viking Age in broader context.

The graphic design elements used on the timeline will reflect the change of artistic styles from the beginning to the end of the Viking Age.
The Arcade Rooms

An important part of the exhibition are the Arcade rooms. While the big open spaces focus on the overall narrative, the Arcade Rooms support this story by offering a more detailed look at selected objects and themes. Here the visitors can immerse themselves and take the opportunity to delve deeper into the themes, get carried away, reflect or rest.
The Arcade Rooms – Types

The Arcade Rooms have an average size of 32 m² and are thematically designed spaces. The design category in which each room falls works according to a menu of types. All Arcade Rooms are located on the courtyard side of the museum, but whether they face the courtyard design-wise, or connect more with the halls on the opposite side, or create an independent universe of their own, depends on the content of the room itself. Some Arcade Rooms hold fragile artefacts that need to be protected from daylight. Others contain no artefacts at all, while still others contain large numbers of one kind of object. The design of the Arcade Rooms therefore varies from immersive digital experiences, to object-oriented treasure archives, to spaces with daylight and with a view to the courtyard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Almost) No artefacts</th>
<th>Little but important artefacts</th>
<th>A lot of different artefacts</th>
<th>A lot of the same type of artefact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preferred dark space</td>
<td>Immersive media installation dedicated to a theme</td>
<td>Archive showcases stretching over the walls</td>
<td>Immersive object-based installation + Projection mapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred light space</td>
<td>Connection to courtyard Window overlay</td>
<td>Connecting to artefacts in the mainhall</td>
<td>Archive showcases stretching over the walls</td>
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<td>Immersive object-based installation</td>
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The Arcade Rooms – Example

The first Arcade Room, close to the Oseberg skeletons and the first vehicle in the burial procession is “The Weavers”.

The room holds precious textiles, including the unique tapestries found in the Oseberg ship.

The Oseberg tapestries depict an array of finely detailed animals, humans, ships, carts and buildings. Tapestries played an important role in storytelling in the Viking Age.

The myths and stories they depict can tell us a lot about society and life in Viking times.

The room will be permanently without daylight, because the fragility of the textiles. The scenes on the textile remains themselves are also hard to recognize because of their decay. The Arcade Room will help the visitor to understand the meaning of the tapestries on two levels. Therefore the animated stories the tapestries once told are projected onto the wall behind the showcases.

In an additional station, the visitors can weave stories themselves. The elements shown on the different textiles are separated into tiles and can be placed on an interactive weaving board. Once the visitor moves the weaving sword, the illustrations appear on the wall, and the tiles start to gain color and form patterns.
Participative

Advanced users can even be utilised as "automatic turks" where they get to do image recognition.

Explorative

Understand how things function by experimenting with their properties.

Playfull

Understand the Viking way of life by reliving some of the things they did.
VISITOR JOURNEY

Hands-on
Try out different research methods yourself.

Interactive
Piece together a puzzle of a ship and see it sail if you did it right.

Investigative
Discover details, alone or under the guidance of an expert.
Research Workshops
Experience Summary

The Discovery

The Oseberg Ship

The Thousand Swords

Hidden Treasures

The Procession

The Core

Equipped for War and the Battle

The Gokstad Ship
VISITOR JOURNEY

The Ship

The Far North West

The Highlight Track

A New Era

The Timeline

The Arcade Rooms

Explore & Research Workshops

Research Laboratory
Museum of the Viking Age offers varied experiences aimed at different target groups. Flexibility in the building structure and exhibitions will ensure a dynamic museum, remaining relevant for the visitor of today and tomorrow. Welcome to a new generation of research museum.
Imprint

Exhibition Project at Museum of Cultural History

Göran Joryd | Project manager
Ellen Marie Næss | Content coordinator
Eili Lindøe | Designer
Jan Bill | Academic content responsible
Hanne Lovise Aannestad | Collection management
Kathy Elliott | Lecturer
Vegard Vike | Conservation
Guro Hjulstad | Conservation
Andreas Kristensen | Project coordinator “The great Viking journey”

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