THE MOON AND A SMILE
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SOPHY RICKETT  ASTRID KRUSE JENSEN  HELEN SEAR
NEETA MADAHAR AND MELANIE ROSE  PATRICIA ZIAD
GRETA ALFARO  SHARON MORRIS  ANNA FOX
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Curated by Katy Freer

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The Moon and a Smile responds to a period in the 1840s and 1850s, when Swansea was at the centre of early experiments in photography worldwide. In particular, the Dillwyn Llewelyn family circle was prolific in the development of photography.

John Dillwyn Llewelyn (1810-82) played a leading role in nearby Penllergare, as did his wife Emma (1808-81), cousin of photography’s notable inventor, William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877). Women in the family were fully engaged in the practice, with Mary Dillwyn (1816-1906), John’s sister, capturing the earliest photograph of a smile and his daughter Thereza (1834-1926), the first photograph of the moon.

Responding to this significant period in Swansea’s history, the Gallery arranged eight new commissions from contemporary international artists. Each artist has created a distinctly rich body of work following their own practice and inspiration. The exhibition encompasses photography, installation, artist books, moving image, and explores themes of memory, archives, botanics, time, family and industrialisation. Their work is displayed alongside a selection of original 19th century photographs that had particular resonance for their projects.

We would like to offer special thanks to Helen Sear for introducing us to the original idea for this exhibition. Our thanks are due to colleagues at Penllergare Trust for their help throughout the creative process, together with others who have supported new work being made. Warmest thanks also to Kate Best, writer and curator, for her discerning text linking historical photography with contemporary practice, and colleagues who helped with the research, in particular Bronwen Colquhoun, Mark Etheridge, Jaimie Thomas, William Troughton, Kim Collins and their institutions which have kindly loaned the works from their historical collections, Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales, National Library of Wales and West Glamorgan Archive Service.

Finally we would like to thank the artists for embracing the project with such commitment and generosity, Greta Alfaro, Anna Fox, Astrid Kruse Jensen, Neeta Madanah & Melanie Rose, Sharon Morris, Sophy Rickett, Helen Sear and Patricia Ziad.

The exhibition is supported by a grant from the Arts Council of Wales; the project and catalogue have also been made possible by the generosity and support of the Institute of Photography/ Falmouth University and the Friends of the Glynn Vivian, to whom we are deeply grateful.

KATY FREER, EXHIBITIONS OFFICER
JENNI SPENCER-DAVIES, CURATOR
GLYNN VIVIAN ART GALLERY
This exhibition brings together eight new bodies of work commissioned by the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery in response to photographs by the Dillwyn Llewelyn family of Swansea and their circle in public collections in Wales.

The family, who lived at Penllergare and Sketty Hall, were amongst the earliest and most enthusiastic experimenters with the new technology of photography, which was announced in 1839. Through photographic albums, prints, negatives, letters, memoirs and other archival materials, as well as the physical remains of their properties, the family left a rich and unique record of their experiments with the medium, perhaps the most complete record of a family’s intimacy with photography in the 1840s and 50s.\(^1\)

Since the 1970s this legacy has been explored in a number of publications and exhibitions that have focussed on the work of John Dillwyn Llewelyn (1810-1882), whose contribution to early developments in British photography is well established, and whose photographs and life story have inspired and framed the ongoing restoration of the family estate at Penllergare on the outskirts of Swansea.

John Dillwyn Llewelyn was born into a wealthy and prominent Swansea family, the eldest son of Lewis Weston Dillwyn (1778-1855), owner of the Cambrian Pottery, important botanist, MP for Swansea and a founding member of the Royal Institution of South Wales. Dillwyn knew many of the leading ‘men of Science’ of the 19th century and passed his love of the natural sciences and interest in the arts to his son. On his maturity, John inherited the substantial estate at Penllergare from his maternal grandfather (and so assumed the surname ‘Llewelyn’), where he set up home with his new wife Emma (1808-1881) after their marriage in 1833. Penllergare became the Llewelyns’ home and a ‘research laboratory’,\(^2\) where the family started experimenting as soon as they heard about the invention of the daguerreotype and the development of paper-based photography by Emma’s cousin, William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877).

For John Dillwyn Llewelyn, photography was both a family affair and a pursuit that combined the interests in science and art that he shared with a wealthy elite. During the 1840s and ’50s photography was not only protected from commercial exploitation by Fox Talbot’s patent but required significant financial investment in equipment and chemicals, space for workshops, time for experimentation and a high degree of chemical knowledge and skill. Swansea, then a major industrial city and port, rich in coal and producing the bulk of the world’s copper and zinc, and home to a group of wealthy industrialists whose enterprises were supported by scientific and technological innovation, was a fertile ground for photographic experimentation.

\(^1\)personal communication with Chris Williams, 2011.

The accounts and catalogues of the family's photographs have long prioritised John's activities, attributing the vast majority of work to him. In recent years however, and in the context of an emerging debate about women in photography, there has been a renewed focus on the experiments and achievements of other family members. Among John's most notable photographic collaborators were Emma, who did much of her husband's printing but who also took photographs herself; his sister Mary Dillwyn (1816-1906), who used a small format camera and made portraits and other studies that are noted for their informality and spontaneity and is credited with having taken some of the earliest photographs of smiles; and his eldest daughter Thereza Dillwyn Llewelyn (1834-1926), who combined research into botany and astronomy with photographic experimentation, and with her father made some of the earliest photographs of the Moon in the Observatory at Penllergare.

The project 'The Moon and a Smile' developed from conversations between curators at the Glynn Vivian and artist Helen Sear, who in 2012 had made a series of flower studies entitled 'Pastoral Monuments' in response to the Mary Dillwyn albums acquired by the National Library of Wales in 2002 and 2007. It became clear that the dispersed Dillwyn Llewelyn archive had the potential to be used as the starting point for a further series of artist commissions that could form a contemporary response to such a resonant period in the history of both photography and Swansea. As the title implied, the project would also invite an engagement with the spirit of inventiveness and enquiry at the heart of the family's (and in particular its women's) photographic output.

Nine artists, all women whose practice incorporates photography, were selected for the project and first came as a group to view historical material and visit Penllergare Valley Woods in Spring 2015. Since then, the artists have each developed their own projects, spending time in and around Swansea and making use of museum collections and archival resources here and elsewhere. By accident more than design, their projects developed independently, resulting in eight distinct bodies of work of great richness and diversity, with fascinating and unexpected points of overlap and divergence. For this exhibition, their work is displayed alongside original photographs that had particular resonance for their projects, on loan from Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales, the National Library of Wales and West Glamorgan Archive Service. At the Glynn Vivian the work can also be considered in relation to the displays of Cambrian pottery, made under the management of Lewis Weston Dillwyn, and the photographs of Richard Glynn Vivian, a friend of the Dillwyn Llewelyn family.
Wisteria on Views of Wales
Vols. 1 & 2 and National Gallery
probably by Mary Dillwyn, c.1853, salt print, Llysdinam album, 7 x 6cm
© Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru/National Library of Wales

The Lake, Penllergare
stereograph from Penllergare Views, probably by Thomas and/or
John Dillwyn Llewelyn, c.1856, albumen prints, 12 x 7cm
© Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru/National Library of Wales
Photography is […] a beautiful necromancy […] and a Science.³

This text will discuss the eight commissions in The Moon and a Smile in the context of some of the historical material that informed them and will consider ways in which this work proposes new ways of looking at the Dillwyn Llewelyn family’s photography and its history, whilst also extending the technical possibilities of the medium now – thus demonstrating what Nevil Story Maskelyne (who married Thereza Dillwyn Llewelyn in 1858) described as photography’s essential magic, as being both a necromancy (a means of communicating with the dead) and a science.

