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Visual Enquiry 1

Lecturer Ryan Moule

Word Count: 622

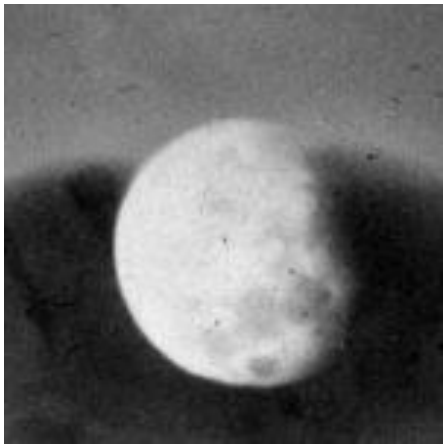
Map of Penllergaer Valley Woods

The starting point for my project is a location close to my home and a place I have spent many years walking my dog, Penllergaer Valley Woods.

The woods had formed part of the Dillwyn-Llewelyn family estate and gardens and had been designed and developed by John Dillwyn-Llewelyn who lived in the family mansion, known as Penllergaer House, during the late 19th Century. The house had been owned by the Price family for over 200 hundred years before being left to John's father, who was a cousin to the Price family in 1783. John Dillwyn-was interested in horticulture, botany and science but most notably he was a talented photographer as was his wife Emma Talbot who was also a cousin to the photographer Henry Talbot Fox.

John and Emma Dillwyn Llewellyn

John's daughter Thereza was also an accomplished photographer and astronomer and had equatorial observatory built for her in the grounds of Penllergaer House, it's the only part of the estate still standing today although it has fallen into disrepair, it was from here one of the earliest images of the moon was taken by father and daughter in around 1857.



John and Thereza Dillwyn Llewellyn, photograph of the moon c.1857

Eventually, in 1961, The Mansion was destroyed and later the local council offices were built, they in turn were demolished and in its place a small housing estate built appropriately called Mansion Gardens.

The gardens fell into ruin and all the beautiful landscaping and walled gardens Became over grown and almost lost, until in 2000 the Penllergaer Trust was Formed with the aim of restoring the gardens to their former glory. In 2012 they received lottery funding and work started in ernest to restore the landscaping

as it would have looked in John Dillwyn-Llewelyn's day.

From the history and research of the estate I felt that after decades of neglect the area was finally becoming a place of beauty and tranquillity once again, a place that is now enjoyed by walkers and ramblers following the same paths as those walked by the Dillwyn-Llewelyn family.

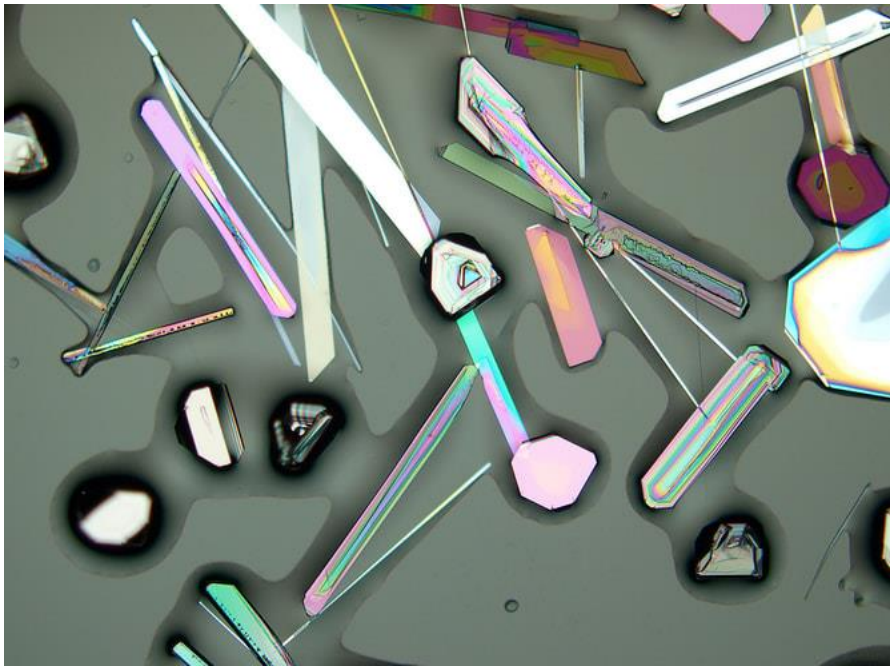
I started looking at artists that had created site specific installations within Nature and found a Spanish artist Javier Riera, his work is based on geometric light projections, projected directly onto the greenery and the landscape.

Javier Riera, Landscape light interventions 2011-2019

He says of his work “The light projections that I create are either static or have a slight and subtle movement, calling out for a certain meditative experience,” “They transform completely the space and they intervene as light sculptures or sceneographies, generating a dialogue between nature, geometry and the spectator.” I would imagine that being able to create a similar project within Penllergaer Valley Woods could have a similar impact of immersing the viewer into the nature of the woods.

Another artist I looked at was a Norwegian artist called Tone Bjordam who makes projects related to nature, perception and science. She works with video, animation films, nature photography, nature-inspired paintings, detailed drawings and sculpture installations.

She also creates stunning photomicrographic images capturing minute details from the land under the microscope, things we would never see with the naked eye.



Force, photomicrography, Tone Bjordam 2016

For my project I wanted to represent the re-birth of the Penllergaer Estate in some way, I was limited as to what I could do due the Covid but taking these artists as a starting point I decided to capture the new growth of plants as a representation of its re invention, using a macro lens I set about walking through the woods looking for new plant growth and creating a series of artistic macro images that I would imagine could have been exhibited within the grounds of the woods.