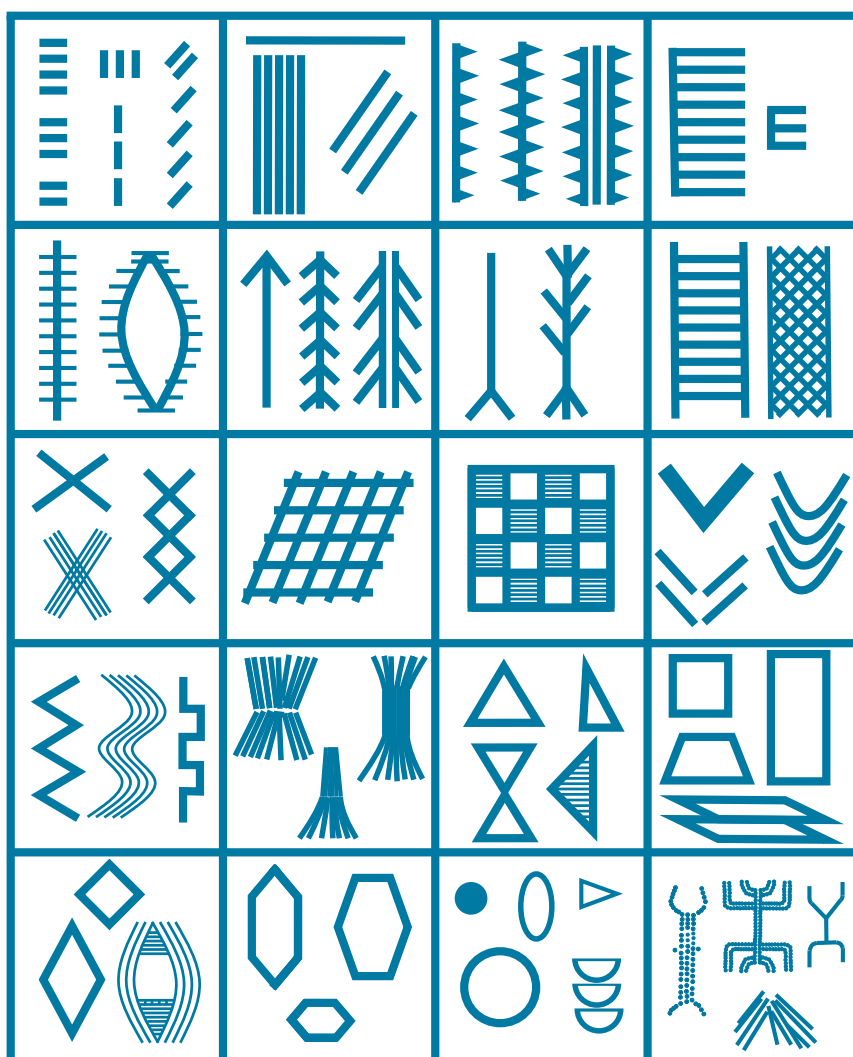


International & Interdisciplinary Conference

**Mesolithic Art –
Abstraction, Decoration, Messages**
*Mesolithische Kunst –
Abstraktion, Dekoration, Botschaften*

Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte Halle (Saale)

19. – 21. September 2019



Landesamt für Denkmalpflege
und Archäologie Sachsen-Anhalt
LANDESMUSEUM FÜR
VORGESCHICHTE

Conference venue

Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und
Archäologie Sachsen-Anhalt –
Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte
Richard-Wagner-Str. 9
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Cover illustration: Judith M. Grünberg (Halle/Saale) and Heribert A. Graetsch (Bochum)

Cover photograph: Detail of the ornamented Mesolithic antler axe from Garz, Saxony-Anhalt
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Layout: Brigitte Parsche (Halle/Saale)

English editor: Alison Wilson (Cambridge, UK)

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Introduction

Mesolithic Art – Abstraction, Decoration, Messages

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Thousands of publications and hundreds of exhibitions have focused in the last 150 years on Palaeolithic art. But what do we know about Mesolithic art? In the Late Glacial and early Postglacial the naturalistic figurative graphic depictions of animals flourishing in Ice Age Europe disappeared more or less completely. A new style – abstract and geometric – emerged, carried out with fine incisions as well as pricked and drilled dots. It is found on tools, personal ornaments and other portable artefacts made of amber, antler, bone, shell, stone, tooth and wood. In addition, different types of rock art (petroglyphs and pictographs) but also sculptured and painted objects including human and animal figurines are also preserved from the Mesolithic. The motifs and patterns are limited in number and often occur regionally and supra-regionally, including ornaments and possibly symbols, information and communications.

Remains of Mesolithic art have been documented in at least 26 countries in Europe. Like Ice Age art, they were first recorded in the middle of the 19th century. However, probably due to their fineness and small size they received rather little attention. The conference aims to investigate the new significant and distinctive style of the Late Palaeolithic and Mesolithic hunter-fisher-gatherers. We will try to explore the possible reasons for its creation; its meaning and its function as decoration or even as an early form of symbolic writing. Representations of the landscape seem to have been engraved, possibly as pictorial messages from one human group to another.

Archaeologists, archaeozoologists, ethnologists and linguists from 17 European countries will participate in the conference in Halle from 19th to 21st September 2019 presenting Mesolithic art in different regions and giving an overview of the state of research in Europe.

Oral Presentations

The Dutch masters? Art, decoration and ornaments in the Late Palaeolithic and Mesolithic of the Netherlands and Doggerland 13000–5000 BC

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The Late Palaeolithic and Mesolithic occupation of the Netherlands is mainly known through numerous sites characterised by lithics. The absence of caves and rock formations has prevented the development of any significant earlier Palaeolithic art tradition in these parts. Also, the geographical and soil conditions often have not been favourable to the preservation of organic remains. Evidence of Late Palaeolithic and Mesolithic art in the Netherlands is therefore limited, but it is not absent. In this contribution we will present an overview of the existing corpus of several dozens of decorated objects and ornaments from the time period between 13000 and 5000 BC. The finds can be attributed to the Hamburgian, the *Federmessergruppen*, the Ahrensburgian and the whole of the Mesolithic. We will discuss aspects of technology, style and cultural affiliation with the aim of discovering whether there is evidence for continued traditions or new developments. We will also highlight some of the controversies surrounding elements of the corpus. An important focus lies with the North Sea and the potential offered by artefacts from Doggerland.

