

06 JANUARY 2020

THE PACIFIC PATCH PEOPLE

A FUTURE CIVILISATION - LIVING ON THE GREAT PACIFIC GARBAGE PATCH

A CLIMATE-FICTION STORY BY LISANNE FRANSEN

THE PACIFIC PATCH PEOPLE

In the second half of the 21st century, our world slowly collapsed. We could not fight the many, unstoppable climate disasters anymore - rising sea levels, massive floods, droughts, storms and violent hurricanes... Land and cities disappeared, systems crashed. On every continent, millions of people were forced to migrate, whereas the surviving parts of countries anxiously kept their borders shut for these refugees.

Around 2070, a group of drifting migrants managed to get ashore of the so called Pacific Garbage Patch: a gigantic plastic island floating around in the Great Pacific Ocean. When they crawled up on the swampy plastic patch, they had nothing but plastic and the ocean around them. The story of the Pacific Patch People starts three generations later, on this PATCH, in this flooded universe, somewhere around **the year 2120**.

The Pacific Patch is now home to a growing civilisation, that - isolated from the rest of the crashing world - created its very own architecture, culture, infrastructure, agriculture, rules, rituals, defence mechanism, costumes, music, fears and dreams and so on.

As their plastic garbage patch floats and flourishes on the rising sea - the Patch has now gained a utopian status for the growing group of landless drifters.



RESEARCH & ACTION

The idea of creating the world of the Pacific Patch People has emerged from my research on the Great Pacific Garbage Patch which floats in the northern hemisphere of the Pacific Ocean at the time of this writing.

Although the patch was already discovered in 1988, it only hit the media by a storm when Captain Charles Moore described the patch as being “an island twice the size of Texas” in 1997. The word *island* finally captured the people’s imagination - after nearly 10 years. This is absolutely understandable; it is hard to imagine what billion tons of floating plastic must look like, but it all hits you when you imagine the following: you are driving through France and Spain, from North to South - and instead of the countryside you only see mountains of floating plastic around you - for the entire journey.

Today, the garbage patch in the Great Pacific is not a real island you can settle on. However, since we have serious difficulties meeting any climate goal or changing our consumption behaviour, its mass keeps on growing and gaining strength. By telling the fictional story of the Pacific Patch People, I aim to address two real major issues that need to be taken seriously: the pollution of our earth and the increasing migration because of climate disasters. And because words, statistics and scientific predictions are often too abstract and too easy to walk away from, this is a call for action through visual storytelling - based on a probable future scenario*.



* This probable future scenario is one of the 4 future scenarios outlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (ICPP) of the United Nations

THE GRADUATION PROJECT

Working title: The Pacific Patch People

Genre: Cli-Fi (Climate Fiction), Drama

Tone of Voice: Post-Apocalyptic and Reality Future

Tonal References: Children of Men / Blade Runner 2049 / Hieronymus Bosch /

Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable (Damien Hirst)

Outcome: **1. Production Design Bible** (Worldbuilding)

2. Short Film (5 min)

The Production Design Bible will be ready to present as a visual “manuscript”, a “plug & play” world for writers, theatermakers, game developers, film directors, producers, streaming platforms and others to tap into with their own stories and characters. To set the example on how this Production Design Bible can be the starting point of a story, I will create a short story about the Pacific Path People myself. From the bible, a couple of scenes will be developed further into a short film project: a teaser-trailer of approx 5 min. The scenes will include as many elements of the world as possible, e.g. actors wear characteristic costumes, eat the food available on the island and are surrounded by visual elements described in the production design bible.



1. PRODUCTION DESIGN BIBLE

The *Production Design Bible* is a (physical) book comprising all elements of the world of the Pacific Patch People and the universe around it.

The bible is created by using the World-building method - constructing an imaginary world with its own coherent set of rules. First, a general overview of the Patch is created, determining broad characteristics such as the world's inhabitants, costumes, technology level, major geographic features, climate, weather, history, language, architecture and culture. From there, the rest of the Pacific Patch is created in detail.

The Pacific Patch People project is an imaginary story. However, it aims to depict a realistic and believable future world. The project does not want to exploit the climate crisis as a 'cool' backdrop for a film, it strives to show what our world could possibly look like when we do not manage to slow down and stop climate change in the upcoming decades (and right now, it doesn't look like we are handling this very well).

In order to be a 'warning' and eye-opener (instead of an entertaining sci-fi movie) every chapter in the bible is rooted in scientific research and predictions on what can happen and what is possible in the future. This then gets an imaginary spin, creating the world of the Pacific Patch People! The bible contains around 40 chapters, stretching from food and drinking water to costumes and body modifications.



2. SHORT FILM

SCENE 1 - OLD CARGO SHIP - NIGHTFALL - LOCATION

We are on an old cargo ship. The room is dark because of the little window or is it because it's dark outside? The interior looks gloomy and is poorly dressed, though we understand it is somebody's home. The people living here are climate drifters. They had to flee from yet another climate disaster that destroyed their homes and ripped their families apart. They have been drifting around on the ocean for years. With many of the coastlines and cities flooded, the surviving countries keep their borders anxiously shut for the landless refugees. Therefore, many of them live in small colonies on old ships, hoping to be granted access to dock somewhere - anywhere. The drifters we see on this ship are on their way to the Pacific Patch... discussing their arrival to the north port over a worn-out, hand-drawn map of the patch.



SCENE 2 - THE NORTH PORT - NIGHT - GREEN SCREEN STUDIO

Still on the ship, we hear voices coming from the upper deck. The Northern Port of the Pacific Patch is finally in sight. We follow our characters to the upper deck - we are outside now. From their excited faces - with the ship as backdrop - we pan around to look out over the wild and pitch black ocean. In the dark distance, we see the lights and the silhouettes of the two watch towers of the North Port of the Pacific Patch! Through dialogues between the drifters, we understand that some of them will take a small boat through the kilometers of floating plastic debris to reach the port and to ask for permission for all the drifters on board to access the Patch.

