



Elian Stefa is an independent curator and architectural researcher based in Tirana. From 2019 he directs [Galeria e Bregdetit](#), an independent space by the sea in the south of Albania, while he continues his territorial research with [ARTiLERIA Sazan](#).

FUTURE ECOLOGIES
~ The Isle of Thorns ~
Curated by Elian Stefa
GALERiA e BREGDETiT
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“They call it ‘The Isle of Thorns’ because of its perceived hostility. They say that anyone wanting to step foot on its shores will have their boat pierced long before getting anywhere near it. Few know how it got that title or when, but even fewer attempt to penetrate its perimeter. Legends surrounding the island paint images of a society of reclusive and self-sustaining natives who are ruthless with those who attempt to step onto their venerated lands. And while these stories may just be cautionary fables, what is beyond question is that the island is fiercely alive. The lush green hills look soft from across the bay, and the sparkles of civilization can be seen shimmering like a mirage in the night. The call of the island, like a siren, or an oasis, beacons release from the barren wasteland that everywhere else seems to have become. And so, onwards we go.”

- Excerpt from a found diary; unknown author; unknown year

The Isle of Thorns is the Albanian iteration of [FUTURE ECOLOGIES](#), a programme from *WE ARE HERE: Artists' Moving Image* from the *British Council* and *LUX*. Speculating on themes explored by five UK artists in dialogue with five artists from Albania and Kosovo, *The Isle of Thorns* works towards contextualising *FUTURE ECOLOGIES* as a manifesto for a semi-fictional, symbolic transformation of the island of Sazan, while also playing with the possibility of using fiction as a design tool.

The manifesto builds on fragments of the island's martial history as the foundations of an alternate reality, where the island of Sazan is one of the few remaining bastions of life on planet earth. The exhibition proposes that the artworks presented are objects surviving from this parallel universe – gathered relics that provide a glimpse into this other dimension where imaginary enemies forced a paranoid totalitarian regime into building castles made of sand and legends made of gold. Utopias and dystopias have the ability to become usurped and weaponized. Can we then use them as a protective spell?

The works of Uriel Orlow, Louis Henderson, Charlotte Prodger and Ben Rivers are accompanied by Driant Zeneli's *When Dreams Become Necessity* trilogy with the aim of redefining the idea of failure, utopia and dreams as foundational moments for building possible alternatives. Anna Ehrenstein uses *Tools for Conviviality* to challenge the utopian idea of digital technologies as a neutral tool. Bedwyr Williams investigates the psychedelic and the authentic in relation to the cosmos, while Driton Selmani unearths a mosaic from a primitive future. Niku Alex Muçaj comments on the multifaceted nature of legacy, and Abi Shehu attempts to capture the ghosts from the past that still dictate our present.

Isle of Thorns curated by Elian Stefa is part of *FUTURE ECOLOGIES*, a programme from *WE ARE HERE: Artists' Moving Image* from the *British Council Collection* and *LUX* developed by Tendai John Mutambu, British Council and LUX. *FUTURE ECOLOGIES* in the Western Balkans is presented through a programme of exhibitions, screenings and public events, curated by six curators from the region.