A new grammar for a changing world: the graphic expression among the Holocene hunter-gatherers of the Iberian Peninsula

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This lecture attempts to provide a critical view of the available information about the graphic expression of the Mesolithic groups of the Iberian Peninsula, and to provide some reflections on its role within those societies.

The Iberian Peninsula is one of the classic areas for the study of the Mesolithic. Hundreds of sites have been catalogued and studied since the mid-nineteenth century, including key references, such as the outstanding cemeteries of Muge and the Sado valley in Portugal, the dense concentration of coastal sites known as the Asturian "culture" in the north, or the "Geometric Mesolithic" of the Ebro valley and Mediterranean Spain in the eastern part of the Peninsula.

Yet the analysis of graphic expression has not been a central issue within the research of this period, except in the case of the long debate on the chronology of the so-called "Levantine art". This outstanding naturalistic style, depicting, among other activities, hunting scenes, was attributed during a large part of its long and complex history of research to the Mesolithic. However, the discovery at the end of the 1970s of another rock-art style in SE Spain, named "Macro-schematic", challenged that assumption, as the latter, which was dated in the mid sixth millennium cal BC by parallelism with motifs found in early Neolithic *cardial* pottery, demonstrated in some cases to be earlier than the Levantine, which was superposed on it on the walls of some sites in the Valencia region. Yet recent re-analysis of the Levantine art, including radiometric dating of the depictions, has re-opened the possibility of at least part of the Levantine art corresponding to the Mesolithic. In any case, the research on the Levantine art has traditionally been quite an independent branch of Spanish archaeological research, and even when this style was generally attributed to the Mesolithic, attempts to analyse it within the general context of Holocene hunter-gatherer societies were scarce.

This is also related to another classic issue which has lately been re-opened: the supposedly abrupt end of the naturalistic graphic expression at the end of the Pleistocene. In this lecture we will discuss the available evidence on the chronology of the end of rock and portable Palaeolithic art, and the possibilities of some kind of later figurative developments having existed in the Iberian Peninsula. Moreover, new data will be provided concerning the graphic expression during the Azilian period, presenting our current research on the Azilian painted cobbles of northern Spain. Other kinds of non-figurative graphic expression in northern Spain and in the Mediterranean region are also discussed.

The animal representations of the Azilian

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The Azilian art is first of all defined by painted and engraved pebbles with schematical patterns. Animal representations are seldom found and humans very seldom.

Animal representations of the Early Azilian are known from Abri Murat near Rocamadour, Rocher de l'Impératrice in Brittany, the cave Pégourié (Lot), the rockshelter Dufaure (Landes) and the cave of Gouy in the Seine valley near Rouen. The figures are similar to the engravings of Late Magdalenian.

The animal representations of the following Laborian are known from La Borie del Rey (Lot-et-Garonne), Abri Morin (Gironde) and the rockshelter of Pont d'Ambon in the Dronne valley near Bourdeilles. The animals of the Laborian are less realistic, their outlines are drawn by hatches, and inside the aurochs of La Borie del Rey and Morin as well as the horses of Pont d'Ambon there are ornaments.

Maglemose amber pendants

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At the moment, about 50 decorated amber pendants are known from the oldest Mesolithic, Maglemose, of the present area of Denmark, and fortunately, more are still coming as they are considered a *Danefæ* treasure. Unfortunately, only three come from a settlement site, while the major part has been found in secondary position, being washed up on the shores of western Jylland as messages from the drowned landscape of Doggerland. Only a few come from the inland of Jylland, and the bogs of Sjælland, Åmosen and Sværdborg/ Lundby have given us a fair number, while there is only a single one from Scania. Although these pendants cover three thousand years no development can be seen.

The pendants weigh from four to 130 grams, and they often show traces of intense use: new suspension holes, worn down decorations and reworking of the decoration. Fortunately, the ornaments, motifs and compositions equal those found on the antler and bone tools.

The decoration is organised in a vertical or horizontal manner, and even as a combination of the two. The decoration can be incised, engraved or drilled with pits, while the visibility of the patterns is enhanced by a black tar.

Ornamented sacral artefacts from Michnievičy quarries (Northwestern Belarus)

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A find spot of bone and antler artefacts of different Stone Age periods near the village of Michnievičy (Smarhon district, Hrodna region) has been known in the archaeological literature since the early 1970s (Charniaŭski/Kalinoŭski 1972). To date, about a hundred bone and antler artefacts are known, as well as a large number of bones with no apparent traces of processing. All the finds were discovered during gravel extraction in the quarries located at the confluence of the Vilija and Draja Rivers. The exact stratigraphic location of the artefacts remains unknown. It is most likely that these artefacts come from the alluvial floodplain deposits below the recent water level (Charniaŭski/Kalinoŭski 1972, 27–28).

Two artefacts stand out from the assemblage. They are known as wands of shamans (*bâtons de commandement*) in the literature (Cherniavskiy 1992). Both artefacts are made of European

red deer antler (*Cervus elaphus*). The first one is represented by a carefully treated item, which was broken next to the hole during its use. There are incised decorations on the side surfaces – rows of zigzag grooves in composition. In places the grooves retain a white filling. The second artefact resembles a heavily stylised moose head. It is broken at the top. The item was carefully processed and polished over almost the entire surface. In the lower part there is a rounded hole for attaching a wooden handle. On both sides of the artefact there are rows of small incisions forming a herringbone decoration. On one of the side surfaces there are two triangles formed by several lines. They can be interpreted as a stylised image of teepee-like structures.

The careful manufacture and rich ornamentation of products could imply that these artefacts were not of practical use, but were status objects. Certain analogies in their form and style of ornamentation can be found at a number of sites and individual find spots from elsewhere in Europe. Both items should be dated to the Mesolithic, but the exact age of these and other antler artefacts from the Michnevičy site is currently under investigation as part of a joint radiocarbon dating project of the Institute of History, NAS of Belarus, and the ZBSA, Germany.

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The hidden symbolism of ornamented antler adzes, probable Mesolithic tomahawks

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Early postglacial decorated finds from dredged river beds have been recognised in northern France during the last century. They concern several engraved pieces made from red deer antler. The technological investigation presented in this paper demonstrates that the finds were used as tools carrying symbolic value. Engraved and bound before use, the peculiar engraved motif they display was not intended to be visible at the time the tools were employed for heavy duty purposes. In the form of a registry of geometric patterns carefully drilled on the body of the tool, and arranged symmetrically compared to its shaft, the motif yielded by the engravings themselves shows the art was made to adorn the tool, but not only for that. The paper discusses the magic function of this art, interpreted as a hidden symbolism used for arming certain tools, making them amongst all the others left unen-

graved, specific to a particular use. Other heavy-duty tools showing a similar art-form, actually deriving from more recent and securely dated archaeological contexts, are also illustrated for a relative dating of these finds.

