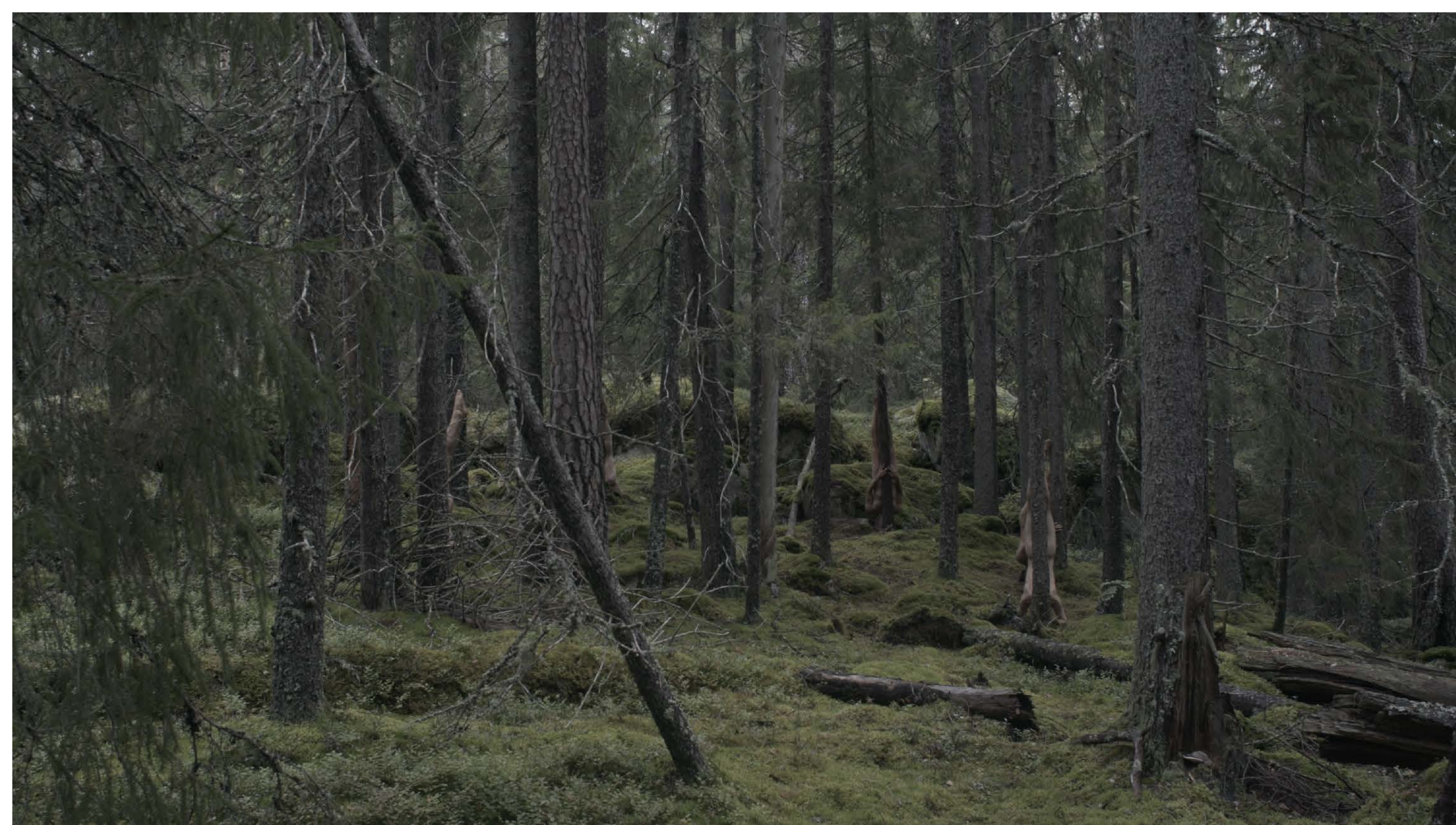


For the 59th Venice Biennale

**The Milk of Dreams**

Curated by Cecilia Alemani

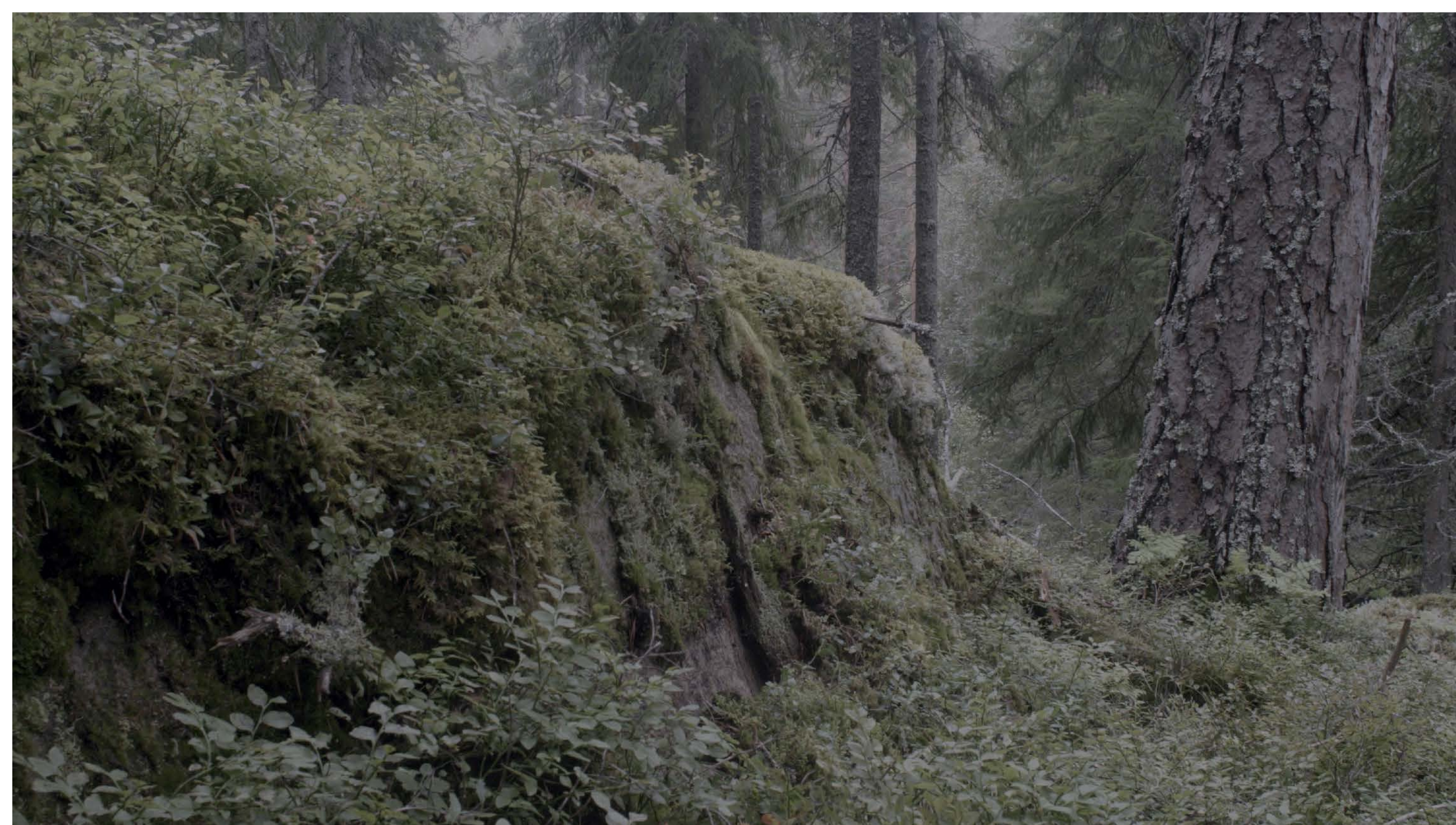




***Le Sacre du printemps*** (2021) is the third work in my “forest film” series. Like *Pteridophilia* (2016-), it seeks to cultivate ecosexual relations between human beings and beings of the plant kingdom. While *Pteridophilia* unfolds in a tropical forest in Taiwan where queer men engage with a wide range of ferns, *Le Sacre du printemps* takes place in a coniferous forest in Sweden where five Nordic dancers attempt to consummate with indigenous pines.

More than 20 meters tall and between 60 and 300 years old, the pine trees are much bigger and much older than the human dancers. The massive difference in spatial and temporal dimensions poses an even greater challenge than the one encountered by us in Taiwan. For several months before the start of the project, I tried very hard to picture ways that the human body and the arboreal body could fuse sexually, but failed to come up with anything that would make sense. Only when we went into the forest and began to play with the trees, did it dawn on us to turn our human bodies upside down so that we can be grounded like the trees, so that we will stop fleeing, so that we will rely less on vision but more on smell and touch, so that we will use not hands but feet to express and embrace.





