



Exposure:
understanding living in
extreme environments
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The Tolbooth
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understanding living in
extreme environments

Paul Adderley • Michael Young

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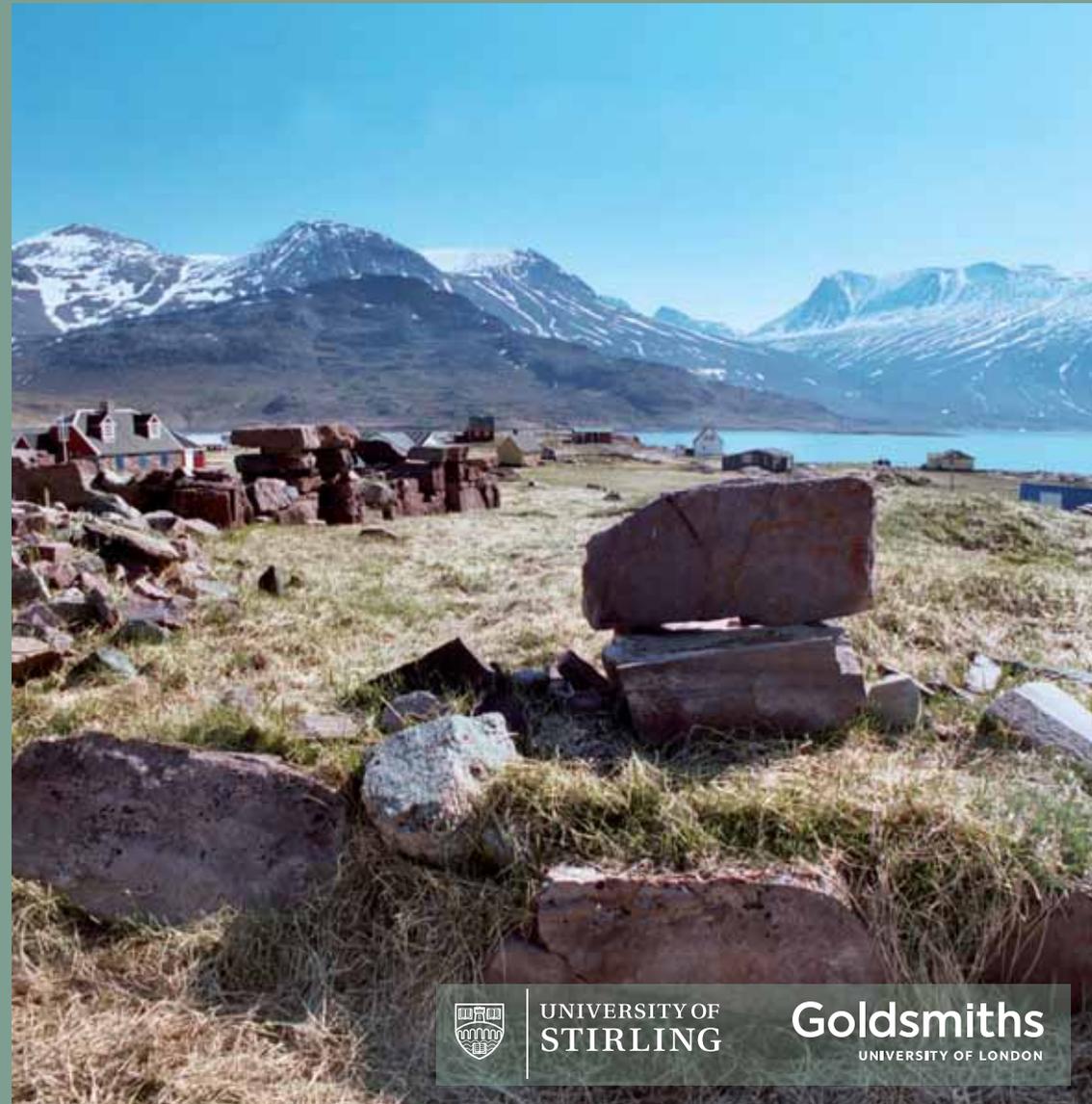
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or visit:
www.ground-breaking.net

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Dr Adderley is RCUK Academic Fellow in
Geoarchaeology and Environmental History at
the University of Stirling. A NESTA awardee,
recent work has included examining fresh ways
of considering the outputs of scientific studies.