SignBase – a data-driven approach to abstract signs in the Palaeolithic

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In the Palaeolithic around 100,000 to 10,000 years ago, abstract motifs – also referred to as signs, patterns, or marks – are abundant in parietal art as well as on mobile objects. In the case of parietal art, several studies have dealt with such abstract signs. However, studies scrutinising signs on mobile objects, such as figurines, tools, or personal ornaments, are rare and mostly limited to either single objects, or to particular assemblages. Our project SignBase aims to enable large-scale comparisons by collecting together abstract motifs on mobile objects from all over the European Palaeolithic, the African Middle Stone Age, as well as further finds of the Near East and South East Asia. In contrast to the chronological difficulties of dating parietal art, abstract motifs on mobile objects are usually well dated, at least with reference to the given techno-complexes. Our project ultimately aims to enable quantitative comparative studies on the development of abstract graphical expressions before the emergence of writing systems. This includes the application of classification algorithms allowing us to study the signs in geographical and chronological dimensions. Furthermore, while any inference about their meaning is inevitably speculative, information-theoretic analyses can shed light on the evolution of their information-encoding potential and compare it to later graphical behaviour such as early written language.

Messages on sticks and stones – rock art and message sticks of the Australian Aborigines

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In my paper I present and discuss different examples of message sticks and rock art sites, including their meaning and cultural background, in one of the oldest living cultures of the world, Aboriginal Australia. First I will explain some basic aspects of indigenous culture, language, art, and ways of communication. Although without written language, Australian indigenous society is and was a knowledge-based society with a long tradition of material and immaterial ways of knowledge transfer. Knowledge is crucial for survival in a practical, but also in a spiritual way for the human soul and body. In Indigenous Australia it was transferred in a multitude of ways including message sticks and rock art sites which have survived until today.

I will then explain in detail the fascinating stories of several different message sticks and rock art sites, based on examples of contemporary and historical research and personal sighting. The ways of using message sticks, what they mean, what they grant, how they are used, how they transport their message, and how they were perceived and categorised by white observers and collectors are discussed. Also, the use of message sticks by white missionaries in order to communicate with Aborigines is documented in one case. Similarly, rock art sites and their meanings, their secular and/or spiritual significance, are explained. Today's challenges like loss of knowledge, danger of destruction, industrial or pastoral use of significant sites, and/or a growing tourism industry are also pointed out.

Besides academic categories and discourses my paper as a whole primarily aims to provide a better and deeper understanding of the messages and how they were told and understood in the context indigenous knowledge exchange.

Mesolithic codes through the lineal engraved plaquettes recovered at Cueva de la Cocina (Dos Aguas, Valencia, Spain)

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Southwest Europe offers some remarkable examples of Mesolithic graphic design; among them, one of the most singular comes from the Cueva de la Cocina (Dos Aguas, Valencia, Eastern Iberia). The collection comprises around 30 limestone plaquettes decorated with complex geometric compositions on one or both surfaces. These compositions made by engraved strokes seem to follow a recursive pattern around a main confluence distribution of parallels and obliques.

The first plaquettes were recovered in the 1940s from the first excavation campaigns conducted by Lluís Pericot, who published a short appraisal included in the description of the Cueva de la Cocina sequence (Pericot 1945). Later unpublished fieldworks (Fortea et al. 1987; García Puchol et al. 2018) have completed the current number of these singular portable objects related to one of the richest Prehistoric artistic sequences known in southern Europe. Comparable with this, the Eastern Iberia region shows different painting (and some engraving) expressions revealing one of the most spectacular Post-Palaeolithic rock art repertoires, encompassing the figurative engravings attributed to the Epipalaeolithic/Epimagdalenian period, the macroschematic/schematic paintings repertory linked with the Neolithic communities, and the wide distribution of the figurative and narrative Levantine rock art considered by authors both as Mesolithic (Mateo Saura 2005; Alonso/Grimal 1996), or (mainly) as Neolithic work (Molina Balaguer et al. 2003; García Puchol et al. 2004; López Montalvo et al. 2017).

In this context, dating the portable engraved plaquettes emerges as a key factor to approaching some crucial temporal and social questions. Specifically, this investigation opens a window to exploration of the symbolic sphere in the changing world that shapes the development of the last hunter-gatherer groups.

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The intentional incisions and engravings on Mesolithic bone and antler artefacts from Northeastern Germany

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The paper examines 18 intentionally engraved antler and bone artefacts found in Friesack that date to each of four periods spanning the middle of the Preboreal to the Late Boreal/Early Atlantic, as well as stray finds that were dredged from the canal next to the excavation site. Notable among the finds are at least six perforated antler batons that date to the Late Preboreal and the Late Boreal/Early Atlantic. Twenty-six Mesolithic antler and bone artefacts with incised patterns from Mecklenburg and Brandenburg are drawn on for comparison. Because of their mostly 'disorderly' character, it is considered unlikely that the engravings and 'patterns' would have had ornamental or artistic value. For the most part, they portray recurring, standardised signs whose meaning, if any, can today no longer be deduced. It is suggested that they were of largely symbolic significance in the practical or spiritual world of the hunters, gatherers and fishermen of the Mesolithic, intelligible only to the parties involved. Marks on two of the perforated batons possibly convey geographical information.

The three worlds in Evenk ornament

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The paper presents data on the comprehensive use of three-world symbols in Evenk ornament. The Evenk universe consists of three layers; the underworld for the dead souls, the middle world for the present living beings and the upper world where the souls of the deceased wait for re-birth in their reincarnation system. For the Evenk it is obviously important to refer to these three levels of their universe in ornament and art, as well as in daily practical constructions. In the clothing ornament the colours black, white and blue represent the three worlds. Special three-world symbols are found on some graves, and the use in several practical constructions of tripods instead of single poles dug into the ground is also a reference to the three-world idea.

The paper furthermore discusses the relationship between cosmology and ornament/art as well as the dynamics of some elements and the persistence of others.

