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For immediate release

**Horniman’s digital artist in residence Marie Smith**

**explores extraction and legacy ‘in conversation’ with Anna Atkins’ historic books**

Digital artist in residence Marie Smith presents work from their six month residency at the Horniman Museum and Gardens from today, Tuesday 17 October 2023.

***Extraction: In conversation with Anna Atkins***is Marie’s visual response to their residency which saw them research and explore two elements – people and worming. Marie utilised worming as a tool to aerate and find new paths of inquiry on the Horniman’s Nature Trail, and in its Gardens and collections.

The online exhibition responds to the Horniman’s collection of cyanotypes of botanical specimens made by pioneering Victorian scientist and photographer Anna Atkins, and is inspired by photographs of the Horniman Nature Trail and Gardens, alongside leaves and flowers collected from the Nature Trail.

During their visit to the Horniman archive, Marie spent three hours ‘in conversation’ with the Horniman’s historic copy of Atkins’ book *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*, made as cyanotype plates in 1848, one of four volumes of Atkins’ important books in the Horniman collection.

Noting that the word ‘extraction’ kept coming to mind, Marie took this as a prompt to reflect on Atkins’ legacy – not just as a botanist and photographer but as someone who married into a family that owned plantations and slaves in Jamaica - as well as the history of photography, and its past and present detriment to the environment.

Cyanotypes of photos from the Nature Trail, alongside leaves and flowers collected there, are overlaid with a transcript of this conversation, addressing Marie’s thoughts and questions on Atkins’ legacy and work.

The exhibition is hosted online at [horniman.ac.uk](https://www.horniman.ac.uk/), with an accompanying video of Marie’s process of making cyanotypes, using plant or food-based developers instead of chemicals, filmed in the Horniman Gardens.

Marie Smith says: ‘During my visit to the Horniman archive, I recorded my thoughts as I looked through Anna Atkins’ books on British Algae. This prompted a myriad of personal and theoretical thoughts that explored her working methodology, the life of the algae, the aesthetics of the cyanotypes as well as her explorations as a female artist in the 19th century. The word ‘extraction’ kept appearing and repeating itself in my mind. I took this as a way of commenting on Atkins’ legacy as well as reflecting on the history of photography which continues to have a detrimental effect on the environment.’

A digital trail marking Marie’s points of interest on the Nature Trail is available on the Bloomberg Connects app.

A reading list which informed Marie’s research and the outcomes of their residency at the Horniman can also be found [online](https://www.horniman.ac.uk/story/about-the-art-marie-smith/%20‎) from Thursday 19 October.

Marie’s six-month residency at the Horniman runs concurrently with artist, researcher and designer Adira Thekkuveettil’s digital residence at the Museum of Art and Photography (MAP) in Bangalore, as part of a joint project in partnership with curator and expert in photography Zelda Cheatle.

Adira’s project, [Nimbus](https://www.adirathekkuveettil.com/map-residency), plays with ideas of ‘suggestions’ and ‘edits’ as tools of engagement with the MAP collection. Looking closely through Cumulus, the Museum’s Collection Viewing System, Adira looks at details in the entries of artworks and collections beyond the stated information. Drawing connections with other objects and artworks in the Museum’s collection, and proposing playful edits, adding both subjective, as well as objective information, Adira examines what forms ‘enrichment’ can take within a Museum’s collection, and in what ways close viewing can actually open up an archive to scrutiny.

Hear Marie and Adira in conversation with Zelda talking about their respective residencies

[via this link](https://youtu.be/mj3JhsExuXw?si=T_2PSjT8RDl4iyD9).

Marie has also been documenting their residency and sharing their experiences on their [website](https://www.marieesmith.com/horniman-museum-digital-residency).

