

lightly, tendrils

Annalee Davis and Amanda Thomson

Extended Gallery Guide

Gallery 2

(Mothworks)

Imago/ Imagines

An *imago* is the name for an adult moth, and *imagines* is the plural/ collective noun. Thomson is interested in the unnoticed in the everyday/ everynight, and the significance of the unnoticed. Moths form an important part of Scotland's biodiversity, and over 1300 species of moths have been recorded in Scotland. They are an incredibly important part of the ecosystem, yet they go about their business quietly and unobserved, and important indicators of the health of the environment. She is interested in the spaces of the unseen, and the invisible connections interconnectedness and symbiosis between species, which Thomson explores more in the accompanying soundwork. Language, and the poetics of naming and crossovers of science, ecology and art, list-making and collecting also plays an important part of Thomson's ongoing work. The soundwork features moth names, their larval food sources and habits, with information relating to how human's engage with these same plants in folk-lore and for medicinal and material reasons.

Gallery 3

Drift

As Bill Maurer writes, the ultimate authority of map-making orders spatial reality as a mode of power, a kind of “space discipline” grounded in the authority of accuracy, which “creates an ethic and virtue of ever more precise definition.” While maps desocialise the territory they represent, these drawings aim to humanise a landscape and its watery boundaries.

Hand-drawn contour lines reproduced from a geological survey revealing the natural features of the Scotland District on the East Coast of Barbados meander across the wall and onto the floor. Some lines are repeated on a large drawing further overlaid with a fishnet, Sargassum fluitans, and drift seeds. Multiple smaller works on paper, a floating register of flotsam and jetsam, suggest afterlives of diasporic drift.

Sea Coconuts, Tropical Almond, White Inkberry, and Anchovy Pear – common names for some of the drift seeds or sea beans referred to as a kind of diaspore in botanical terminology that functions as plant dispersal – are in fact seeds that have drifted many thousands of miles on the world’s ocean currents. Varied species of Sargasso weed wash onto both the Caribbean and Scottish coastlines. In the latter, it has a history of being used to bolster poor soils and extract iodine while in the former, more recent warming seas, Sahara dust, and an increased nitrogen footprint foster seaweed invasions in Barbados, threatening its fragile post-plantation, tourism-dependent economy, and coastal health.

While researching Scottish and Barbadian historic entanglements, I learned that midwives in the Highlands gathered nicker nuts drifting in on the Gulf Stream, offering them to labouring women to hold in their hands “to increase her faith and distract her attention”. (Flora Celtica, Pp. 70).

Fishing, kelping, and weaving—common habits in The Highlands—might also have been practiced in Barbados amongst the indentured and other Scottish folks recognising Scotland in the hilly terrain on the East Coast of Barbados and naming it the Scotland District. Former indentured servants settled here on this inexpensive land at the end of their indentureship. I wonder if Scottish women who landed here between the 17th and 19th centuries welcomed a fleeting sense of familiarity on finding similar sea fruit, non-human kin that washed up on the east coast of this small isle almost two thousand miles away from home.

Drift gestures to another kind of mapping referencing sea fruits floating in on these shores for centuries who, like the human diaspora, unwittingly were part of a global transit system germinating in new soils

F is for Frances

By declaring F is for Francis, Davis attributes the speech sound to the muted female and restores her agency. Francis is called into our phonetic consciousness. [...] F is for a “Girl

Slave” who worked on a plantation in Barbados. The land knew her. It bore her presence and still carries her narrative. Davis utilises her art-making to amplify its knowledge.
—Marsha Pearce, *A Chorus of F-words in Rab Lands*, exhibition catalogue, 2016

The ledgers are symbolic of the imposition of colonial order, the drawings indicative of its incomplete reach.
—Andil Gosine, *Wilding*, exhibition catalogue, 2016

The last will and testament of Thomas Applewhaite written in August 1816, 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.” At the time, Applewhaite was the owner of Walkers - the site where I live, work and explore. This suite maps Frances’ name in a series of seven drawings on ledger pages. The letters forming her name comprise 18th and 19th century sherds 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. With Frances, another voice becomes audible and visible

walkDrawings

These have been made using a handheld GPS to record movements through space, taking the idea of taking a line for a walk into landscape. Originally created through her interest in the ways that specific tasks dictate how we move across landscape, the series of etchings reveal a series of tasks carried out while volunteering on an RSPB reserve and walking with foresters and ecologists doing conservation work. The photopolymer etchings show, ‘exotic species’ removal, seedling counting, regeneration counting, bird ringing, an archaeological survey, capercaillie broodcounting, tree thinning and a crossbill survey. The resulting drawings remove any reference to time, place, effort and memory, though hint at what they are with the compass marking and scale. They aim to distil and reduce the experiences themselves to their minimum, leaving as much to the imagination as possible, and are investigations of mark and line as well as movement.

