

# External Engagement

(ADDA6007)

Lecturer: Joe Timothy Coleman

# Contents

## 1. EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

### A. Documentation Art Works.

1. Ceramics and Prints (Studio)
2. Window Art Installation
3. Paints (External Opportunity)
4. Craft Students (Studio)

### B. Collaborations & Collectives

1. @Guy Bigland (TLA Books Project)
2. SEEDS Collective
3. G39 (Book Fair)

### C. Small businesses & Clients

1. Small Wedding
2. Product Photography (Studio)
3. Food Photography (Restaurant)
4. Creative Portraits (Studio)
5. Commercial Interior (Dental Clinic)

### D. Internship - Ffotogallery

### E. Open Calls

1. Open Call Narcisos
2. Open Call Food Photography
3. Open Call Soft Cover
4. Other Open Calls

### F. Events

1. Memorial
2. Morrison Victorian Day
3. Music Industry
4. Funeral
5. Charity ball

## 2. Graduate Plan

1. Business Path
2. Artist Path
3. Technical Proficiency and Tools
4. Summary & Timeline
5. C.V.

## A. DOCUMENTATION OF ARTWORKS

Photographing other artists' work has become a rewarding and comfortable part of my practice. While it doesn't require the same creative improvisation as producing personal work, it offers something I value: precision, control, and a focus on detail.

### 1. Ceramics and Prints (Studio)

This shoot came from a university email. Two Fine Art students, Laura Mitchinson and Victoria Goddard. Laura brought her ceramics, and Victoria brought her prints to the studio, and it turned into a great learning experience for me.

We improvised a white box using cardboard found in the studio to improve the lighting setup when photographing ceramics.



It was important to frame the objects. I realized the best option is at the same height as the object.

I used a tripod with an extension arm to photograph the prints from above, and I set the camera on a timer to reduce the risk of any shake. Techniques I also use when shooting food.



For this image, I decided to extend the threads to push the work further. I suggested the idea to Victoria, and it was fulfilling to see how we collaborated and created something new together.

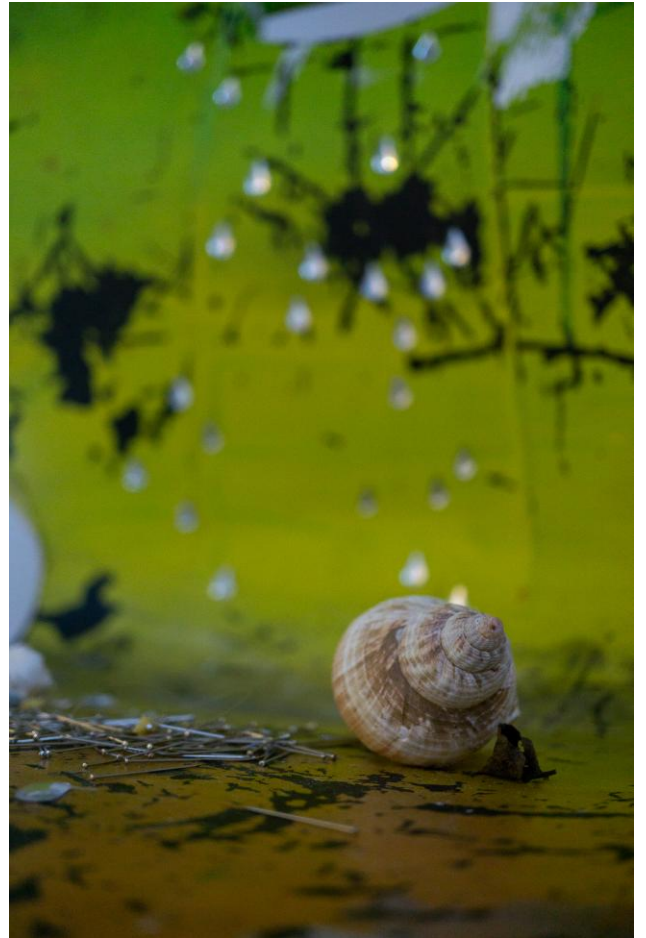
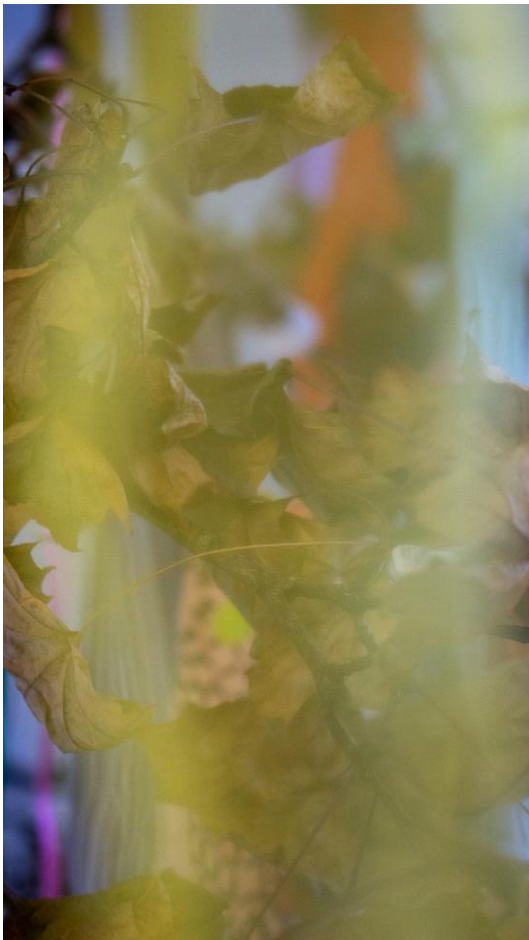
## 2. Window Art Installation

Later, Victoria asked me to photograph her window installation in the Art Department. This was more complex, a three-dimensional piece installed outside the studio environment. Since it was located in the university building, I used my Sony A6000 mirrorless camera along with two prime lenses. After taking the initial set of images, I reviewed them in the Mac room with technician Ann, identified areas for improvement, and returned to reshoot the necessary shots.

The work was intense. One area I still need to work on is framing. I'm improving, though there's still a long way to go. I know that shooting in RAW format allows for extensive editing—it takes a lot of work, but it's doable. However, good framing is key. If that's right, the rest can usually be corrected in post-production.



One important thing I'm learning through this process is the difference a prime lens can make



I was pleased with the results, and so was she. What meant the most to me was that she later asked me in person to photograph some of her classmates' work, based on how much they liked the images I had taken for her. It made me realise how powerful word-of-mouth and trust are in creative environments.

