

**SAOIRSE
AMIRA ANIS**

**FOR NO OTHER
REASON THAN JOY**

**CAMPLE LINE
09.07 – 28.08.22**



Still from *A Lesson in Frivolity*, 2022



Deliveries from a Higher Power, 2022 (detail)

Saoirse Amira Anis: *For no other reason than joy*
– Jamie Donald

I write this sitting on the wooden floor in the upstairs exhibition space at CAMPLE LINE. Around me, Saoirse Amira Anis is installing her exhibition, *For no other reason than joy*. There are empty coffee cups, snippets of gold and purple textiles, and rogue crumbs of lavender scattered across the floor. Parliament's *Give Up the Funk* is playing as Saoirse skips across the room, lifted by a sense of self-belief that felt absent just a few hours ago.

It's late June. The sky is a light flat grey, breaking occasionally for moments of direct sunlight that glances through the window onto golden mirror-tiled props that rest on its wide white sill. From them, reflected strings of soft yellow light grace the walls in crawling, glimmering trails.

There is a lightness in the room, carried in part by the silvery tinsel euphoria of disco music playing through a laptop speaker.

Chic, Everybody Dance

Saoirse has spoken of art making – and the engendering and inhabiting of her alter ego *Freedom Princess* specifically – as a kind of therapeutic process. Through Freedom, she works to resolve conflicts and fulfil desires that find no space for themselves in the real.

Her Princessdom is Freedomia. Elsewhere in the cosmos, it is not of this world, a planet of its own that she constructs in dreams and in wakefulness. *It has no links to capitalism or state-fuelled inequality; no bloody history of slavery or terror*, Saoirse has said. Its colours are purple and gold. It has leaked into this room.

Sister Sledge, Thinking of You

When you enter another's world you meet it with your own. I encounter the stuff of this exhibition through the lens of friendship, a privileged form of access. Saoirse and I have spoken about the lingering and often potent residues that amass upon lives formed

in the shadow of the Catholic Church; we have talked about our families, and feelings of inability, anxiety, insufficiency, shame. I have seen first-hand the transformative waves and wakes that embodying this alternate self has left on her everyday being.

Jackie Wilson, *Your Love Keeps Lifting Me Higher and Higher*

I am trying hard not to think too much about Catholicism, trying to not allow its motifs to eclipse the objects in front of me, but – mirroring the shadows of the clouds outside – it creeps in and over and across the room. In the small shelves I glimpse altars, home altars, adorned with a tentative selection of offerings and devotions; in the blank, golden, flaking frames I see halos encased by shimmering Baroque ornamentation.

Womack and Womack, *Teardrops*

I don't immediately recognise the ceramic object Saoirse is holding. She is testing its positioning in different areas of the room – *by an entrance, I think it needs to be by an entrance* – reaching upwards to a height just over that of her head. She stops herself when she realises that the height she is attempting to approximate, that she remembers in a wholly embodied way, is the knowledge of a child, a child who had to stretch to reach the holy water. A font, a stoup – I am not sure of its name – it has been refigured in canary yellow with a gold lustre lip and devoted to joy, a higher, higher power.

Martha and the Vandellas, *Dancing in the Street*

I have been thinking about the impulse to gild, to paint things gold. I find myself on the website of a construction company – specialists in contemporary gilding – that tells me the process of picking out details like this is called 'flossing'. Not dissimilar to the dental practice or the dance, it suggests skimming an object's surface with a fine thread of silk.

The website continues, '*Gilding can be found on every kind of decorative object – picture frames, furniture, sculpture, ceramics, etc. It always serves to elevate the viewers' perception of value and importance. The same effect is true with architectural and*

exterior gilding, which is often found atop the gleaming domes of government buildings and sacred spaces...'

Candi Staton, *Young Hearts Run Free*

This is a sacred space, but it also feels playful, a den maybe. Through sequins and doodles I am reminded of dress-up games, make-believe – being able to immediately and vividly imagine alternate worlds. In the video work, *A Lesson in Frivolity*, Freedom describes 'all of the lost and forgotten parts which lay dormant to conserve energy, and whose lack of productive purpose seemed to render them redundant.'

