

Moth-ing by Amanda McCavour
Curated by Jessica Thalmann
Special Projects Gallery, York University
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Images of both moths and butterflies are prevalent in the visual and literary arts symbols of transformation, metamorphosis and renewal. However, there are subtle but complex intricacies of the moth image that Amanda McCavour, emphasizes in her artistic practice. McCavour's new textile installations in *Moth-ing* appropriate this potent textual symbol to re-examine its relationship to natural and artificial light while also subverting the insect's inherent nature.

It is important to recognize the medium itself, the exhibition and McCavour's practice in general. *Swarm* exemplifies this strong and immediate sense of irony when the artist molds her moths out of the very substance that it hungrily devours. The visual imagery of moths massed in the throngs of string and twine alludes to a sense of being trapped or ensnared, which is then repeated in *Bug Jars*. The presence of glass jars also signals another type of barrier or hindrance that exemplifies this idea of captivity illustrated in *Swarm*. It is perhaps the vulnerability and fragility of McCavour's medium combined with the deft use of visual imagery that affects the viewer so. These images feel as if they were to unfurl or unravel before you with the slightest touch. And again, tactility is accentuated in her work as one cannot help but recall the feel of such materials touching skin, whether it is clothing, bed sheets, hand towels, mittens etc. This synesthetic experience of viewing the work is unique to McCavour's practice.

Moth-ing dually explores the visual and thematic uses of light as it pertains to insects and consequently the viewer. A curious relationship develops when the moth is inherently attracted to light almost to the detriment of its very existence. Thus forms the proverb 'Like a moth to a flame' and even alludes to Icarus's tragic plunge due to his reckless abandon. *Positively Phototactic* probes this dichotomy as circles of light exposes and, again, imprisons the insects within boundaries. What does this thematic reoccurrence suggest about the work, but also McCavour's practice? Perhaps the ephemeral and often fleeting aspects of her work pooled with ideas of entrapment and unraveling signals a hidden truth about quotidian life that appeals universally. The exhibition as a whole exudes a mysterious sense of temporality as her threads are almost barely present in the space; but, ironically, when accumulated can have a presence of such substantial weight that it can overwhelm and overpower the viewer's senses with its insistence on the visual and tactile.

Jessica Thalmann