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The Viking Age as a Themed Experience: Representing Hitorical Narrative Through Research Based Design

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THE VIKING AGE AS A THEMED EXPERIENCE: REPRESENTING HITORICAL NARRATIVE THROUGH RESEARCH BASED DESIGN

by

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ABSTRACT

I intend to design an interactive educational experience that teaches guests about the culture, society, and beliefs of Scandinavian peoples during the Viking age. The concepts are illustrated through a dynamic narrative designed to be experienced through exploration of a themed environment. Immersion into the narrative is intended to instill a sense of active participation with the culture itself. This interaction is intended to inspire guests to further investigate the culture and history outside the limits of the experience. These qualities, unique to an immersive environmental themed experience, capture the lasting attention of an audience such as other mediums may not. Design and narrative decisions in the experience will be supported and justified by research of primary sources (untranslated medieval sagas from Iceland and Norway, archeological artifacts from the region and period, the prose and poetic Eddas) and secondary sources (translations and interpretations of Viking age literature and mythology, archeological documentation and interpretation of primary sources.) One goal of this experience will be to dispel common misconceptions of medieval Scandinavian culture and society propagated by popular literary, film, television, and video game representations, and to present a historically justified representation as equally compelling. Strict historical exactitude, however, is not the intent. A model of a historical Viking archeological site could be accurately created. However, it will not necessarily be as engaging as an endeavor that takes certain creative license. This thesis is also an experiment in establishing a groundwork for educational representations of historic and modern cultures in themed experiences. I use Viking

Age Scandinavia, a culture with which I have significant academic experience prior to this thesis, as a test case for this idea. The scope of the project includes a designed and planned themed experience expressed through written and visual mediums where appropriate, as well as historical justification for design and narrative choices.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my most heartfelt thanks to my committee members, Vandy Wood, Tim Brown, and Peter Weishar, all of whom have helped me along this process and supplied guidance on crucial aspects of this project, as well as for helping me to attain the skills and educational foundation upon which this project is built through the entire graduate program at UCF.

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ON THE SAGAS

The Saga tradition describes a body of literary works out of Scandinavia that describe family histories, mythological happenings, epic heroic narratives, and major historical events taking place in and around Scandinavia. Though these have come from all regions of Scandinavia, a great collection of them come out of Iceland and many are still familiar to people there today, much as the English speaking world is still familiar with Shakespeare. Saga literature offers a unique perspective into the Viking Age life and happenings. While the more mythic sagas can offer much in terms of the culture's sense of morality and idealism as well as their religious beliefs and practices, the more historical and family-based sagas help to depict daily life and happenings during the Viking age.

Much of the literary voice in the more historical category of Saga literature is, for lack of better terminology, rather matter-of-fact. This often results in very plain descriptions of everyday happenings. *Njál's Saga,* for example, includes whole chapters of tedious legal debate, often including specific idioms and mannerisms that apply exclusively to legal happenings at the time (*Story of Burnt Njal*). While this might not make for particularly entertaining reading in and of itself, it shines a brilliant light on aspects of Viking Age culture that might otherwise have been lost. Similarly, descriptions of buildings, personal interactions, family dynamics, kinship, farming, warfare, religion, and much more allow us to see into not only the culture's mindset in the broad perspective, but also into the normal functions of day-to-day life.

The more mythic Sagas, such as *The Saga of the Volsungs* and *The Saga of Ragnar Lodbrok and his Sons* offer a perspective into the values and ideology of Viking Age Scandinavians (Crawford, 2017). These works contain larger than life figures who accomplish mythic feats according to the moral code and ideology of the culture from which they come. One can learn a good deal about a culture by studying its heroes. Viking Age Scandinavia is no exception.

ON THE EDDAS

The Poetic and Prose Eddas are the chief existing record of Norse Mythology and the religion. The Eddas (being the *Poetic Edda* and the *Prose Edda*) are collections of traditional mythological stories. (Crawford, 2015)

The *Prose Edda*, also known as *Snorri's Edda* is a collection of stories told in prose form recorded by the Icelandic writer Snorri Sturluson in the 13th century. This collection contains many stories of the Norse Deities and their deeds and interactions, but also serves as a manual for writing and reciting both poetry and prose narrative. Stories from the prose Edda can tell us much about Viking Age religion in a literal sense, but also puts in direct view many of the ideologies, moral values, and social priorities of Viking Age Scandinavians.

The *Poetic Edda* is a collection of similar mythological stories told in poetic form. Many of these stories are the counterparts to stories in the *Prose Edda*, sometimes differing greatly and other times differing only in minor details. One particularly helpful poem in this collection when studying Viking Age culture is *Hávamál,* in which the god Odin delivers a long list of general wisdom and advice. Though much of this advice still holds true for a modern reader, plenty of it is specific to the time and moral code which it represents. Both Eddas contain material that is missing from the other, and taken together shed a lot of light on Norse religious tradition.

THE SHORTCOMINGS OF SAGA AND EDDIC SOURCES

The literary and historical value of the Eddas and Sagas are difficult to overstate. There are, however, some cautions to be aware of when using them as sources for Viking Age life.

It is important to note that for much of the Viking Age, literacy was not nearly as widespread as it was in the centuries that followed. Most Saga tradition was likely passed down orally, but was only written down in the 13th century (McTurk, 2011), about two hundred years after the end of the Viking Age (793-1066 C.E.) It is important when researching to attend the fact that the Sagas are retrospective.

Another consideration, though not strictly a shortcoming, is that the Sagas do not always represent reality as we know it. Divine intervention, foresight, curses, and the existence of certain magical or ghostly beings is taken as granted in many Sagas. This is by no means restricted to the more mythical Sagas such as *Saga of the Volsungs* or *Saga of Ragnar Lodbrok and his Sons,* but is also a commonplace occurrence in *Njál's Saga*, which for the most part operates strictly under the rules of the living world. It is common in Norse literature to see magic or the otherworldly taken as a literal fact of life. The threat of a reanimated corpse might be taken with similar gravity as would be a wolf seen to be prowling at night. This absolutely has its restrictions, but is nonetheless a present force in the literature. It is useful as insight into belief systems during the Viking age, but can also detract from a strictly historical depiction in the Sagas.

The Eddas also suffer a similar issue in that they were not transcribed as such until after the Viking Age, but in addition suffer from having been recorded long after

most of the Scandinavian world converted to Christianity. Snorri's *Prose Edda* in particular is written through a Christian lens (either because he was wholeheartedly a part of the Christian faith or because he wanted to appear to be) and as such likely contains editions, censorship, or bias to some extent (Semedo, 2017). Additionally, the stories in the *Prose Edda* had been passed down by oral tradition and had been changed little by little with progressive tellings. This is apparent even when comparing Snorri's *Prose Edda* to the *Poetic Edda*.

The case of the *Poetic Edda* specifically is a little different. Though it also was handed down through oral tradition before being written down, it has the benefit of being in a sort of verse. This likely has made it less prone to change over time. Unfortunately, Viking Age poetic traditions can make works very difficult to translate or interpret correctly. The language shifts dramatically when speaking in verse much the same as it does in English, but in addition, certain words exist solely for use in poetry. Viking Age poets also held to a tradition of using kennings, epithets for otherwise familiar terms in order both to lend interest to a piece, intentionally pose a riddle to the audience, or to better fit the alliteration or meter of a verse. There is still much academic debate over the translation of much of Norse poetry to English or even modern Icelandic.

Despite these fallbacks, both Saga and Eddic literature are beneficial if not crucial to understanding both the material and ideological substance of the Viking Age. They have been an invaluable source for this project and have greatly influenced its feel and design.

ON TERMINOLOGY

In order to move forward with better clarity I have provided definitions for frequently used terms. Some are Norse terms, others are clarifications on terminology as it is used in the context of this work, and others yet are corrections to some terms which are commonly misdefined when talking about the Viking Age.

Viking – This has become the standard term for referring to Scandinavian cultures during the Viking Age in general, but is technically inaccurate as a descriptor. The term Viking comes directly from the Old Norse language and refers specifically to the occupation of raiding (an occupation which often was temporary) and would not have been used by Viking Age Scandinavians to refer to themselves. Though the term has been commonly adopted, including in academic discourse, I have elected to avoid using it as much as possible in this work (with a few exceptions) to refer to the general culture. Except for when used in terms such as “Viking Age”, readers should take it to mean relating to piracy.

