ABENDLAND
(Hours, Years, Aeons)

A film by IC-98

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An animated short film by IC-98
(Patrik Söderlund & Visa Suonpää)

Written, Directed and Drawn by IC-98 (Patrik Söderlund & Visa Suonpää)
Animated by Markus Lepistö, assisted by Leo Liesvirta
Music composed, arranged and mixed by Max Savikangas

Year: 2015
Duration: 43 minutes
Color: B/W
Sound: musical score with no spoken dialogue
Aspect Ratio: 1:1 (square)

Synopsis

In a twilight world long after the age of Man, a twisted ecosystem centred around an overgrown fruit tree undergoes parasitic and geological transformations as hours, years and aeons pass.

Realised in Söderlund's and Suonpää's signature combination of traditional drawings and subtle digital effects, Abendland (Hours, Years, Aeons) is a poetic meditation on Anthropocene. It's a work about the containment of ecological disasters in general, and about repositories for spent nuclear fuel in particular (the case in point being Onkalo at Olkiluoto, Finland).

The highly metaphorical film is set in a mythologized, distant future devoid of humans but slave to their long-lasting influence as a dominant species. It reminds us of the long and sometimes circular passages of time, putting the anthropocentric view of history into a new perspective. Thus, the work as a whole demonstrates the circulation of pollutants, the mutations they cause, and a certain cultural amnesia about the distant future: something is buried and forgotten – but it never disappears completely.

Abendland (Hours, Years, Aeons) was first exhibited as a part of the site specific installation *Hours, Years, Aeons* at the Alvar Aalto Pavilion of Finland, the 56th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia, 2015.

IC-98 Online

IC-98 Website
www.socialtoolbox.com

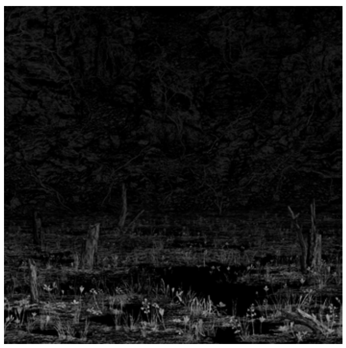
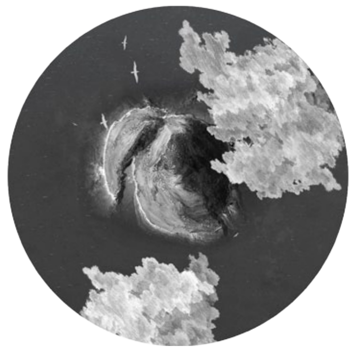
IC-98 on Vimeo
https://vimeo.com/ic98

IC-98 artist monography
http://issuu.com/framefinland/docs/ic98_hoursyearsaeons_1_

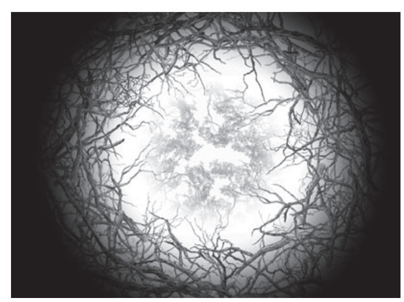
IC-98 Filmography

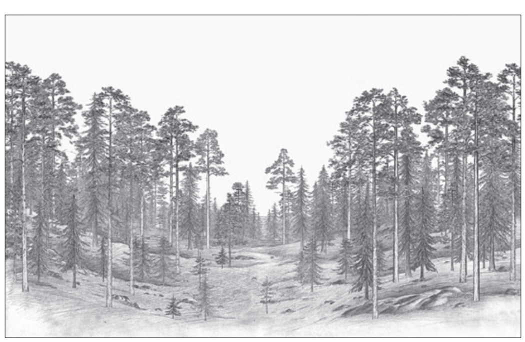
The following works have been shown as video installations in museums and galleries. All are animations combining pencil drawing and digital effects.

