



Inkeri  
Kurkilahti  
Portfolio

## Artist Statement

I am a performance artist, butoh practitioner and musician from Turku, Finland. My practice moves at the intersections of ritual, ecology and community, weaving Karelian heritage, folk traditions and contemporary ecological concerns through embodied performance, sound, and participatory practices. My path has unfolded through mentorship and practice rather than formal education, in dialogue with folk musicians, ritualists, healers, and butoh artists. This has shaped my understanding of art as a space of transmission, where ancient practices and contemporary questions meet.

In my performances, I use ritual structures and collective actions to create shared spaces of reflection and imagination. Biochar Witchcraft draws from ancestral agricultural knowledge and ecological practices, turning biochar into a vessel for rituals of soil regeneration. The Living to Come Within Us offers a participatory space where people weave lives, memories and prayers into a communal braid, envisioning futures together. The Ancestral Tree reflects on lineage, technology, and tradition, blending butoh and ritual in a gesture of connection and provocation.

As a musician with more than a decade of experience in independent experimental folk music, I work with traditional wind instruments (natural flute, reed pipe, lävikkö) and the kantele, fascinated by their untamed tonalities and deep ties to breath and body. Sound for me is both musical and spatial — a way of connecting communities, memories and ecologies. Through performance, sound and collective practices, I aim to create spaces where heritage becomes alive and reshaped through encounter. I see art as a form of ecological and cultural regeneration: a practice of continuity, resilience and shared imagination.



# Biochar Witchcraft (2025)

Site-specific performances, workshops & lectures

Biochar Witchcraft is an environmental art series combining performance, ritual and ecological practice. In different iterations, participants engaged with plants, microbes and soil through shared actions such as preparing herbal ferments, gathering water and seaweed, or charging biochar with living cultures, touch and intention before returning it to the earth.

The work is grounded in the understanding that human and microbial life are inseparable. Handling soil, plants and ferments became a communal ritual where participants exchanged microbiomes with garden, forest and sea.

Resonating with practices such as Nordic slash-and-burn agriculture and Amazonian terra preta, the project reframes biochar as a form of “people’s soil medicine”: a vessel for microbial life, memory and intention.

Through storytelling, embodied action and collective imagination, Biochar Witchcraft explores how ritual, ecology and ancestral knowledge can converge in practices of renewal.



[Performance documentation \(compilation\) available on YouTube](#)

*Created in collaboration with Alkuvoima association’s Healing Garden project,  
supported by the City of Turku through participatory budgeting.*

*Video by Leo Kääriäinen. Music “Heitä miulle mustat mullat” by Inkeri Kurkilahti.*

# The Onion Eater (2025)



Between lust and repulsion, nourishment and poison, the onion becomes a threshold. To eat it is to invite contradiction — to embody the push and pull of craving and rejection.

This performance grows from the paradoxical nature of the onion: a humble foodstuff tied to everyday life, yet charged with symbolic weight. In some traditions, onion is believed to stir desire, while at the same time its rawness provokes tears, burning, and aversion.

The work is rooted in Buddhist reflections on attachment and aversion — two forces shaping human existence. Through ritualised action, the simple act of eating unfolds as a meditation on desire, disgust, and the fragile body that experiences both.

Two ritual objects frame the performance: an envelope filled with ash, evoking impermanence, and a crystal bowl of water, symbolising natural state of mind.

[Performance documentation by Meri Karhu available on YouTube](#)





