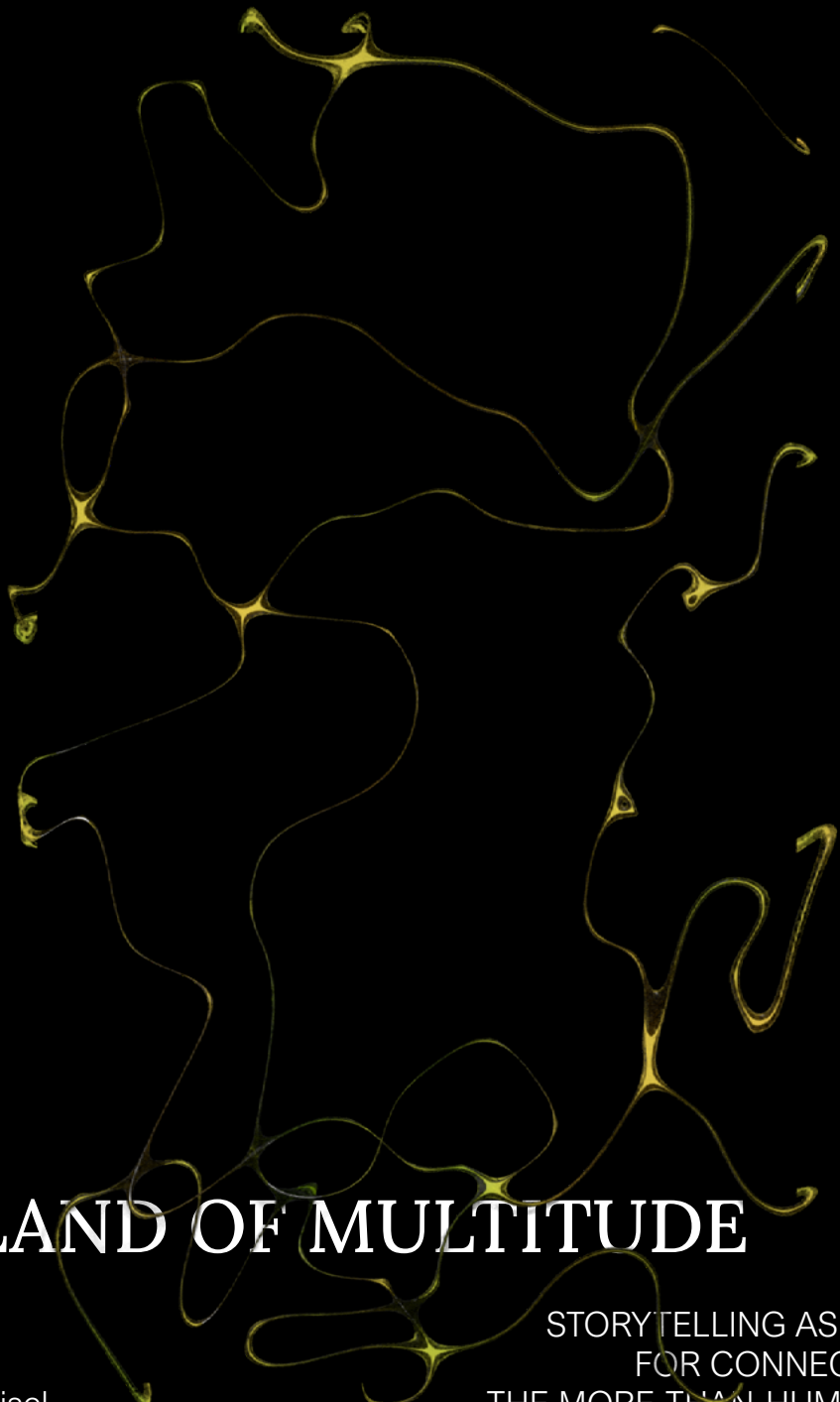




ISLAND OF MULTITUDE

Karl Kaisel

STORYTELLING AS A METHOD
FOR CONNECTING WITH
THE MORE-THAN-HUMAN WORLD.

**Island of Multitude. Storytelling
as a method for connecting with
the more-than-human world.**

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[The term ecosphere] has the double advantage of reminding humanity where it is domiciled, while expressing no prejudice in favour of organisms, hence no denigration of earth, water and air as less than organisms, as merely their environment. It implies equal importance among all components, while also implying that everything existing within the Ecosphere [...] The Whole Home is the prime reality; all else within is fragmentary, disarticulated, lost, and meaningless until conceived and experienced in the context of the Ecosphere.

- J. Stan Rowe (Rowe 89, 125)

STORIES IN ECOSPHERE

Our world is full of stories told by humans, for humans. These tales help people to build an understanding of their environment and are used to change people's minds for better or worse. We see the world through the stories and narratives that are told to us and we tell others and ourselves. With these stories, we have made it to the 21st century — an era of the climate crisis, the Holocene extinction. Yet we are slow to take action on these problems despite having the potential to do so. Maybe what is lacking is the right type of stories to make us understand the world. Western European culture (the dominant Christian culture that people are exposed to living in Europe) tends to divide the world into humans and nature and spin a tale of conflict and differences between those. It's embodied so deeply into our minds that it's hard to find language to talk

about it without this dichotomy. Somehow it always comes to mentioning humans and nature as they were separate entities. In this thesis, I will use the term "more-than-human", coined by David Abram and used in James Bridle's book "Ways of Being". This term refers to "a way of thinking which seeks to override our human tendency to separate ourselves from the natural world." (Bridle 2022, 44).

This is of course not the only way of experiencing the world as there are many cultures around the world having a different type of relationships with their surroundings. As an Estonian I am most familiar with the worldviews of the Estonian folk belief and the wider Finno-Ugric belief system therefore I will refer to those views as an alternative understanding to Western culture.

In this thesis, I am going to look into the possibilities of telling different, less human-centric, stories, through the point of view of an island. I lay out the framework that I am working in by examining the discourse around post-human-centric thinking. I also give the context of islands in science and culture, especially Estonian folklore. Growing up in Estonia, near the Baltic Sea/Läänemeri, I have chosen to explore the island of Uuluti and the different perspectives on it, including my own connections with the island. In the last part, I will write about the artistic methods and context of the final artistic work which is a short film.

As Donna Haraway wrote in her book “Staying with the Trouble”: “It matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with” (Haraway 2016, 118). New narratives are essential to change the world and have more care and understanding. It’s not only important to write stories about nature and coexistence, but stories, where humans are not the main characters anymore but are equally entangled with their environment. To rather spin tales of stories from beings that otherwise might go unnoticed and through that acknowledge them as equal agents in this world. Unfolding stories of deep connections between the living and nonliving all form an interconnected web.

The first step is getting over these arbitrary divisions between nature and humans. As long as we identify as something separate from our environment, we will struggle to show care for it. Besides, it’s not just any care that we need to extend to our surroundings. It needs to be a deeply rooted care that we feel for the people closest to us. It can not only be because climate change is making our usual way of life impossible and caring for the environment is the only way out. It’s more than just about surviving. It’s about coexisting on the planet we share.

How can stories of multitude be told by humans? The paradox emerges from the anthropocentric view of the world where certain qualities are only dedicated to humans and seen as lacking in other beings. There is a fine line between differentiating anthropomorphism, human exceptionalism and seeing other beings as equal agents in this world. It’s extremely important to figure such things out as we are trying to understand the more-than-humans and find ways to co-exist on this planet. How can we think of other than human agents in our legal and moral systems? Or should we rather instead dismantle this way of thinking completely and try to form something more inclusive? For example, scientific publications try to avoid anthropomorphising and through that create the opposite effect of non-human beings

being purely mechanical and devoid of willpower. “We can let elephants be hungry when they look hungry, but we have trouble allowing them to be happy when they look happy.” (Morton 2021, 47). Perhaps there are alternative ways of approaching this seeming dichotomy of humans and nature.

We are used to experiencing the world through our bodies, cultures and narratives. Often we even struggle to understand other humans who are different from ourselves, not to mention other creatures that go through the world with completely different senses. There’s a possibility through storytelling to convey these perspectives. Not only to depict them but to put them in a form that is understandable and relatable for us through the forms of metaphors. Fröydi Laszlo writes in her essay “Plant-story?” how she sees the use of metaphors when it comes to multispecies storytelling:

It seems to be impossible to build understanding without some use of metaphor and construction of models. When I consider some animals and plants friends and family members, I register that I’m making projections. [...] It seems to be common in most human cultures to construct concepts and models for all kinds of think-

ing, and doing so from a base in the senses, emotions, and the orientation of the human body in space and time. We must suppose that even other species construct some kind of meaning on a similar basis. (Bencke 2022, 136).

