

MEMORIAL FOR THE LOST

HILLSIDE PROJECTS



APRIL 12 – JULY 3, 2021

CONVERSATION WITH HILLSIDE PROJECTS (EMILY BERRY MENNERDAHL + JONAS BÖTTERN)

SF: The planning for your solo show with the title *Memorial for the Lost* started already in 2019. Since then, we found ourselves suddenly in a pandemic, that is still ongoing, that only a few imagined that this could and would happen – sooner or later. This particular situation is making your exhibition, in my eyes, even more relevant than it already has been before, by addressing our distorted relations towards the planet we live on and their creatures – something that seems to be a general focus of your work over the last years.

Has this focus always been a center of your artistic work?

HP: Since we started our collaboration nearly ten years ago, we have always been interested in the relationships between specific places, its habitants and its history as well as what you refer to as *our distorted relations towards the planet*. This has taken its form in explorations into how we aspire to re-organize nature based on our needs and ideas of what we want it to be, the disappearance of species as well the hierarchies in nature between humans and more than humans. – We aim to talk with and not about. To listen to places, plants and all more than humans and broaden our perspective. We set out to do this in a playful manner through experiments, performance, and interac-

Hope (2021), textile installation, installation view *PASSAGE*, Bonn (2021)



tions, thus embracing both the tragic and comedic in our subject matter.

SF: The video *Searching for The European Roller* was the first of your works I came across, presenting it at DAS ESSZIMMER in a collaborative exchange with ID:I Galleri, Stockholm/SE. What struck me, was your use of visual aesthetics connected to natural science as we know it from various TV formats, using it as a vehicle for a different narrative. – Something that is also present in your most recent video *Reading, to Kins* (2021), that was produced at the ornithological Archive of the Research Museum Koenig in Bonn/GER and that was part as well as an extension of your solo show *Memorial for the Lost* at DAS ESSZIMMER. – What is the attraction/function of this peculiar aesthetics and settings within your work approach?

HP: Our working methodology from research to creation to presentation embraces a process that is present in educa-

tional tools and aesthetics. In the initial stages of a project, we collect and assemble information and, in an attempt, to comprehend and make sense of our research we work with lists and mind-maps, flow charts and collectively share a writing process between us. We also play with these tools and formats in order to create a different narrative with an alternative approach to our subject matter, approaching it through emotions, and varying angles. To encounter the stories that are sometimes hidden below the surface, the ones that perhaps do not seem to be the obvious stories or the most important ones. Also, to play with how these stories in turn can be presented and given importance through their presentation. We are also interested in exploring our different roles within our collaboration and can play with our *characters* in our performances and presentations. How does a character change/evolve through their presentation and how does this affect what is being told? These are the sort of things we think about.

Remorse (2021), textile installation, installation view *PASSAGE*, Bonn (2021)



SF: The video of the exhibition, presented in the back space, is something like the center piece of your solo show to what also the textile wall hangings in the front space are connected to, unfolding this connection only after one has seen the video. The video itself has an oral narrative, giving the last individual of a species a voice, while showing poetic and mystic visuals of a forest. Can you tell a bit more about the video, what it shows or better not shows?



