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Matter and Mindscape: Artist Hege Liseth on

Hege Liseth - HomoBulla

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ABOUT

her animation video "Homo Bulla" By Pritha Mahanti

Watch on **YouTube** Homo Bulla, 2011, animation video by Hege Liseth© bout matter, American physicist Richard Fynman had said, "Things are made of

A multimedia visual artist working in Norway, Hege's central theme and practice can be summarised as tracing time and matter through textures. This video was made during a short course that she took in animation back in 2011. Some of the motifs recur throughout her oeuvre. But why 'Homo Bulla'? Hege: 'Homo Bulla' comes from the Dutch and Flanders 17th century vanitas traditions. The idea had intrigued me for some time before I made the animation. In my early student days in London, I noticed the works of the contemporary artist Helen Chadwick. Her work was referred to as vanitas of

yet rich it is. There are so many metaphors and layers that one can read into it. Is there anything specific about such an artistic process one wonders?

rational thought and everyday life to a certain childlike, free and dreamy condition of the mind.

And surely, "Homo Bulla" is nothing short of dreamlike. What stands out, though, is how minimal

A still from the 2018 animatiion video TRACE - Lost & Present, Hege Liseth© Hege: I work first and foremost with abstract paintings, characterised by an intuitive and spontaneous approach. Working with animation allows me to deal with storytelling and narratives in a different way. I can then create short stories of an unreal reality, or the experience of time in meditation and reveries. Situations in life where time and place cease to exist, thereby leading to a change in thought. I worked intuitively with the video. Even though I made a storyboard as a guideline, I allowed the story to change organically as I went. My intention was to make a cyclical story, referring to nature. I wanted to put the spectator in a certain surreal condition, inspired by the 'nature of nature'. The inspiration backdrop is the feeling when the most common becomes weird – remembering as a child thinking my own skin to be a very strange material that heals by itself as if it

Could one of these paths also lead to the question of gender? How much is Hege, the artist and

Triptych Moving Parts from the Equator- series | 3 panels, Hege Liseth©

complimentary necessities, where one element cannot exist or be without the other. Differences are not divisive but dynamic, and nothing is ever permanent or still. Somewhere on her website Hege mentions that working with art in one of the the richest countries is an extreme choice. When it comes to the global south, more often than not certain

most other people are provided. I am commending it, but on a global scale it is not at all so extreme. The question of this "extreme choice" has probably taken on a new significance now, given that the world has been through a very difficult and odd time because of a global pandemic. The idea

expenses generally make it more difficult to step out of the system. Norwegian employers are required

by law to save pensions for their employees, which you can harvest from the age of 67. An 'extreme

choice' is relative and related to artists in Norway that often choose to live without a safety net that

A still from the animation video *Fluid Systems*, Hege Liseth©

reality. We're living in a time when the theories of Chaos, Catastrophes, Fuzzy Logic and Flux are

reality in the common consciousness, and even beliefs of certainty have taken on a different guise.

In a new video I would maybe picture the uncertainty by making different timeline scenarios. The

animation technique itself depicts changes and transitions very well. One frame after the other, 24