The point is not to create the most accurate story depicting exactly how other-than-human experiences the world. It’s about taking the time and reflecting on the millions of other ways of being and experiencing the world that we all share. Asking questions how do other beings see the world and what sort of a role do we play in it? Could other beings understand us through their metaphors?

Stories are not rigid and change over time. Before the stories were frozen in time by writing them down or turning them into any other static medium they reached us in a more fluid way. The narratives that were passed on orally were shaped by each storyteller and their understanding of the world. Each of them added or removed something from the story that seemed the most fitting for the narrative. Even the fixed mediums of movies or written stories can be understood and narrated in various ways based on the person’s own experiences. The main point is to let these stories be told, interpreted and narrated to have a richer world.

One where there are more ways to see. It's also important to note that the shift in understanding the role of humans in the ecosystem is not needed equally in every human culture. The main need for change appears to be in Western culture. There are plenty of places where humans already live in a closer relationship with nature and some places that did so not so long ago. In the Finno-Ugric folklore and belief system, which Estonia is part of, there is a strong understanding that nature and humans are not separate entities but rather part of one system. The core belief is an animistic worldview that sees every living and also non-living being as having a soul. A good example is the ritual of Khanty people's bear's wake. When the sacred animal is killed there is a long and complex funeral ritual consisting of multiple days of singing and performing for the dead bear that pays respect to the passed animal who is seen as part of the family tree (Meri 1989). It's an active practice of kinmaking that extends the care for non-humans. Unfortunately, the Khantys' traditional way of life and connections to nature came under attack during the Soviet era when the Khanty people were murdered by the Soviet authorities and their rituals made illegal. The discovery of oil in the 1950s gave another blow to the traditional ways of living. Today the continuation of the traditions of Khanty and many other Finno-Ugric people are in danger (Kolga

2001). It's extremely important to preserve these stories and learn from them. There's a lot of knowledge that is valuable for its own sake but it is also valuable for making a difference in the way we see the world.



Part of Khanty bear's wake ritual from Lennart Meri's 1989 film
"The Sons of Torum"

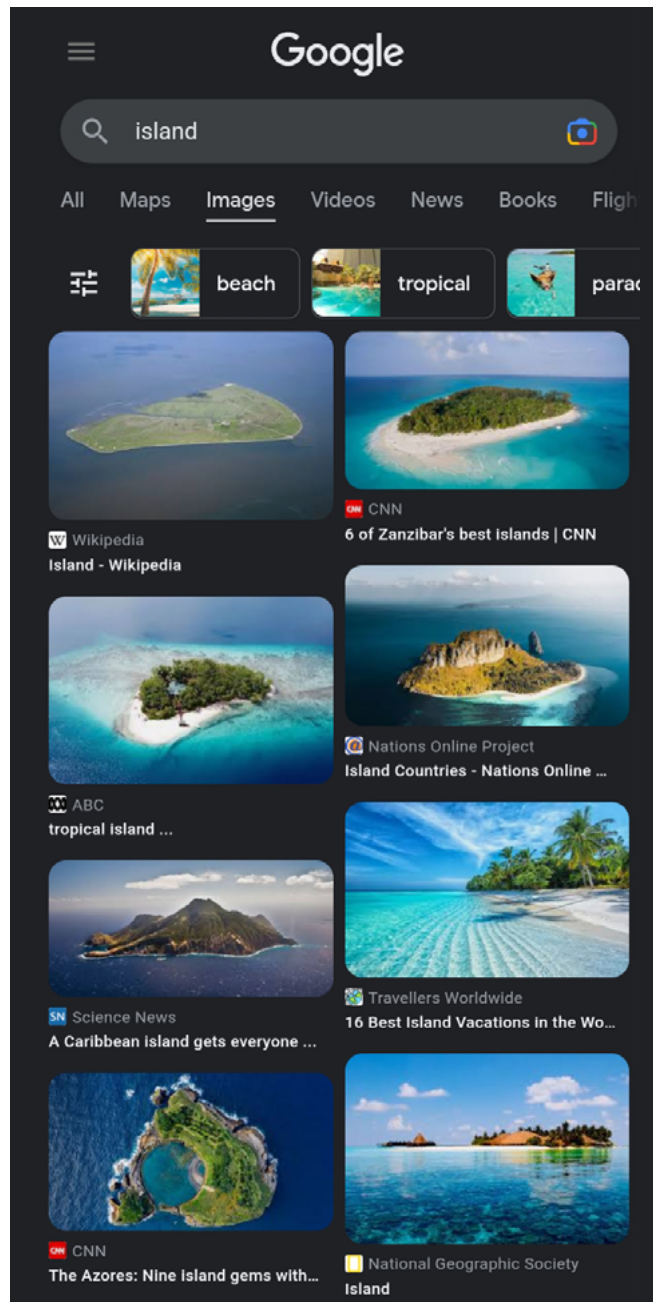
ROLE OF ISLANDS IN CULTURE AND SCIENCE

Culture

Islands have been mysterious and unreachable in people's imagination and therefore the stories that take place there have a similar feeling to them. It's a fertile ground for growing new stories. Islands play various roles in popular Western stories, like the Tempest, Robinson Crusoe, Lord of the Flies, and Jurassic Park. In these narratives islands are places that transform the characters into somebody new, changing their nature. The isolation brings out the best or the worst in them. Islands are also places to look back and reflect on the outside world in comparison to island life (Sides, Davis, and Rock 2014, 1). Humans, usually Westerners, are centred in these island stories, while the islands themselves are usually tropical. These faraway lands are romanticised and seen only as a backdrop for

human narratives. The story is not exploring the island itself but rather the transformation of the human characters by the island. This type of tales are also ignoring the narratives of all the other beings that inhabit the island.

When googling the word "island" most images are with the turquoise ocean, blue sky, white sandy beaches and palm trees. When I am thinking of an island the image is quite different. The image of an island in my head is made out of the smell of rotting algae and salt, relentless wind, grey sky, rocky beach and junipers/[kadaks](#)/*Juniperus communis*. Instead of being this glamorous place in the far away lands island for me is something common and homely. So I am interested in the role of islands in the context of local storytelling.



Screenshot of Google image search for "island", 2023

In Estonia, there are more than 2000 islands and 3% of the country's population lives on islands. Although only 22 out of the 2000 islands are inhabited ("Püsielanikud on 22 saarel" 2017). Still, islands have played an important role in this area's history and have left a distinct mark on the culture. One significant event that has changed the stories told in and about this area is connected to the island of Saaremaa. 3500 years ago the Kaali meteor fell on Saaremaa destroying the villages and leaving a 110 metre diameter crater. This event has been tied to myths all over Europe, stories of the land where the Sun went to sleep. This in turn might have given the area religious significance (Jonuks 2022, 178-179). In modern-day the islands in Estonia play a significant role as places where distinct dialects have survived and traditional crafts still flourish.

In Estonian folklore, especially in the stories from the West coast, the creation of the world starts from the island. The following song was recorded in 1889 in Karuse parish.

[...]
 MIS SÄÄL MEIE ÕUE ALL
 MERI MEIE ÕUE ALL
 MIS SÄÄL MEIE KESKE'EL
 SAAR SÄÄL MERE KESKE'EL
 MIS SÄÄL SAARE KESKE'EL
 ÕUNAPUU SAARE KESKE'EL
 [...]

[...]
 WHAT'S THERE UNDER OUR YARD
 THE SEA IS UNDER OUR YARD
 WHAT'S IN THE MIDDLE OF US
 ISLAND IS IN THE MIDDLE
 WHAT'S IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ISLAND
 APPLE TREE IS IN THE MIDDLE
 [...]

(Estonian Folklore Archives 2013-2018, Karuse. H II 2, 200/2 (307). 1889.)

Translation to English by Karl Kaisel

The story continues with how during a storm the apple from the tree fell to the sea creating a spotted bird that built a nest in a treetop and laid seven eggs. From each of them, a bird was born and scattered across the world. The first one was given to the underworld, the second one was put on a cloud to be the sun, the third one became the Dawnstar (Venus), the fourth one became the North Star, the fifth one the Little Carriage (Ursa Minor), the sixth one to become the Moon and the last one became the Pleiades. The song ends by saying: "Because of this we can count the time/ Know our hours".

The story seems absurd to modern thinking. It's a creation story that starts with a world that already exists. The island and the apple tree were there before the sun or moon was created. So was the land and the forest where the bird laid its eggs. Reading Estonian folk tales you are often left with this off-feeling — something isn't right. The story ends abruptly without any conclusions and the expected moral of the story is ambiguous.

There's respect for the environment in Estonian folk tales and belief. Misbehaving people with no consideration for their surroundings were bluntly punished and one's that cared for and nurtured their environment were rewarded. As stories shape the world that we live in, our way of life was very much affected by such understanding.

