



Brigitte Jurack

The female surveyor

(second draft)

Pedvale Art Park, Latvia, 2024

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Preface to this edition

The artist Brigitte Jurack, a native of Düsseldorf, has been living and working in Great Britain for more than thirty years. After spending several weeks in German-speaking countries in summer 2022, she published the bilingual *Die Vermesserin (the female surveyor)*. In September 2024 whilst on an international artists' residency in Pedvale, Latvia, she wrote the second draft of *Die Vermesserin* in her native language, German.

The second draft is published in two separate volumes, German and English and this English translation seeks to mimic the clipped 'dry' prose of the German original.

The female surveyor counts, notes and connects observations at a very local level and within the context of current European and global wars, narrowmindedness and climate change.

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Ojārs Arvīds Feldbergs (artist and founder of Pedvale Art Park), Laura Miglone (curator), Gļebs Panteļejevs (Department of Sculpture, Art Academy of Latvia), Manchester School of Art, Department of Art and Performance, Manchester Metropolitan University, Great Britain.

The female surveyor

(second draft)

*“Precisely this wretched World War must make us more keenly aware that
love is higher than hate, understanding than anger, peace than war.
Or what would be the good of it?”*

O Freunde, nicht diese Töne! (September 1914), Hermann Hesse,
published in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 3 November 1914.

“The harpedonaptes or surveyor draws, holds, and ties the cord.”
(Serres, 1995)

“The first laws of the Earth. In ancient Egypt, under normal weather conditions, the Nile flooded the fertile land on both sides of its course. When the regular flood was over, royal officials (harpedonaptes) who were surveyors or geometers, measured anew the land mixed with mud and silt, to redistribute or attribute its parts. Life got going again. Everybody went home and got back to work.” (Serres, 1995)

She had stopped counting.

It was the driest and hottest day in June (2023) since records began.

After three weeks of drought, rain at last. She enjoys getting wet. Summer rain.

It rains twice in the forest. The downpour causes the water in the stream to rise.

In the rapid retreat of the water, fish get stuck in the mud.

She helps them back into the stream with a broken plastic cup.

In the first week of July, she gets soaked to the skin three times.

She harvests blueberries, prematurely ripened in Moel Famau.

On the treeless mountain, she does not know whether or how she should seek shelter in a thunderstorm. She crouches down next to the remains of a dry stone wall and considers whether the zipper on her jacket could attract lightning.

Who wins the war? The arms industry.

She makes a note to watch the movie *The Night Manager* (2016) again.

She vaguely remembers that tanks, drones, armoured vehicles and weapons were sold and bought without shame in expensive dinner suits, with cocktails in hand, from detached villas.

In glittering evening dress are the machines of destruction ordered by catalogue.

Bertolt Brecht’s *Mother Courage and Her Three Children* (1939), a new production recorded in Kiev is played on the radio in July 2023.

Brutal, merciless, through dirt, quagmire, mud. Darkness. Patchy, unsteady light. Malice. Horror. Every miserable crisis a business opportunity.

She did not remember her school reading being so dark.

If there is a lot of obsolete equipment around, it will eventually become scrap. From this point of view, a war is an accelerated scrapping of obsolete equipment, at least in the first phase. After that, new machines are deployed, which also become scrap.

Then new more advanced devices are developed that will have to be used and scrapped in the future. And so on.

John Heartfield has shown this in his collages since the late 1920s. His *Tool in God’s Hand? Toy in Thyssen’s Hand!* (1930) shows the steel magnet Thyssen holding Hitler as his string puppet. A torpedo disguised as a cigar stuck between his lips.

Peter Kennard projects the shadow of a crosshair onto the pale printed portrait of a woman. Below it, lined up on a metal bar, are fourteen business cards from global arms manufacturers and security companies: BAE Systems, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, General Dynamics, G4S, Securitas (Whitechapel Art Gallery, January 2025)

Which economy is being stimulated here? By whom? Who is making money from this war?

Mariupol in ruins, all the buildings, all the streets in Gaza. Mountains of rubble, reinforced concrete rods, bridge skeletons, chunks of concrete, streetlamps forced to their knees, mangled electric cables, ruptured pipes, ripped dams, torn factories. Everyday.

Destroyed apartments, perforated high-rise buildings, collapsed hospitals. Burnt farms. Crushed cars.

Again, she thinks of the darkness in Brecht's *Mother Courage*.

Böll's and Sebald's speechlessness amidst the ruins of Cologne and Hamburg.

In churches and cathedrals in Dresden, Lübeck, Liepāja, Warsaw, Coventry, Berlin and Düsseldorf, black and white photos remind us of the extent of the destruction eighty years ago.

In Sebald's stories, no one can forget, their traumas nest in every fibre, sit deep and never come to rest.

What will become of the hounded children, crammed between two fronts? Trapped between sea and wall. The breast milk of their mothers laced with anxiety since October. Milk curdled by fear.

Andrey Kurkov's protagonist Sergey Sergeyich lives in the rhythm of his bees. He knows that bees sense fear. In his devastated village on the eastern side of Ukraine, he puts himself completely at the service of his bees. Their care, their well-being, their survival, their honey production, his honey harvest and processing in the misnamed no man's land. Between the fronts, in the quagmire.

Where the line is only clearly marked on maps.

