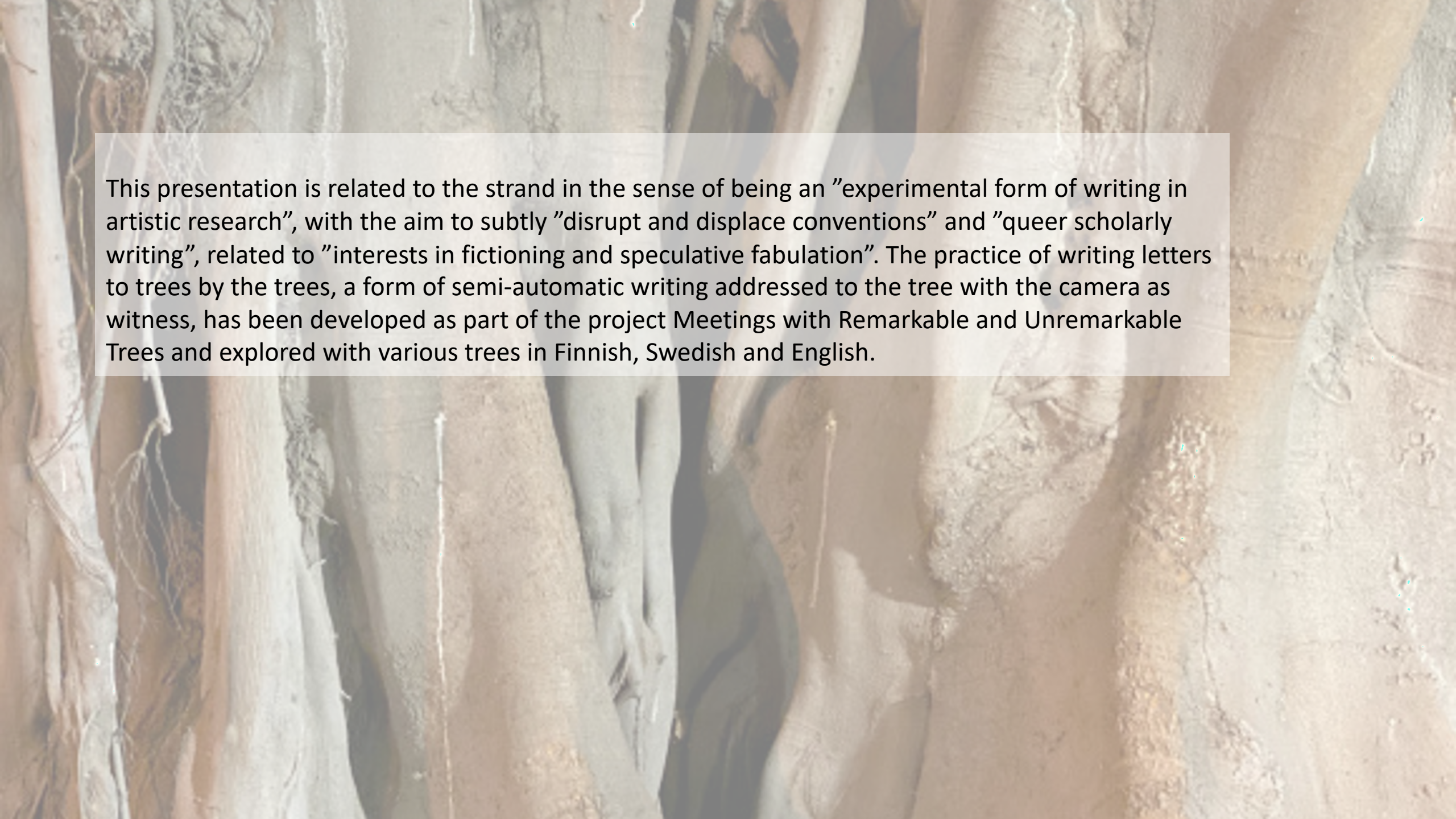


The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of several tree trunks and their roots. The trunks are light brown and show signs of weathering and peeling bark. The roots are exposed and tangled, extending from the trunks down towards the bottom left. The overall tone is earthy and natural.

Writing Letters to Trees with the Trees

CARPA 7, 26-28.8.2021

Annette Arlander



This presentation is related to the strand in the sense of being an "experimental form of writing in artistic research", with the aim to subtly "disrupt and displace conventions" and "queer scholarly writing", related to "interests in fictioning and speculative fabulation". The practice of writing letters to trees by the trees, a form of semi-automatic writing addressed to the tree with the camera as witness, has been developed as part of the project Meetings with Remarkable and Unremarkable Trees and explored with various trees in Finnish, Swedish and English.