In recent years, Sophy Rickett has made work that engages conceptually with archives ‘as a means to explore expanded notions of authorship, ownership, participation and consent […] and how meaning is contested, continually subject to interpretation’. The Curious Moaning of Kenfig Burrows, her project for this exhibition, is the third in a trilogy of works that use text and image (still and moving) to document archival research and explore specific histories of the visual in relation to her own subjectivity.⁴ The project also explores Rickett’s ongoing interest in the ways in which photography and landscape are understood and experienced on both aesthetic and physical levels – a ‘mobilisation’ that is particularly acute in the landscape garden (such as Penllergare), intentionally laid out as a series of ‘pictures’.⁵

From her initial visit to the National Museum Wales collections and the estate at Penllergare, now leased by a Trust to restore the gardens and landscape and remaining structures to ‘the romantic style shown in the photographs of John Dillwyn Llewellin’,⁶ Rickett was struck by the breaks and discontinuities in the narratives about the family, such as the demolition of Penllergare House, and the ‘politics of assignation’ raised by questions of authorship and collaboration. She also became interested in the ways in which the arbitrariness of loss and the dominance of certain narratives ‘work alongside the traces of what did survive, forcing hypothesis, conjecture, assumption and the imaginary’, all combining to mitigate against the possibility of a ‘seamless’ reconstruction.⁷

Rickett was drawn to a photograph by John Dillwyn Llewellin of Thereza looking out to sea with a telescope at Caswell Bay, ‘as much for the idea of Thereza’ as for the image.⁸ Thereza had a close relationship with her father that revolved around their shared interests in botany, photography

[Image of Thereza and John Dillwyn Llewelyn, c. 1855-7, Gelatin silver print, © Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales]
and astronomy, in which they collaborated until she left Penllergare after her marriage in 1858. John encouraged Thereza’s studies from a young age and amongst the many portraits he made of her there are several that show her at work, with a microscope, telescope or flower press. Thereza also became technically proficient and experimental in photography, and it is likely that the observatory with adjacent photographic laboratory (darkroom) that has outlived the house at Penllergare was built for her use. Her father also gave her a stereographic camera for her birthday in 1856.

Rickett made a detailed study of Thereza’s papers, comparing diaries from the mid to late 1850s with memoirs from the end of her life, when she self-consciously sought to claim her family’s position (in particular the roles of her father and husband) at the beginnings of photography. Informed by the gap between Thereza’s testimonies, Rickett’s own narrative response is knowingly positioned between historical report and personal reflection. Through text and image, The Curious Moaning of Kenfig Burrows suggests an equivalence between the space between diary and memoir and the physical remains and absences at sites described and pictured in the archives, as Rickett visits and discovers (and documents) how these landscapes now exist within an ‘awkward combination’ of natural and municipal.

At Caswell Bay, where the family had a seaside house, Rickett recognises rocks from Thereza’s photograph and locates what might be ‘escaped’ plants from the family’s exotic garden, but her efforts to visualise the house are blocked by recent developments. Likewise, at Penllergare a cherry tree is the only feature of the Council Offices car park (apart from the Observatory) that hints at the former site of the mansion. Rickett’s attempts to connect with ‘Thereza’ at a physical level are instead mediated by individuals and organisations involved in custodianship and care whose voices and images punctuate her account, and by her own personal memories and identification.

Rickett was also photographed as a child by her father, who gave her her first camera, and so became intrigued that Thereza, the inquisitive photographer and scientist, ‘is also a beloved daughter, subject of, and also subject to her father’s scrutinising gaze’. Rickett’s father, a doctor, kept his camera with scientific instruments, things ‘to do with looking inside’, and this association leads to a childhood recollection of having her painfully infected ears examined by another doctor. This episode, while referring to deafness and the later breakdown of communication with her father, functions as an abject obstruction in the narrative, pulling the work back from nostalgia. Indeed, throughout the piece, Rickett grapples with the romantic allure of the Dillwyn Llewelyn archive and the landscape at Penllergare, contrasting her own silver-bromide landscapes that make direct reference to John Dillwyn Llewelyn’s Caswell Bay photographs and Thereza’s technical experiments, with colour photographs and found imagery that have a more detached, literal aesthetic. As the text implies, these photographs are both ‘a capture, but also, a refusal’.

Caswell Bay in Wind and Waves
John Dillwyn Llewelyn, 1853. Salt print, 14 x 17 cm
Inserting her own family photographs into the project, Rickitt also finds a visual echo in the way Thereza posed for her father with a photograph of her own daughter at nursery, ‘subjugated into obedient conformity through the act of having her picture taken’. The way her daughter is sitting ‘somewhere between a pose and the very real sense of her waiting’ reminds Rickitt of Thereza posing for her father, and perhaps also the transformed landscapes of their collaboration, ‘like a document slipping into something else, something more functional, more itself, both staged and not staged, depending on how it is understood’.15

This description might also be used for the portrait of Elinor Dillwyn Llewelyn with her doll, probably also taken by John Dillwyn Llewelyn, which was one of the starting images for Astrid Kruse Jensen’s project. The second youngest of Llewelyn’s daughters, Elinor usually appears in photographs paired with her younger sister Lucy. Here, instead of supporting her sister, Elinor holds a doll.16 The photograph was taken in the conservatory at Penllergare and because of the light bouncing off Elinor’s white apron, has been overexposed so that the doll’s face is obscured. The only part of the image in focus is an orchid at Elinor’s side, perhaps also the subject of the same photographic session. Elinor herself, frozen in the pose, seems strangely absent, her challenging gaze creating a sense of resistance that contrasts with the fleeting smiles of other Dillwyn Llewelyn photographs.

The ways that these unintended effects contrast with the majority of carefully staged photographs in the archive struck Kruse Jensen, who perceived a kind of equivalence in the landscape at Penllergare, undergoing a process of transformation from overgrown wilderness to re-established landscape garden, a romantic version of reality known (validated?) through its photographic representation. Kruse Jensen was also drawn to Llewelyn’s photographs of the river and lake, where reflections disturb and distort the images and set in play a mirroring of reality.

Kruse Jensen’s practice explores the ways in which the mutability of memory is reflected or embedded in the constant transformation of landscape and the chemical transformations of photography, both a ‘changeable state of organic development that constantly evade control’. Her series of photographs for this exhibition explore the temporal and aesthetic layering at Penllergare, using revived black and white Polaroid ‘instant’ film and a basic plastic camera. As a ‘reinvented analogue’ process made in opposition to the digital, the Polaroid suggests to Kruse Jensen a ‘longing for a more slow process in a fast medium’ and inscribes the work with a lack of technical perfection that echoes and contrasts with the man-made beauty of the landscape at Penllergare.17

Key to these photographs and the way in which they evoke a ‘state of mind’ is the use of the female figure in the landscape. For this project, Kruse Jensen photographed her daughter at Penllergare, the photographs ‘floating’ between figure and landscape, but also between mother and daughter, the mother-as-photographer finding herself reflected in the image of the daughter (as Elinor’s image is doubled in that of her doll).18 Scanned and printed onto transparent fabric...
and suspended in the gallery, the images also offer ‘glimpses of memory’, floating between a
than of the Dillwyn Llewelyn’s time and the now of the gardens as they are slowly reclaimed and
re-established.

The experience of being in the landscape is also an ongoing concern in Helen Sear’s work. Her
film Moments of Capture is framed by an image of a woman in the woods at Penllergare, with
her back (hair) to the viewer, holding antlers above her head, thus overlaying references to John
Dillwyn Llewelyn’s photographs of women and animals in the landscape with motifs from Sear’s
own work.22 As the woman holds her pose in real time - the length of the film approximating
the exposure time of some of Llewelyn’s photographs23 - the camera moves to closely observed
events beyond this frame around the park at Penllergare and beyond, at Margam (the home of
Emma Dillwyn Llewelyn’s brother Christopher Talbot and now a country park), Port Talbot and
Caswell, that build up a mounting sense of anxiety about landscape and technology.