In place of the word Viking, I will be using “Viking Age Scandinavians” or Norse interchangeably.

Viking Age – The Viking Age is a period of history roughly between 793 and 1066 defined by a sharp rise in Viking (piratical) activity among the Norse. This period led to a rapid expansion of Scandinavian peoples either through settlement, trade, occupation, discovery, or raiding. The Viking Age saw Scandinavian culture flourish thanks in part to economic growth, political power, and more consistent contact with neighboring and distant ethnic and cultural groups. This period is the subject of most Saga literature.

Old Norse/ON – Old Norse is the name of the language spoken across Scandinavia during the middle ages. It is similar to modern Icelandic and Faroese and is the linguistic ancestor to modern Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish. Old Norse is also closely related to Old English/Anglo-Saxon (the language spoken across England at the time) to the point of being almost mutually intelligible. Though modern English is not a direct ancestor of Old Norse, Old Norse did make a significant impact on the language during the Viking Age. England saw a sizeable influx of uninvited Scandinavian settlers and Vikings (specifically in the sense of piracy), many of whom had political ambitions in the country. Over years of interaction, Old Norse terminology made its way into the English language, leaving behind many common words in the English vocabulary, as well as practically any pronoun beginning with 'Th'.

Given the popular image of the Vikings, it often surprises people to learn how soft and poetic the Old Norse language is. For the purposes of this project (as well as in general) I subscribe to the academically reconstructed model of Old Norse pronunciation as opposed to reading it as one would modern Icelandic. Where there would be audio narration or guest interaction with cast members using Old Norse phrases, the pronunciation would be consistent with this philosophy.

LAND OVERVIEW

Summary

Within the narrative of the attraction, a feud has been ongoing for two generations between the Ingvars and Þórgerðrs in Iceland. Killings back and forth have been taking place between the two families for years, but tensions have recently come to a head and a more widespread conflict is imminent. Þórgeir Hérjolfsson of the Ingvars has sent for his cousin Þráinn, a shipmaster in Norway, to aid him in handling the feud.

Guests are introduced to the conflict when they take passage to Iceland by ship and happen to have booked with Þráinn as their captain. Through the voyage, Þráinn details some of the recent history of the feud and its participants. He warns guests that feuds seldom lead to any good, but that he has a duty to family and must lend aid where he can. The destination in Iceland will be a settlement called Langskegsvík, where Þórgeir is the Chieftain*. As Guests disembark, they are informed that Þórgeir will be holding a celebration to honor the arrival of Þráinn and that all are invited to the longhouse later that day for a feast.

In the meantime, Guests are free to roam explore Langskegsvík. Situated around the main house are a number of smaller houses, booths, and stalls offering a variety of experiences, demonstrations, merchandise, and food offerings. Interactions with the cast working these stations will help reinforce the story and history of Langskegsvík and the feud with the Þórgerðrs. Cast members are playing the role of citizens of Langskegsvík who may have individual narratives but are not main players in

the overarching story (as opposed to characters like Þráinn or Þórgeir.) The primary goal of many of these interactions, though, is to engage guests in everyday life in Viking age Scandinavian village.

Guests are invited to the main house for a feast to celebrate Þráinn´s arrival to Langskegsvík. Once guests are settled, one of the hosts at the head table stand to address the room. He declares that he is Þórgeir, Chieftain* of Langskegsvík. He thanks the audience for coming, and declares that he is proud to offer his hospitality. Throughout the meal, Þórgeir and a few other family members at the head table deliver some of the history of the feud to guests. Some of this is humorous and some very serious, all told in an animated way and some acted out. Near the end of the meal, the conversation turns to discussion of what needs to be done now to take care of the problem with the Þórgerðrs. Þráinn suggests that the first step should be to send out raiding parties to collect enough wealth to better arm a force against the Þórgerðrs. After some back and forth about whether or not Þráinn is just trying to get out of the feud and go sailing, he gets the backing of a few other family members and Þórgeir agrees to the idea, requesting that any willing Guest take part in the raiding expedition. Þórgeir tells Guests that they will be called upon when the ships are ready and apologizes for the celebrations being cut short.

After some time to explore the rest of Langskegsvík, Guests make their way to the boathouses at Hráfnkellfoss to set sail on their final journey of the experience. Here they board ships with Þráinn and other members of the Ingvars for an attack on the Þórgerðrs in furtherance of the feud. There is an air of high energy, but also a sense of foreboding as ships set sail. As Guests approach the Þórgerðr

settlement, they are ambushed by a small fleet of new ships. A voice calls out from one of these ships declaring the name Þóra Brunhildsdóttir of the Þórgerðrs (established somewhat in backstory information as a feared Viking leader and daughter of Brunhildr Hákonsdóttir, an equally feared Viking in the narrative.) Some shouting back and forth ensues and projectiles begin to fly from the opposing ships. As both sides begin to near each other, spears and arrows are hurled and shot from both sides. In the confusion, everything goes suddenly black and still. The shouting and chaos of battle are replaced with stark silence. Before the ship´s prow, Guests can see a floating figure leading them on.

The Valkyrie leads the ship to the steps of Valhǫll, the great hall of Óðinn where those fallen in battle spend the afterlife in revelry and combat. Here Guests meet many of the fallen characters from the feud narrative, all now comrades in death despite their violent conflict and mutual hatred in life. Refreshments and drinks are offered in theming with the food at the Valhǫll described in myth. Guests spend time enjoying the food, atmosphere, and characters in the space before exiting through the gift shop.

Figure 1, Map of Attraction, 3D Model, E. Duncan MacPherson

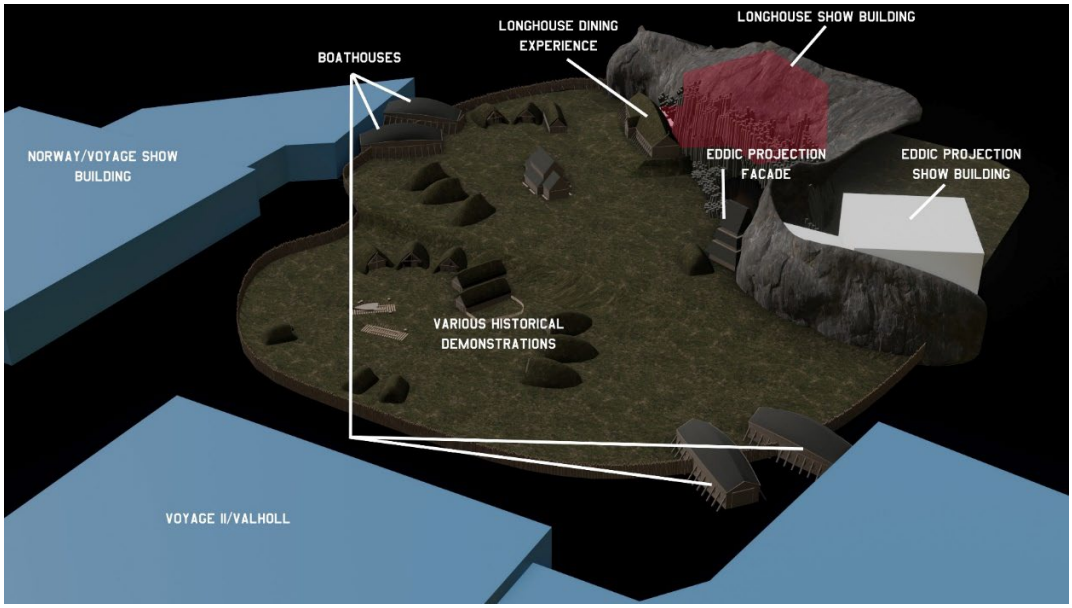

Figure 2, Labeled Map of Attraction, 3D Model, E. Duncan MacPherson

JOURNEY BY BOAT TO ICELAND

Narrative Walkthrough

After some time to take in the Norwegian setting and atmosphere, Guests are called to set sail on their voyage to Iceland, officially beginning their Saga experience. The journey begins with the first steps toward a long wooden building at the Fjord's shore. The building, a replica of a Viking age boathouse, is long and rectangular with a slowly arching, shingled roof which echoes the shape of a longship's hull. The planks that make up the boathouse's walls are clean cut, tightly fit, and set vertically. The walls and roof are further supported by diagonal staves that buttress the building along its longer sides. A door with an intricately carved frame and lintel welcomes guests as they approach, illuminated by firelight from below.