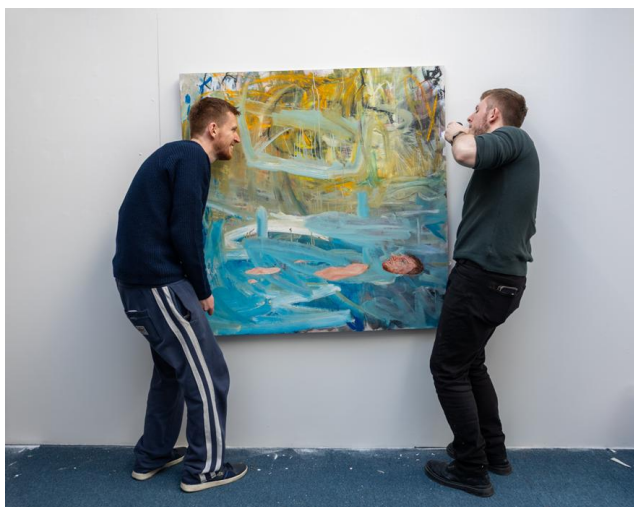
### 3. Paints (External Opportunity)

This opportunity came through the university and involved a paid job documenting an artist's work. I visited his studio to photograph the pieces, which he wanted to update for his website and media platforms. It was a lovely session. Tomos, the artist, and his brother hung the paintings while I took the photographs. I used a camera borrowed from the university and received guidance on how to achieve the best results in terms of lighting, camera settings, and framing.



I was using a zoom lens, but I learned that to maintain consistency and avoid distorting the angles, it's better to use a 50mm lens. This helps keep the white balance constant throughout the shoot. I realize that I'm still not fully independent in my work—there's so much to learn, and not enough time to master everything. One of the main reasons I don't want to leave the university is the access to installation space, gear, and most importantly, the advice and help available from the staff.

He initially asked me to photograph just his work, but I decided to take some extra shots as a gift. I enjoy photographing people, and he was pleased with the surprise.



I was satisfied with the images, and so was the artist. It took a bit of time to capture the images of the works exactly how we wanted, but everything worked out. One amazing moment was when he asked for my personal email to contact me in the future because he wants to work with me. When it was time to pay, he even added a £25 tip. It wasn't about the money, but the gesture that confirmed he was truly happy with my work.



After the photoshoot, Tomos sent me a message saying, "Thank you again for your help this afternoon, Cristina. I'm really happy with the photographs. They are excellent. Thank you for your hard work. It's no wonder Ryan recommended you!"

A few days later, Ryan reached out to me because Tomos had emailed him separately, sharing positive feedback about my work. It was encouraging.

## 4. Craft Students (Studio)

This opportunity to photograph the work of craft students in the studio came through the university. Last year, I photographed work from craft students. This year, the lecturer contacted me once more to photograph her students' work. It's the best kind of feedback I could get, it feels rewarding to be called by name. During the shoot, we ran out of white background, so we switched to a grey one. While editing, I realized the grey background wasn't ideal for the final images. Next time, I'll be sure to use a white background, but the experience taught me a valuable lesson on how to adjust backgrounds during post-production.



The situation enabled me to learn how to manage backgrounds better, but I still can't help but feel a bit disappointed about it. If I were in that situation again, I would make everyone take a break and spend more time trying out new lighting.

Something I worked on during the shoot was improving my framing, aiming for a more flattering composition. I'm starting to be able to correct myself quickly as I go along.



## B COLLABORATIONS & COLLECTIVES

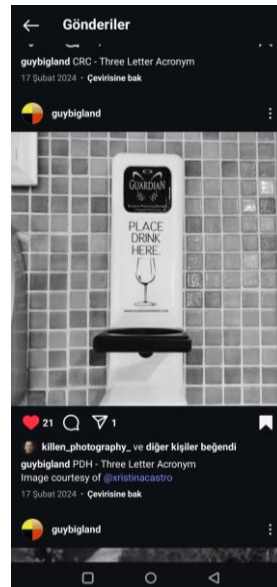
Collaboration has been a keystone of my development as a practitioner, especially within the university environment. Working with lecturers and classmates daily has fostered a space where we grow and learn together. While social media, particularly Instagram, isn't my strongest point, I've realized its value in facilitating smaller collaborations and networking opportunities. One example is my collaboration with @guydebordd, whose project featured some of my images on his Instagram. This experience has been a great reminder of how social media can open doors for creative connections.

An unexpected but equally meaningful collaboration occurred with the artist Fernanda Fedrizzi, who was in residence in Swansea. I had the privilege of becoming the 14th page of her book project. This experience reinforced the power of networking and how sometimes the most valuable collaborations happen when you least expect them.



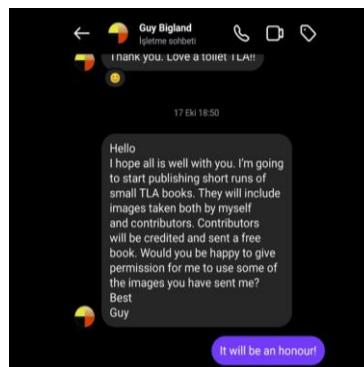
### 1. @Guybigland (Instagram)

I first encountered artist Guy Bigland's work during a university lecture, and I decided to send him some of my photographs for his *TLA Books* project, which documents three-letter words found in images—both his own and those submitted by others. He featured two of my images on the project's Instagram profile, which was exciting to see.



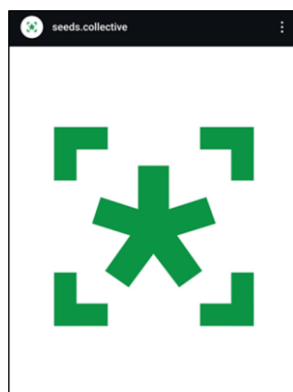


Some time after that, Guy reached out to ask for permission to include a selection of my photographs in one of his upcoming publications. This opportunity to be part of his book feels both exciting and affirming. It marks an important step in how I see myself as a practitioner and reminds me of the value of building connections and putting myself and my work out there—something we’re often encouraged to do at university.



## 2. SEEDS Collective

The SEEDS Collective was formed as part of a university assignment that encouraged us to collaborate in groups. A few of us came together with a shared interest in alternative photographic techniques such as cyanotypes, salt prints, and pinhole photography. Our goal is to create a space where we can collaborate, share knowledge, and offer workshops to others interested in these experimental methods..



I believe in the magic of collaboration—the energy that emerges when people work well together. When there’s flow and connection, it’s an incredible experience. Of course, I also understand the challenges that come when things don’t flow as easily. That’s something I want to help the group navigate and grow through.

When we began deciding on our first steps, we learned that Harvey was already preparing to lead a workshop related to his practice in cymatics. I knew that working with him would be a valuable experience.

When I asked myself what I could bring to the collective, I realized it’s a mix of teaching experience, a willingness to share knowledge, and resilience to keep things moving when challenges arise. I’m also happy to help in any way needed, whether that’s organizing events, supporting workshops, or doing behind-the-scenes work

Our first workshop focused on cymatics, with Harvey leading the session. He already had a working setup for the process, and we used university resources like photographic paper and the darkroom to make it all happen.