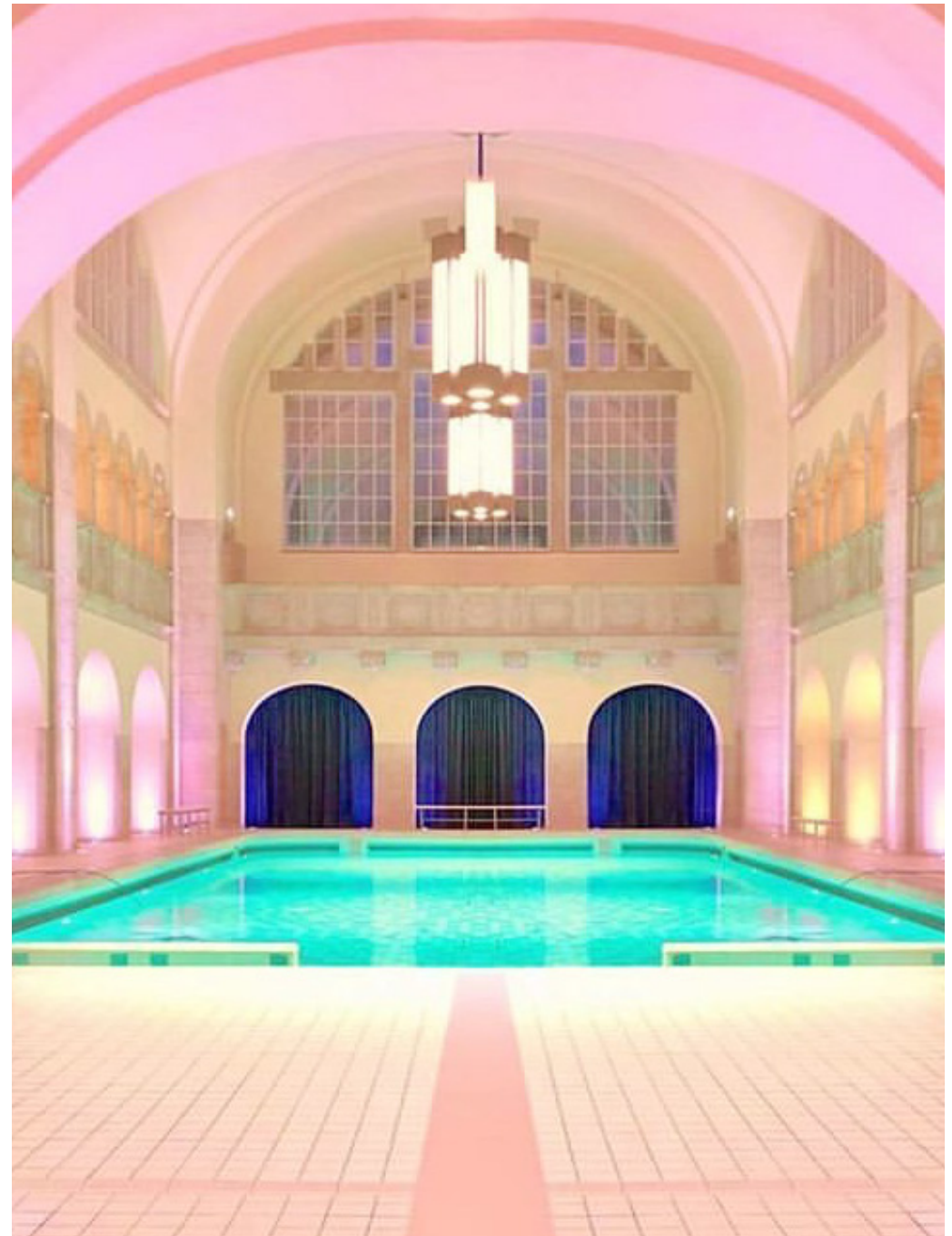


SCENE 3 - THE ARRIVAL TRIBUNAL - FILM STUDIO

The small group of drifters are escorted to the magnificent hall of the 'Arrival Tribunal' - it is the first time we see the architecture, interior and costumes of the Pacific Patch People up close. Everything in the Tribunal is extremely colourful due to the fact it is all made out of ocean plastic. It is a mesh-up of interior elements, architectural styles and symbols.

The Tribunal works as a gateway to interrogate ocean drifters who want to access the Patch. The Patch is fragile in many ways and the Patch People only survive because of their strict rules and respect for each other and the sea. Strangers with wrong intentions could be of great danger. The council that decides on the fate of the drifters is quite special: it consists of children and young adolescents between the age of 12 - 18. As they will live on the island the longest - they are in charge of making decisions that are of great impact for their island, such as accepting new inhabitants to the patch.

Through the questions asked by the children-council to the drifters we learn what happened to the world in the past decades and why the Pacific Garbage Patch is their last hope. The Drifters are offered food and rest - showing little glimpses of the traditions and food of the Pacific Patch People. Then, the rules of the Pacific Patch People are read aloud - giving us a better understanding of how the Patch People have been able to survive for so many generations on a floating garbage patch in the extremely hostile and unstable climate ruling the earth around the 22nd century.



The background image is a photograph of a tropical beach. Several palm trees are visible, some of which are leaning significantly to the left, suggesting a strong wind or storm. In the foreground, there is a fence made of wooden posts and wire. The sky is bright and hazy, and the ocean is visible in the distance. The overall tone is somewhat somber and urgent, matching the text overlay.

WE ARE IN THE YEAR 2120

THIS IS THE UNIVERSE AROUND THE PACIFIC PATCH



These super-storms, with winds of over 300 kilometres per hour,



The enormous waves of December 9th



but they can't stop it coming to them.







**All over the world, we still use our
ingenuity to survive in the wild places,**

UMBRELLA VISION

The outside world, the world around the Pacific Patch, is a flooded and dangerous universe. A world we destroyed. A world where lots of land, life, nature and colours disappeared.

Although the Pacific Patch was originally a garbage dump - it is now a safe zone for surviving. Whereas the old world's systems crashed (think of agriculture, import and export of food and energy, electricity networks and internet connections) - the people on the Pacific Patch created their own ways of surviving and living in a community. The Patch is still not a lush place, but it has adapted to the extreme weather conditions of the 22nd century, which makes it relatively a good place to live. (A lot of inspiration comes from the BBC documentary series *Human Planet*, showing how tribes, in remarkable ways, have managed to survive in extreme environments on Earth.)

This is also the contrast between the drifters and the Patch People. The latter are generally happy and colourful whereas the drifters are grey and often close to despair. Significant is that the drifters are mainly people from the former Western world, the Europe and the USA as we know it now. The Patch People descend from a mix group mainly from Asia, sub Sahara Africa and Latin America - these were the first groups who couldn't defend themselves anymore from the natural catastrophes wiping away their land, homes and families. However, now it's the Western world that needs to flee and migrate to safer places.