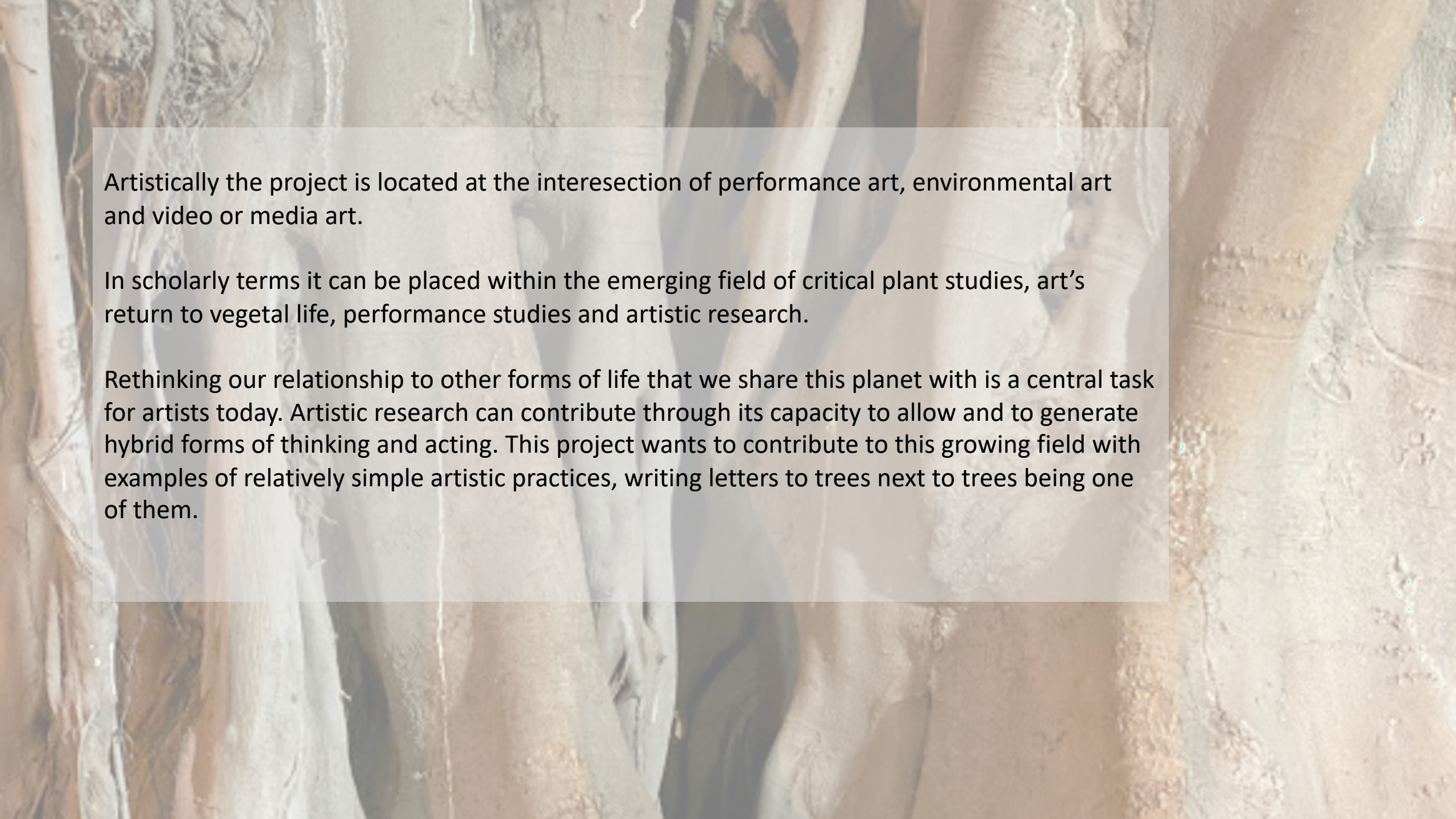
Meetings with Remarkable and Unremarkable Trees

Project blog

<https://meetingswithtrees.com>

Project archive on the Research Catalogue

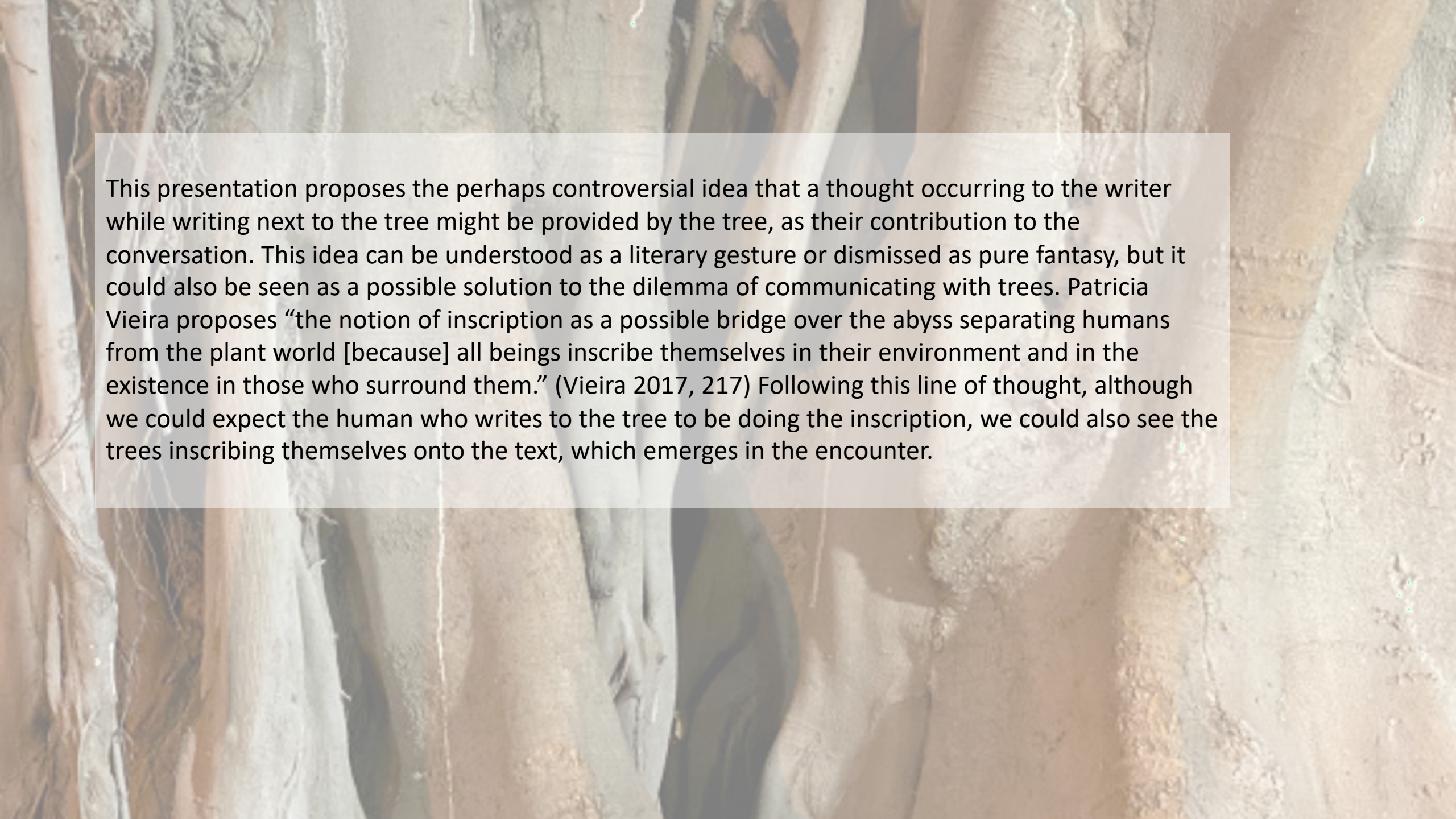
<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/761327>