After the workshops, we used one of the university walls to showcase the work produced during each session. The exhibition allowed participants to display their results and connect with others in the university community.



At first, we planned to produce a small publication (a zine) to document the workshop series. Printing would be free at the university, and any costs for special paper would be minimal. Eventually, though, we decided to sell the prints at the Book Fair held at G39 Gallery instead. This gave us the chance to engage with a wider audience and support the sustainability of our project..



I took most of the photographs during the workshop for documentation purposes, and it was a great experience using the camera in the darkroom. It pushed me to think about how to visually capture process-based work, which is something I'm keen to improve on.



Our team brings a combination of social, organizational, and teaching skills, which has been key to our success. We continue to learn from each other, especially in areas of specialized knowledge like Harvey’s expertise in cymatics. We also benefit from the support of lecturers and technicians, as well as access to materials and spaces like the darkroom.



During the workshop, one of the attendees brought an image to work with, and to my surprise, it was one of *my* photographs.

One of our early concerns was low attendance at workshops, but the reality turned out to be the opposite. Interest was higher than expected, and we even decided to repeat the same workshop a few more times.

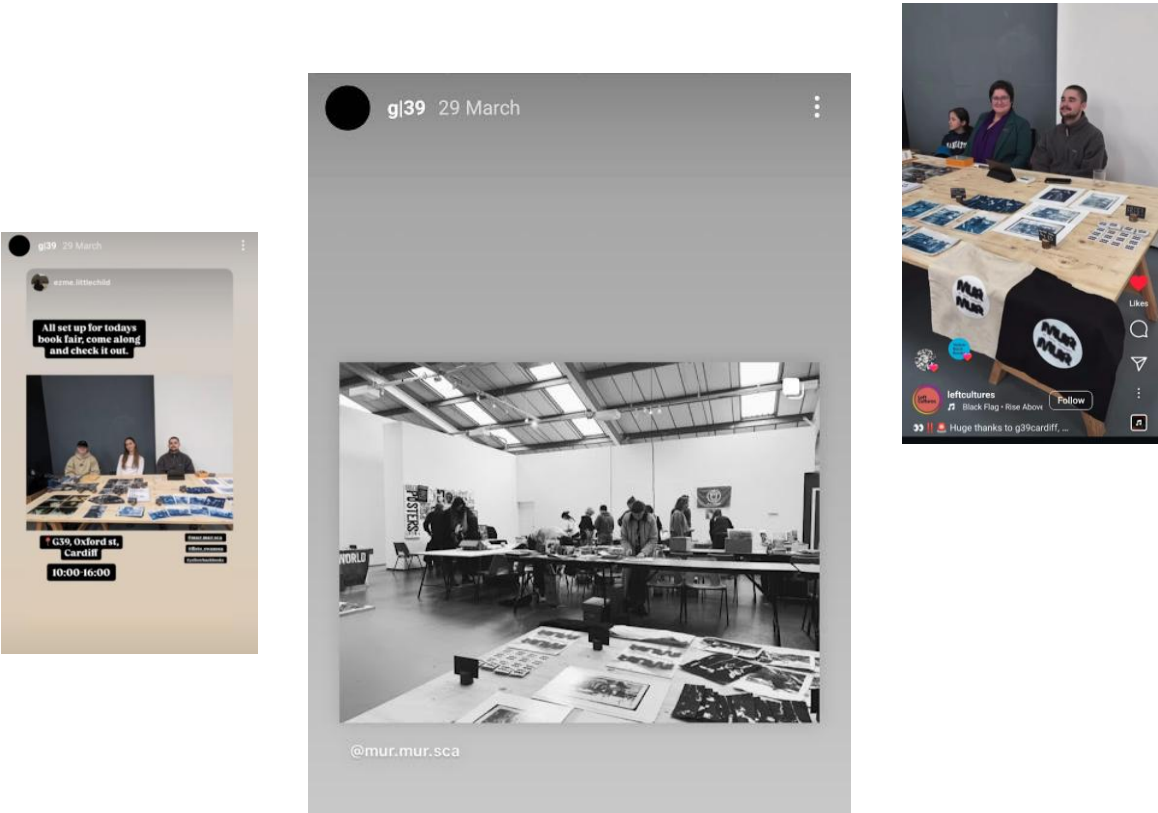
Each time, our organization improved, and Harvey became more confident in his delivery. We’ve also set up a shared online folder (called SEEDS) to store ideas, documents, and planning materials, which helps us stay organized.

Overall, I think we worked well as a team. While not everyone had the same level of engagement, the structure allowed flexibility. Harvey was the only truly indispensable member since he led the workshops, but the rest of us could easily support one another. If someone needed to miss a session or leave early, the others could step in and cover. I believe we did a great job, and we’re planning to continue the collective into the next academic year with new workshops and ideas.

### 3. G39 Book Fair

We had the opportunity to attend a book fair in Cardiff as the group “Mur, Mur,” where we sold books and prints. I went along to help in general and also participated as part of the SEEDS Collective. We made prints based on the workshops we had previously run.

I didn’t bring any personal work with me because I hadn’t thought it through beforehand. In hindsight, I could have taken some of the cyanotype prints I’ve been working on. I have hundreds from the small cyanotype movie project that I’m not currently using, and I can always make more in the future. But that’s life. I’ll keep this in mind for the next opportunity.



I enjoyed being there. It was busy, and it gave us the chance to move around, meet people, and see other artists’ work. I brought my daughter with me, even though she found parts of it a bit boring, it was still an interesting experience for both of us.

As always, I forgot to take photos or videos to document my presence there. One thing I want to improve is my online presence. Instagram Stories could be a good way to share where I am and what I’m doing in real time.

## C. SMALL BUSINESS & CLIENTS

Working with a variety of small businesses and individual clients, from a local restaurant to more personal commissions like a wedding ceremony, has been incredibly valuable in helping me reflect on the kind of photographer I want to become. Each experience came with its challenges and rewards.

These encounters pushed me to improve my technical skills, including lighting, editing, and composition, while also strengthening my confidence in communicating and directing people. Most importantly, they have given me a clearer sense of what I can offer to others and what kind of work I find truly fulfilling.

I have realised that I enjoy creating visual content that supports people's personal stories or helps small businesses build a strong identity through images. These experiences have shaped the way I think about life after graduation. I can see myself combining my artistic practice with commissioned work in a manner that feels balanced and meaningful.

### 1. Small Wedding

This was a small, intimate ceremony for the daughter of a friend and classmate. She knew that I don't usually photograph weddings or events and reassured me there would be no expectations, she just wanted a few images.



Still, I felt the pressure because I couldn't help it, and I knew I wasn't fully prepared. The lighting at the venue was poor, so I brought a Canon R5 and an external flash. Although I'd attended a workshop on how to use flash, it's still an area I need to improve. Some of the images suffered from weak framing and low angles, which I tend to use but aren't always flattering.



