

LYDIA BODNAR-BALAHUTRAK

“HIDE AND SEEK”

Collage is a way of piecing things together. I clip newspaper and magazine articles, save treasured mementos and bits of cultural artifacts, and arrange them onto canvas, wood, or paper. The collages accrue and become grounds upon which I can play “hide and seek”. Through layering, scraping, veiling, and applying various markings with paint, charcoal and other media, some elements are concealed, others revealed. Seemingly disparate fragments join forces, come together, and a wondrous new narrative begins to take shape.

In 1996, ten years after the nuclear cataclysm of Chernobyl in Ukraine, I visited the Zone, ground zero. I was struck by the wildly overgrown abandoned buildings and grounds. Trees were breaking through concrete floors and taking root; apple trees were laden with golden ripe fruit. Nature was resolutely reclaiming herself and spreading her healing mantle over the dust and decay. Despite everything, even in the face of deception, destruction, and loss, nature was regenerating life and creating anew.

The tangles of trees and branches, the vines and berries, the flocks of birds in my artwork are not exotic nor enchanted. They are grace notes close to home, the ever-present harbingers of poet Gerard Manley Hopkins’ words:

“Nature is never spent; there lives the dearest freshness deep down things.”