

Exhibition Essay

Artist statement

This body of work explores a surreal and tranquil encounter between the self and the natural world. The scene is set within a quiet, serene forest landscape, with the images depicting a lone figure. The presence of the bed within the environment alongside the figure wearing a white dress similar to a nightgown are intentional props to blur the lines between reality and subconscious space, suggesting a moment of transition between sleep, dreams and awareness.

Throughout the images, there are consistent naturalistic elements to be seen such as water, rocks, moss and trees, creating a calming yet mystical atmosphere. These organic forms work together to create aesthetic, atmospheric and engaging visuals. The figures' calming, almost asleep-like interaction with the landscape is done so to evoke a sense of vulnerability yet content with the environment she finds herself in. She is placed in a way so that she may become part of the environment as well as simply existing amongst it.

Through this work, my aim is to evoke a sense of curiosity and calm whilst providing tranquil and serene visuals.

Key research

Ana Mendieta

Ana Mendieta, “best known for her earth/body works” (ANA MENDIETA, n.d) has been an ongoing inspiration for me as a creative. This work by Ana Mendieta presents an unconventional depiction of the human body interacting with nature, where the figure is almost entirely obscured by clusters of delicate white flowers. The body appears to lie within a hollow, stoney area, evoking curiosity and ambiguity within the viewer which is art that I am very drawn to. Rather than simply placing the figure within a natural setting, Mendieta pushes further, allowing nature to overtake and conceal the body in a peculiar and unconventional way, similarly to in Lemoine’s *Charly on the moor*, where identity becomes ambiguous, and instead of the main focus being simply on the figure, we start to wonder why the figure is there, and the story

Imágen de Yágul (Image from Yagul). 1973. From the *Siluetas Series*.



behind the imagery rather than simple observing a pretty photograph. This creates an unsettling yet visually compelling image that sits between beauty and discomfort, and I very much like to capture images that will hopefully evoke those same reactions from people who view my own work.

What initially drew me to this work is its sense of peculiarity. The image feels surreal and disorientating due to its unusual nature. As a viewer, I am unsure as to whether I am witnessing a peaceful merging with nature, or something more unsettling such as entrapment or hiding. The use of flowers to cover the figure softens the scene aesthetically, yet conceptually it adds an element of fragility, softness and the cyclical relationship between calmness and unease is what makes the photograph powerful and adds that emotional tension that draws myself and other viewers in, making me want to look longer, to know more.

I am particularly drawn to how Mendieta uses her work to reflect her connection to nature “she uses her body, and later the absence of her body, in the landscape as a way of connecting with the universe” (ANA MENDIETA, n.d), as I myself too feel a deep devotion and connection to nature, and enjoy using my own imagery to portray this. Additionally, I am very drawn to the strangeness of her work and want to continue creating images that feel similarly peculiar, though through my own approach. Rather than submerging the figure within natural elements such as flowers or dirt, I decided to introduce an unexpected object, but still unusual, white bedding into outdoor environments. This shift allowed me to explore the idea of displacement and surrealism, but in a way that felt personal to my work and the story I was trying to tell through my own photographic series *Back to sleep*. A bed, which I understand is typically found in only domestic spaces, becomes out of place when positioned within a natural landscape such as the woodlands or riversides. With this, I wanted to create visual tension, similar to work from Mendieta’s *Siluetas Series* where something familiar is made unfamiliar. Although the bedding is not repetitively present within my final exhibition edit, it is a prominent prop in the series overall, appearing alongside myself and individually in many images within the full sequence.

Additionally, when the original image obscures the body to create intrigue, I chose to maintain more visibility of the figure, while still using composition and setting to evoke a sense of oddness. The presence of the bed, and a figure laying amongst the nature in a white nightgown act as the central unnatural elements, replacing the idea of physical submersion with conceptual displacement. This allowed me to create work inspired by artists such as Ana Mendieta, but while adapting it to my own visual language and ideas.

Overall, this artwork has been significant in encouraging me to embrace and continue my exploration of capturing the unusual in my photography. Work like this pushes me to

think beyond aesthetic harmony and to delve deeper into considering how elements can impact an image and how it is perceived.

