

**TWENTY FIVE a Stills School Exhibition**  
**Tuesday 18 Feb - Saturday 1 March 2025**



Twenty Five is an exhibition featuring the work of young people who participated in the Stills School programme last year.

At Stills School, process is key. Students don't just learn how to turn light into photographs—they also embark on a journey of creative self-discovery. Along the way, they explore different genres of photography. Through experimentation, they transform ideas into images.

This exhibition highlights work from students at various stages of their artistic endeavours. Their pieces explore themes of connection—whether with ourselves, our four-legged companions, our work, or our surroundings. The works delve into rituals, from obsessive collecting to the comforting repetition of daily acts of care.

Every student in this exhibition began with the same cameras in the same room. For many it was the first time they have picked up a camera.

All exhibitors have completed the first stage of Stills School, our 8-week Contact course which is held once a week. Others have had the opportunity to delve deeper into their practice by taking part in our 3-month Academy.

They have all been given the freedom to experiment and the time and space to play. We hope you enjoy the results!

We asked each of our exhibiting artists a series of questions to find out a bit more about their work.

**What inspires your work?**

**How did you make your exhibition piece?**

**Tell us about your experience on Stills School?**

**What do you want to do next?**

You can find their answers to some, or all of the questions inside...

## **Ally Lloyd**

'Home' was prompted by conversations about found family. I wanted to think more about the way we bring traditions and ideas we have grown up with together in our homes, and also make space for new ways of living. The photos were taken over the last year while at homes with friends. They were made on black and white film processed in the darkroom at Stills. These are just a few of many, many photos and when it came to picking which to include in the zine friends helped sort through them with me. We picked out what felt most important in the story of our homes - cooking, stillness, people together, and caring for spaces and each other.

Stills School was my first experience of accessible education. It was a space to learn and explore at your own pace and in your own way. The tutors and staff and other students/ alumni at Stills are incredibly knowledgeable and supportive. I feel very lucky.

The school has given me a love for photography and the foundations to keep learning and exploring and playing with it.

## **Claire Jewell**

I find inspiration in the work of Jim Brandenburg, Annie Leibovitz, and Erik Johansson. Jim Brandenburg's mastery of nature photography and his ability to capture the serenity and beauty of the natural world resonate with me. Annie Leibovitz's portraiture and her talent for storytelling through expressive imagery motivates me to explore the emotional connections between people. Erik Johansson's imaginative and surreal compositions ignite my creativity and push me to see photography as more than just documentation but as a limitless canvas for visual storytelling.

My love for cherry blossom trees shines through in these images. I've always been drawn to their delicate elegance, and I love capturing the soft pink clusters against vibrant green leaves, highlighting the intricate details of each petal. Through my framing and composition, I aim to showcase not just their natural beauty but also the dreamy, almost ethereal atmosphere they create. I spent hours

immersed in capturing the beauty around me. I was captivated by the way the soft light filtered through the branches, illuminating the vibrant blossoms in shades of pink and blush. It was the perfect setting to experiment with composition and depth of field, allowing me to capture the ethereal charm of the cherry blossoms

I really enjoyed learning from the mentors at Stills in both the Contact and Academy courses. Their guidance and expertise helped me grow as a photographer, and revisiting my skills in the darkroom was a rewarding experience that deepened my appreciation for the craft. One of the most fulfilling aspects of these courses was the sense of community. I made meaningful friendships with fellow photographers, and I genuinely enjoy watching their work evolve. Seeing their creativity flourish inspires me to keep pushing my own boundaries. Being part of this supportive and inspiring community has been an incredible journey, and it's something I truly value.

My next steps involve turning my passion for photography into a full-fledged career. I've already had the opportunity to work on pet portraits, newborn photography, and equine photography, which has helped me refine my skills and build my portfolio. I'm excited to continue exploring these areas while also expanding into new opportunities. I'm determined to grow Claire Jewell Photography and share my vision with a wider audience, capturing stories and moments that resonate with people. This journey is just beginning, and I can't wait to see where it takes me.

