



GRANTON EXPLORATIONS



Robyn Sime

Scotland 365

The Scotland 365 project is funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund, Kick the Dust scheme and aims to increase 16 - 25 years olds engagement with National Museums Scotland as well as with wider heritage. The National Museums Collection Centre (NMCC) in Granton, Edinburgh, holds the Museum's collections that are not on display including research collections alongside facilities to access, care for and use the collections.

As part of the Scotland 365 project, Granton Explorations was an opportunity to test how we might engage young people who live locally with the NMCC collections and work in collaboration with staff across the museum.

Working in partnership with staff from National Museums Scotland and Stills Centre for Photography, a group of young people from Granton Youth learnt both analogue and digital photography techniques from creating cyanotypes and photograms to manipulating their images using photo editing software.

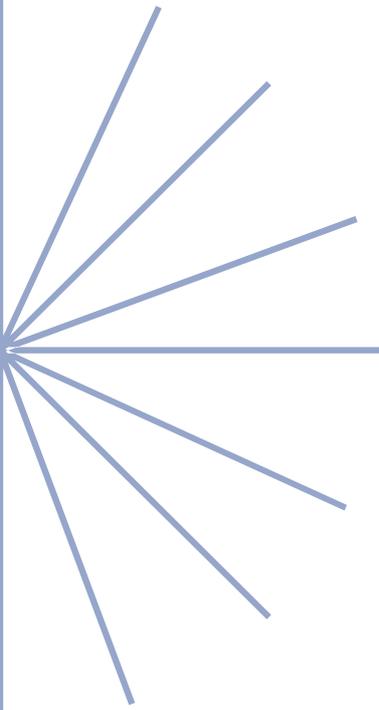
A project by: Francis Bunt, Summer Frail, Katie Reid, Carly Russell, Robyn Sime, Hannah Stevenson, Tammy Whalen.

Staff team: Emma Black (Stills), Ross Combe (NMS) Julie Gibb (NMS), Zoe Hamill (Stills), Ailsa Hutton (NMS), Ryan McGlone (GY), Linsey Neilson (NMS), Marlee Pearson (GY).