Prayer To Be Recited (acrylic & oil on linen), Hege Liseth©

Once Upon a Time (2007/08) by Hege Liseth©

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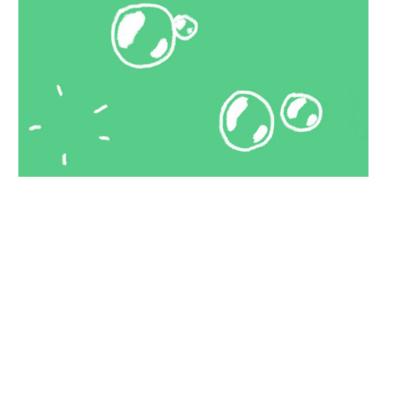
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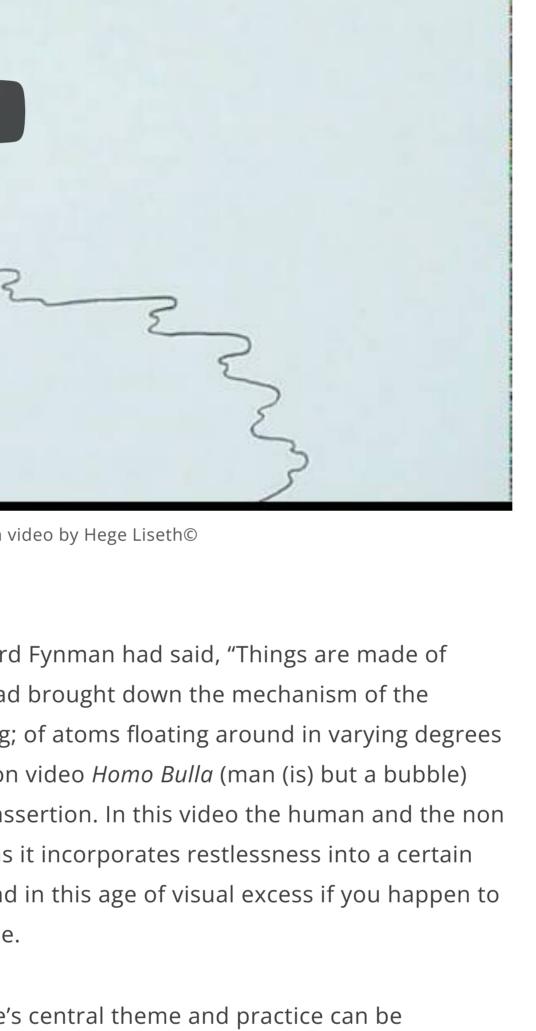
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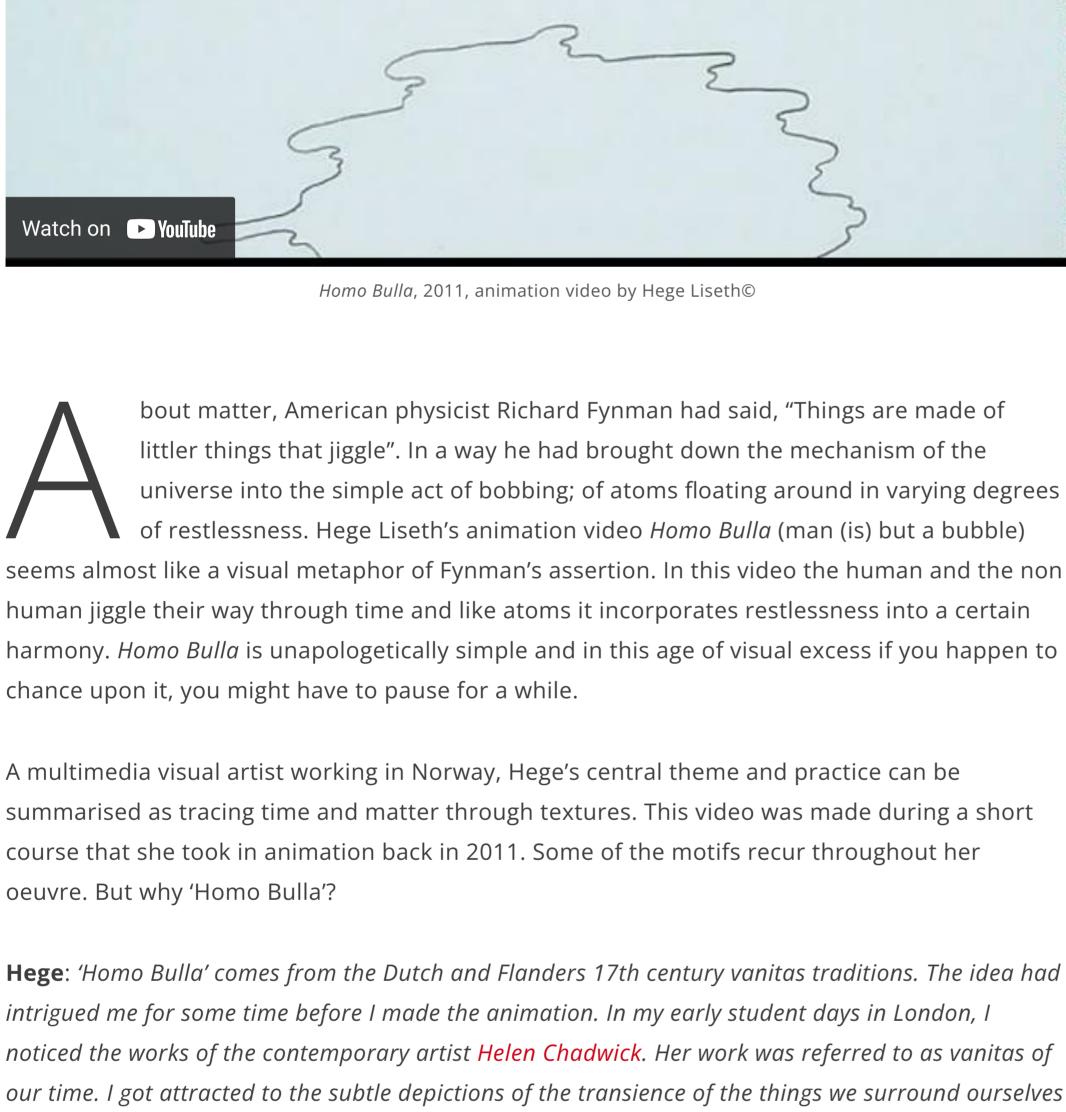
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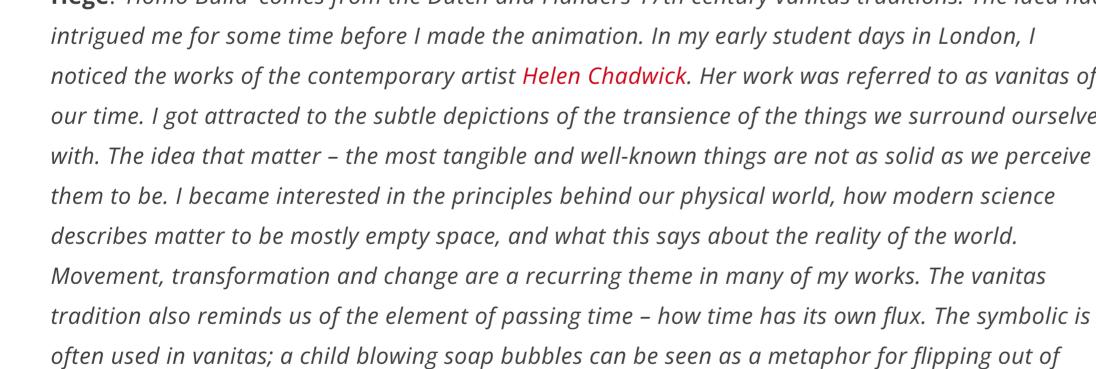
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has a will of its own. This is somehow surreal enough for me. And in addition – we are living on a globe floating in space and everybody thinks this is normal! There is no unambiguous meaning built into the video. I wanted to create an open narrative that could take on many different paths of meaning.

