

*AT THE SHORE,
EVERYTHING
TOUCHES*

TAKO TAAL

Exhibition Notes | Sat 11 December 2021 - Sun 20 March 2022

DCA

Dundee Contemporary Arts

152 Nethergate
Dundee, DD1 4DY
01382 432444

Scottish Charity No. SCO26631

Open Tue - Sun 11:00-18:00
Open late Thu 19:00
Admission free

www.dca.org.uk

INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION

This exhibition debuts a new body of work by Glasgow-based artist Tako Taal.

Taal's practice often considers the paradoxes of black subjectivities, and her work evokes cited, spectral and physical bodies to undermine history, destabilise images and disrupt ideas around identity.

At the shore, everything touches is the first iteration of a project that considers the changing nature of Taal's family's home village in The Gambia – Juffureh. This village is renowned for its proximity to the British slave fort established on what was once known as James Island, now named Kunta Kinteh Island referencing the central protagonist in Alex Haley's 1976 novel *Roots*.

This text and subsequent filmic adaptations had a profound effect on Juffureh, placing it within popular culture and within Western public imagination for the first time, resulting in an ethically complex tourist industry developing in the area around the histories of the village and nearby island.

Taal's body of work focuses a new lens on Juffureh, considering its geography, historical significance as a trade post and fort during the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the ways in which its histories have been used and instrumentalised over the last half a century.

This exhibition comprises a new video and sound work, *SAMT utterance_01 (how a name becomes a step, a rhythm, a loop)*; accompanying installation, painting and collage work; and facsimiles of familial photographs and documents belonging to the artist.

At the heart of the materials Taal has been working with for this project are the memoirs, poetry and possessions of her father, Seedy Taal, who died in 1990. She has said,

“In some ways this exhibition feels like our combined life's work as I have wanted to make work alongside him for a long time. Making the exhibition is a process of collapsing different timescales in this one location in Juffureh and being able to see where and how everything touches. Unlike a memorial, which is this static object in time and space, I want the gallery space to be a site where people feel like they can linger, gather together and share within a loss and a landscape.”

SAMT utterance_01 (how a name becomes a step, a rhythm, a loop) takes the form of a split screen video installation installed in one half of the gallery, with a further sound element playing at intervals from a tape player in the space.

Taal describes this work (and indeed the exhibition in a wider sense) as a landscape study, using different visuals, filmic devices, music, sound and text to build up a rich, layered picture of Juffureh and its surrounds. Footage shot by the artist on site in recent years unfolds together with sequences of family photographs and glimpses of documents and ephemera belonging to her father.

This moving image work is spatially placed in dialogue with two photographs by Scottish artist Maud Sulter (1960-2008) which have been kindly loaned for this exhibition from the Harris Museum in Preston. Selected by Taal from a wider series of nine photographs taken in 1987 and collectively titled *Sphinx*, these artworks serendipitously consider representations of this same land in The Gambia over 30 years ago. When *Sphinx* was first exhibited, it was accompanied by Sulter's words, 'Only the wailing of the women remained.' Taal has folded this text into the language of her own film work, amongst other kindred voices such as Danez Smith, Mati Diop, and Kandace Siobhan Walker.

Elsewhere in the gallery are artworks and artefacts which further elucidate but also complicate and deepen the artist's exploration of this research material. Facsimile prints of excerpts of her father's memoirs and poetry sit alongside intimate watercolour studies Taal has made of old family photographs. Also on display in the form of a painterly installation on one wall is a constellation of personal objects and ephemera belonging to the artist and her family, as well as an illuminated wool embroidered cloth from Juffureh.

In her careful interrogation of this place, the artist looks to Juffureh as home, as a tourist site and as a point of departure for recent migrations. At stake in this project and in Taal's practice in a wider sense are the psychic structures of colonial relations and the question of how vivid they remain in the present. In *At the shore, everything touches*, she reconstructs whispered anecdotes and artefacts from family archives to trace the shifts that merge and split boundaries between body, land and the state.

GLOSSARY

Subjectivities are ideas, decisions or understandings based on a particular person's or people's opinion or life experiences. The term 'subjectivity' is most commonly used as an explanation for that which influences, informs, and biases people's judgments about truth or reality.

Facsimile is a term used to describe something that is an exact copy or reproduction of something else.