The forest is located in Dalarna, Sweden. For the entire week we were there, we did not see or hear any other humans. Yet the forest did not feel menacing to us, but rather friendly and accommodating. The forest floor was covered by thick mosses. We did not feel like intruders, but guests who were welcomed to inhabit the forest and to learn its many ways of living and dancing.

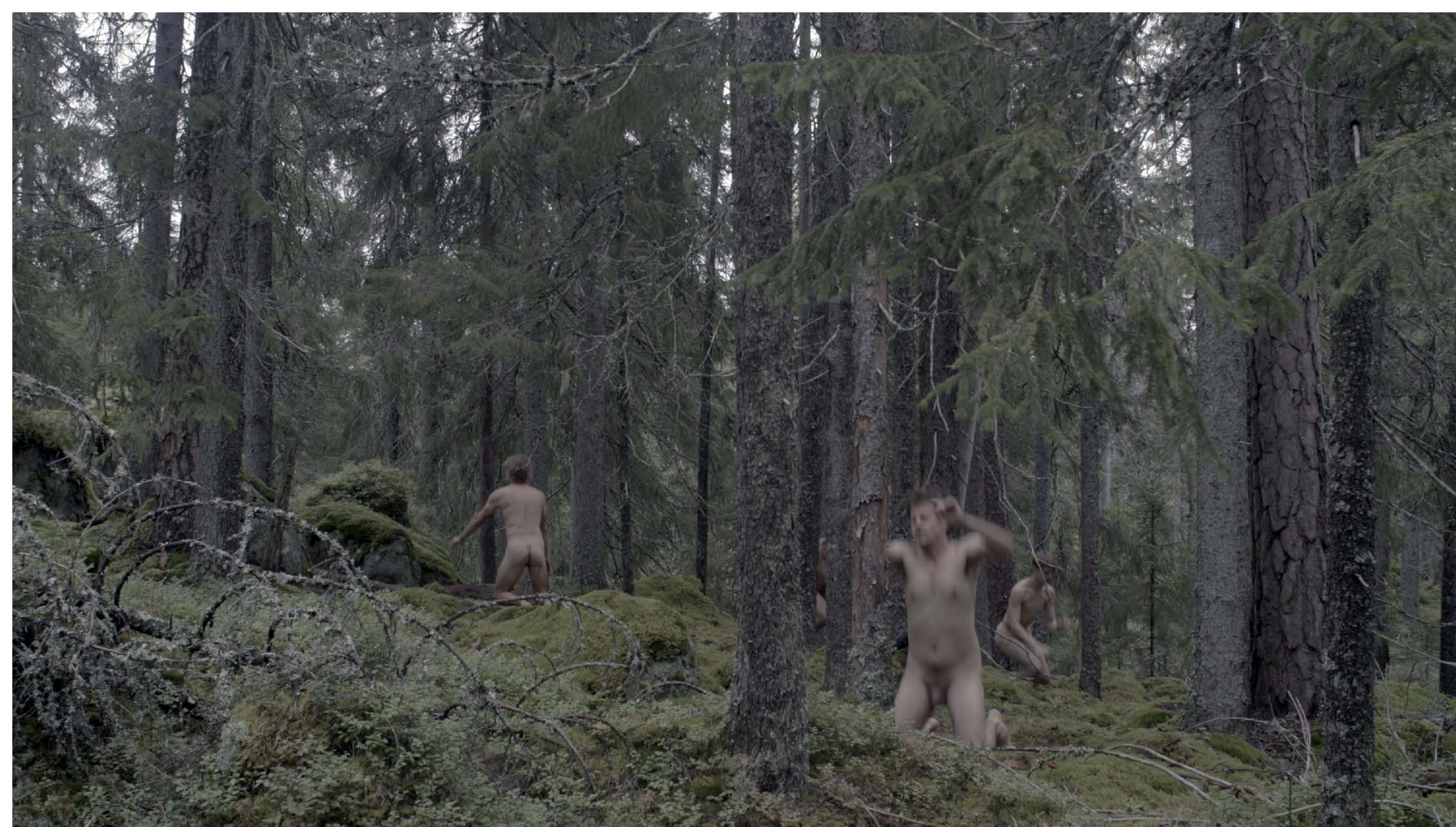




It was cold. Shaking is a good way for the human body to warm up, so we began the dance by shaking. It also allowed us to grow the energy inside of us, so that we could become more equal to the trees.



