

Annalee Davis and Amanda Thomson

lightly, tendrils

Sat 9th April — Sat 21st May 2022

Amanda Thomson considers how we make connections with the natural world, enacting and encouraging attentive looking, listening, slowing down, taking time to become familiar with new things and revelling in the unfamiliar. Most of the work featured in this exhibition lies in and around the Scots pinewoods of Abernethy forest in the Scottish Highlands, where she lives. Annalee Davis' work sits at the intersection of biography and history, focusing on post-plantation economies by engaging with a particular landscape on Barbados. The work connects with the land and attends to what would appear, like the ceramic shards and wild botanicals, to make room for hidden and unacknowledged histories.

lightly, tendrils forms an expression of a sense of movement, an itinerant journeying toward and through different registers of thought, attention and practices. In offering a relationship to tendrils, thread-like, that twine around in multiple directions, the works hope to offer a wayfinding guide to think about our connections, (her)stories and perspectives.

*I was eventually to become one person,
gathered up maybe, during a pause, at a comma.*

— Lyn Hejinian, *My Life*

Gallery 2:

An *imago* is the name for an adult moth, and *imagines* is the plural/collective noun. Moths are nocturnal and frequently appear to circle artificial lights. The space recreates an environment of a forest moth trap, allowing us to pay close

attention to the moths. Thomson has gathered an ongoing archive of footage between the time of 2011 - 2022, filmed in Cairngorms National Park. The new series of moth videos in the various compositions repeat and merge with one another, looking at the spaces of the unseen, and the invisible connections, interconnectedness and symbiosis between species, which is explored in the accompanying soundwork. The soundwork features moth names, their larval food sources and habits, and tells us how humans engage with these same plants in folklore, medicinal and the material.

The flower videos on 4 monitors broadly chart the seasons Spring to Autumn:

Spring (wood sorrel, lesser celandine, wood anemone, primrose, early dog violet, stitchwort, speedwell)

Early Summer (corn marigold, pignut, dandelions/ cats ears/ hawkbits, yarrow, coral root orchid, wintergreen, bitter vetchling, alpine bistort)

Mid Summer (knapweed, birds foot trefoil, dandelions etc, bladder campion, thyme)

Late Summer/Autumn (Melancholy thistle, heathers and blaeberrries, red clover, creeping ladies tresses, juniper, devils bit scabious, harebell)

An index of moth names spreads across the wall, the lists reflect the different species captured in the course of a season by Cairngorms Connect's moth monitoring research. Many of the moths were named during the Victorian era - the great era of collecting, which speaks to the poetry and sometimes romantic and somewhat florid nature of their names. The representation of the index questions the conceptualisation of insect and plant species and the jargon often linked to natural habitats, invasive and migrant species that reproduces language reminiscent of nations and controlled borders.

Gallery 3:

Cartographic representations.

The hand-drawn contour lines across the wall and onto the floor reveal the features of the Scotland District on the East Coast of Barbados. Some lines are repeated on a large drawing further overlaid with a fishnet, sargassum fluitans (brown seaweeds) and drift seeds. Multiple smaller works on paper, an interconnected web of sea fruits create a floating register of flotsam and jetsam.

Afterlives of diasporic drift. (if these can be designed as sidenote)

A scatter pattern.

Playing with the notion of absence and presence, conceived through walking in a place, this series of prints were made using a handheld GPS to record movements through space, using the idea of taking a line for a walk into landscape. The photopolymer etchings remove any reference to time, place, effort and memory, though hint at what they are with the compass marking and scale. Investigations of mark and line, as well as movement, are reflected across the space in the large digitally-printed drawing. The geographer Tim Edensor's observation that 'in mediaeval times, walking was usually bounded by an individual's *day's walk circle* - an area within which most every day activities and adventures were confined'. Emerging like branchwork, mapping the drawings taken from Amanda Thomson's house – the thicker lines reveal repeated routes while the thin threads represent where she has walked a route only once or twice. The thicker repeated lines tend to be on tracks, paths and desire-lines, the single lines 'unpaths' across fields and through forests.

