

MAY 2015

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Acrylics 50 x 50 cm

Green in all shades.

Green, the colour of the month of May, the colour of youth, hope and confidence. Out of the forbidding silence of the dense fir forest we step into the quiet calmness of the light lime green in the deciduous forest.

Change of scene.

Change of paradigm.

May 1945.

Collecting timber in the woods since the early morning.

That means, my mother stacks dry timber onto the small wagon, and I, at that time 7 years old, live my dreams with the wood. Sometimes there is a snake, sometimes a telescope but most of the time a gun, and if there is a Red Wood Ant crawling around on a twig I have to have a close watch how the little animal manages its six legs without stumbling. If it tries to disappear into the leaves I reach for the gun. Puff, puff. With the bazooka I destroy the enemy tank. Six legs regardless.

Mother has no empathy for my world, she hurries on as I have to be in school by ten o'clock, and it is a long way to the village.

Then, all of sudden, all the church bells start ringing.

I still remember well how my mother tied down the timber in a frenzie, and how we rushed at the double back to the village.

But no disaster had struck, on the contrary.

From all the houses, flags were hung out, in the streets there were lots of people standing around and shouting out to us: the war is over!

There was laughter, singing, embracing and joyful shouting. Friendly and beaming faces in our village that otherwise used to have more of a stance of seriousness and grumpy curmudgeon.

It was a holiday, and to my big disappointment there was no school either. (The older pupils probably felt differently.)

I still remember how my father removed the big map of Europe from the sitting room wall. On this map he had used to mark the current front line with coloured thumbtacks, and I learnt reading words whose meaning was alien to me: Stalingrad, Monte Cassino, Dieppe... And everything should be again like 'before' although to me this 'before' never existed because as far back as I could remember there had been war, but the faith in the future of the 'Big Ones' promised nothing but good.

What remains is the green of hope, the bright light in the dark wood, provided that it is not the glow of a devastating forest fire.