

Barbro Raen Thomassen
S for Seeds and Survival
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The beautiful can be found where we least expect it. What you see is not always what you think, and what you think is not always what you see. Nine seeds – each in reality the size of grains of sand – rest on the lawn between the old oak tree and the villa.

The significance of seeds and their potential is fundamentally existential. Without seed-bearing plants, humanity would not survive. Seeds come in countless forms, each more incredible and surprising than the other. Barbro Raen Thomassen engages with weed seeds, meaning seeds of unwanted plants in unwanted places – plants we typically dislike and do everything we can to remove, eradicate, or exterminate.

Weeds are a nuisance, but not entirely. They can also be a resource, provided they are kept in check and balanced with the crops. Some weeds are edible, like lamb's quarters and nettles. Some are nitrogen-fixing and function as fertilizer, such as different types of clover. Weed seeds begin to sprout as soon as they come into contact with exposed soil. When weeds cover the ground like a blanket, they prevent evaporation and stop the soil from drying out. Weeds that are removed also make for good compost.

It is the withering and dying plant that produces seeds. Paradoxically, the plant's last stage is also its first. There is a paradox in carving fragile, perishable seeds into solid stone: what seems insignificant and delicate becomes substantial and massive, what is light becomes heavy, what is small becomes large, what is almost invisible becomes visible. Suddenly, the seed becomes a bearer of the question about the future of humanity and the planet.

Barbro Raen Thomassen (b. 1955 in Tønsberg) was educated at the Bergen Academy of Art and Design and at École des Beaux-Arts in Angers (France). Thomassen has exhibited works at venues such as TCG Nordica (Kunming, China), the European Cultural Centre (Venice), Kirsten Kjør's Museum (Denmark), Risør Kunstpark, Sørlandets Kunstmuseum (Kristiansand), and RAM Gallery (Oslo). She has completed public art projects in Vennesla's pedestrian street, the new Bøler Church, and Byhaven in Grimstad.

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