Camille Lemoine

Charly on the moor. Camille Lemoine. From *Down Tower Road*.



Camille Lemoine's *Charly on the moor* from her *Down Tower Road* series, with Lemoine describing this series as a way to "create imagery that communicates the subtle language of the land here and how I have become part of it" (Lemoine, 2023). Lemoine's *Charly on the moor* presents a captivating synthesis between the human body and the natural landscape, where the figure

appears mostly subsumed by the surrounding plants. The subject is not positioned in a typical way of which one would usually be perceived outdoors but is instead found in an unusual and interesting position and place, intertwined and almost completely consumed by the bushes. Nor is the subject positioned as dominant within the space, since they are mostly concealed, blending into the textures and colours of the nature. This compositional choice disrupts traditional portraiture by shifting the viewers focus from identity to presence, encouraging us to consider the body as an extension of the environment as opposed to simply existing amongst it. The colours and textures within this image are also visually engaging, particularly blue from the subjects clothing popping out amongst the otherwise earthy colours and textures within the image, suggesting an out of placeness that draws me in visually.

In developing my own exhibition images, pieces such as this further inspires me to continue my exploration regarding the integration of the human body into natural environments in unconventional ways. For my own project, I wanted the subject to exist within a natural environment, such as the forest or riverside, allowing the colours and textures of moss, rocks, trees and water to interact with the body.

My work introduces a personal variation through my own use of different settings and colour contrasts. While *Charly on the moor* includes softer and lighter tones of colour, I decided that my images needed a denser and slightly moodier feel and appearance, hence why I decided to shoot in slightly shadowed locations such as thick forests as opposed to wide open spaces. I wanted to create a more surrealistic atmosphere, while

still maintaining the sense of calm and tranquillity that I admire in works such as Lemoine's. Additionally, I have experimented with the positioning of the human body in various ways, sometimes laying flat on the ground, hanging backwards into the riverside, laying on tree trunks and submerging parts of myself in water to enhance the surreal and peculiar quality that inspired me, elements that I personally like to see in art, and include in my own photographs.

Since discovering Lemoine's work, specifically works such as *Charly on the moor* and her *Down Tower Road* project in general, her work has been both inspirational and fundamental in shaping my approach to composition and subject matter. Works like this encourage me to explore further how the body can be visually absorbed into nature and how this relationship between the two can convey meaning and evoke emotion and narrative without relying on overt expression. Through this influence, my exhibition work reflects how photography such as this inspires me and an exploration of my own creative perspective and personal practice.

Blommers and Schumm



Images by Blommers and Schumm. *Titles unknown.*



Since our visit to the Foam museum in Amsterdam, I have developed a great fondness for the work of Blommers and Schumm. Anuschka Blommers and Niels Schumm are artists who collaborate to create work. This photographic duo, although best known as fashion photographers, have “also managed to take up space in the art scene” (Zharmukhambetova, 2025) and are “leading figures in international fashion photography, known for blurring the line between editorial work and autonomous art” (Foam, 2025). Their images as shown are from where I believe to be from various fashion shoots and editorial pieces from over the years, two extracted from their website and one I took myself whilst visiting Foam, all depict figures placed within what appear to be

natural environments, yet unlike more traditional approaches to nature photography, their compositions feel carefully constructed and stylised. This balance between control and natural settings creates a distinctive visual tension and language that feels both grounded but also otherworldly.

I have made myself familiar with and admire a large variety of their work, however these photographs in particular inspired me when thinking about my own exhibition images due to the way the subjects within their images feel slightly unnatural, lying curled into the landscape, partially hidden within foliage or arranged in peculiar ways. This resonates with my own creative interest, particularly how the body can be integrated into nature in unconventional ways. While artists such as Camille Lemoine explore a more subtle blending of the figure and landscape, Blommers and Schumm often heighten the sense of artificiality, which adds to the surreal quality of their images.

