

Seed to Seed

Working intuitively, Claudine Marzik and Tijn Meulendijks allow the inherent properties of plant materials to guide their creative process. From childhood in their respective countries of Switzerland and The Netherlands, both found solace and peace in nature, and now in their mid careers, both artists return to the natural world for release and inspiration.

Those retreats into European heaths or meadows and into Far North Queensland rainforests, dry sclerophyll bush and cultivated gardens, continue a lifelong urge that Marzik and Meulendijks share, to closely observe the germinating, growing and wilting of flora.

In *Seed to Seed* Meulendijks works with colour derived purely from plant and soil pigments. When crushed and dried onto paper, the *Rubus alceifolius* fruit (wild Blackberry) becomes the colour of a soft-hued tea, in contrast to the deep violet stains of an introduced wildflower found by the side of the road. The integrity residing in Meulendijks' sculptural installations and in Marzik's spare, layered paintings comes out of their time spent discerning the morphology of plants and their distilled colour, their intricate prickliness and smooth shapes, their grace and vulnerability. Ultimately, the affect of the plant world upon human emotion is inspirational.

The incursion of *Rubus alceifolius* in the gallery space was guided by Meulendijks' meticulous hand work, transferring energy to each Blackberry cane bound and entwined with another. The resulting organic thicket is an animated form sprouting from the gallery's high ceiling—hard and soft, heavy and light. Meulendijks' other medium comprises residual traces of grass seeds germinated on paper through which he wrought massed drawings of delicacy and mystery, with shooting stalks now softly imprinted.

Grass, its knotted forms and angular stalks also spoke to Marzik. Her stripping back of multiple paint layers releases stems and pods of colour, restrained at a distance but alive at the close-up level of fine texture. These coloured striations are absolutely attuned to the vegetation tenderly observed in the *Seed to Seed* project. Marzik's two-dimensional works also pick up the dialogue of Meulendijks' tensile installation and she talks of the spontaneity shared with Meulendijks in jointly creating this, their third exhibition together, describing the collaboration as a 'lucky ensemble'.

Gut feeling, that natural emotion, is a reaction to art made from an authentic emotional state, and is far stronger than an intellectual response. The latter automatically places a barrier between the creation and the viewer, objectifying and analysing the art. But in their collaboration, Marzik and Meulendijks' very personal expression of the natural world seeks a shared gut feeling—a fundamental recognition of the life force around us.

This evocative exhibition speaks to nature's elemental cycles and has a visual corollary in the first line of the eponymous Dylan Thomas poem, *The force that through the green fuse drives the flower*. The 'feel' embodied in *Seed to Seed* is European with an Australian influence but the intent is beyond place or nationality, it is universal, like Thomas' metaphorical poem about youth, growth and death.

I hope in *Seed to Seed*, viewers truly perceive the unsentimental beauty of flora in its purity. I also hope viewers are able to take pause from their hectic, multitasking lives and appreciate the quietude of *Seed to Seed*, contemplating the world's natural phenomena in communion with two very distinctive, accomplished Cairns-based artists.

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