The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of tree trunks and roots. The trunks are light brown and have a rough, textured bark. The roots are exposed and spread out across the ground, which appears to be a mix of soil and small stones. The lighting is natural, creating soft shadows and highlights on the bark and roots.

Artistically the project is located at the intersection of performance art, environmental art and video or media art.

In scholarly terms it can be placed within the emerging field of critical plant studies, art's return to vegetal life, performance studies and artistic research.

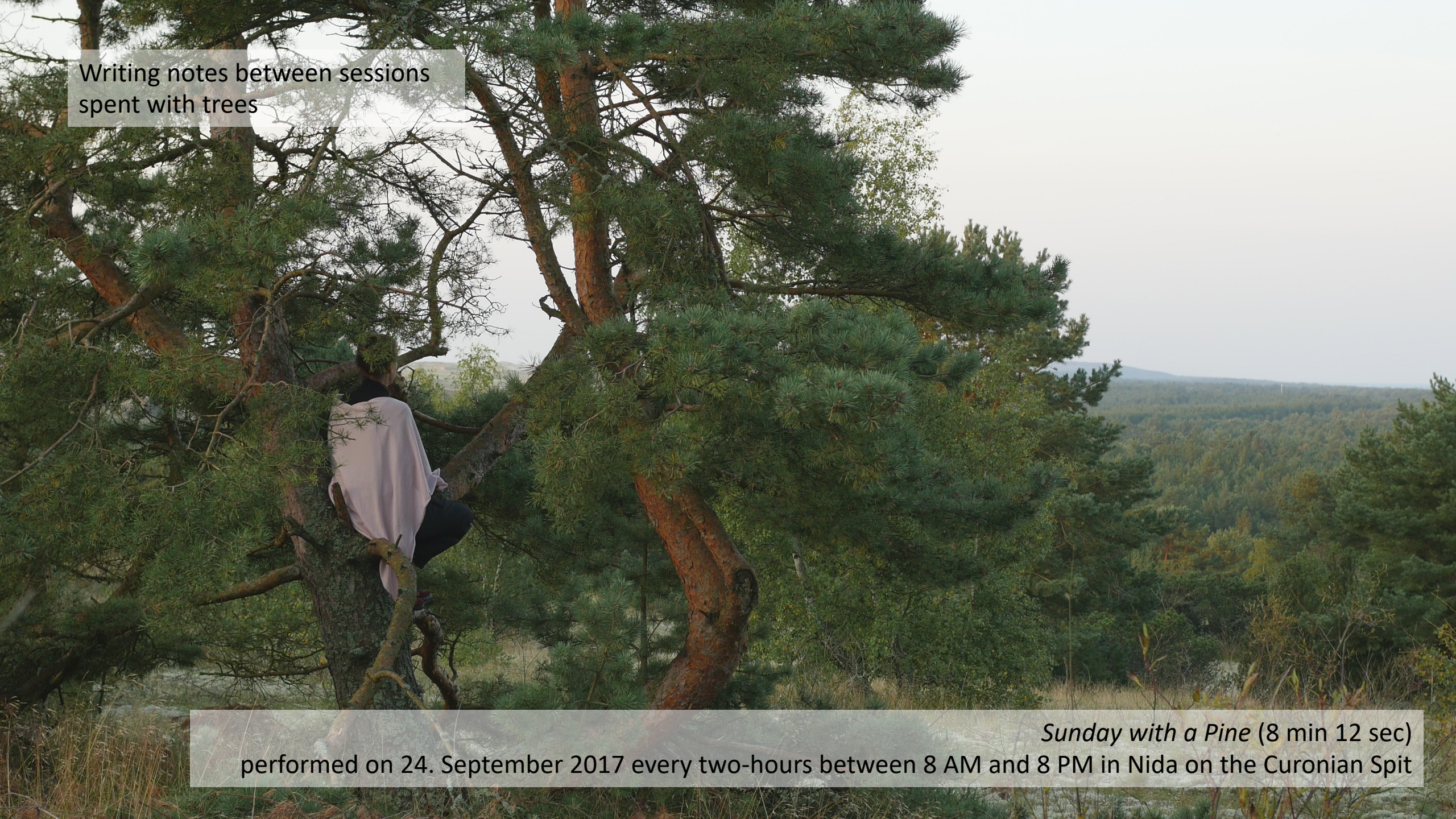
Rethinking our relationship to other forms of life that we share this planet with is a central task for artists today. Artistic research can contribute through its capacity to allow and to generate hybrid forms of thinking and acting. This project wants to contribute to this growing field with examples of relatively simple artistic practices, writing letters to trees next to trees being one of them.