The boathouse from the inside is little other than what one would expect from its exterior. Built primarily for storage and shelter, the interior itself is not decorated nor made comfortable. The air is still and damp and the smell of old wet wood fills it. The dirt floor is patched with a layer of wood shavings. Tools and makeshift workstations litter the area, some with evidence of ongoing projects: A half carved oar sits at one, with a row of finished and finely crafted oars leaning against the wall beside it. By a wall opposite rest two decorative beast heads with a third head only mostly carved nearby.

Filling most of the space in the boathouse and looming over guests is a Viking era longship. The mast is folded down to fit in the house and the head has been removed from the prow as is custom, but the shape is distinctive and familiar. Overlapping boards are fitted and molded together in elegant curves and with great

care. The boat rests atop long log rollers, used to move the boat in and out of the structure through a door opposite the one guests entered.

After some time spent in the first boat house, guests exit through a side entrance back into the night air. A fire lit path shows the way to a neighboring boathouse. Guests are grouped and invited into the boathouse to prepare for the voyage. The contents of the second boathouse are similar to those in the first, but in this one there is a wooden ramp that leads up to the side of the boat. Guests are directed up this ramp and into the boat, where they are positioned and seated among the rows of bench seats.

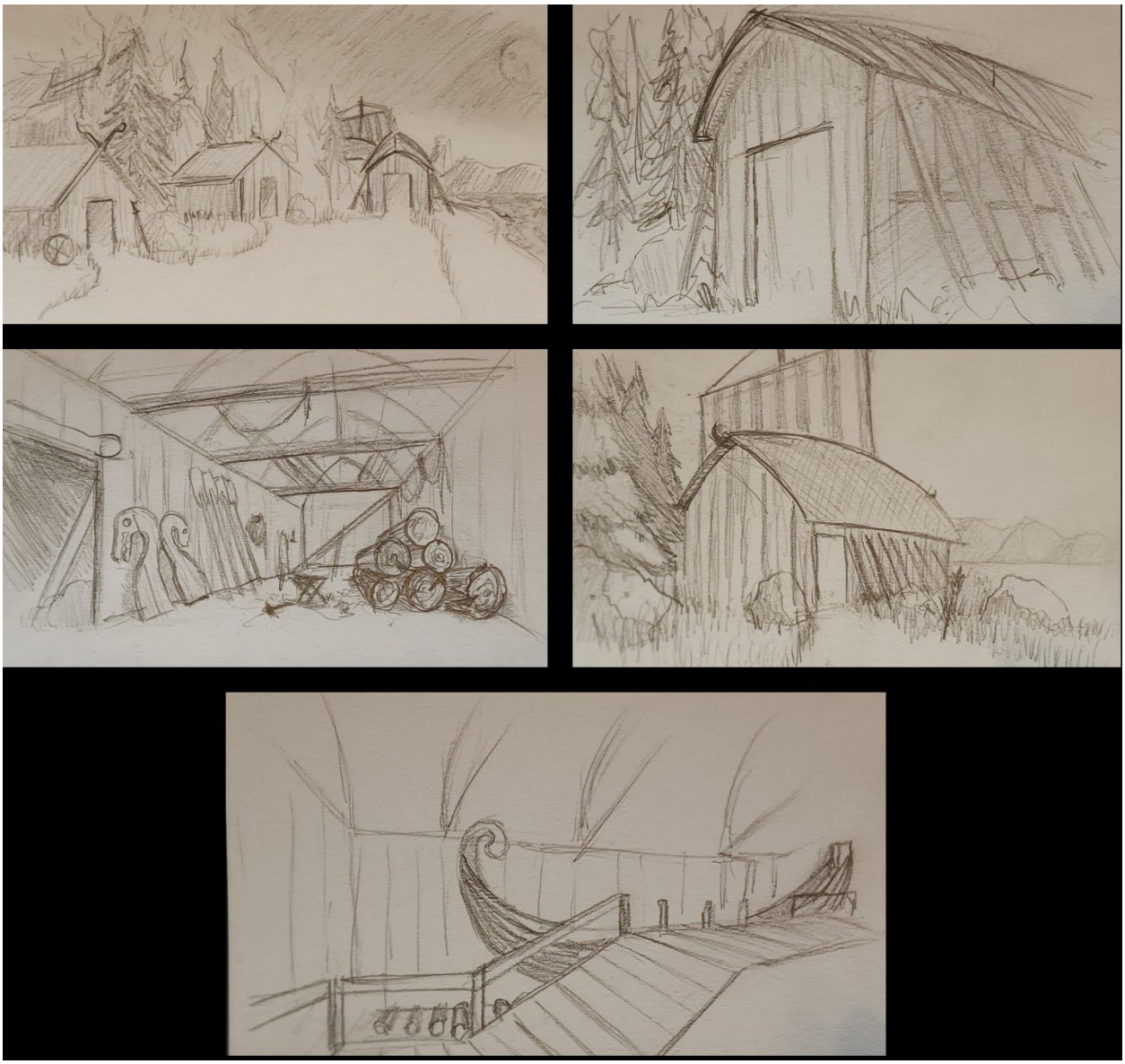

Figure 3, Storyboard for queue to ship attraction, graphite on paper, E. Duncan MacPherson

Once Guests are seated, a long oar attached to the ship's side is laid across their lap. They are instructed to hold onto it and are made aware that they will be asked to row when necessary. When all Guests are seated and ready, the voice of the ship's captain booms from behind them, welcoming them aboard.

"I am Þráinn (THRAH-een) Þráinsson, and it is my ship your are sailing in this voyage. Maybe you are going to Iceland to see relatives or perhaps you have an overdeveloped sense of adventure. Hel, maybe you´re outlawed from Norway for murder. I don´t really care. So long as you row when I tell you to row I imagine we will get along just fine.

As for me, my cousin Þórgeir (THOR-gare) wants my help resolving a feud that has been burning since the days of my grandfather. Resolving it or making it worse, I can never really tell. These things always lead to trouble one way or another. Why the Norns had to spin me into a feuding family, I wish I knew. I just want to sail ships. Speaking of which…."

Grunts and panting are heard over the sides of the boat, and a rhythmic vibration can be felt as the ship begins to slide along the long wooden rollers beneath it. The ship begins to gain speed, moving out of the boathouse and splashing into the water of the fjord. Þráinn calls for everybody to row.

The boat glides quickly further out into the fjord and, after some rowing effort, Guests find themselves in the open ocean. Here, the water is rougher and the boat pitches as it moves along its way. The sun is beginning to dawn, revealing a wide open sky with clouds lining the horizon. To pass the time and motivate the rowers, Þráinn recounts one of a number of Norse legends relating to nautical happenings. As Þráinn

begins to narrate the story, the environment around the ship begins to change in sync. Clouds form into vague figures that represent the characters and events of Þráinn's narrative. As the stories grow more colorful, so too does the sky. The further Þráinn goes into the narrative, the more detached the world becomes from reality, with clouds and waves illustrating the story more and more literally. When the narrative begins to darken around its climax, so to do the clouds above. The ocean wells up into violent waves and as Guests and the boat are enveloped into a raging storm. Imaginative colors and illustrative clouds fade quickly back into their familiar real-world state, and Þráinn calls out to the passengers:

"I am afraid we are going to have to continue this story another time. The weather seems to have gotten the better of us. Hold tight to the oars! Things are going to get more than a little rough."

Guests grip the oars tightly and the ship begins to pitch and roll with the waves. Rain and ocean spray spatter Guests over the edges of the ship as they do their best to hold fast through the storm. Gusts of wind scream around the ship. Þráinn shouts through the tumult for his passengers hold on and pray to whichever god they prefer, but his voice is drowned out by the wind and the creaking timbers of the ship.

After some time, the storm calms. The motion of the boat returns to a slow rocking with the waves and the cacophony has died to a whisper.