Outdoors, the lighting was much better, and I was able to shoot without the flash. I learned the importance of being more intentional with composition and giving direction to people, especially during posed shots. Despite my doubts, they were happy with the results and even framed several photos, which meant a lot to me, especially coming from a fellow photographer. This shoot made me realise how vital it is to learn posing techniques, and I've made it my goal this summer to practice directing others, starting with self-portraits.



## 2. Product Photography (Studio)

I was contacted by a lecturer to photograph the work of craft students for their portfolios and social media. It was encouraging to be asked personally, based on my work from the previous year. The shoot took place in the university studio, which is a space I enjoy working in. However, I made two key observations:

First, I worked for too long in one go (from 09:30 to 16:00), which affected my focus. In the future, I'll split long shoots into two days to maintain energy and focus. Second, we ran out of white background paper and had to use a grey one, which complicated the editing.

While the final result was still good and the images with the white background were used on Instagram, I learned to always check background materials beforehand and adjust lighting creatively if needed.

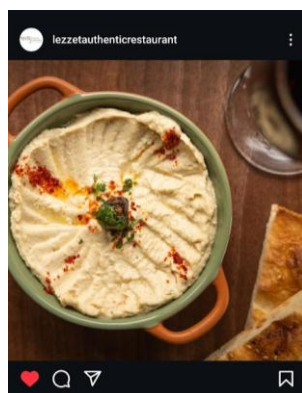
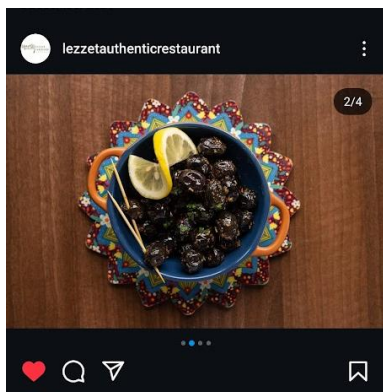


On a positive note, I've been improving my editing speed, learning to batch edit, and experimenting with cropping styles to enhance composition. The studio remains my happy place at university.



### 3. Food Photography (Restaurant)

I decided to explore food photography by shooting in my family's restaurant. While I'm used to helping in the kitchen or waiting tables. Fortunately, Ann (the technician) joined me for the first session, which gave me confidence and some authority. We used a Canon R5 camera with two prime lenses, a tripod with a transverse centre column, and natural light, along with a diffuser and reflector, which ended up being unnecessary.



I returned a second time by myself to photograph drinks and desserts. Working in this environment taught me how much time each setup requires and how to style the table to create a specific atmosphere. I've since received consistent credit on their Facebook and Instagram, which has been helpful for visibility.



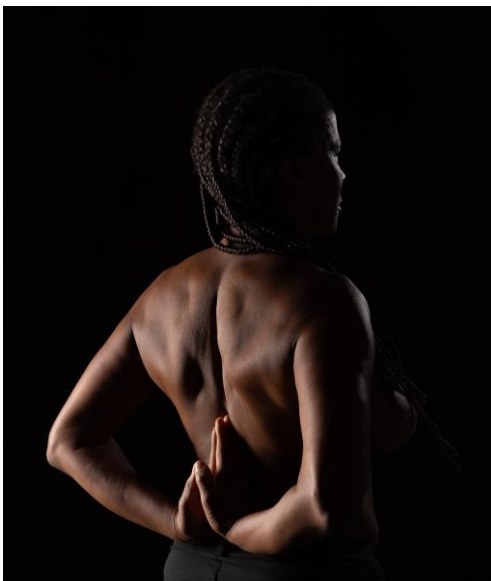


Despite the complications that can arise from working with family, the shoot gave me clarity about offering content creation services to small businesses. I have another commission planned for after my submissions and am seriously considering creating a business profile. I need to have a clear package of services to offer. I've been checking out small businesses locally and can see how I could carve out a niche for myself in that space. My goal is to help small businesses create the online presence they need to differentiate themselves from others.

## 4. Creative Portrait (Studio)

This portrait session was different, it was more intimate and experimental. The model wanted body movement and expressive images, which felt like a big responsibility. We worked with shadows, a lighting technique I was less familiar with, but Daff helped me prepare the studio and offered some valuable advice.

She was pleased with the results, and the shoot reinforced my passion for working closely with individuals on personal, creative projects.



Through this experience, I realized how essential it is to master posing and directing. The need to use filler lights and separation lights. I discovered a photographer online, [David Suh](#), whose philosophy focuses not only on technique but also on becoming comfortable in your skin, and this resonates deeply with me. My goal this summer is to explore this area, starting with self-portraiture. I enjoyed spending time in the studio, getting to know the person in front of me. It is a special kind of conversation.

## 5. Commercial Interior (Dental Clinic)

This commission was for a local dental clinic that was undergoing renovations. It's just a short walk from home. I used my Canon R6 with a 24-105mm lens and a tripod, practicing bracketing and timer shooting beforehand. The clinic was small, which made angles tricky, but I worked carefully to remove distracting elements and adjust my positioning. The bracketed images came out well, and although I didn't need to blend in Photoshop this time, I was ready if it had been necessary.



The owner was pleased with the results and mentioned he would contact me again once the further renovations were complete. This shoot gave me real confidence in working with commercial interiors and small businesses. Now, I regularly check the online presence of places I visit to identify gaps in their photography. Many businesses need strong imagery for their websites or a steady stream of content for social media, and I see how I could help meet that need.

## D. INTERNSHIP

I applied for an internship at Ffotogallery as a Festival Facilitator for Ffoto Cymru 2024 without expecting to be chosen. It was more of a casual application, but to my surprise, I was accepted. Looking back, I now realize how fortunate I was to have this experience. Though it was a long and demanding internship that took up a significant amount of my time, every minute was worth it. It taught me invaluable lessons about gallery work, installations, and my growth as an artist.

### 1. Ffotogallery (Cardiff & Swansea).

I was involved in the entire exhibition process, from planning and preparing the walls to handling, hanging, and deinstalling the artworks. The Ffotogallery team generously shared their knowledge with us, and I learned how to use different hanging systems such as mirror plates, sawtooth hangers, and the H Track system. I learned how each system fits specific types of work and spaces, and how crucial it is to combine precision with flexibility. I also quickly discovered that having a packet (or two) of White Tack is always a good idea!



Spending time in the galleries during the exhibition deepened my understanding. It's not just about installing work but also about understanding it, so you can talk about it with confidence. I gained a better appreciation of the artists' practices, which further enriched my experience.