The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of tree trunks and roots. The trunks are light brown and have a rough, textured bark. The roots are exposed and spread out across the ground, which is covered in dry leaves and twigs. The lighting is soft, creating a warm and natural atmosphere.

This presentation proposes the perhaps controversial idea that a thought occurring to the writer while writing next to the tree might be provided by the tree, as their contribution to the conversation. This idea can be understood as a literary gesture or dismissed as pure fantasy, but it could also be seen as a possible solution to the dilemma of communicating with trees. Patricia Vieira proposes “the notion of inscription as a possible bridge over the abyss separating humans from the plant world [because] all beings inscribe themselves in their environment and in the existence in those who surround them.” (Vieira 2017, 217) Following this line of thought, although we could expect the human who writes to the tree to be doing the inscription, we could also see the trees inscribing themselves onto the text, which emerges in the encounter.



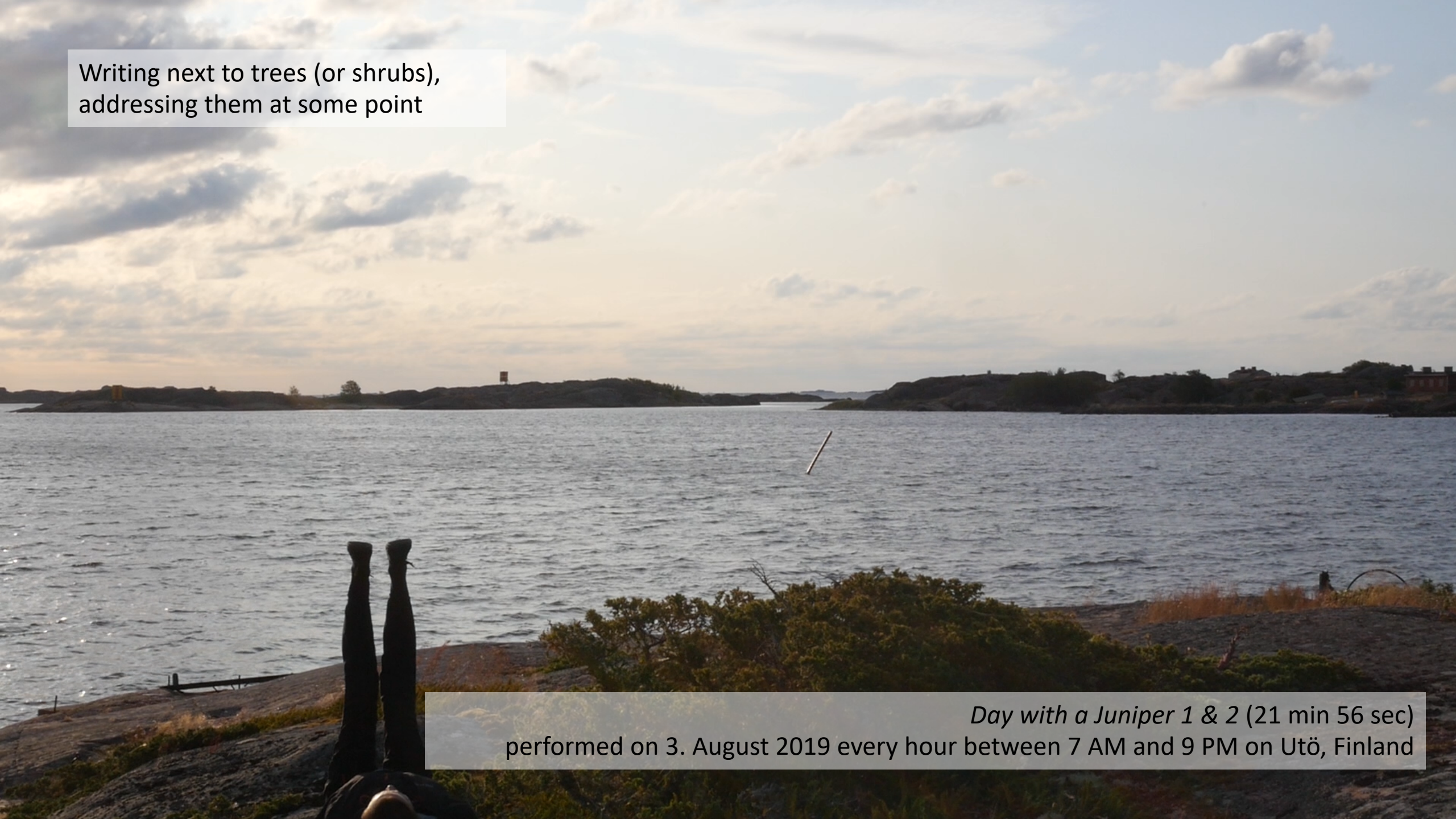
II DEVELOPING THE PRACTICE - EXAMPLES

A person is sitting in the branches of a large, mature pine tree. The person is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt and dark pants. They are positioned in the upper left quadrant of the frame, looking out over a vast forest landscape. The tree has thick, reddish-brown bark and dense green needles. The background shows a dense forest of various trees, with some hills visible in the distance under a pale, overcast sky.