We then dropped onto the ground, and felt the desperate urge to go into the soil to be rooted like the trees.

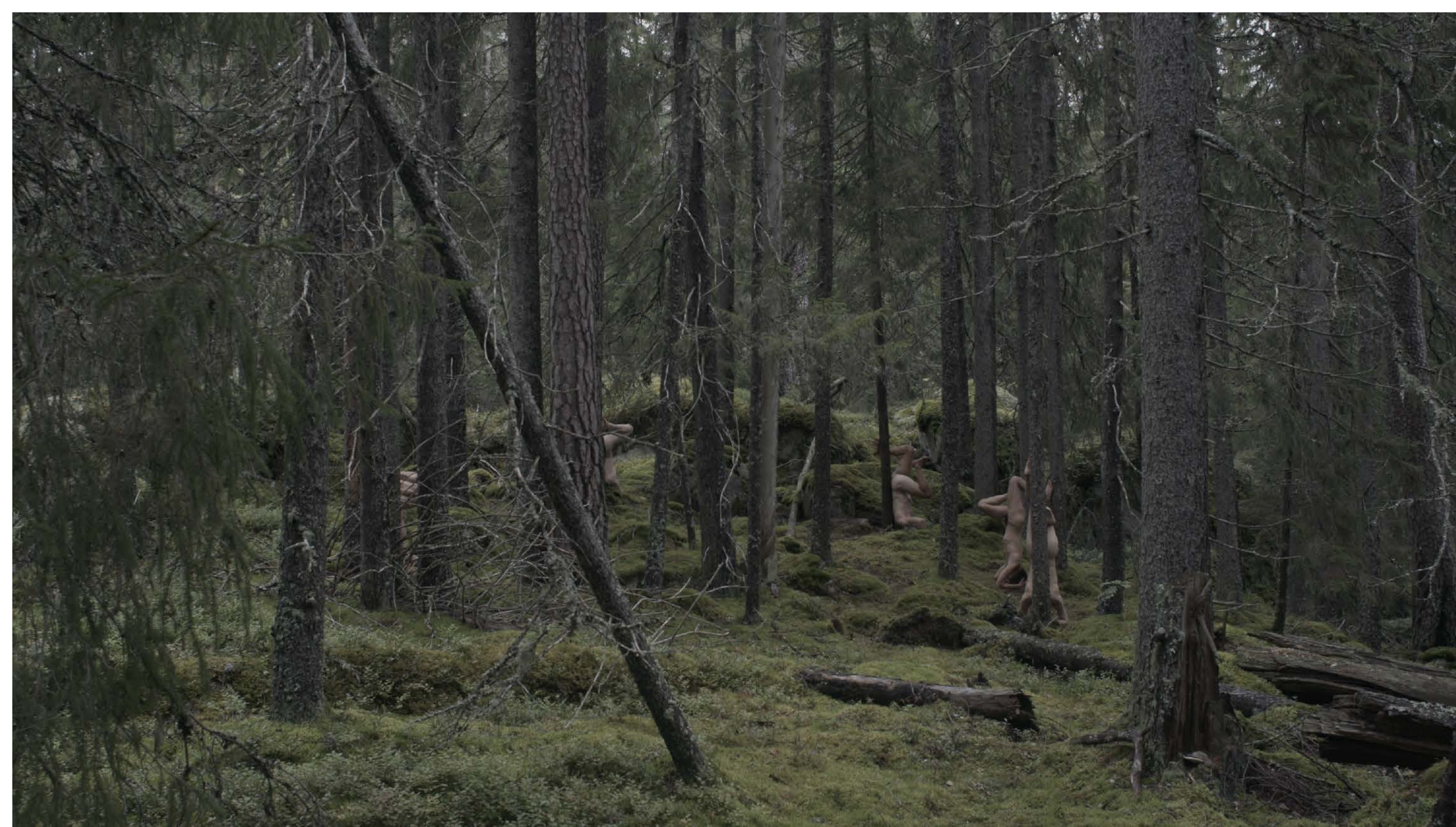






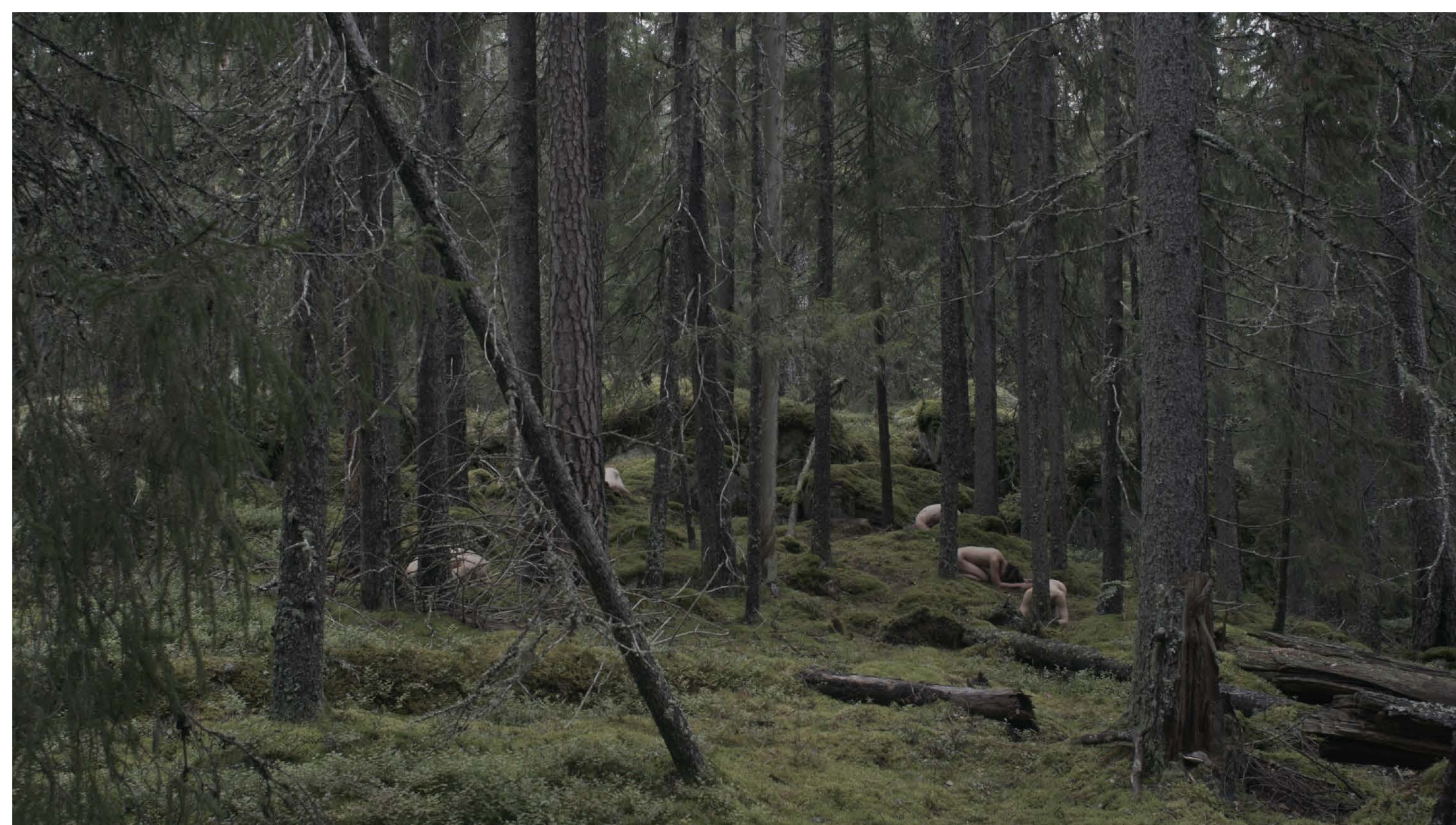


We discovered that by turning our bodies upside down, we acquired a different sense of verticality, a kind much closer to the pine's way of feeling. We started to dance for the trees in ways that perhaps they could relate to.