The film follows in the footsteps of Llewelyn, who set out in the summer of 1854 on a
photographic ‘campaign on the sea coast’ for which he made use of a drop shutter that enabled
him to reduce exposure times to around 1/25th second.24 His resulting set of Motion
photographs, for which he was awarded a Silver Medal at the Paris Exposition Universelle of
1855, pictured the movement of clouds, the breaking of waves, a ship in sail and a boat letting
off steam and were celebrated as early examples of ‘instantaneous’ photographs that captured
‘fleeting’ moments of passing time.

Perhaps more than any other of his works, these photographic set pieces also reflect the scientific
and technological debates of the age. The elemental subjects - water, steam, wind, light, motion –
are suggestive of the debates about the chemistry of photography among Llewelyn’s scientist
friends, notably his future son-in-law Nevil Story Maskelyne (1823-1911) and Swansea neighbour
William Robert Grove (1811-1896), who were fascinated by the way the chemical changes in
photography demonstrated light to be an ‘actinic’ (i.e. electric) force acting on objects, equivalent
to heat, electricity and magnetism.25

The concern with ‘capturing’ steam also resonates with Llewelyn’s other notable experiments,
harnessing waste steam from a farm traction engine to heat his melon house and applying
Grove’s fuel cell battery technology to electrically power a boat.26 Indeed, the way photographic
exposures harnessed the sun’s rays was compared at the time to steam power, with photography
described as early as 1843 as ‘the steam engine of the fine arts’, and listed as a new means of
production alongside gas works, telegraphs, steam navigation and railways by Karl Marx.27

Optimism about scientific and technological advancement in the mid-nineteenth century was
mingled with anxiety about its environmental, social and metaphysical impact, unease that Sear
finds echoed in contemporary environmental debates, including the suggestion that humanity’s impact on the Earth is now so profound that it has created a new geological epoch, the ‘Anthropocene’, or the ‘age of the human’. The geological surveys carried out by Llewelyn’s friend Sir Henry de la Beche (1796-1855), the father of his sister-in-law Bessie, had revealed that the world was much older than the Bible and established the case for organic change over time that Darwin built on with his Theory of Evolution (published 1857). Llewelyn’s concern with ‘instantaneity’, as his photographs of the Welsh coast suggest (especially those of Thereza and other family members set against the rock formations and breaking waves at Caswell Bay), therefore sits within a wider discourse about deep time and non-human history.

Informed by this reading of instantaneity as a ‘temporal sublime’, Moments of Capture examines relationships between nature and technology and the tension between stillness and momentum through a series of visual episodes that Sear calls ‘still, moving images’. Through re-workings of the Motion images (substituting the blast furnaces at the Port Talbot steel plant shot from Margam for the steam ship) and animations of Llewelyn’s stuffed animal scenes (drawing comparison between photography and the pursuits hunting and fishing (capture) that were enjoyed by the family), Sear unpicks Llewelyn’s interest in representing motion and instantaneity, finding moments of apparent stillness and quiet in a world in flux. By contrast, the rhythmical thud of the Port Talbot steel plant forms an industrial soundtrack suggestive of the movement of steam trains or the anvils that chimed in Wagner’s Das Rheingold (written 1852-4), adding a sense of urgency to the harvesting/hunting activities of insects, animals, wind turbines and a solitary metal detector.

The film culminates with the arrival of a drone, at once terrifyingly other and strangely familiar, as it hovers and hums like an insect, its mirrored legs and wings taking on the ‘fearful’ symmetry of an exotic orchid. Significantly, it was through a detailed botanical study of orchids that Darwin was able to demonstrate his theory of natural selection, and thus the theory of evolution. In Fertilization of Orchids (published 1862), he contradicted the prevailing view that flowers were created for beauty, as the handiwork of a Divine Creator, by demonstrating that orchids developed specialized modifications to provide pollinators with different ways to fertilize them, evidence of ‘co-evolution’. Darwin initially studied wild specimens like the ones in Sear’s film, but he then drew on the many species of exotic orchids that had been introduced by a small number of dedicated enthusiasts, including John Dillwyn Llewelyn, who started collecting orchids soon after his marriage in 1833 and built what was probably the first private Orchid House in Britain at Penllergare, influential for its innovative steam heating system and ‘tropical picturesque’ interior.

The family’s passion for orchid growing and interest in picturing plants became the inspiration for Neeta Madahar and Melanie Rose’s collaborative project. Having visited and photographed...
the ruins of the Orchid House at Penllergare, Madahar and Rose studied correspondence about the family’s orchids from John and Thereza in the archive at Kew Gardens. In a letter to William Jackson Hooker, the Director of Kew in 1842, Llewelyn enclosed a daguerreotype of orchid Aridae odoratum, a very early, possibly the first (but sadly untraced) example of self-styled ‘Botanical photography’. Madahar and Rose both have an interest in natural history illustration, and they set out to identify other photographs of Llewelyn’s orchids. With the help of orchid experts and existing published research, they also compiled a detailed list of all the forty specimens grown at Penllergare. The names of the orchids had particular resonance for Madahar, who has written of her fascination with ‘the associations between naming, representation and meaning’, and although only a few photographs of orchids have been identified, Emma Dillwyn Llewelyn’s drawings and other contemporary Illustrations of the Orchid House, as well as the botanical designs on Cambrian Ware pottery informed this project.

Alongside their archival research, Madahar, with her background in photography, and Rose, who usually draws and paints, experimented with the cliché verre process, which combines these processes. They also made test pieces that incorporated plant elements, inspired by the photogenic drawings (camera-less photography) of ferns in the archive, probably taken by Thereza, and those of Henry Fox Talbot and Anna Atkins that had influenced Madahar’s earlier series Cosmoses, with their exploration of the alchemical potential of light and the balance between chance and order. However, partly because of the practical difficulties in photographing orchids in bloom, but also in a conceptual step akin to Madahar making photograms of origami rather than actual flowers in Cosmoses, for their final piece they selected the twelve orchids they felt were most significant and used low resolution images from the internet as source material.

For a second piece of work, still in process at the time of writing, Madahar and Rose have sought to identify Emma’s watercolour drawings of orchids that were published as lithographs in Curtis’s Botanical Magazine, and will use these as source imagery for a wallpaper design.

Madahar and Rose’s collaboration and ‘darkroom play’ references the way the Dillwyn Llewelyns made many of their images and has led the artists to a rediscovery of the possibilities of the analogue process. Informed by the family’s cultivation and observation of plants and birds, their projects also celebrate the Dillwyn Llewelyn’s contribution to the art and science of botany, in particular the often-overlooked role of Emma.
Patricia Ziad’s work also takes as its starting point the Dillwyn Llewelyn family’s experimental approach to the representation of flowers, particularly the work of Mary Dillwyn. Unlike other family members whose written accounts have informed subsequent histories, little is known about Mary other than what we can ascertain from her photographs. Although these are often initialed ‘MD’, many of Mary’s photographs have long been attributed to her brother, and it is only in recent years that her position as a photographer, perhaps ‘the first woman photographer in Wales’, has been reappraised.35

Ziad was initially interested in Mary's delicate studies of flowers, posed in carefully-chosen jugs and vases,36 but rejected what she saw as their fragility (in Ziad’s earlier body of work on Welsh Chapels, flowers and doilies are a marker of a ‘prettification’ of the once-austere interior), finding it impossible to look at the photographs without acknowledging what they do not make visible, namely their context in the powerful history of nineteenth century Wales, and addressing the family’s privileged position in that world. She therefore made images of ‘industrial flowers’, by painting with ink on plates of glass tinted a rich copper colour to echo copper production in Swansea and reference both the environmental destruction caused by the growth of industry and the reclamation of the Lower Swansea Valley since the 1960s, where tree planting and conservation work aims to return the valley to its preindustrial ‘green’ state.37

Ziad’s research then concentrated more closely on coal mining and the copper and zinc industry, gathering imagery of the industrial landscape of Swansea and of mining, including photographs and engravings used to campaign for the restriction of child and female labour, as well as work by early-twentieth-century artists who developed a style influenced by Cubism and Futurism to express modernity and mechanisation.38 She also studied accounts of the Rebecca Riots in rural West Wales in the 1840s, when protests against the rising costs of toll roads and deep-seated divisions between the gentry and Welsh-speaking communities boiled over into violence. John Dillwyn Llewelyn and his brother Lewis Llewelyn Dillwyn (1814-1892) were both magistrates and were involved in quelling the 1843 protests around Swansea and prosecuting the leaders, and the archives include their written testimony of this tense and dramatic period.