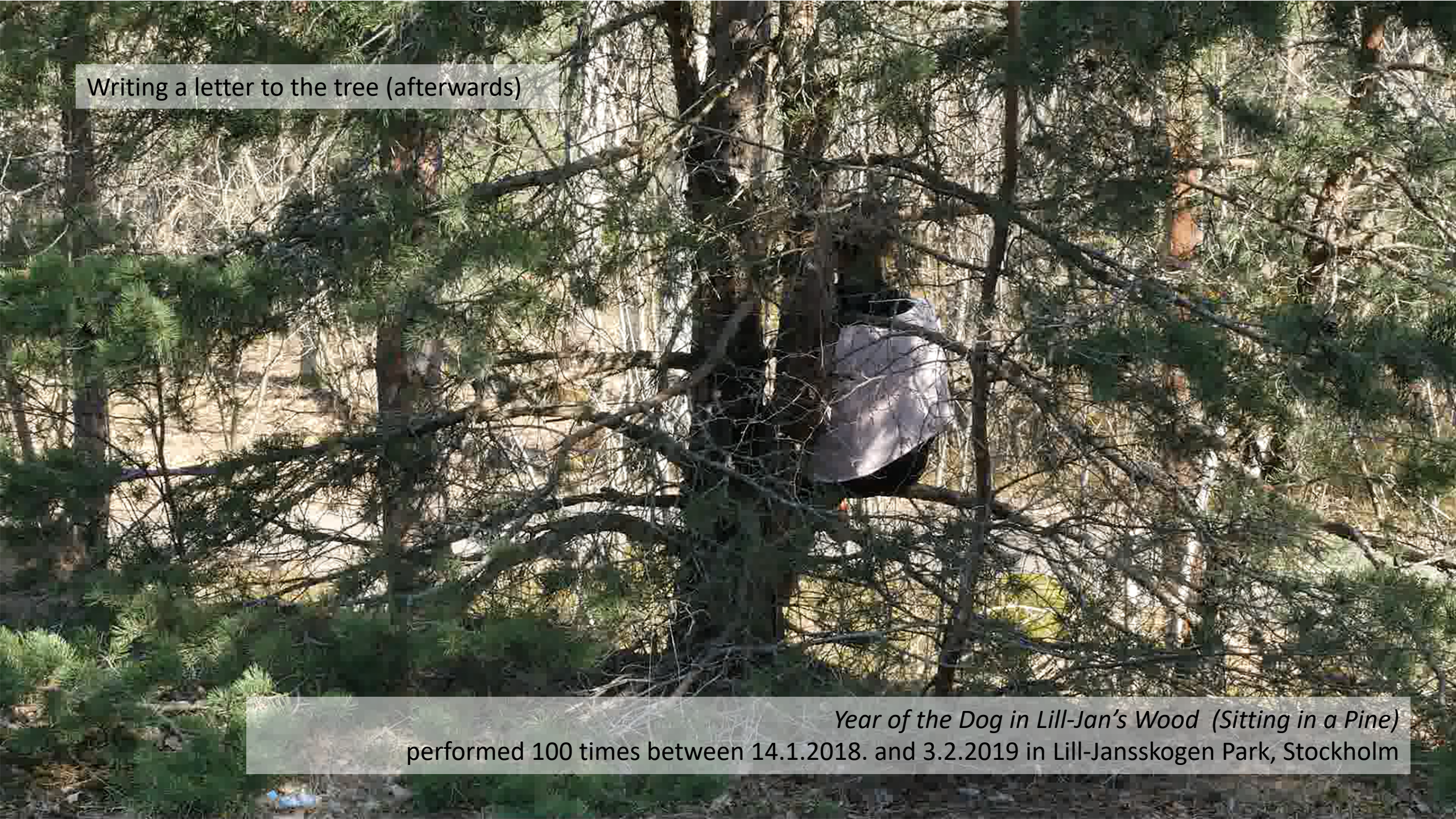
Writing notes between sessions
spent with trees

Sunday with a Pine (8 min 12 sec)
performed on 24. September 2017 every two-hours between 8 AM and 8 PM in Nida on the Curonian Spit

Writing next to trees (or shrubs),
addressing them at some point



Day with a Juniper 1 & 2 (21 min 56 sec)
performed on 3. August 2019 every hour between 7 AM and 9 PM on Utö, Finland

A photograph of a person sitting in a pine tree in a forest. The person is wearing a light-colored jacket and dark pants, and is positioned in the center-right of the frame, partially obscured by the branches and needles of the tree. The background shows a dense forest of tall, thin trees with sunlight filtering through the canopy.

Writing a letter to the tree (afterwards)

Year of the Dog in Lill-Jan's Wood (Sitting in a Pine)
performed 100 times between 14.1.2018. and 3.2.2019 in Lill-Jansskogen Park, Stockholm



Writing a letter to a tree
afterwards:
Dear Juniper, voice-over
text for "Revisiting the
Juniper" as part of
HTDTWP presents:
The Transformative
Potential of Performance
at CARPA 6, 29.8. 2019
Kiasma Theatre

Photo: Mia jalerva

Writing letters to trees next to the trees:

Dear Olive Tree, Dear Ficus Macrophylla I & II <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1013698>

Tallen på Hundudden 1-4 (The Pine on Hundudden) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/771644>

Dear Firethorn Rhus <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/822442/51/603>

Dear Firethorn Rhus II <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/822442/51/2128>

Dear Pine – Kära Tall <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/831544>

Kuusi Hyvä – Dear Spruce 1-7 <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/844990/0/0>

Dear Spruce, Dear Birch and Dear Deceased <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/982302/20/3334>

Writing with a Pine, Writing in a Pine <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1036306/182/2455>

Dear Pine, Pines by the Path <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1036306/182/2455>

Writing letters to trees next to the trees:

Tala om det för tallen (Tell it to the Pine) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1107375>


Dearest Pine, Esteemed Pine Tree <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1165222>

Esteemed Tarri Pine <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1225961>

Dear Mountain Birch (with text) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1294375/18/4222>

Dearest Mountain Birch (with text) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1289070/536/4656>

The Ash Tree on Eckerö (with text) <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1307712>

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a black long-sleeved top and black pants, is sitting on the thick, gnarled roots of a large, ancient olive tree. She is holding a small notebook and a pen, appearing to be writing. The tree has a thick, textured trunk and dense, silvery-green foliage. The ground is dry and rocky, with a low stone wall visible in the background. The scene is set in a rural, arid landscape under a clear blue sky.