Elvis Costello, *Everyday I Write the Book*

Tiffany's *I think we're alone now* comes on, and Saoirse shows me – gesturing wildly between a thin golden rail and a hanging pressed flower – a dance she made up as a child to the song that played often from a 'housework CD' her mum would listen to, dropping exuberantly to the floor in time with the lyric '*and then you put your arms around me and we tumble to the ground and then you say...'*

Cheryl Lynn, *Got To Be Real*

For some, it might take a great effort to accept or reclaim the idea of frivolity. An odd word, carrying mostly negative connotations – frivolous spending, frivolous behaviour, frivolous occupations. The first example of it in use that Google helpfully suggests is '*frivolous ribbons and lacy frills*' and when I read this, sat just between an airy tulle lilac ruffle and an apricot yellow-gold ribbon that sways steadily in the breeze from the open door, I laugh.

I read that the word, *frivolity*, comes from the Latin *frivos*, 'broken', or further back, from *fricare* – 'break, rub away, crumble'. It harks to the idea that something damaged has lost its value, lost its worth; that we ought to dismiss or cast aside that which crumbles or breaks. Centuries later the word moves into legal terminology, denoting something 'so clearly insufficient as to need no argument to show its weakness.' *So clearly insufficient*. My stomach turns.

The Waterboys, *The whole of the Moon*



A Lesson in Vanity, 2021 (installation view)



Remnants of a process, 2022 (detail)

Bodily shame emerges in many forms, whether due to a certain body's not-conforming to a given standard or ideal in either function or appearance, or due to its being a vessel that holds needs and desires at odds with its upbringing, its context, the demands of its continued living.

Saoirse I hope will not mind me saying that her body frequently, chronically, feels pain. That it is in friction with a world that demands constant ability and availability. I think of the language of languor – of the words thrown derisively when one is unable to deliver, unable to commit, unable to persevere. Flagging, flaking, a thin piece falling away from the pack, away from the more vigorous whole. The thought moves smoothly back to the moulting gilt frames; to grand powers failing over time; to a multitude of individuals tentatively peeling or pulling themselves away from a belief, a life, a state of mind; of finding beliefs anew.

The O'Jays, *Love Train*

I have some insight to the lore of Freedomia, so I know that the fabric hanging over the stair – blank, makeshift, fraying – is not its flag and is not intended to be, but in it I still see a style of textile declaration – less one of statehood and more of surrender, of submission. Lavender purple, and with lavender in the air, I think about luxury, luxuriating, rest. Examining other textiles that are pinned and draped around the room, I imagine them steeping in baths of spices and wildflowers and it occurs to me that luxuriating is a process that transcends the human experience; that luxuriating is imbuing with a richness of sensation granted only by sufficient – no – ample time.

Prince, 1999

I have a copy of Shola Von Reinhold's *Lote* in my hand. It is Saoirse's copy that I have borrowed, and it is in a poor state: dog-eared, worn, covers peeling. It is a beautiful book. A page whose corners are well-folded at both the top and bottom corner reads,

Between the assimilation and the fantasy there was another space, which was not about championing that which speaks

against you [...] but instead about showing your ability to embody the fantasy regardless, in spite of, to spite, and in doing so extrapolate the elegance, the fantasy, Romance, or whatever it was, abstract it and show it to be a universal material, to be added to the toolbox. 'Look! Look: It does not belong to them.'

Martha and the Vandellas, *Heatwave*

Both working on our own tasks, we pause as the room gently changes in hue. Soft orbs of light have appeared in our midst – reflections from a slumped disco ball that drift and float across the walls. We gaze on as they, in unison, reveal themselves to be projections, becoming marbled as they reflect the wisps of clouds that move across the sun.

Sister Sledge, *Thinking of You*

Jamie Donald is an artist, writer and curator based in Dundee. She has served on the committee at GENERATORprojects (2019–2021) and is a founding member of Wooosh Gallery (2019–). She has written for MAP Magazine and Front Left Scotland.