the walkDrawings relate to elements of conservation work, and are of the following activities – Left to Right:

1. Two walks to find crossbills. A survey to establish the numbers of Scottish crossbills, a rare kind of finch.
2. Trackside path clearance – removing overhanging branches and small trees close to nature reserve tracks to prevent branches falling and blocking tracks in the events of high winds, storms or heavy snowfall.
3. Seedling/ regeneration counting. This involved walking to particular points in a remote glen, then marking out a quarter of a circle and counting any new growth within that quadrant. From there, estimates can be made as to how successful regeneration is across a particular area. This drawing took place over two days, staying overnight in a remote bothy.
4. Archaeological survey – highland croft. The main areas of movement are shown around the dilapidated house itself, with the thinner lines sweeps around the croft to look for any agricultural equipment or remains of built works that might remain

5. Norway spruce removal in remnant Scots pinewoods – removing non-native species
6. Bird-ringing loop: nets are set up to catch birds in order for them to be ringed, so their movements can be traced. This is important to understand species movement and numbers.
7. Several walks, broodcounting. These were walks done in one particular day, in surveys which used to be carried out each summer to order to establish the numbers of capercaillie – a rare species of grouse, across the reserve
8. Transect walking – Scots pine regeneration counting. To count regeneration of Scots pines, ecologists walk in lines, for example, 10 metres apart, and count what is seen within a certain distance of each line.

walkDrawing (walk circles)

The large digitally printed drawing emerges from mapping the drawings taken from her house – the thicker lines revealing repeated routes, the thin threads, where she 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. The title of the large piece, ‘walk circles’, comes from the geographer Tim Edensor’s observation that “in medieval times, walking was usually bounded by an individual’s “day’s walk circle” and area within which most every day activities and adventures were confined’ and how, at that point, there were very few through tracks ‘due to locally constituted boundaries of society and space’. It refers to how many of these recorded walks took place during lockdown, when we were restricted to walking only from our homes. The work speaks to the flower works shown as part of *imago/imagines* and *aar*, and how one can come to know place by repeated visits over time, recognising what is there, what arrives and what leaves, or grows and dies, through time, seasons, becoming familiar and noticing change.

Twinflower

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 becoming familiar with the flower and its habitat, and moves on to the nature of what it is to categorise, using its Latin name, *Linnaea borealis*, to consider this tiny plant’s connection to histories of botany, economic botany and botanical collections, migration, colonialism and ecological histories of place.

Aar

For over a year and a half, 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. The resulting work reveals the slow and shifting changes of season, light, and time passing. Aar (a Scots word for alder) also includes notes from a shared diary of recording 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. These aren’t necessarily systematically recorded but speak to what is simply noticed when there, and in the course of the everyday. The diary also records the

fleetingness and luck of seeing of residents such as eagles, crossbills, and hares. Aar is the beginnings of what will become a phenological exploration and reflection of a place and ongoing change, questions of attentiveness and care, and human and more-than-human timescales. It feeds into Thomson's longer and ongoing research and investigations which incorporate a visual arts practice and creative non-fiction and explore questions of slow looking and attentiveness, Scottish landscapes, language (as in her book, *A Scots Dictionary of Nature*), walking and reflections on the interrelationships of place with self, migrations, native/non-native/'invasive' species, and conceptions of home.

Gallery 1 (Tea Room)

(bush) Tea Services

2016, Glazed Barbadian clay, 18th & 19th-century clay and porcelain shards

Literally digging into the ground of her family property in Barbados, Annalee Davis mines family archives to unpack the plantation, and its multi-layered history. *(bush) Tea Services* incorporates found porcelain shards from tea sets and cheap crockery unearthed from around the yard and surrounding fields of the former plantation. Re-purposing these fragments, Davis has included them in a new set of tea cups, saucers and a teapot in the form of a traditional water carrier called a 'monkey jar'. From the tea set, she serves (unsweetened) varieties of bush tea collected from the fields of the former sugarcane plantation and adjoining rab lands. Sugar-sweetened tea, a psycho-tropical sweet stimulant, provided not only a moment to pause and refresh, but a cheap tool to prolong the working capacity of the enslaved in the field. For the enslaved, many of the herbs in these bush teas also offered medical uses in bush baths, for healing, and to prevent or terminate unwanted pregnancies.