Writing letters to trees

With an Ancient Olive Tree (19 min)
performed 19.12.2019 in Ulldecona, Spain

A woman with glasses and dark hair, wearing a black long-sleeved top and dark pants, is sitting on a low brick wall. She is looking down at a small white notebook in her lap, holding a pen. Behind her is a massive, ancient-looking tree with thick, gnarled roots and dense green foliage. The scene is outdoors in a park-like setting with other trees and a building visible in the background.


Writing letters to trees

Dear Ficus Macrophylla I (19 min 30 sec)
performed 25. 12.2019 in Alicante, Spain

Writing letters to trees



Tallen på Hundudden 1-4 [the Pine on Hundudden] (c 14 – 20 min), performed 7., 13., 26.1 2020 and 19.7.2021 on Hundudden in Stockholm.

A person is sitting on a large, thick, dark tree branch that extends horizontally across the frame. Below the branch, a small waterfall flows over a series of dark, wet rocks into a pool of water. The surrounding landscape is lush with green grass and dense foliage. The scene is captured in a cinematic style with soft lighting.

Writing letters to trees

Dear Firethorn Rhus (20 min 15 sec & 6 min)
Performed with a Firethorne Rhus (*Searsia pyroides*) in Nirox Sculpture Park 18.3. 2020.

Writing letters to trees




Dear Firethorn Rhus II (20 min 15 sec & 6 min)
Performed with a Firethorne Rhus (*Searsia pyroides*) in the Nirox Nature Reserve 19.3.2020.

Writing letters to trees




Dear Pine – Kära tall 1-7 (12 min 30 sec - 20 min 32 sec)
performed between 30. 3. and 6. 8.2020 with a pine in Brunnsparken, Helsinki.

Writing letters to trees


A person wearing a dark jacket and a beanie is sitting on a rocky, grassy hillside, writing in a notebook. A large, dark green spruce tree stands prominently in the background against a clear blue sky with some light clouds. The ground is covered with dry grass and small plants.

Dear Spruce – Kuusi Hyvä 1-7 (c. 20 min 50 sec)
performed between 10.4. and 25. 8. 2020 with a spruce on Harakka Island.

A person with short brown hair, wearing a black jacket and black pants, is sitting on a large, moss-covered tree stump in a forest. They are holding a white notebook and a pen, looking down at it. The forest is dense with tall, thin trees and a thick layer of green moss on the ground. The lighting is soft, suggesting an overcast day.

Writing letters to trees

Dear Spruce – Rakas Kuusi (20 min 15 sec & 5 min 47 sec)
performed 25.9.2020 with a spruce near Mustarinda

A person with brown hair tied back, wearing glasses and a black long-sleeved shirt, is sitting on a large, moss-covered tree trunk in a forest. They are holding a small notebook and a pen, appearing to be writing. The forest is filled with tall, thin trees and dense green foliage. The scene is captured in a wide shot, showing the person in the center-left of the frame.

Writing letters to trees

Dear Birch – Kära Björk (20 min 15 sec & 5 min 50 sec)
performed 29.9. 2020 with a birch near Mustarinda

A person with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and dark trousers, is sitting on a large, weathered log in a forest. They are holding a small, open book or notebook and writing in it. The forest is dense with green trees and many bare, tangled branches. A large, moss-covered tree trunk is on the left, and a large, flat, light-colored mushroom is growing on its side. The ground is covered in green moss and fallen leaves.


Writing letters to trees

Dear Deceased (20 min 15 sec & 6 min 26 sec)
performed 29.9. 2020 with a dead spruce near Mustarinda

A photograph of a person with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a black long-sleeved shirt, sitting in the branches of a large, gnarled pine tree. The person is holding a small notebook and a pen, appearing to be writing. The tree has thick, dark brown bark and dense green needles. The background shows a clear sky and other trees in the distance. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

Writing letters to trees

Writing with a Pine II (20 min)
performed 10.11.2020 with a pine on Örö

A large, gnarled pine tree with thick, dark bark and many branches dominates the center of the image. A person is visible climbing the trunk of this tree. The background is a dense forest of tall, thin pine trees. The ground is covered with green moss and some fallen branches. The sky is overcast and grey.

Writing letters to trees

Writing in a Pine (13 min & 5 min 20 sec)
performed 16.11.2020 with a pine on Örö

Writing letters to trees



Dear Pine (10 min & 4 min 30 sec)
performed 18.11.2020 with a pine on Örö

A person is seen from behind, sitting on the thick, gnarled trunk of a pine tree. They are looking out over a body of water, likely the sea, under a cloudy sky. The tree's branches are bare and spread out, framing the view. The ground is covered in moss and low-lying vegetation. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Writing letters to trees

Pines by the Path (Kära tall) (16 min 20 sec & 4 min 5 sec)
performed 1.12.2020 with two pines on Örö

A person wearing a dark hooded jacket and glasses is sitting on a thick, mossy branch of a large pine tree. They are looking down at a book or a small object in their hands. The background is a dense forest of pine trees with a light snow cover on the ground and branches. The sky is overcast and grey.

Writing letters to trees

Dearest Pine (with text) (15 min 45 sec)
performed 21.2.2021 with a pine on Örö

A large, gnarled pine tree with a thick trunk and many branches. A person is climbing the trunk. The ground is covered with moss and some snow. The sky is overcast.

Writing letters to trees

Esteemed Pine Tree (16 min 15 sec)
performed 23.2.2021 with a pine on Örö

A person wearing a black hooded jacket and grey pants is sitting on a log at the base of a large, ancient-looking pine tree. They are holding a small notebook and a pen, looking up at the tree's canopy. The tree has a thick, textured trunk and dense green needles. The ground is covered in snow, and other pine trees are visible in the background under a clear sky.


