

Ada di Palma 1903003

Documentary Photography & Visual Activism

Visual Enquiry I

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Word count:1255

I would like to start from the assumption that for me a place does not only represent what it really is but also what you imagine it could have been regardless of its history and what you imagine it can become regardless of reality.

I wanted to interpret the area of Uplands where I closely live and give a vision of my sense of adapting to a new place and the evolution of familiarization with it. The first step explored is to be traced back to the sensations experienced as a first approach of myself with the unknown space and the appreciation of it conquered during the "transition". I referred to the elements of life introduced by Bill Viola in the exhibition Martyrs, the lights installations by Barry Underwood, the perceived connection between 2 spaces of The Dream of Julie Cockburn and the influence of the collective exhibition "The Space in Between" that recollected and framed nostalgic memories. My bodywork want be a depiction of my emotional state of initial refusing and the serene final acceptance of a place that doesn't belong to my past but represent the present and the future.

I have tried metaphorically to invoke the sensations felt, associating those to more specific sites of the area.

Rosehill Quarry is the site distancially closer to me, built at the beginning of the 19th century it was a flourishing park, became a tennis court around 1910, today it is little frequented. The first experience of myself seen in such a vast and open space, made me feel at time in a sort of physical and mental bewilderment....a spiritual short circuit which somehow takes the place of the "disappeared" net.

Almost all of the Uplands buildings date back to the Victorian age, The formal Ffynone Nursing Home (Llwyn Helig) is visibly a site belonging to that era but the documentation seems to be imprecise and scarcely exhaustive in the history of birth and decline. Probably it was devastated by the bombardment of the Three nights blitz of 1941 that involved the destruction of the close Teilo street in Mayhill or, I suppose, been dilapidated due a fire of which there is no documented information in the online archives.

Bill Viola retraced how a body could feel overwhelmed by the 4 elements of life and how human strength helps to rise from their suppression. The collapsed state of the nursing home wanted to be the connection to my feelings, the entity in which I have identified myself is an abstract presence and the power of resilience is visible in the illuminated points of my being, metaphorically spreaded in the mind, heart, eyes, legs, veins, tongue. The place from inside takes the form of a shipwreck and I have visualised into the context, the miracle of surviving. I haven't considered the life elements as a danger but instead I attributed the danger to the "stranger space" where in an "unprotected" environment the elements of life could symbolise rebirth.

Ffynone road would represent the moment after emergence, the refer to the element Air as manifest of liberation, walk away in a new skin, under a "new name", not anymore Ada Marino but Eda (Anglo-Saxon phonetic pronunciation) Di Palma (Husband's Surname adopted in UK) in a new space. In the mid 19th century James Walter, the son of a local colliery owner, was largely responsible for the development of the Ffynone area, responding to the increasing demand for large new houses for the middle class away from the industries along the river Tawe. He commissioned the building of substantial Italianate stucco villas with 8 houses, which date to the 1860s (Richmond Villas) 2 detached villas on north side which were part of the Sancta Maria Hospital. In 1863 the Mansion House was built and much of the furniture came from the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery. (Ffynone Conservation font) The road has significant artistic, naturalistic and religious values. When the Goat Street Synagogue was destroyed in a German air raid in February 1941 was replaced with the Ffynone Synagogue in 1955. Other images produced very closely to Ffynone, St James Garden, establishing the connection with nature, the inspirational lights of Barry Underwood's installations that pushed me to use brightness to accentuate the naturalistic beauty, Underwoods talking about the project Scenes said "We are kind rooted to nature.... I use lights primarily as a means to making a mark". (B. Underwood) I created the element of fire symbolizing the burning passion, ideas, the stimulus to open to new boundaries and spirit of enjoyment of the space that surrounds me. Often I tend to imagine how a foreign country could be, based on some information, film scenes; I idealise an idea of the place, even sometimes it would have been better don't visit to avoid to see my expectations disappointed. However, when I have imagined the houses and the parks of the Great Britain I expected those to be just like them appear in St James Crescent and St James Park. In every community there is a place of worship and prayer, In Uplands there is St. James Church. The Church was consecrated in 1867 and was designed by the architect Thomas Nicholson who was the diocesan architect for Hereford Cathedral. Most of the windows have hood moulds with stone stops, although some damage was caused by a bomb in the Second World War. A tower never completed. (Ffynone & Uplands Conservation Area font) I have represented my conflict with the churches, cults and idolatry that haven't abandoned me even in a foreign land.