Estonian folklore and folk belief are animistic (Valk 1993, 21). It's common that trees and animals are the centres of a story, and spirits of forests, rocks and springs interact with people. In this worldview, the usual human-centric stories with narratives that follow rigid structures are out of place. This more open-ended and entangled storytelling of folktales seems like a good example to look at when forming new stories. New types of stories can be told by decentering the humans. This way the person experiencing the story is put in a position of uncertainty and discomfort which requires rethinking and consideration of alternative worlds.

It's important to note that folk tales are not only telling stories of spirits and talking trees. These stories have been used to build nationalistic narratives. In the context of Estonia, the most active collection and recording of folktales coincides with the national awakening. The systematic collecting of folklore was started by Jakob Hurt in the 1860s and grew into a national phenomenon in late 1880s (Jonuks 2022, 27-28). These narratives had their role in that era in the context of building a unified identity to gain independence from the foreign rule but they can be misused in contemporary times to cultivate problematic and discriminative nationalistic ideas. This means that the interpretations and conclusions should be critically reevaluated in contemporary times.

Science

Remote islands are not only captivating people through the stories in literature and film but are also crucial for studying evolution, biogeography and ecosystems. Crucial to Charles Darwin's and Alfred Russel Wallace's evolutionary theories were the case studies of the Galapagos and Malay Archipelago (Scott 2014, 3). Evolutionary theory has brought humans down from the god-created species, in the Christian view, to be just as ordinary or extraordinary as every other living being on this Earth. This has helped bridge the gap between humans and nature but there's still a long way to go to see the world through an ecological perspective of interconnectedness.

In ecology, however, there are many units that deserve to be called islands because of the sharp boundaries that delimit them in respect to a radically different surrounding landscape, where the inhabitants of the 'ecological island' could not survive permanently (Minelli 2012, 268).

This can include mountaintops, isolated bodies of water or even caves. In this case, the island's definition is based on the inhabitant's ability to go to an island and leave it. It becomes defined by the

borders and limits which go both ways. For the outsider, an island is a limited place and for the islander, the outside is the limited part. For the species which have evolved to fit the island conditions, the outside world becomes sort of an island that requires crossing barriers and changing their ways of life.

Islands have two seemingly opposing sides when speaking in evolutionary terms. Their limited area and isolation create conditions for rapid evolution due to the smaller gene pool. The competition for resources is low and there are plenty of open niches to inhabit. This creates a situation where new species can rapidly evolve. Because of this, they are at the same time in danger of overpopulating the island and running out of resources. The minimal threat from other species can discourage the evolution of defensive abilities and behaviour which in turn makes these species vulnerable to outsiders (Scott 2014, 6). Extreme specialisation for the island niches makes the species sensitive to the changing environment. For example, the only endemic species in Estonia is Saaremaa yellow rattle/[Saaremaa robirohi/Rhinanthus osiliensis](#), as the name suggests, it's only growing on the island of Saaremaa, but it is endangered due to the loss of habitat due to the draining of boglands (Reitalu 2004, 36-37).

Additionally, the lack of genetic variation creates a situation where the species are more exposed to genetic shortcomings that are inherited in the small island community. Anything can disturb the delicate balance of the ecosystem. A new species introduced to the island can destroy the whole island's biodiversity, the whole island's life. A well-known example is that of the dodo bird on the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. The species was wiped out after contact with Europeans, who hunted dodos extensively and introduced new species to the island (Scott 2014, 6).

The research around islands is full of seeming contradictions (islands don't want to fit into the categories we create for them). On one hand, they are studied for their uniqueness but at the same time, they are used as a representation for general models that can be expanded to continental ecosystems. Islands are studied for their isolation but also for being part of the global ecosystem. They are looked at to see how life evolved in the past but also for understanding the future. (Sides, Davis, and Rock 2014, 2).

ISLAND SPACE

Islands are used as models to better understand bigger systems, therefore it's a good place to start looking into new narratives. Alexandra Side writes in her essay "Our View of Islands: Joining the Values of Science and Society.": "It seems that on an island, probabilities can be disregarded and disbelief more easily suspended. We are more willing to accept strangeness from an island. We expect it". (Sides, Davis, and Rock 2014, 1). It's not easy to get into new mindsets but people are willing to try new things in new places. An island is a place away from most people's everyday life, therefore it seems like something mysterious and unknown. There's a certain otherness and alien-ness associated with it. Island is in the periphery of our imagination. At the same time, people have built up narratives in their imaginations about the island whether or not they are aware

of it; it is known and unknown at once. This duality seems to be characteristic of islands even when we look at the science of islands. In ecology, an island can be a place that is the miniature of the mainland and a completely unique system at the same time.

This type of in-between is not always easy to approach but it leaves space for new thoughts. Humans/*inimene*/*Homo sapiens* tend to categorise things into more understandable units (Branan 2010). Therefore the island is thought of as something that has edges and boundaries, and we can tell where it starts and where it ends. It's a slippery slope like rocks covered with algae. When observing the island as one unit with all the living and non-living it becomes clear that the boundaries are not so clear. The is-land ecosystem continues after the edge of the

water. Creatures from the island constantly cross the boundaries. Seagulls catching the fish, algae carried to the shore, cows splashing through shallow water. It is much more entangled with the surroundings rather than being an isolated unit.

Uuluti Island

To try to overcome this challenge, of seeing the intertwined space of an island, let's observe one tiny island in particular. The island has many names — Uuluti Ullutu, Ulluta. Even the name of the island resists precise positioning and reflects on the multitude of ways that it can be seen. The tiny, 0,3km², island is located in the Baltic Sea not far off the coast of the Virtsu Peninsula in West Estonia. It is part of the Puhtu-Laelatu Nature Reserve due to the rich birdlife and important migratory rest stop. The area is also protected for its semi-natural meadow environments.

At the moment Uuluti's foliage is managed by herding cattle in the warmer part of the year to keep the island's meadows from overgrowing. The goal is to keep the juniper thicket from taking over the island because these would provide hiding spots for predators. The open grassland is more suitable for migratory birds to safely graze and nest. The cattle have the freedom to leave and go to the island as they please. Although the island itself



Map of Uuluti. Estonian Land Board, 2022

is not entirely fenced, part of the pasture that connects the island to the mainland is surrounded by an electrical fence to keep the animals from leaving the area. The cattle can roam between these two places as they please in the summertime; it's usually not deeper than one metre and they know the right way that connects the island and the mainland. The cattle have formed a web of paths between the smaller islets to reach the Uuluti.



Map of the Uuluti, beginning of the 18th century. National Archive of Estonia, EAA.1.2.C-IV-191

There's not much historic information about Uuluti, probably due to its lack of importance and human settlement. The oldest maps that I found from the National Archive of Estonia are from the beginning of the 18th century from the parish maps where the name can already be found — *Uulota holm* (holm meaning island in Swedish). The changing name of the island reflects the region's history. The name of the island goes from Swedish

Uulota holm, to German *Insel Ullota* to Russian *Остров Уллота* and finally to Estonian *Uulutilaid*.

Looking at the newer maps it can be seen that the island used to be divided into units and this can be considered a clear indicator that the island was cultivated by humans. The oldest division of Uuluti that I can find dates back to 1932, but remains of human activities can be found on the island in the form of a borderstone and two square rock foundations of unknown origin.

Ortophoto of Uuluti and the surrounding area. Estonian Land Board, 2023





MULTI-PERSPECTIVE

WORLD OF UULUTI

With the island's roles in culture and ecology in mind, let's come back to storytelling and observe the island of Uuluti. It's a place that I feel connected to and it helps me to understand the world in a more diverse way. Firstly, what is an island? Where does an island start and when does it end? Does the island end when the water starts? Are the lines more blurry? There are as many ways of seeing the island as there are beings experiencing it. Let go of the idea of how we are used to seeing the world. Instead, let's try to imagine what an island is for other beings or at least try to do it best to our abilities. Each of those perspectives are valuable in their own right. Exercising care will help us to have a better understanding of the world that surrounds us. Maybe we can find ways to experience the island that would not come to our mind if we would stick to our usual way of thinking.

Exercise of being a multispecies storyteller

In order to observe the world in a more diverse way I want to imagine how other beings can experience the island. I don't intend to speak instead of them or even think that what I am imagining is an accurate depiction. Instead, I base these stories on my own time on the island and the observations I made through the different senses. I took time to think and research which types of experiences are important for other inhabitants of the island and tried to imagine and include them in the following stories. We all inhabit different bodies with different senses so however hard I try I will be limited to my humanness. The point of this is to exercise care and broaden the understanding of the island space through other beings.