## **Gus Pica Turner**

**Who or what inspires you / your work?**

*Curiosity around relationships, always. Relation between people, place, materials... Sentiment I suppose.*

**How did you make this work?**

*Fat thumbs, frustration, and a country-wide bus pass. The prints are hemp and the glass was made via photographic transfer.*

**Can you tell us about your experience on Stills School?**

*Stills absolutely redefined what I thought education could be, for the better. It has been great to find community here. It's a safe space, for sure.*

**What do you want to do next?**

*Something small, like a zine, or printing my face on moon. Anything to broaden my scope.*

## **Jo Ogilvie**

I take a lot of inspiration from movies which have impacted me personally. Artists like Francis Bacon, Eugene Meatyard and David Lynch have also been a huge influence for me.

I used a Canon F-1 with a 50mm lens and black & white film. This particular piece was inspired by David Lynch's work, specifically Eraserhead and Twin Peaks.

Stills School and its staff have been an amazing help to me, by teaching me how to operate a much wider range of photographic equipment, and by building my personal confidence to go out and do the work I want to do.

I'd really like to continue working with Stills, by helping out and by continuing to learn as much as I can. I'd also really like to show my work to as many people as I can, by continuing to do exhibitions and also by doing so in a professional capacity

## **Kinslee Sikes**

I am inspired by all my favourite artists from a variety of mediums; the Brontë sisters, Ingmar Bergman, David Lynch, Sufjan Stevens, Ana Mendieta, and especially I am inspired by all artists who continue to create despite the personal or societal difficulties they face. I seek to make art that comes from a place of optimism.

My video was originally images shot on film and the framed images are from a digital camera. The digital images are made after Justine Kurland's series on young girls. The video is made from an assignment to use one roll of film continuously and these images were shot at my real place of employment while I was on shift.

My experience at Stills was wonderful. I came in with a lot of goals and aspirations, but I needed direction. Everyone I interacted with at Stills was earnestly dedicated to helping me improve my skills and learn what is needed to create and exhibit the art that I want to make. I would wholeheartedly recommend Stills to anybody who wants a safe and constructive environment to learn photography.

What do I want to do next? Make art forever!

## **Lola Molina**

I think that specifically with Photography I am very inspired by memory and the preservation of it - and the camera allows me to hold the memory as a still. I love Art that is personal and emotionally charged, when it communicates something really powerful to you and changes the way you think.

I chose Miyako's work to reference because it is so beautifully minimal but filled with emotion. Her work has stuck with me since seeing it for the first time at Stills Gallery in 2022.

I started Contact while I was still at high-school, and really hating it. Stills School was like a little creative home I could come to and actually feel and be supported in my projects and creative interests. It was the best part of both 2023 and 2024.

I'd like to go to art school! Having had this experience I know that creative education is so beneficial for my practice. And having like-minded people around to support and share ideas too :)

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### **Macy James**

My experience in stills school was really good because it helped me with my anxiety and being able to get out the house more often while out with a camera, i had a lot of fun and learned a lot about how to use a camera.

After the exhibition I'm hoping to get into stills academy and develop my photography skills further.

### **Magdalena Kalinowska**

Body. Flow. Soul. The delicacy of our humanity.

From a lifelong journey in ballet, where the motion of the body and spirit were at the heart of the art, I transitioned to photography, drawn to that same essence.

Analog photography allows for two souls to flow together, where the process itself becomes a dance: my own spirit comes alive as I infuse a piece of myself into every step—loading the film, framing the shot, and developing the image; moreover, stripped to black and white, the soul of the body photographed is revealed, as is the raw beauty of the body, its form, its shadows, its rhythms and its vulnerability.

What remains is the bodies themselves, embodied in the intentional play of light and shadow, in their purest expression.

Nanda Moira Hagenaars, Arnoldas Kubilius, and Jesse Draxler are the artists I draw the most inspiration from. Beyond them, I find immense

inspiration in the moment itself—the emotions shared between myself and the subject, the shapes and states of their body, the light, and the atmosphere at the exact moment (right before) the photo is taken. It's the energy of that fleeting instance that feeds back and inspires the work.

My partner has been my creativity catalyst—through our unspoken understanding, his essence and support. The familiarity with each other's bodies and spiritual energies fostered peace and trust in the process of capturing these vulnerable shots. The depth of our comfort is reflected in the body's relaxed and authentic emotions that shine through the shadows in the images.

Collaborating with my partner and his best friend—both of whom are also artists—created a beautiful synergy of creativity and artistic flow. It also allowed us to deepen our connection, transcending the photographs themselves, and reflecting back into them.