During the realization of this project I wanted to change slightly the perception of things, another important piece of Uplands, unavoidable to don't mention for its importance, is the Dylan Thomas' house. It could be easily recognizable by the front entrance, but what about the back? Dylan Thomas used to spend his childhood at 5 Cwmdonkin Drive, the house was one of six houses (three pairs of semi-detached houses) that were built between 1913 and 1915. Planning permission for the development was granted in 1908 by the Borough of Swansea to a Mr T Lewis. It has been documented that the builder, W H Harding lived next door in Number 6. In fact, the South Wales Directory for 1920 lists the occupant as being Thomas Lewis - the developer. (Dylan Thomas Birthplace font) . I wanted to imagine a place that belonged to him as a child instead of the famous poet. About changing the perception of things I ventured to change the visual of a view and of a border that communicates Uplands with Mountpleasant, precisely the middle point of Terrace Road where is a gate that interrupt the road, I removed the gate on a picture and added a wall on the other, making Mountpleasant side, in both cases not really visible. On the other image I manipulated the view of Swansea bay, often compared with the coast of my native place and merged it with the gulf of Naples. My aim was to create an optic illusion of a cul de sac/open road, to give the viability and in the other image to give the second half of Terrace Road to Uplands

area. An illusion also given to the panorama image, seeing 2 beloved places in a unique representation. I wasn't influenced by Andy Warhol's "Vesuvius", the lava is simply the Partenopean blood that flows in my veins. I belong to 2 places and I can imagine to see more moons, in both cities, at same time.

Images Produced: 13

Techniques used:

Long exposure

Photoshop Manipulation

Collage

https://www.swansea.gov.uk/media/17982/Ffynone-and-Uplands-conservation-area-character-appraisal-and-management-plan-adopted-version---part-1/pdf/Ffynone_conservation_area_character_appraisal_and_management_plan_adopted_version_-_part_1.pdf

FIGURE 1-2: MAPS OF UPLANDS

FIGURE 3-4: SCENES OF BARRY UNDERWOOD

FIGURE 5: THE DREAM OF JULIE COCKBURN

FIGURE 6: FFYNONE & UPLANDS CONSERVATION AREA AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY (ST JAMES CHURCH)

