Steno (Niels Stensen) 1638-1686
Steno's law of superposition: layers of rock are arranged in a time sequence, with the oldest on the bottom and the youngest on the top, unless later processes disturb this arrangement.
So, I’m using a spatial pattern (one layer on top of each other), to determine a temporal relationship (the bottom layer is older).
This is the SPACE-FOR-TIME SUBSTITUTION

Which is the sine qua non ("without which it could not be") of natural history.

Sine qua non - I like the sound of this Latin stuff.
The same logic applies to all things that occurred in a historical order (including Jackson Pollock paintings)
Part of Scottish Enlightenment:
John Playfair (math)
Joseph Black (chemistry)
Adam Smith (economist)
David Hume (philosopher)

The present is the key to the past.
Siccar Point, Scotland
"the mind seemed to grow giddy by looking so far into the abyss of time".
Hutton Unconformity at Jedburgh, Scotland, illustrated by John Clerk in 1787
Rule of unconformities

Rule of cross-cutting relation a

Principle of inclusion

Rule of cross-cutting relation b
He noticed that:
1) Each particular rock stratum could be identified by the fossils it contained; and
2) The same succession of fossil groups, from older to younger rocks, are found in many parts of England.

Those, in combination, are the rule of faunal succession.

So, he made a geological map of England. (Implicit in this, is that the fossil record is a “one-way street”, recording changes of life in the past.)
Rule of faunal succession
Theories that have the earth eroded
May all with safety be exploded
For of the Deluge we have data
Shells in plenty mark the strata

And though we know not yet awhile
What made them range, what made them pile,
Yet this one thing full well we know -
How to find them ordered so.

attributed to William Smith (1829)