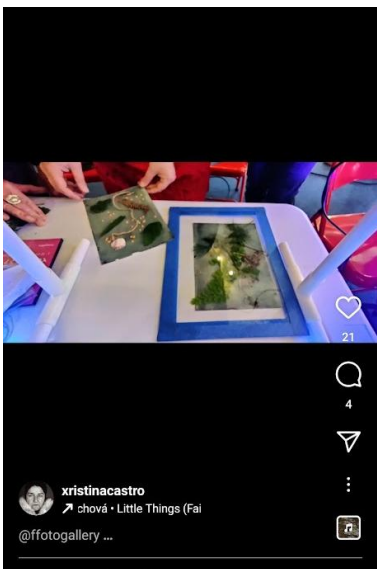
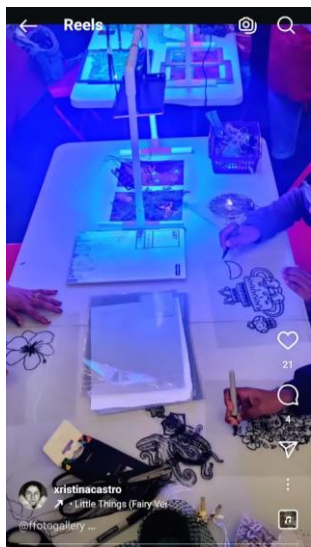


One of the most meaningful parts of this internship was spending time at Elysium Gallery with three South American artists featured in the exhibition. Talking with them, hearing about their creative journeys, and realizing that doubts and challenges are universal for all artists was inspiring. I loved the idea of planting seeds; each connection, project, or piece of work has the potential to grow into something greater over time.



This internship also helped me view my Spanish background as an asset. I assisted in translating interviews with Spanish-speaking artists for Ffotogallery (published in *The Guardian*). For the first time, being bilingual felt like an advantage rather than a disadvantage. Initially, I was nervous about speaking English in social settings, but by the end of the internship, I felt more confident and at ease.

Additionally, I helped run a cyanotype workshop at The Cranes.



The people I met throughout the process were incredible, and the staff at Ffotogallery were kind, open, and willing to offer advice. I had a particularly enriching conversation with Bob Gelsthorpe about an installation idea for my final project, and he generously provided feedback and support. After the internship officially ended, I even returned to volunteer for another exhibition installation.

This experience taught me a lot—not just about gallery work and installations, but also about my strengths, identity, and how I want to shape my future as an artist. Next time, I'll be more mindful about documenting my contributions, but overall, this was a transformative experience that gave me confidence, practical skills, and a sense of belonging in the art world.

Best wishes,  
Kate

Cristina has been an asset to the Ffotogallery team during Ffoto Cymru 2025, as well as since when she has helped during installs and behind the scene support activities with the organisation. She is practical, reliable, and tenacious. Her enthusiasm for all things photography means she puts her hand to any task given!

She works well as part of the team, feeling comfortable enough to make contributions towards projects as well as following instructions given by the core staff of the organisation. With both practical tasks and visitor facing elements to her role, Cristina proved herself to be courteous, friendly and professional speaking about artwork but also how she related to others volunteers and interns associated with Ffotogallery.

## E. OPEN CALLS & SUBMISSIONS

Engaging with open calls has become an important part of my artistic development. Each submission, whether successful or not, has offered something valuable. Rejections, while initially disappointing, have taught me resilience rather than discouragement. Over time, I've come to see the process as a way to stay present, keep creating, and remain connected to a wider creative community. While some submissions didn't lead anywhere, others brought exciting surprises, reminding me that persistence matters.

This ongoing practice has also pushed me to become more organized and proactive. After a complicated situation involving difficulty in locating high-resolution files for a submission, I realized how essential it is to be prepared. I've since invested in an external hard drive compatible with both Mac and Windows, which has significantly improved my workflow and peace of mind.

More importantly, open submissions have helped me shape how I present myself and my work. Writing artist statements, selecting images, and placing my projects within broader narratives have all contributed to defining my voice as an artist. With each application, I gain more clarity about what I want to say and how I want to say it.

Ultimately, these submissions are less about the outcome and more about staying in motion. I plan to continue applying, not only to seek opportunities but to embrace the ongoing process of reflection, refinement, and growth.

### 1. Open Call *Narciso*

I applied to this open call because the theme was connected to my practice: identity, memory, and self-perception. Being selected was amazing and allowed me to push myself both creatively and personally.

I used Photoshop and Lightroom for this project, working with self-portraiture and projection, using layered images of my own selfies to represent fragmented aspects of identity. I wanted to capture the feeling of being seen from different angles but never fully understood. How filters, personal history, and external perception can mask or distort who we are.

The process involved using a DSLR camera, a projector, and editing software like Photoshop and Lightroom to create layered visuals that brought these themes to life.



I used the projector I had at home, which came with its challenges due to the awkwardness of the space. However, using Photoshop and Lightroom wasn't difficult, as I had experimented with projection at home before. Despite the technical challenges, working on this project felt natural.

I was doing my internship with Ffotogallery when I was selected for this open call. The team was supportive. They even gave me the day off so I could attend the exhibition and be there for the artist talk. Knowing they had my back meant a lot.



But being there wasn't easy. After the talk, when people started mingling and making small talk, I felt completely out of place, vulnerable in a way that caught me off guard. I didn't know how to act, and instead of pushing through something that felt uncomfortable and overwhelming, I left. I didn't take photos or videos of the exhibition. I just needed to step away.

Even though it felt like a low point, that experience taught me something about myself. I realized how much space those feelings of vulnerability take up and how they can shape my experiences.

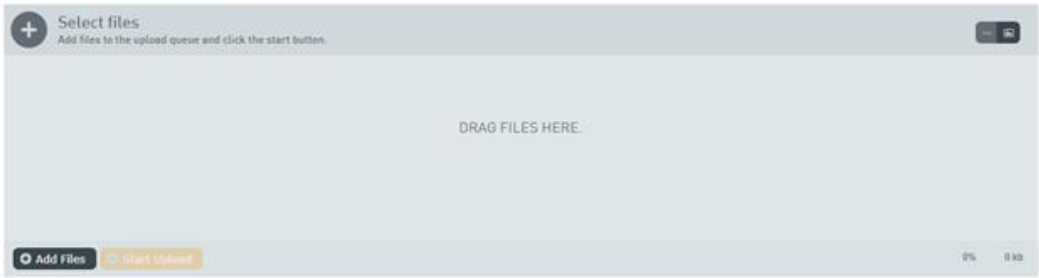
Looking back, I feel proud of the effort I put into this project. It wasn't just about the technical execution; it was about pushing myself creatively and personally. I learned to see my challenges not as obstacles but as part of my voice as an artist. This experience has given me more confidence in my ability to express complex ideas and tackle future projects with more intention.

## 2. Food photography Open Call

Out of the blue, Saskia (a classmate) sent me a WhatsApp message about an open call for food photography. She had seen me editing food images in the Mac room for Lezzet Restaurant and thought of me. I checked the website and saw that the entry was free for students, but the deadline was the same day.

Normally, I overthink things and hesitate. But this time, I didn't. I went straight to my folder, picked five images, and submitted them without giving myself the chance to back out. Looking back, I feel really good about that decision. I've been reflecting a lot on the importance of being proactive, especially since I know how easy it is for me to fall into self-doubt and sabotage.