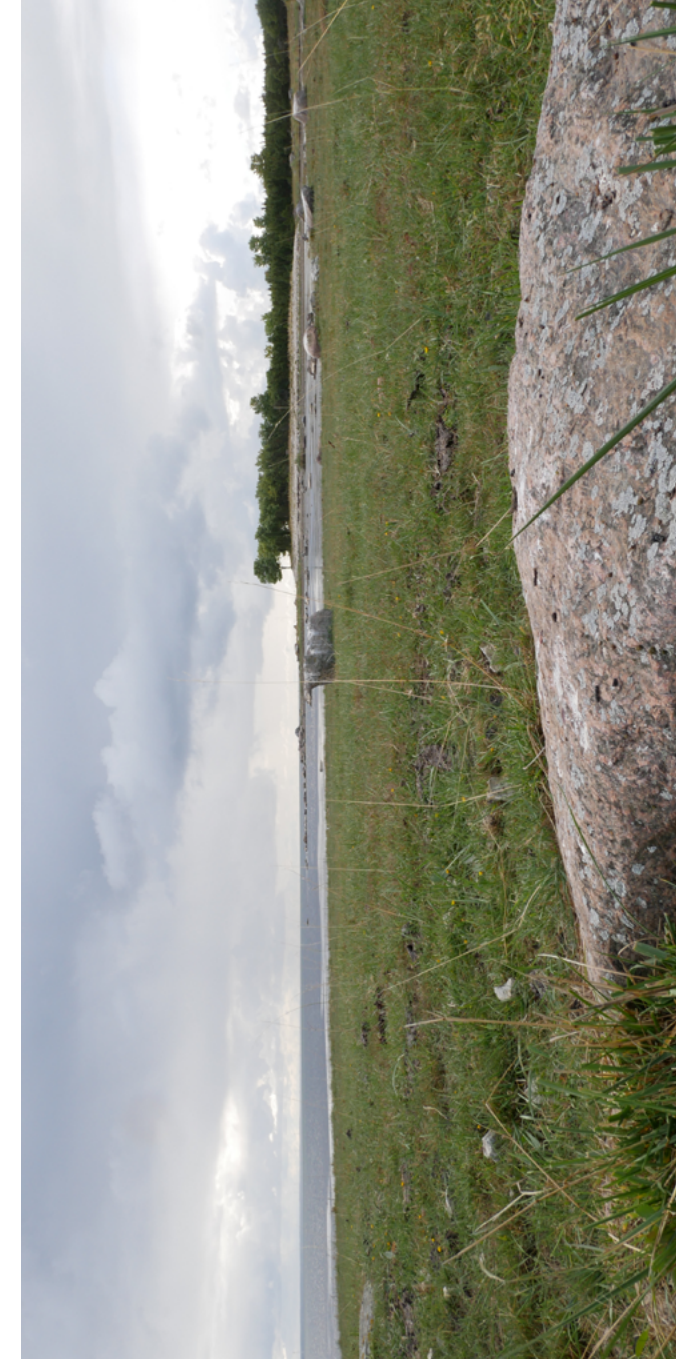
Great Egret/*hōbehaigur*/*Ardea albat* in the sky adjusts their wide wings above the island. The usual flow of air changes from the steady wind above the sea to more sudden rushes of air above the island. The tiny island underneath seems inviting with the shallow pool that seems great for hunting some small fish. The pool is surrounded by grassland and cows eat peacefully. It appears to be an open space and therefore safe from lurking predators. For a great egret, the island is not a place of isolation. The body of water surrounding the island is not the same obstacle as it is for creatures bound to land but maybe that's the key element for a bird the fact that others are isolated from this space and therefore it's safer from predators. The egret descends from the sky and graciously lands in the shallow water, their feet sinking in the mud. The fish flee but the bird knows that they will be back and waits patiently for their return.





Three-spined stickleback/*ogalik*/*Gasterosteus aculeatus* is swimming in the shallow water off the island looking for crustaceans to eat. They know that this is where the water ends and a new habitat starts so they have to keep eye on what's happening above the water but also in their immediate surroundings. At any moment a peak can pierce through the silvery water above and snatch them up. Yet it's a good place for the fish to hunt too because pieces of food from the island land into the coastal water. The island is a curious place that the stickleback has never seen but it's a place from where food, but also danger, comes from.

This rowan/*pihlakas*/*Sorbus aucuparia* grows at the end of the island. They are located away from the sea on a higher gravel pile that keeps them safe from the high waters. The climate is rather mild here. The sea breathes warmth during the winter and cools the burning summer heat on the broad leaves. There are the occasional storms that build up on the open sea but the rowan has grown stout and has roots running deep. They are twisting through the gravel reaching into the heart of the island in search of fresh water. This tree got here with a bird who carried its seed in their digestive system from the mainland. In the coldest time of the year the birds come looking for the last food that is not hidden under the snow. The rowan's bright red seeds are standing out of the landscape calling for the hungry birds. In this way, the island is not a place of isolation for the rowan.



Cattle */veis/* *Bos taurus* habit the island only one part of the year. They have never seen the island covered with snow or the sea frozen over. For them, the island is a temporary place. Perhaps in the winter when they stay in their barn, they dream of the island. Or maybe the warm barn is much more comfortable than the windy island. The island is part of their territory that they can graze at but so is the mainland. They have to walk through the sea to get there but they do it so regularly. Getting their feet wet is part of their daily life so the island doesn't feel any different than walking from one part of the pasture to another.



The granite boulder came from the mountains of Scandinavia. It has been laying on the island for ten thousand years. Over time the moss has inconsistently covered them, sometimes being brushed clean by the ice and snow. The tiny mycelium and algae are pressing themselves into the body of the rock, degrading the boulder, scattering them across the island, slowly losing its shape and merging with the space. In collaboration with the wind and water, the rock is being chipped away, turning their heavy bodies into gravel, and gradually turning into sand. The boulder is changing from a solid body to thousands of little rocks that are carried away by sea or displaced by a stepping foot.

A lonely red fox/*rebane*/*Vulpes vulpes* dashes from bush to bush finding a way in the undergrowth chasing a scent. The smell is lingering between the junipers and leading towards the beach. Living on the island you can't be picky and have to take any opportunity. They find a seal carcass on the beach. The meat is tough under the teeth but it's better than nothing.



The fox came to the island at the end of winter across the ice. After spending some days looking for mice and bathing in the warm sun it was too late to leave. The spring sun had melted the ice and swimming through the icy water didn't seem appealing, so the fox stayed.

The spring was hard as the island was too small for sustaining a fox. Occasionally the sea provided some fish and in the bushes there were some mice but it was barely enough for a fox. As the winds changed and the sun warmed up, life became easier. More and more birds arrived on the island. They were easy prey as they were too occupied with building their nests to notice the fox. Still, the island was not enough. The fox knew as their fur started to change with the season that harder times were ahead and he could not survive another season. They paced restlessly around the island until a familiar smell caught their nose, the smell of another fox. The direction was clear and the fox started to swim.



As every species has a different experience of the island, so does every individual. What is this island of Uulutu for me? I think this is best answered by another story. I was standing at the end of a peninsula and looked out to the sea. I could see through the thick fog the outlines of Uuluti. It was barely distinguishable from the sea and the sky as they all merged together in the greyness. I could not go to the island because the sea was covered with ice that was not thick enough to walk across, but thick enough so that it was impossible to use a boat or walk through. So I stayed by the shore and gazed out to the sea. It was not my first time standing there.

The place that I am standing at is called Puhtu and it used to be an island, but now it's a peninsula. Puhtu has become a place that my family visits regularly. I can't really tell why it became such a significant location in the first place. Maybe its unique broadleaf forest fascinated my parents who both got their education in forestry or maybe it has more to do with the beauty of this location. Perhaps it's about the ancient towering trees and crashing sea, the smell of the seaweeds and salt mixed with the smell of garlic coming from the cowleeks that make this place.

One thing is for sure, some sort of a connection was formed between my family and Puhtu. Now the same place that I am

standing, at the end of the peninsula, is the place where my father's ashes were given to the sea more than a decade ago. The waves scattered the remains of my father across the sea and shores. I imagined the ashes flowing in the environment, some of it becoming the bladderwrack in the sea, some consumed by the stickleback, others reaching the shores and some of it floating to the surrounding islands, including Uuluti. This very embodied connection to this place and island evoked in me these questions of how it is to be part of this complex ecological system. What it feels like to embody all those different parts of living and non-living that make up the whole environment of an island.

Another connection that I have with this island is the more practical kind. The first time I landed on the island was part of "talgud". It's a concept from the Estonian peasant culture which means communal working on a bigger project that requires more than one family's efforts. The project on hand was clearing parts of the island from junipers to free up the pasture and habitat for the seabirds. It meant cutting down the vast juniper thickets. The most memorable moment of it for me was when I almost cut off my finger with a billhook. I was bleeding all over the island. In a way leaving parts of me with the land.