2015	Abendland (Hours, Years, Aeons), 43min, stereo sound
2014	Abendland (III: The Edge That Was Set), 16min, stereo sound
2013	Abendland (II: The Place That Was Promised), 16min, stereo sound
2013	Arkhipelagos (Navigating the Tides of Time), 20min, silent
2013	Arkhipelagos (Ebb), 10min, silent
2011	A View from the Other Side, 70min, stereo sound
2010	Theses on the Body Politic (Colony), 10:50min, silent
2009	Theses on the Body Politic (Riket), 14min, silent
2008	Theses on the Body Politic (Shadows), 45min, stereo sound
2008	Theses on the Body Politic (The Descent), 6:11min, stereo sound
2007	Theses on the Body Politic (Vicious Circles 1-3), 35:10/35:10/32:32 min, silent






Biographies

Directors, Screenwriters, Drawings:
IC-98 (Patrik Söderlund & Visa Suonpää)

IC-98 (originally Iconoclast, founded in 1998) is an artist duo comprising Visa Suonpää (b. 1968) and Patrik Söderlund (b. 1974). Their projects take the form of installations combining research, text, drawing and animation. IC-98 is best known for their animated film installations, which combine classical drawing and digital effects, often depicting landscapes shaped by interlaced forces of nature and technology, navigation and exploitation, climate and migration.

IC-98's intensely abstracted, readily identifiable visual language weaves myriad bridges between the material and mythical, the individual and the collective, nature and culture. Their work is rooted in investigations into the body politic, social formations, architectural constructions, different ecologies and the presence of human and natural history in everyday life. They often collaborate closely with other arts professionals such as poets, composers and architects.

IC-98 has exhibited extensively internationally. They represented Finland at the Venice Art Biennale 2015. IC-98's recent solo exhibitions include shows at Dundee Contemporary Arts, Scotland, and Helsinki Art Museum, Finland, and previous appearances in Conde Duque Madrid, Spain (2014), Beaconsfield, London UK (2014) and Turku Art Museum, Finland (2013). Their works have been presented in numerous group exhibitions, most recently at the Frankfurter Kunstverein, Germany (2014), Laboratorio Arte Alameda, Mexico City (2014), Quartair, Netherlands (2014), Moonshin Museum, South Korea (2014), Kiasma, Helsinki (2014), MAMba, Argentina (2012), Reykjavik Arts Festival (2012), KUMU Art Museum, Estonia (2012), Loft Project Etagi, St Petersburg (2011), IPCNY, New York (2011). IC-98 has also had solo art fair presentations at Moving the Image Art Fair, New York (2015), ARCOmadrid (2014), Volta, New York (2013) and Volta, Basel (2012). Works by IC-98 are found in numerous private and public collections in the Nordic countries. IC-98's prize-winning self-publishing initiative, Iconoclast Publications, has brought out 16 publications to date.

Currently IC-98 is in the pre-production phase of their first live action feature film due to be released in 2017. The Kingdom of Birds follows the sole survivor of an undefined ecological apocalypse as he lives through his last day on earth. The film is loosely based on the highly controversial oeuvre of Finnish deep ecologist, ornithologist and fisherman Pentti Linkola, whose life and thought can be summed in the paradox: "How can a person reconsile his hatred of humankind with his love of human beings."

Animator:
Markus Lepistö

Markus Lepistö (b. 1982) is an animator, motion graphics specialist, video and image editor, 3d artist and illustrator. He has BA in Digital Arts from Turku Polutechnic (2008) and is currently pursuing his MA at Helsinki Aalto University (Media Lab, New Media). He's been animator for IC-98 since 2008, making important contributions to the development of IC-98's visual style. Currently Lepistö works on his directorial debut under the supervision of IC-98: Nekropolis, a large scale interactive animation installation will be premiered at Röda Sten Art Hall, Gothenburg, Sweden, in February 2016.

Composer:
Max Savikangas

Composer Max Savikangas (b. 1969, Finland) started playing the violin at the age of 6 and the piano at the age of 9, concentrating later on the darker and larger viola. He received his MMus degree from the Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, after extensive studies in composition, viola performance, music theory and electroacoustic music, including additional studies with Finnish and international masters. In 1993–1994 Max Savikangas studied composition for one year with the renowned Swedish composer Anders Eliasson (1947–2013), who remains his most influential teacher and mentor.

Max Savikangas is internationally recognized as a prominent composer, especially for his own instrument Viola. Compositions by him have been premiered—and most importantly performed again—extensively in Finland, and over the last decade his music has gained growing international attention, having been performed by top orchestras and ensembles and presented at important festivals in five continents (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Holland, Ireland, Belgium, Italy, Slovenia, Hungary, Poland, Switzerland, Austria, Russia, USA, Canada, Australia, South Africa and Brazil).

After composing 102 varied works of instrumental chamber music, orchestral music, vocal music, electroacoustic music and film music (and combinations of these) as well as premiering more than 100 works from the international repertoire, Max Savikangas writes: "I enjoy contemporary music with its constantly renewing challenges, improvising, listening to the world, experimenting with sounds—and composing. The seeds of my compositions often emerge as a result of (instru)mental improvisation and of savouring all kinds of sound events of the world."