A surreal landscape where islands are composed of piles of trash and debris. In the foreground, a large, dark, swirling vortex of water is visible. To the right, a massive, steep pile of trash rises. In the background, several smaller trash islands are visible, each topped with a cable car station. Cable cars are suspended from a wire that stretches across the sky. The sky is a pale, hazy blue, and the overall scene is one of environmental devastation.

THE WORLD OF THE PACIFIC PATCH PEOPLE

DESCRIBED PER FILM DEPARTMENT: FROM PRODUCTION DESIGN TO SOUND AND BACK

STORYTELLING

Most climate-fiction movies tell big doomsday stories about how humanity is almost entirely wiped out by one big natural disaster, or how there is only one last safe place where humanity can survive. (In *Water World* it is a floating city, in *Wall-E* it is a space ship, and in many movies it is another planet).

This is not how I imagine the universe around the Pacific Patch People in the year 2120. Although the extreme climate disasters take many human lives and land - humanity is not wiped out. Greatly reduced in numbers, we are still here, on earth, but in a new reality where all country borders, power structures and communication systems are lost. We live in small communities who fight for their own survival on a daily basis.

One of those communities is the Pacific Patch. They flourish in adapting to the new conditions of planet earth, yet I don't want to depict them as the last survivors or as the last surviving place threatened by millions of 'angry out-siders'. The story about the Pacific Patch People is not a conflict of how to keep outsiders away. It's not that an *us-against-them* story. It's much more nuanced. It shows, through the eyes of those who dare to undertake the dangerous journey of finding the Patch - in a world without working satellites or updated google maps - the life of the people on the patch. It is a story about the Pacific Patch People, how they eat, sleep, dance, fight and fear, dream and love.



PRODUCTION DESIGN

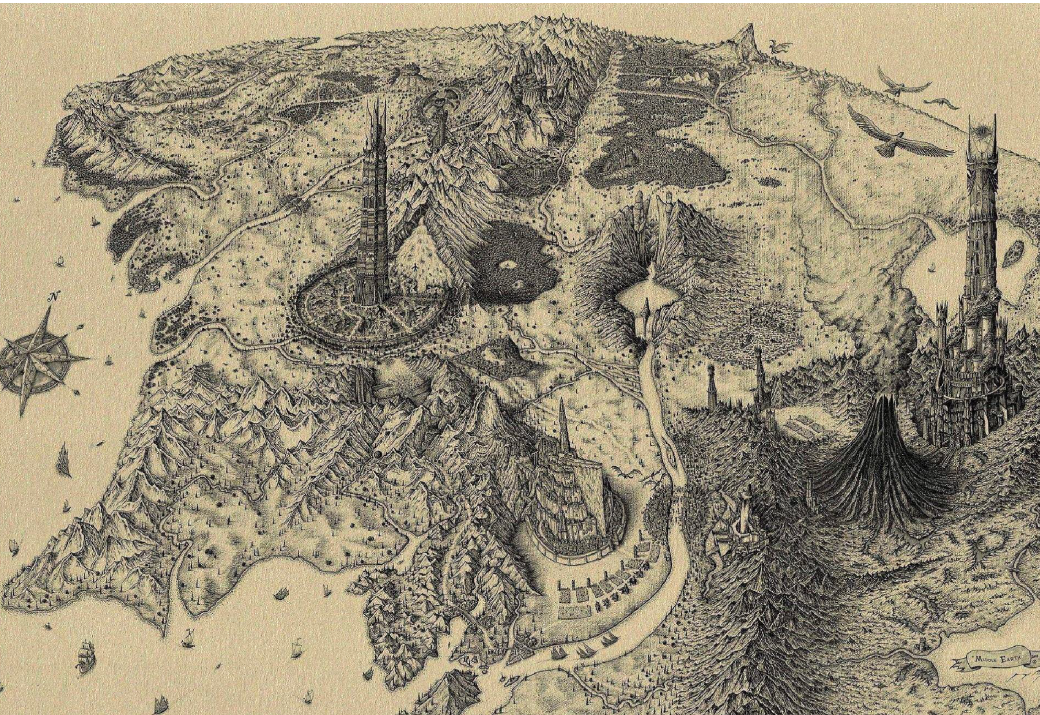
SCALE

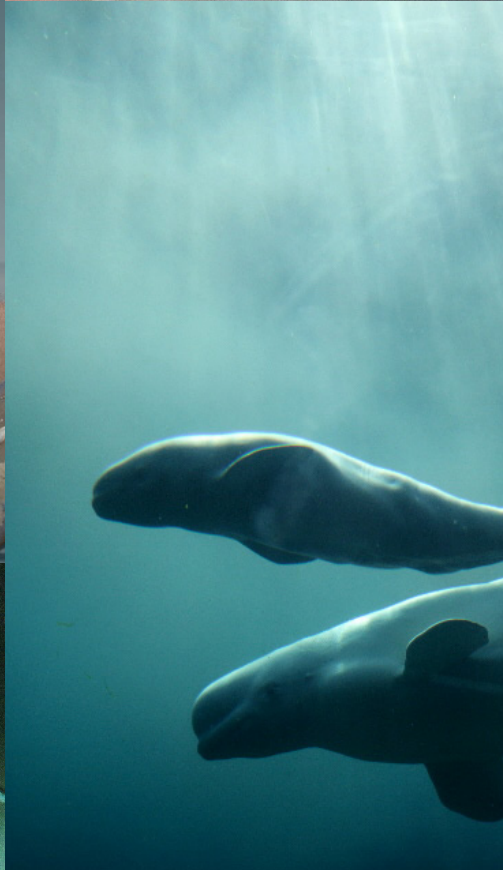
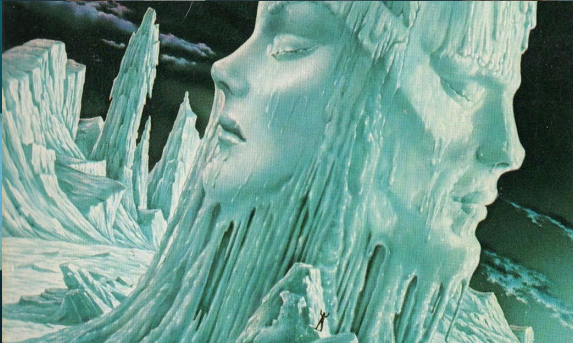
The scale of the fictional Patch is based on the current size of the real garbage patch: two times the state Texas = 1.400.000 km. Most of this area is a swamp-like surface, consisting of a thick layer of plastic, whirling on the oceans surface. Though, in the middle of this plastic swamp, three dense patches have 'gained' so much strength that they have become firm, walkable surfaces - tundra-like landscapes of plastic mountains and ocean lakes. One of these Patches is our Pacific Patch, almost as big as the island of Iceland.