Struck by the fact that Mary Dillwyn lived to the age of ninety at a time when the average life expectancy was around forty, Ziad then made images that express the ‘sense of darkness’ of industrial Wales and seek to reproduce the repetitive processes undertaken by the industrial workforce. Building up these images with gestures that echo what she describes as the ‘rhythmic exercise of labour’ required by copper smelting, Ziad’s images both pay tribute to and perhaps reinstate the body of the worker via a semi-abstract language that hints at the dizzying vortex of scaffold and mine shaft, danger, claustrophobia and subterranean entrapment and suggests the ‘shadows’ of this experience on lives today.39

View of Swansea from St Thomas
John Dillwyn Llewelyn, March 15, 1858,
gold-tinted albumen print from cyanotype negative, 14x18cm
© Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales
Greta Alfaro’s project also deals with the contrast between the ‘elegance and refinery’ of the Dillwyn Llewelyn photographs and other nineteenth century images and accounts of the poverty and pollution in the city of Swansea. Like Ziad’s prints, Alfaro writes of there being ‘something dark and foggy, grey and dirty, all around the atmosphere of this project, just like a factory’s smoke, a colliery, or an old black and white photograph’.

Alfaro was particularly struck by a photograph of a young man with his eyes closed (subsequently identified as Theodore Talbot of Margam), inscribed with a quotation in Greek from Aeschylus’ Prometheus Bound that translates as ‘And to the Sun’s all-seeing orb I cry’, a phrase which formed the title of her project. Contrasted with the photographs of the Moon taken in the Observatory at Penllergare by Thereza and John Dillwyn Llewelyn, but for Alfaro equivalent to using optical devices to ‘turn a blind eye to’ the world (the lens abstracting and detaching the object from reality), the photograph seemed to express the apparent ‘blindness’ of the family’s photographs to their industrial context.

The photograph was made at Penllergare, probably taken by James Knight, the Llewelyn children’s tutor and one of John’s photographic collaborators and is an example of the ways in which the Llewelyn children acted out ‘family theatricals’ for the camera. But the choice of text, as Alfaro deduced, is telling. According to Aeschylus’ text, Prometheus is the Titan who is punished by Zeus for giving man the gift of fire; ‘All human skill and science was Prometheus’s gift’. In Ancient Greece he was worshipped by potters, his gift of fire essential to their kiln. In the nineteenth century, with the popularity of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s Prometheus Unbound (1820) that tells of his release from captivity, Prometheus came to symbolise the Romantic hero rising up against oppression. Prometheus is thus a link to the source of the Llewelyn’s wealth and position, the Cambrian pottery developed by Lewis Weston Dillwyn, and in Alfaro’s eyes, a personification of the ‘working-class rights defenders’ who participated in the Rebecca Riots, and thus also a parable of modern-day global inequalities.

To explore these connections, Alfaro has made ceramic versions of photographs from the Dillwyn Llewelyn archive and mounted these on slate slabs engraved with sentences from Friedrich Engels’ The Condition of the Working Class in England (published 1845), which criticised the disregard of the bourgeoisie for the conditions of industrial workers. Suggestive of tombstones, these pieces form a ‘vanitas’ still life, reminding us of what Alfaro calls ‘the permanent bond between life and death, wealth and misery’.

For the Ash: Yr Onnen, Sharon Morris’s series of artist’s books, also hinges on the paradox of the Dillwyn Llewelyn’s sensitivity to the natural world, in particular what she describes as the ‘intimacy of perception’ of the photographs attributed to Mary Dillwyn and Thereza Dillwyn Llewelyn, and what they leave out, namely ‘the industrial source of wealth in the Swansea area’. In a series of
photographs and poems made in Pembrokeshire, where a landscape ‘intimate with its scars of history and labour’ places the 19th century industrial revolution in the context of millennia of human intervention, Morris expresses both admiration for the bravery and vision of the family and unease about their role within a capitalist, industrialist history whose ongoing environmental and social impact are pressing concerns today.44

Describing a series of encounters with and detailed observations of the landscape, interwoven with references to events from Welsh mythology and history and personal memory, Morris’s images depict a land where past and present coexist, but which is threatened by our own lack of care or inattention.45 The series is structured around a number of visual motifs from the Dillwyn Llewelyn photographs, including the solitary tree; the woman at the water’s edge; flowers; a concern with geology and archaeology; the moon and the smile; and perhaps most importantly, a concern with looking and not looking, key to Morris’s insistence on the importance of ‘facing up’ to the present and not turning away from history. Optical motifs in the landscape – a ‘face of flowers’, ‘heliotropic’ daisies, a hedgehog’s beady eye, circles of cairns, beaker ware, coracles, golden sunsets, islands, wells, the Milky Way - all recall the ‘astonished gaze’ of nineteenth-century experimental observation (as evidenced in Mary’s photographs of birds and plants, and Thereza’s studies with telescope and microscope) and contrast with images and texts that play with ideas of concealment and the refusal to look.46 The landscape is at once view and insistent observer, reminding the reader/viewer to ‘open your eyes to heal your sight’.47 With the Welsh language that names and describes it, it contains both rebuke and redemption, like the mythical Welsh tales of the Mabinogion that opened the forbidden door to the flood of memory, history fresh and bloody, and remembered their acts and their tasks.48

By ‘daring to look’ closely at the Pembrokeshire landscape now, these poems and photographs resist nostalgia or sentimentality, as if following the Brechtian maxim: ‘to start not from the good old things but the bad new ones’.49 Presented as artist’s books in a format that recalls the intimacy of the photo album (they include family photographs), they reveal a subject struck by the ‘unbearable beauty’ of a landscape of shimmering springs, blue seas, fields of barley and wheat, and suffering a deep sense of ‘solastalgia’ – an existential distress caused by the signs of environmental change including ash die-back disease, from which the series gets its title. The poems speak ‘between’ Welsh and English. As Morris reminds us, Welsh was the ‘language of the home at the time of the Rebecca Riots’,50 but was not the language of the landowners.
and magistrates, including the Dillwyn Llewellyn family, so this structure both celebrates the richness of the Welsh language and acknowledges its difficult history. Welsh is also Morris’s mother tongue and its integration into her poems also alludes to notions of home, origin and sanctuary now. Indeed, the symbol ‘Mother’ is at the heart of the project, referenced by the photographs of the artist’s mother and a series of images of mother/child relations (cow/calf; mare/foal; Rhianon/Pryderi; Rebecca/Histori). As Morris suggests, ‘Mother’ is the primary carer, the ‘one who pays attention to the world because they care’.

In *Smile*, Morris includes a portrait of a woman with the same tentative, half-shy smile that we see in Mary Dillwyn’s portraits. This could be an old photograph of her mother or herself as a young woman, but it eludes attempts to date it. Read alongside the text *The First Smile Begins in the Womb* and the poem *Punctum* that equates the mother with the landscape, it makes a direct reference to Roland Barthes’s discussion of the detail or ‘punctum’ in a photograph that holds the gaze, and captures a true likeness of the mother for whom he mourns. For Barthes, all photographs present the future death of their sitter, the ‘punctum’ thus capturing a moment that no longer exists, but Morris’s images posit a different form of temporality, like the digital print that obfuscates the time of its origins or the petrified forests revealed at Amroth at low tide in *Stone/Wood*:

> the lightest of our flat stones skimming the surface...

