



My Feral House

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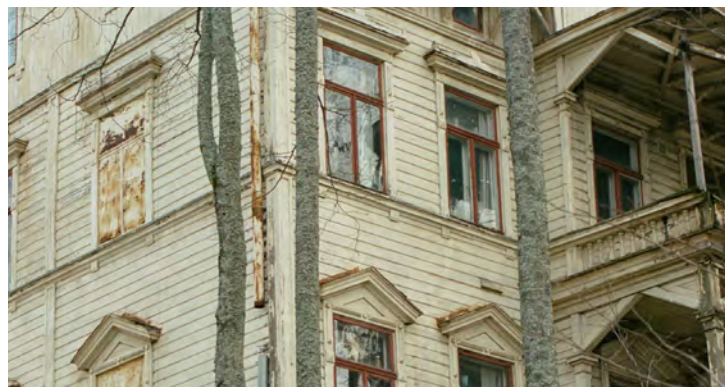
Creative essay

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My feral house:

In exploring this project, I've looked into the possible futures for a historically important Villa in the center of Helsinki. This Villa, which has served many purposes throughout the years, is now falling apart and heading towards an unknown future. By studying both human and more-than-human structures in the area, I have gathered feral data, resulting in a collection of artifacts, primarily centered around the transformation of the house into a more untamed and feral state. These abstract models are made from natural materials found on-site (logs, moss, and twigs) combined with symbolic elements representing the controlled, geometric nature of human creations. Throughout this journey, I've thought about various questions concerning power dynamics, the relationships among different entities, and the potential to rethink the importance and roles of a house beyond human-centered views.



Built in 1890, the house has lived a long life. An institution bought the villa in 1929 and opened a care facility for children with functional difficulties that lasted until the late 1960's. Following that, it served as a tenement for construction workers in the 1970s. Finally, an independent man named Aulis Junes bought the villa in 1980, and has lived there until his passing in 2023. This man is not unknown in the media, as there has been a lasting conflict going on between him and the government concerning the restoration of the villa.

My feral house is nestled among other villas that were constructed around the same time. From a distance, they may look similar. They share the same architectural style, however, my house sets itself apart. Concealed behind large trees and with certain parts of the structure already showing signs of decay and deformation. This mysterious appearance and current condition is perhaps why I laid my eyes on it in the first place. It brought me to a realization that it's in a process of transitioning into a state of feralness.



What are the possible scenarios?

This conflict between Aulis Junes and the government poses the question of powerdynamics in our society. Who are the agencies deciding how things should look and when things should change?

An obvious approach to solve the issue of the decaying villa would be to preserve the whole house, or even just parts of it. Several of the surrounding villas are preserved and used by the public to enjoy. In this case, turning the house into something similar could be seen as quite a human-centric solution. I believe it is natural for us to find some sort of function to the structures we care for. The changes that are happening as this house keeps decaying can be seen as a “threat”. If it does not perform as intended, does that mean we are losing something? Could this loss or change of function spark something new and unexpected that could benefit the surrounding more-than-human species?



A Feral future

Having an experimental approach to feralness as a concept, I have focused on a more speculative approach to a future scenario for this place.