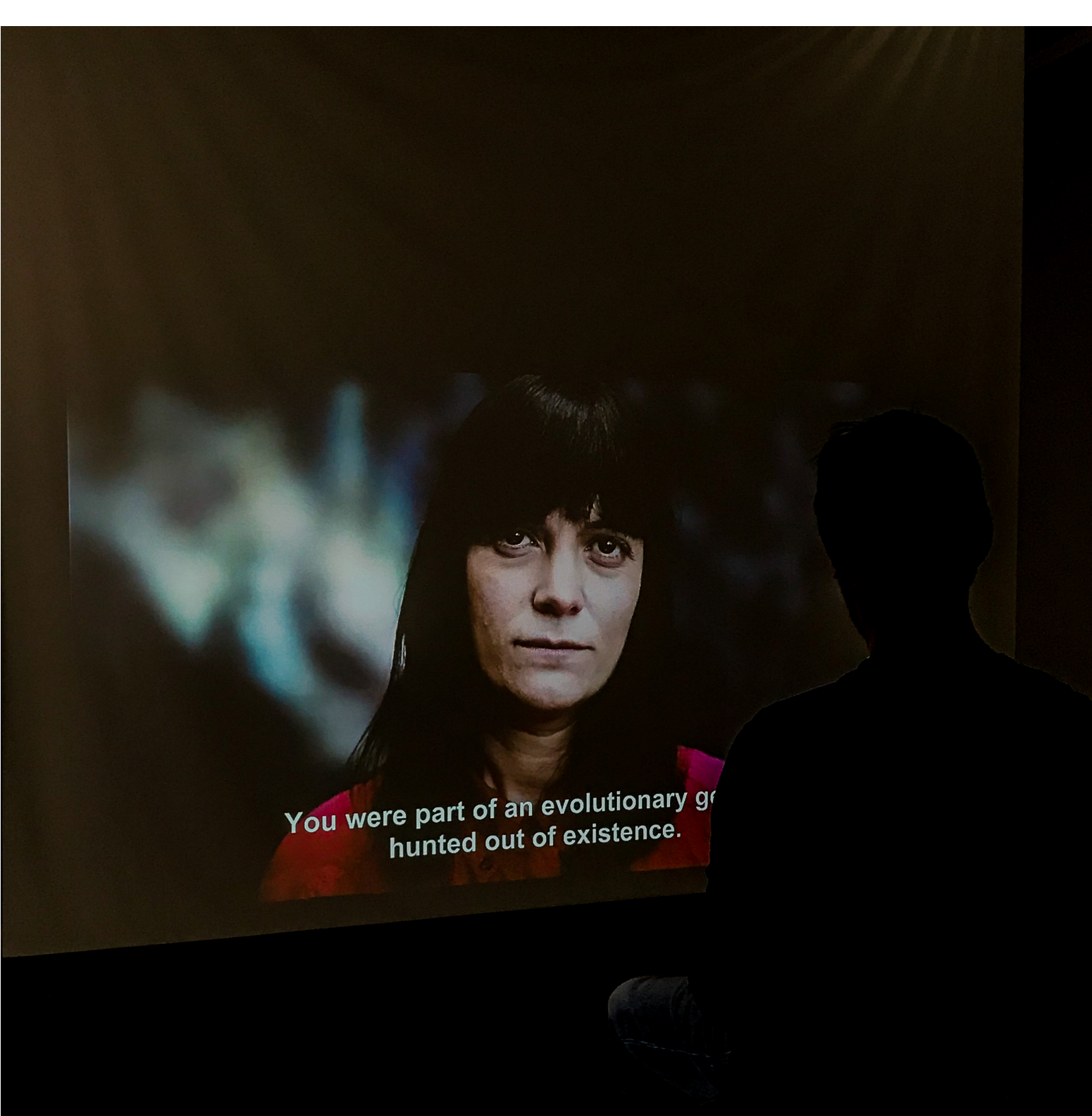
HP: *Memorial for the Lost* is a performance set in a forest landscape. It is an act, a gesture, a performance that is manifested through a video work where also text and sound play an integral part. The audience is the place in itself i.e. the ground, the trees, the more than humans perhaps present or not and so on. It is the second part in a trilogy on extinction, the first part being a work called *Again and Again We Ask These Questions* (2019), also a performance to *no audience* manifested as a video work. At the core of *Memorial for the Lost* are six pairs of poles mounted with fabric and assembled in a triangular shape and installed in a forest landscape. Each fabric construction represents the last individual of a species before extinction, also referred to as *endlings*. Printed on the fabrics are microscopic blown up images of the skin and patterns of these last individuals collected from found photographs and other images. The same fabric constructions are then installed in the gallery space as seen in *DAS ESSZIMMER* in the new form as textile wall hangings thus continuing to embody the lost.



Our intention with this work was to approach the notion of extinction through an act of mourning, and with the hope of finding new ways to navigate in a world where things are rapidly disappearing, to re-learn in order to change. We found the concept of endings very fascinating, what does it entail when something is the last of a species? Text and sound are also important elements in this work. The sound is that of *singing bowls*. Singing bowls are often used in alternative healing practices where the vibrations/sounds of playing the bowls connect to different parts of the body. Large parts of the sound in the video were recorded in India during a singing bowl session where bowls were placed and played around the body. The narrative in the video is narrated by a female voice and unravels fragments and stories around the lives of the six endlings whilst also presenting a rather dystopian view on the future. It is important for us to always explore different perspectives and counterpoles i.e. the tragic/humour, hope/the dystopian, the cynical/the remorseful and this is something that runs throughout our trilogy on extinction.



stills: *Reading to Kins* (2021), Video Performance in the ornithological Collection of Museum Koenig, Bonn/GER



exhibition view: *Memorial for the Lost* (2020), single channel Video Installation, still image



Memorial for the Lost (2020), single channel video, video still



SF: You mention the textile wall hangings in the front exhibition space, depicting small enlarged parts of the 6 endings you refer to in the video *Memorial for the Lost*. They all come with a textile border of different colors. Was that just an aesthetic choice?