Anna Fox’s project also explores ‘the mysterious relationship’ between time and memory in photography. Looking through the Dillwyn Llewellyn collections, Fox was intrigued by the ways in which the family’s photographs tell of a desire to capture a greater degree of veracity but at the same time, with their careful staging and theatricality, often play with photography’s illusory qualities, to create ‘a strange mix [...] of alchemy and indexicality’.

*Picnic on Goppa* is amongst the photographs Fox selected from the archive that demonstrate this duality. One of a series of ‘birthday photographs’ made for Emma, with the children posing in a variety of places and scenarios, it has been elaborately staged, down to the stuffed pigeon placed in the foreground, yet also functions as a record of the children as they grow up and a memorial to the family picnic. Likewise, the backdrop in *Iris Germanica* lends the illusion of a studio setting to a photograph of plants growing in the garden; a theatrical conceit presumably designed to better record their transient blooms.

Capturing the passing of time, particularly in relation to family life, was central to John and Emma Dillwyn Llewellyn’s photography. In a letter to Henry Fox Talbot in May 1853, the year of the first birthday photograph, Emma described portraits of children as invaluable ‘records of passing time’.

![Mrs Vivian and her grandson or Mrs Vivian and Little Ernest Mary Dillwyn, 1853, albumen print, 8x6cm © Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales](image)
and discussed how daguerreotypes ‘mark the lapse of time’.

Her 1854 birthday photograph was accompanied by a poem by John describing his desire to create ‘A witness faithful, lasting, true/ A record dear to me and you’, that opens with the exclamation:

See how the chemist’s art can give
These fleeting shadows power to live
Can every transient form engage
And chain them on his magic page.

Fox’s recent work has also been concerned with time and memory and the ways in which this is impacted by both the illusory nature of photography and changing technology. Building on a technique developed in her 2013 series Loisirs, for which she set out to capture time in a ‘documentary’ image, for this commission she visited some of the places that were photographed by the Dillwyn Llewelyns and are now ‘democratised spaces’ of the leisure industry. Working with a production team, she shot photographs there over several hours and then digitally stitched them together to create final images that have the illusion of instantaneity (being taken in a moment) but in fact represent an extended period of time. These are ‘stowed down photographs’ that use new technology to suggest both the duration of memory (how it felt to be there) and the long exposure of early photographs, whilst ‘through the illusion of photography’ presenting a believable representation of space and time. Fox moves beyond the photographic ‘punctum’ or frozen moment to create an image of duration, posting a new kind of photographic document of lived, embodied time.

The series includes scenes at Penllergare Valley Woods, the car park at Caswell Bay (under which are the remains of the Dillwyn Llewelyn’s holiday home) and Sketty Hall, once the Dillwyn family home and now a wedding venue. As with her previous series on holiday camps and parks, the locations of these photographs and their layered process, which scrutinises pose, gesture and interaction, also allow Fox to develop a collective portrait of contemporary leisure that reveals its curious mixture of performance (perhaps ritual) and chaos.

Compared with the Dillwyn Llewelyn photographs, Fox’s Penllergare is bursting with activity, the well-trodden path bringing families, bikers, youths and tourists to enjoy a day by the water. Boys leap into the falls, children and dogs play in the river, while tourists take photographs on mobile phones in front of the waterfall, perhaps confusing this nineteenth century feat of engineering for a natural phenomenon. For Sketty Hall, the house that was the home of both the Dillwyn family and Richard Glynn Vivian forms the backdrop to a scene which also minglesthe highly theatrical – bride and groom stalked by photographers, groups primping their outfits and posing for their photograph – with the relaxed informality of a family celebration, a combination echoed in the overgrown parterre and confused remnants of Glynn Vivian’s Italianesque gardens. As in

*Piezo Ilgra-Grappa*

John Dillwyn Llewelyn, September 23, 1855, salt print, 15x19cm

© Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales
Llewelyn’s staged photographs, people appear (here sometimes more than once) as both individual and symbol. In the same way that the backdrop picks out the Iris as both an individual plant and representative of species Iris germanica, they are themselves, and a picture of themselves.

With their seamless collage but hyper-real scenes these images work in the gap between illusion and reality, as examples of what has been called ‘post-representationalist’ photography, whereby the impact of digital software has shifted the use and experience of the photographic away from simulating the perspective of monocular human vision. Instead, the photograph becomes a ‘site of play’ whose ‘magical charge’ derives ‘from its capacity both to articulate and to participate in our collective image environment’ as artists and viewers explore the possibilities of new digital technology.61

Like Fox, all of the artists in The Moon and a Smile have explored new visual and ontological applications of digital imaging and image capture for their work in this exhibition, finding a kindred experimental approach in the work of the Dillwyn Llewellyn family as they too explored new photographic technologies and opened up new fields of vision. As this text has set out, scrutinising historic photographs and records as evidence of technical process, visual language and historical memory has lead to a plurality of projects that build on (and sometimes challenge) existing research and extend our understanding of the Dillwyn Llewelyn’s photographs and their relevance now. These projects, which have been made in and around Swansea during a period when discussions about the impact of globalisation and technology have been to the fore, might also be seen together as a document of a historical moment that has challenged us to confront the ongoing legacy of social, environmental and economic transformations of the mid-nineteenth century. Through photography’s ability to bring together the past and present in one visual experience (its essential ‘necromancy’62) The Moon and a Smile is a palimpsest (a layering of present experiences over faded pasts) that invests the Dillwyn Llewelyn archive with a new vitality and urgency for audiences today.63
6 Quotes from www.penllergare.org/saving-penllergare/restoration/

The same doll also appears in Emma Llewelyn’s 1853 birthday photograph, perhaps a
Sophy Rickett, op. cit., pp.6

Note the etymology of ‘curator’ from the Latin curare, to care for.

Object in the Field (2012) focused on an abandoned Archiestronic chart in the 1940s, and
recalled a vision of butterflies made by Rickett’s father.

Sophy Rickett describes ‘the mobilization of each [landscape and photography] as an
opportunity to play with and to life, but is still partially obfuscated by anecdote.’

Her to start collecting pressed flowers when he visited Penllergare during the meeting of
the London Society in 1853 to discuss new focal points. (Three Victorian Namesake, 1922), p.107.

In a letter to Henry Fox Talbot 8 Oct 1858, Emma Llewelyn writes of her husband
‘always trying to turn waste steam into account’. See foxtalbot.dmu.ac.uk. William
Dillwyn Llewelyn, who was the first to photograph with an instantaneous medium in
1843 (p.46) is pertinent. Carol Mavor, A mackerel sky” p.97.

As early as 1835 Llewelyn referred to his ‘mania’ for collecting orchids (letter quoted in
Asylums and the foundation of the Church school), the roots of the family’s wealth in
green valleys and their new industries could give. Where the wild flowers had grown in

Carolee Schneemann’s, ‘naked肉 body’ performance art, was a revolutionary approach to
challenging the male gaze and the social role of the female body.

44 Steve Edwards argues that the values associated with photography were entwined with
the values associated with the medical professions, and that photography was part of the
medicalization process.

Mark Durden describes landscape as being (for Rickett) ‘a motif to play with and
learn the Latin names for plants and observing their structure. She also writes of being
awake to ‘deep time’ in John Dillwyn Llewelyn’s photographs, in particular the
Grove cell’ battery see chapter on Grove in Ronald Rees, Heroic Science: Swansea and
the Instrumental Frame in the Romantic Imagination, 2016, p.119.

9 Quoted from the artist’s project proposal, 2015. As Rickett writes ‘A story starts to come
and developed his own version of the calotype using silver bromides in 1846.