The Ancestral Tree

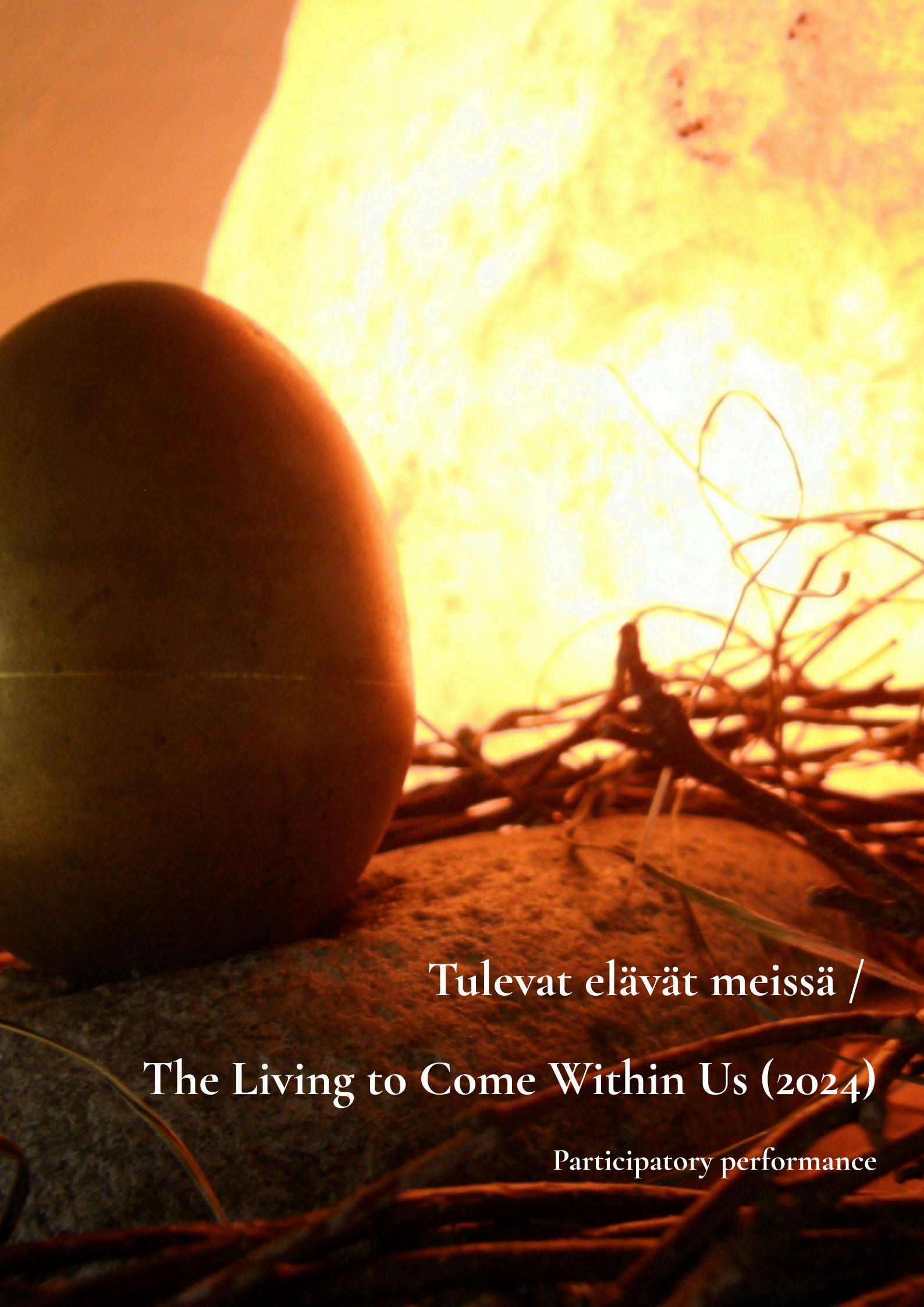
The Ancestral Tree is a performance situated at the threshold between tradition and technology, the sacred and the profane. The work unfolded in two stages. First, participants were invited to tie prayer cloths to the branches of a tree, transforming it into a site of collective offering and ancestral presence. After this shared action, the performance began.

The performer braided the prayer cloths into her own hair, weaving the threads of collective intention into the body. This gesture was followed by a second act: taking an electric cord and braiding it into the same strands, intertwining ritual fabric with industrial material. Eventually, the cord was plugged in, carrying current through the intimate weave of hair and cloth.

Through these actions, the work asks: What does it mean to carry ancestral practices into the contemporary moment? How are authenticity and the sacred transformed when they meet electricity, media, and spectacle? The Ancestral Tree is both a gesture of connection and a provocation — a meditation on lineage, belonging, and the ways in which modern life reframes what we inherit.

Photography by Meri Karhu





Tulevat elävät meissä /

The Living to Come Within Us (2024)

Participatory performance

The Living to Come Within Us unfolded as a communal ritual and a meditative act of shared handicraft. Participants were invited to weave threads into a growing braid, tying their own lives, memories, and prayers into a collective form. The braid became both a symbolic gesture of ancestry and a vision of the people yet to come — those for whom we will become ancestors.

The performance drew from a Karelian creation myth where weaving and braiding hold cosmological and protective power. Through this simple, tactile action, the work created a slow, reflective space in which tradition, imagination, and community intertwined.

Presented at Olohuone 306 Urban Art Festival in Turku, 2024, the piece engaged over thirty participants, offering a space for shared reflection on heritage, continuity, and the weaving of possible futures together.





Sounds & Music

## Sounds & Music

My current focus is on traditional wind instruments — long flute, lävikkö (a Karelian clarinet-like instrument), reed pipe — and the wooden-pegged kantele. I am fascinated by their untamed tonalities, deeply bound to breath, body, and natural materials. My practice moves between experimental folk and sound art, often shaped by multisensory perception.

Sound is also central in my performance works — for example in Biochar Witchcraft (2025), where ritual and collective actions were interwoven with guided sounding. Participants sounded intentions together as a choir, turning voice into a shared medium of ritual and ecological connection.

Listening samples:

- Heitä miulle mustat mullat (2025) – [[Soundcloud](#)]
  - Experimental folk soundscape with kantele, tin whistle and runosong.

Earlier work:

- Käärmikkä – Suvet ulvoot suon perällä EP (2021) – [[Spotify](#)]

Selected concerts:

Alkufest (2024), Kaustinen Folk Music Festival (2021), Turku Cathedral (2020).



Through performance, sound and  
community-based practices, my work  
seeks to weave heritage and ecology  
into contemporary artistic  
encounters. I look forward to  
creating dialogues across cultures and  
practices.

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