Psychic structures organise a collective mindset that may be widely understood and accepted, without question or critical challenge.

Colonial relations corresponds to the complex relationship between an indigenous population of a region and a invading force seeking to dominate and conquer people and/or resources within this place.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Tako Taal was born in Wales and lives in Glasgow. She graduated in 2015 from Gray's School of Art, Aberdeen. She was a 2019 RAW Academy fellow at RAW Material Company, Dakar and Artist in Residence at Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh, 2018-20.

In 2021 Taal was shortlisted for the 2021 Margaret Tait Award; her work was presented at NADA House, Governors Island, New York; and she was co-programmer of *GIVE BIRTH TO ME TOMORROW*, LUX Scotland's artists' moving image festival. Other exhibitions include: Glasgow Women's Library, 2019; Grand Union, Birmingham, 2018; CCA Glasgow, 2017; Galerie de l'UQAM, Montreal, 2017; Castlefield Gallery, Manchester, 2019; New Contemporaries, Royal Scottish Academy, 2016.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Tako Taal would like to extend deep gratitude to:

Taalikunda - the Taal family past, present and future; Foluke Taylor; Colette Jones; Khady Taal; Kandace Siobhan Walker; Eoin Dara; Valerie Norris; Adrian Murray; all the participants and staff of RAW Académie Session 7 where so many of these conversations started; Edward Ball; Lindsey McCormick and The Harris Museum for loaning Maud Sulter's works; Hassoum Ceesay; Liam Buckley; Katie Paine; The Gambia National Archives; Abdou Mankeh & Wassa Darboe; Matthew; Ray; Rowan; Aideen; Sami; Rosie and Steph.

NEW PUBLICATION

We are publishing a new book in January 2022 as part of the project, also titled *At the shore, everything touches*, containing newly commissioned writing on Taal's practice by Kandace Siobhan Walker.

To launch the book, there will be a special In Conversation event with Taal and Walker, please see the Talks and Events section of these exhibition notes for more information.

From late January, copies of the book will be available to read in the gallery and Information Space, and to buy in DCA Shop and online at a special launch price of £8 (usually £10).

INFORMATION SPACE

Visit the Information Space next to the galleries to learn more about the exhibition. Here you will find a video interview with the artist, alongside the reading materials listed below that have been influential to their thinking.

READING LIST

Chantal Akerman, *My Mother Laughs*, 2013

Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, 2021

Maud Sulter, *Passion*, 2015

Alex Haley, *Roots*, 1976

Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images*, 2017

Ama Ata Aidoo, *Our Sister Killjoy*, 1977

Zadie Smith, *Swing Time*, 2016

Mary Hoffman, *Grace and Family*, 1995

Jennifer C. Nash, 'Writing Black Beauty' in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Volume 45, No. 1, Autumn 2019.

TALKS AND EVENTS

For more information and to book tickets visit www.dca.org.uk

A View from Everywhere and Nowhere: Tako Taal and Kandace Siobhan Walker in Conversation

This event is being rescheduled to take place in late February or early March in line with current restrictions and guidance. Please check our website and social media for updated information.

We are delighted to be publishing a book as part of Taal's exhibition at DCA, containing a new text by the writer Kandace Siobhan Walker.

Join us to celebrate the launch of the book, and hear Taal and Walker speak together about their correspondence over the last year which has resulted in Walker's delicate and illuminating essay on Taal's work that forms part of the publication.

The conversation will be followed by a Q&A chaired by DCA's Head of Exhibitions Eoin Dara.

The publication, printed in a limited edition of 400, will be available to purchase at a special launch price of £8 (usually £10).

Kandace Siobhan Walker is a writer and filmmaker from Wales and elsewhere. Her writing has appeared in *bath magg*, *The Guardian* and *The Good Journal*, among others.

Her most recent short film *Last Days of the Girl's Kingdom* was produced in collaboration with the ICA and DAZED, and aired on Channel 4's *Random Acts*. In 2021, she was the winner of The White Review Poet's Prize and a recipient of an Eric Gregory award. She lives in Wales.

Curator's Tour

Thu 17 March, 18:00-19:00

Galleries

Free, but ticketed

Please book in advance

Join our Head of Exhibitions, Eoin Dara, for a tour of Taal's exhibition in Gallery 1 and Rae-Yen Song's exhibition  in Gallery 2.