Offerings to a Higher Power, 2022



List of works

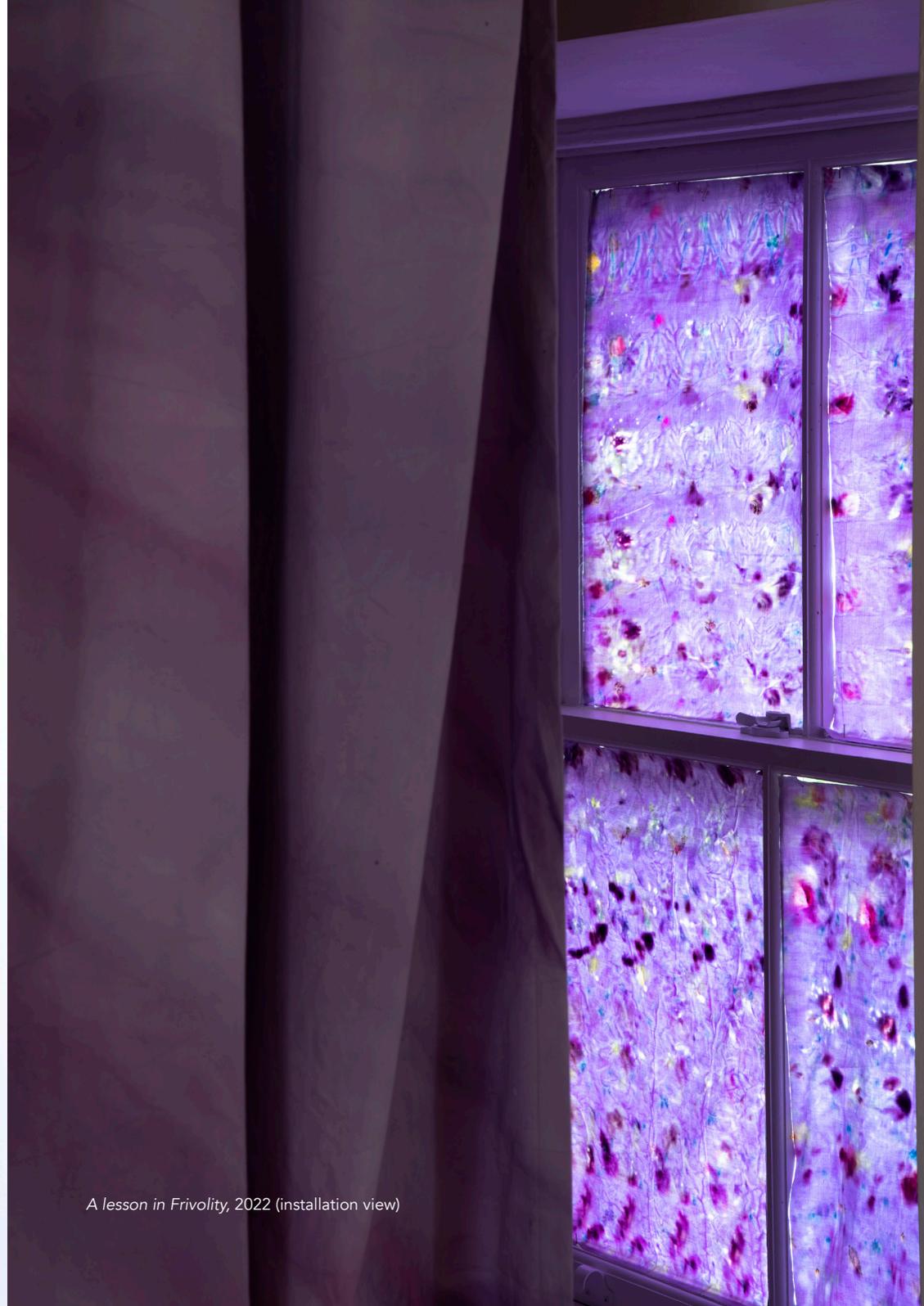
- 1-3. **A Lesson in Frivolity**, 2022,
Digital video, 11 mins, sound
Installation in four parts
wood, fabric, mirror tiles, foam
4. **Remnants of a process**, 2022
Aluminium frames, ink on paper,
glazed ceramic, fabric, gold leaf,
lavender
5. **In place of an altar**, 2022
Turmeric-dyed fabric, glazed ceramic,
lavender, water, food colouring
6. **Deliveries from a Higher
Power**, 2022
Ribbon, ink on paper, brass wire,
buttercup
7. **Freedomia from above**, 2022
Red cabbage-dyed fabric, buttons,
thread
8. **Offerings to a Higher Power**,
2022
Wood, brackets, glazed ceramic, crepe
paper, lavender
9. **Primordial perfection**, 2022
Aluminium and gold leaf
10. **Font of holy joy**, 2022
Glazed ceramic, lavender water
11. **Disco ball of dreams**, 2022
Papier-mâché, mirror tiles, tulle
fabric
12. **Freedom's Regalia**, 2022
Tulle fabric, brass wire, tissue paper,
mirror tiles
13. **Between realms**, 2022
Red cabbage-dyed fabric, brass wire
14. **A Lesson in Vanity**, 2021
Digital video, 10 mins, 12 secs, sound