But only on maps printed between 22 January 1918 and 11 November 1918 or after 1991.

The terrible logic of destruction, first everything must become quagmire, the old boundary stones flooded and dislodged from below.

Mud, swamp, silt, sludge, unstable or unsteady horizontal mass.

In ancient Egypt, the Nile Valley was remeasured after every flood.

Sergey Sergeyich lives to the rhythm of the bees. He takes them to where the flowers bloom.

They are bound to each other. Without words, they are in a contractual dependency. In summer he is free to travel with them to the blossoms, to make honey, to sell and store, in winter he is tied to the house, protecting them in their slumber. In the restricted radius of movement between the fronts, he and they live off their supplies.

The fruit of both their labours binds them to each other, to the world of flowers - the earth - the planets - the weather - and to other people.

Cohabitation.

A contract without words.

"We are apprehended together and we apprehend one another, intercorded, even when mute; better yet, the contract blends our constraints and our freedoms." (Serres, 1995)

Her friend's father from Belfast shared his knowledge of bees with beekeepers in Ukraine.

For him, the bees were a salvation.

Their rhythm is older than any divided or occupied country.

In the correspondence of journalists from Belarus, Ukraine, Latvia and Georgia, translated and compiled in the summer of 2022, she reads two years later in the summer of 2024 "hopefully the war will soon be over." (Petrosyan, 2002)

She wonders whether she would let her son go to war.

Each of the eighty birch trees that grow as an avenue from Firkspedvale manor house towards Brinkpedvale manor house carry three yellow and blue horizontally striped ribbons. Feldbergs' *The Black Hole. Ukraine, the War, the Alley*. Object in progress (2022-)

On 28 September 2024, she puts on a yellow and blue ribbon, embraces the white birch trunk, stands between the root and the treetop, in the now, and prays.

Opposite the Russian embassy in Riga, a temporary wall and a small shrine in front of which people gather. A target picture with Putin. She too has often found herself thinking about heart attack, poisoning or murder.

Why is it so difficult to eliminate a despot? Why are they so healthy?

With precision and thermal camera, satellite imagery, a United States Navy SEAL sniper assisted by a drone had killed Osama Bin Laden, while the then President of the United States, Barack Obama, watched on TV.

We saw on our screens how he watched the assassination on his screen. We became secondary witnesses. She remembers this screen moment well.

Screen moment of sanctioned horror, 2 May 2011.

The on-screen moments of sanctioned and unsanctioned horror, for three years, hour after hour, minute after minute, second after second.

During her school history lessons, she struggled to understand, why only very few people had dared to plan and carry out an assassination attempt on Hitler.

Terror, propaganda, obedience, envy, revenge, ambition, obsession, patriotism, the will to omnipotence, the prohibition of dissent, power.

“To let an obsession take one over is therefore always to consent, in some degree, both to one’s own death and to that of others. Or - to look at it another way - a destructive attitude to others, and to one’s own nature, can be satisfied by cultivating an obsession.” (Midgley, 2001)

“The logic of fascism is to exploit and whip up the fear of those who think differently.” (Eco, 2020)

The banality of evil. She should read Hannah Arendt again.

Where does hate come from?

Who is fuelling the obsession?

Who consents to the destruction of themselves and others?

Evil breaks, destroys, degrades, expels, sends into exile, retrain, trims, beats, reproves, torments, destroys.

Wickedness. Malice.

Books are being banned here and there again.

Simple thinking is becoming socially acceptable.

Eeny, meeny, miny, moe, you are out.

Inside-outside, in-out, a game she hated already as a child.

She counts: on 1 September 2024, almost exactly eighty-five years to the day after the start of the Second World War, the right-wing extremists in Thuringia win 32.8% of the vote.

A few weeks later, Saxony and Brandenburg follow with 30.6% and 29.2% respectively.

On her retina, images of those who are rebelling. Those who feel pissed off. Those who want to shoo people who think differently off their land.

“We need to recognize wickedness as negative, as a general kind of failure to live as we are capable of living.” (Midgley, 2001)

“To understand wickedness, we need to understand our positive capacities.” (Midgley, 2001)

What are our positive capacities?

Have all those who believe in love, sovereignty, freedom, equality, care, fairness and truthfulness left the country?

Those who celebrate complexity and diversity.

Those who delight in the playful.

Those who love, those who care, those who think, those who play, those who cry, those who laugh, those who sing, who shake hands.

She watches the boys with admiration as they perform their gravity-defying flying exercises on the plywood skate park. Pirouetting in the rosy evening light.

Bliss.

Complexity can be beautiful. The intertwining of the branches, the instruments in the symphony orchestra, the voices of a polyphonic choir, the roar of the waves as they crash onto the beach.

A group of sixteen women and men dance salsa in front of the setting sun. Barefoot on the sand hardened by the sea.

Can a picture be too colourful?

The water will turn brown if it is not replaced after frequent brush washing.

Colour theory: contrasts attract, red-green, yellow-violet, orange-blue are the dynamic opposites in the composition.

Pine trees grow right up to the sea. During the winter storms the sand of the dunes dislodges. Bare roots reach into the void.

He says that we cannot really imagine how huge the universe is. What do 2.5 million light years look like?

She paid forty euros for the cab that took her to the International Radio Astronomy Centre in Irbene. Forest all around. No mobile phone reception.