Still Images 1/3

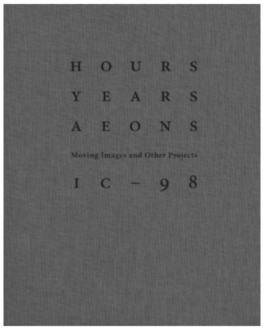
Still Images 2/3




Still Images 3/3

Installation view of *Hours, Years, Aeons* at the Finnish Aalto Pavilion at the Giardini, Venice Art Biennale 2015. Photo: Ugo Carmeni.

IC-98: Hours, Years, Aeons – Moving Images and Other Projects 1998–2015



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Published on the occasion of the 56 International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia in 2015, the artist monograph Hours, Years, Aeons – Moving Images and Other Projects 1998–2015 maps out the practice of artist duo IC-98 over the past two decades. The introduction by Curator Taru Elfving serves as a bridge to their site-specific work in Venice, followed by an essay by Professor Jukka Sihvonen, which guides readers through the conceptual labyrinth formed by their earlier works. A comprehensive selection of IC-98's moving images, installations and publications is presented by the artists, while an interview by Critic Martin Herbert delves into the wealth of cross-disciplinary cultural references and research that inform their oeuvre.

The monograph is available online at Issuu:
http://issuu.com/framefinland/docs/ic98_hoursyearsaeons_1_)

The book can be ordered by mail from Frame Visual Art Finland at info@frame-finland.fi.

Excerpt
IC-98: Hours, Years, Aeons – Moving Images and Other Projects 1998–2015

Martin Herbert
Drawn into Tomorrow. In conversation with IC-98

For the last decade, IC-98 have been using pencil-drawn animation to create an expansive vision of the world, a vision characterised by strange new hybrids and an absence of people. Here, they discuss the influences on their work and its aims, post-human hopes, and well-founded fears.

Martin Herbert: How would you characterise the tone of your animations? On the one hand, there's an outwardly melancholy quality; on the other, an apparent acceptance of humanity as being just a temporary blip, a virus. Between those polarities, there's plenty of room left for the viewer's subjective attitude.

IC-98: Leaving space for the viewer's thoughts is important to us, and was one of our main ideas when we started making animations. Our earlier work, like the free-distribution booklet *Forays* (2005), had been characterized by political and theoretical themes, which were presented quite directly. That underwrote our use of text, too, although the books still demanded quite a lot of reader participation. They were loose, collage-like narratives, full of gaps to be parsed. With the animations, the idea was to try and convey the same narratives as in the books, while foregoing the written language and collage-like quality. The first animation was actually based on research meant for another booklet; we decided to try and use it within a seamless, metaphoric form, and *Vicious Circles 1* (2007) was the result.

This shift in practice had a lot to do with the depressing anti-Bush years, too. Those were strongly activist times, but at the same time this political polarization threatened the ambivalence and conscious obscurity that we think are important for art. We were also concerned with freedom of thought. The figure of the enemy started to control people's thinking, which was frightening, as always when a movement is primarily defined by the enemy: that is, you are active, but always reacting. We felt that we needed to take the control back, even if it meant leaving Marxism behind.

So the non-directive is political?

The ideas and basic assumptions that informed the beginning of our collaboration are still there, coded into the texture of our animations. But we don't force the ideas. You can watch the films and appreciate the images and atmosphere without knowing much about the ideas behind the narratives. Then again, the films are carefully scripted; we see them as much as texts as moving images. If we cannot explain some nice visual element in the context of the work, we omit it.

A cynic, or a strategist, might say that we create a beautiful surface to lure people in, to be able to convey the actual message. But well-thought-out content and a carefully executed surface do not exclude each other. On the contrary, we try to communicate on two levels: reason and language, and feelings and passions. Leaving the narrative open – or using familiar symbols: landscape, clouds, water, light and darkness – is paramount. For us art is the primary production of political thinking. We construct a space of thought, which might create seeds or ideas for political action by other people better suited to the task. In this sense, the Finnish tax office has made the best definition of art by putting artists and farmers in the same category in their system. This openness is risky, but worth it. You could say that a work operates perfectly when opposite factions of the political spectrum can find something in it and use it for their own advantage. This is what happened with Nietzsche's texts, too. Incidentally, it was he who said that an individual should always have the right to contradict him or herself.