VISUAL LANGUAGE

The first generation of Patch People came from many different places, mainly from Asia, sub Sahara Africa and Latin America. To be able to survive on the rough plastic surface, they needed to accept each other right away. They needed to share their knowledge and skills in order to slowly build a new civilisation. Over the years they managed to survive and build a strong community. A great respect for the sea and its creatures grew amongst them as a new "religion". This mix of different cultures, animism and ocean worshipping is clearly integrated in the visual language of the Pacific Patch People. The architecture, interiors, objects, costumes and headpieces are a colourful mix of ocean plastic and elements of the sea. The plastic colours are tuned down in its saturation due to long exposure to the salty sea and the sun. The plastic objects and fishing nets are merged with coral, shells, mother of pearl, wavy forms and references to ocean animals.







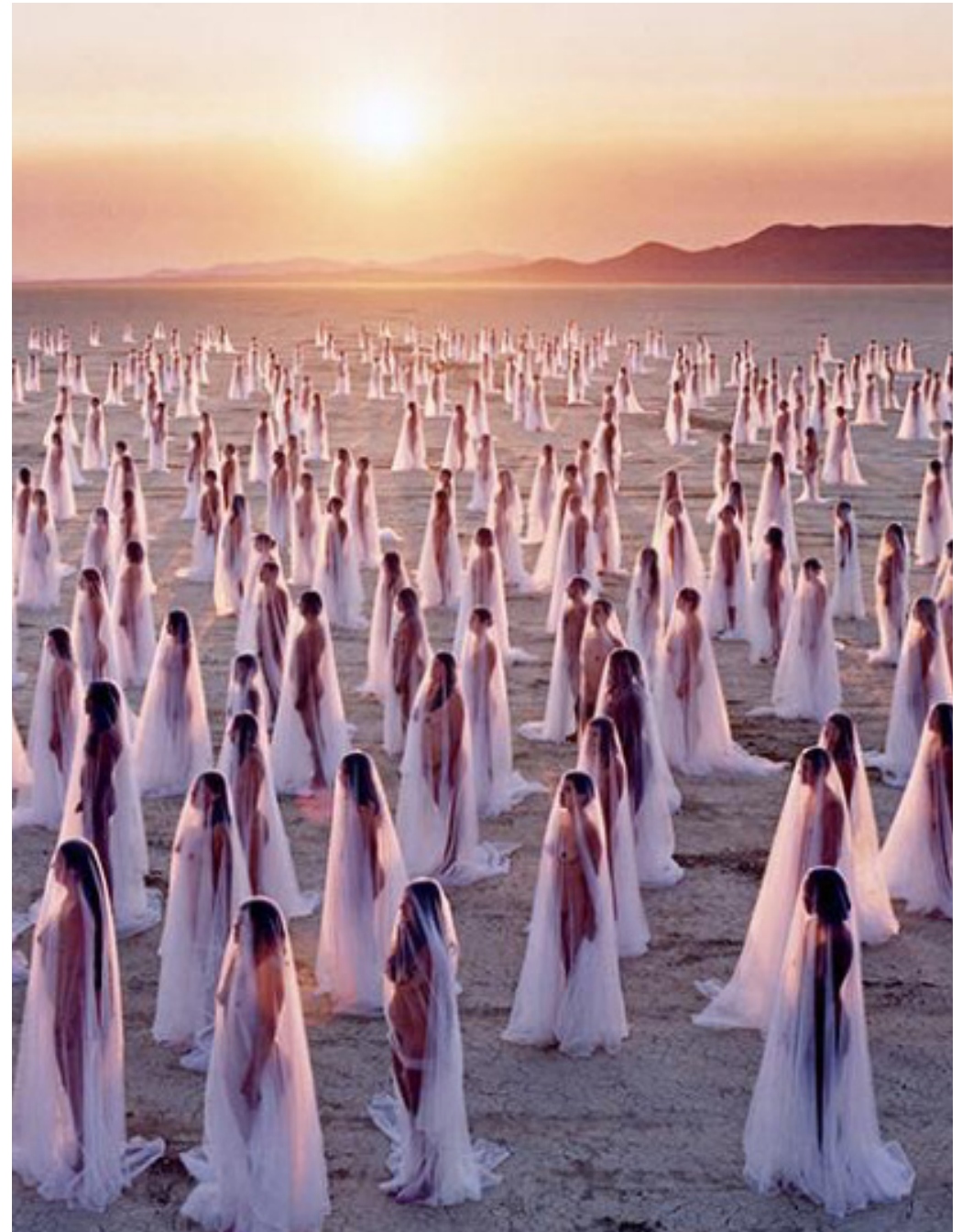
COSTUME DESIGN

Just like the architecture and interiors around them, the Patch People had to create their clothes out of what they could find on the Patch: ocean plastic. Gradually their clothes making skills evolved from stringing plastic bits and pieces together, to new weaving techniques in order to create a sort of fabric out of the plastic waste.

Next to plastic there is one other material in great abundance on the Patch: shells. Over the years, the Patch People became skilled ocean farmers, cultivating seaweed and oysters as their main sources of food. The oyster-shells and pearls became a grateful new material to add to the plastic.

Mixing their knowledge and traditions from the old world, with these new materials and techniques, a whole new style originated which evolved even further with the next generations on the Patch - who never have seen the old outside world.

Think of long trailing robes like Alexander McQueen-style and of beautiful color mixing like in the Disney films.