She was allowed to climb into the old radar dish of the Soviet occupiers. On the wall, a faded map of Europe in Russian. Symbols mark the military infrastructures of the Cold War.

What remains of the prefabricated service personnel buildings is gutted and windowless. Ruins of the cold war.

How many years will it take for wind, weather, flora, fauna and microbes to break down the concrete slabs, first into chunks and then into dust?

She remembers the small front garden next to a six-lane road in Heliopolis, Cairo. Hibiscus hedge, flowering cacti in pots and car tyres, in the shade of a leaning mimosa. A man had formed a 15cm high earth wall around the slightly lower seed beds. Protected from the side and from above, the tiny beds remained moist for a long time. Brought fruit. Care. Alongside the crazy traffic, things bloomed, grew and thrived. Primroses, peppermint, camomile, onions, lettuce. Love of the earth, tender and everlasting. In the shade of the mimosa, a person connected to the earth.

The muezzin calls at six o'clock. The man who looks after the garden prays on his little carpet in the shade of the mimosa.

Next to him, cars in six-lane traffic. Incessantly. Swirling sand, the smell of petrol, noise. All the time. Relentless, this unstoppable flow of combustion engines.

From the bus, high above the rooftops of Cairo, she sees a man waving a small red flag. He is standing on a raised wooden platform, reminiscent of the water towers in Manhattan. With his small red flag, he shows his pigeons the way home. The wooden slats of the raised platform that functions as a dovecote are decorated with geometric patterns in green and white.

Six months later, from the parking lot of the Monastery of Saint Simon the Tanner, Cairo, she hears the whistling and shouting of young men standing alone or with companions on these high platforms, calling their pigeons back to their perches, in front of the setting sun.

Love of the pigeons, tender, caring, of men, in a city that houses more than twelve million people.

St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) Patron Saint of the environment and animals.

The manuscript *On the Use of Animals*, written by the Mamluk scribe Ibn Al-Durayhim Al-Mawsili in Syria around 1354, contains illustrated animal legends from the life of St. Francis of Assisi in Arabic.

In tempera and gold leaf.

Von Assisi calls all of God's creatures on earth brothers and sisters.

Sisters and brothers.

Pigeons build their nests on the red roof tiles in High Leigh, behind the retrofitted solar cells. With small branches in their beaks, they duck under the cells, lay the branches on the galvanized struts and come out on the other side.

In the shade of the dusty white mulberry leaves, the city starlings meet for their evening roundup.

Horizontal wheel hubs made in wood or iron are placed on the wooden pylons of the overhead power cables, the clinkered factory chimneys and on 6m-high masts. Horst platforms on which white storks build their large nests.

Every year, if they survive their flight of up to 10,000km, pairs of storks return to the same nest, repair it, make love, breed, feed their young and set off again. The storks were already on their way to Egypt when she arrived at the end of August.

Grass-covered nests waited in vain for the returning pairs. They must have died on their journey. Will the ornithologist know how and where?

On their way South, they missed the sudden arrival of the cold, wet weather front in Poland and Austria by a few days at the beginning of September.

They will fly over the destroyed Gaza

The swallows and swifts that left for the South a few days later died in their thousands in the wet and cold weather front. Exhausted, soaked and starving, they fall to the ground. On 15 September 2024, the

Austrian and Polish population was asked to set off with shoeboxes to save exhausted and starving swallows and swifts.

Shoeboxes and sandbags.

Primitive devices in times of climate change.

White storks flew over destroyed Gaza. In autumn 2023, spring 2024, in autumn 2024.

Will their routes change due to war and climate change?

In the city: lime trees, lime trees everywhere, often double-rowed and trimmed. So many lime trees.

A lime tree every 12m, some as old as the houses in the street. The town bears the name of this tree. The blossoms smell sweet in June and July.

Lime wood, ideal for woodcarving.

Every day she drinks lime blossom tea.

She listens to the regular, slow, short, gentle scraping of the brushwood brooms. Women in smocks or municipal uniforms sweep up the golden heart-shaped leaves.

In Beijing, those of the ginkgo trees, in Liepāja, Sabile and Riga those of the lime trees.

Brushwood brooms bound from birch branches adapt to the user's movements. She cannot use the brushwood broom of her left-handed mother. The branches, which are bent in one direction by the gentle but constant pressure of her mother's left handedness, resist her motoric.

Now that the leaves are falling, the grass verges and pavements between the lime trees are swept in the mornings and evenings. White and blue reusable bags are on standby. They fill up quickly. The many lime trees, birches and ginkgos will require four to six weeks to lose their leaves.

The women will be in the service of the leaves for six weeks.

The rhythmic sweeping motion of their brushwood brooms – the melancholic tune of a summer saying goodbye.

In Liverpool, the leaves are removed by men with leaf blowers. Their howling benzine engines drive the leaves forward.

Houses are made from wooden beams. Flax fibres, squeezed into the cracks between the beams.

Sawing, measuring, planing, dovetailing, tilting, lifting – the standing body, the yard, the forearm (Elle), the foot is needed. Timber embodies time. The fast-growing pines that as beams support and hold the attic must have been eighty years old. The house itself has been standing for one hundred and thirty years. It is additionally protected on the weather facing outside with horizontal wooden cladding. The roof is made of tin shingles.

