

# Turning the Gaze Outside-In – Exploring Danish Pasts in Graphic Storytelling

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Sarah Santangelo and Ancco, graphic storytellers, were invited to the National Museum of Denmark to participate in the workshop *Turning the Gaze Outside-In – Exploring Danish Pasts in Graphic Storytelling*. This workshop took place from 12 to 18 September 2022 and was part of TAKING CARE's line of inquiry *Different Pasts – Sustainable Futures*, which explored the role(s) museums might play in highlighting, showcasing, and supporting the resilience and adaptability of traditional knowledge systems. Beyond anthropocentric models, this workshop was conceived to support the museum in its exploration of what it means when care work in the museum is not just part of practices of preservation, but also about caring for people. How might the museum rethink its role to becoming a space of cultural encounters that continues to believe in the importance of preserving the collections it holds, but, importantly, also mobilizes these collections for innovative co-creation in the making of other, better, futures for both humans and non-humans?

**Turning the Gaze Outside-In** investigated native Danish lifestyles and practices by inviting an international graphic storyteller to explore how to create new narratives of these traditions for a Danish and global community.

As part of the project, we brought together the South Korean graphic novel artists Ancco (Choi Kyung-jin) and Sarah Santangelo, a student of Graphic Storytelling at The Animation Workshop in Viborg, Denmark. Often employing a humorous and auto-fictive oeuvre, they interrogate issues of personhood, of gender, and of identity. Together, the artists met with museum researchers and with professionals for conversations in object-oriented sessions related to animism and shamanism, from a primarily archaeological perspective. They also visited an open-air museum with reconstructed Danish Stone Age, Iron Age, and Viking Age exhibits. These experiences formed the basis for their graphic storytelling. The focal point of the workshop were Nordic (in particular Danish) aspects of animism and shamanism not only as beliefs and practices in the past, embedded in archaeological and ethnographic objects, but also as a way to understand how communities today strive to revitalize these facets of traditional lifeways.

For this project, Ancco worked on the collections and used expertise from within the National Museum of Denmark related to pre-Christian Scandinavian practices such as animism. Sarah Santangelo documented Ancco's encounters with museum objects, researchers, and storiesSee here a sample of Sarah's documentary illustrations (*figs. 1–3*) and Ancco's museum object sketches (*figs. 4–5*). Ancco's illustrations are not necessarily representative of her graphic novel on the topic. This graphic novel is still a work in progress at the time of writing.



### 1. FOR A POLARBEAR, A MEN IS A POLAR BEAR

Getting back to the reality through what we like to tell or think to know about optimism.

1000 years ago they taught everybody was equal.

Large structures of stone or fire so each family would have the same.

Prominent shamans would travel through long distances, with rare items, iron. They could easily have become an important figure. They had to share, those were the ceremonies. The bears in the structures are like "brothers". Stripping in order to be like every other being.