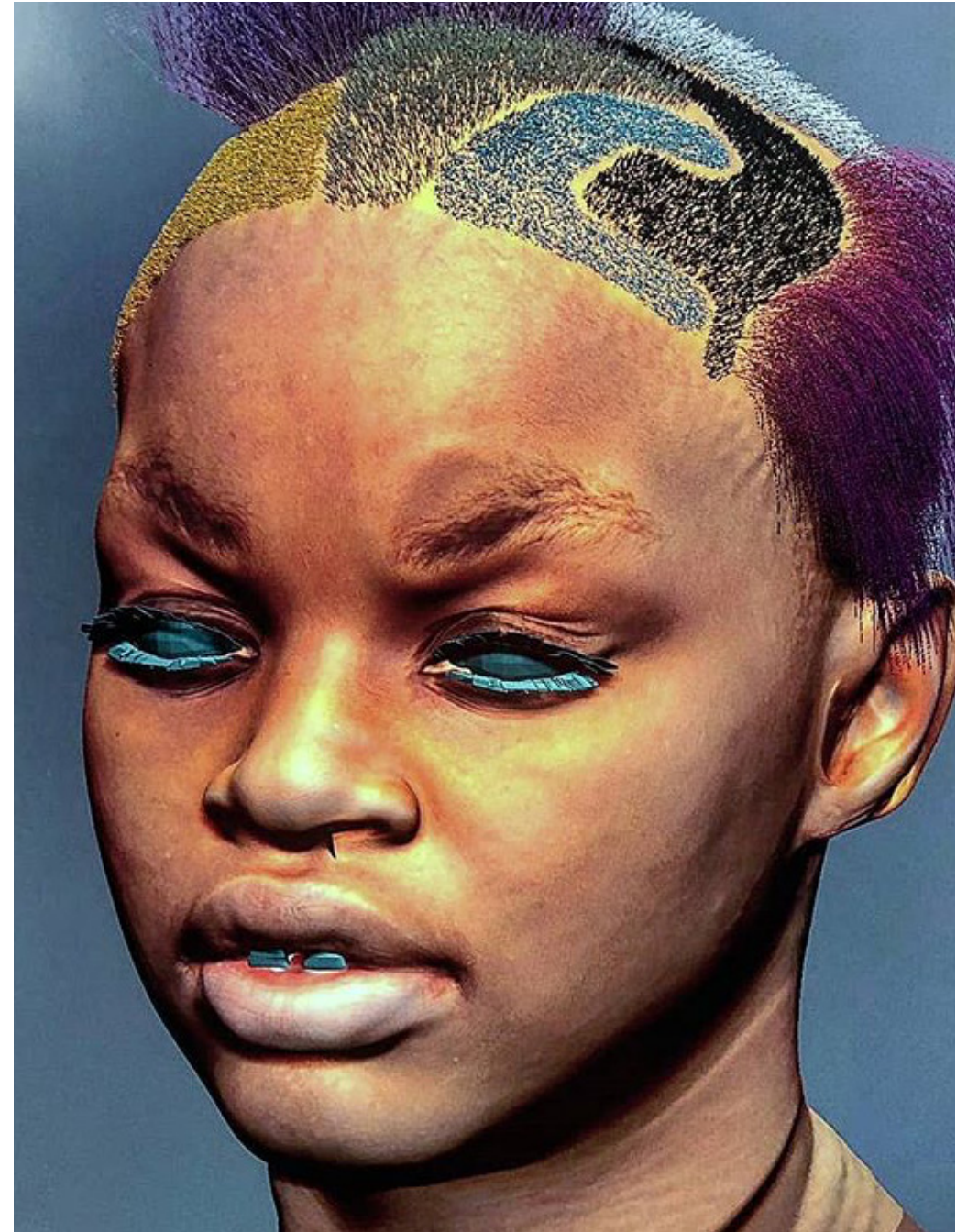


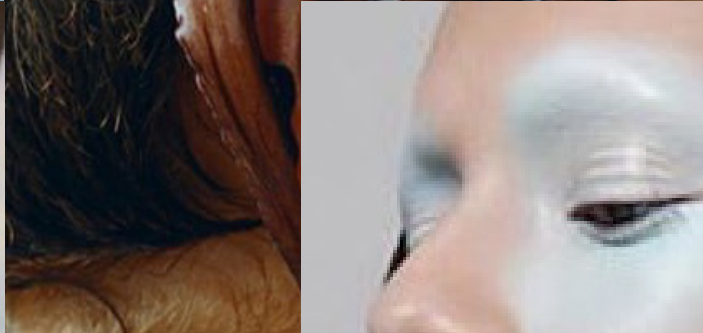
MAKEUP & HAIRSTYLING

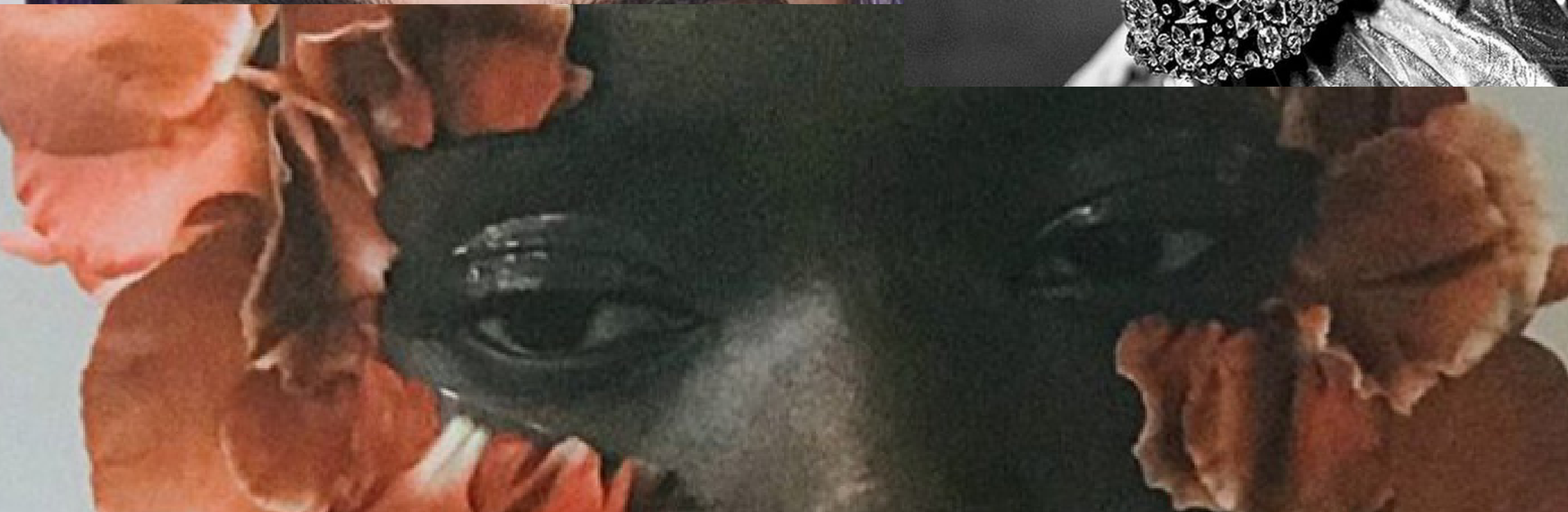
To strengthen the community feeling on the Patch and to feel as one nation, costumes and facial painting are very important to the Patch People. Especially in the early days when people came from many different backgrounds with many different traditions, it was important to “look the same”. Hence painting the face became a loving tradition for the Patch People.