Another practical experience was years later when I was working for the farmer who keeps his cattle on the island. Part of the job was to get the cattle to the island. We went there with an amphibious vehicle herding the cows towards the island through the sea. It wasn't the easiest job as the vehicle was constantly stuck in the mud and the animals didn't want to go to the island. Eventually, we managed to get them there. Now the management of the island is different as the cows are not anymore taken to and from the island but rather given a free range to come and go from the island.

Through these experiences, I have been able to be part of the management of the island. Changing and creating space through physical labour.

World Through Island

After all these different perspectives of an island from the outside it would be time to think about how the island experiences the surrounding and themselves. Imagining how it is to be an island might at first glance seem like something impossible. How can multitudes see the world? We are not used to thinking in the mode of many. Perhaps this idea is not as alien as it might seem at the first glance. Thinking in human terms, it's not

so different from how we already experience our environment. Humans like all the other species are holobionts, our life and perception is constantly altered by a multitude — the microbiome that lives in and on us (Yong 2016). As studies have shown, the microbiome of our body can play a big role in our mental health (Pennisi 2022). There is a direct link between human perception of the world and the multitude of other species that are part of our body.

The island is made up of many beings starting from the birds in the sky, algae in the sea, stones, the lichen on the stones and everything in between. Each of them has their own perception of the world. In combination with the non-living, they make up an island. It's a complex system of relations.

Through all these different perspectives it becomes clear that the rigid categorisation of an island doesn't make much sense. The division of island and non-island is forced and in a similar way the approach to humans and nature, a strong dividing line between the two.

Cohabiting the Island

The Uulutu island challenges the stereotypical dichotomy of humans and nature. The narrative being that on one side there are humans and on the other side there's nature and it's for the best to keep them separate. Excluding humans from natural habitats is the best case scenario. It might be the case in certain situations but the reality is much less black and white. These value judgments contain anthropocentric views of the world. It assumes that humans are separated from nature and these interactions are not natural. For new types of narratives, we need a different approach to this idea of how humans can interact with the environment. Kull & Kukk & Lotman write in their essay "When Culture Supports Biodiversity: The Case of Wooded Meadow": "[...] the only way to preserve biodiversity in the long run is to find ways of ecosystem management which could also increase the local species richness, without any active introduction of new species" (Roepstorff, Bubandt, and Kull 2003, 76).

Humans are equally part of the ecosystem as every other species. Humans affect and are affected by the surrounding world and the relationships in it. Humans create ecosystems and add to biodiversity in many cases. Good examples of that are beaches and wooded meadows

which are the world's most biodiverse ecosystems on a microscale (Bubandt, Roepstorff, and Kull 2003, 76). These types of ecosystems are in danger but not because of human activity but the lack of it. What keeps these areas so rich in species is the active herding and harvesting of hay. Similar landscapes are part of Uuluti island. Without active herding, the islands would be overgrown with juniper thickets making them less biodiverse. The grassland maintained by the cattle is suitable habitat for various migrating birds.

On Uuluti new stories are created through an entanglement of participants which in return creates a rich environment that supports high biodiversity. The beach meadows that cover big parts of the island are important nesting spots for migrating birds. Without human activity on the island, this grassland would be quickly overgrown and replaced by a less unique and biodiverse landscape. These places have been kept in these conditions over hundreds, if not thousands of years, of animal husbandry which continues to this day. To care for such a place one has to have a connection to the land. Accessing the island is not always possible. You have to keep in mind the weather, the sea levels, the time of the day and wind directions. Especially at the sea, you have to be prepared for sudden changes in weather.



RESEARCH THROUGH EMBODYING

Getting to the island

One of the characteristic features of the island is the journey that it takes to get there. The challenges and the route to the island define it for somebody from outside. Therefore as part of my research on Uulu-tu island, I used different methods to reach the island. My first attempt was to paddle to the island. With a heavy wind blowing from the South West, it was a struggle to reach the island without being blown out to the sea. I really had to fight with the elements to get to the destination. I felt tiny and insignificant floating on the waves completely in the hands of the wind and the sea. The weather conditions affect the reachability of the island a lot but with the struggle to get there, the island became even more of a point to reach. Eventually, I landed on the closest shore to the mainland and stayed for a few hours.

The second time I tried to paddle around the island in sunny weather. The sea was so quiet that it felt off. The lack of wind and lazy waves were not the usual sight. Without the constant wind, the sounds grabbed my attention. Usually, any outside noise is cancelled out by the howling wind but now I could hear the voices of people. There was nobody to be seen but the bodiless sound was so clear that I could almost make out what they were saying. With the quiet sea, the sound must have travelled there from the harbour a few kilometres away. The other unusual part of the calm sea was that the waves were gently rocking me up and down instead of the usual relentless battle with the coming and going waves. The waves were peacefully passing by and slowly merged with the shore of the island. The sea seemed to be in an unusually gentle mood. The water was very

clear and as I was moving along the shore I could see the sea floor with all the algae, the jellyfish floating past and the silvery fish darting around. The island once again felt like a completely different place, more like an idyllic dreamland welcoming me there rather than pushing me away.

On my next trip to the island, I decided to walk barefoot through the sea as the cattle do. The summer of 2022 was extremely dry, therefore the sea levels were low and the island was accessible by walking there. The water at its deepest was waist deep so I took on the journey to walk from one tiny islet to another through the sea following the paths made by the cows. For them journeying between the island and the mainland is a daily habit as I observed them often crossing the sea. Walking through the sea barefoot is not the easiest but it gave me the feeling of the different seafloor surrounding the island. Something that I would not have noticed otherwise. At times the path is clear and the bottom of the sea sandy. These were the best parts of the trip. At the next crossing from islet to islet the seafloor was littered with sharp limestone cutting into my feet at every step. When crossing the next islet the ground becomes a deep mud pit in which every step is a challenge as the mud sucks me in. From the last islet, the sea bottom is covered with algae softly caressing the bruised feet from

the walk across the sharp stones. Eventually reaching the island my feet were on fire from the sharp stones.



For one more way to reach the island, I visit the island also with a drone — an extended mechanical eye observing the island from a bird's eye view. Crossing the sea and reaching the island is no different from flying anywhere else. It really takes something away from the islandness but it gave me an unusual angle of the island. The puddles and grooves took on shapes unseeable from the ground, the trails of cows snaking through the bushes finding the most optimal ways between the pastures and juniper thickets. The birds were flying under me instead of above me. The coastline is drawing out complex figures that are not comprehensible while walking on the island. New shapes and patterns emerge from the borders between the grassland, junipers, piles of seaweed and mud pits. The details are getting lost as the drone speeds across the island but from that, a different type of complexity emerges.

On the Island

Through various ways I got to the island. The two-dimensional outline, usually seen from the mainland, is suddenly a three-dimensional space. Climbing over the gravel piles, Uuluti opens up. The view that opens seems like a diverse miniature landscape. In front of me are a small shallow lake, beach, grassland, groves and hills. The first thing that anyone can notice on the island is the smell. It's a mix of freshness of the open sea and stagnating mud from the shallow pits with a tiny spice of juniper. The colour of the island depends on the season. In the summer the deep green of junipers alternates with the lighter grassland green which in turn is divided with strokes of white from the gravel and dried mud. The colour of the junipers stays the same throughout the year but the grassland changes from fresh green to worn-out yellow to whiteness the snow.

At first, I want to circle the island to get a feeling of its size. What seems like a rather small island becomes a lot bigger when following the fractal coastline. Despite the fact that nobody lives on the island it doesn't feel so isolated from the humans as you might expect. There are constant signs of human activity. The coast is littered with various objects brought in by the sea. I found a boot on the one side of the island and its

pair on the other side, six unpaired flip-flops, tons of driftwood, worn-out helium balloons from some fairs and an endless amount of unidentifiable pieces of plastic. I tried to collect as much trash as I could carry but still, there was way more left behind. Even if people are not actively littering on the island, the trash that gets to the sea anywhere can end up on the island. So much of the isolation.

Human activities were present on the island in other ways too. On the North side of the island, I see the constant ferry traffic connecting the mainland and Saaremaa island. Just as much are present the wind turbines that stand on the coast, always spinning in the background. When it comes to signs from other humans on the island I found a little armchair made of pallets and a bonfire surrounded with rocks. Somebody has camped here before me. From older signs of humans I found an old borderstone in the middle of the island. It's a stone carved with X indicating the direction of the borders between lands. In the current landscape, it's the only sign of those previously existing divisions on the island.

The border rock bears the mark of human activities on the island but there are various rocks on the island with very different stories. The granite rocks that I climb are likely to have been brought here by the glaciers in the ice age.