Memory of a place.

Across the room, a series of seven drawings on ledger spell out the letters forming the name Frances. Frances was referred to in the last will and testament of Thomas Applewhaite, which was written in August 1816 and directed that six years after his death his “little favourite Girl Slave named Frances shall be manumitted and set free from all and all manner of Servitude and slavery whatsoever.” The farm where Annalee’s home and studio is located, Walkers Dairy at St. George, Barbados, was once owned by Thomas Applewhaite. The letters forming her name comprise 18th and 19th century shards found in the soil of former sugarcane fields, suggesting fragments of history understood only in part - usually through the words of the white colonial settler and most often a male voice.

A name re-imagined

Installed in the centre of the space are two videos: twinflower takes the form of a videowork and long-form audio essay that explores the connections between twinflowers, a rare flower found in Scots pinewoods, and environmental change, history, migrations and time. Thomson considers the act of seeking the flower, and moves on to the nature of what it is to categorise, using its Latin name, *Linnaea borealis* (named after Carl Linnaeus) to consider this tiny plant’s connection to histories of botany, economic botany and botanical collections, migration, colonialism and ecological histories of place. Sitting across twinflower, Aar (a Scots word for alder) contemplates the passing of time where Thomson filmed an alder by the burn outside her window, sometimes two or three times a day, occasionally once a week, sometimes just once or twice a month, for a period of over a year and a half. The resulting work reveals the slow and shifting changes of season, light, and time passing and includes notes from a shared diary of recorded sightings – often the first flowers or migrant birds of the year:

cuckoos, house-martins, geese; spring primroses, summer germander speedwell, late summer creeping ladies tresses.

Gallery 1:

Conceived as a tearoom, the table in the space displays the Atlas of British Flora, the work *What's the Opposite of Erasure?*, recalls the 152 Scottish women who were sent as indentured labour to Barbados. Through inscribing their names into *The Atlas of British Flora*, Davis recalls the lives of these women as she wonders while tracing their names if they were imprisoned for their work as healers or witches, and if, when they came to the Scotland District of Barbados, they shared their healing work with those with whom they interfaced within African enslaved society. The symbolic act of naming makes room for hidden and unacknowledged stories that is a counter-narrative to the colonial obsession with maps, ledgers, and lists. Acknowledging the incompleteness of any archive, these hand-drawn names painted in a Victorian rose colour migrate across neatly delineated national grids to interfere with the mapping scheme, rendering these women visible.

Charms, a series of seven embroidered works using pieces of lace, crochet, and old tea tablecloths onto which drift seeds and sea fruit found on the east coast of Barbados frame the tearoom. Inspired by the use of charms in respective spiritual and medicinal rituals practiced by Scottish indentured and African enslaved labour in Barbados, these works include materials commonly found on the island but often overlooked, such as 'sea beans'. These beans, found on beaches have been highly prized for their reputed magical powers. Crossing the Atlantic on ocean currents and washed up in Scandinavia or Scotland they are known as 'fairy beans', 'elf kidneys', 'Mary's Beans' and 'entrada. They're often used as amulets to aid in childbirth or to protect against drowning. Davis' embroidered works are transformed into present-day charms - quiet

meditations on degrowth, balance, and an effort at disalienation from the grounds beneath our feet becoming fervent prayers to halt the ongoing demise of post-plantation environments.

The writer William Faulkner, in *Go Down, Moses*, described a black cemetery with “shards of pottery and broken bottles and old brick and other objects insignificant to sight but actually of a profound meaning and fatal to touch, which no white man could have read.” Incorporating 18th & 19th-century clay and porcelain shards found on Davis’ family property in Barbados, she also presents a set of tea cups, saucers and a teapot placed on plantation ledger page.

Two varieties of tea have been created for this show with Scottish-based herbalist, Tariqua Gorrissen, matching herbs that grow in both Scotland and Barbados. There will be a tea session every **Saturday 3pm - 4pm** in the gallery, wherein visitors can sample the 2 varieties of tea.

For an extended gallery guide,
please scan this QR code

