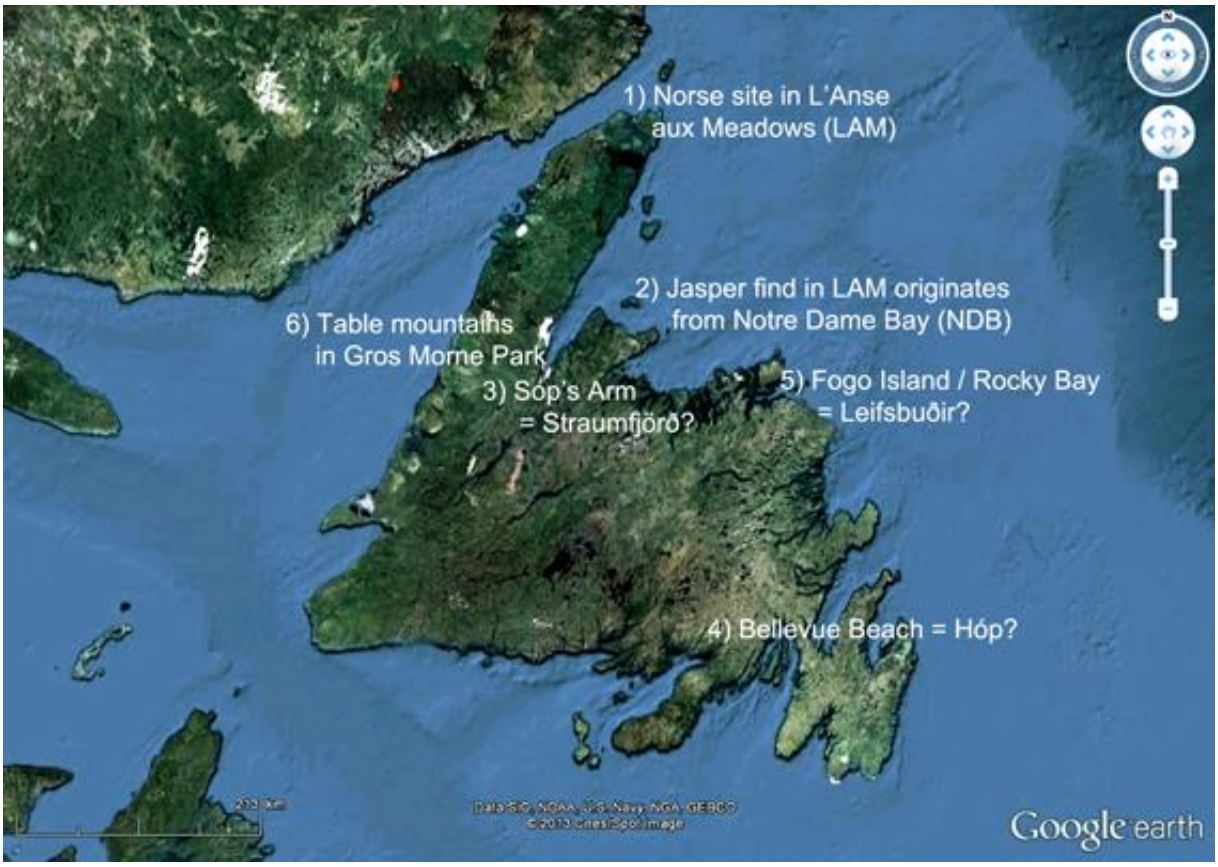
The Vinland Phenomenon

on a medieval myth in modern Newfoundland
an artistic research project by Rona Rangsch

As depicted in medieval Icelandic sagas Vinland is the land where, around the year 1000, Leif Eiriksson and his crew – coming from Greenland – set foot on the American continent as the first Europeans. The name means „wine land“ and must have sounded to Norse ears like the „land of milk and honey“.

Since the 1960s we are having archeological evidence of a Norse presence in L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland, but apart from that, until the present day, both speculations and scholarly discussions are going on as to how far South along the East coast and further West on the mainland Vinland may have reached.

What I am calling the „Vinland Phenomenon“ is based on the mythical status, the aura of mystery and promise, Vinland has acquired over the centuries. It comprises both the fascination it exerts up to the present on laymen as well as experts as a paradise-like place and the character of an ocean-spanning link between the Old and the New World inherent to the Vinland legend.

The project will investigate this phenomenon through the collection of photo and video material at the relevant places in Newfoundland and by interviews with local Newfoundlanders as well as selected experts in the field. The results shall then be elaborated against the background of historical, geographical and climatological considerations in order to audio-visually transport the idea of the Vinland Phenomenon with photo and video works as well as with an illustrated book.

selected places / regions where a Norse presence i) is scientifically ascertained (LAM) or likely (NDB): 1 & 2; ii) claimed by locals: 3, 4, 5; iii) assumed by author: 6