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FOR DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY
IN CONSERVATION



Faded glory

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The damage that may be suffered by objects that are important to us - us as individuals or as the human species - is often gradual and almost imperceptible. This is what makes it so easy to accept - even prefer. Many, if asked, would admit a predilection for faded glory - for the subtle and smoothing effects of time. That's natural as it shows us the object has a career, a biography which we are still part of.

It is that continuum that makes the objects so important to us, just like an institution such as a monarchy, for instance - if it's managed well and skilfully, has a purpose in quietly aligning the future with the past. We can see the various world religions in that light too - bringing comfort that things are ordered and in place and the proof of that is their longevity - they've been here since time immemorial and their changes are vast but, individually each change is generally slight.

Then something happens that shakes us from this comfortable place - something dreadful like the recent fireball in Norway that destroyed homes and lives and also a stave church. Fire is not only powerful but it has a powerful image. One of the less attractive (but nonetheless intriguing) issues about this particular event, in Laerdal, was the use by the press of drone carried cameras taking those images, which impeded rescue helicopters - but mistakes will be made. It is the image that makes this memorable and it is the speed and hunger of rapacious fire that makes it so frightening. And it is also the destructiveness and the permanent loss it leaves.

In seconds everything has changed. And what is lost, apart from, as I have said, the immediate and emotional issues - are the records and proof of the past - the key to our comfort continuum. If it isn't sudden - we rather like it, the faded glory. But if it's an earthquake or a fire or a flood or a bomb or a terrorist action then we notice - we notice that what we have is not permanent. It is fragile and delicate and vulnerable and if we care about it we must record it.

You expected that line as you've read previous Opinion pieces that carry the same message - but it is such a powerful message that it takes many iterations to get it across. We just have to record our treasured objects as they represent the mirror of our future and our children deserve our caring. That is our mission.