### Select Photos To Upload



### My Uploaded Photos

#### SUBMITTED IMAGES



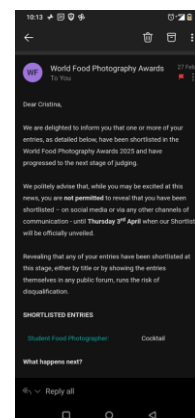
These food photographs meant a lot to me, they were my first real attempt at this type of work.

I remembered what we were told in class about recycling our work and applying to as many open calls as possible. I'm proud of myself for acting before doubt had the chance to creep in.



The submission was a learning experience, and one of the images was shortlisted.

They asked me to upload a high-resolution image, but it turned out the images were stored on the Uni computer, and my organizational skills weren't as sharp as they should have been. I realized that I need to be more organized and prepared to send high-resolution images if any of my works are selected in the future. While I wasn't expecting to be shortlisted, the experience made me realize the importance of both speed and organization when submitting work.



This whole experience has been a valuable learning curve. It's made me reflect on my workflow and recognize how much I enjoyed the process of photographing food for Lezzet. It's something I want to explore further.

### 3. Open call soft cover

This open call is made through this University, and I found it in Curator Space before knowing it was from this department. I presented some images related to one of my second-year works, but different images, because I have been trying to carry on with that project. However, I never have enough time to make a proper body of work. It was good to use some of the extra images I had been taking.



The open call asked for a CV and artist statement. It was quite a stressful task, but also a learning curve. As always, I need to be more organized and ready to apply. The open call asked for layouts, and it was quite complicated because it made me think about how to present my work, not just now, but in general. I am thinking about how to present my works in book format moving forward.

Finally, the open call did not work, but surprisingly, I did not feel bad at all. A little conversation with my ego, and I was fine.

## 4. Other Open Calls & Applications

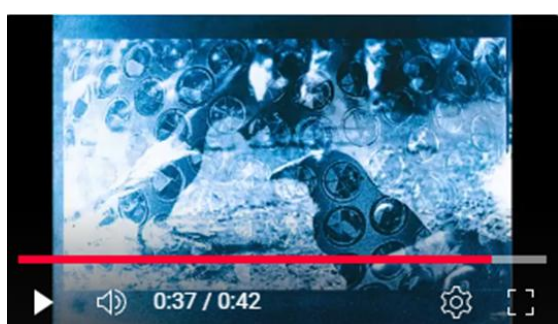
### LensCulture Portrait Awards 2025

I applied mainly for the experience, taking advantage of the free single-image submission. Although the outcome was uncertain, it was a valuable opportunity to practice putting my work out there in a prestigious context while continuing to refine my portraiture style.



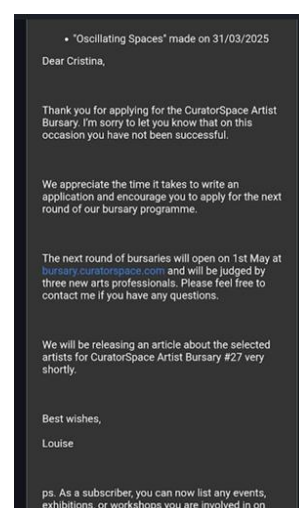
### Artemis Collective Fluid Motion Experimental Film Screening

I submitted two short experimental videos to this event. Later, I was informed that the screening had been postponed due to a high volume of entries. Now I just need to wait. In the meantime, I've been thinking about how I could further develop these pieces for future screenings or exhibitions



### Curator Space Bursary Application

I applied for support for my final degree show work. Although I wasn't selected, I was encouraged to apply again in the future. At the time, I felt uncertain about presenting a work-in-progress, but now—with stronger visual material and more clarity about my artistic vision—I feel much more confident. This experience has also prepared me to actively seek out similar opportunities for funding and support as I continue to develop my practice.



## 5. EVENTS

Event photography has been challenging. Initially, I was certain that events were not for me. The unpredictability, the pressure, the expectations, and the fast-paced nature of these events felt overwhelming. However, as I took on different small events, I began to realize the importance of stepping out of my comfort zone. With each new experience, I learned how to navigate these challenges, refine my skills, and better manage both the technical and personal aspects of the job. Though it wasn't always easy, these experiences have allowed me to grow as a photographer, and I now see small events as an area where I can truly thrive.

### 1. Memorial

Ann (technician) contacted me for this event. A few months before, I had taken some photographs for the same person, and she was contacted again for this event. This time, three of us went: Serena, a first-year student, and me. The event was good, and the weather was nice. It was helpful to have the three of us there.

This work was for the memorial, and Mark specifically asked for me because of the work I had done before. But this second time. The previous work I did for Mark was good. He needed images of some military flags that couldn't be moved, and the lighting and positioning were complicated. The shoot went well. I used a tripod to capture different illuminated areas so I could later combine them in Photoshop. That was a great experience, and Ann was amazing at explaining how to do it. Those images were used for their website and a small zine.



For the memorial event, I borrowed a university camera but didn't double-check the settings. I'm so used to shooting in RAW that I didn't think to confirm it, and unfortunately, the images weren't saved in RAW format. I did shoot in manual mode, but I quickly learned how different it is when you're working in a public event setting.

I enjoyed part of the process, but it was stressful. I also struggled with being in the middle of the action. This isn't the first time it's happened. Ann is great at handling this; she told me, "You need to be cheeky, take your photo, go in the middle of everyone, take the shot, smile, and move on. You're there to do a job, so just take the image." I struggled with this because I felt it was disrespectful. When I reviewed the images, I noticed how low my point of view was, and I realized that wasn't ideal. I also need to always be aware of framing.

During the first meeting, we were told that the images were for the archive, but on the day of the event, Mark asked us for a few images within hours for the press. That's something to be aware of—people often need images quickly for social media or the press. I need to be able to deliver that right away.

That day, I had to pick up my daughter and go home to edit and send a few images, but to my dismay, my computer broke down, and it took days to get it fixed. My daughter was sick, so I couldn't work from the university. Everything felt overwhelming, was a bad experience. Thankfully, Ann offered to help by editing the images, as she saw how difficult it was to get anything done. It was almost a week before things were back on track.

Since then, I have always double-checked that my images are in RAW. I'm also more aware of the need for a few quick images for press and social media. I've learned that when a photo is needed, you have to go right into the middle of the action to capture it. And something I still struggle with is framing. If the framing is right, editing can help with the rest, but good framing is key.

Ann said that Mark was pleased with the images. I am just grateful that there were three of us.



## 2. Morriston Victorian Day

When I think about this event, I still want to disappear.

I contacted the council to offer myself as a photographer for the Morriston Victorian Day. The event takes place where I live, and I've seen how hard the organisers work to create something special for the community. I attended the last two years and appreciated their efforts.