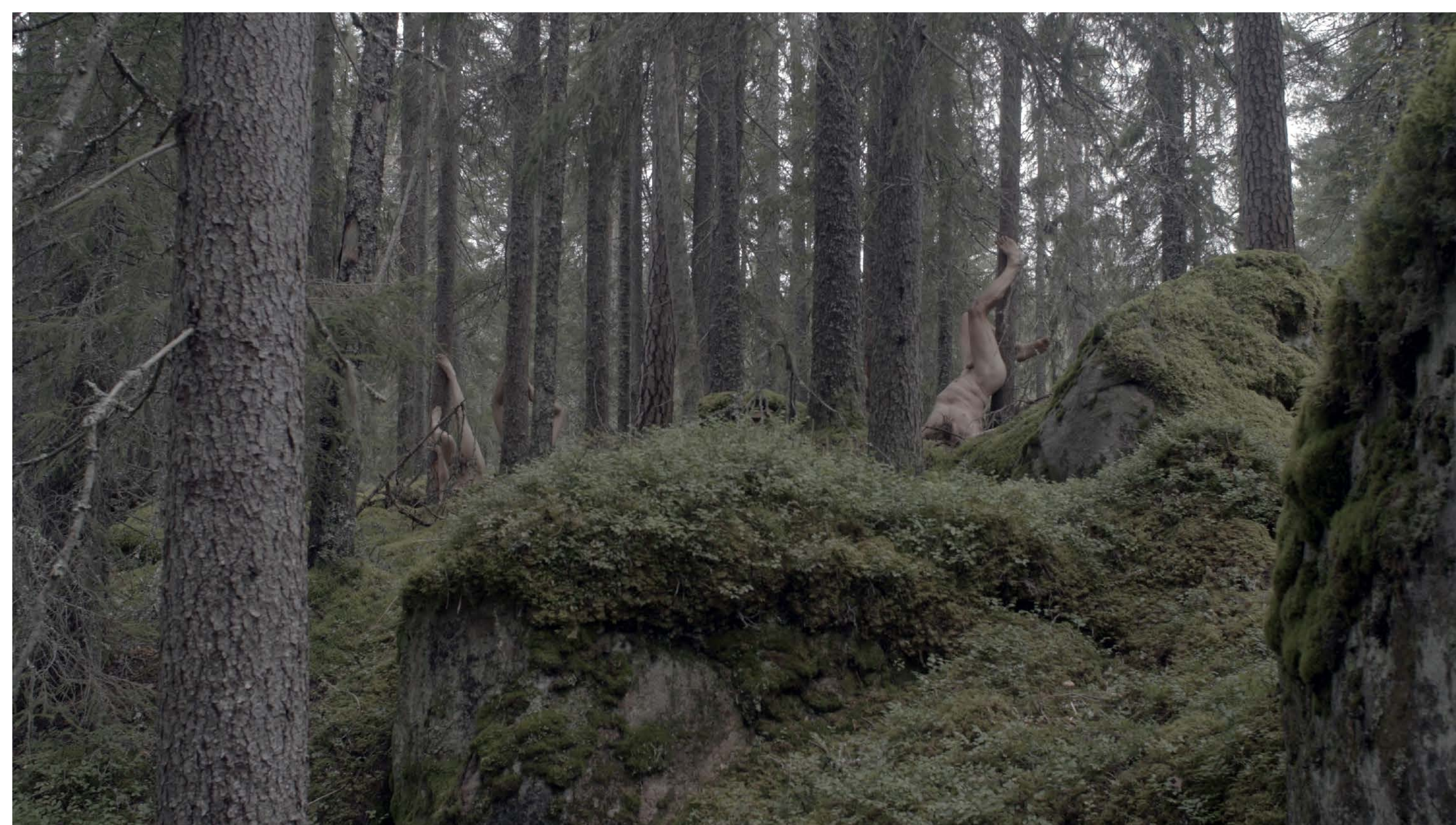




But we humans were not used to living upside down. We had to come down to rest and worship often.