New research results and dates from Mesolithic sites with decorated bone and antler tools in Northern Germany

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This presentation will deal with new dates obtained from the Mesolithic site Hohen Viecheln. The site is located on the northern shore of Lake Schwerin and was used for a long time in the Early Mesolithic. Due to an extended dating programme that dealt with the re-evaluation of the stratigraphy for better understanding the stratigraphic sequence and enhancing the precision of bone point chronology, more precise estimations were gained for the ornamented tools and artefacts at the site.

The radiocarbon dates from our analysis provide a range for the different artefacts from the Late Preboreal to the Early Atlantic and hence show a lengthy use of the site during the Early Holocene. Sedimentary analysis further refined our understanding of processes that caused a re-deposition of finds and enabled chronological estimates for artefacts that were not precisely dated. Consequently, it is possible to indirectly date the different ornamented finds and deduce the development of decoration styles at the site. We will briefly present our results of the dating programme and its consequences for the chronology of different decorated artefacts in Hohen Viecheln.

Mesolithic portable art in the museums of Saxony-Anhalt

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In Germany, archaeological remains of Mesolithic art are rarely documented. All of them are mobile or portable art, mainly found on tools made of antler, bone, stone, tooth and wood. In addition, there are incised personal ornaments and a painted pebble. The total number comprises almost 100 artefacts from about 50 sites located mostly in Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Schleswig-Holstein, but also in Baden-Württemberg, Lower-Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia.

In Saxony-Anhalt tools with deliberate markings and sculptured personal ornaments from the Mesolithic are housed in five museums: Aschersleben, Genthin, Halle (Saale), Havelberg and Salzwedel. There are at least ten bone and antler tools showing various repeating motifs well known from Mesolithic artefacts in other regions, including various engraved simple strokes in rows, bands, stroke and line patterns as well as drilled pits and pointillé ornamentation. These are found on six antler tools (four axes, one perforated shaft) and four bone tools (two awls, one dagger and a bullroarer). Most of them are single finds, some excavated during drainage or building works. Moreover, the cut-out hole at the distal end of one of the wild boar canine halves from the Mesolithic burial at Bad Dürrenberg has been broken and it seems to have been reworked into a small sculptured head, possibly of a bird. More than half of these artefacts have been on display in the museum for years. The others are in museum storage depots. Almost all of them had received little attention and were never dated or studied until now. This conference provided the occasion to examine these artefacts in more detail using new microscopic and 3D-digitalisation methods. The presentation will also summarise the results of new studies and ¹⁴C-AMS-datings of the finds. The motifs will be discussed in the German and European context.

Painted wood, notch on bone – ornamentation or marking?

A case of two neighbouring forager sites, Dudka and Szczepanki, Masuria, NE-Poland

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Dudka and Szczepanki are sites located on two islands of the former Lake Staświn in Masuria, Northeast-Poland. They were occupied from the Late Palaeolithic through the entire Mesolithic and Para-Neolithic (Zedmar Culture) until the end of the Stone Age. Both sites yielded about one hundred well-preserved bone and antler artefacts, apart from more numerous small fragments. They represent diverse categories of adornments, tools and weapons, such as tooth and bone pendants, beads, pins, awls, daggers, points and harpoons, fishhooks, pitchforks, chisels, adzes, axes and batons. Ornaments are very rare on these artefacts and they are very scanty and simple. They comprised only a single notch or several notches

which created short parallel lines, short zigzags, and one or a few X-like patterns. They were made more often on the tooth pendants (14% of adornments) than on the bone and antler implements (c. 7%). Ornaments occurred on different kinds of tools, i.e. one bone dagger, two massive awls, three antler axes and one antler baton. Similar notches were made also on unworked bones. At least three such bones were found at Dudka. In turn, at Szczepanki irregular notches were observed on the inner surfaces of turtle carapaces. However, they appeared only on a few fragments, which comprise c. 2% of all the pieces of carapaces.

It should be pointed out that at both sites there is no real geometric ornamentation typical of the Mesolithic, though many of the implements and adornments were very carefully made and polished. Taking into account the simplicity of patterns, the notches on tooth, bone and antler items from Dudka and Szczepanki were in fact not proper ornamentation, but seem rather to be a personal marking.

On the contrary, wooden artefacts were richly decorated by paintings. There are two such objects made of ash-wood – a paddle from Szczepanki and a probable fishing-rod from Dudka. Both artefacts were spirally painted with tar in exactly the same way. Before painting the rod and the handle of the paddle must have been spirally bound with tape, since the edges of the spirals are perfectly regular. The blade of the paddle was additionally painted with red ochre. The unique spiral painting seems to be an exceptional local tradition and probably it was reserved only for given objects and maybe only for particular persons.

Ornamented bone and antler implements from the Terminal Mesolithic in Schleswig-Holstein

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While pottery, flints and bone/antler tools from the Ertebølle Culture in Schleswig-Holstein have been thoroughly investigated, the decorated objects have only been published in individual cases. Due to intensive fieldwork on submerged sites such as Grube-Rosenhof, Wangels, Neustadt and Strande on the Baltic Sea coast, new ornamented finds have been discovered in recent decades.

This presentation focuses on decorated bone and antler tools and a few other implements from the Terminal Mesolithic between 5500 to 4000 cal BC. For a better chronological understanding some new radiocarbon dates obtained from the finds are included. In most cases the decoration motifs show a wide distribution within the Ertebølle Culture of southern Scandinavia and northern Germany, but regional styles can also be observed. It is noticeable

that nearly all the decorated pieces were discovered on coastal sites whereas there is not a single find from inland Ertebølle sites.

Ornaments, sculptures and interpretations during the pre-pottery Mesolithic in present Estonian territory

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Works of art have always been favoured in studies of the Mesolithic in the Eastern Baltic. However, most of these studies use ornamented objects as illustrations, by simply mentioning the ornament or describing the objects, while specific and in-depth studies are rare. With such an approach a view has been formed that Mesolithic art mostly consists of geometric motifs and, dependent on the scholar's interests, simpler or more sophisticated interpretations are ascribed to these objects.

In fact, Mesolithic art is more complex than just geometric ornament on tools. In this presentation I wish to look at 'art' in its context – what kind of motifs are used, how geometric patterns are set on bone or antler implements, whether there is any correlation between types of objects and the presence of ornament and if such an approach gives meaning to otherwise anonymous dots and notches. In addition to geometric patterns, the Mesolithic 'art' in North-East Europe is also characterised by antler sculptures – elk-headed staffs, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic sculptures. Although dating of art objects is usually complicated, it seems that a sculptural tradition spread across the Eastern Baltic and North-West Russia at the end of pre-pottery Mesolithic, around 6000 BC.