Their use of colour is also influential. Rich colours and tones dominate many of their works, creating a moody and immersive atmosphere. At the same time, the clothing worn by their subjects introduces contrast, often featuring delicate fabrics and unexpected textures that stand out against the organic surroundings. This interplay between natural tones and styles fashionable elements adds a layer of complexity that make their images feel both editorial and narrative driven.

During my research, I have found that not a lot of their works are not clearly titled or are presented as a larger editorial series. This lack of specific titles has made it more challenging to reference images, but it has also shifted my focus towards analysing their overall style and recurring themes rather than individual pieces.

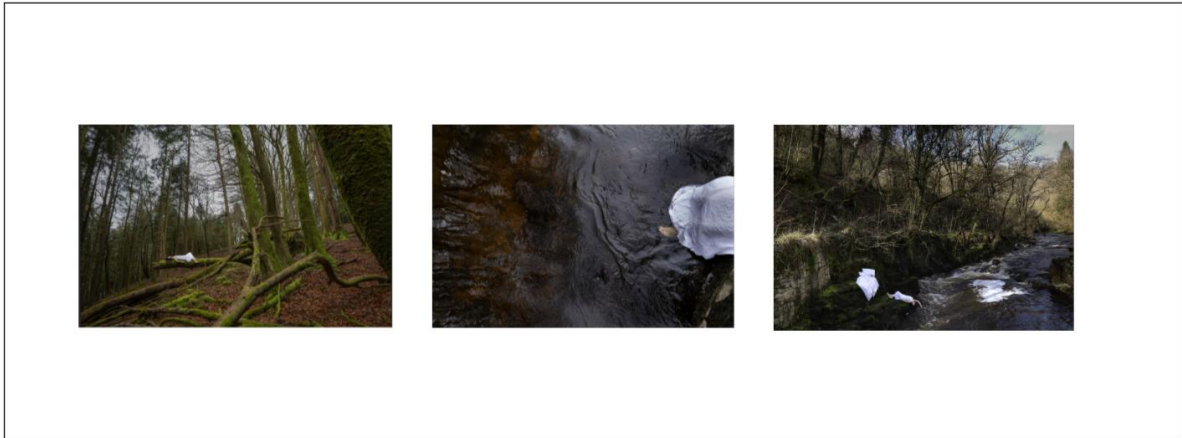
Overall Blommers and Schumm have influenced my approach by reinforcing the idea that the body in nature does not have to be presented in conventional or expected ways, and can be both aesthetically beautiful yet peculiar, which are the two main qualities I enjoy in my own photographs, as well as others photographs so far. Their work has encouraged me to experiment further with mood, styling and positioning of the human figure, whilst also reminding me to embrace a sense of mystery and ambiguity within my own photographic practice.

Exhibition methods

For my final display, I chose to present my work as a sequence of three photographs, initially intending to present them horizontally across a single wall as a sequence. This decision was made in collaboration with my lecturers during a discussion regarding the final exhibition edit. During this time, we reviewed my photographic series before narrowing them down to a final three. After reviewing the full body of work, we needed

to consider how the images could function most effectively together as a collective. By narrowing the series down to three images, the presentation became more focused and intentional, allowing each photograph to hold significance within the sequence, whilst also contributing to a broader visual narrative.

Featured here is the initial presentation layout plan.



The selected images work cohesively as a sequence, particularly through their use of composition, colour and subject matter. We decided that for this specific type of imagery, when viewed from left to right, there is a much clearer sense of progression as opposed to if they were scattered randomly on a wall. The first image is what i feel to be the strongest out of the three, featuring a woodland environment with the subject not centre frame, but clearly distinctive within the image. Within this image, there are clear earthy green and brown tones, additional to the pop of white from the figure in the frame. The presence of the subject within the image, clearly visible whilst also one with the landscape, clearly introduces the character within the series at first glance, as well as creating an initial sense of stillness and ambiguity. The second image we chose is an overhead shot of the figure sitting in the water, with only her feet and the bottom half of the dress visible amongst the body of water and mossy rocks. This second image shifts the perspective to a much closer, more intimate view of the subject and the space she finds herself in, featuring a close-up shot of the figure's interaction with the water. This sudden change in scale meant it made the most sense for this image to be featured in the middle of the three to draw the viewer in and create a transitional moment within the sequence. The final image then expands outwards again into a wider landscape, showing the river and surrounding forestry along with the figure now smaller and more distant within the frame, again becoming part of the bigger picture as opposed to being the only focus. This progression from wide, to close, to wide again creates a rhythm that guides the viewer through the work, as well as ensuring the sequence was as visually pleasing as possible.