Hege, the woman embedded in the idea of homo bulla? Hege: No, I don't think there is a difference. My focus was mostly on questions about existence and the human condition, and not so much related to gender. Hege's artworks (paintings and those on paper) are characterised by a sense of both permanence and ephemerality. The artist's self-awareness of such a duality seems almost like a pre-requisite, or does it?

Hege: Yes, absolutely. My work is generally based on opposites. I explore ways to express polarities to create a kind of dichotomy. The simple versus the complex. Silence and chaotic energy. The volatile and the stable. The challenge is to communicate both places at the same time. Combinations of polarities that emphasise yet simultaneously dissolve the contrasts between them. In my paintings, for instance, I try with these combinations to depict a condition of potentiality, before it becomes a phenomenon.

I also see these dualities as a metaphor on embracing the instabilities in life, and to be understood as kinds of art practices, especially the personal and experimental, are considered to be a part of an elite luxury bubble. Needless to say there could be a fair amount of curiosity regarding what she means by 'extreme choice'. **Hege**: Maybe 50 -60 years ago and earlier, only the better off would consider becoming an artist. In the social democratic Norway today, an average salary gives a good living standard. But visual artists, on the other hand, are a group with expected low income. When the majority of people have a good earning, it creates certain economical expectations to take part in the community. High living

of homo bulla has been dominating the conscious and the unconscious because of its heightened awareness given the uncertainty all around. Would the animation video be any different if it were to be made today?

Hege: One hundred years ago Albert Einstein expressed concern that so far as the laws of mathematics refers to reality, they are not certain. And so far as they are certain, they do not refer to

drawings per second, becomes what we perceive as movement. As life itself – consisting of a many 'now' – put together it gives us the experience of time passing. "In hoc momento pendet eternitas" – in this moment hangs eternity – these words are written on a skull in a vanitas, still- life by Pieter Sion. I am intrigued by the idea that in every moment we can consider to change the frame and it will create us a new story. It gives me hope.

And, surely, hope is what we need to nurture and preserve. But there is something more. **Hege**: Homo Bulla also reminds us very strongly that we are a part of – and interconnected with nature. We cannot set ourselves apart of, or ahead of nature – the same matter our bones and bodies consist of. That also means we are interconnected with each other. If we give the Covid vaccine to only one part of the world, it will not last for long, the air knows no border. As nature. In my new video, I think the bubble will burst again to create a more coherent globe.

Hege Liseth, born 1969, is a visual artist living in Norway. Working across different media and techniques, with a major emphasis on painting and drawing, Hege Liseth focuses on the complexity in relation to perception and what influences how we interpret the world around us. Hege Liseth is a graduate of Chelsea College of Art & Design in London and the The National College of Art & Design (SHKS) in Oslo. Liseth's work has been widely exhibited throughout Norway. Internationally she been displayed in in New York, Barcelona, Reykjavik, Riga and Colombo. She has earned several grants, such as the National Artist Grant.

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