Map of the Uuluti 1932, Estonian Land Board

When I observe the limestone chunks I find fossils of the ancient corals that used to grow in the area 472 million years ago ("Paekivi Teke"). These rocks have been standing on the island for thousands and millions of years. I wonder how the rocks that came from Scandinavia arrived here only recently with the ice age compared to the limestone that was here when the continents were in different places. These rocks must have experienced the times when the island was completely underwater and slowly emerging from the sea. Changing from a marine ecosystem to a land with trees and animals. Perhaps for the

stone, the island in its current form is just a fleeting moment as it soon might be submerged again. I get up from the stone that I am sitting on and continue the circle around the island.

Walking the coastline I see the bird constantly coming and going. Sometimes it's a lonely black-headed gull/*naerukajaks*/*Larus ridibundus* making their distinct sound that reminds me of laughter, that gives their Estonian name — the laughing gull. Other times it's the flock of birds passing by so quickly that I can't even see who they are but only hear the flapping of their wings in unison.

Whenever I am on the island I can always hear the mooing of cows. Their low voice carries across the island and even back to the mainland. Their presence feels the most dominant on the island. It's not only their sound and big black bodies that stick out of the island landscape but it's also the smell and marks that they leave everywhere — the trails crisscrossing the island and the manure piles.

Even more dominant the presence of the cattle is the sea. Being on an island the sea can't be ignored. It is what makes the island an island and influences everything. One stormy day I was walking on the coast at the South end of the island, which is the most exposed to the open sea. The waves were high and

covered with white foam. The storm was ramping up and the rain was pouring down and the wind was howling in the grey sky. I felt the urge to go into the sea. I took the first few steps into the sea feeling the waves crashing against my feet. I had on my long fishermen's boots that go up to the waist so I ventured deeper into the sea. The waves were not anymore only crashing against my feet but were pushing my whole body around as they pleased. It wasn't easy to keep my balance.

Leaving the sea behind I am going deeper into the island. The inland is a labyrinth of junipers. There are trails made by cows but they are not meant for humans. The juniper needles poke my body and the endless spider webs built between the branches block the way. When trying to go around to avoid destroying the spiders' work I counter only more webs. Eventually, I give up on finding my way through and seek easier passages. Over the thickets tower a few groves. The highest and biggest ones consist mainly of European aspen/*haab/Populus tremula*. I find my way to the aspen grove that hides something surprising. The distinct teeth marks and felled tree trunks were clear signs of a beaver/*kobras/Castor fiber*. It seemed like they were from many years ago. I wonder how the beaver ends up on an island in the sea. Of course, they are excellent swimmers but usually, they are found by rivers and creeks that

are surrounded by trees that they like but this island barely has suitable trees for beavers. I wonder if they left the island or are still hiding somewhere.

There are two other grooves on the island. One with Baltic pines/*mänd/Pinus sylvestris* and the other with silver birch/*arukask/Betula pendula*. These grooves help me to orient myself on the island. Despite its tiny size, it's easy to get lost in the junipers.

The day was coming to an end and it was time to set up a camp. I found a relatively windless spot hidden between the junipers. I put up my tent and gathered some driftwood for a fire. It creates a little island of light in the darkness. The isolation is an illusion. Sounds from the sea and island come through the island of light.



Soon I see curious eyes and shapes in the darkness. It's the cows who come to inspect the fire. After a while, they leave but I still hear them rustling around in the bushes. I decide to leave my little bubble of light and take a walk in the darkness. As I walk further from the fire I realise how the little island of light is bright and visible to everyone outside instead of being isolated from the rest of the world.

I stumble around in the darkness for some time. The only light on the island is my campfire but looking out to the sea and mainland there are many lights. The wind turbines have two red dots, like eyes, glowing high up in the sky and the ferry runs with bright lights on. In some places, the sky glows marking denser human habitats. They all seem so distant. I return to my campsite and sit a bit longer in the light of the campfire thinking about all the creatures who stare at my little light. The fire slowly burns out and I go to sleep.

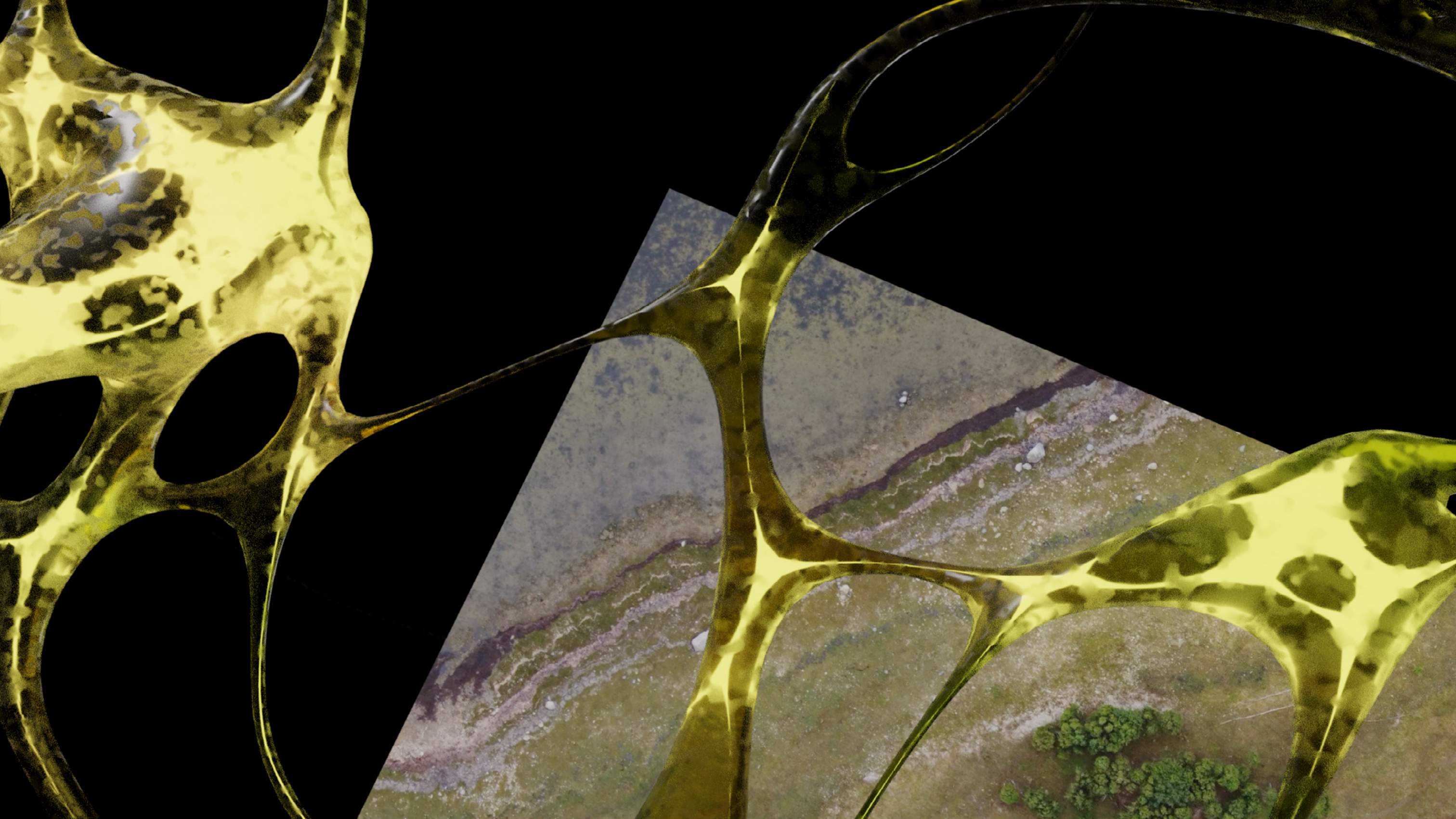
Island space is where humans are not the centre of the world anymore. The howling storm that takes the control out of our hands or the freezing ice water prevents us from going to the island. Forces of nature are more prominent on the island and make us feel small and less significant in a good way. Humans need to pay attention and get along with their surroundings as there's no safety in environ-

ments that we build and control. This type of letting go of control can evoke the feelings of the space having its own sentients. Something that has moods and decisions to make independent from us.

Leaving the Island

Going back from the island never feels as exciting as going there. It's a rather melancholic trip back through/over the sea, returning to the usual life. Stepping back on the mainland I felt like I had come out of a folk tale where the human accidentally wanders to the other world but the ending is abrupt and nonsensical. I am back in the bigger space and the connections to the surroundings feel more distant. I feel a loss of intimacy when leaving the small isolated space. I am returning home, biking 15 kilometres through the countryside. The feeling of strangeness is leaving me. This place is still my home and I have known it forever. The connections that I have to this land are still there and just as close as they were on the island. What helped me to feel the connections in a more intimate way was the lack of distractions from normal life and people.

