

Where memory, nature and 19th century photography intersect

BY EVAN WILLIAMS

ewilliams@floridaweekly.com

A new series of photographs by the artist London Amara, "Ethos," is filled with rich, sensuous detail in their depictions of nature. She achieved this affect using labor-intensive techniques, both silver gelatin prints created from film negatives as well as 19th century collodion photography.

"Ethos" will debut at the Sidney & Berne Davis Center in downtown Fort Myers on Friday, March 2, from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., with an artist Q&A at 7 p.m. It will be on display through March 27.

Her second solo exhibit at the Davis Center examines the dialogue between sublingual memory, the natural environment, and modern-day culture in images of landscapes, ferns, fronds, flowers and faces.

A departure from her past work in mediums such as painting and sculpture, it is also in some ways familiar.

"I've always used my art as a way to investigate and understand the world as it were around me, so in that way it's very similar," said Ms. Amara, who works in Bonita Springs and Columbus, Ohio. "So it's still me as an individual investigating what's around me but doing it in a different way."

The photographs that make up "ethos" evolved out of line drawings and sculpture that Ms. Amara ended up deciding to cut from the show, the idea of which was sparked by two trips she took last year.

"I finally decided it's one show, it's one body of work, and I just want to get quiet inside myself long enough to figure out what is the most powerful and



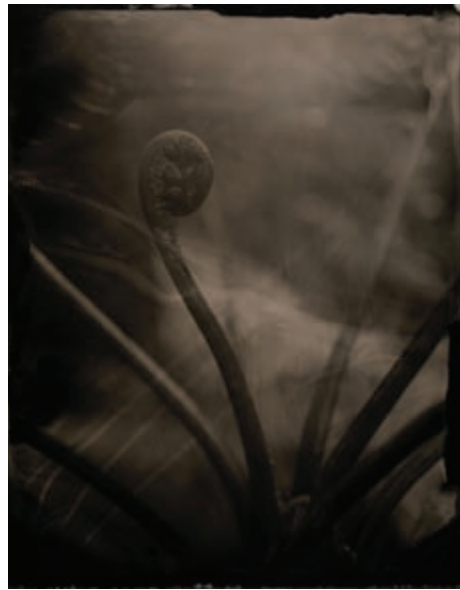
"Fragile Light," 8-by-10 inch ambrotype, 2017

most distilled I can get," she said. "And the answer to all of that is to take everything out, only exhibit these images, and let that be."

The first trip to Reykjavik, Iceland, inspired her initial approach to "ethos" based on the culture; for instance, the lack of music in retail stores and smiley American public relations-type of interactions.

"In Iceland, what struck me there was their elemental, earthy, minimalist approach to life in all ways," she said. "So one of the first things I noticed about that culture is they were much quieter."

The idea for the work evolved on the second trip last fall to her family's forested land in Ohio, which she credits as her greatest inspiration as an artist and



"Praeter Naturam," 8-by-10 inch ambrotype, 2017

calls her "First Language."

Now 40, she spent hours and hours on that trip observing the forest, bringing back inchoate early childhood memories such as looking up at light patterns in the tree canopy while being pulled in a little red wagon.

"It's a language, when you spend a lot of time out in nature there is a language there, and you, we enter into a dialogue with that natural setting," she said.

That dialogue is also behind her work's more topical observation that our culture may suffer from nature deafness when it comes to the warnings of a changing climate.

Collodion photography utilizes a camera with an extremely slow shutter speed that saturates the images with detail and reflects the long, careful



"Amara Slow Medicine" 37-by-30 inch collodion negative hand printed on paper,

attention to nature that successful communication depends on. Each image was shot and exposed in a darkroom (a tent) on site.

"Each plate must be cleaned, colloidal poured, sensitized in silver bath, exposed, developed, washed, fixed, three additional washes, allowed to dry overnight and then varnished," Ms. Amara explains in an artist statement.

One of the results was a photograph entitled "Praeter Naturam."

"Meaning beyond what is natural or normal," her statement reads. "This image visually describes the air filled, fluid space of spirit and spontaneity where our extra sensory perception is required. ■"

in the know

'Ethos'

>> **Where:** Sidney & Berne Davis Center, downtown Fort Myers

>> **When:** Reception to kick off exhibit, Friday, March 2, 6 p.m.-10 p.m.; artist Q&A at 7 p.m.
On display through March 27



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