"Well" calls Þráinn *"That was certainly an adventure. It seems the Æsir had a will to see us through that one. Speaking of, a new god is becoming fashionable in Norway, and apparently he refuses to share space with the likes of Þórr and Óðinn. You might want to make it to the temple when we get to Langskegsvik before the trend catches on*

in Iceland too and you no longer have the chance. Anyway, I think I was telling a story before I was interrupted…"

Here, Þráinn resumes the narrative. Gradually, the cloudscape shifts back into a colorful imagined illustration of the story Guests are hearing. As the story concludes, the colors fade from the cloudscape. On the horizon can be seen the silhouette of distant mountains.

"There it is. Iceland. And if my navigation was right – and I am certain it was – we should be approaching near Langskegsvík. Be ready at the oars for when we reach the inlet…"

The shape on the horizon grows larger in the view of the Guests. As the ship approaches, arms of land stretch out into the water. As the ship sails into the inlet, the water grows smoother. *"At the oars!"* shouts Þráinn *"Row!"* Guests work at the oars to keep the ship's momentum as they sail further into the inlet.

A boathouse similar to the one from which Guests departed sits on the shore directly ahead of the ship's prow. Behind it tower stockade walls punctuated by wooden watchtowers. Armed archers and spearmen stare dutifully down at guests as their ship glides toward the shore. *"Don't worry"* says Þráinn *"My cousin Þórgeir is just a little overcautious with all this feuding going on."*

The sounds of labored grunting and rolling logs rises over the sideboards as the longship is hauled into the boathouse. A new voice sounds from inside the boathouse: *"Þráinn Þráinsson? Your cousin the Chieftain* Þórgeir has eagerly awaited your arrival,*

but is busy at the moment with some local matters. He is holding a celebration in honour of your arrival at the longhouse later on. Your crew is welcome to come."

"Thank you" calls Þráinn to the second voice *"I'll be sure not to arrive late!"* then to the Guests "well then I suppose that makes you my crew and I suppose you will be treated to Chieftain Þórgeir's hospitality! In the meantime, feel free to explore Langskegsvík. I'm sure there is plenty to see. As for myself, I would join you, but my cousins Herkell and Hergeir tell me great things of a new shipbuilder and I intend to find him and introduce myself."

Restraints lift and Guests are guided out of the ship toward doors that open on the landscape of Langskegsvík.

History

The longship is one of the most famous images of the Viking age. The era itself is defined by a marked and dramatic increase in long distance sea travel among Scandinavian people, who took to the sea to raid, explore, or conduct trade in other parts of the world. By The 10th century when the Viking age was well underway and nearing its end, it was relatively common for Scandinavians to travel or immigrate as a normal part of life. This aspect of Viking age lifestyle is well reflected in saga literature. The events of *Njál's Saga,* one of the longest and arguably most significant of the Icelandic sagas, are set in motion by an ill-fated voyage from Iceland to Norway. (*Story of Burnt Njal,* ch.2-6) In the same saga, many other characters over the generations it describes make voyages to and from Iceland for reasons including the accumulation of wealth and status by raiding, going to war, fighting for the Byzantine Empire,

banishment, and revenge. In the semi legendary piece *The Saga of Ragnar Lodbrok and his Sons,* (the loose inspiration for the *Vikings* TV series) the titular characters spend most of their time between Denmark, Sweden, and England completing heroic deeds. Though the story does not specifically include travel to Iceland, its inclusion of so much travel within a relatively short narrative space is significant. While literature like the *Vinland Sagas,* being *the Saga of the Greenlanders* and *the Saga of Erik the Red,* more directly focus on narratives about nautical travel, most of the sagas include some form of significant travel in a more casual way that implies this was a granted part of Scandinavian life at the time.

Viking age ship burials were a relatively common practice across Scandinavia. It should be noted here that there is little to no evidence of the stereotypical “Viking Funeral” where the deceased is set adrift in a burning ship. Archeological evidence as well as written accounts both in saga literature and from contemporary witnesses (Fadlan et al, 114-118) offer much more solid evidence for burial rituals among Viking age Scandinavians. Ship burials were usually reserved for the wealthy and powerful and were as such more rare, however many burial sites have offered a wealth of archeological evidence and insight into the Viking way of life. Most Viking age ships have been lost to time and decay. However in a few cases the burial practiced has helped to preserve some of the vessel, allowing archeologists insight into how they were constructed. The most complete examples is the *Oseberg Ship* on display at the *Viking Ship Museum at* Bygdøy in Oslo, Norway. (Bischoff) Finds like these, used in conjunction with literal accounts of nautical life in the Viking Age, allow for a relatively accurate depiction both visually and thematically in a themed experience. Notably,

however, much of the more nuanced and technical aspects of Viking Age seamanship have been lost to history.

The boathouses through which the Guests enter are less iconic of the Viking age, but are described in Saga literature (*Story of Burnt Njal*, ch. 6) as well as supported by archeological evidence. Being chiefly utilitarian, they would have varied to an extent depending on the builder and location, likely only having minimal decoration, and would have fit into the general schema of Viking age architecture to be covered in more detail later on. The buildings were designed to house and shelter longships during winter and periods of non-use. As such, they were fittingly long and narrow with enough space to house a longship. The Oseberg Ship is roughly 70 feet long to 16 feet wide, which justifies at least a similar dimension for a Viking Age boathouse.

Creative Liberties

A few liberties had to be taken to fit this important aspect of Viking age life into the space of a themed attraction. These liberties were carefully chosen so as to still maintain a reasonably well-crafted image of the subject in the experience.

- Boathouses Launch/Docking: Boathouses were a common part of Viking age settlements and the practice of launching and taking in boats by log rollers beneath the hull is evidenced in saga literature, however boathouses were used more often for storage during longer periods of non-use where a vessel could not be left in the water or on a beach without reasonable concern for wear. It would not have been usual practice for a vessel to be launched while already boarded, nor would it be

normal to house a boat immediately after a voyage, especially while still carrying passengers. This narrative decision is intended to disguise the transition from show building to exterior in a way that still makes reference to history and to the culture being represented.

- Sailing: As stated above, much of the technical aspects of Viking Age sailing were not directly recorded. The sailing portion of the overall adventure represents the importance of the concept, but is by no means an accurate depiction of what Viking Age sailing would have been like beyond educated guesswork. It bears stating that the voyage from Norway to Iceland would have been much longer than could be accommodated in the time of a single attraction.

Ride/Show System

The ride system will be a slow moving tracked vehicle base with an actuated carriage mounted on top. The vehicle will require four degrees of freedom to simulate movement on the ocean waves. The Guest area will be designed to appear as a Viking age longship. The load and unload portions of the attraction are designed as boathouses at both Norway and Iceland.

As the ride vehicle departs the unload area, it moves into one of two projected domes. These domes will house most of the show between load and unload, taking approximately four and a half minutes each. Inside the dome, the ride vehicle itself will remain stationary on the track as the actuated carriage rolls, pitches, yaws, and heaves on top of it to simulate sailing through difficult water. As the narrative reaches its end,

the ride vehicle moves out of the dome and into the boathouse in Iceland where guests will unload and depart into the next section of their adventure