There are many solid wood beam houses in Liepāja. Only a few are in good condition. All of them stand on foundations of rounded glacial erratics.

Terminal moraine landscape.

Latvian cart horses.

Stones and beams. Building material nearby.

Sustainable and with a low CO2 footprint, as we say today.

She had seen black and white photos of men carrying 6m-long wooden beams for the hut construction up the mountain on wooden backpacks at the Untersberg Museum Grödig-Fürstenbrunn. And photos of forty horses in a double team pulling marble blocks from the quarry to Salzburg. To build fountains and statues for the Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

There are many gaps in the city. Demolished houses leave their shadows on remaining firewalls. Unprotected old buildings and empty apartments are threatened with collapse. She thinks of Southside Chicago. Of

Theaster Gates. Of Gordon Matta-Clark in New York. The Tobacco Warehouse in Liverpool. How many artists and art projects does it take to revive the dormant, half-ruined brick warehouses and Gründerzeit factories?

On the arterial road towards Grobina, the disused steelworks, including a rusting blast furnace. A paradise for pigeons. In Redcar, they blew everything up.

Where there is too much empty property, where there are too many gaps, nobody wants to come anymore. Where there is no work, it becomes empty.

When does too much become discouraging?

The officers' barracks are boarded up. Outside, a new stage, café, art, community garden. In the water tower, studios on every floor, only feasible during the summer months.

One hundred and fifteen years ago, the water tower pumped water into the military town planned and built by the last Tsar Alexander III.

She learns that the Baltic Sea remains ice-free at this point. The naval port and the infrastructure of barracks, refectories, church, hospital and parading grounds of what was then the largest naval base in the Russian Empire was built at the same time as Port Sunlight, the garden city for workers and managers of the Lever Sunlight soap factory in Liverpool City Region.

On this scale, building projects realized from blueprints of the drawing board are seductive. Aesthetically speaking, a coherent whole has been created from the ground up.

Drained marshland becomes garden city for workers and factory for soap.

The sandy soil behind the dunes transformed into a naval base complete with green spaces, gardens and lime trees.

Ships bring raw material for soap from what was then the Belgian Congo.

Ships carry navy soldiers of the last Tsar into a fatal war against Japan.

Ships bring Red Army soldiers.

Ships probably brought knights of the Teutonic Order to the land of the Balts.

Ships brought the Norsemen from what is now Sweden.

Ships brought the refugees.

Ships brought the people seeking protection.

She also came by ship.

She later reads that Liepāja, the city of lime trees, which is called Libau on old postcards, will be the European Capital of Culture in 2027.

There are six and a half million more people living in London than in the whole of Latvia.

The wood storage spaces are full. Just like in Tenna, wood is used for heating. Sawn, chopped, split, stacked or as pellets in bags.

In the nearby sawmill, alder, birch and hazelnut trunks with a diameter of 12cm are cut into firewood.

Fifty percent of the land is forest. Straight roads run through pine forests where pine trees shoot straight up into the sky. Planted close together their rapid growth is hastened along, their fresh papery bark glows orange in the evening sun.

He says many forests belong to international companies. Forest - a growing industry. Will pine monoculture deplete the soil here too?

She wonders whether the pines are destined for the Swedish paper industry.

She herself worked as a student in a calander roll factory. From 6 o'clock in the morning, cotton rich, octagonal paper was placed in hand-thick stacks on an automatic hole punching machine. Punched, then taken down again and placed rotated by an eighths on the growing perforated stack.

Is mixed forest better for CO2 compensation?

Or are the pines ground down? Or are they pressed into slabs for flat pack furniture? Or as pellets in the oven?

Mountains of woodflour in the port of Liepāja.

The bus travels at 80km per hour for thirty minutes through forest, then through a few huge fields, then another twenty minutes through forest, then fields again, scattered with individual farms.

She senses that this landscape has a rhythm that is alien to her.

These distances and proportions are unfamiliar, overwhelming, she loses her sense of scale.

The mole has left its mark overnight. Fresh volcanoes made of the finest soil lie on grass of the apple orchard.

The two groundsmen need two hours to flatten the earth volcanoes with their rakes.

She uses the leaf rake to remove hay from the growing grass.

The stonemason's angle grinder eats through the stone. An erratic boulder, red granite, rolled more than 11,500 years ago out of a retreating, melting ice tongue. Red granite, hidden in the ice, from the land we now call Finland.

The first inhabitants moved in after the retreat of the ice sheet. This was also the case on the Orkney Islands. Building with glacial boulders. Walls, houses, temples, burial mounds.

A black and white photo shows an erratic boulder on an ornate metal bed

without mattress. The paint is peeling. The plaster wall is crumbling. Moisture is leaving its mark. The boulder, a relative from a distant past?

Roads made of glacial boulders. Slightly sloping from the centre of the road to the edges on both sides, in a gentle curve. With little traffic, moss grows in the joints.

Licked by the rain, the granite glows in rich red, pink, blue, grey and black.

It is a good thing that no asphalt covers up this splendour of colours and shapes.

Smooth stones, lubricious and shiny.

She knows that the rounded boulders roads are not pleasant for cycling.

In Naples she also walks on stones, rectangular blocks, almost black, from Vesuvius, made smooth and shiny from shoe soles, hooves and tyres.