I will try to return to the island but I don't know if I will be able to. Maybe there will be a storm, maybe the sea will be frozen. These things are not for me to decide and my connection to the place is dependent on aspects that are out of my control.



ARTWORK AND METHODS

I have chosen film as a method to explore the multi-perspective idea of Uuluti island. It's something that we interact with almost on a daily basis. The rectangular format and 25 frames per second have become the standard way we experience other places and stories. Most humans experience this world through vision and hearing therefore I want to explore how different perspectives and ways of being can be communicated through audio-visual artwork.

Another important aspect of a film is its ease of distribution. It doesn't have to be contained in a gallery space but can inhabit many places across the world in a digital format. Just as much as the island is borderless, so can be a digital film. It's important that the film is available to people because of the point of stories that they are told. The Uuluti island might be

a specific place, but the story itself is more universal and relevant for more people.

Methods of Filmmaking

The "Island of Multitude" is a film about Uuluti and the question of how the understanding of an island can shift when we think of it through the various inhabitants of the island. The tiny speck on the map is actually much more complex and fluid than we might think. It's a place filled with stories and entangled relations between living and non-living. The film observes the island through the various inhabitants of the place. The artwork asks a question — how is the world experienced by the island where time and space are not limited to one species' experience?

The film is not trying to most accurately represent how other beings experience

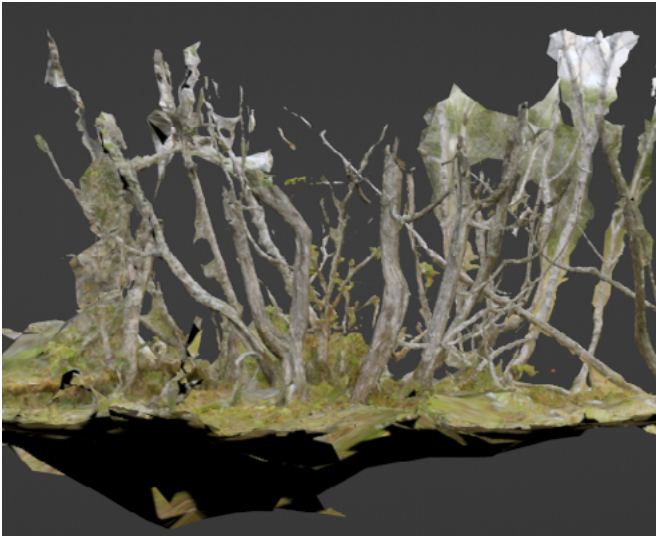
the world. Film is a fully human-centric method of storytelling and a more-than-human world does not require these stories. These narratives are necessary for humans who have lost the connection and understanding of themselves as part of the natural world.

In terms of methods of filmmaking, I approached the island from multiple perspectives as well. I used a drone to see the island from a position that I have not seen before but is so common for the seabirds that live there. How is it to see all the trails created by cows snaking across the island like veins? Or to observe the endlessly complex and shifting coastline? With a waterproof camera, I dove into the underwater world, peeking into the lives of the algae and stickleback. How is the line between sea and land seen from underwater? With a handheld camera, I walked the island and filmed the different aspects of it from the viewpoint of a human, cattle or a fox. What do we hear when we rush through the reeds only surrounded by the dried-out plants and grey skies above?

I approached the island without a strict narrative in mind about how the final film should be. Instead of looking for a story to capture, I tried to experience and collect what I could find in space at that moment in time and later look at what sort of connections are forming in the collected

material. I filmed what felt to me like a relevant and meaningful representation of how the island is experienced by the various inhabitants. Of course these choices of what and where to film were made by me, through my human experiences but from the very beginning I knew that I am making this artwork for humans. The rest of the inhabitants of the island or even Earth are not in the need of these new narratives.

Besides the filmed footage I created 3D models of various objects found on the island using photogrammetry with the AliceVision developed programme Meshroom "Photogrammetry is the science of making measurements from photographs. It infers the geometry of a scene from



Photogrammetry of a dead junipers

a set of unordered photographs or videos. Photography is the projection of a 3D scene onto a 2D plane, losing depth information. The goal of photogrammetry is to reverse this process" (AliceVision). The loss of this depth dimension is something important to consider when taking photos or filming. No means of technology is able to capture our world perfectly but photogrammetry gives you more data to work with and narrate the story you want to tell.

When working on the film I had very different experiences of the island depending on the place and context I was in. The first time I went to the island with this project in mind was in the summer of 2022. I was spending most of my summer in Estonia and often took the opportunity to go to the island or the area around it. In autumn I moved back to Vienna. While being there and reflecting back on the island through my memories

and filmed footage it seemed like the format of a film made a lot of sense. I started to form a narrative that I could tell through the film. I was thinking of the island in terms of these "clips", memories and thoughts that were not necessarily connected with each other. I progressed with the film and edited these clips together until I went back to Estonia again to record sound for the film. Being back there I had quite a different experience of the island - one that was much more embodied compared to sitting behind a table in a warm room in a big city. Going to the island in the middle of Estonian winter meant experiencing the world more intensely through my body and less through the metaphors and ideas in my head. It entailed biking 30 kilometres on icy roads, enduring the relentless wind, slipping on algae-covered rock and falling into the sea face first. All this discomfort and close relation with the bodily feelings made me doubt my ideas of film that felt extremely disconnected from these experiences. I struggled with working on the film as long as I stayed in Estonia and close to the island.

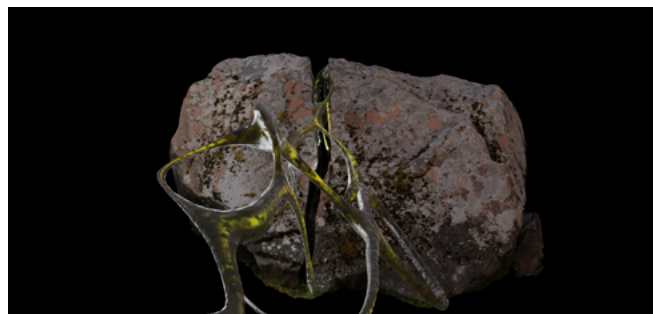
Once I was back in Vienna, 1200 kilometres from the island, the format of a film started to make some sense again. The island became a place that is existing in my head as memories and it connects more with mental images rather than physical experiences. The distance and

time translated the experiences into something more conceptual and visually driven. I started to look at the clips that I had collected with a different approach. I came to terms with the fact that the film materials are only limited depictions of the island. The shots are chosen by me showing a fleeting moment in time. The frame cuts the image into a neat rectangle that does not care about the connections that continue outside of the frame. Instead of trying to counter the limitations of showing the entangled world, I decided to try to take the constraints, embrace them and through that make the connections even more visible.

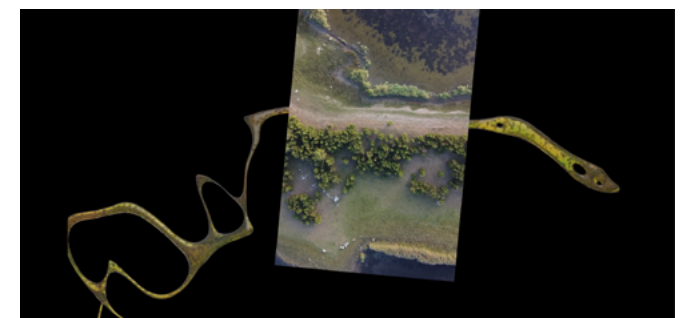
In my rethought approach I am taking the film frames and looking at them as individual entities and their relationships rather than a flow of shots that creates a narrative. I place the clips in a three-dimensional space and let interactions form between them as objects. With a combination of different media, video and 3D models, there's more space for experimentation. The 3D-modelled world is multifaceted and open for change and interactions with its surroundings. The end result of 3D scans is a digital object that is observable from any position and can be brought to life in a digital environment. This creates more possibilities for storytelling and conveying the experiences not captured by the camera. The 3D recreations of the objects on the island are not

bound to the way we see with our eyes but can be used to create a more mysterious and feeling-based world. I want this world, which is portrayed in the film, to be open for new types of narratives and possibilities just as the Estonian folktales were full of magical entities and happenings. Being immersed in a world where anything can happen leaves open the possibility to also rethink the ways we approach the world outside of the film.

The web of connections in the ecosystem are endlessly complex and a big part of it is not visible to human eyes. Using 3D animation leaves more creative freedom to visualise the relationships that are not always so clear in the environment and highlight them. This technology in turn comes with its own limitations and never gives the full image of the place but still a limited representation. Although a bit more varied and open for different views than the classic film clip.