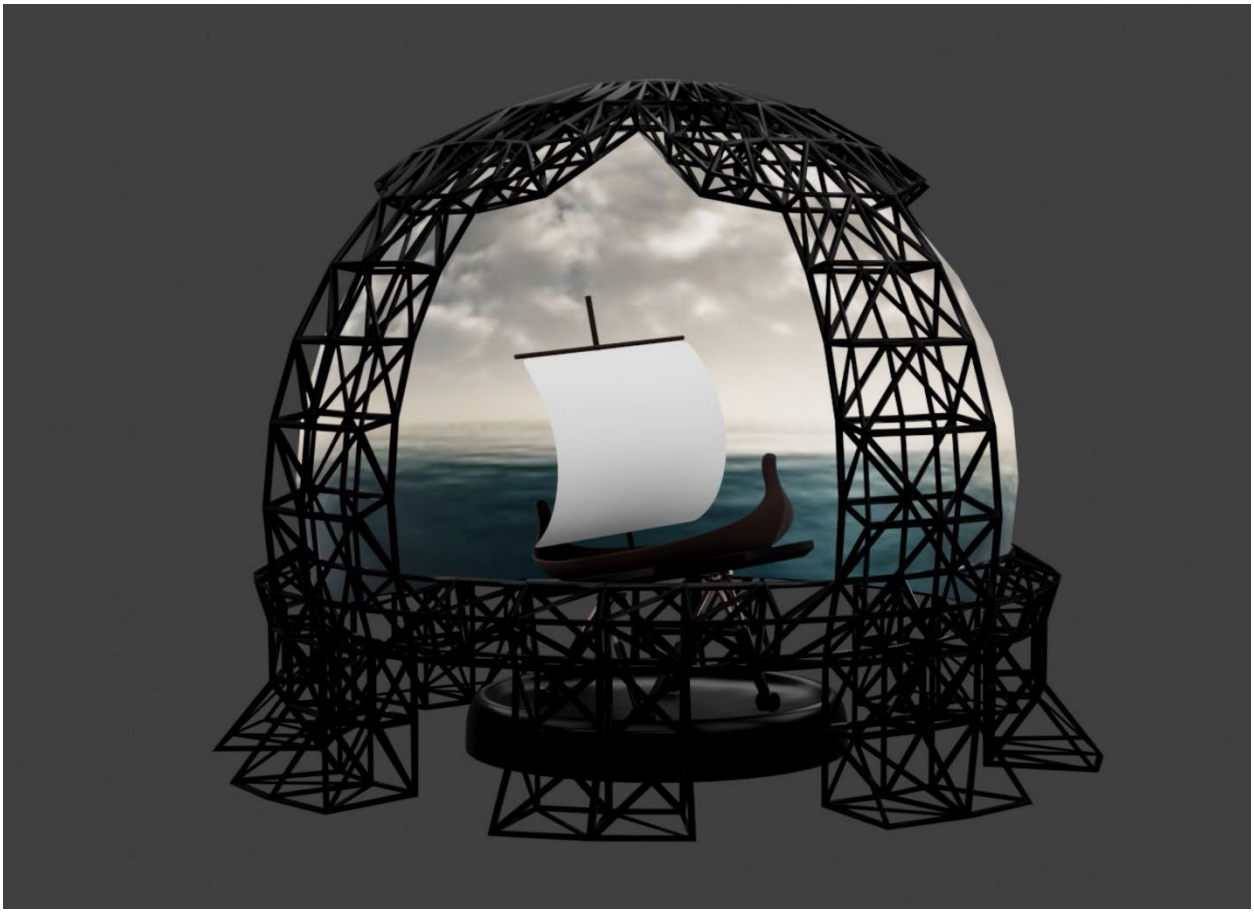

Figure 4, Concept model for Longship ride vehicle, 3D Animation, E. Duncan MacPherson

LONGHOUSE DINING EXPERIENCE

Summary

This themed dining experience puts Guests in a Viking Age longhouse during a feast to celebrate the arrival of Chieftain Þórgeir's favorite cousin, Þráinn. The menu includes of a selection of offerings inspired by Viking Age dishes as well as some recipes which more directly represent historic meals. During the meal, Guests learn some of the family's history and the history of their feud with the Þórgerðrs. The stories shift in tone, with darker moments interspersed with elements of comic relief.

Figure 5, Early Concept for Longhouse Dining Experience, based on turf/peat houses in Iceland, Digital art, E. Duncan MacPherson

Narrative Walkthrough

From the outside, the longhouse looks almost to be part of the natural environment. Its walls are built of peat bricks and its long arching roof is covered in thick grass. From a distance, the longhouse might even be mistaken for a hill, but for the smoke rising steadily out of it. In the center of its long side stands a wooden door, set back into the thick peat walls and roughly the same color. It is topped with a decorative gabled canopy, carved with delicate knotting patterns.

Once through the door, Guests find themselves in a starkly contrasting environment. The building's interior walls are paneled with expertly carpentered wood. Thick rafters support high vaulted ceilings that fade off into darkness in the fire-lit room. The room that Guests have entered is separated from the main dining area by a wooden wall that only reaches to the bottom of the rafters. Light spills over the top of the wall and the sound of hurried preparation can be heard on the other side.

Guests wait here until called to be seated in the main hall. The room they are in seems to be acting as temporary storage. In the back corners are folded cots and bedrolls, as well as a few weaving looms with half-finished tapestry work still attached. After some time waiting, Guests are called to make their way to the main hall. A host comes to retrieve the party from the waiting area and brings them into the adjoining room.

The main hall is full of light from burning hearths along the floor. On raised wooden platforms running the length of the hall, long rows of benches and wooden tables seat parties of other Guests. There are no dividing walls beyond the one

adjoining the waiting room, so the hall stretches clear to the other end of the building. The roof is held up by thick wooden supports every twenty feet or so, some of them carved with intricate decorative designs. The walls of the longhouse hall are hung with swords, spears, axes, and round painted shields, though none of them seem to have ever seen battle. On some walls are animal furs or decorative tapestries. In the center of the dirt floor is a stone hearth with a blazing fire, over which cook spitted meats.

Figure 6, Longhouse Dining Experience Miniature, physical model, E. Duncan MacPherson

Guests are led to their seat at the long tables, likely being seated at the same table with one or two neighboring parties. Plates and silverware are all ornate and well crafted, but the sets do not all match. Some plates and utensils are silver, while others are polished wood. Mismatching patterns and decorations adorn pieces in the same place setting.

At the far end of the hall, seated at tables facing the length of the building are a selection of well-dressed individuals. At the center sits a man with thick dark hair and a well-trimmed beard. He has a long scar across his right cheek leading to a blind eye.

This is Þórgeir, the Chieftain of Langskegsvík. To his right sits his wife, Yri, and right of her their son Björn. To Þórgeir's left sits his sister, Vetr, and their two twin brothers Herkell and Hergeir.

Throughout the meal, different members of the family reveal the history of their Feud with the Þórgerðrs through conversation and stories. Some of these are accompanied by illustrations similar to those from the boat attraction, but taking place in smoke in the rafters above. These are accomplished via projection.

The narrative of the Feud as a whole is complex and interwoven, but through the narration of the hosts, Guests learn the basics of the history:

Two generations ago, a man named Ingvar came to Iceland from Norway and settled the land that became Langskegsvík. He married a woman named Þórgerðr, with whom he had three sons. Both Ingvar and Þórgerðr were unfaithful and were legally divorced, both remarrying and having more children. Þórgerðr develops a jealousy, as she justifiably feels she got the worse outcome of the divorce. She does not act on this nor does she intend to, but she is open with it within her family. One of her sons, Hákon, grows up to be a notably violent teenager, and, taking her words to heart sets out to harm one of Ingvar´s family. Hákon murders Hráfnkell, the favorite child among Ingvar´s children. He is not witnessed, but leaves a knife at the scene. Fearing his discovery, his father sends him on a boat leaving Iceland so that he cannot be killed in revenge and might manage to escape legal action.

After years, Hákon returns to Iceland a seasoned fighter. Rather than taking legal actions, four of Ingvar´s family ambush and kill Hákon. One of these, Þráinn (the father of the Shipmaster from the earlier attraction) shoulders the blame and is

outlawed, serving his mandatory banishment by sailing to Norway. Along the way he falls in love with sailing, marries a Swedish woman, and settles down in Norway.

Back in Iceland, a series of back and forth killings take place over the next years. One important one for Guests to know is Brunhildr (a daughter of Þórgerðr) killing Fúsi (a son of Ingvar) in self-defense. For this she is charged only with a fine, as it is evidenced that she killed in self-defense. Deciding she wants no part in the feud, she runs away from her family and joins a group of Vikings. She rises to prominence as a raider and takes it up as a career.

Now in the third generation of Ingvars and Þórgerðrs (Þráinn, Chieftain Þórgeir, and most seated at the main table are the grandchildren of Ingvar) we come to stories of the relatively recent past.

Herkell and Hergeir, both having taken to the Viking life, exchange relatively upbeat stories of adventures abroad. Vetr recounts an impressive bowshot she landed on Bersi Tryggvason some years ago.