Over the years, and with children born who never have seen the ‘main land’, the Pacific Patch People developed styles and traditions totally their own - inspired by the plastic around them and their life on the sea.

Also, their bodies started to adapt. They got used to the wobbly, wavy surface of the patch, and became excellent swimmers with great knowledge of the ocean and its creatures. Newborns develop great sight under water, can hold their breath for several minutes whilst hunting for fish and their skin gets affected by the exposure to the salt and the sun every day.







CAST

The Pacific Patch People live in isolation on the floating garbage patch which they have manage to tame and control. The population consists out of three to four generations, of which only the oldest members were born on the main land of the 21st century world, before it started to drown. They were the ones who first set foot on the garbage patch many decades ago. They were the ones who brought the culture and knowledge of the 21st Century world to the Patch. And it is this knowledge the following generations on the Patch People have build upon.

The first Patch-settlers came from Asia, Africa and Latin America. In order to survive on this rough uninhabitable land they had to become a close community rather than fighting each other over power, religion or race. They decided/were forced to abandon all their 'land-believes' in order to keep their heads above water. They became one new nation.

Their children and grandchildren have mixed Asian, African and Latin features. Unlike the first Patch People, they have never seen the land of the old world and the societies who were once living there. Being totally isolated and disconnected from what is left of the old world, they are creating a world of their own.

It are the grandchildren and great grandchildren we are focussing on it the teaser-trailer. They are between 12 - 18 years old in the year 2120.