The consistent use of natural earthy tones, greens, browns, blues from water and sky helps to unify the images, while the recurring pops of white fabrics and the figure acts

as a visual anchor across the sequence. This contrast was an intentional choice made by me to make the image more captivating and interesting, and to of course make the subject stand out from the surrounding environment. the placement of the images in a straight line across the wall enhance these details, encouraging the viewer to move laterally and experience the work as a continuous flow rather than separate pieces.

In terms of considering the viewers experience, since my work was going to be featured in an exhibition, I knew that viewers would likely be engaging with my images in a slower, perhaps a more contemplative way. The horizontal layout supports this by making the sequence easy to follow and observe. The clarity of the arrangement allows a wide audience to access the work visually, whilst the subtle shifts between each image invite deeper interpretation. The minimal presentation also reflects conventions of contemporary photographic exhibitions, where simplicity is often used to emphasise the artwork itself rather than the method of display alone.

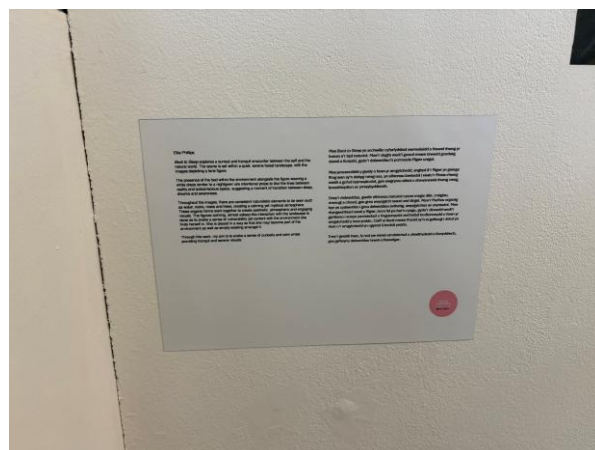
The initial decision to use a single wall was also an important consideration. This meant that my work would be seen in a contained viewing space, ensuring that the relationship between the images were maintained through the sequence and not disrupted by other works within the exhibition. The slight spacing between each photograph allows them to breath individually, while still feeling connected as part of a three. This balance between separation and cohesion was a good idea to present the sequence effectively.

Regarding the production and installation of the work, we worked together a team to ensure the space was left with a professional finish ready for installation. Alongside my classmates, I contributed to preparing the exhibition space by removing any imperfections from the walls, such as Blu Tack residue and uneven textures. This was done using a variety of tools, such as sandpaper, student ID cards, and any other things we could use to achieve a smooth and clear surface. This stage was important, as any bumps or flaws on the wall could distract from the work, interfere with the vinyl and reduce the overall quality of the presentation.

Following this, we repainted the walls with white paint to establish a clean and neutral base for our images. This choice enhanced the visibility of the photographs by providing contrast and eliminating visual distractors. Additionally, since we were all presenting various kinds of work, white was likely chosen to ensure a neutral background that would work well with all kinds of imagery, colours and compositions, as opposed to using a bold colour that could interfere or negatively impact the appearance and effect of some works. A clean, neutral wall also contributed to the professional, gallery-like aesthetic we were aiming for, helping to frame the work in a professional context and ensuring that the focus of the viewers remains entirely on the imagery for this exhibition in particular.

Although I was not present during the final installation of the photographs due to external circumstances, the work was installed by my lecturers, whose experience ensured a high standard of presentation, so I was grateful for them to help. The position of the images was slightly different than intended, as instead of them taking up one wall, two were placed on one, with the final image placed opposite on a different wall, but the overall presentation of the images still looked good and captivating, nonetheless. While I did not physically take part in this stage, I feel that due to my involvement in the planning, selection and preparation demonstrates my understanding of how to present photographs in an exhibition effectively, and it has been an enjoyable and valuable learning experience overall.