But still, amid the ambivalence, the narratives you lay out definitely revolve around the end of mankind's time on the planet. With regard to 'creating seeds', is no position being espoused on that?

We are coming from a background of cultural pessimism, seeing culture from a critical and problem-oriented point of view. Our early work was more tool or solution-oriented (books and interventions) and thus could be described as being more activist. The animations distil the problematic tendencies in society into metaphorical narratives. But they could also be interpreted as optimistic, romantic and wistful depictions of time playing its part in everything. This is part of the openness: a technocrat might see the ending of *A View from the Other Side* (2011) as tragic, while from looking at and listening to the work it is quite evident that we see nature taking over as a beautiful thing. It's not a tragedy, not a fight, but an enlightened acceptance that everything has its time. It's a happiness for the other lifeforms, that they will have their turn.

In a way, we try to tell the stories objectively. Not coolly – there's a lot of emotion there, or at least we hope so – but from time's own point of view. It's not an anthropocentric perspective. Rather, it's seen, if not from the vantage point of eternity as we don't believe in transcendence, then at least in terms of geological time, centuries. That is one reason why people are not visible in the works, only their actions. Seen against long durations, the length of a human life is nothing.

In your work prior to *Abendland* (2013) there's typically an initial calm, a human-directed activity or interruption, then a calm again. The viewer comes to expect that, and it suggests inexorability.

It's definitely not intended as a didactic disaster scenario. But, of course, we choose our themes based on our interests and beliefs. In this sense, our early interest in Foucault, Deleuze & Guattari and Walter Benjamin shines through. In our work, we're not commenting on timeless human themes, but on the actions of European civilization during the last 500 years: colonialism, exploitation of both peoples and nature, use of power, large technological systems, architecture. One of the main drivers of this history in our view is capitalism, the constant need to gain more, extend control, create territories. But, again, with the animations this political aspect is much more hidden. It is seen mostly in the selection of the subject matter.

In your films, things frequently shift without the viewer noticing exactly when. At the same time, you compress long periods of time so that deep, sometimes fatal structural changes can be seen. Slowness is paramount, and also implicit in your mixture of pencil and digital animation.

Slowness is crucial, and also connected to openness. When things happen before your eyes, your mind has time to wander. But not in the way that it happens with boring stuff, when your mind wanders because you shut yourself off from the thing you are watching. This slowness is more akin to the idea of the viewer thinking with the work. The animation opens up a new space, which has its own rhythm. Adjust yourself to that rhythm, and it's not slow anymore, it just is what it is – time, temporal duration. This is the beauty of all long, slow works: vast and difficult novels, slow cinema, Wagnerian opera: you are able to root yourself in their world. We want, also, to avoid the Aristotelian mechanics of drama, to tell a story using the whole image frame, rather than just the central character or motif.

On the level of crafting the narrative, the idea of multi-rhythmic time is very important. Animation is perfect for this multi-exposure of different temporal rhythms in one image frame. Also, we always try not to use montage – all the changes happen in front of the viewer's eyes. Time is multi-rhythmic, and not deterministic; in this we were influenced very early on by Fernand Braudel's concept of *la longue durée*. In *A View from the Other Side* we tried to perfect this idea: a 70-minute loop without a single montage, combining the hours of the day, the seasons and the centuries into one story. When it's drawn, not filmed or CGI trying to imitate the real, it is possible to make all of it look and feel completely natural. We used the same apparatus in our earliest animations: there's a million-year sequence, water creating a ravine on a plateau, people building a dam, nature taking over, water drying up.

How did you decide on that pencil-animation format?

Hand drawing and digital effects correspond to the superimposition of the real and the imaginary. The drawing comes originally from the drawings we made for our publications. Back then, the drawings were already our quite metaphorical commentary on the collage-like material that we collected for the books. At some point, we thought it would help a lot to add a temporal dimension to them. Of course, single drawings, and paintings in history, have a duration of their own, but we needed more, to be able to show time passing, to depict some process of cause and effect. And we didn't want to make a cartoon or picture book. So this was already brewing when we decided to skip the next book and translate the research into an animation.

Presumably you'd both done quite a bit of drawing before, given the high level of drafting skill on display.

The pencil-drawn animations came about completely naturally. We were already making drawings; then we added duration. This is important: we still don't think of the animations *as* animations or even films, but as moving images. We just use the word 'animation' for the sake of convenience and to avoid using 'video', which is even less apt. So the first three animations were meant to look like moving drawings: we showed them on approximately A3-sized HD monitors. The background was left white. We didn't even clean the fingerprints off the digital copy. This is the reason why the first ones look more primitive than the later ones, if you do not see them installed properly. The scale is completely different. Quite soon afterwards, we took a slightly different direction. *Shadows* (2008–9) is still clearly consistent with the previous animations, taking its style from the romantic landscape tradition – not so much the Romantic in the Friedrichian sense, but rather scientific landscape illustration. This had to do with the subject matter, too – ownership of land etc.