HP: The textile borders are a reference to *begravningsband*. In Sweden, during a funeral it is common to place a long piece of fabric, often in a silky material in different colours, on the casket or accompanying the flower arrangements, and sometimes it also includes a last message to the deceased. Jonas' mother, who has made clothes and worked with textiles as a hobby throughout her entire life, made these for us. We wanted to create a framing and a new context for the fabrics that had been part of the performance in the forest. If you look closely you can see stains and holes in the fabrics, traces from the performance, but now contained and held together by the textile borders in different colours.

SF: Can you already say something about the 3rd part your trilogy of extinction you mentioned earlier?

HP: The third part will look at the extinctions we do not necessarily mourn such as children's diseases, parasites, mosquitoes, the dull-looking. It won't necessarily be manifested as a video work but perhaps a kid's clothing collection. We shall see. We are interested in looking at the notion of extinction from different angles.

SF: Our exhibition project with you was also part of an ongoing collaboration with SEA Foundation in Tilburg/NL, where you stayed for a short residency, developing an exhibition or rather individual performance there under COVID-19 restrictions...

HP: Yes, this is correct. Unfortunately due to the current situation in the world only one of us (Böttern) could take part in the residency. It was focused time to elaborate on a project that was initiated whilst in Mumbai/IND in 2020. It also provided us with the opportunity to try out a new performance one on one with the viewer which as a result of COVID restrictions. It pushed us to re-think our ideas and intentions and find new ways.

exhibition view: textile wall installation



SF: As part of your solo show at DAS ESSZIMMER we got in contact with the Natural History and Research Museum Alexander Koenig here in Bonn/GER, where you could produce a new video work, then screened as a premier on our YouTube channel. This work seems to be a direct reaction towards the current pandemic...

HP: Both yes and no. The performance at Museum Alexander Koenig (which took its form as a video work: *Reading to Kins*) is a continuation on the work initiated in Mumbai/IND early 2020 and which we then continued working on at SEA Foundation in Tilburg/NL. The project centres around the situation of the Indian vulture. In the last few years the vulture population in India has declined by 97% due to Diclofenac poisoning. Diclofenac is a painkiller given to cattle in order for them to work harder and longer which in turn poisons the vultures. Through the history of

the vulture this work touches upon the political situation in India and that of a failed symbiosis between humans and more than humans. It felt important for us to include the vultures in the conversation about their demise thus not only talking about but with the vultures.

Seeing that the COVID situation in India at that time (Spring 2021) was pretty awful and heartbreaking we chose a text by Arundhati Roy to inform the taxidermic Indian vultures at the museum about the ongoing on their land, India.

exhibition view: textile wall installations:



Hillside Projects hillsideprojects.se

Hillside Projects is an artist duo consisting of **Emily Berry Mennerdahl & Jonas**

Böttern. Their multidisciplinary practice is manifested as installations and performances including video, text, drawing and artist publications. Prompted by current events in and around nature, they apply methods of storytelling and performative actions in a desire to talk about the stories of and between humans and non-humans, as well as notions of hope and despair, remorse and guilt. Living in the sixth mass extinction, the on-going extinction event of species, mainly as an event of human activity, Hillside Projects attempt to relay the tragedies, comedies and stories of the natural world and its inhabitants.

Education (Berry Mennerdahl)

- 2017-18 The Photographic Artist Book, 60 university points, Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm/SE
- 2008-09 Independent Study Programme, Valand Academy of Arts, University of Gothenburg/SE
- 2009 Underwater photography. 30 University points, Gothenburg University
- 2005-08 MFA Studio Arts, Concordia University, Montreal/CA
- 2001-04 BA (Hons) Photography. 1st class honors. Manchester School of Art, Manchester/UK

Education (Böttern)

- 2019-20 Public Art, Social Dimensions, Ecologies and Changes, 30 hp, Konstfack, Stockholm/SE
- 2013-16 MFA Fine Arts, Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design

Artist Residencies:

- 2021 SEA Foundation, Tilburg/NL (Böttern)
- 2020 Clark House Initiative, Mumbai/IND
- 2019 Sfakiotes Artist Residency, Greece/GR
- 2012 TCG Nordica AIR, Kunming, China/CN
Rhizome – Lijiang Art Centre, Lijiang, China/CN
- 2009 TCG Nordica AIR, Kunming, China/CN (Böttern)
- 2009 Banff Centre for the Arts/CA (Mennerdahl)

Grants:

- 2020 Emil Bergs fond, Konstakademin (The Royal Academy of Fine Arts Stockholm/SE), Böttern
- 2020 Emil Borgs fond, Konstakademin (The Royal Academy of Fine Arts Stockholm/SE), Berry Mennerdahl
- 2020 IASPIS (Swedish Arts Grants Committee), international exchange and travel (Berry Mennerdahl)
- 2019 IASPIS (Swedish Arts Grants Committee), one-year working grant (Berry Mennerdahl)
- 2019 IASPIS (Swedish Arts Grants Committee), one-year working grant (Böttern)
- 2019 IASPIS (Swedish Arts Grants Committee), international exchange and travel (Böttern)
- 2019 Helge Ax:sson Johnsons Stiftelse (Böttern)
- 2019 Längmanska Kulturstiftelsen (Böttern)
- 2018 Helge Ax:sson Johnsons Stiftelse (Berry Mennerdahl)