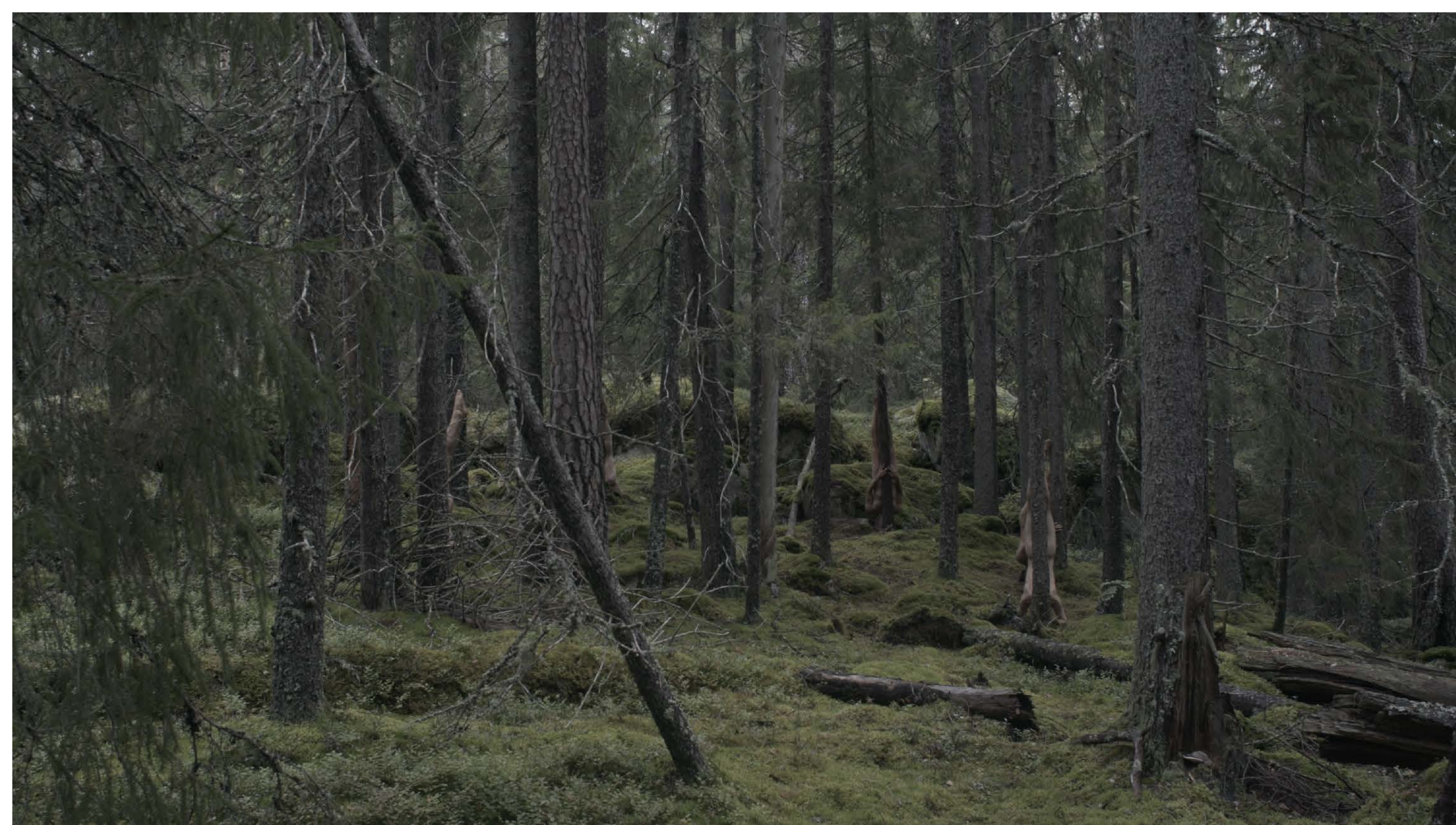






We attempted again and again. Sensing the rising sexual energy between us and the pines, we twisted our bodies and moaned.