Finally, I would like to address broader questions such as what is art and what could have been the possible purpose of covering some objects with geometric motifs. Could it be just a decoration, changing the essence of a raw material, or was it some sort of symbolic language?

The Tågerup axe shaft – a masterpiece from the 7th millennium BC. A brief presentation of a coming exhibition of Mesolithic art and ritual at the Historical Museum at Lund University

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The purpose is to present some initial ideas and thoughts when planning for a permanent exhibition of Mesolithic Art and Ritual Traditions. In our collections we have numerous finds of decorated objects made of antler, bone and flint found at several important sites throughout Scania, southern Sweden. Among these the Axe Shaft from the large Kongemossian settlement of Tågerup stands out, with its intricate set of bands filled with rhomboid patterns. Are these patterns purely decorative or could there be other explanations? This amazing find made from a red deer antler will be highlighted and compared with other South Scandinavian finds.

Mobile art of the East European Plain forest hunters (6000–3000 BC): images, ancestors, networks

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In the Holocene Stone Age, the territory of the Eastern European forest zone was a single whole featuring the multiple relationships and common cultural and spiritual phenomena of its population. Peculiarities of ritual practice, its possible forms in various regions and periods of time and groups of main mythological images of the epoch are investigated on the basis of the detailed analysis of all known artefacts (pendants, figurines, sculptured tools, images on vessels sceptres – about 700 items). Special attention is paid to the problem of interactions among people. Mobile art serves as a source of investigation allowing us to analyse gender differences, marital and kindred relationships, as well as progress and stagnation in ritual traditions. The study is very important for understanding the Mesolithic hunter-gatherer-fishers' mobile art phenomena as fully as possible and for reconstructing its role in the extensive communication system of prehistoric hunter-gatherer-fishers. Researchers outside Eastern Europe are little acquainted with the bulk of current investigative data pertaining to these artefact collections. The items are well preserved, skilfully made, and

could be compared with mobile art collections of the European Upper Palaeolithic epoch. Various sets of items were obviously connected with highly diversified conceptions and were used in different situations. Certain items possessed their own functions, periods and areas of existence. The group of undoubtedly "male" items consists of antler rods with elks' heads, which were widespread over vast territories and dated from the Final Mesolithic to the Early Metal Age, and could have been linked with each man who reached maturity and began possessing certain rights and responsibilities, including in the sacred sphere. The group of undoubtedly "female" objects includes ritual sets of clay sculptures, dated 5th–4th mil BC and widespread among cultures with Comb-Pitted Ware of the Eastern Baltic basin. These sculptures were probably made by women, as well as all the ceramics of that epoch, and located in dwellings beside the hearth, probably representing ancestors surrounded by certain animal species. Sculptural pendants were widespread over large areas in the 4th mil. BC. Images of birds of different kinds, snakes, fish, beaver, otter, elk and bear were probably sewn on the clothes and hats, and could represent a totem ancestor of the community or the kin. Sculptural pendants representing certain animals were spread over the given area. Map analysis has determined the concentration of certain animals in certain regions, belonging to the territory of the one or two big river basins. In some cases sharing of the same dwelling by people of different kins was indicated, reflecting probable fratriae and marital unions. Thus the whole Final Mesolithic and Neolithic forest zone was meshed in networks, and the mobile art played a significant role in the processes of their emergence, existence and collapse.

Island of decorations – the uneven impact of preservation on the interpretation of long-distance connections

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In Swedish contexts the distribution of Mesolithic bone and antler artefacts is extremely limited. This is generally the case for organic material in the Swedish Mesolithic. Such artefacts have mainly been limited to a few settlement and wetland sites in Scania, the south-

ernmost province. Beyond that, organic finds occur at low density, with a few important exceptions, in the middle and northern parts of Sweden.

Investigation of exceptional sites such as Strandvägen in Motala – in southernmost middle Sweden – has already had a significant impact, essentially revealing an island in a sea of poor preservation conditions. This has extended the options for interpreting variability in Mesolithic bone and antler material, widening the perspective on different artefact morphologies and decoration patterns. On this basis, this presentation discusses how the Motala material suggests possible contacts to the south and even to the east.

From hunter's art and ideology to death narratives

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The Mesolithic Northern Tradition rock art or hunter's art of Scandinavia has traditionally been associated with past subsistence strategies, where images of cervids have been argued to be associated with hunting magic and to have acted as means to control the behaviour of animals and secure successful hunting. Another explanation of the rock images and associated rock art sites has been that they functioned as assembly sites, ceremonial sites or strategic meeting places for bands and groups in the Mesolithic. These approaches have for the most part avoided trying to include and understand the meaning of the images and the different rock art compilations – also understood as narratives – in these models and interpretations.

They have also failed to try to include the many depictions of anthropomorphs or human images and their significance and meaning, amongst animal depictions, and other such images, at the different rock art sites. The human images are generally highly stylised, but a number of them are depicted with ribs, long fingers and toes, with no palm or feet, features that are typical for skeletons. On the bases of predominately the Norwegian sites it will therefore be argued that the Northern Tradition Rock Art was associated with past mortuary practices. Burials from the Mesolithic (and the Neolithic) are generally missing in the archaeological record of Scandinavia, although there are exceptions. The missing graves have been argued to be the result of acidic soil conditions, but could just as well be the result of death practices which left little remains and few intact bodies or skeletons. It is therefore interesting to note that many of the human skeleton depictions on the rock art panels seem to bear features of both manipulation and disarticulation of what seem to be defleshed bodies, practices that are also documented and reflected in the burial material of Scandinavia. The recovered burial material from single graves or cemeteries in Scandinavia can therefore

be understood as the end product of Mesolithic death rituals, but now we can potentially retrieve some of the post burial processes, leading towards the final burial stage, from the image compilations and narratives in the rock art record. The paper will also discuss the sudden appearance of the Northern Rock Art Tradition at the end of the Late Mesolithic period and what caused the just as sudden termination of the rock art production and the Northern Tradition a few centuries later.