The emails with the council went smoothly, and everything seemed great until the actual Victorian Day. The weather was terrible: stormy, with strong winds and heavy rain. The streets were empty, and no one was dressed in Victorian clothing. It was a disaster.



When I went to the Tabernacle, I wasn't allowed to use flash, and from that moment on, everything started going wrong.

There were barely any kids—just two—and I wasn't allowed to take pictures of them. The wind and rain made it almost impossible to work.

On top of that, I didn't make a shot list, which was a huge mistake. The councilwoman asked me to take photos of a performance, acting as if it were an important moment, but it turned out to be just a monologue by a woman in Victorian clothing. Because of that, I lost time and missed one of the best locations I had planned to shoot.

Funny enough, I had planned for my daughter to stay later in her Saturday morning drama class so I could have the freedom to work, and some of her friends with their mothers were supposed to enjoy the Victorian Day too. But with the bad weather, everything was cancelled, and I ended up taking Matilda with me. In the end, she was the only child in my photographs.

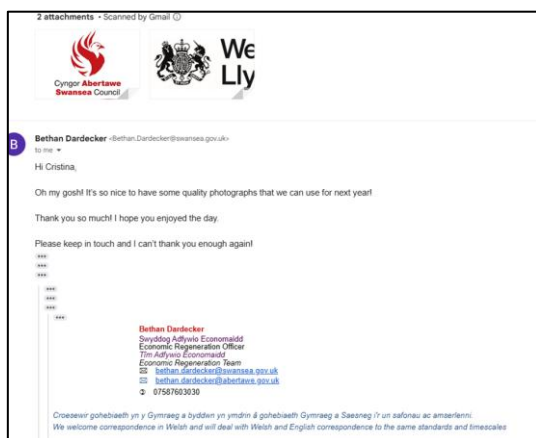


In my mind, the event was supposed to be mostly outdoors, but this time, it turned out to be a complete mess. Still, I did my best to push through. The streets and stalls were empty, and during the opening ceremony, the space was so tight that I didn't want to block anyone's view. My mistake, once again, was shooting from too low. Ann had told me before, "You're there to work. Take the photos, smile, apologise, and move on."

After that disaster, they asked me for a few images that same day for their Facebook page. Now I know event photography often requires immediate delivery. I sent a few, but I felt awful about it.



The emails with the council had been positive overall, but the entire experience left me frustrated.



However, it was a valuable learning opportunity. On the plus side, I was well-prepared in some areas: I brought two cameras, extra batteries, a flash, memory cards, plastic bags, and an umbrella for the rain. That said, I didn't have a proper shot list and lacked the experience to handle unexpected challenges. It was a tough day.

At the time, I swore I'd never do event photography again. But decided to do a few more to see how I feel and test my skills further. As for equipment, I used a camera harness to carry my gear, a Canon DSLR from the university, and my small Sony mirrorless camera. Next time, I'll bring two reliable full-frame cameras with prime lenses. Borrowing a harness was a great decision.

### 3. Music Industry Event

This was an opportunity I explored, but I quickly realized it wasn't a good fit for me. While it seemed like a chance to test whether event photography in the music industry could be something I enjoyed, I learned that it's not a direction I want to pursue. I went with Serena, who had more experience in this area, but personally, it didn't align with my life circumstances. Balancing school runs, extracurricular activities, and all my responsibilities as a parent means I need to be very mindful of how I manage my time and energy. The unpredictability of the event added to that challenge. We arrived at the venue, The Arena, after our lecture for a rehearsal. However, there was a lot of waiting around with no clear direction or explanation. Even Serena, with her experience, was unsure of what was going on. Eventually, I was asked to take some B-roll footage using their camera, but that was the only task we had before being free to leave. I don't want to put myself in that situation again. From 12:30 to 16:00, we were mostly walking around and waiting. Some may enjoy the laid-back nature of this environment, but it didn't suit me. It didn't feel like anyone had a clear plan, and the lack of direction made it feel like an inefficient use of time. I have nothing to show from the day, as I was using their camera. This type of work isn't something I want to pursue further.

## 4. Funeral

This was an unexpected and delicate situation. A friend of mine, who comes from a gypsy family where the ceremony of death holds great significance, asked me to take photographs when his mother passed away. He mentioned that his brother-in-law regretted not having any photographs from a previous funeral in the family.

It was a sensitive request, but I accepted the challenge. I took a Canon camera from university, along with a zoom lens, and decided to bring my Sony camera as a backup. I'm grateful that I had extra batteries, memory cards, and a second camera.

I made sure to be respectful while capturing the images, understanding the gravity of the situation. Funny enough, just as the horse was about to leave, the Canon camera malfunctioned. I couldn't believe it. In a matter of seconds, I had switched to my backup Sony camera, and the rest of the event was captured with it..



I have some images from that experience that I truly love. If a similar opportunity arose again, I would take it without a second thought. It's not about morbidity; rather, I'm deeply interested in the rites of passage across cultures, with the rite of death being one of the most significant. In these moments, we witness the raw emotions and true essence of people. These rites carry culture, tradition, ancestral customs, and beliefs. In the future, I would love to explore this further as a project.

At one point during the ceremony, I was asked to step away from photography to look after the small children, which shifted my role from photographer to that of a family friend.



The feedback I received was quite emotive. I only have a small WhatsApp message about it, but the real feedback came in person.

We've just looked at them all. Thank you, thank you so much. They're so tastefully done. Andrew is visibly moved by them, the two of us are sobbing looking at them.

Lesson learned: always bring an extra camera and primes for low light conditions, just in case, especially when it's not a situation where flash is appropriate. Also, make sure to have an umbrella and black plastic bags to protect the camera in case it rains.

# 5. Charity ball

For this event, I went with Serena, so a big part of the pressure was off. We were two photographers, and Serena has a lot of experience in events; she thrives in that environment. For this event, we had a proper flash workshop at the university. It was indoors at night, and one key lesson I learned from these external events is that white balance needs to remain consistent. Before this event, I was convinced that I didn't want to do any more event photography, but this time was fantastic. The pressure was off because I was with Serena, and I finally got to see the results of all the previous work. The use of the flash was effective, and I was clear that my focus was on capturing portraits of the people. If I could take some shots of the venue as well, that would be a bonus.



At one point, during the dance, I stepped inside to photograph the guests, and I ended up enjoying the dance a lot. It was magical. I told Serena that if she ever needs a second photographer for an event, to let me know. For example, during dinner, we sat apart and enjoyed the meal as well. Being together as a team made everything much smoother. When working alone, time can feel slow, but with Serena, it was fantastic. Afterward, I went to uni to edit the images with Ann's help, and I can honestly say my skills have improved over the past year. The frames are sharper, the flash was flattering, and I'm really happy with both the general event shots and the portraits. I feel confident that I can handle small events and truly enjoy the process. It's also been great to have professional cards printed to give to those who ask. I now know that events are something I'll pursue when I start working as a photographer.



