



Designs for lights inspired by Torquay Museum's collections

Pictures: TORQUAY MUSEUM

Museum collections inspire lights for Royal Terrace Gardens

Torquay Museum's curators have been busy helping artist Anouk Mercier find inspiration for the laser cut designs she is creating for the new lighting along the bottom of Royal Terrace Gardens, often erroneously known as Rock Walk - which is, in fact, the path along the top of the cliff).

Anouk is based in Bristol and her artistic practice often responds to museum collections and past histories. From the consultations, Anouk came to the museum with lots of ideas focussed around wanting to celebrate the natural and geological heritage of Torbay.

She had an understanding that it is a place which holds many memories for both locals and tourists and wanted to honour that.

The museum staff sent her pictures of how the gardens used to be so that she could better understand people's reminiscences.

Anouk was also interested in the scientific heritage of Torbay and how that can be seen through the museum's natural history collections.

This includes the seaweed collection of Amelia Griffiths, known during her life as 'the Queen of Seaweed' who collected

Clare Howe looks at how Torquay Museum has helped inspire the new lighting at Royal Terrace Gardens

many specimens from the beaches in Torbay.

She was a pioneer in the field of marine botany and was highly respected among the scientific community of the time.

When she first moved to Torquay, in 1829, she lived on Cary Parade just around the corner from Rock Walk, although it would have looked very different then.

The collections of William Pengelly, Arthur Ogilvie and William A. E. Ussher were also a source of inspiration showing the wide variety of items that scientists collected in Torbay in the past, including geological specimens.

These were of particular interest as Anouk wanted to reflect the importance of the UNESCO Geopark status which is held by the Bay.

The corals which can be seen fossilised in the local limestone create beautiful shapes and were a particular source of inspiration.

Many forms from the natural world have been used to create the final designs including seaweeds,



EPSON scanner image

fossil corals, local birds, trees, insects and pressed flowers, many of the shapes being taken directly from items in the museum's collections.

The designs will show what you might find at different levels, moving from sea level to the top of the cliff.

It has been an amazing experience for museum staff to see items from the collections used in this way to create art work, particularly as the end result of the project will create lights in a prominent area of the seafront.

We hope that the lights will celebrate the heritage and natural beauty of the Bay for many years to come.

The works at Royal Terrace Gardens are made possible using £200,000 of the £750,000 accelerated funding received as part of the first phase of the Town Investment Plan to enhance areas of key public realm within Torquay.

The installation of more creative lighting will encourage more people to connect with the seafront all year round, as well as offering a boost to the night-time economy.



One of many butterflies sent to Anouk Mercier for inspiration.