A great thing about drawing, and the same can be said nowadays about CGI, is that you can visualise any kind of world you want. Drawing is the oldest way of creating worlds. However, drawing – and especially the quite realist drawing we are using – is also good for the thing we are trying to achieve: to superimpose the real and the imaginary, actual and virtual elements. This allows us to create something which is real enough, though still stylized – an independent world which operates regardless of the viewer's participation. Again, we don't use montage, which also means that the traditional cinematic rules don't apply: the viewer is not participating in the construction of the narrative from separate shots. Add to this large-format projection, no central characters, no movement-image in the Deleuzian sense, and an infinite loop, and you have a work that exists regardless of the viewer, like any real world.

It should also be stressed that we draw everything from models, from real life. Every individual element in the animations has its counterpart in reality, but the elements have then been combined as we please. Thus, on the level of formally composing the picture, the idea of juxtaposing real and imaginary processes in society and history finds its counterpart in the technique. For example, the plants growing in the garden of *Abendland* are species which only grow in places where the human footprint is non-existent.

Is the digital condition in any way part of the content?

Computers and software are just tools for us. We are not interested in doing anything about computers or the digital. As little as we are 'video artists', neither are we 'media artists' or 'digital artists'. Our collaboration brings together two very different traditions: on the one hand, home computing and early multimedia demonstrations on the Amiga 500, and, on the other, childhood and adolescence spent compulsively drawing, and later developed into classical draughtsmanship embracing Photoshop. It all comes quite naturally, finding the tools that we feel most comfortable using. So digital really is just a platform, the eighth art in the same way that avant-garde filmmakers were thinking about film as the seventh.

Having said that, we don't just use software to make a composition out of pencil-drawn bits and pieces to make it look like a drawing again – although the animations are composed of disconnected little details, the minimum that needs to be drawn. Digital effects add realism to the drawings: shadows, liquid and gaseous natural elements, and more traditional frame animations when they are needed, such as the movement of branches, animals. We have a strict policy of trying to use as simple effects as possible. The difficulty is that everything is possible in digital imaging nowadays. We try to compose the image using the kind of layering already used a couple of hundred years ago, in theatre and various optical attractions. These effects are more in line with the quality of drawing. Another thing is the striving for some kind of timeless quality. It would be nice if, later, it were difficult to say when the works were made – if you don't take into account the technological basis: the resolution, bit depth etc. The effects are part of our attempt to create another world.

In fact we haven't moved away from pencil drawing, at least not drastically. *Abendland* (2013–15) is pure pencil drawing with simple digital effects. It's just on a different scale than before: the original drawings are larger, which results in greater downscaling, which means sharper picture quality. I'd say that *Abendland* is the endpoint of this technique, which we have perfected with our long-time collaborator, digital artist and animator Markus Lepistö. We cannot develop it any further. This is why we are also moving towards actual cinema, but not leaving the animations behind.

You mention conflating the real world with an imagined one. Can you say a bit more about your intentions in that regard?

This superimposition happened already in our first project, in which we mapped the administration building of Turku University and added an extra, imaginary floor on the top. At that time, this may have been more intuitive, though. But we've since used this same tactic on multiple occasions. This is a method in which research and metaphorical fiction come together. And so do the real and the invented, since we always draw from models, never from our imaginations. On a more general or theoretical level it is a question of the virtual and the actual. We use real events and places, but add a virtual level – we like to talk about events that didn't take place, but which nevertheless happened and keep on existing as virtualities. In a historical sense, it's about realising that many paths were not taken. Another way of looking at it is via a tree metaphor. Looking from the present moment backwards, events often look deterministic – all other branches of the tree were cut off and only one path was taken. We want to see the whole tree with the ghost branches intact.

Thus, history teaches us that our reality is not the only possible one, that there were a multitude of unrealised possibilities. Realising this, the political aspect of the work, which at first glance might appear slightly historicist or anachronistic – old-school pencil drawing, slightly un-contemporary subject matter – becomes more apparent. We look at this virtual history and realise in our present moment that everything is possible, we can take any path from here. The future is unwritten, as The Clash said.