I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to have attended Stills School. Beyond acquiring technical skills, what I am most grateful for is learning something I hadn't even realized was a skill of its own—and one I was missing: how to create and execute an artistic vision from start to finish. It truly opened my eyes to how to approach creative projects, where to find inspiration, and, most importantly, how to be confident in taking risks, making it work, and believing in the art that flows through you. And of course the people. The most inspiring, kind and thoughtful bunch I could ever have asked for.

Using the skills I've learned at Stills School, I now hope to embark on more photographic projects in the same experimental and confident manner. I aim to set aside time to develop my own artistic themes, executing them from start to finish. My goal is to build confidence in my own creative ideas and to seek more inspiration from within, while looking less for guidance in the pre-existing ideas of others.

## **Nash Burns**

The quirky face photo was inspired by Christian Vielver who takes quirky photos of shelter dogs catching treats to get them adopted.

The agility photo is inspired by an agility show I went to where they had light gates that would take a photo when the dog jumped straight over the hurdle.

The theme name is inspired by the movie 'A Dogs Life' which follows different dogs reincarnated to help the same person. Each dog does something new and interesting, from being a service dog in one life, to a sport dog another. My photos show each aspect of my dog's very full life showing how smart he is for being able to do everything.

I decided what the main aspects of my dogs life are; smiling (being happy), playing, doing agility, being my assistance dog and going to pride marches, events and social media. You can see all this hard work through his rough feet.

I had an amazing experience at Stills School. My assistance dog and I have done the previous course as well as this Contact. Both have been filled with the nicest people where we've had great discussions and shared ideas. This is the first learning environment I've felt fully included by everyone. Every step of the way Stills put in the work to make the course accessible to all.

Before this course I'd never even considered the theme and underlying meaning of my photos. Next I'd love to attempt more large projects like this where all the photos are connected. I got so many ideas for photoshoots to do next which I'm already planning out. I've got my higher photography exam to sit in only a few months which this course has really set me up for success with.

## **Siobhan Dagleish**

Hello, I'm Astra and this is about the change that happened in the world we all know. The world we knew is still here, but it's turned into real life Magical Fairy World, with little creatures and some bigger creatures.

So, it's like one of those stories I used to read of people teleported to other worlds or reincarnated. But instead, it's like their world collided with ours and now we have elves, orcs, beast people and more.

Anyway, we are going to venture around new and old areas of Scotland. I know magic and have a sword to keep myself safe on my journey. I love exploring and taking photos so we decided to explore taking photos to share with the world.

College wasn't working for me as a photographer with mental health and learning difficulties. I struggled a lot and ended up not finishing. I later found Stills School with help and I joined their Contact course at the start of 2024. I really enjoyed the environment and that the course was only 8 weeks compared to 3-4 years of college - I even learned more in Stills School. Later in Stills Academy found that I actually really enjoy film photography!

## **Spencer Wilson**

I took these pictures on a film camera and printed them in the darkroom.

I enjoyed Stills School. It gave me the opportunity to find my love for photography again. I don't know what I'm going to do next - I am thinking about going to college to do photography.

## **Taylor Rooney**

One of my most recent inspirations has been the work of Barbara Kruger. Her use of multiple art forms (graphic design and photography - her most notable trademark being her use of word graphics) was quite striking to me and this fusion of art forms is something I strive to incorporate in my own work.

The concept for Am I? originated from the idea of - how much of who we are is connected to what we own, the things we value and have a daily presence in our lives?

How much does our possessions impact how others perceive us and is it our responsibility to understand how we are seen?

This project was made to explore these ideas from a more personal perspective and is a self-portrait of sorts and I hope it will allow you to start exploring to.

My experience at stills has changed the way I practise photography. Having the ability to connect with people both interested and involved in the photography world, as someone who is self-taught, changed the game for me. I have gained valuable knowledge, not only in the fundamentals of photography, but also in the importance of creativity and collaboration.

I plan to continue exploring different ways of working with light, whether through a camera lens or a scanner bed, and I want to experiment with the fusion of different art forms to bring my ideas to life.

Stills would like to thank Stills School students past and present for making the school what it is – a creative community to be proud of. Keep taking pictures xx

Stills School is an alternative photography school for 16-25 year olds who face barriers to accessing the arts. The school is free of charge. All materials, equipment and travel is provided.

If you would like to donate to Stills School you can do so in person. If you would like to sponsor a student place please contact our Development Manager Caitlin Serey; [caitlin.serey@stills.org](mailto:caitlin.serey@stills.org), 0131 622 6200

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