Early and Mid-Holocene Mesolithic decorated antler and bone tools from the interior of Schleswig-Holstein

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The preservation of Stone Age bone and antler tools in Schleswig-Holstein varies significantly due to the heterogeneous landscape. The outwash plain, drift sand and older Saalian moraine landscapes in the western part provide less favourable conditions, while in the east the

younger Weichselian moraine landscape next to the Baltic basin usually provides good conditions for the preservation of organogenic material culture. This is presumably why the majority of the decorated Mesolithic objects originate from the eastern part of Schleswig-Holstein. These are solely decorated bone and antler tools, which will be presented in more detail in the lecture. Most of the finds from the inland river and lake landscapes can be attributed to the older Mesolithic Maglemose culture or the late Mesolithic Kongemose culture.

Among the outstanding pieces are three decorated *bâtons de commandement* (Lochstäbe) from the sites Travenort and Groß Rönna in the Trave valley in Holstein and Gammelby in the Koseler Au valley in Schleswig. As part of a more comprehensive dating program of Mesolithic bone and antler tools from Schleswig-Holstein in the subproject "B2: Transition of Specialized Foragers" of the Collaborative Research Centre 1266 "Scales of Transformation – Human-Environmental Interaction in Prehistoric and Archaic Societies" supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation; project number 290391021), samples were taken for AMS dating of these three objects. In the lecture we will present the dating results for the first time and discuss their significance for the chronological classification of Mesolithic art objects in the southwestern Baltic Sea region.

Carving and shaping wood, stone and bone – Mesolithic art from the territory of modern Finland

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This paper deals with various plastic and/or decorative manifestations from Finland's Mesolithic, including the early pottery Mesolithic period. Chronologically, the studied material spans from the late 9th through the 5th millennium cal BC. Though the material is scarce, it shows local traits as well as features with counterparts in neighbouring areas, which suggest some sort of cultural network. We examine these manifestations and their contexts, and discuss the meanings and purposes of the sculpted and ornamented objects in Finnish

and in a wider perspective. We seek to look at this "art" from the perspective of communication and transmission of knowledge, and link it to the social systems.

The Mesolithic portable art of the Iron Gates

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Mesolithic settlements in the Iron Gates of the Danube have yielded a significant number of portable art items, exemplified here by the sites of Cuina Turcului, Climente II, Icoana, Veterani-Terasă, Ostrovul Banului, and Schela Cladovei (Romania). The surface 'decoration' observed on these artefacts is represented by incised motifs, using lines as the basic graphic element. More complex decoration is rare, consisting mainly of series of transverse oblique incisions, hatched lines and the network pattern, grouped into rhombic and, more rarely, triangular motifs.

The present paper focuses on the use-wear and functional analysis of these pieces, in an attempt to distinguish between intentional decoration and incidental butchering or manufacturing marks. Previous publications list and illustrate a series of artefacts with irregular incisions that were considered at the time to be intentional decoration. The present study suggests that several of these artefacts were merely tools (bevelled tools, spatulas, scrapers) used in various domestic activities, and the so-called elements of decoration were in fact butchery marks or cuts resulting from the manufacturing process. In a few cases we were able to observe the development of the use-wear on the active front of the artefact.

Those objects that can be considered as portable art items are typical of Late Pleistocene- Early Holocene geometric art. The abstract character of the engravings is not necessarily

evidence of an artistic or cognitive incapacity to produce naturalistic representations of the environment, but more likely reflects cultural choice.

To what extent is Fontainebleau Massif rock art Mesolithic and could it improve our understanding of the Mesolithic period?

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There is a large group of engraved caves and shelters inside sandstone boulders in the "Fontainebleau Massif" (France). The engravings produce a rock art, in which a distinction is made between its "classical" part - composed of lines, grids and cupules – and figures (anthropomorphic...) or symbols ("rouelle"...), which sometimes supplement it and can belong to other types. The engraved panels may range from very simple to very rich. This group has a great value. The classical art is generally considered as purely Mesolithic and local, but debate is arising about a longer duration, relationships with other periods and locations and connections with other aspects. It is not an isolated art in time and space. In addition, the classical art is generally described as non-figurative (geometric or abstract) and without any order. Thus, it seems to have no meaning. But, in fact, there are figures more or less hidden inside the drawings and which are to be extracted. This rock art appears to be more schematic than abstract.

Much needs to be done for research – on a national and international scale – and protection for future generations.

Changing patterns in artistic production in late Pleistocene/early Holocene times: the Italian case

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The late Pleistocene/early Holocene rock art sites of Italy extended from the pre-Alps in the North to Apulia, Calabria and Sicily. Altogether, some twenty caves and rockshelters, and possibly a rock in the open, are decorated by engravings ranging from linear and non-figurative to naturalistic. Portable art – which actually includes blocks which cannot be easily transported – is found at many of them, but also occurs where no incised wall is recorded and in the open as well. Slabs, blocks and pebbles, and more rarely bones, have been both engraved and painted. Overall, figurative art focuses on the local fauna – mostly bovinds, followed by equids and caprids – but anthropomorphs have also been represented. Whenever the chronology is well assessed, a shift can be detected before the end of the Pleistocene. Through time figurative art, stylistically quite similar to the Franco-Cantabrian, turns out to be more and more schematic, with the outline of animals and anthropomorphs made by straight lines. Geometric decoration also occurs, including on Azilian pebbles, discovered at a number of sites from Liguria to Sicily.

New data on the Late Palaeolithic and Mesolithic art in Poland

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Ornamented artefacts dated to the Late Palaeolithic and Mesolithic are rare finds in the area of Poland. Most of them are stray finds and for that reason we have no information about the context of deposition. In such circumstances we gather all the information on these artefacts, studying the forms of these artefacts and their ornaments. Our study aims at the description and interpretation of artefact biographies from their shaping to abandoning. We take into account all technical traces of their manufacture, reshaping, the technology of ornamentation and their phases.

In our study we examine four artefacts from Pomerania and a piece from Upper Silesia. The Pomeranian artefacts can be dated to the Mesolithic (or some of them to the Late Palaeolithic): a baton from Szczecin-Podjuchy, a mattock-head from Trudna, a point from Stolec, a chisel from Niezabyszewo and a harpoon-head from Szczecin-Police. All these pieces were made of bone or antler. Four of them are old finds which were stored after World War II in Germany and were restored to the National Museum in Szczecin, the city where they had been kept after their discovery. The ornamented artefact from Birów (Upper Silesia) is dated to the Late Palaeolithic.