ARTIST'S CHOICE SCREENINGS

Tako Taal has selected two films to accompany her exhibition: *The Land Before Time* and *I Am Not a Witch*.

“I absolutely love both these films. The breadth of emotion and deep grief that flows through *The Land Before Time*, mesmerised me from a young age.

I Am Not a Witch is a luxurious poetic dream and Rungano Nyoni's majestic handling of the complexities of an African landscape with grace, humour and precision is something I deeply admire.”

– Tako Taal

The Land Before Time

Sat 5 February, 13:00

Cinema

Please see website for prices and to book tickets

Five years before he would give dinosaurs an entirely new lease of cinematic life with 1993's *Jurassic Park*, Steven Spielberg teamed up with George Lucas and animation legend Don Bluth to executive produce this animated adventure.

Adorable 'Longneck' Littlefoot's motley gang of friends are a delight to spend time with, from stubborn 'Threehorn' Cera, to nervous 'Flyer' Petrie. Spielberg's big-hearted family values are very much on show, but there's also a natural undercurrent

of darkness that Bluth brings from his days as a Disney animator. There's a very good reason this was a mainstay of any family VCR machine throughout the 90s.

Dir. Don Bluth / 1h 09m / U / 1988 / USA, Ireland

I Am Not a Witch

Tue 8 February, 20:30

Cinema

Please see website for prices and to book tickets

This arresting first feature from Zambian-born, Wales-raised Rungano Nyoni is unlike any British film you might have seen before.

Exploring the fine line between tradition and superstition, folklore and exploitation, *I Am Not a Witch* defies categorisation. Shot in and around Zambia's capital city Lusaka, the film is a striking visual combination of realism and fantasy. While the script has a sombre story to tell, there are also moments of humour, delivered in deadpan style by the mostly nonprofessional cast. But at its heart is a fierce little girl desperately trying to find a connection with those around her and survive.

Dir. Rungano Nyoni / 1h30m / 12A / 2017 / UK, France / English, Bemba, Nyanja and Tonga with English subtitles

CREATE SPACE PROJECT DISPLAY

ST/ART@DCA:

Autumn Prints & Textiles

Wed 8 December – Sun 12 December,
11:00-18:00

Free, drop in

A vibrant display of print and textile work made during our autumn partnership project with Tayside Healthcare Arts Trust. ST/ART@DCA works with adults who are isolated by long term health conditions, bringing small groups together to learn new print, craft and animation skills and to engage with DCA programmes. With thanks to Stafford Trust, Alexander Moncur Trust and Foundation Scotland.

FOR YOUNGER VISITORS AND FAMILIES

Create Space

From Wed 15 December

Tue – Sun, 11:00-18:00

Free, drop in

Children must be accompanied at all times

Create Space is located between Gallery 1 and the Information Space and is a flexible, comfortable and imaginative space; a space in which people of all ages can see, think, make and do together. The new design of the room includes pre-packed materials, activity sheets and 'makes' linked to the exhibitions in the galleries.

You can expect to find themes about family histories, colourful, imaginative and mythological characters and portraits with a difference.

Please respect our room capacity guidance and wear a mask (unless exempt from doing so). Hand sanitiser is provided outside the entrance to Create Space and throughout the building.

Family Art Labs: Tako Taal and Rae-Yen Song

Sat 29 January, Sat 19 February,
Sat 19 March, 13:00-15:00

Create Space

Free, but ticketed

Please book a ticket for each person attending

Family Art Labs offer time and space to get making as a family with creative activities led by local artists. You can stay as long as you like or leave when you need to, these sessions are flexible.

Each Family Art Lab is inspired by the exhibitions in our galleries; you can expect lots of materials, creative ideas and projects to finish on the day or to take home. We have safe, pre-packed materials bags for each family and child. We look forward to sharing lots of ideas!

GALLERY 2



Rae-Yen Song

Gallery 2

Sat 11 December 2021 – Sun 20

March 2022

Running concurrently in Gallery 2, this exhibition will mark Glasgow-based artist Rae-Yen Song's first solo exhibition in Scotland, debuting a new body of work including sculpture, installation, printmaking and video.