Þórgeir begins a story that starts off jovial and turns gradually darker and more sombre. Conflict in his youth resulted in the death of his father, Herjólfr. He and his siblings, Vetr, Herkell, and Hergeir took revenge for their father by attacking the home of the killer, Yngví. In anger, the siblings took things further than they intended, and when they had the upper hand, they forced Yngví and his family into their house, locked them in, and burned the house to the ground. During the burning, Yngví's sister, Hallgerðr shot an arrow through a window that ricocheted from a rock and hit Þórgeir in one eye, blinding that eye and scaring him. By the mood at the main table, it is clear that the siblings regret having gone quite so far, even in revenge.

Having realized that the festive mood of the celebration had been so dampened by this turn of the story, Þórgeir stands and clears his throat. “It is to this end that I have asked my cousin Þráinn here to Iceland. We have word that the þórgerðrs will be staging an attack on us soon. We intend to beat them to the punch and need all the help we can manage both in arms and in preparation. To any willing and able, I would implore you to aid us so that we may strike hard and teach them to think twice before setting arms against Langskegsvík. Rest assured that we can compensate you all well….”

History

The Longhouse was a staple element of Viking age communities. Longhouses served a number of functions, usually housing the owners of the land they were built on as well as their extended family. Longhouses could be rearranged to an extent to serve different functions as needed. Generally, if a Longhouse was divided off into rooms, the chief family would sleep in a private room while the extended family stayed in the main hall on cots, bedrolls, or simply on the floor. Tables, benches, and workstations could be set up in the main hall as needed either for working or for providing hospitality to guests.

Creative Liberties

Relatively few creative liberties were necessary for this experience, the chief one being that the door in the side of the Longhouse would typically lead into the hall itself and the walled off sections would be off to one end or the other. This is changed in

order to aid Guest flow and provide a waiting area for incoming Guests. Additionally, this allows for the space to be divided into kitchen and dining area while maintaining the narrative.

Ride/show system

The show building housing the restaurant has two dining areas and one kitchen that connects to both. Guests are lead from the waiting area either to the left or right depending on when they arrive. The show element in each dining area is on a loop of roughly half an hour with the two shows being staggered by half the show's length. Guests are directed to one or the other room based on the timing of their arrival to ensure that most guests get the full loop from an optimal point in the story.

EDDIC PROJECTION SHOW

Summary

This attraction consists of a 360 dome projected show combined with physical set and show elements that will take guests through an abbreviated telling of some of the tales from Norse Mythology. Guests enter through a Viking Age temple to the Æsir (Norse gods/goddesses) and then step into an “outdoor” theater where the story of the world, its creation, its end, and a few points in-between will be narrated to them by three mysterious figures.

Narrative Walkthrough

A tall wooden structure stands in stark contrast to the mostly low rising houses of the settlement. The wood itself is aged and dark, almost the color of charcoal. The building’s many tiled roofs overlap one another and slope progressively more steeply toward the sky. A covered walkway wraps around the building’s exterior, supported by intricately carved wooden posts. At the peak of each roof end is a stylized ornamental serpent’s head reminiscent of those that decorate the prows of the longships.

Figure 7, Eddic projection show exterior facade, graphite on paper, E. Duncan MacPherson

Guests enter through a door in the center of the outward facing wall. As they pass through, they notice complex and seemingly infinite interlacing patterns of knotted wood carvings that frame the doorway. Woven into the knotted designs are elegantly stylized depictions of animals, human figures, and a few bizarre and unfamiliar creatures. The most prominently featured figure is a long and winding serpent that seems to slither through the knotwork at the outer edges of the doorway. At the one foot of the doorframe, the serpent's body plunges beneath the doorframe. At the other it rises back up again. At the center of the doorframe's head, the two ends of the serpent meet with the serpent's tail clenched in its jaws.

Crossing the threshold, Guests pass by the doors themselves, swung wide open to admit the crowd. The doors are decorated with as much care as the frames that hold them. Here, the figures exist within a clearer dialogue and action. Some are easily readable: A wolf has bitten off the hand of one human figure; a bearded man in a chariot pulled by goats wields a hammer above his head. Other imagery is less clear: Three figures, one of them holding a ring, stand around what seems to be a bag with the head of an animal; A man sits by a campfire with something amorphous in his hand and holding his opposite thumb in his mouth with two birds seeming to watch on.

Beyond the doorway is a wooden room, much taller than it is wide or long. As Guests enter the room, their eyes are guided upward by high wooden arches which lead to long, slim windows, which then lead to deep rafters and a high slanting roof. Shafts of light fall through the windows filling the room below with a dusty glow. The ceiling above seems to sink away into shadow.

Beneath the arches on the left and right sides of the room are carved wooden figures looking to have been carved from tree trunks. Each towers over the crowd by a head or two. One is depicted with arms crossed, holding a hammer in his right hand. One grins wide and holds one hand hidden behind his back. One wears chainmail and a conical helm. He holds a sword in one hand, but his other arm terminates at the wrist. One holds a spear and wears a flowing gown. On her head sits a helm and around her waist can be seen the tips of feathered wings. One stands tall with a large decorated horn hanging at his hip. One holds a spear and is cloaked in a hooded robe, one eye staring out. On each of his shoulders sits a raven.

Figure 8, Stave Church interior, 3D Model, E. Duncan MacPherson

As Guests wait, the light from the windows grows dimmer, transitioning slowly from sunlight to moonlight. In the distance can be heard a melancholy, almost eerie tune played on a bukkehorn (a Viking age instrument made from a goat's horn. The sound is similar to that of a muted French horn.) Doors open at the far end of the room, inviting guests to walk through.

Through the doors, Guests step out into the night. A yard behind the building (an interior show set design to look like the outdoors) is set with rows of long benches. Rimming the seating area is a wooden retaining wall of a few feet in height. Beyond this, the land seems to extend into deep forest. The area beyond the retaining wall forms a sort of 360 stage. Guest's eyes are drawn to the stage opposite the wooden

building through which they entered, where large, jagged stones are silhouetted against the sky above the tree line. Above the guests, projected on a domed ceiling, the northern lights illuminate the night sky. The Bukkehorn can still be heard in the distance. There is a moment of relative quiet as Guests find their seats.

Torches on the stage near the base of the stones flicker to life, softly illuminating the set. Before the stones are scattered a collection of shields, spears, swords, and axes, some resting against the stones, some laying on the grass, and others yet planted firmly in the ground. Embedded in the largest stone are three seats, each positioned above the last. In these seats sit three cloaked figures with faces obscured by hoods lined with decorative embroidered knotwork. The figures speak as in a whisper, but their voices seem to come from all around the Guests. The figures speak to one another about the approach of a stranger; someone from Midgard come to the realm of the gods to seek wisdom.

Figure 9, Stage Setting for Eddic Projection Show, Physical Model, E. Duncan MacPherson

After some moments of discussing this stranger, the stranger himself appears, stepping out from the forest having apparently been walking for some time. He introduces himself as Gangleri. The three introduce themselves as Hárr, Jafnhárr, and Þriðji. Gangleri states that he has come a long way and wishes to pass into the realm of the gods to seek their wisdom. The three challenge Gangleri to a contest in order that he may pass on: He must present them with a question concerning the gods and their realms that neither Hárr, Jafnhárr, nor Þriðji can answer. The questioning begins immediately:

“Tell me of the beginning of Midgard” says Gangleri, “How was the earth formed?”

Hárr, the lowest seated of the three, gestures his hands and the sky above seems to respond to his movements. The lights in the sky swirl and rearrange to form abstract patterns of light which slowly shift into hazy suggestions of shape and form, eventually materializing onto full - though vibrant and dream-like – images of a barren icy landscape. The sound of cold, unforgiving winds sweeps across the theater. Jafnhárr explains that this is Ginnungagap, the giant wastes that predated the creation of the nine realms. Þriðji tells of Ymir, the first giant, who lived in Ginnungagap, and of Surtr, who guards Muspelheim. As characters and events are narrated, they are illustrated in the sky through vividly colorful formations of light.

This style of narration continues, with Hárr, Jafnhárr, and þriðji alternately telling different parts of the story. They tell of the birth of Odin and the first of the Æsir (the Norse gods) and of the killing of Ymir and the subsequent building of Midgard (earth)

using Ymir's remains. As the different parts of the world are created (such as the rocks made from Ymir's teeth, or the clouds made from his brains) they materialize around the theater. By the end of the story, the world is made and the theater appears to be outside in the daylight, surrounded by the sights and sounds of the natural world.