- 2016 Main grant holder for Chancellors Grant at Konstfack, Stiftelsen Den Nordiska Första
St Johannislogens Jubelfond (Böttern)
- 2017 Ateljéstöd (grant for maintaining a studio for 3 years), Stockholm Stad (Berry Mennerdahl)
- 2017 Ateljéstöd (grant for maintaining a studio for 3 years), Stockholm Stad (Böttern)
- 2015 Ulla Fröberg Cramérs Stipendiestiftelse (Böttern)
- 2013 Ateljéstöd (grant for maintaining a studio for 3 years), Stockholm Stad (Berry Mennerdahl)
- 2013 IASPIS (Swedish Arts Grant Committee), international exchange and travel (Berry Mennerdahl)
- 2013 IASPIS (Swedish Arts Grant Committee), international exchange and travel (Böttern)
- 2013 Project grant, Lunds Kommun
- 2011 Helge Ax:sson Johnsons Stiftelse (Berry Mennerdahl)
- 2009 Helge Ax:sson Johnsons Stiftelse (Böttern)
- 2009 IASPIS (Swedish Arts Grants Committee) international exchange and travel (Berry Mennerdahl)

Solo exhibitions

- 2021 *Memorial for the Lost*, DAS ESSZIMMER – space for art+, Bonn/GER
- 2021 SEA Foundation, Tilburg/NL
- 2020 *Memorial for the Lost*, Clark House Initiative, Mumbai/IND
- 2019 *Why Did You Leave?*, Galleri 54, Gothenburg/SE
- 2017 *Searching for the European Roller*, Dazibao-images, exposition, éditions, Montréal/CA

Selected group exhibitions

- 2020 Rosalux, Berlin/GER
- 2020 Works on Paper; CASINOT XXH, Malmö/SE
Platforms Projects, Athens/GR (postponed until 2021)
- 2019 Biologiska Museets Vänner # Fåglar, Eric Ericssonshallen, Stockholm/SE
In Mid Air, Bångska Våningen, Stockholm/SE
Platforms Projects, Athens/GR
The Whole and its Parts, curated by Sibylle Feucht, Space 52, Athens/GR
Is This The End?, Galleri ID:I, Stockholm/SE
Stockholms Kulturmatt, Galleri ID:I
- 2018 Filmveckor, CrumHeaven, Stockholm/SE
Photography Books in Sweden Past Future, Institute Suedois, Paris/F
Landskrona Fotofestival, Landskrona/SE
PAB – Konstakademin, Stockholm/SE
Platforms Projects 2018, Athens/GR
- 2017 *Searching for the European Roller*, ID:I Galleri, Stockholm/SE
- 2016 NEU NOW Festival, Westergasfabriek, Amsterdam/NL
Fotografiets Ömsint Vårdande Blick, Centrum för Fotografi, Stockholm/SE
Northern Light Conference. Curated by Chris Goldie, Sheffield Hallam University/UK
Fotografiets Ömsint Vårdande Blick. Curated by Svante Larsson. Centrum för Fotografi/SE
One Minute Video, Art Rotterdam/NL

- 2014 Everthing Must Go ,Platform, Stockholm/SE
2013 Land/Sea/Sky, Chapel Gallery, Ormskirk, Liverpool/UK

Screenings:

- 2020 Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm/SE
2019 Bideodromo International experimental film and video festival, Bilbao/ES
FilmForm News at 65th International Short Film Festival Oberhausen/GER
32. Stuttgarter Filmwinter – Festival for Expanded Media/GER
Dåtid.Samtid. Nutid – Tensta Konsthall, Biografen Zita/SE
Tensta Konsthall 20 år; Tensta Konsthall/SE
2018 ID:I Galleri goes DAS ESSZIMMER – space for art+, Bonn/GER
2017 Alienationen, Two Change & ID:I Galleri, Stockholm/SE

The exhibition project was supported by:



and Helge Ax:son Johnsons stiftelse

Imprint:

Editor: Sibylle Feucht, **DAS ESSZIMMER** – space for art+
gUG (limited liability), Mechenstrasse 25, D-53129 Bonn/GER
www.dasesszimmer.com | 2021

Concept/Design: Sibylle Feucht

Front:

Exhibition view front space with 6 textile wall installations

Back:

Exhibition view of one textile wall installation



published by

 **DAS ESSZIMMER**
SPACE FOR ART+