Shot from the film "Island of Multitude" showing the combination of photogrammetry and 3D



Shot from the film "Island of Multitude" showing the combination of filmed footage with 3D animation

More-than-human filmmaking

As I wrote at the beginning of the thesis, humans like to tell stories about themselves. Most films focus on the human subject even if the topic at the first glance is not about humans, for example, nature documentaries. They often tell stories through the distorting lens of humans and it doesn't necessarily need to be a problem as long as we recognise that these depictions are often anthropomorphising the more-than-human world or rather than trying to understand the complexity of the world merely acts as an observer through the human gaze.

We can still find interesting examples of motion pictures that are dealing with the more-than-human world. With the following look into some of the films I don't intend to cover the whole motion picture history of the given topic but rather look into some examples that have inspired and influenced my thoughts and work.

Even from the earliest motion pictures we can find some interesting examples. Starting with Eadweard Muybridge's "Horse in Motion" from 1878 and French scientist Étienne-Jules Marey's studies of the flight of birds and insects (Braun 1992, 45). The original purpose of these image sequences was to observe the motion of animals and gain a deeper understanding of their behaviour and bodily

experience through the use of technology. These films were created with scientific goals in mind in hopes of learning more about the world around us, therefore they lacked any narrative and were perhaps very purpose driven. In following years came the 1895 movie "Rough Sea at Dover" by Brit Acres which had a different purpose as it was publicly screened for entertainment. Despite its shortness and seemingly mundane subject, it was one of the most popular early British films (Brooke, n.d.). The film lacked any narrative and therefore feels purely like an observation of record without the presence or intervention from humans.

One of the most fascinating filmmakers from the early 20th century was the French scientist Jean Painlevé (whose later films were made in collaboration



Jean Painlevé's 1928 film "The Octopus"

with Geneviève Hamon). He got an education in biology and was involved with surrealists, his work was finding a niche between scientific and artistic work. His works were certainly anthropomorphising the natural world but at the same time it wasn't classical nature film that was observing the other-than-human from a distance. It was something much more entangled with the creatures in the centre of the stage telling the stories through which the viewer could connect and relate (Cahill 2019).

When working on this artistic work the important influence for me has been the ideas of ecocinema. "The job of an ecocinema is to provide new kinds of film experience that demonstrate an alternative to conventional media-spectatorship and help to nurture a more environmentally progressive mindset," (Rust, Monani, and Cubitt 2013, 20) written by Scott Macdonald who coined the term "ecocinema". I don't want to make a nature documentary about Uuluti. I feel like a classic nature documentary is drawing strong divisions between the observer and the one being observed. My goal is to create a film where these roles are interchangeable and lack this hierarchical structure. Instead of creating a strict narrative following a linear storyline, I am more interested in the possibility of showing the perception of the inhabitants of the island and their intertwined relationships.

When thinking of going beyond the film frame, the work that was on my mind was Stan Brakhage's "Mothlight". It's a film that leaves the camera behind and works directly with the bodies of the insects, flowers and leaves on the film strip. This way there's nothing beyond the frame as everything is contained and directly projected on the screen. (Hoberman, 2012). This way the intermediation from the translation to the film is left out.

In terms of storytelling, one great example is the documentary "Leviathan" by Lucien Castaing Taylor and Véréna Paravel from 2012. Even though the film takes place on the fishing ship and is centred around the fishermen's lives the film feels to be more about the sea and its power over people. The way the story emerges from another story is a great way of telling a story of something so different from humans like the sea is.

"Animals" - (Jonas Priestestersbach, 2019) is a film about animals that we never see. Throughout the whole movie, no living animal is seen but we rather observe the humans who interact with the ideas of humans from the furries to hall full of people imitating bird sounds. It becomes this twisted documentary where the humans come under the gaze of humans observing themselves as if they were the other.

When working with special effects and video editing I think finding the right rhythm and pacing is crucial for telling a non-narrative story. It's sort of like assembling music and a great example of this is the Irish video artist Kevin Mcgloughlin. His works are technically fascinating and flawlessly executed when it comes to pacing and keeping the viewer's attention. I find his ways of finding

shapes and patterns in his surroundings brilliant for example in the short film "Epoch". His works break what is expected from classic film and blend the categories between animation and live-action film.



Shot from the film "Island of Multitude" showing the 3D animation

STORY OF MULTITUDE

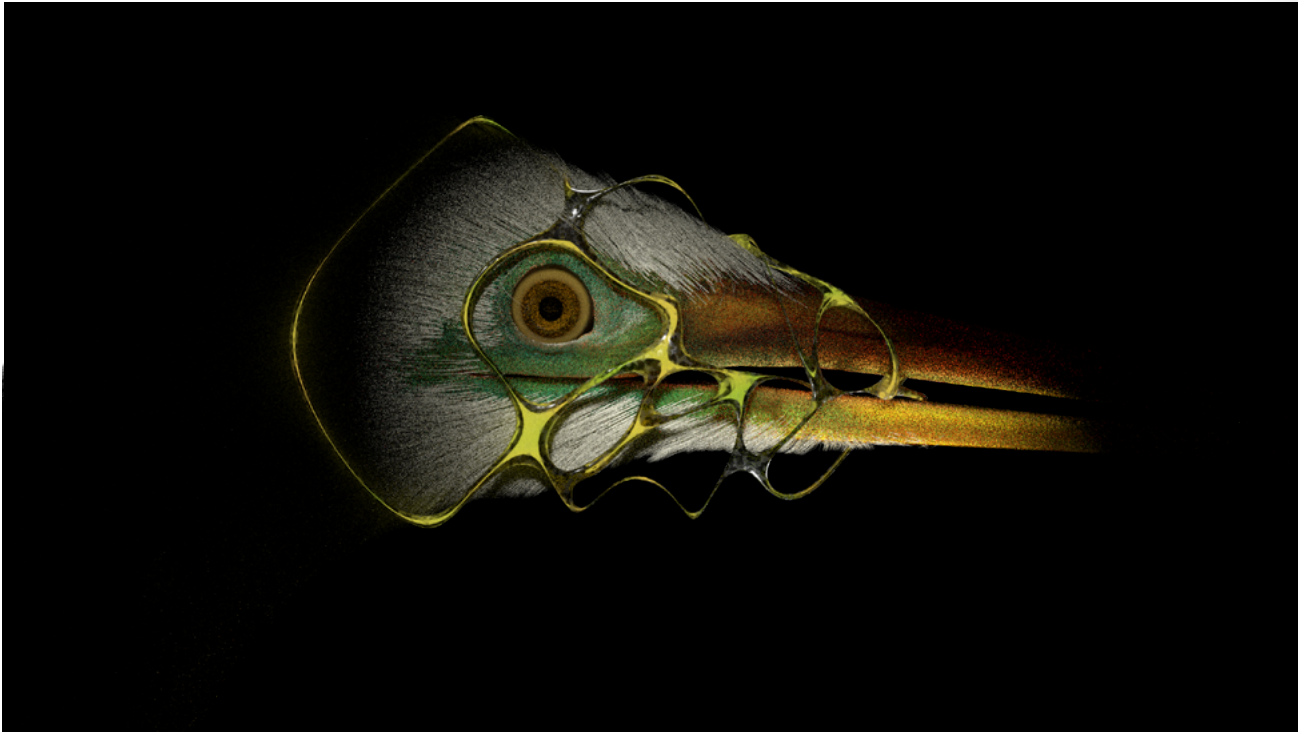
With the story of Uuluti I try to encourage seeing people's own surroundings not only through the other species that inhabit it but as a whole connected system and think about what kind of role they play in it. To start changing our thought patterns a personal island is not required. I am lucky to have the opportunity to experience Uuluti and to have such personal connections to it but it's possible to find your own little island. It can be a place that you know well already or maybe a place that you have never visited before. Maybe it's just a place in your memory. Wherever it is, imagine the beings that inhabit it. How is this space for them? What kind of relationships do these beings have with each other? What kind of role do you play in it? There are endless questions that can be asked about the space and its inhabitants. It's not important what these questions

are exactly but to focus on the answers and the connections between them.

With the first step of having these personal connections and thoughts, I think it's easier to care for the whole ecosphere. This way we go back to the original meaning of the word "eco" — the ancient Greek *oikos* meaning house or home. By extending our home outside our house we break the division that contributes to the damage that we inflict on the planet. We are living in the middle of a climate crisis and mass extinction. It's no wonder that so many stories are calling out for radical change and are in a constant state of fighting for change. In the middle of all this, it's important to also tell stories that are not only in the state of fighting but more casual stories that portray the world that we want to live in and not only the world in the middle

of turmoil. Other than imagining the apocalypse and the desperate methods to save us from it we could think of worlds that are positive and functioning.

In the end, the stories don't start from nothing. There was already an existing world and understanding but a new one can be born. Maybe the folk tale about the creation of the world wasn't so nonsensical after all and the point was exactly the following: we don't need to wait for the world to end to start a new one.



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