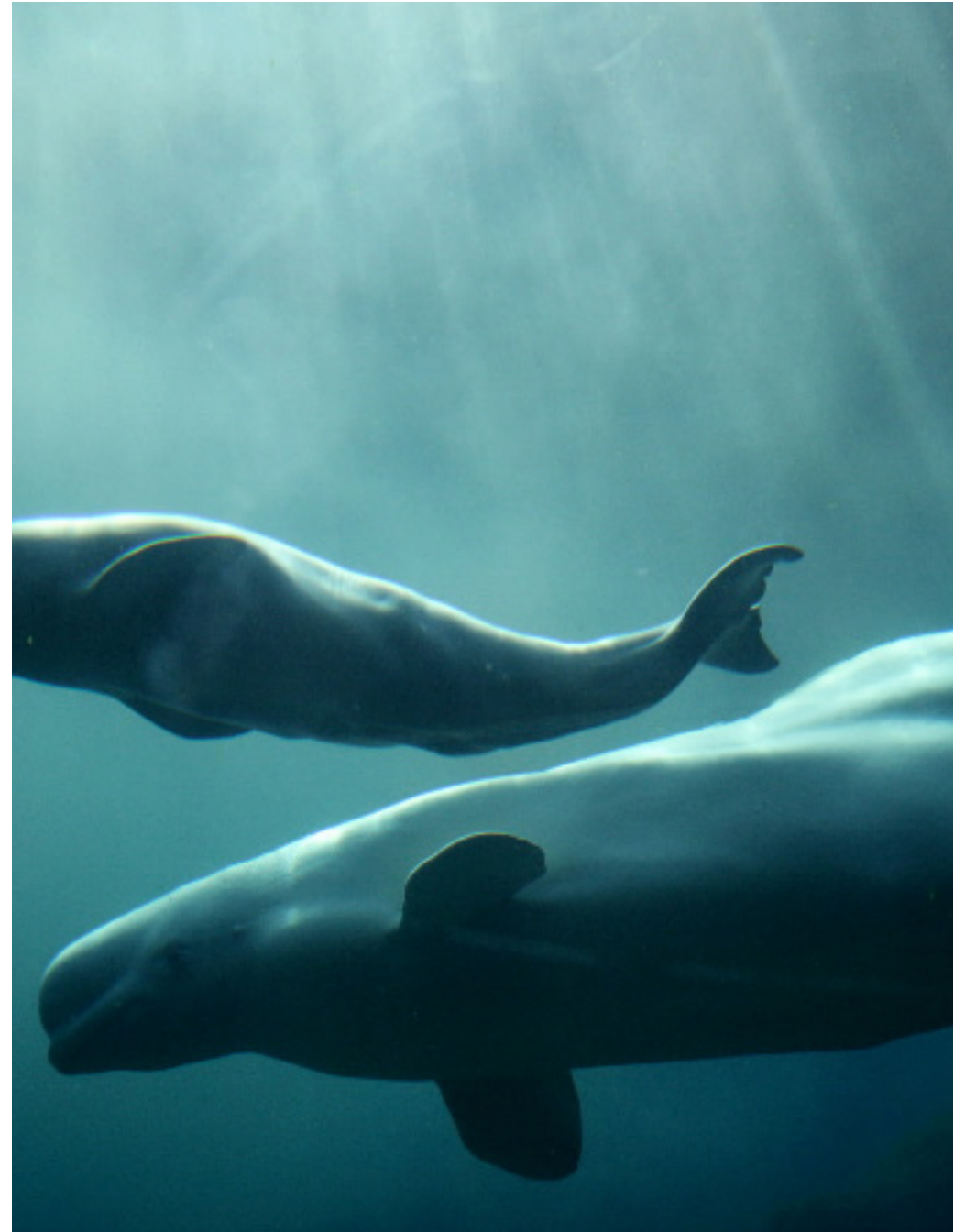


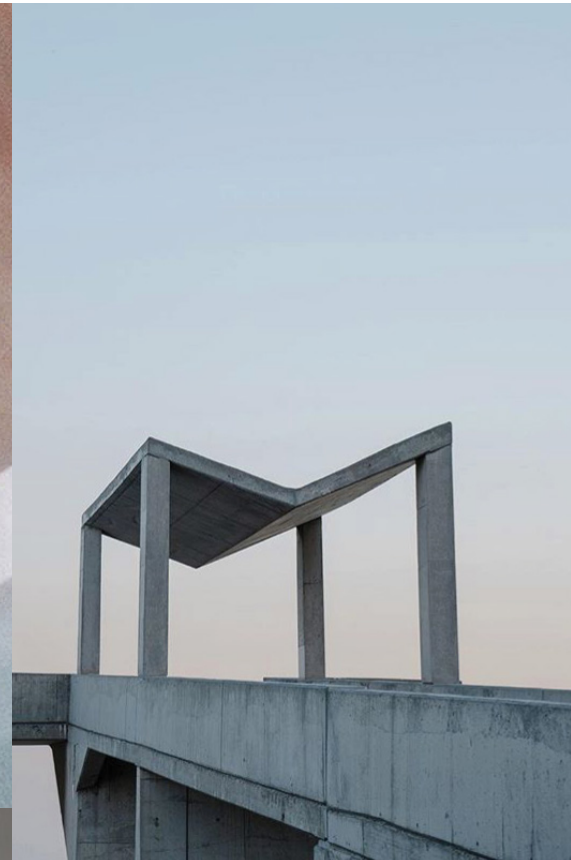
LIGHTING DESIGN

The Pacific Garbage Patch is floating around in the Northern hemisphere of the Great Pacific Ocean. Kept in place by ocean currents. Around the Patch, there is nothing but the sea. The seasons as we know them now have faded - the universe around the Patch is always filled with dark grey skies, rain, storms and hurricanes.

The Patch is, in contrast to this grey-skied universe, a brighter place. The light is not directly coming from a bright and shiny sun however, but more from reflections onto the water and the plastic shiny surfaces of the Patch.

The Patch People harvest energy out of the waves and wind, and collect oil out of their seaweed farms. So there are sources that give them power for lighting and other machinery. Yet we will not focus on this too much, there are simple light sources and the Patch is not a 'candle-lit' place.





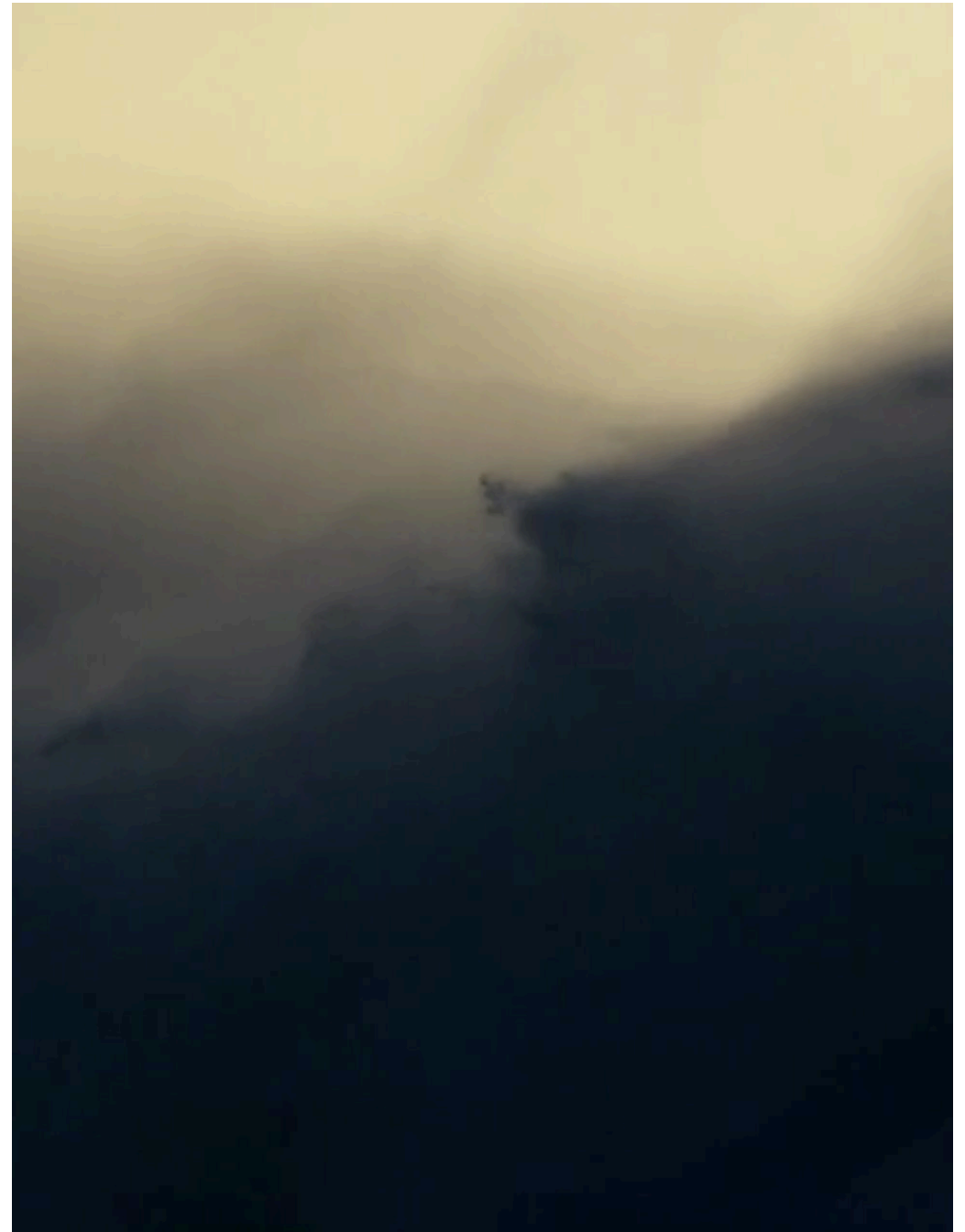
CAMERA & EDITING

The camera language is an important part in the creation of the teaser-trailer. I imagine it filmed like a music video meeting a wild storm. Capturing the atmosphere and environments is more important than filming a scene with a perfect dialogue between two characters. Think of Gaspar Noés film Climax where the last 20 minutes were filmed upside down.

I would love the camera translating the rough conditions of the outside world versus the calm yet colourful world of the Pacific Patch People. A realistic worlds meets a surrealistic world.

The same goes for the editing process; I have no intentions of creating a chronological, linear story. The teaser-trailer has to express a visual world rather than a logical, easy to follow, storyline. Instead of the characters and their lines, it is the visual world of the Pacific Patch People that is in focus here.

Same goes for the stories the drifters tell, about how they lost everything because of the climate disasters. This to be felt through how it is filmed and edited as much as through how it is told - or even more!



