

Monika Mørck og Maia Birkeland

Rekonstruksjonar heimanfrå

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**TRØNDELAG
SENTER
FOR
SAMTIDSKUNST**

Monika Mørck and Maia Birkeland use plants and materials from nature for their textiles and sculptural installations. Over the years, they have incorporated the old farming culture into their artwork. They collect natural materials, work with plants and gardening, conserve, and regard the transfer of knowledge between generations as an important central element in their artistic exploration. Both artists translate manual farm work, traditional needlework, and their encounters with older generations into a practice that is linked to their lifestyle and working method.

Monika Mørck and Maia Birkeland both have backgrounds in textiles and have collaborated since 2018. The exhibition "Rekonstruksjonar heimanfrå" (Recreating from home), at Trøndelag center for contemporary art, is their fourth collaboration. The exhibition is designed as a walk through a landscape with traces of cultural history and natural elements. The artists' installations, sculptures, and textiles provide sensory experiences and encourage reflection on the values of our surroundings, natural resources, and ancient knowledge.

In her sculptures, Maia Birkeland combines nature's multifaceted parts into recognizable forms. Tree trunks, driftwood, twigs, logs, and various types of wood are processed and combined with harvested flowers, reeds, stone, steel, yarn, and non-felt surfaces. Through care and reuse, these combinations form the results of the artist's reconstructions of natural experiences.

With her choice of material and form, Birkeland seeks purity, harmony, and balance in her sculptures. A kinship is formed with Eastern aesthetics and meditative practice. The perhaps unintended aesthetic expression may evoke associations with Japanese landscapes, with flowering cherry or bonsai trees, and East Asian architectural constructions and religious monuments - such as older wooden pagodas, with their tiered towers with multiple eaves, reaching upwards. The artworks point back to nature itself and the quest to evoke something original in a state of calm, harmony, and productivity.

In several of Monika Mørck's artworks, she repurposes worn wood sacks and adds decorative elements through embroidery and appliqué techniques. The reuse of worthless objects combined with time-consuming handwork highlights the value that lies in the concentrated handwork itself. The colorful embroideries are not purely decorative, but a method for personal reflection that emphasizes the value of the time-consuming and repetitive traditional craft passed down from mother to daughter through generations.

In several of her embroidered and hand-dyed textiles, the trivial with its origins in the domestic, intimate, and concrete world of life is incorporated. The silk fabrics are recycled from previous works of art and are plant-dyed with self-grown ornamental flowers, berries, plants, and lichen.

The textiles resemble flags, as something that leads the way or signals belonging. Ribbons are sewn on the edges and refer to the knowledge of sewing one's clothes and repairing them. This common knowledge about repairing clothes has disappeared in line with increased access to cheap and easily accessible textiles and clothing. We exchange, outsource, and buy services and lose the knowledge of how to take care of what we already have.

In their exhibition, Monika Mørck and Maia Birkelands thus balance the sensual with political questions. What can we do to ensure that traditional methods and techniques are continued now and in the future? How can artists today contribute to increasing people's ecological responsibility?

Maia Birkeland (b. 1978) lives and works in Osterøy, after having been based in Oslo for many years. She is educated at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts - KHIO and Glasgow School of Art and has a master's degree in medium- and material-based art from 2015.

Monika Mørck (b. 1984) lives and works in Trondheim where she is part of Gregus Kunstnerverksteder. She has her education from the Accademia Italian in Florence, Italy, and her master's degree in 2013 from the Oslo National Academy of the Arts - KHIO.

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Text: Margrete Abelsen