We use hi-tech methods of observation of original ornaments, shaping traces and usewear, using stereomicroscopes, a metallographic microscope, 3-D microscope, SEM and other methods of surface analysis (RTI), including resin casts of decorated objects. To construct the biographies we also use palaeozoological analyses of artefacts and palynological and chemical analyses of residues.

Our research yielded a fresh insight into the decorated artefacts which were discovered and described many years ago. Current studies prove that the ornamentation is a part of a complex history of ornamented artefacts. They were not manufactured as finite entities but were

shaped and reshaped in many actions. Most of their ornaments were not produced at the same session. The new ornaments were engraved on many occasions when the old ones became worn out because of use.

The methods of research help us to reconstruct life histories of ornamented artefacts. In such a case our study is not only focused on ornaments, their style and technology, but also on the history of the artefact and its ornamentation. They become a part of the social and ritual life of Mesolithic hunters and gatherers.

Evidence for the Mesolithic origin of the Levantine art of Mediterranean Iberia

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Levantine art is an exceptional rock art style in European Prehistory. Discovered shortly after the beginning of the 20th century, it is well known for the naturalistic depictions of animals and the complexity of scenes in which human figures and animals are involved in different ways. Since its discovery, researchers have been discussing its chronological framework. Breuil or Obermaier suggested a Palaeolithic age for this style, but this interpretation was swiftly rejected by some Spanish researchers who proposed a younger origin, ranging from Mesolithic to the final stages of the Early Neolithic. The Neolithic origin hypothesis has been the predominant one during the last twenty years.

A number of new pieces of evidence have arisen during the last decade, offering new approaches to the origin of this particular rock art style. Some researchers have re-evaluated the proposed parallels and the superimposition between different rock art styles that are the basis of the Neolithic hypothesis. More importantly, a number of sites with engraved figures that could be connected to the Levantine style have been discovered, opening the possibility of connections with Late Upper Palaeolithic traditions. Finally, the first application of direct dating techniques is giving clues about the existence of typically Levantine pictographs before the earliest arrival of Neolithic cultural traits and settlers in the Iberian Peninsula.

All in all, it seems that Levantine art is a long lasting tradition deeply rooted in Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic traditions, with a complex formal repertoire formed not just by figurative elements, that survived all along the eastern half of the Iberian Peninsula long after the appearance of Neolithic, and that, in consequence, could be involved in the processes of transition to farming in the Iberian Peninsula. In this sense, it is necessary to

explore the connections with other graphic expressions of the Mesolithic period in the rest of Mediterranean Europe.

Portable ornamented objects from Mesolithic Southeastern Norway: meanings, contexts and depositional practices

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In the last two decades large scale excavations of Middle and Late Mesolithic sites in southeastern Norway have put intensive settlement activities in these periods, often in coastal areas, on the agenda. Amongst the primarily lithic finds from these sites are a number of portable ornamented objects or (fragments of) figurines. Apart from single artefacts, like the ornamented stone plate from Brunstad or the "Venus" figurine from Svinesund, these have not been studied very closely. This contribution aims to collect new and old finds of ornamented portable artefacts, and to analyse similarities and differences in their material and ornamental expression. Their often well-documented find circumstances will serve as a background for assessing the objects' context of deposition as well as their probable chronological position. By including the histories of the ornamented portable objects in the analysis, with the place of deposition being a late step in the prehistoric life of the artefacts, questions of the meaning of these objects will be discussed in the light of the ornamental world of the Mesolithic in general. Also, aspects of large and small-scale mobility of people and objects in these Mesolithic societies will be addressed.

Examples of recently found Mesolithic objects with "decoration" from Lolland, Denmark

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The lecture will discuss what the stone age people were trying to express through "art" and "decoration". As both terms/labels are of a much younger date they may not be completely adequate to describe the prehistoric situation in which the objects were made.

Stone Age art and decoration is, in this lecture, seen as a way to communicate. It is designed for communication through symbols and signs and not so much made as a pleasure for the eye, as art and decoration is understood today. The newly discovered objects with decoration were found at an Ertebølle location on Lolland, Denmark. The objects will be analysed both according to the style of the decoration and the context in which they were found. Similar objects from around the western Baltic area will be drawn upon for comparison.

Maglemosian art – from mono to multi-causal interpretations

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During the 20th and into the 21st century, shifts in the interpretation of Mesolithic portable art of northwestern Europe closely mirror that of the cave art in southern Europe. Although resulting in very different interpretations ranging from hunting magic, over calendar systems and kula rings to shamanism, these studies all present a single explanation for engraving patterns on portable objects. This is often the result of basing their analysis on the small samples of published objects, which often have the most elaborate and a typical ornamentation. By surveying the Maglemosian art of southern Scandinavia and northern Germany (9700–6500 BC) in its totality I will present a much more varied selection of material, suggesting that art had a multitude of forms and meanings. Finally, I will discuss how multi-causal interpretation fits with the animistic and totemistic cosmologies suggested for Mesolithic hunter-gatherers inspired by ethnography.

Decorated antler axes/mattocks in Mesolithic Scandinavia

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Shaft hole axes made from the base ends of red deer antlers are a characteristic and relatively common artefact type from the late Mesolithic of southern Scandinavia, which judging by the axes' appearance in several graves, served as symbols of status for the men of the hunting culture.

The lack of regular, sharp edges and the fact that the axes are often provided with incised ornamentation argue against the function of a practical, usable tool. The antler axes should rather be perceived as personally associated weapons of a real and magical nature, and this article presents a number of recent finds of decorated axes submitted to the National Museum as "Danefæ", and which by means of carbon 14 dating have refined the image of the development within the Maglemose, Kongemose and Ertebølle ornamental art.

Particularly notable is a group of East Danish Ertebølle axes, which are decorated with a special and hitherto undescribed technique, in which the artists have combined contrasting fields of smoothly scraped and untreated, rough antler surfaces.

Decorated bone and antler artefacts from the territory of Belarus in the Mesolithic period

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Most of the Mesolithic sites in Belarus are located on sandy soils that are not favourable to preservation of organic materials. Bone and antler artefacts belonging to the Mesolithic are mainly random finds discovered in rivers, lakes and peaty flood-lands.