The tea service was made in collaboration with master potter Hamilton Wiltshire, using local red clay from the Scotland District on the East Coast of Barbados. Davis' (bush) tea, was harvested from former sugarcane fields and rab lands from which she has served cerasee bush tea, bay leaf tea and blue vervain tea amongst others.

Charms

Charms is 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 are attached. 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.

Uibhean sithean or fairy eggs were made using fruits from the sea that washed up on Scottish shores by the Gulf Stream. According to J. Cameron (1880) they were collected and worn as charms to ward off evil spirits or evil-disposed fairies. These tough-shelled tropical seeds made their way around the waters of the world, becoming family heirlooms. In a 1997 journal article, Jerome Handler writes that "An adult male buried in the late 1600s or early 1700s in a plantation slave cemetery in Barbados"... was found with many objects "including a necklace of money cowries, fish vertebrae, dog canine teeth, European glass beads, and a large carnelian bead probably from India." Handler notes that "the individual was probably an African-type diviner/healer whose high status in the slave community is reflected in his relatively elaborate artifact inventory."

Medicine and ritual, the use of incantations and charms, and the gathering of organic materials are all part of long traditions of knowledge or belief systems in both Gaelic and West African societies. Often brought against their will across the oceans and held close,

how might these respective Scottish and African-derived customs have rubbed up against each other?

As we navigate today's multiple ecological crises, these 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.

What's the Opposite of Erasure?

This work links several books. The colonial project included lots of books - part and parcel of the (mis)education of its colonial subjects leading to alienation from their histories, landscapes, themselves, and each other. In the Caribbean, we were taught poems about daffodils, recited foreign fruits while learning the alphabet including *A is for apple* which does not bear here, or drew maps of faraway wheat-growing fields in the Canadian prairies. Meanwhile, the archipelago we lived in was still terra incognita in the educational syllabus of the '70s when I was at school.

Book #1: I recently found a copy of *The Atlas of British Flora* (1962 edition) on a table of giveaway books at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus in Barbados. On the inside cover the name of the presumed owner, *L. E Chinnery 1972*, a Senior Lecturer in the Biology Department there, is inscribed in this 432-page weighty book mapping the distribution of plants across the British Isles.

Book #2: Of the just over two thousand Scots named in David Dobson's 2005 publication, *Barbados And Scotland Links 1627-1877*, I search for the names of women listed as wives, daughters, secretaries, a rioter from Glasgow (1726) and fifteen prisoners from the Edinburgh Correction House (1653 & 1665). In the introduction, Dobson writes about James Hay, a Scotsman, who was the first Proprietor of Barbados. He sent off indentured servants - high in demand at the time - along with administrators, planters, and workers who sailed from Scotland, England, and Holland to Barbados. Some of those people were involuntarily transported to Barbados to empty Scotland's jails.

Book #3: *What's the opposite of erasure?* is a reworking of *The Atlas of British Flora* into which I have transcribed the names of one hundred and fifty-two Scottish women representing 7% of those named in Dobson's book, 9% of whom were prisoners. I wondered 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 women whose names I logged into *The Atlas of British Flora* include Ann Armstrong, a time expired indentured servant who emigrated from Barbados to Antigua aboard the *Francis* on April 28th, 1679; Helen, Margaret, and Sarah Findlay - three daughters of Thomas Findlay from Balkirsty, Fife - who emigrated sometime before 1765 to Barbados; and Miss McKenzie, the eldest daughter of Lord Seaforth, Governor of Barbados from 1800-1806 and owner of Balmacara Estate in The Highlands. Miss McKenzie married Commander Sir Samuel Hood in Barbados on November 6th, 1804. Also listed is Janet Hill, a rioter from Glasgow transported to Barbados in January 1726, and the final name I transcribed is that of Elspeth Yuill, one of the prisoners released from the Edinburgh

Correction House and transported by Morris Trent, a merchant in Leith, from there to Barbados on the *Mary* on May 4th, 1663.

What's the opposite of erasure? 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.

caught/ unseen

A collection of footage from a nature camera placed around and near her house, capturing the everyday and everynight movements that go on unseen on a daily and nightly basis, and is a record of what is found and captured, as well as which is just caught, sometimes momentarily, and almost missed.