Very suddenly, the visions in the sky disappear and Guests are beneath the night sky again. Lighting draws attention back to Gangleri and the three. After a momentary pause, Hárr asks Gangleri if he has another question about the gods or their realms.

Gangleri then asks the three any two of the following:

Has Thor ever been bested in strength?

To which the three recount the story of Thor, Loki, and two children as they travel to Útgarðr and are challenged to a series athletic contests. In this story, Thor is apparently bested in humorous fashion in contests of strength, combat, and drinking. It is ultimately revealed that the appearance of his humiliating defeat was a trick aided by magic.

How did Odin grow so wise?

To which the three recount a short series of abbreviated stories about Odin in the pursuit of wisdom. These include Odin trading his eye to drink from the well of knowledge, Odin sacrificing himself to himself to learn runes, and Odin challenging Vafþrúðnir to a contest of wisdom in which he wagered his own head.

How did Odin get his horse, Sleipnir?

To which the three recount the story of Loki using transformative magic to help Odin cheat his way out of an agreement. Odin has challenged a giant to build a wall around Asgard within a certain period of time. As that time draws near and it is becoming clear that the giant will likely complete the wall, Loki is called upon to resolve the issue. He does this by transforming himself into a mare and distracting the giant‘s workhorse. Loki becomes pregnant and gives birth to an eight legged horse. This Horse, Sleipnir, becomes Odin‘s and is described as the best among horses.

Who was the favorite among the Æsir?

To which the three recount the story of Baldr, the most beautiful and beloved among the Æsir, and his death by a mistletoe arrow (Baldr’s single weakness) and Loki’s treachery. Afterward, the Æsir try unsuccessfully to bargain with Hel to win back Baldr´s life.

How came Fenrir to be kept in chains?

To which the three recount the story of the Æsir tricking the giant wolf Fenrir, who is prophesied to consume Odin at the end of the world, into being bound in chains. In order to accomplish this, Tyr, one of the Æsir, sacrificed his hand.

What happened to the Jǫtnar?

To which the three recount the story of Thor losing his hammer, Mjǫllnir, in Jǫtnheim and the lengths to which he has to go to get it back. Through a semi-comical series of twists in the narrative, Thor ends up at a feast in Jǫtnheim wearing a dress before retrieving his hammer and killing the Jǫtnar.

After this series of questions, Gangleri asks the three what will happen at Ragnarǫk (the ending of the world as depicted in Norse mythology). There is a pause and the general tone grows more solemn. When the three answer they do so with a heavier sense of gravity in their voices. As they begin their tale, the stars grow dark and a red light as from a wildfire reaches into the sky.

The three tell of the chaos in human society that precedes Ragnarǫk; of the harsh winters and of the ages of violence, war, and misconduct that lead up to the events of Ragnarǫk itself. They tell of the beginning of Ragnarǫk when the sun and the moon are finally devoured by the wolves that have been chasing them across the sky. They tell of the earthquakes and the fires and the violent rising of the sea as Jǫrmungandr (the giant serpent encircling the earth) grows angry and rises from the water. They tell of the giant wolf Fenrir, who breaks free of his chains. The sky fills with the imagery of monstrous forms, darkness, and destruction. At the sounding of a horn, the Æsir emerge to combat the destruction. The three tell of the struggle between Odin and Fenrir and of the battle between Thor and Jǫrmungandr. The two Æsir meet their death, but in Thor's case he has beaten his foe. The battle is said to rage on until nearly all is dead or destroyed. In the aftermath, only a few of the Æsir are left alive. These gather together to discuss what has passed. A new sun and moon are born. Two

humans are revealed to have been protected through the chaos and are destined to start humanity anew. Though Ragnarǫk marks the world‘s send, it also marks a new beginning. Life will go on through a new age.

Just as the sky begins to light up with a new dawn and the promise of another age, everything whirls back to the way it was. Guests find themselves once again under the calm night sky. Hárr gestures toward Gangleri and speaks to him:

“Surely now you may have no questions, as no one can tell further the fate of the world! Make as best use as you can of the wisdom that has here been given to you.”

The sky lights up in a sudden flash and thunder crashes all around the theater. When Guests’ eyes readjust to the evening light, the stones and the three who were sitting upon them are gone. Gangleri stands alone on the stage and the light upon him fades until Gangleri is only a silhouette. Doors to the left of the theater open and Guests make their way out.

History

The historical understanding of Viking Age religion is comparatively limited. Both the Poetic Edda and Snorri’s Prose Edda are fairly short works and both are quite clearly incomplete. There are references to characters and events that do not appear elsewhere in the text, as well as a certain amount on incongruity between the stories that do exist (though it has been asserted that some of this is simply a characteristic of the narrative form.) Aside from the Eddas, there are inclusions of mythological poems and references throughout other works of Saga literature.

The narrative frame used in the attraction is an adaptation of the frame Snorri uses in the Prose Edda. In Snorri's Edda, a Swedish king, Gylfi is tricked by a goddess and as a result sets out on a quest to Ásgard to seek the wisdom of the Æsir. Along his way, Gylfi finds what is implied to be Valhǫll. He disguises himself and calls himself Gangleri before entering the hall, wherein he meets Hárr, Jafnhárr, and Þriði. These are all implied to be aspects of Odin. In fact, the names Hárr, Jafnhárr, and Þriði, which translate to high, just as high, and third respectively, are listed elsewhere in the Prose Edda among the names by which Odin sometimes goes (Sturluson, ch. 3). The characters are not described in any visual depth, but as Odin has a habit of disguising himself rather obviously (usually a man in a hood or a broad hat with a long grey beard) this is how he is depicted in the attraction.

The stories themselves are mostly taken intact, though summarized to fit into the attraction itself. The idea is not that Guests leave having comprehensively learned the Norse religion, but that they leave curious enough to look into it on their own. To this end, as well as to the end of conveying a sense of disjointedness and shaky continuity from the mythology itself, the stories told in the show are not all directly connected with each other. Some even set up contradictions for later parts in the show. For example, the story where Thor kills all of the Jǫtnar precedes the Ragnarǫk story, which (in both its Eddic versions, though not explicitly mentioned in the show) notably includes the Jǫtnar as an attacking force. This aspect of the mythology, though it can be confusing at times, lends much to the allure of the mythology.

The wooden figures in the entryway depict a selection of the Æsir, left intentionally unnamed as to provoke curiosity as Guests wait to enter the show. In

order described, they are Thor (shown with his hammer, Mjǫllnir), Loki (his grin and hidden hand representing his deceitfulness), Tyr (armed for battle, and missing the hand that Fenrir bites off), Freya (who is implied to be a Valkyrie and owns a transformative bird suit), Heimdal (with Gjallarhorn, the horn heard at Ragnarǫk, hanging at his side), and Odin (hooded and with one eye, holding his spear Gungnir. He is accompanied by his two ravens Huginn and Muninn, literally meaning thought and memory respectively in English.) The carvings on the door represent a number of scenes and characters from the Eddas as well as from the Saga of the Volsungs, which is directly connected to events and characters in the mythology.

Creative Liberties

The greatest creative liberty taken here is the educated guesswork that went into the building through which Guests enter the attraction. There is very little evidence archeologically or through text sources for what a Viking Age center of worship would have looked like. There are a few descriptions in text sources from people who came in contact with Viking Age Scandinavians, but for reasons of political, social, or religious bias, these are generally to be taken with some skepticism. What does seem to be consistent in the sources is that many sites of worship included wooden figures of the gods being worshipped. (Bremen et al, 143-144, 252-254)

The structure itself, however, is borrowed from religious structures post-Christianization. Around Scandinavia can be found buildings called “stave churches”, which date back to around the Viking Age. These have rather distinctive architecture in

general, but something quite unique to these structures is that many of them include imagery from pre-Christian Norse mythology. On the doorframe to the Urnes stave church in Norway can be found a stylized carving of the deer that are described as gnawing at the roots of Yggdrasil in the Eddas. The transition to Christianity was not an easy one among the Norse and in many cases required some convincing. This is attested in the latter half of Njáll's Saga which takes place during and after the Christianization of Iceland. The use of imagery from the old religion was likely a way to ease the transition to the new one. It may have been a way to help convince churchgoers that things were not so different to what they were already familiar with.