**Ends**

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**Notes to Editors:**

* **Marie Smith** is a neurodivergent visual artist and writer born, living, and working in London. Smith graduated in 2017 with a MA in History in Art with Photography at Birkbeck, University of London. Being a neurodivergent woman with dyspraxia and anxiety has informed how she navigates the world. Marie’s practice incorporates digital and analogue photography alongside text as a form of visual language that addresses identity, nature, sustainability, mental health, and well-being. Marie utilises low-toxic plant, food, or herb-based developers to process her analogue film. Due to this methodology not being transferable to developing colour film, Marie now only works with black and white and camera-less film processes. Marie is a member of [Women Photograph](https://www.womenphotograph.com/europe-3) and an Associate Lecturer at Kingston University, Goldsmiths - University of London, and London College of Communication. [marieesmith.com](https://www.marieesmith.com/horniman-museum-digital-residency)
* Born in 1799 **Anna Atkins** was a pioneering scientist, keen botanist and scientific illustrator. Atkins was married to John Pelly Atkins, the son of [Alderman John Atkins](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/22420) who was a London West India merchant and slave-owner in Jamaica. Using an early photographic method called cyanotyping, Anna Atkins began producing photographic plates of British algae in 1843, using specimens from her collection. Eventually, she completed three volumes, which are now recognised as the first books ever to be published with photographic illustrations. Produced over a period of 10 years between 1843 and 1853 Atkins distributed her work in parts to a number of participants who bound the work themselves. The Horniman copy is bound into four books (Vol. 1 parts 1 and 2, Vol. 2, Vol.3 (inc. appendix)).
* **Bloomberg Connects** offers free digital guides to cultural organisations around the world. The app is part of Bloomberg Philanthropies’ longstanding commitment to supporting digital innovation in the arts. Bloomberg Connects makes it easy to access and engage with arts and culture from mobile devices when visiting in person, or anytime from anywhere. With dynamic content exclusive to each partner organisation, the app provides a range of features including video, audio, and text; expert commentary; and way-finding maps. Follow Bloomberg Connects on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/bloombergconnects/), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/BloombergConnects), and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/bbgconnects?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor) for updates on new guide launches, exhibit highlights, and more.
* **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** was [Art Fund Museum of the Year 2022](https://www.horniman.ac.uk/story/horniman-wins-100000-art-fund-museum-of-the-year-2022/), the world’s largest museum prize.
* **The Horniman Museum and Gardens** opened in 1901 as a gift to the people in perpetuity from tea trader and philanthropist Frederick John Horniman, to ‘bring the world to Forest Hill’. Today the Horniman has a collection of 350,000 objects, specimens and artefacts from around the world. Its galleries include natural history, music and an acclaimed aquarium, alongside a World Gallery of anthropology and a flexible arts and exhibition space, The Studio. Indoor exhibits link to the award-winning display gardens – from medicinal and dye gardens to an interactive sound garden, Butterfly House and an animal walk – set among 16 acres of beautiful, green space offering spectacular views across London. [horniman.ac.uk](http://www.horniman.ac.uk/)
* The **Horniman Museum and Gardens** relies on income from ticket sales, memberships, the shop and the Café to help care for the Gardens, animals and Aquarium residents, to run events and to look after the collections. The support of our visitors and donors is more needed than ever.

[horniman.ac.uk/support-us](https://www.horniman.ac.uk/support-us/)

* The **Horniman Museum and Gardens** is core-funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and since 1990 has been governed by an independent charitable trust, registered charity no. 802725.
* On 29 July 2019 the **Horniman Museum and Gardens declared an ecological and climate emergency**, pledging to place carbon reduction and environmental issues at the heart of its work. The declaration – and the subsequent **Climate and Ecological Manifesto**, published in January 2020 – is a consolidation of existing work and a commitment to renewed ambitions to reduce the Horniman’s environmental and pollution footprint, increase biodiversity, and inspire others to do so. Find out more about the Horniman’s manifesto commitments and progress so far at [horniman.ac.uk/climate](https://www.horniman.ac.uk/about-the-horniman/climate-and-ecology/).