A Lesson in Frivolity, 2022 (installation view)

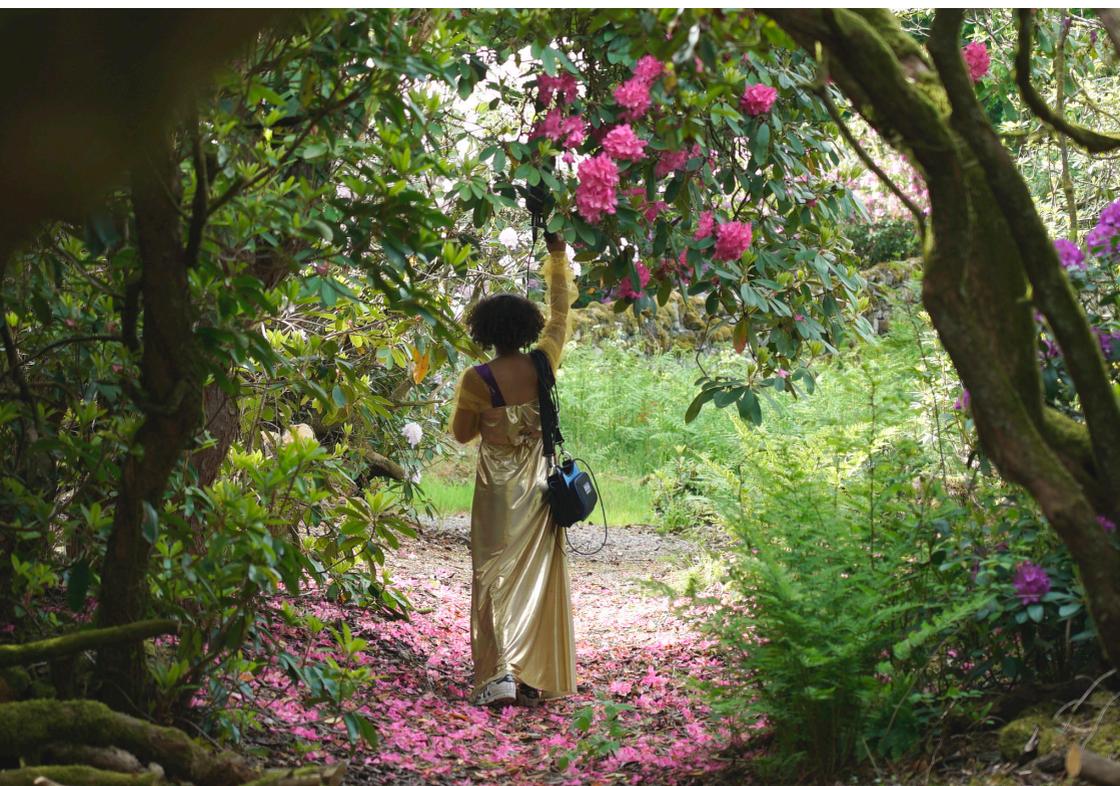


Offerings to a Higher Power, 2022



A lesson in Frivolity, 2022 (installation view)





Saoirse Amira Anis (b. Lanark, Scotland) is an artist based in Dundee. In her work, Saoirse explores the relationships between materials, memories, and the essential movement that runs through everything. She recently curated *Miss(ing) Information (2022)* at Perth Museum and Art Gallery, an exhibition that featured the work of Tayo Adekunle, Nkem Okwechime, Tako Taal and Natasha Ruwona.

Since graduating Saoirse has completed residencies at Cove Park, Argyll and Bute, Hospitalfield in Arbroath, and Collemacchia, with the Museum of Loss and Renewal. She was a committee member at GENERATORprojects 2018-2021. Recent projects include: *Jupiter Rising*, 2021; *A Lesson in Vanity*, David Dale Gallery and Lux Scotland, July 2021; *We Can Still Dance*, Jupiter Artland, as part of the Black Lives Matter Mural Trail, Edinburgh Art Festival (2020); *GEN-TRS*, The Royal Standard, Liverpool (2020), and *Echo*, in response Alberta Whittle's *How Flexible Can We Make the Mouth*, DCA, Dundee (2019).



Freedom's Regalia, 2022 (installation view)



Still from A Lesson in Frivolity, 2022

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