FIGURE 7: ST JAMES GARDENS

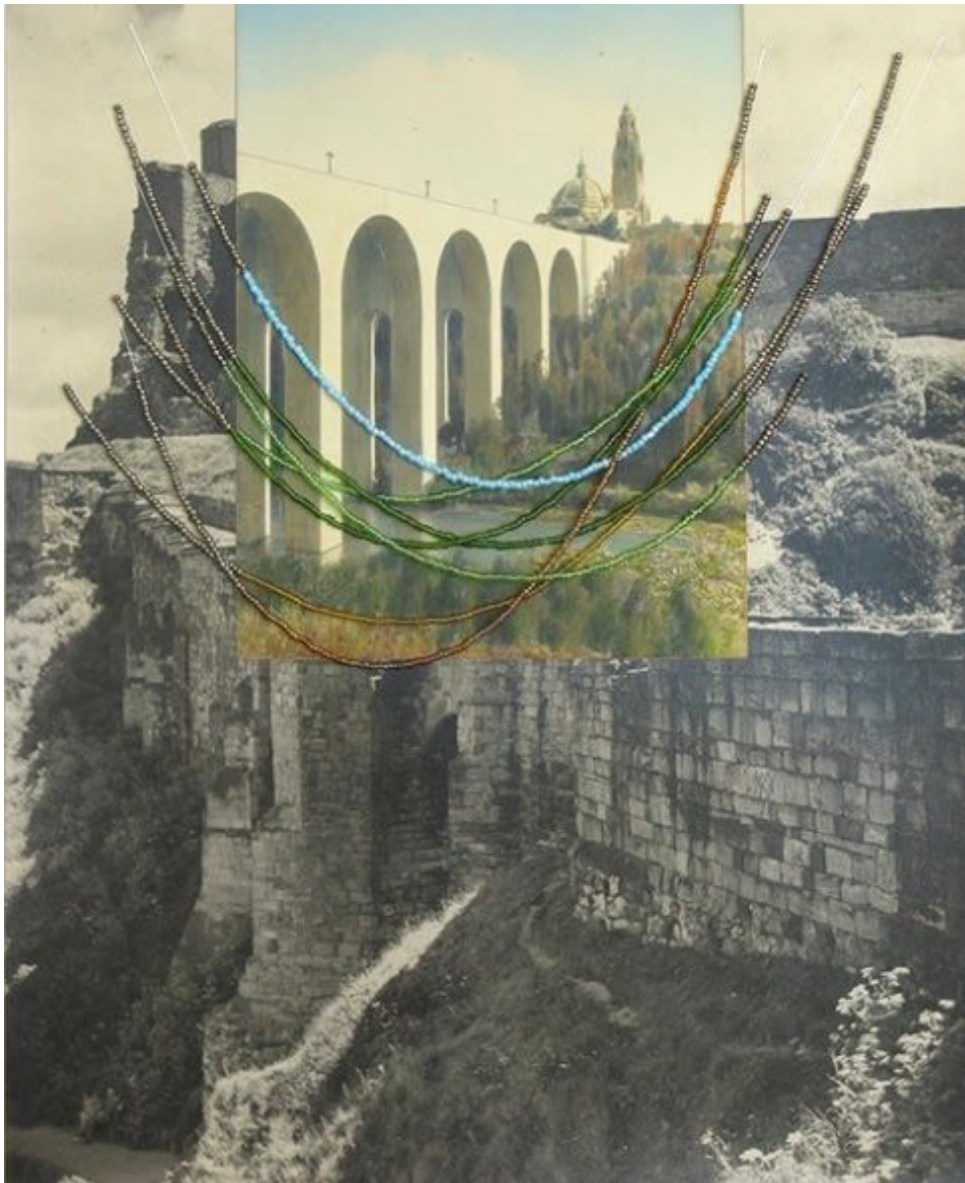
FIGURE 8: UPLANDS

FIGURE 9: FFYNONE HOUSE

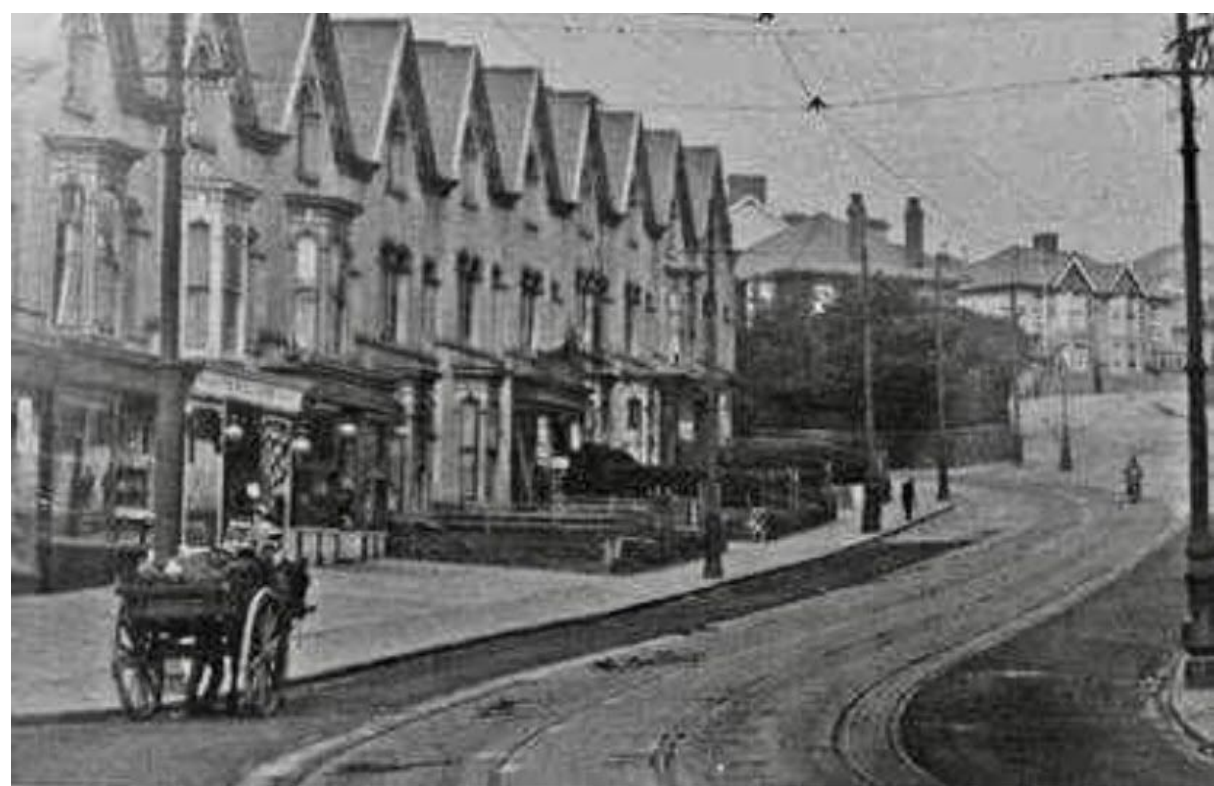
FIGURE 10: MARTYRS BY BILL VIOLA











Ffynone House, Swansea

View map 