On Photographic Phenomena and their bearings (1998) that describe fossilised forests in Carmarthen Bay, making the

We are all familiar with the idea that any photograph is a sign of time passed and thus of
the past, a representation of the present, or a tool for preserving and communicating the
past. However, this is only one way of understanding the photograph.

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the past, a representation of the present, or a tool for preserving and communicating the
past. However, this is only one way of understanding the photograph.

John Dillwyn Llewelyn: The First
Photographer in Wales

48 THE IMAGES OF A SOUL

THE IMAGES OF A SOUL
THE ARTISTS

SOPHY RICKETT  ASTRID KRUSE JENSEN  HELEN SEAR
NEETA MADAHAR AND MELANIE ROSE  PATRICA ZIAD
GRETA ALFARO  SHARON MORRIS  ANNA FOX
This is a multi-disciplinary project consisting of photography, moving image and text, inspired by the life and work of Thereza Dillwyn Llewelyn. The images and text are informed by a close reading of Thereza’s accounts of her life, as well as time spent at the Penllergare estate and some of the places she describes in her memoirs and diaries, in and around Swansea Bay.

Thereza was daughter of John Dillwyn Llewelyn, the celebrated Swansea based Victorian photographer and botanist. Taking Thereza’s papers, now held in the British Library, as a starting point, the detailed primary research involved in working with this original, handwritten material is disrupted by the artist’s own subjective voice, as she inserts her own associations and memories into the context of Thereza’s ‘original’.

Moving between different geographical locations, points in time, and subjective positions, the text operates both as a source of information about Thereza and her life as well as a distraction away from it; tangents, interruptions and other forms of aside function as a conceptual device through which a distracted and restless, yet pre-eminently embodied self constructs a non chronological version of events much of its own making.

Visually, the project combines photographs taken by the artist at locations associated with Thereza’s life, particularly Caswell Bay, Penllergare and Kenfig Burrow, with film stills also made on location, and images sourced from internet searches; photographic representation oscillating between abstraction, pictorialism and illustrative literalism.

The Curious Moaning of Kenfig Burrows explores the relationship between landscape and photography, particularly the mobilization of each as an aesthetic resource as well as a physical one, and the various cultural, political and practical uses to which they can be put. Focusing on a moment in the history of photography, both as a technical process, but also as a visual language, the project explores and expands the dialogue between individuals, institutions and other canonical orthodoxies that are asserted in contemporary life, and normalized through notions of custodianship, conservation and care.

This new work was generously supported by Metro Imaging.

Sophy Rickett is a visual artist working with photography, video installation and text. Much of her work explores the tension between the narrative tendencies and abstract possibilities of the photographic image.

Rickett came to prominence in the late 1990s shortly after she graduated from the Royal College of Art. She has undertaken commissions for several institutions including Photoworks, The Institute of Astronomy and Arnolfini and has exhibited widely in the UK and internationally. Solo exhibitions include Arnolfini, Bristol; Kettle’s Yard, Cambridge; De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill on Sea; Museum of the History of Science, Oxford. Group exhibitions include MOMA, Moscow; Pompidou, Paris; Banksy: Gateshead; Finzi ASSIGN Museum, Cambridge.

Her work is included in many collections, including The Government Art Collection, London; IMAC, Almere; Pompidou, Paris; Musée des Beaux Arts, Nantes, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Recent mixed media projects include Objects in the Field (2012), The Death of a Beautiful Subject (2015), and an ongoing collaborative project with Bettina von Zwehl, Album 31.

She is based in London and teaches on BA (Hons) and MA Photography at London College of Communication/ University of the Arts, London.
ASTRID KRUSE JENSEN

Floating

The landscape of Penllergare is slowly being re-established to what the family created and intended. I am interested in this transformation – and also interested in the landscape that is still overgrown, with only traces of the landscape they created. A landscape where the family at Penllergare created their own reality / own nature, because it was possible for them and they had the passion for it.

I have started the working process in a landscape that has some of the same elements as the landscape of the Penllergare Estate. I recently moved into an old castle in the forest of Holbaek forty minutes outside Copenhagen. It is a landscape of lakes, small rivers, trees and forests. I am using the human figure and human created elements as a marker – to mark and sometimes confuse the scale in this manmade landscape – to create images where the figure and the landscape merge. The woman / girl are absorbed within the landscape, disappearing into a state of mind.

I am working with images that revolve around an interest in the man-made beauty of a ‘landscape’, a controlled landscape with elements of the uncontrolled – and photographing them with a camera that does not provide technical perfection – as a contrast to the motif itself. The absence of anything in sharp focus is due to the limited capabilities of the simple camera used, a small Polaroid SX 70 in plastic. The camera is here reduced to a lightproof box – without the same capacity and the same degree of detail.

In many of the works the reflections break up the subject – and open up to a feeling of infinity. Instead of revealing its own depth, the dark water surface of the lake reflects back the surfaces of the surroundings. The reflection confuses the eye. It becomes difficult to know up from down – hard to distinguish reality from reflection. The reflection distorts and displaces, but at the same time is part of reality. In this way the subjects become abstract – the unreal becomes real, the reflections become the reality. The reflections become an image of the difficult distinction between illusion and reality. The subject breaks up, the mirrorings take over and create a universe on their own that can only exist for a brief period in this very light – in the reflection right here and now where the light burns through in exactly this way.

As Astrid La Cour has written, ‘Photography, landscape and memory are three subjects that characterise Astrid Kruse Jensen’s practice as an artist. In uniting them, her works emerge in a constant alternation between physical and mental landscapes … all three elements appear in a changeable state of organic development that constantly exudes control’.

Astrid Kruse Jensen (b. 1975) is a visual artist educated at The Gerrit Rietveld Academie in the Netherlands and at The Glasgow School of Art.


Her work has been shown in solo and group exhibitions around the world. Astrid Kruse Jensen is represented by Martin Asbæk Gallery, Copenhagen, Denmark and Wetterling Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden.

Astrid Kruse Jensen’s work challenges the idea of photography as a frozen moment. Instead she inscribes the photographic medium in a living process in which the motif, the photographic material and memories fuse – becoming part of a larger narrative concerning the ideas and interpretations of memory.


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HELEN SEAR

Helen Sear first moved to Wales in 1984 after completing an HDFA at the Slade School, University College London. Her work came to prominence in the 1991 British Council exhibition De-Composition: Constructed Photography in Britain which toured extensively throughout Latin America and Eastern Europe.

Her work explores the materiality of vision and the nature of experience, our human-animal interactions in rural and “natural” environments. Photography is central to her practice, and often explored as a combination of moving images, sound, drawing and print. Her work was included in the exhibition About Face at the Hayward Gallery, London in summer 2004 and as a final work for Welsh Pêleriannau at the Eglur Eiriau, Twentieth Century in Castellon Spain in 2005. A bilingual monograph Twice, was published by Zelda Cheatle Press in 2002, and Grounded was a touring exhibition curated by Impressions Gallery, York between 2003 and 2005.

Recent solo exhibitions include, inside the View, shown at Gallery Harmonia in Finland in 2006, G39 Cardiff who also published the bookwork Tale in 2009, Beyond the View, Hoopers Gallery London, and Kompiching Gallery New York in 2010. Her work is featured in Aperture print collection and magazine. Photography Wales published her first major monograph in 2012 Inside the View. G39 published the bookwork Teller in 2015 which accompanied a major national tour in the same year.

She is the first woman to be selected to represent Wales with a solo exhibition at The 56th Venice Biennale 2015. Helen is currently Professor of Photographic Practice at Falmouth University.

Moments of Capture

“Yet in the Anthropocene, ironically we humans have become that sublime force, the agents of a fearful something that is greater than ourselves.” David Farrier 2016.

The archaeologist, anthropologist and nature writer Jacquetta Hawkes explains using recollections of her own childhood in order to “caus[ing] that emotion which uses our own early memories for a realization of the most distant past… in recalling the experiences of that remote, unknown child, I find I am being led back far beyond the bounds of personality and my own life.”