Writing letters to trees

*Esteemed Tarri Pine (with text) (8 min 10 sec and 27 min 30 sec)
performed 14.4.2021 with a pine in Hailuoto*

A person with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a grey sweater and dark pants, is sitting on a log in a forest of birch trees. They are holding a pen and writing in a small notebook. The forest floor is covered in low-lying vegetation and fallen branches. In the background, a snow-covered mountain range is visible under a cloudy sky. The scene is captured in a cinematic style with soft lighting.

Writing letters to trees

Dear Mountain Birch (23 min) and *Dear Mountain Birch (with text)* (7 min)
performed 10.6 and recorded 13.6.2021 with a birch in Kilpisjärvi

A person with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a light grey sweater, is sitting on a log and writing in a notebook. They are surrounded by several birch trees with characteristic white bark and dark lichen. In the background, a calm lake stretches towards distant, hazy mountains under a cloudy sky.

Writing letters to trees

Dearest Mountain Birch (25 min) and *Dearest Mountain Birch (with text)* (7 min)
performed 11.6 and recorded 13..6.2021 with a birch in Kilpisjärvi

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a black long-sleeved top and black pants, is sitting on a large, reddish-brown rock. She is holding a small notebook and a pen, looking down at it. In the foreground, a large, leafy ash tree with many hanging catkins (seed pods) is partially obscuring the view. The background shows a calm blue body of water under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

Writing letters to trees

The Ash Tree on Eckerö (6 min 11 sec)
performed 11.7.2021 with an ash tree in Eckerö

A person is seen from behind, sitting on a thick, mossy pine tree trunk. The tree is a large, gnarled pine with many branches, some of which are bare. The person is looking out over a body of water, which appears to be a lake or a wide river. The water is calm, and there are some logs floating in it. The sky is overcast with soft, grey clouds. The overall mood is quiet and contemplative.

Speaking to trees

Tala om det för tallen (Tell it to the Pine) 1 -3 (8 min - 14 min. sec)
performed on 11.1., 20.2., 11.5. and 27.6.2021 with a pine on Örö

The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of several tree trunks and their roots. The trunks are light-colored, possibly birch or aspen, with a smooth but slightly textured bark. The roots are more gnarled and darker, extending from the base of the trunks. The lighting is soft, creating a natural and organic feel.

III SELECTED VIDEO EXAMPLES

Dear Juniper <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/727848/727849/0/0>

Dear Olive Tree (forthcoming in JER) <https://jer.openlibhums.org>

Dear Deceased (scroll down the page) <https://pinp2021.aalto.fi/essays-visual-essays/>

Esteemed Tarri Pine <https://designingpluriversity.org/Annette-Arlander>

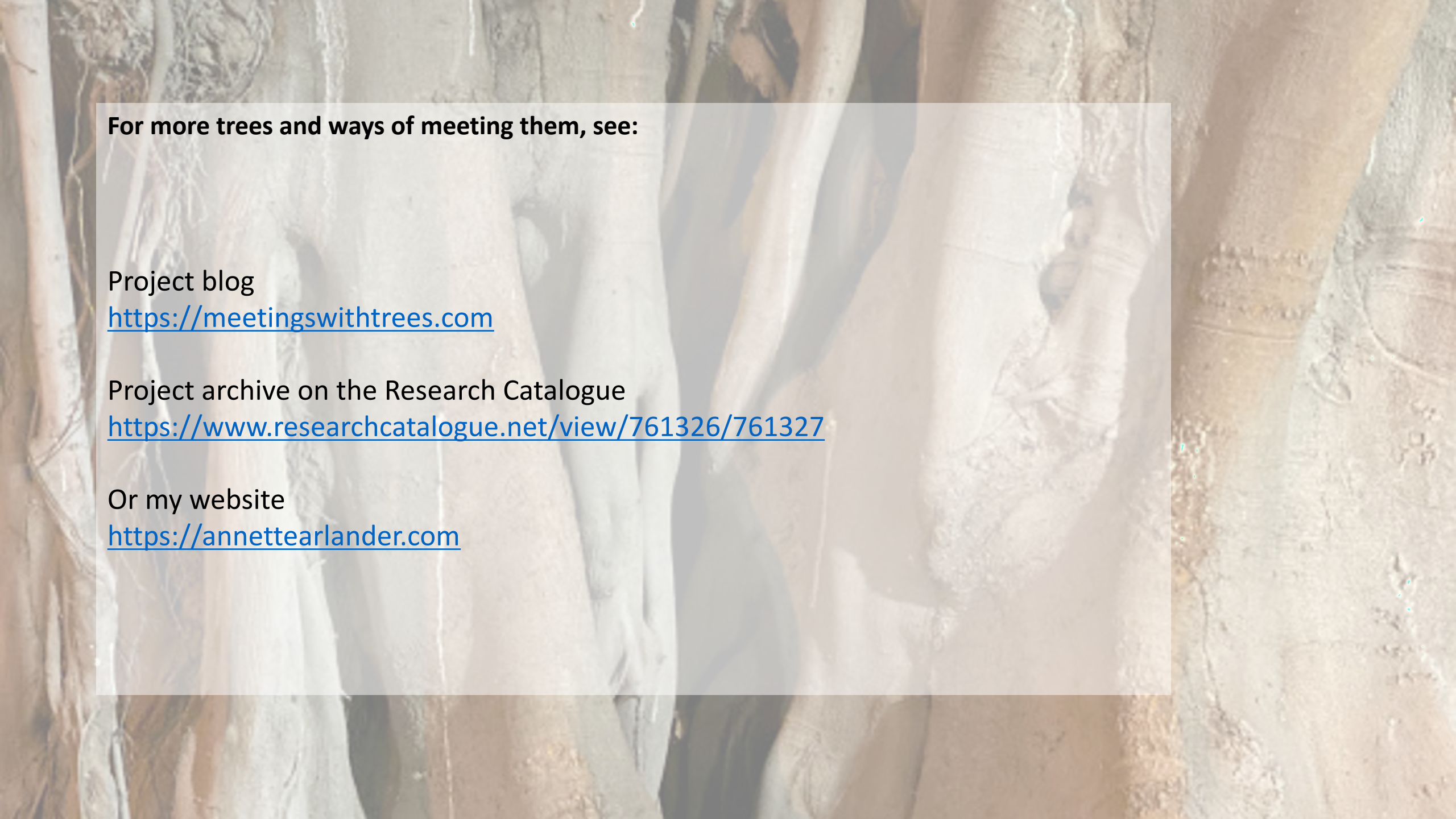
Askträdet på Eckerö – The Ash Tree on Eckerö

