





UNDER FOREST COVER | METSANPEITON ALLA

Five channel sound, single channel film hologram, birch tree trunks
20 mins (looped), 2021

Live performance (voice and movement), 20 mins, 2021

Commissioned for Helsinki Biennial, Hanna Tuulikki explores the Finnish folkloric concept of being caught in *metsänpeitto* (forest cover), an enchanted forest landscape where places become unfamiliar and everything moves in reverse. Traditionally used to describe when people went missing in the forest, *metsänpeitto* is used by Hanna Tuulikki as a contemporary metaphor for the emotional trauma that comes with ecological awareness. We like to think of Finnish forests – heavily entwined with ideas of national identity – as rich ecosystems, or mystical, untouched wilderness. However, in reality, most forests are monoculture plantations exploited by industry.

The installation consists of silver birch tree trunks, surround sound audio, and a digital choreography. The sound features a vocal improvisation based on traditional cow calling songs recorded on Hanna Tuulikki's now derelict family farm in North Savo, in Eastern Finland. In the distance, emerging from sonic interference, a voice can be heard calling in Finnish: "Come back! Come back home! Come!" Projected as a hologram, a disembodied apparition appears slowly, limb by limb, crawling and searching in the dark. Hovering in reverse and out of time, repetitive glitching gestures recall the folkloric instructions said to help the one lost in forest cover find their way. In a backwards English incantation, she sings a song of sorrows to the birch, her grief obscured by language.

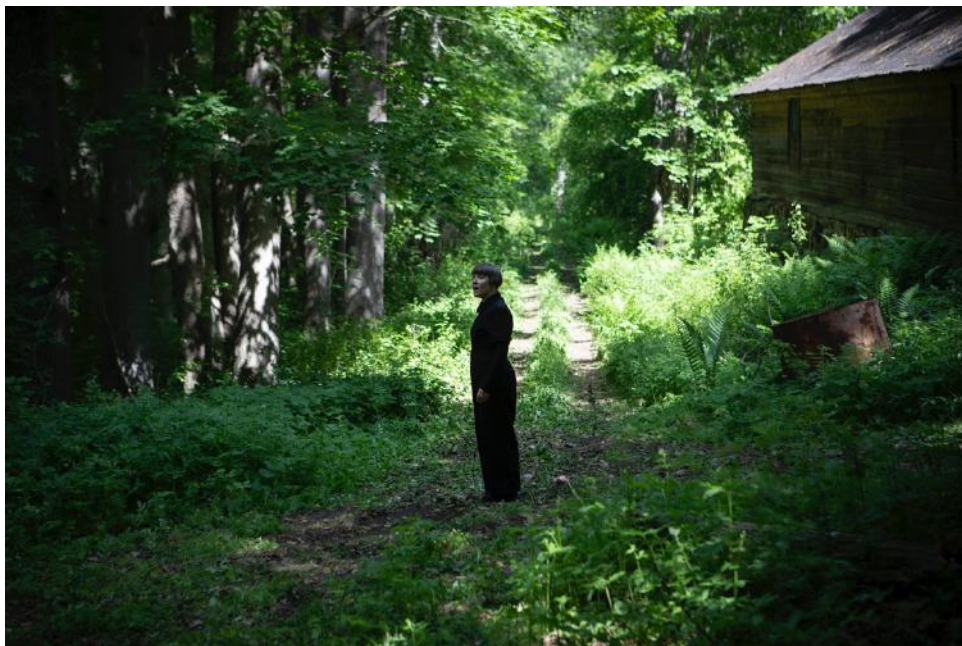
In this weird exploration of dark ecology, the body becomes a tangled map of damaged earth, nationhood and memory. And now, as we attempt to navigate the woods of a global pandemic, the work begins to take on strange new meaning. Hanna Tuulikki suggests that before we can begin to feel our way out of it, we first have to recognize the deceptive appearance of *metsänpeitto*.

Link to film (PREVIEW to un-mastered stereo version):

<https://vimeo.com/542159720/a390f3e3be>

Link to film documentation of installation:

<https://vimeo.com/608954714/d2e4755b1c>



"Hanna Tuulikki succeeds in building an entire magical world in a small exhibition space using a few simple gestures. *Metsänpeiton Alla / Under Forest Cover* (2021) takes place in a birch tree grove with an 'auditorium' that accommodates a small audience. This intimate work is an impressive combination of contemporary dance, folk song and cow calling songs. In the performance, a human transforms into a magical animal with legs and hands flashing through the landscape as a digital interference image." - Sini Mononen, Helsingin Sanomat

Drawing on the themes in the installation, the site-specific performances took the audience on a physical and metaphorical journey into-and-out-of metsänpeitto (forest cover), guided by the sound of a far-away voice animating the Vallisaari woodland with echoes of traditional herding songs, bird vocalisations, and a backwards song of sorrows. In the folklore, there are a series of gestures and actions that will help the one lost in forest cover find their way out. One of these is to look between your legs, and so we invited the audience to begin to shift perspective...

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Detail from *Under Forest Cover* Mirror Text Song Lyrics

UNDER FOREST COVER

Exhibition history:

2021 Helsinki Biennial

Performance history:

2021 Helsinki Biennial

Visual score history:

2021 Castle Mills Contemporary, Edinburgh Printmakers

Radio:

2021 BBC World Service

Installation Credits:

Choreography performed by Hanna Tuulikki

Dramaturgy and movement direction by Peter McMaster

Costume by Caroline Dear & Meg Miller

Cinematography by Andrew Begg Edited by Hanna Tuulikki

On set wardrobe management by Lydia Honeybone

Vocal improvisation performed by Hanna Tuulikki

Location sound recorded by Pete Smith

Backwards song composed & recorded by Hanna Tuulikki

Sound mixed by Hanna Tuulikki Surround sound mixed by Pete Smith

Installation design by James Boyer Smith

Directed by Hanna Tuulikki

Performance Credits:

Devised by Hanna Tuulikki and Peter McMaster

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Commissioned by Helsinki Biennial 2021