This new body of work gives viewers a glimpse of an alternate dimension, shaped according to the ancestral logics and imagined futures of Song's family, which serves simultaneously as spectacle, memorial and refuge. Visitors will be granted access to a multi-sensory environment, a speculatively sacred space from a stubbornly uncertain point in time and space, which floats somewhere between history, memory and imagination.

The cornerstones of familial connectedness, from storytelling to sibling dynamics to ancestral traces, sit at the heart of this project. Song's works are always a form of personal activism where alternative realities are proposed and ownership over biographical narrative is reclaimed.

JUST ASK

Our friendly Visitor Assistants are always happy to help with your questions.

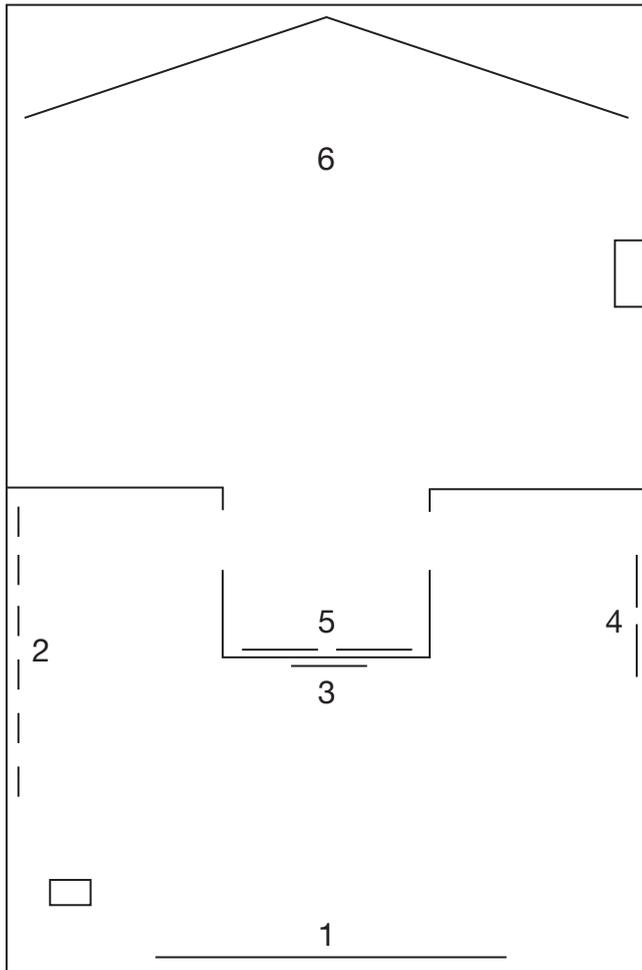
LARGE PRINT, AUDIO & BRAILLE

Large print, audio and Braille versions of this leaflet are available, please ask a Visitor Assistant for more information.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Keep up to date with the very latest from DCA by visiting **www.dca.org.uk** or by following us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. Share your thoughts on the exhibition using **#helloDCA**.

EXHIBITION FLOOR PLAN



1. *Sad deserted shore, your fickle friends are leaving*

Glitter vinyl, emulsion, oleander flower, brass, lemon peel, c-type prints, coins (various origins), rice, muslin, silk thread, newspaper cutting, plastic wallet, solar powered calculator, lightbox, portable radio cassette, infinite tape; 2021

2. *Memoirs of Seedy 1976-88*

Series of six Giclée prints; 2021

3. *our black saga*

Wax carra (wool embroidered cloth), lightbox; 2021

4. *Absence / Baduja (the state of being away, the condition of being related)*

Watercolour on paper, imitation leather, gold chain, seashell; 2021

5. Maud Sulter

Sphinx

Two photographic prints; 1987
Collection of Harris Museum, Art Gallery & Library, Preston

6. *SAMT utterance_01 (how a name becomes a step, a rhythm, a loop)*

Two channel HD video, stereo sound, lightbox, portable radio cassette, infinite tape, sigh; 2021
33 minutes

Written by Tako Taal with excerpts from *Reflections* by Seedy A M Taal
Camera & Editor: Tako Taal
Composition & Sound Design: Claude Nouk

Location Sound: Rowan Markson
Citations: Maud Sulter, Danez Smith, Mati Diop, Kandace Siobhan Walker
Infinite tape vocals: Lamin Taal