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/1307712/495/508>



EXAMPLE TO BE VIEWED TOGETHER

Dear Ficus Macrophylla <https://vimeo.com/592842492>

The background of the entire image is a close-up, artistic photograph of tree trunks and roots. The trunks are light-colored, possibly bleached or weathered, and show various textures like bark patterns and knots. The roots are more intricate, with some appearing as thick, gnarled structures and others as thinner, more delicate lines. The overall color palette is warm and earthy, with shades of beige, tan, and light brown.

For more trees and ways of meeting them, see:

Project blog

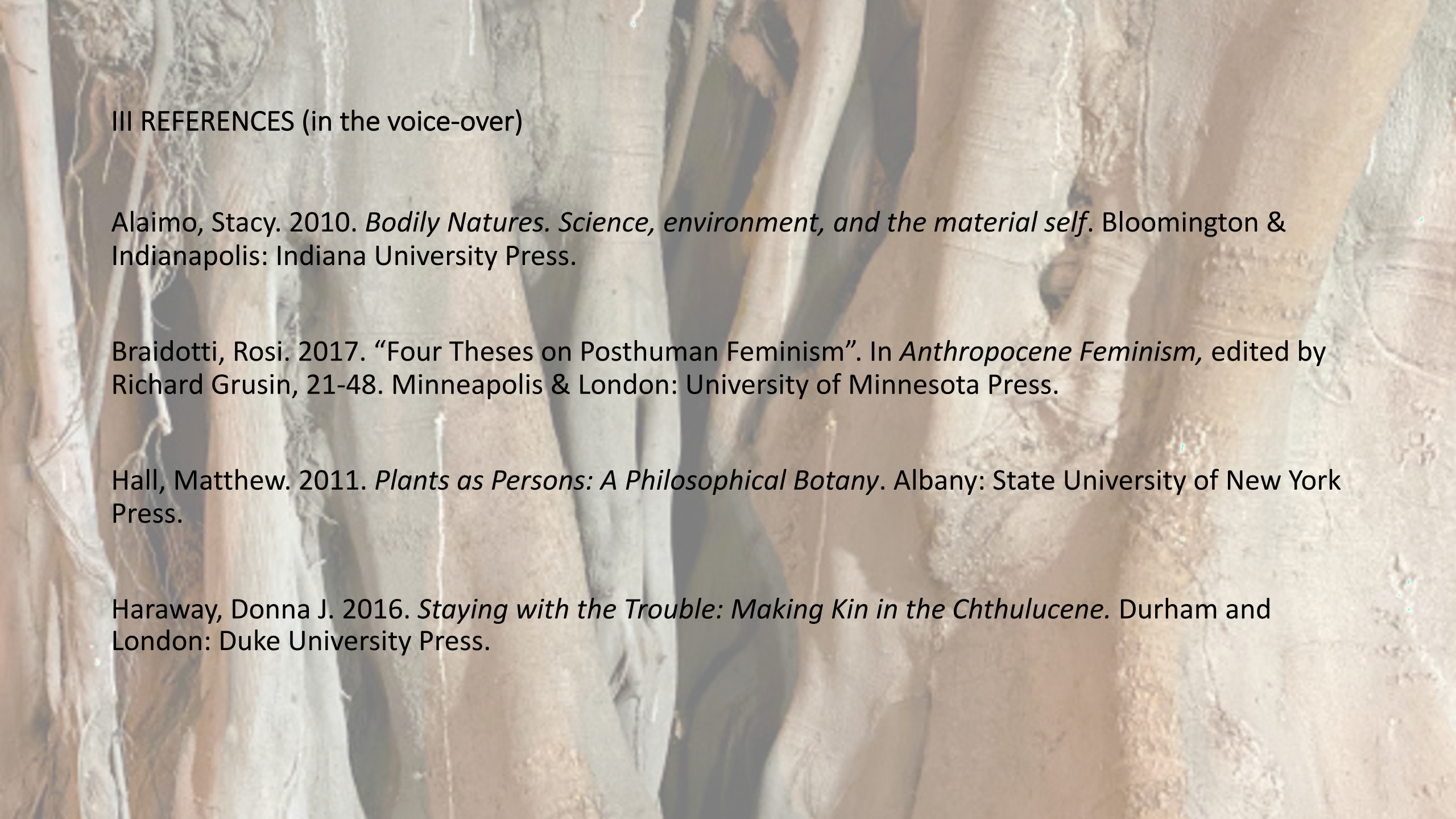
<https://meetingswithtrees.com>

Project archive on the Research Catalogue

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/761326/761327>

Or my website

<https://annettearlander.com>

The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of tree trunks and roots. The trunks are light brown and have a rough, textured bark. The roots are exposed and run vertically and horizontally across the frame, creating a complex, organic pattern. The lighting is soft, highlighting the textures of the wood.

III REFERENCES (in the voice-over)

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Thank you for your attention!