Aside from those you previously mentioned, what are some of the other textual/theoretical influences on your work?

If for us the world without people is an ethical question, it mostly comes from our engagement with the writings of the Finnish fisherman, ornithologist, eco-philosopher, and infamous eco-fundamentalist, Pentti Linkola. He was the first in Finland to point out the problems of overpopulation – a very unpopular discussion even today. Linkola's thesis is that the only way of saving the planet and keeping humanity alive at the same time is to create an eco-fascist society, the society of survival. We agree with Linkola's analysis, but not his conclusions. A life without freedom is not worth living. Here, paradoxically, Linkola's background in biology – and in being a human being – comes into play. He still thinks, based on his 'species-typical behaviour', that humanity should be saved. And to do this, we should enslave ourselves. Linkola's tragedy is that, while he hates humanity, he loves the human being. We are actually working on our first film installation about this theme and Linkola's character.

We have tried to let go of this survival instinct and to think about the world completely without human beings. Mostly this is because the other species should have a go. Human beings are conscious organisms capable of making this decision, to end it for all of us. However, the most important thing is the ethics of letting other species thrive.

In *Abendland,* nature has been restored to primacy, allowed to 'have a go', but it's a weird, warped and alienated nature, an unnerving one.

Our point in *Abendland* is to show a world without human beings, but where the long-term effects of humanity are still present. This is not a paradise, not a regained pastoral existence, but a toxic landscape. This is what it means to deal with the end results of the Anthropocene – before there is even a scientific consensus on whether it has started or not. The invention of nuclear fission, and the waste produced in the process, has changed everything. The old Cold War theme of nuclear holocaust doesn't feel so relevant today. It is not about some sudden catastrophe and its aftermath anymore. It's a much slower process, a whole different time-scale. We have been thinking a lot about nuclear waste, buried in the bedrock. In Finland they are constructing a deep geological repository called Onkalo [literal translation: "cavity"], an ostensible 'final solution' for storing spent nuclear fuel. In fact the work has its very concrete starting point there. In the engineering utopia, once Onkalo is full, the rock will be sealed, the processing facility on top dismantled, and a forest grown on the site. We wanted to comment on this, but in our own metaphorical way.

We were intrigued, first, by the idea of a future civilisation of humans or animals digging too deep, not knowing what they will find. That's a classic horror and sci-fi trope: something lies buried, deep asleep – and is awakened. At the same time, we were studying the ruins of Roman sepulchre chambers as illustrated by Piranesi.

We also found interesting the legend of the King in the Mountain, who will one day awaken and save the wasteland that is our miserable reality. So T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is relevant here, too. We thought these intertexts would work well in reverse: the walled garden with a fruit tree (as in the myth of the Garden of the Hesperides) becomes a contained, contaminated area, the mythical tree a monster sucking poison from below ground etc. In the end, the aim was to simplify all this into one set of strong images that would communicate on many levels. We wanted to show a landscape without humans, the new warped – as you said – or mutated landscape built on the toxic remains of human civilization.

I'd like to ask more about the sense, and the measurement, of time in your work. In *A View from the Other Side*, there's a survivalist phase in which the barbed wire goes up, the place becomes an encampment. How did you want the narrative to operate here, because it's complicated: time seems to move at several speeds at once. In *Arkhipelagos*, meanwhile, the survivors are trying to navigate in a world where only time and weather reign, as you have described it.

Actually, *Arkhipelagos* was envisioned as a sequel to *A View from the Other Side*. The geographical reference points, in this case, refer to the embanked river running past an architectural monument – that is: a world of tangible history, a history of geographies, territories, buildings, goods etc. There was a Benjaminian idea of the debris of history being washed out into an open sea. In the river, the flow of history is somehow regulated – or the events align themselves with this flow of causes and effects. In *A View from the Other Side* there are multiple temporal rhythms, but the river flows steadily. We thought the next (post-humanist) step would be sailing, or being washed through the delta to the sea, a space with no borders.

A sea power is very different from a territorial power on land, as Paul Virilio demonstrated. Virilio was speaking about 'a fleet in being', the potentiality of a fleet without an exact location. This distinction has similarities with Foucault's 'discipline' (physical) and 'control' (internalized). Theory aside, we wanted to talk about the end of history in this metaphorical sense. All the elements in *Arkhipelagos* – beside the sea itself – were taken from *A View from the Other Side*: flags, textiles, ropes, poles etc. In our imagination, whatever is sailing there behind the waves is all there is left of material civilization. Thus, only time is left, no space in a material sense.

