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Jenal Dolson

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In botany, the embryonic root of a seedling—the first part to emerge from the seed during germination—is known as a radicle. Linguistically, the word is derived from the same Latin origin as *radical*, both starting from *radix* or *radic-*, which means “root.” Yet while a radicle is a specific part of a plant, radical carries many more associations, most commonly relating to an intense departure from the norm. But it also denotes the root of a number in mathematics, the root of a word in linguistics, or back to botany, the phenomena of a plant springing from a base—a radical radicle.

In her recent body of work, Jenal Dolson navigates biological growth, merging body parts and blossoms within an abstract framework. As if in the middle of a mysterious process, organic forms synthesize with structures in a constant state of flux. Dolson intertwines ideas around emergence and change in *Radicle Dream*, especially relating to the female body, fertility, and the womb.

Like flowers and plants, the body undergoes transformation after transformation. Within nine months, a tiny embryo develops into an entire infant, and by the time a child is two years old, their learning is so intense that their brain experiences twice as many synapses as adults. Children bloom into adulthood and then inevitably continue into old age, moving through different cycles, biologically equipped to foster new life. Dolson taps into this thriving period at the very beginning, tracing abstract journeys from seed to sprout to blossom, and emphasizing the way nature, like the mind, soaks up nutrients to flourish.

Dolson’s paintings emphasize strong contrasts between light and dark, oscillating between depth and flatness. Organs, fingernails, breasts, mouths, and other anatomical references emerge from within textured tableaux, sometimes featuring gritty earth materials like sand and pumice. Saturated with hues redolent of the 1980s, when Dolson was growing up, lines and patterns intersect with amorphous shapes that generate new forms in a continuous process of metamorphosis.

- Kate Mothes, Founder/Curator, Young Space and Dovetail Magazine