



The shoes of Persephone
Hand Embroidery by Hanna Sukare
Foto: Esche Schörghofer

Hanna Sukare: Ark of the North

Not writing is the most difficult part of writing, the austrian author Ilse Aichinger (1921 – 2016) once said in an interview. I appreciate her work very much, but I was skeptical about this remark and thought: Here she exaggerates. Only last winter did I experience her remark firsthand and found it to be true.

In previous years to start writing had meant to me for example finding a suitable name for the main character thanks to inspiration from a painting, like in my novel *Schwedenreiter*. Or a dream brought me the first sentence of a story, like in my novel *Staubzunge*. Above all beginning had meant research: in archives, books, maps, talks with different people etc.

In August 2022 I finished my *Trilogy of Quest*. The three novels deal with the consequences and long-term effects of National Socialism on individuals, families and society in Austria. In autumn 2022 I had the reading tour with the last novel *Rechermacher*. During this past fall I realized that I wanted to change direction. I wanted to change not only my subject but also the starting points and means of my writing. I longed for reduction: fewer characters, fewer places, fewer different times and above all: less research outside but more inside myself.

On May 1st 2023 I arrived at AARK, Korppoo. I had no idea what I would work on. I entered a room full of light, abundance of light. The room was silent, abundance of silence. Inside something moved. Outside I saw the birches, still naked, pines green as ever, rocks like the backs of giant seals, covered with moss and silver lichen. In the background twinkled a body of water, shimmered. Inside something opened, brightened up. I sat down and started to write. Two weeks later the birches got dressed as the alders and ash trees. The room was still silent and even brighter than when I arrived. I was still sitting at the table by the window that looks out at the birches, pines, rocks and the body of water, shimmering, and I was writing.

What I did not give up from my former way of writing is my working with dolls, little wooden or fabric figures. They are on my desk. I talk to them when I do not know how the story will continue. They give me answers. My husband Esche, who had previously supported me with the research, made the new dolls for me here on Korppoo – every story needs its own characters. These figures are made of Finnish wood, they are islanders, from the Archipelago.



Now I am curious how the writing that I began here on Korppoo will continue when I come back to Vienna, where I live. I only know there is something else which will not change in my writing: *The sentence decides between the attitude towards the real persons and the attitude towards the words, until the sentence, completely invented, can to some extent touch on what really*

happened. Herta Müller, Romanian-German author (Nobel Prize 2009), used this apt wording for the transformation of things into sentences.

I bow in gratitude to Renja Leino and Benkku Andersson for creating on Korppoo this Ark of the North that shelters artists from all over the world. I bow in gratitude to the light and the deep silence that this island has given me.



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Hanna Sukare born in Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany. Has lived in Vienna, Austria, since she was young. 2016 awarded the Rauris Literature Prize for the best debut in German, shortlisted for the 2016 ALPHA Literature Prize and shortlisted for the 2019 European Union Literature Prize.

Next to writing Sukare embroiders by hand. The motifs of her embroidery she takes from her dreams.

You can read more about the artists' adventures at AARK (Archipelago Art Residency in Korpo) at aark.fi/work-in-progress

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