On Monday 2 September, many beautifully dressed children and teenagers board the bus. Freshly ironed clothes and in their Sunday bests. They all carry flowers. Three gladioli, a colourful bouquet of garden flowers, more gladioli, roses, a bunch of hand-picked field flowers. In Latvia, on the first day of school after the summer vacation, children bring flowers to the teachers.

She imagines the joyful, colourful scented mixture of flowers. Thirty children bringing thirty bouquets.

The school classes are probably smaller here.

Playgrounds, ramps, swimming in the river, in lakes and by the sea. Fishing with a friend or cousin, walking home alone for 2km home from the school bus stop. Latvian children summer. Doing pirouettes on the skate park until dusk sets in.

She knows that this kind of freedom is virtually non-existent in the UK.

She knows, that bringing her children to school and making them wear a uniform felt like an early encroachment on their freedom, since she herself walked alone at the age of six to school in Düsseldorf.

It is again berry season: raspberries, blueberries, cranberries and sea buckthorn berries.

Harvested by hand.

There is also homemade sea buckthorn and elderberry juice at the market.

Will there still be women and men going into the berries in the future?

Phlox and zinnias, berries and mushrooms teleport her to the time of her summer visits to East Germany. Her aunts in the German Democratic Republic went berry picking in Upper Lusatia.

The weather will change soon.

The huge stubble fields are turned upside down.

After the severe drought of the last few weeks, rising clouds of dust follow the tractor. For two weeks, she hears the tractor every day and into the night on neighbouring fields.

She thinks of the tractor driver, alone, with ear protection, high above the field, back and forth, in the service of the earth, in the rhythm of the summer that is drawing to a close. He is preparing the soil for the seeds that will bear fruit next year.

Every furrow a service to the earth.

In the National Archives, she finds black and white films dedicated to farm work. Exactly one hundred years ago, up to twenty men, women, oxen and horses worked simultaneously on a field of this size.

The tractor has replaced animals and people.

Under the occupation of the Communist Soviet Union and National Socialist Germany, more than a hundred thousand women, men and

children from many farming families were deported to Siberia and the Gulags between 1940 and 1991.

In the small-town museum, they attempt to depict the extent of the internment, exile and forced resettlement to Siberia and the Gulags. Family photos, names, dates of deportation, rarely a date of their return. Wooden spoons, small straw dolls, knitted socks. Two large books bound with red linen, each 8cm thick, printed with the names and places of residence of all those who were forcibly deported: farmers, foresters, fishermen, poets, teachers and all those who were active in the first Latvian Republic.

Re-education camp Labour camp.

Forced resettlement.

Banishment.

Her neighbour was also in Siberia. She came from there with her two sons. Her toes were damaged by the frost. She was given a house by the association for displaced Germans. Her sons never moved out; they never want to leave their mother.

Pain.

Since the full scale Russian Army invasion of the Ukraine over 20,000 children have been forced into deportation so called 'population transfer' to Russia (Le Monde, 2024).

The distant labour camps broke the local ties to the land. The internalized knowledge of cultivating one's own plots. In the collective farms, landless workers drove tractors in convoys across huge fields.

1991 land reform again. Land repatriation. To whom?

Agriculture. Culture that is shaped and informed by the land, the farmland and its cultivation. Agri comes from agre or argris: field, earth. Culture of and from the earth.

In the gathering darkness, two headlights in the distance. She thinks

of the alpine farmers in Tenna, who keep their threshers on wire ropes pulling them up and along the meadows on 30-40% slopes.

She thinks of the Chinese farm labourers in the long slim vegetable field. She noticed through the window of the 300km/hour bullet train from Beijing to Nanjing that the plots were so narrow that the long-handled rakes of the workers facing each other could cross over in the middle of the field.

She makes small mounds of hay with the leaf rake. Sixty minutes a day for a week. From a distance, her mounds of hay do not look much different from those of the mole.

After a week, she stuffs the dried hay into woven bags made of jute and orange plastic fibre. After further three weeks, she pours out the bags in the exhibition space. Law of proportionality: months, years of growing, just enough for a day or two (cow, horse, deer), a few weeks (hare) or a lifetime (insects). Pedvale 2024.

Sculpting in granite: he concentrates, his hand vibrates from the angle grinder, the stone holds firm. Slowly, cut by cut, stroke by stroke, chunk by chunk, he wrestles a new shape from the stone. It would be quicker with the CNC-controlled diamond saw.

She likes the erratic boulders just as they are. Unpolished, rough and smooth, shaped by their journey through the ice.

Stone is not her material.

She is too impatient.

She cannot work that slowly. She does not have that much humility.

Maybe that is what is missing?

The physical connection to the time of the earth, the weather, the seasons and the cosmos.

The erratic boulder in the bed.

“The greatest event of the 20th century remains undeniably the disappearance of agricultural activity at the forefront of human life in general and in individual cultures.” (Serres, 1995)

A bond, a dependency, an internalized silent contract of which tools, utensils, songs, stories, rituals, textiles, dresses, furniture and photos of the Liepāja Ethnographic Collection report, in fragments, are witnesses.

Since the first Latvian independence, artist, teacher, founder and director of the museum, which opened in 1924, Jānis Sudmalis systematically collected everyday objects, textiles, songs and tools from Kurzeme.