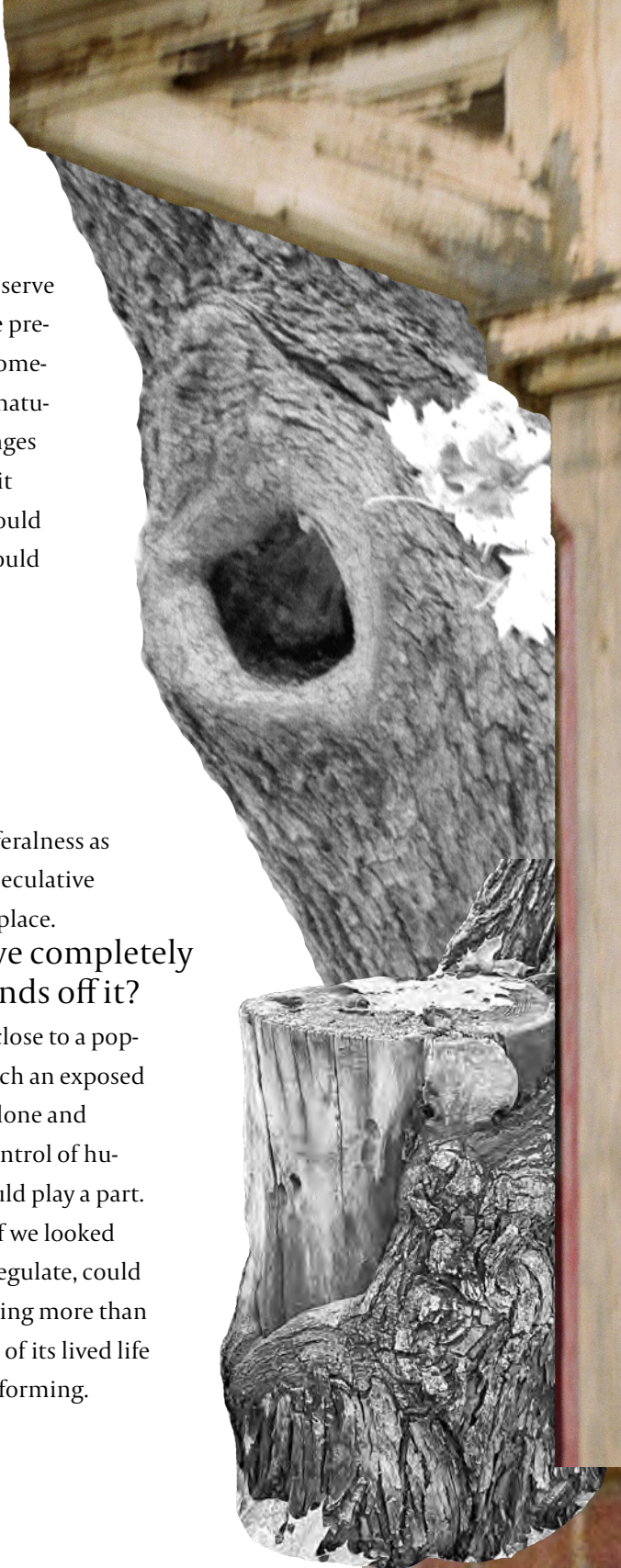
What happens if we completely lay our human hands off it?

Being located where it is, central and close to a popular walking trail, it is unlikely that such an exposed and historical Villa could just be left alone and change into something beyond the control of humans. Too many unknown factors would play a part. Things like safety and aesthetics. But if we looked past our human need to control and regulate, could we then think of this house as something more than a house? Where the essence and spirit of its lived life still remains, but with new narratives forming.



Human / More than human structures

During my walks, I payed attention to the interplay between human-made structures and those crafted by more-than-human entities. Structures intended for human needs often display a certain level of order, whether reflected in their visual appearance or the intended functions they serve. In nature, however, structures appear more woven into their environment, lacking clear order. Trees are allowed to crack and transform organically with other living creatures involved in the process – ever changing and growing.

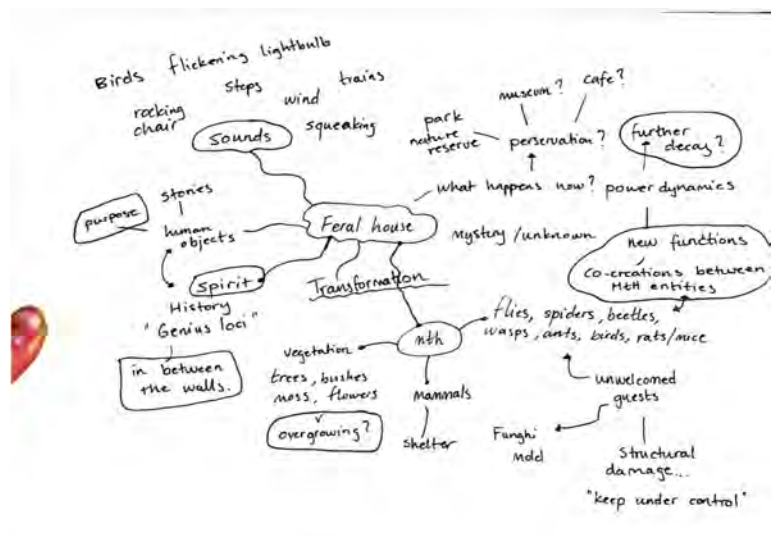
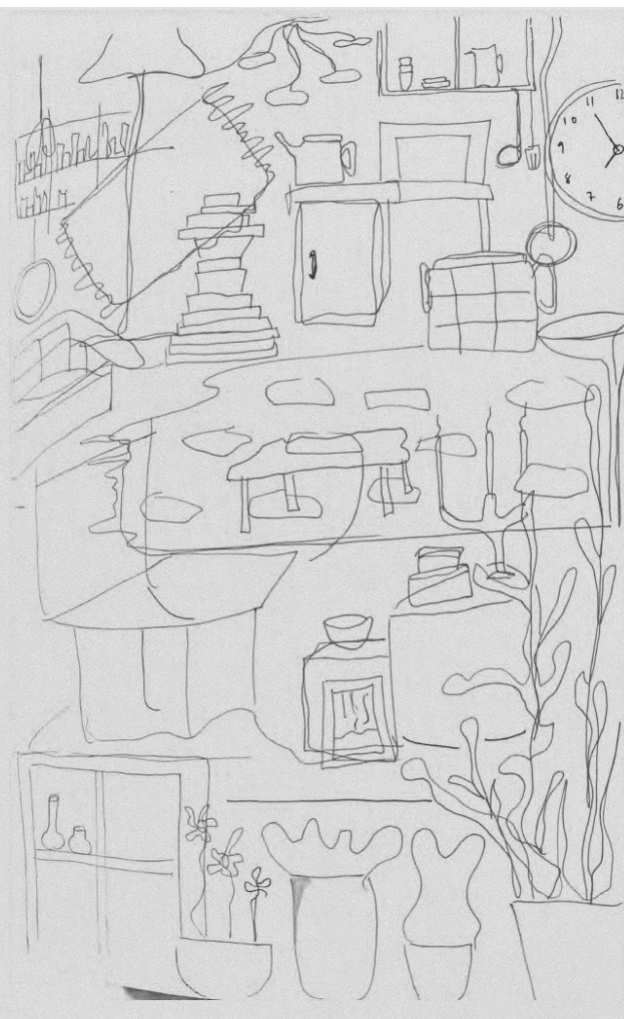