Dr Young is a Lecturer in Music at Goldsmiths,
University of London. He composes and investi-
gates computer-based generative and interac-
tive processes for a range of sound media.
Recent works include Argrophylax (2005),
Aur(or)a (2006) and Piano_Prosthesis (2007).



In extreme environments the adaptation of peoples to their environment may require major changes to the landscape through agriculture or other land use. Such landscapes therefore reflect the lives and histories of the people who have lived there. A variety of scientific analyses can be used to reveal how people lived in the past and the results of these investigations can provide lessons for the management of landscapes in the future.



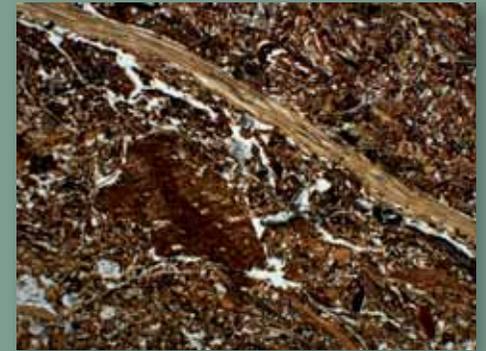
Qassiarsuk in southern Greenland; recreation of a Viking long house in foreground.



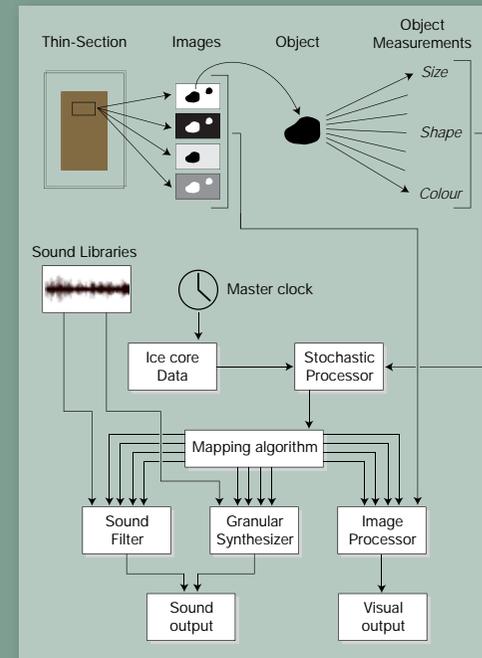
Greenland is dominated by the massive icecap covering the majority of its land area. The weather is extreme both in day to day changes and between winter and summer months.

Southern Greenland is today populated by people descended from Inuit hunters who have settled in small sheep-farming and fishing communities. Just over 1000 years ago however Vikings settled in the area. These settlers met few if any people: the indigenous Inuit population only visited the region periodically on hunting trips. The Viking settlers by contrast were sedentary farmers, bringing sheep, cows and horses. The Viking colony was a success and lasted for over 400 years, building farms, churches and a cathedral before meeting a mysterious fate in the 1400s.

Soils can act as a store of information, recording the past management of a landscape over thousands of years. Microscopic fragments of different objects found in the soil can be used to inform us about peoples' lives.



Soil thin-section from Qassiarsuk, site of Brattahlíð the first Viking settlement in Greenland.



This installation uses visual information gained from the forensic examination of soils from old settlements; this information concerns the everyday farm-life of the Viking settlers and is used in this installation to inform both the synthesis of the sounds heard and the images seen. In doing so over a thousand years of soils records are explored and revealed in different perspectives.

By illuminating and making audible this ancient landscape, we invite you to reflect on the nature of these past communities and the extremes of the environment they faced...