Now the collection is exhibited in the basement.

Why in the basement? Symbolic space of storage of provisions, protection and hiding.

Also foundation.

People in hand-woven skirts and jackets, with wedding crowns and Celtic-style jewellery look at her from the hundred-year-old photos.

Wooden beam houses, small windows, roofs made of wooden shingles or reed that extend deep over the window-eyes. Wooden storage vats, wooden furniture, wooden utensils.

She had already seen such photos and objects in the Safien Camana Museum in Safienthal, Switzerland, and in the Museum of Country Life, Castlebar, Ireland.

Even if they did not know anything about each other, those who tilled the land lived in the age of wood. In some places until the middle of the 20th century.

Away from the crystal chandeliers of the landed gentry.

Without electricity.

Spinning, weaving, knitting, sewing, cooking and feeding the children in the light of glowing birch splinters.

They sang, danced, hunted, fished, sowed, harvested, gave birth, grew, married and died in close proximity to and dependence of land, mountain, lake and sea.

Tools, furniture, toys, clothing, food was made by hand on site, in their houses and huts.

In the rhythm of sunlight, cosmos, seasons, animals and plants.

Her father still wore wooden clogs in his childhood in Upper Lusatia. Out of his wooden clogs he was sent into a German submarine.

In Lutheran Latvia, peasants who were in serfdom to the German-Baltic nobility until 1818, tilled the vast fields. In Catholic Ireland, the English barons held the keys.

No Constable, no genre painting with a rustic peasant kitchen, no picture with muscular young pioneers speaks from the perspective of farmers and fishermen who lived in the age of wood.

John Berger tried.

The hundred-year-old apple trees bear abundantly. Silver lichen and moss in Schweinfurt green cover their arms. The weight of their red fruit pulls them down. Some break under the weight.

Apples on ancient trees. Everywhere. On the roadside, in old meadows, in abandoned and overgrown courtyard gardens. She picks up an almost white apple: the white crab apple, the earliest in Northern Europe. It can be harvested in Münsterland as early as July.

She had not seen old apple trees this laden with fruit since she was a child. Who said that old trees bear no fruit? She will ask the new owner how old the trees are. Did his children play among the trees, the children of the collective farm workers and those of Baron Wolfgang von Fircks, who only left the estate in 1939?

Wheelbarrow loads of windfall are tipped under the under the fir tree.

Every other day she makes apple compote with cinnamon, he takes the

apples by the bagful to the apple mill. Emptied into pallet size boxes labelled with his name, he collects three hours later the juice from his own apples. The sterilized transparent tubes holding the juice are still warm and wobble as they are packed. This material transformation has a sculptural quality.

He has already driven five times to the juice mill and it still looks as if the harvest is imminent.

There are melons from Ukraine in the supermarket. Apples from Italy are totally out of place in this year of local apple exuberance.

In Hamer's *How to Catch a Mole: Wisdom from a Life Lived in Nature* (2019), she reads that moles are loners. If two moles accidentally meet in a tunnel, a duel ensues until one is scratched or bitten to death. The only exception is the short period of mating and rearing the young. The mole's blood is thin. The victim bleeds to death quickly.

Their underground tunnels are designed for loners.

Moles try never to encounter another mole in their burrows.

On television, she sees the trenches filmed by a bodycam in an almost destroyed pine forest in the Ukraine. Coked black tree trunks, earth trenches, digging like in the First World War. Drones from a hiding place, operated remotely.

Metre by metre.

In the snow, in the rain, at night and during the day.

Foxes in their dens, deer standing on fields, moles in their tunnels, men and women in the earth bunkers. Their bodies tremble with fear.

Between the charred trees, the distant drone pilot steers his drone towards anything that moves.

On 8 December 2024, the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy reports that in the almost three years of the Russian invasion, 43,000 Ukrainian soldiers have died. FORTY-THREE THOUSAND.

370,000 Ukrainian soldiers wounded. THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY THOUSAND.

It is estimated that in 2022 during the Russian siege of Mariupol 20,000-80,000 civilians died. TWENTY TO EIGHTY THOUSAND.

Thou shalt not kill.

"Why is the technology that enables the production of explosives and poisonous gases being promoted and developed with smiling arrogance?" (Hesse, 2018)

The sculptor who shows her around the art academy told her in the car that he was in total shock during the first few weeks of the Russian war on the Ukraine. He could not go to the studio, could not think straight or get anything done. Students and colleagues felt the same way. Then came anger, then a kind of powerlessness in the face of the emerging logic of the brutal Russian attack.

Six hundred and fifty Ukrainian children died in the Russian war of aggression against the Ukraine (January 2025). SIX HUNDRED AND FIFTY.

When is enough enough?

Once again on television images of destruction in Ukraine and Gaza. Once again wreckage and rubble.

Still, the third winter.

Still, the second winter.

Stop it! Stop it now!

She thinks of her mother, who was bombed out as a child.

Of her father, who was drafted into the war at the age of sixteen at the start of 1942. From Upper Lusatia into the submarine

Fear, shame, guilt – sitting in the soul, covered over.

After Russian captivity: silence.

A new beginning. Zero hour. Stunde Null. Reconstruction. Post war economic miracle.

The fallen brothers in the ground somewhere on the way to Stalingrad.