In my exploration, the feral house becomes a tangible representation of these natural processes. With its gradual decay, the structure becomes an active participant in the ecosystem surrounding it. If we left the house standing by itself – what would then happen to it over time? Will this state of decay allow the house to adapt and align with the state of change in the surrounding more-than-human environment?

A more than human home

The outer part of the house is visible to anyone passing by. Those interested can observe the structural changes happening here over time. It's interesting to consider not only the wild changes that might occur between the house and the surrounding plants but also the potential relationships among different species inside the house if it were an open space. Typically, in our human homes, we control what enters and exits. If ants, spiders, or other insects attempt to settle, we can easily keep them away with human-made tools. From our human viewpoint, this is understandable, as we want our spaces to work well for our own needs.

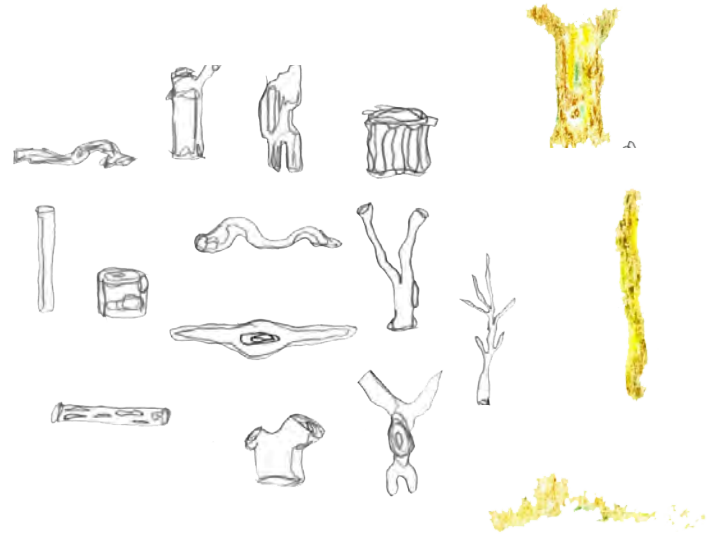


In the absence of humans over an extended period of time, the ecosystem surrounding the property might undergo significant changes and potentially create advantages for the more-than-human creatures in the area. Could there be some benefits for the multi-species to take control over the inside structure of a house like this? I don't know the answers, but thinking about this has made me question what belongs to people and what belongs to other living things.

When do we decide what's purely ours to utilize?

Development of my artifacts

My intention with the final artifacts was to visualise a speculative future of the feral house and its change in structure as it becomes one with the natural surroundings. The actual making of the artifacts was very much a learning-by-doing experience, where rather than having a specific result in mind, I focused on the process of connecting with the materials found. I used organic material (logs, moss and twigs) that I had found laying around the property as a starting point to develop these models.



This project has helped me discover the significance of understanding and co-creating with more-than-human entities. In a way this process has re-shaped my design thinking and challenged my perspectives. Pushing myself to go beyond my human-centric mind and embracing an openness to experiment with the feral as a method to connect more intimately with my surroundings. To consider the importance of creating mutually beneficial environments for all living creatures and sometimes being able to just let things be. See loss and change as something potentially beautiful. I will bring these new ways of thinking with me further on my journey.