We thought of this both new and ancient situation, of navigating, as a metaphor for society, too. The rafts float past each other in the fog. Only when the sky clears and reveals the stars do they all come together: this is the only moment at sea when you can locate yourself in the world. And this need to locate oneself is a shared interest. The idea of an archipelago is important too – and not only because there is an actual archipelago outside Turku. But the archipelago is not composed of islands and the sea routes between them. The seafarers are themselves the archipelago, ever changing. This continuous creation and disintegration of communities is very interesting to us; we called many of our works *Theses on the Body Politic*, and we still have one work about this same theme in store. It will be a folk opera, a kind of *singspiel* or a popular procession based on the reimagining of the tale of The Pied Piper of Hamelin.

And lastly, there is the ecological theme. Or, rather, the very theme of leaving our material civilization behind can be seen as being ecological. Obviously people see the deluge there, in that it matches talk about rising sea levels, but we have to admit that this question was the last one on our minds. The whole idea is that we cannot see behind the waves, maybe there are no survivors, only floating debris.

Do you see your works as different temporal points along the same line? (Such that *Arkhipelagos* would come before *Abendland?*) A different way of phrasing this might be: are you building up one big storyline (or partial storyline) here, or do you keep constructing different scenarios?

Yes, we see all these works as taking place in the same universe. Sometimes they follow each other, sometimes they are different scenarios. *Navigating the Tides of Time* follows *A View from the Other Side,* while *Ebb* (2013) is an alternative take on *Navigating the Tides of Time*, but can also be seen as a continuation. *Colony* (2010), *Oikoumene* (2012) and *Okeanos* (2014) tackle the same questions, but the emphasis changes. *Colony* concerns birds, but of course the birds can symbolise humans, too. *Oikoumene* and *Okeanos* show the same island from a human perspective, from the point of view of the castle in the middle of the ocean and from the point of view of people taking to the seas to reach this island. *In the Labyrinth* (2008) is situated, in a way, inside the walls of the island, in the rooms of power where all these political and ideological decisions affecting peoples and nature take place. *Vicious Circles* (2007)*, Riket* (2009) and *Shadows* (2009) are all rooted in the history that leads to the later occurrences – the age of High Capitalism and the depression years before the Second World War. It's clear that *Abendland* is the temporal endpoint of this universe, at least if we look at it from the point of view of humanity. Of course, it is a new beginning, too, a place of possible regeneration – but looking at the scene, that regeneration is far away. We still have a couple of works to fit into the grand narrative, including the Linkola-related work, *The Kingdom of Birds*. And maybe a simple epilogue to everything, on an extra-terrestrial scale.

Actually, we had been developing a blatantly optimistic work, trying to restructure the relationship between humans and nature, and this was supposed to be our first feature-length film. But unfortunately the novelist whose work we wanted to adapt was bound by his convictions, and couldn't give us his permission for the project. This is devastating, because that is the only novel that we have ever immediately seen as a film.

Your work stresses an almost geological sense of time in which different eras are connected and compressed. Does its reference to the tradition of landscape depiction relate to this also? There's a sense of updating the format for precarious times.

The great thing about landscape is that people are small in it. It, too, puts humans in perspective. Landscape also has enough space and air, not only formally and geographically, but mentally, too. There is space to think. And, as you say, a landscape immediately reminds us of geological time, the climate, the atmosphere – the *longue durée*. For us the most important historical reference points – when talking about landscape – are Claude Lorrain, Gianbattista Piranesi, J.M.W. Turner and Caspar David Friedrich. Each has a speciality that we use: Claude composes the ideal landscape, pastorals almost without humans. Piranesi is a great lover of the ruins of a civilization. Turner depicts the modern world in motion, light and steam. Friedrich adds the sublime to this tradition. One could say, I guess, that we are updating landscape art. But we don't think in those terms, as if we were part of some continuum. We take ideas from these artists because they were composing the landscape, crafting it. But we have looked as much at the TV nature documentary series *Planet Earth* (2006) to learn how to depict certain natural processes. So I wouldn't say that we are referring to historical painters, just trying to learn some of their craft and to use it to our own advantage.

Can you say something about the role of music and sound in your work?

Originally we didn't even consider music and sound: the early animations were supposed to be moving drawings. Later, we have sometimes added a soundtrack, sometimes not. Music is such a strong element, and wrongly used it drags the narrative in the wrong direction. Music is also essentially time. In relation to a film, it is then also a metronome, a pacer, a clock. This might be problematic if we want to superimpose a number of temporal rhythms. Then again, without music, viewers need to find their own angle without a rhythmic reference point. This is more real, and also more challenging. You are alone with your own rhythm, facing another rhythm without a bridge between the two, the soundtrack.