# GRADUATE PLAN

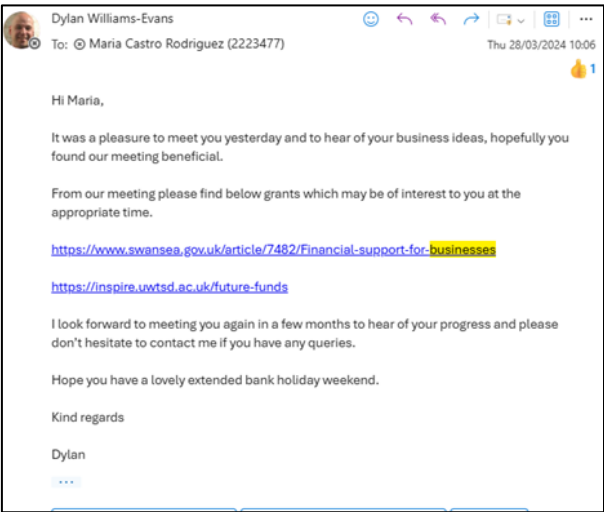
## 1. Business Path

After graduation, I plan to launch a second website dedicated to commercial work to support my professional services and help me monetize my degree.

I've already completed portrait sessions, covered small events, and worked with local businesses. My most recent event, a charity ball, was a significant turning point. Collaborating with another photographer eased some of the pressure, despite challenging lighting conditions, I confidently used flash and delivered work I was proud of. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and realized I'm capable of handling more events like this in the future.

To simplify some of the client interactions, I am using the platform [Pixieset](#) to deliver galleries, making it easy for clients to download and order prints, which feels professional, it is efficient and bring extra money. Looking ahead, I plan to focus on: Portraiture (in studio and in location) Small events, and Visual content for small businesses.

During my university studies, I took a business course, which introduced me to the basics of starting a creative business. I plan to revisit the content with clearer goals and more experience. One of my tutors even offered a 2-1-2 session when I'm ready, and I plan to follow up and refine my business plan.



Additionally, my growing interest in food photography has led me to draw inspiration from the [World Food Photography Awards](#), where I was shortlisted. This recognition has fuelled my ambition to refine my food photography skills.

In portraiture, I am particularly inspired by [David Suh](#), whose expertise in posing has enhanced my understanding of portrait photography. His work has shown me how to better engage with subjects, make them feel comfortable, and create dynamic portraits. I've signed up for one of his online courses to deepen my skills in this area.

## 2. Artist Path

I am applying for the part-time MA in Photography: Contemporary Dialogues at UWTSD. Due to my current life circumstances, relocating or engaging in extended travel isn't realistic, but the university has confirmed that the part-time route is a viable option. I'm excited to continue developing my practice at a more sustainable pace, allowing for critical thinking, experimentation, and deeper reflection on my visual language. The part-time study will provide valuable access to facilities, lectures, and the broader academic community, which will enrich my artistic journey.

Alongside the MA, I plan to keep applying to open calls and submitting work. These opportunities help me stay attuned to the evolving expectations of the contemporary art world. Platforms like Starving Artist and CuratorSpace have been invaluable in this process. I'm building a routine of applying to calls, sometimes with new work, and other times revisiting and refining past pieces.

I also plan to continue my collaboration with the SEEDS collective. After a successful workshop this year, led by Harvey, we discussed expanding our efforts within the university and potentially externally. If Serena and Harvey continue with postgraduate study, our collective work could evolve into a more established initiative.

I'm particularly inspired by photographers who blend contemporary practice with education and entrepreneurship, such as [Justin Quinnell](#), known for his pinhole photography and workshops across various institutions. His ability to teach and share his alternative process work resonates with my own interest in blending creativity with community engagement. Additionally, I have recently started following [Edd Carr](#) as I research deeper into alternative photographic methods, such as the cyanotypes I have been working with in my last project.

Throughout the MA, I look forward to having the opportunity to further explore and experiment with alternative photographic methods, while also incorporating moving images into my work. I am keen to expand my technical and conceptual skills in this area.

## 3. Technical Proficiency and Tools

Over the past year, my technical skills have developed significantly.

Lightroom has become a key tool in my workflow, especially for handling large volumes of images. I've gained confidence in using its masking tools and AI-driven features, which allow for efficient and fast batch editing, particularly for events and portrait sessions. For more detailed retouching and compositing, I rely on Photoshop, tailoring my use of it to the specific needs of each project.

Additionally, my exposure to studio lighting during my BA has been invaluable. It's broadened my understanding of lighting setups and improved my ability to work intentionally with light, space, and subject.

## 4. Summary & Timeline

### From now until September:

- Prepare my artist website.

- Grow Instagram as an active, creative space.

- Continue applying for open calls.

- Complete my BA in Photography.

### After graduation:

- Begin the part-time MA at UWTSD Swansea.

- Continue applying to opportunities to stay active and engaged.

- Launch a second website for my business.

- Offer photography services: portraits, events, and content for small businesses.

- Continue developing skills in studio work and editing.

- Explore more workshops and collaborations through SEEDS collective.

I am committed to continuing my learning and growth, both artistically and professionally.

# Xristina Castro

Visual Artist

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## Artist Statement

Xristina Castro is a Spanish visual artist based in Wales. Working across photography, video, and material experimentation, her practice engages with themes of identity, memory, hauntology, and the interplay between technology and self-perception.

Through alternative photographic processes, digital fragmentation, and projection, her work investigates how personal and collective narratives are shaped in contemporary culture. Moving between still and moving images, sculptural elements, and installation, she creates immersive visual environments that invite reflection on the emotional and material traces of the past.

## Education

BA (Hons) Photography in the Arts

University of Wales, Trinity Saint David, Swansea College of Art

2022 - 2025 (*expected*)

## Selected Exhibitions

2025 - *Oscillating Spaces* - UWTSD, Swansea (Group Show)

2024 - *All Eyes Are on You* - Ffoto Cymru, Cardiff (Open Call Group Show)

2024 - *Erase* - Dynevor Gallery, Swansea (Group Show)

2023 - *301 Moved Permanently* - Swansea (Collective Project)

2023 - *Paradigms* - Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea (Open Call Group Show)

2022 - *Tramas* - Dynevor Gallery, Swansea (Group Show)

## Workshops & Collaborations

Assistant, Cyanotype Workshop - Ffotogallery, Cardiff (2024)

Member, Seeds Collective - Collaborative Workshop & Exhibition (2024)

## Selected Projects & Artistic Commissions

Art documentation (window installations, ceramics, crafts, prints)

Shortlisted - *The World Food Photography Awards* (Art Category, 2024)

## Artistic & Technical Skills

Alternative Processes: Cyanotypes, photograms

B&W Film Photography: Processing, enlarging, darkroom printing

Digital Editing: Adobe Photoshop, Lightroom, Premiere Pro

Installation, Projection & Studio Photography

Languages: Spanish (native), English (fluent)