

Moments of Capture (a 17 minute video projection).

Text for exhibition publication *The Moon and a Smile, Glynn Vivian Swansea 2017*

“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 archeologist, anthropologist and nature writer Jacquetta Hawkes explains using recollections of her own childhood in order to “steal 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”.¹

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 *in front of or before the eyes*, suggesting headdresses discovered at Starr Carr worn by hunter gatherers in the Mesolithic age.

Merging with her surroundings she watches almost motionless: clouds falling behind the wind turbine, the setting sun, 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 as the wind wheel pulls water from the ground, 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.²

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 mid 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 between 1852 and 1856 in the grounds of the Dillwyn Llewelyn 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 .

¹ Hawkes, J, *A Land*, Collins, 2012

² Morris, R, *John Dillwyn Llewelyn and the electric boat*, Welsh Journals online, Gower - Vol. 48, 1997

Christopher Titterington writes of a profound disturbance that must have occurred for Llewelyn's generation with the recent awareness of the deep time in geology, of non-human history, contributing to a questioning of religious faith and human domination over nature.

He describes a temporal sublime, "an infinity of not simply of dimension but also of time", giving rise to the idea that a human lifetime was itself now a mere instant.³

The suggestion that, reflected in the photography of the Dillwyn Llewelyn circle, 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.

Helen Sear 2016

³ Titterington, C, *Llewelyn and Instantaneity*, V&A Album 4, 1985