Because we think of the animations as being another reality in relation to the viewer's space, we see non-diegetic music as a fabrication – it codes the narrative as being fictitious. Maybe we are just so oculocentric, but we feel this does not happen with an image – you can see silent images, through windows, faraway landscapes etc. We have used very few sound effects, for the same reason. Besides, people say they think they hear sound even in silent works.

Having said that, we have still worked with composers. Music is such an important emotional element. Even though we originally started making *A View from the Other Side* on the assumption that it would be silent, for the above-mentioned reasons, now it's impossible to imagine it without the music. At some point towards the end of the process, we thought it might be a good idea to have a soundtrack to give this long work consistency. And we wanted music that would basically imagine the sound of flowing time. To be the sound of the river, the passing hours, years and centuries – without reverting to traditional narrative accompaniment familiar from silent films. Long chords, playing with textures and masses, freely flowing. We couldn't think of any other instrument than a grand organ, which has a very wide register. We were introduced to the main organist, Markku Hietaharju, of Turku Cathedral and got him on board. We explained the idea and he improvised for 70 minutes in one take, according to our script and unfinished extracts from the film! It was a perfect match.

What about the – very different, much more abstract – sound aspect of *Abendland?*

We showed the first version without sound. When it became a two-channel spatial installation, we knew that there needed to be music. This time, too, we had quite a clear idea of which instrument we wanted: double bass played non-traditionally. The instrument is low frequency, it has a wooden echo chamber like the tree we were depicting. All the sounds coming out of the double bass could be sounds coming out of the tree. The resonance was important, and also the possibility of creating disturbing sounds. We contacted composer Max Savikangas, whose own instrument is the alto violin. Together we set out to make a spatial arrangement, in which sounds emanating from the tree travel through the space to the opposite screen showing the wall of the garden, at the centre of which the tree stands. There was also an idea of the tree signalling, trying to get over the wall…

In recent years, there's been a swelling interest in both the concept of the Anthropocene and, relatedly, in Speculative Realist / Object Oriented Ontology theory that considers the autonomy of objects, as well as in scenarios of an Earth denuded of people, such as in Alan Weisman's *The World Without Us* (2007). How much of an influence, if at all, has this compound context been on your work?

Almost zero. We say almost, because, of course, we keep up with the times. The truth is, the first time we heard of the Anthropocene was shortly before Hanna Johansson took it up in her article about us in the publication for Ars Fennica, the Finnish art award, in 2014. But we immediately embraced the term, because it was so fitting. As I mentioned earlier, the more important background was Finnish writers, Linkola and the novelist Pentti Haanpää, who masterfully combined nature and capitalist critique in his oeuvre spanning from the 20s up to the early 50s, before his premature death.

It is good to mention here that we have a background in academia. We started our collaboration at the university while majoring in art history and cultural history. So critical theory is the backbone of our practice. The first project we made was not meant to be art at all but just a broadening out of academic writing, taking it out into the space that it was theoretically dealing with. Slowly we moved towards the art world, because it was there, a place for things happening in the grey zone. However, in recent years we have tried to move away from reading theory, while moving in a more poetical direction.

Talking of the art world: how do you think the pace of your films works for gallery audiences?

Maybe, at the start, we were wondering, but then we watched these two 10-year-old boys looking at our first three animations. The animations are quite primitive and super-slow, but still these guys were completely captivated by them. Their parents tried to drag them away, but the boys just kept saying: “No, no, don’t you see, there’s something happening, we need to know what happens next!” That’s when we knew that the slow, uneventful animations might work for others, too, not just for us. That is an example of some kind of suspense. No matter how slow it is, you need to know what happens next.

This has to do with the fact you mentioned, that things happen in the picture frame without the viewer noticing. That makes people concentrate, and even watch a second time. On one level, we exploit this simple device to be able to make the transitions in front of the viewer’s eyes – we know people will be looking for this, so we do it in another part of the frame. Then again, this action in all parts of the frame has to do with the autonomy of our moving images. In real life, things happen everywhere.

In general, the feedback we get from galleries and museums is always the same: people just keep sitting there, which almost never happens with videos or video installations. When the museum closes, they have to herd people out. And viewers keep coming back, too. We’d like to think this is because of the openness and the multi-faceted nature of our works. If you give the work your time, it gives you a lot back.