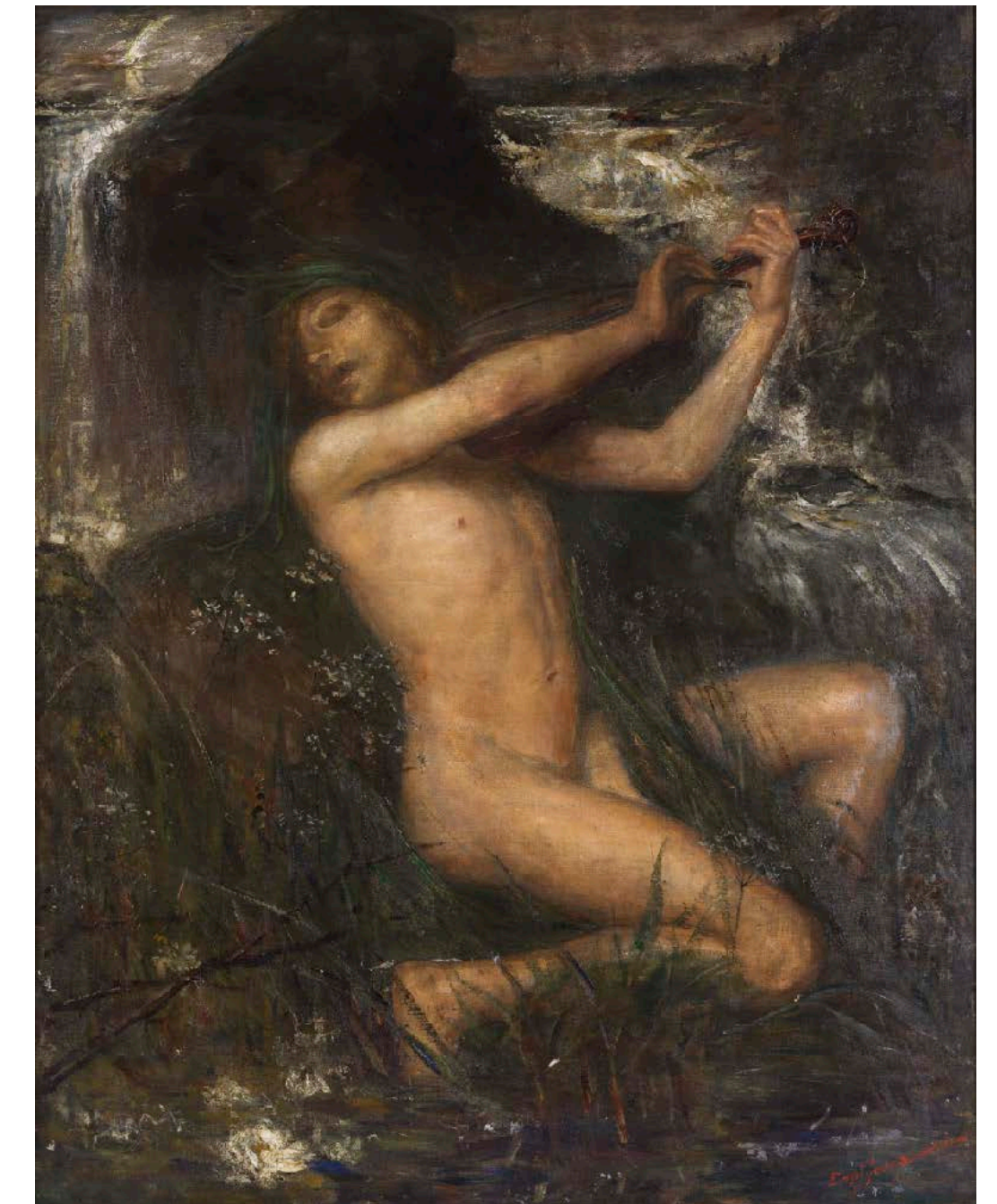
Our deliberate attempt to ferment interspecies pleasure will take millions of years of evolution to code into our genes.



When we went back to the city, we visited the National Museum and were astonished by the continuity of our work and late 19th-century Nordic paintings of the forest and the naked body. What we just choreographed was not new, but a renewal of intimacy and playfulness that has always been part of planetary vibrancy.



Prince Eugen (1865-1947), *Skogen*, 1892.  
Oil on canvas, 45.5 x 36 cm.



Ernst Josephson (1851-1906), *Näcken*, 1882.  
Oil on canvas, 144 x 114 cm.



We decided to name our work *Le Sacre du printemps*. For over a century, *Le Sacre du printemps* has been reinterpreted again and again, yet the human body has always overpowered the season, the forest, and the soil. We believe it is time for us to return to an actually living forest, to assume more humble positions, and to dance as creatures of the forest and companions of trees.



Mariinsky Ballet's interpretation of the original "Rite of Spring" production by Vaslav Nijinsky



Pina Bausch's version by the English National Ballet



Ecosensibility: Zheng Bo

Produced by Rickard Borgström and  
Rebecca Chentinell of DACE -  
Dance Art Critical Ecology

Dancers: Paolo de Venecia Gile,  
Andreas Haglund, Mikko Hyvönen,  
Adriano Wilfert Jensen, and Ossi  
Niskala

Cinematographer: Adam Nilsson