The young woman protagonist wears the antlers of a stag, the wood of the deer, antennae of the forest, from the Old French antouille, an etymological front of or before the eyes, suggesting headdresses worn by hunter gatherers in the Mesolithic age. Merging with her surroundings she watches almost motionless: clouds falling behind the wind turbine, the break of a wave on the sand, the blast furnace at Port Talbot, a dew covered spider’s web, the boy who jumped the waterfall at Penllergare, the setting moon, and the point of a dog’s tail in a windswept clover field. Hover flies jostle with a bumblebee for the nectar from a poppy, a single crow tracks across the sky and an agricultural machine disturbs dust from the harvested wheat. The industrial leitmotif of the soundtrack drives these still, moving pictures towards greater acceleration.

The man-made lake at Penllergare is described by Richard Morris as the scene of one of the first explorations in the propulsion of a boat by electricity in 1841. John Dillwyn Llewelyn had been experimenting with galvanism, electricity produced by chemical action. In June 2016 whilst filming a heron catching fish in the same lake, a recreational drone flying overhead startled the bird. This moment opened a window across time, a connecting thread between the 19th century and the present, where I could explore in moving images, stillness and momentum, through relationships between nature and technology and a world in constant flux.

Two recurring photographs of taxidermy specimens of a stag and a heron, photographed in the grounds of the family estate persisted in my mind, along with the Motion photographs of waves, clouds and steam exhibited in London at the Photographic exhibition in 1854. Christopher Titterington writes of a profound disturbance that must have occurred for Dillwyn Llewelyn’s generation with the recent awareness of the deep time in geology, of non-human history, and a questioning of religious faith and human domination over nature. He describes a temporal sublime, “an infinity not simply of dimension but also of time”, giving rise to the idea that a human lifetime was itself now a mere instant. The suggestion, reflected in the photography of the Dillwyn Llewelyn circle, that the optimism of new technological advancements is mingled with a sense of melancholy relating to the transience of existence, resonates loudly in our present time.

1 Hawkes, J, A Land, Collins, 2012
2 Morris, R, John Dillwyn Llewelyn and the electric boat, Welsh Journals online, Gower - Vol. 48, 1997
3 Titterington, C, Llewelyn and Instantaneity, V&A Album 4, 1985
4 Mabey, D, Land, Collins, 2013
5 Morris, R, John Dillwyn Llewelyn and the electric boat, Welsh Journals online, Gower - Vol. 48, 1997
6 Titterington, C, Llewelyn and Instantaneity, V&A Album 4, 1985

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Orchidomania

Orchidomania is inspired by Victorian gentleman botanist and photographer John Dillwyn Llewellyn’s (JDL) fascination with orchids and discovering that he and his family produced clichés verre, a 19th century technique that combines drawing or painting with photography. In 2015, during a visit to JDL’s estate Penllergare, we saw the ruins of an orchid house that JDL built and for which he pioneered construction of a hot water cascade that created a mist upon which orchids thrived. A 2006 transcript of a talk by Richard Morris about the orchid house referred to an archive of letters between JDL and Joseph Dalton Hooker, Director, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and esteemed botanist George Bentham. Reading this correspondence, we identified many of the orchids that JDL cultivated, and *Bollea violacea* was the stimulus for building a hothouse in the first place. In 1849, JDL wrote that he was experiencing a bout of ‘orchidomania’. This passion for orchids became the inspiration for the title of our series.

After researching contemporary and historic examples of clichés verre, we made tests using black ink and acrylic painted onto acetate or glass and then applying pressed orchids or etching directly into the substrate to create a negative from which to make a photographic print. Our experiments evolved from creating conventional clichés verre to making prints in the analogue darkroom from translucent film sheets overlaid and slightly out of register in both the enlarger and in contact with the paper. This advance, that also has its roots in the photogram process, came through working alongside master photographic printer Rob Sara and photography technician Michael Coombs at the Arts Institute, University of Cumbria in Carlisle.

Having selected certain prominent orchids from the list of varieties grown by JDL, we took online images of the blooms and digitally manipulated them, removing their colour and making tonal adjustments to create ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ files. These files were subsequently printed onto colour separation film. Re-combining the positive and negative film sheets in the darkroom to make fine black and white fibre prints resulted in work with an unforeseen richness and subtlety despite the crude starting materials. The representation of the flowers as photographs that are at once intimate and recognisable, yet strangely three-dimensional, devoid of intense impressions like colour, offers an uncanny interplay between what is real and unreal. This resonates deeply with our fascination with perceptions surrounding the natural world and the transformative power inherent in art and nature.

NEETA MADAHAR AND MELANIE ROSE

Neeta Madahar is an interdisciplinary artist, meditation and yoga teacher exploring relationships between nature, artifice and the self through her work. Solo exhibitions include Rencontres d’Arles Photography Festival, France (2004), Irena London (2005), Dartington Museum of Art, Massachusetts (2006) and Oakville Galleries, Ontario, Canada (2007). Madahar has also been awarded commissions from organisations such as FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology), Film and Video Umbrella, Harewood House and Photoworks. Her work is held in private and public collections including Harvard University’s Fogg Art Museum, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art and V&A London.

Melanie Rose is a visual artist whose practice is predominantly drawing; the constant theme running through her work is the relationship between the human form and the natural environment. She graduated from Trent Polytechnic with a BA Honours degree in Fine Art in 1987 from which she went on to Central Saint Martins graduating with a MA in Fine Art in 2002; she is a member of the practice based research group Land2 and has exhibited extensively and has work in both public and private collections.

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THE STRAND ART & FRAME
Welsh history in the 19th century is a powerful story. The growth of industry on an epic scale, plus a massive influx of workers from rural areas in Wales, England and Ireland, Chartism and the Rebecca Riots, changed Wales irrevocably in terms of landscape, language, demographics, culture, religion and politics.

The Dillwyn Llewelyn family had a privileged position, lived on a country estate near Swansea and practiced photography as a scientific undertaking. The backdrop to their lives, the sulphur laden air of Swansea, the coal mines, the copper smelting, the hurly burly of the industrial city, was a powerful lure and the path I chose in terms of a visual response.

In the beginning flowers were on my mind. Not the fragile prints of Mary Dillwyn but something stronger. The flowers produced were imaginary and inclined to industry with petals of metal, glass or wood. They were drawn with ink on glass plates resembling large negatives, reflecting Mary Dillwyn’s experimental approach to the representation of flora.

Concentrating on industrial flowers led me to industry itself and the pattern of sounds and movements familiar to workers. Copper smelting was a rhythmic exercise of labour, the unrelenting transportation of coal and ore to forge ingots.

There was a sense of darkness in industrial Wales, not of being underground, but a mental, spiritual and physical poverty, a sullen knowledge of deprivation and this eventually surfaced in the form of political protest.

My work attempts to reproduce the monotonous, repetitive, difficult processes the labour force was compelled to endure in industry and express some of the rhythms and the shadows of their working lives.
And to the Sun’s all-seeing orb I cry

Thereza Dillwyn Llewelyn took the first photograph of the moon. But another picture draws my attention: A young man enjoys the sunlight, placidly leaning against a wall. On the photograph’s surface is a text written in ancient Greek: “And to the Sun’s all-seeing orb I cry.”

The sun allows us to live and see, makes photography possible and is traditionally linked to the arts. The moon is related to darkness, deceit and passivity. Very symbolically, the youngster has his eyes closed to the sun, and Thereza has her eyes open to the moon.

How beautiful the Dillwyn Llewelyns’ photographs are. They depict a bucolic life, leaving us with a vivid impression of their idyllic happiness, of an ongoing harmony between family, nature and objects. But then an unknown witness says:

To the traveller who crosses the Landore bridge at night, the livid glare from the numerous chimneys, the rolling, fleecy, white clouds that fill up the valley beneath him, the desolate-looking heaps of slag on either side, recall Dante’s line, “Voi che entrate lasciate ogni speranza / Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.”