Here are images displaying the final exhibition layout and presentation, along with an artist's statement to provide context regarding my installation.



I believe that the final presentation was a success, as it maintained its sequence regardless of being on separate walls, the images turned out great and visually engaging and I felt very proud of the work and installation overall. The precise selection and sequencing of the images, combined with a clean and considered installation created a cohesive and engaging viewing experience. The work benefits from its simplicity,

allowing the visual narrative to unfold naturally. The technical preparation of the space also allowed the space to appear professional and polished, further benefitting the outcome.

Final Year Exhibition Evaluation

Throughout this module, I have consistently attended and engaged with lectures and sessions to maintain a strong standard of work. Regular participation helped me to stay on track, receive ongoing feedback, which was essential in refining both my ideas and final outcomes. In addition to scheduled sessions, I arranged one to one meetings with our university technicians. These sessions were particularly helpful in developing my technical skills and understanding of editing and ensuring that my photos looked as best as they could for presentation. The additional support I received from staff helped me to problem solve more effectively, discuss my ideas and the intentions behind my work, overall bettering the outcome of my work further than I could have achieved independently during this point in my studies.

My role within the exhibition was as part of the design team alongside my classmates Lily and Grace. Within this group, I contributed both visual and promotional ideas for the exhibition, whilst also ensuring that accurate and relevant information about the exhibition was clearly provided and communicated clearly. This required both creativity and organisation, as we needed to balance aesthetic decisions and come up with design visuals that best suited the variation of work we knew would be displayed. Through this role, it has better helped me to develop on my communication and teamwork skills, as well as developing a stronger understanding of the importance of compromise when it came to considering the ideas and input from the class to ensure that the overall design outcome was one that we were all pleased with. As mentioned, I also contributed to the preparation of the exhibition space, which gave me some hands-on experience regarding spatial planning, and has gained me experience in the formation of an exhibition that I have not yet experienced.

Managing my workload throughout this module has been one of the more challenging aspects of the process. While the content of this module itself has been enjoyable and straightforward, balancing it alongside the demands and deadlines of other modules proved difficult for me. I found that I still struggle with multitasking across multiple projects, and I'm still learning to distribute my time evenly to ensure the quality of my work stays strong. However, this experience has highlighted the importance of developing stronger time management moving forward. In future, I recognise the need to plan my schedule more effectively, breaking tasks into smaller, more manageable

stages and setting realistic deadlines to ensure that all areas of my work receive equal attention.

This module has been highly beneficial in developing both my practical and creative skills. It has provided me with further experience in planning and executing photoshoots, which has strengthened my confidence in directing and organising my work. I have also developed my ability to critically evaluate my images, learning how to select the strongest outcomes from a larger body of work and what things to consider when making a final selection, such as compositional considerations as opposed to only picking my favourite images or ones that seem to “look the best” on initial evaluation. This process has encouraged and reminded me to think more intentionally about composition and narrative going forward for future projects. Additionally, working as part of a team has improved my communication skills and reinforced the importance of reliability and shared responsibility in collaborative projects.

Participating in the exhibition itself has also been a valuable learning experience. It has given me insight into how artwork is presented within a professional context, and how decisions around layout and placement can influence how work is perceived by an audience. This has encouraged me to think more strategically about how I want to convey the meaning or message behind my images, considering not only the appearance of the content but also how I can use strategies such as display and presentation as tools to further enhance the viewing experience of my work.

In future exhibitions, I plan to focus on improving my time management and balancing my workload more effectively across all modules. I am also looking forward to experimenting with more ideas, equipment and techniques going forward to strengthen the overall quality of my photography in general. This also means experimenting further during the development stages of my work, allowing myself more time and creative flexibility to explore a wider range of ideas before refining the final outcomes of my projects. Overall, this module has been both enjoyable and highly beneficial in developing both my practical and conceptual skills, and it has given me insight as to what will be needed for future projects that require independence and collaboration.

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