The creative liberty taken with the stave church is based on an extension of that idea. It is possible that stave church architecture intentionally borrowed from the architecture of the old religion in order to help converts feel more comfortable in a new belief. This, it should be noted, is entirely conjecture on the author‘s part. Much of the architecture in stave churches, especially in their layout, is still that associated with Christian designs. Ultimately, it is a portion of the experience that is likely not accurate to history in any literal sense, but still carries the spirit and narrative to convey the mythology.

Ride/show system

The show mostly makes use of dome projection technology to express the mythological narrative of the experience. Anything described by Hárr, Jafnhárr, and Þriðji takes place on the projected dome sky. The narrative frame of Gangleri speaking to the three is expressed through physical set pieces and animated figures.

The moment at the end of the show where the three disappear is accomplished via a lowering or thematic covering of their set piece during the flash of lightning and subsequent darkness.

The show has seating for around 300 people in a show building hidden behind the rockwork mountain at the back end of the settlement. The show lasts approximately 20 minutes not including the wait inside the stave church. Guests enter and exit through different doorways to keep the reload time of the attraction as short as possible.

FINAL VOYAGE

Summary

Guests set sail on a war voyage with a Viking group from the settlement. After some time sailing along the coast of Iceland, the crew arrives at the Þórgerðr settlement. Preparations begin as the crew approaches their target, but the þórgerðrs surprise the would-be attackers with an ambush. Fate does not seem fit to see the Guests' ship to victory, and they soon find themselves at the gates of Valhǫll.

Narrative Walkthrough

Guests are recruited to take part in a combat expedition along with some of the other settlers. The party will be making their way to the main settlement of the þórgerðrs in Iceland in order to strike a pre-emptive blow against the enemy family.

Crew members are told to report to the western boathouse as soon as they are ready to set sail. This boathouse is similar to the last, only with a heavier supply of weapons replacing many of the tools Guests saw before their voyage to Iceland. Axes, swords, bows, and spears are to be found all about the boathouse, some organized in rows against the wall, others strews about.

Guests find the ship to be similar to and yet different from the one that brought them to Iceland: This longship is decked for battle and lined with brightly painted circular shields along the bulwark. Guests board in the same fashion as before and find similar seating with long benches and oar handles to take hold of. The launch as well is

essentially the same, starting with the sound of grunting and straining from below and the ship being pushed on its rollers into the water.

From here, the voyage differs from the last. A different captain commands this ship and with a different attitude. When he speaks, there is clear excitement in his voice for the battle ahead. Along the way, he recounts the tales of famous warrior heroes like Gunnar Hámundarson, Sigurd, or the sons of Ragnar.

The voyage passes quickly and within what feels like mere minutes new shores are in sight. The Captain calls for all aboard to ready for combat, barking commands to guests and to unseen other crew members. As the shore draws closer on the starboard side of the ship, a call is heard from over the water to port, turning the attention of all passengers. Three other longships have appeared in the water opposite the shore.

The Captain shouts back at the other ships asking whom they belong to. When an answer comes back, the Captain repeats the order to prepare for battle, calls for the crew to make full sail, and orders Guests to row hard and keep pace with the enemy ship. As the boats start to move, a sudden surge in activity can be seen aboard the other ships. Guests hear the twang of a bowstring from across the water and a flaming arrow soars just overhead. It does not take long for more to follow, and in short order guests are surrounded by a swarm of burning arrows, feeling a the heat of the flame and a burst of air as projectiles shoot past them.

There is a brief moment of peace before another volley, this time aimed in a higher arch so that they rain down on the vessel. Guests look up to see the arrows crest their trajectory and fall directly toward their target.

Just as the arrows hit, all goes dark. Of the other ships and of the shouts of crew members, nothing can be heard. Everything is silent save for the sound of water lapping against the side of the ship. Slowly and gently, the darkness is broken by northern lights that dance above guests in a starless sky. Before the ship can be seen a figure clad in armor. Long wings spread wide from her back and glide on the wind as she leads the ship onward.

A mist rises up and surrounds the ship, obscuring all around it from the view of the Guests, but the gentle flutter of wings can still be heard guiding the ship forward. Suddenly, the mist parts to reveal a huge, golden building. Its walls stand tall and its roof is thatched with round shields. Before its steps are scattered countless weapons. Spears, arrows, swords, and axes are thrust into the ground.

Atop the steps, the doors to the hall are flung open wide and laughter can be heard within. Guests are led up the steps and through the doors of Valhǫll. After a full life and a warrior's death, Guests are treated to the reward of one last drink and a hearty meal. Within, guests can sample a variety of meads and Scandinavian foods in a festive conclusion to their Viking Age experience.

Figure 10, Valhǫll Façade, 3D model/digital painting, E. Duncan MacPherson

History

Valhǫll is described throughout the Eddas as Odin's hall, where those fallen in battle go after death and live on until Ragnarǫk, at which time they take up arms to fight alongside the Æsir. In Valhǫll, the dead spend their days fighting and slaying one another in battle, and then each evening are resurrected to spend their nights feasting and drinking. The hall is briefly physically described in the beginning of *Gylfaginning* in Snorri's Prose Edda as being gigantic, built with gold, and with a roof thatched with shields. (Sturluson, Ch. 2)

Creative Liberties

Though ship battles are a relatively common occurrence in Saga literature, they are usually described as taking place with the ships close enough together for parties to board the other's vessel. When further out, crews usually hurl spears rather than fire volleys of arrows. This unlikely but plausible event in the attraction is in part to quickly and clearly communicate both the immediate danger of the situation as well as its consequences. Given the constraints of the ride system, there was not a safe and convincing way to have enemy Vikings board the Guests' boat. Though imperfect from a historical perspective, the battle between the ships is still intended to convey the spirit of the event as written in Sagas.

Ride/show system

The ride system in this attraction is the same as that used in the Journey to Iceland attraction, this one including sensory elements so that guests feel the arrows going by in the final scene of the battle. Here, instead of exiting through the boathouse, guests exit in front of the Valhǫll façade, exiting the projection dome portion of the ride when their sightline is obscured by mist. The approach to Valhǫll takes place inside a show building in order to maintain lighting control over the set.

CONCLUSION

The experience of designing such an attraction as this was enlightening in a number of ways that can help illuminate important aspects of design when representing any cultural group. Firstly, even coming into this project with a significant body of experience with Old Norse language and literature, there is still plenty that either has to be left to guesswork or goes beyond my own ability to research. Furthermore, there is no level of detail that cannot be deepened by another order of magnitude. If an article of clothing is the right cut and color, you can ask yourself about the type of fabric. If that is accurate, you can still ask if the fabric is produced in the correct way and then further if the fibers come from the correct natural source and so on ad infinitum. This kind of design is, in a real world scenario, not a process for a single person to undertake. The design itself requires a fair amount of education in the subject matter being represented on the part of the artist, but it is of utmost importance to have one or more people on hand who act solely as dedicated experts in the subject being depicted. The majority of guests visiting an attraction like the one I have proposed in this thesis would likely not notice if the feel of a shirt was off, but a Viking age Scandinavian certainly would. This is all speculative with a historic culture like that of Viking age Iceland, but is immeasurably more critical when considering a contemporary culture.

Toward the latter half of the project, it became apparent that narrative was far more important to the feel of the experience than was object accuracy. Without the story, the space feels empty and void of some important essence. Working in a more linear narrative with specific characters and historical events had great effect on the

experience as a whole and improved the sense of a living Viking age society. Here it was critical to be able to draw on the cultural narratives of the people being represented (in the case of this project, recorded Sagas which originated in the Viking age and were written by near contemporaries in the same culture and place) and work these narratives into the experience. As with physical cultural objects but to a greater extent, having a realistic and near authentic feel to the narrative is crucial to representing any group. I feel this project has come close, but that a real world project would require a team dedicated fully to research and critical review.

Ultimately, however, I feel the attraction is enough to inspire a Guest to continue the journey long after leaving the final dining experience in Valhǫll. Education can only go so far in a themed setting, but a themed experience can absolutely inspire one to educate themselves. As much as this project aims to teach Guests about Viking age Scandinavian culture, it aims to inspire Guests to undertake that journey on their own.

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