Currently, the author knows seventeen items that can be dated back to the Mesolithic and have decoration elements on their surfaces. They came from nine sites in different parts of the country. Only items from Michnievičy (Smarhoń District), Karozičy (Hrodna District) and Aziarnoje 2B (Liubań District) were discovered within the assemblages of bone and antler artefacts of Mesolithic and Neolithic age. The rest of the decorated artefacts are single finds lacking archaeological context.

Typologically, decorated artefacts can be divided into several categories: (a) antler axes – 2 pcs., (b) wands of shamans (*bâtons de commandement*) – 2 pcs., (c) daggers – 4 pcs., (d) spearheads – 1 pc., (e) points – 4 pcs., (f) fragments – 4 pcs.

Elements of geometric ornament as well as regular compositions with anthropomorphic and zoomorphic images occur as engravings on the artefacts studied.

Punched ornaments on art and jewellery objects from the Late Upper Palaeolithic and Late Palaeolithic in Europe

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During investigations of the amber objects from the Federmesser site at Weitsche, in Lüchow-Dannenberg, Lower Saxony, peculiar point ornaments attracted attention. On close inspection the impressions turn out to be trihedral and look indeed as if they were punched with a burin edge. There is little evidence so far of this technique, though it is documented over large parts of Europe. A specific motif shows connections between Eastern and Central Europe. Chronologically, this unusual technique of ornamentation is currently limited to the Late Upper Palaeolithic and Late Palaeolithic. The lecture will present different raw materials (amber, ivory, fired clay), supports (pendants, animal figures, plates) and motifs.

Artistic representations from the Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic in Latvia, Eastern Baltic

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In Latvia the Late Mesolithic (6000–5400 cal BC) and Early Neolithic (5400–4400 cal BC) is the time of dominance of the so-called Narva Culture of the Eastern Baltic. This period is marked by optimal climatic conditions, population increase and flourishing hunter-fisher-gatherer subsistence traditions.

These traditions also encompassed various artistic expressions, represented at this time by bone and antler objects. The archaeological material analysed came from two places: the well-stratified Osa settlement site in the Lubāna Lowland, southeastern Latvia (Zagorskis 1973) and a bone and antler stray finds collection, recovered in recent years from the bed of the River Užava in the coastal lowland of western Latvia (Bērziņš et al. 2016). Some of the objects have been radiocarbon-dated and belong to the Late Mesolithic–Early Neolithic period.

The art objects consist of 1) decorated bone and antler artefacts (mainly geometrical ornament); 2) zoomorphic images (cervids, water birds, fishes, snakes, etc.); 3) engraved "stories" on flat bone surfaces (daggers, shoulder blades). All artistic representations are executed to

a high artistic level, reflect the surrounding environment and are deeply rooted in the everyday life and the mental and symbolic world of the Stone Age people.

References:

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Berziņš et al. 2016

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Poster Presentations

The examples of mobile art on hunter-gatherers' (10 500–4 200 cal BC) bone and antler tools in Lithuania

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There are very few discoveries of Stone Age hunter-gatherers' mobile art in Lithuania. The majority of artworks are anthropomorphic and zoomorphic images made of bone, antler, flint or amber; however these are dated to the second half of the Neolithic and its final phase (approx. 3800–2000 cal BC). There are far fewer prehistoric art objects found in Lithuania dating from Final Palaeolithic – Mesolithic/Early Neolithic. This is mainly due to the lack of research on wetland settlements of this period, as well as the lack of attention to the analysis of stray bone and antler articles and old collections. This study will present the earliest perception of hunter-gatherers' art, dating back to approximately the beginning of the Younger Dryas and the emergence of the first ceramics in the Atlantic. From a chronological point of view, this would include the period of the Final Palaeolithic – Early Neolithic. The paper contains data from Daktariškė 5, Šarnelė (western/northwestern Lithuania), Palanga and Smeltė sites (coastal Lithuania). The bone and antler inventory of these sites consists of arrowheads, daggers, spearheads and axes. On several of them the geometric motifs were detected, which represent the earliest known primitive art in Lithuania. Motif forms are of various shapes, including triangles, solitary and crossing lines or systematic incisions. The elk antler axe example from the Smeltė site shows complex axe ornamentation technique, where the antlers' cortex has been removed in some parts of the tool and in the other parts left as it is. This is very similar to the practice of axe ornamentation from the Strøby Egede multi-burial Ertebølle grave in Denmark. It has to be mentioned that only finds from Daktariškė 5 and Palanga come from excavated sites. Ornamented osseous tools from Smeltė and Šarnelė are stray finds in origin, however most of both groups, i.e. stray and excavated finds, have new AMS ¹⁴C data.

Documentation of Mesolithic portable art using a Keyence 3D-Macroscope

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In the past, Mesolithic art was documented by drawings and photographs often of insufficient quality. The Keyence 3D-Macroscope now allows the measurement and analysis of three-dimensional surfaces in high resolution within minutes and with little training. The measuring is contactless and non-destructive, which is important for the handling of very fragile and unique archaeological finds.

The engravings on Mesolithic portable art from different museums in Saxony-Anhalt were examined, measured and analysed. For the documentation and visualisation of the artefacts the three-dimensional surfaces were illustrated by 3D view or coloured height images. To analyse the dimensions and the distribution of structures, profile cuts were set and investigated. They show the shape of the structures and enable us to measure the distances, diameters and depths of the structures. This makes it possible to draw conclusions on the composition and sequence of manufacture and reworking of the decorations, as well as on the different tools used.

Public Evening Lecture

Illustrations of humans and other creatures from the Stone Age of Southern Scandinavia

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Humans and animals are depicted in various ways during the Final Palaeolithic and Mesolithic of southern Scandinavia. Apart from the zoomorphic figurines in amber, the rendering of humans, human parts and animals are executed in the geometric style of the period, while a naturalistic illustration is only rarely attempted. Unfortunately, most of the pieces to be discussed in the following Public Lecture talk are stray finds. An amber pendant, a wooden paddle and a naturally penis-shaped flint core have their function, while the function of the decorated antler batons and axes together with the bone tools remains largely unknown.

An illustration of a figure can be incised, engraved, drawn by using drilled pits, or even printed onto the blade of a wooden paddle. Most figures are asexual, but a few male and female individuals do appear. In addition, a series of very stylised drawings can perhaps be interpreted as humans. Other creatures are elks, deer, bears, boars, birds, fish, snakes, frogs, insects, a millipede and perhaps even a dog. Most often, only a single individual is depicted on the selected artefact, but a repetition of the same figure is known and so are a few landscapes.