Those who experienced the Second World War as children,

Those who have lived through German or Soviet repression are brought back to their fears by every flickering television image from Ukraine and Gaza.

Who sings the children to sleep? Who takes away their fear?

Who gives them flowers? Who teaches them to read and laugh?

Human destructive power.

Contaminated, burnt, bombed, mined land.

She is afraid of the normalization of violence.

The lies.

The logic of war.

Or has this already happened?

The flip side of the potentiality to think evil is the actuality to think and live good.

“The problem of evil is an important and difficult problem about individual human psychology in the context of social and individual causes.” (Midgley, 2001)

Yoko Ono and John Lennon in a bright white bed. Love against the gathering darkness.

In her CO2 footprint seminar, she asks students to write postcards from a better future back to the present day. Learning to use positive human abilities.

She peels and divides a fresh pineapple.

For twenty-five years, parcels were packed on the 26 November for her aunts, uncles and cousins in the German Democratic Republic. Pineapple in a can, coffee: Jacobs Krönung, nylon tights, chocolate and Spanish oranges.

Cuban oranges from the socialist brother country were small, green and sour.

In summer by train, later also by car through the Iron Curtain. Border control by border soldiers, German Alsations, mirrors under the car and behind the plastic roof insulation, opening all the hatches and suitcases, getting out, looking under the car.

As a child, she did not understand why people who spoke the same language, ate the same cheesecake and had the same allotments were separated by a mined fence. Their allotment was in Düsseldorf, their cousin's dacha in Eisenach.

She was the only one in her school class who had relatives in the East.

Summer vacation at the dacha, learning to swim in clay pit 1, shooting air rifles in the garden, feeding barn rabbits, eating cherry crumble cake, picking blueberries, climbing up to the Wartburg. Driving past the Bautzen prison.

The Weißwasser/Boxberg opencast coal mine expansion stops in front of the grandparents' house. The simple small farmstead is now a protected monument.

Only speak frankly when the radio is on, otherwise the Stasi neighbours will overhear the conversations with us West Germans. Her cousins are not allowed to study, they are not in the FDJ.

She used the obligatory daily exchange money in Dresden and Görlitz to buy books, and later Orwo photographic paper and film, drawing pads, brushes and gouache.

In the valley of the clueless, uncles and aunts were loyal to the party, even after 1989. Now the descendants are voting AFD.

When the Wall was scaled in Berlin on 9 November 1989, she was asleep in Stranraer.

On the 10 November she was on the ferry from Stranraer to Belfast.

As a Protestant, she spends the night with her Catholic school friend in a Catholic family. In front of the living room window, the barrel of the British army soldier's gun.

Corrugated iron walls, barbed wire, fences, barrier wire, walls, some across the course of the road.

In the long-term fences do not last.

Languages seem more stable to her.

How many divided countries and cities are there in 2024?

Who shares what, when and for how long? With whom?

She reads place names on Kurland maps from the 13th century.

In general, there are many maps on display. The coming and goings of people, animals and plants, religions, rulers, kingdoms and empires, armies, including those from Nazi-Germany, Soviet occupation, exile, resistance, the human chain and the republic.

On 30 August 1989, around two million people held hands along a 650km stretch from Tallinn to Vilnius. The longest human chain in history protested for independence from the Soviet Union. Fifty years after the Hitler-Stalin Pact.

Not a shot. No drone. No teargas. No tank.

Two million women, men and children, a human chain as long as from Cologne to Munich, from Edinburgh to London, from Rome to Palermo.

The land border between Ukraine and Russia is 1974km long.

She wonders if, when and where a new fence will be built in Ukraine.

A death strip?

A concrete wall from north to south, as high and thick as in Berlin?

Tunnels, caves, cellars, vaults, bunkers.

Since the ban on strychnine in 2006, moles in England have been caught and killed in the traditional way. Traps are set up in tunnels. At the end of the hunt, the dead moles are hung on the farmer's fence. Their little bare front hands stretched out. Payment depends on the number of bodies lined up.

Gray-black Hooded crows strut across the stubble fields and the drifting seaweed.

The Corvus cornix is native to north-eastern Europe and Eurasia. A hybrid zone, an approximately 150km wide strip of air and land where black crows and hooded crows share the habitat, is on the longitude of Magdeburg - Dresden - Mecklenburg. Further west, the hooded crow can only be found in Ireland, Scotland and Italy.

Buffer zones and distribution areas of crows. Not every species of the genus Corvus lives everywhere, but almost everywhere lives one of the species of crows.

Will a buffer zone, a hybrid zone between Ukraine and Russia be possible? Without mines? Without a wall?

Two butterflies dance in the warm September sun.

The collective farm complex lies empty for thirty-three years.

A carpet of moss stretches across the asphalt, interspersed with flat-leaved lichen. Lush green in the shade of the birch trees.

The moss exposed to the sun is detached from the ground, has dried up into small patches.

Nothing grows on the broken corrugated asbestos roof panels.

Birch, pine, elder, nettle, knotweed, aronia berry bushes and wild Mirabelle plums grow on top of white concrete block walls of the roofless barns.

Aronia berries are suitable for winemaking. She learns that it was cultivated on a large scale during the occupation by the Soviet Union as a highly vitamin-rich healing miracle berry. Originally from the eastern part of North America, the berry seems to be made for the continental weather of north-eastern Europe. Dry, bright summers and dark, cold winters.

