

Shrubs, Flowers and Decay: Zadok Ben-David – Tilyen Mucik

'Going into nature and being in that nature nothing but truly and forever at home, that would feel like his greatest joy', says the actor at Vienna's Burgtheater in Thomas Bernhard's novel *Woodcutters*.

Especially at times of upheaval and great change, nature seems the only available source of comfort. After all, it gives us the certainty that life will continue and always reorient itself. Especially at the few places that are untouched by humans, a great diversity develops, which is a condition for life. In the age of the Anthropocene, there are hardly any places left where humans have not intervened. Although we desire to be 'in free nature [...], not locked in it, just in nature, not in artificiality' (*Woodcutting*), nowadays it is hardly possible to experience this anymore.

In the exhibition *Shrubs, Flowers, and Decay*, the young photographer Tilyen Mucik (born in Ljubljana in 1995) discovers the variety and diversity of nature, and the sculptor Zadok Ben-David (born in Bayhan, Yemen in 1949) creates it by his own hand. Artificial and natural nature meet. In nature, chance plays a large role in the development of variety, while humans in their work want to eliminate chance as much as possible. Predictable consistency is highly important to them. The variety presented in Zadok Ben-David's *Blackfield*, which has been exhibited internationally, is planned, not the result of chance. It is a field consisting of finger-sized flowers, cut like silhouettes from stainless steel. Depending of the size of the field, they amount to hundreds or even thousands, on one side in colour, on the other black: a sea of delicate shapes. One side, we perceive with our senses, the other one rationally, and while walking around it, we oscillate between sensual and analytical perception. In 2009, we had one *Blackfield* in the gallery; this time, we are showing select individual pieces.

Tilyen Mucik's series was conceived when the artist spent time at the beach in Croatia. On her walks on the beach, she observed the small plants growing around her, and noticed on closer examination that they were all different. 'Upon closer inspection of the flora, I realised numerous species of plants grew in this area.' She took a white sheet of paper, placed single plants on it, and thus documented the variety and elegance of the inconspicuous flora. She explains: 'I once again marvel at the miracle of evolution and beauty of mother nature, at the eternal battles for survival and the wonderful diversity of the world of plants.' In her *Shrubs*, she tries through manual editing of the photographs to bring back their naturalness that has been lost through the process of photographing. 'With the photographic process I robbed nature of its natural; it contained nothing organic, it became sterile and not wild anymore. I needed to return what I had taken – I started adding the natural to the photographic medium.' She colours or embroiders with materials gained in nature, or buries the photographic film in the earth for a while. In her latest work, she colours only parts of the otherwise black-and-white photograph, creating a document of decay. We are showing works from all three series.

Tilyen Mucik (born in 1995) finished her graduate studies in 2018 at Visoka šola za storitve (VIST) with a thesis project Flora Femina – combining female and botanical motifs in the field of photography. In 2013 she received first prize at Tresk festival for best concert photography, and again a special jury mention in 2018. At Rovinj PhotoDays Festival she placed second in the category "Art Concept" with her photoserries "Pink". Her works have been exhibited in Slovenia and abroad (Museum of Arts and Crafts – Zagreb, Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova – Ljubljana, Ethnographic Museum – Ljubljana). She is currently finishing her master studies in Photography at the Academy of Visual art and Design in Ljubljana.

Zadok Ben-David is an award-winning, London-based artist, widely acclaimed for his sculptures, installations and public artworks. Ben-David explores themes linked to human nature and evolution. His work is often referred to as poetic and magical, always oscillating between delicate miniature-work and monumental installations. Metalworking has become Ben-David's preferred language in contrast to the subtle optical illusions that he creates thanks to a sometimes-rough medium. Ben-David represented his country Israel at the Venice Biennale in 1988 and participated to numerous biennales worldwide. His works are exhibited in illustrious national museums and art galleries across Europe, Australia, America, Central Asia and the Middle East. Born in Bayhan, Yemen in 1949, Ben-David immigrated to Israel the same year and graduated in Advanced Sculpture from St. Martin's School of Art, in London, where he taught from 1977-1982.

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Poster
Reverse
Tilyen Mucik, Halophytes Salicornia europaea, 2021, digital print on archival paper, 30 x 40 cm, edition of 3
Zadok Ben-David, Unnamed, 2021, handpainted stainless steel, perspex box, 25 x 25 x 13 cm, unique

ZADOK BEN-DAVID TILYEN MUCIK *Shrubs, Flowers and Decay*

March 25 – May 19, 2022

Opening March 25, 6pm

sculpture and photography