SPECIAL EFFECTS

The special effects play an important role in the teaser-trailer about the Pacific Patch People. Due to the accumulating natural disasters - caused by the rapid changing climate - the world is constantly plagued by rain, storms, massive floods and violent hurricanes. Hurricane-season rules all year long and no continent is spared. The weather is out of control, due to the fact that we couldn't control climate change in the 21st Century.

For the scenes on the cargo ship, the upper-deck and the boat ride to the North Port of the Patch, there will be a lot waves, water, rain and smog. And also when inside, during scene 3 in the arrival tribunal in the port, we need to feel the rough weather outside - and see glimpses of it through the windows in the arrival tribunal.



VISUAL EFFECTS

Next to the special effects, the visual effects will play a big part in creating the teaser-trailer. In the Arrival Tribunal, there will be big windows showing the outside, stormy world. A hostile world from which the drifters want to escape from.

During their boat-trip from their cargo ship to the North Port of the Patch, their boat is wading through a thick layer of plastic, floating on the sea's surface. It's too thick for the cargo ship to sail through, yet too thin to walk on. This plastic swamp is surrounding the Patch for hundreds of kilometers. To film this scene: the polluted ocean and the struggle of the drifters to sail through it, production design needs to be combined with scale models, VFX and SFX in a green-screen studio.

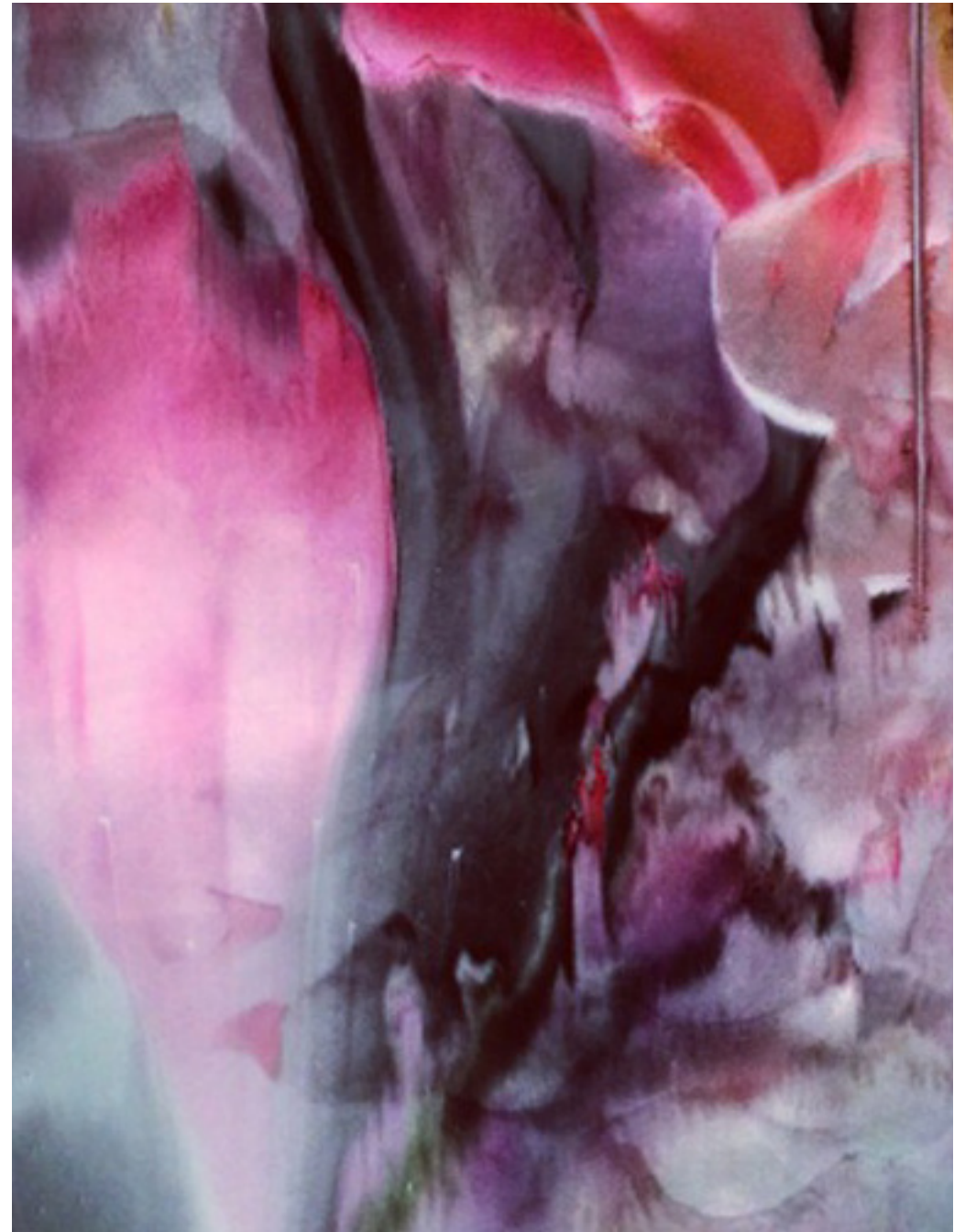


SOUND SCAPE

I would love to develop a special sound scape for the world of the Pacific Patch People that will also be used for the teaser-trailer. Not using any existing, recognisable songs or tunes. I imagine the sounds and music being an important part, shaping the world outside and the world of the Pacific Patch People. The sound contributes to show the contrast between the dark-grey old world that is drowning and the colourful-wavy Patch that is flourishing.

Also, since the Patch People have lived in isolation - shaping their own new rules and rituals, I imagine they have their own songs, language, hymns, sounds, rhythm etc. The instruments they play are build from the material on the Patch: plastic, and the songs they sing are written to worship the ocean, the animals, or to tame the storms and gigantic waves threatening to damage their Patch.

Think of whale-sounds mixed with the rhythm of the rain or the deep base of a storm rattling in the distance. Think of buzzing wave-sound and dolphin chatter, mixed with words from the language their ancestors spoke in the old world.



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This project is part of my graduation project
at the Stockholm University of Dramatic Arts.
SADA is the main producer / financier of the
Pacific Patch People Project.

Lisanne Fransen

A photograph of a vast landfill under a cloudy sky. In the foreground, a person wearing a conical hat and a purple shirt is seen from the side, carrying a large, woven basket filled with trash on their back. The basket has a red cloth tied to the top. The ground is covered in a sea of discarded plastic, paper, and other debris. In the background, another person is visible, also carrying a basket, walking across the waste field. The overall scene conveys a sense of environmental degradation and the scale of waste disposal.

THE END