Aronia berry wine is in the fridge. Aronia berry tea tastes bitter.

The forest is slowly spreading in the ruins of the last occupying power.

The blue and white monument protection plaque does not hang here.

On the hill, not far from her accommodation, this plaque shines at the Brinck-Pedvale manor house, which has fallen into disrepair. She doubts that this building could be saved. Moisture sits in the wooden beams. Plaster, still clinging to the wooden slats and reed mats, dangles from the ceilings. She is surprised at how intact the reed mats are.

Ecological construction method of the 18th century. Rock, wood, brick, roof tiles, reed grass, sand, lime, glass, paint.

Inside, still original wall painting.

The writer Gertrud von den Brincken was born here in 1892. Child of a German colonial (occupying) Baron. In 1911, six years after the first Latvian independence, her first volume of poetry *Wer nicht das Dunkle kennt* (Those who do not know darkness) was published.

The current owner of the manor house, sculptor Ojārs Feldbergs, splits a large red boulder in two in 1996. Both halves of the stone bear one of her poems on their polished cut sides. In Latvian and in German.

Brinck-Pedwahlen

In Pedwahlen, my Brinck-Pedwahlen, God and the world were not yet divided, and we learned to count without numbers, my parents filled the bowls every day with some eternity.

Our game was sparked by fables.

No experience seemed experienced enough.

Down below the lights of the little town of Sabile flickered

Above it was written in silver letters,

Prophecy that bore God's signature.

It was improper to ask for luck.

Silence covered the paths in the park and on the dance floor,

Over its shiny surface yet nobody danced. Yet God came walking every night, through the hallway to my bed.

My parents knew that thoughts

were greater than what worried them at the time.

The restricted feels comfortable as long as it is kept in check and within its boundaries. But blessed are the homesick, who cannot be cured through a drink from the mild Lethebecher.

This is what I now think, as I am steering through stale currents, past friend and bay;

... May God walk tall like it used to be in

Pedwahle, my Brinck Pedwahlen, through the starlight-silent corridor?

Sandy roads. A rising cloud of sand behind every car. She learns to close her eyes when she is overtaken by a car while sitting on her bike.

On the asphalt, a black grass snake with white markings on its flanks.

Matrix matrix. Threatened with extinction.

Worshipped before the 13th century as the embodiment of life's vitality, fertility, unending life force and her ability to slip from one body into another.

In the museum, carved Kunkelband arrows with sun and snake motifs.

Wooden dowry chests, with thinly chased metal veneers, ornamented with birds, soul bearers endowed with prophetic powers.

The sculptor knows about this ancient knowledge, it keeps him awake at night, makes him restless and binds him to the boulders. He shows her where the Liv's wooden castles stood.

In the end moraine country, the erratic rocks connect him to pre-Christian traditions, building methods, rituals and deities. The earth of this river valley is fat. The course of the river Abava is teeming with life. There are no other humans nearby. The river, its flood meadows and valley are now officially protected. She swims in the clear current of the Abava.

He is planning a trip to the Orkney Islands. As a sculptor, she also felt the need to visit the Orkney islands. She was surprised that there were no trees on these islands. She remembered the ferry to the island of Hoy. Maxwell Davies' summer academy for young composers and a concert in a tiny damp and cold village church. The fierce wind howled around the walls. Her hair stood on end. The music, the space, the crossing, the remoteness and the euphoria of the composers, musicians and the audience.

Powerful in the most beautiful way. Truly intangible, fleeting, transient.

Her fingertips are black. She collects the willow and hazelnut charcoal from the place where three mature willow and hazelnut bushes were cut down and burned in early June. The small, light lumps crumble in her hand. Petrified in black, small pieces of branch, their bark and flesh preserved in detail.

She thinks of the Herculaneum where the beams of doors and windows kept their shape whilst petrified in the heat of the volcanic embers.

She blackens the paper with willow charcoal saturated in linseed oil.

She can no longer ignore the darkness.

She is writing a postcard from the future and begins with a quote from Hermann Hesse that is more than a hundred years old.

"The other man is not a stranger; he is not something remote, unrelated to me, and self-sufficient. Everything in the world, all the thousands of 'others', exist for me only insofar as I see them, feel them, have relations with them." (Hesse, 1918 republished in 2018)

She adds "other person" and in brackets: children, people, animals, rivers, mountains, oceans, earth.

This is followed by her unsorted list from a better future:

To love, to sing, to educate children in and to freedom, fresh air, to learn three languages, to celebrate, to allow technology and machines only for the healing of humans and other living beings, to abolish all weapons industry, to re-engage with agriculture instead of chemical culture, to know the names of plants and animals, to learn history, to play football, to talk to real people in real space, to creatively understand complexity, to write stories and share the earth with all living beings fairly and equally. To grow with and alongside trees, animals and plants. To dance on the beach. To pirouette on skateboards. To breed pigeons, to sow, plant, water, harvest. To bury the dead with dignity and to not forget them.

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In the Biedermeier Conservatory, small panes of coloured glass are sporadically inserted into the wooden struts. The blue pane gives the garden a wintry appearance during the summer, whilst the orange pane gives it a summery appearance in winter.