That was the reality behind the pictures. The moment of their photographic production coincides with the height of industrialism in Swansea, with all the misery of human exploitation and nature’s devastation. The technical developments in photography are indissolubly linked to those of the Industrial Revolution.

Were the Dillwyn Llewelyns strangers to this horror? An inherited fortune allowed John Dillwyn Llewelyn and his family to devote their lives to photography, and although he is remembered as a philanthropist, not only would he not have been a stranger to the abuses of the system, he would have been unavoidably immersed in them.

With these facts in my mind, one can feel a sense of absurdity, immorality or shame when looking at the images. These photographs may connote as well an underlying desire of evasion, of negation of the world around, by the construction of a parallel reality. And is this attitude not similar to what we do today?

This project is conceived as an elegy to what used to be called progress, to the technological, scientific advances which led to ecological disaster, war, and to the ruthless exploitation of people. The desire to remain blind has but intensified. If the Dillwyn Llewelyns see the world through their lenses, always looking away, the devices we use to avert our eyes have become more sophisticated than ever. Life and images appear as almost indissoluble. Slaves of artifice, we do not look at the real world anymore. Engels’ descriptions of society are still important, now maybe more than ever. Inequality grows, while any hope dwindles without a utopia to hold on to.

1 &e;αι τον πανοπτην κυκλον ηλιου καλω. Aeschylus’ Prometheus Unbound. Translation by George Thomson.
CRUELLY
BUT UNCONSCIOUSLY
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THAT MOANS BELOW

THE PHILANTHROPY OF THE RICH
IS LIKE A RAIN-DROP IN THE OCEAN
LOST IN THE MOMENT OF FALLING
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THEY SUFFICE TO CONCEAL FROM THE EYES OF THE WEALTHY MEN AND WOMEN OF STRONG STOMACHS AND WEAK NERVES THE MISERY AND GRIME WHICH FORM THE COMPLEMENT OF THEIR WEALTH.
For the Ash: Yr Onnen

Inspired by the early photography albums of the Dillwyn Llewelyn family, in particular those by Theeresa and Mary held in the National Library of Wales, ‘For the Ash: Yr Onnen’ is a series of twelve artist’s books and scrolls bringing together photographic images, poetry and short texts.

In contrast to the formal imagery of her brother John Dillwyn Llewelyn, for example his placing of inanimate animals in the landscape, Mary Dillwyn, while being equally fascinated with the technical advances in photographic processes, evokes a more ephemeral world of cut flowers, pairs of live birds, the family building a snowman, casual portraits blessed by a fleeting smile: a world characterised by a mind caught up in the Victorian period of enquiry, reaching for the moon, and yet attentive to the detail of the domestic. These small-scale albums convey the intimacy of perception, portraits that serve as period familial documents of the Penllergare estate and the Gower but also, through omission, point to what has been left out: the industrial source of wealth in the Swansea area.

‘For the Ash: Yr Onnen’, also serves as an historical document of the rapidly changing landscape of west Wales: fields of cattle and sheep as transient as climate change and the cruel vagaries of neo-liberal capitalism, the Ash at the mercy of fungus and beetle, the sea libeled with oil spills and degraded plastic, the silence of the Preseli hills shattered with the sound of warplanes, the puffin and other seabirds placed on the list of endangered species; wildflowers becoming rare in a land in imminent danger of being sacrificed to fracking.

Across the sea from the Gower, the visibility of Pembrokeshire becomes a measure of distance and weather: for our Palaeolithic ancestors the plain and forest extended out under the current level of the sea. This peninsula remains part of the west Atlantic seaboard of Celtic languages and waves of immigration – Neolithic, Roman, Norman, Flemish, Viking, the languages of the port, trade, exile and refugee, riches. These macaronic poems, of ‘The Ash: Yr Onnen’, speak between two languages, a reminder of the language of the home at the time of the Rebecca Riots, 1839, and the dominance of the language of the courts and magistrates, such as John Dillwyn Llewelyn.

Sharon is currently working on the relation between words and images as a form of translation and ‘macaronic’ poetry, juxtaposing different languages, including Welsh.

Born in Pembrokeshire, Sharon Morris is an artist and poet, who studied at the Slade School of Fine Art, UCL, London, where she currently teaches.

She is widely published in poetry journals including Greylines, 2010, and her poetry collections, Vale Spring, 2007, and Gospel Oak, 2014, were published by Enitharmon Press. Her artworks, installations, film-poems, and live performances, have been shown recently at Camden Arts Centre and Rowing, London, and the Mission Gallery, Swansea.

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THE MOON AND A SMILE 81

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Taken from a previous exhibition, ‘The Moon is Shining on My Mother’, a woman hides her face, glimpsing from behind her hands, daring to look at a landscape of such unbearable beauty intimate with its scars of history and labour: Mesolithic and Neolithic stone quarries, Iron Age field systems, ancient hedges, Roman Roads, coal mines, slate quarries, lime kilns, railways, disused dairies, mobile phone masts, wind turbines... A world that urgently needs our attention.
ANNA FOX

Pleasure Park

One of the most striking things about the Dillwyn photographs is how candid and playful they are; to capture the first smile must have been an exciting event in itself. Trawling through the archive one discovers the imaginative Dillwyn family investigating the development of camera technology and the desire to capture information about life itself, their own lives and the natural world around them. This combined with the pleasure of playing with photography’s illusory quality creates a strange mix in the archive of alchemy and indexicality.

In recent work I have been investigating the mysterious relationship between time and memory in photography and like the Dillwyns’ investigations this has a relationship both to changing technology and to the illusory nature of photography. For many years, photographers have pursued the capturing of fleeting moments, freezing action, albeit small, on a plate, film or file as a significant moment, a poignant note about life summed up in a pregnant milli-second. The photograph has been understood as a memento directly out of a time and place and this has been embedded in the medium since its inception, a miniature death or life suspended as if in aspinc. More recently a kind of magical realism has arisen out of the coming of the digital age. While we are still wrapped up in photography’s indexical relationship to the world, new ways of playing with this illusion are erupting.

Since 1983, when I started photographing, I have been picturing the leisure industry. For this commission I have revisited some of the houses and locations that the Dillwyns recorded. The houses they photographed were private homes and the beaches and hillsides used for leisure purposes predominantly by the moneyed classes. Today these places are open to the wider public and leisure is the pursuit of the masses. My photographs tell a story about the leisure industry as it is today. The work plays with time and illusion, echoing the provocation of the Dillwyn archive. Each image is constructed with dozens of separate images. First a background plate is created and then, together with a team of assistants I photograph what happens in the location over approximately a 3-hour period. Images of the people are selected and then layered in post-production onto the background. This process and its results has led me to think more intently about photography, time and memory, and to consider that a single image, shot at 1/25th of a second, is not necessarily a memento of an event in the way that an image constructed out of many images and in a few hours might be. The picture made up of many images represents what has been seen over a period of time and so has a new relationship to the notion of what constitutes a documentary photograph. These are slowed down images connected to memories of a period of time in a particular place and an event or series of events that happened there.

This work was made with the assistance of Andrew Bruce, Ashleigh Fisk and Amanda Whittle.

Digital post production Andrew Bruce.

Born in 1961 and completing her degree in Audio Visual Studies at The Surrey Institute, Farnham in 1986, Anna Fox has been working in photography and video for over twenty years. Her solo shows include Impressions Gallery, The Photographers’ Gallery, London, the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago and her work has been included in numerous international group shows – Through the Looking Glass, Centre of the Creative Universe: Liverpool and the Avant-garde and I Hope We Are: Photographing British Airways, and others. She has had several monographs of her work published; Anna Fox Photographs 1983-2007, edited by Val Williams was published by Photographers 2007. Anna Fox is Professor of Photography at University for the Creative Arts at Farnham.