Carly Russell



WELCOME TO GRANTON EXPLORATIONS

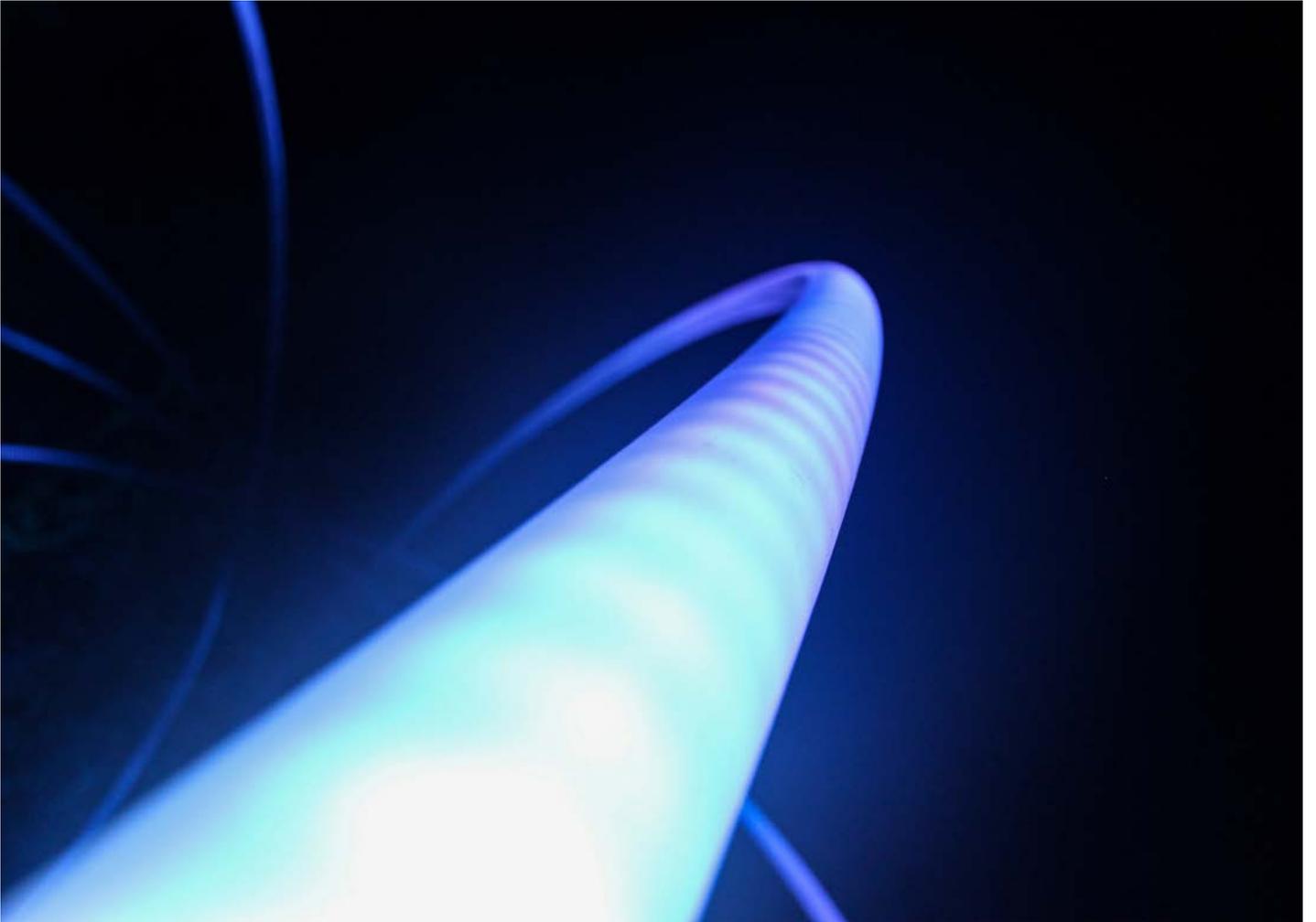
Emma Black

Creative Learning Manager, Stills Centre for Photography

In October 2021, Stills Centre for Photography was commissioned to deliver GRANTON EXPLORATIONS. This became part of our developing community programme which aims to build skills and explore the social purpose of photography. Stills has an established Creative Learning Programme, including Stills School, an alternative art school for 16-25-year-olds experiencing barriers to the arts. GRANTON EXPLORATIONS was a new project for us. For Stills, it was an extremely positive experience. In terms of learning and development, this project has given us the opportunity to consider how we work with historic cameras and to explore how we can use historic collections – but most important of all were the people involved.

The project sessions were held from October 2021 – February 2022. During this time we were subject to COVID-19 restrictions, storms, more storms, uncertainties and the continued disruption to life and education from nearly two years of the pandemic. Through this, we worked together. This publication tells our story. It is dedicated to a group of very talented young people who embraced the project, kept going and exceeded all expectations of what we thought would be possible to make with the historic camera collection. They became pioneers and created a series of work that demonstrates their skills, patience, and commitment to the project and to art.

From these explorations, we hope more connections will grow.



Summer Frail

EXPLORING HOW PHOTOGRAPHY MADE US FEEL

Linsey Neilson

Youth Engagement Project Officer, National Museums Scotland

Working with young people from Granton Youth in a face-to-face environment has been a real highlight for me in what has been a challenging time for us all. Although the project has been short in length, young people have really embraced the opportunity and brought lots of positive energy and joy. The group came to us with little or no prior experience of working in partnership with the National Museum of Scotland, to a building unfamiliar to them, with new members of staff to meet. Young people were quickly introduced to the National Museum Collection Centre, Science and Technology camera collections, whereby they handled the collections with wonderment and respect.

I was surprised how keen the young people were to learn more about the film cameras (some dating back to WWI). I thought the digital cameras would be more a hit among the group and more familiar. The young people loved exploring the stores in NMCC and receiving a behind the scenes tour of the large objects. They also enjoyed meeting curatorial staff and finding out about the stories associated with the collections and many objects relating to Granton. The object selection was interesting, young people capturing photographs of industrial machinery and large mammals (Gary the rhino was a favourite)

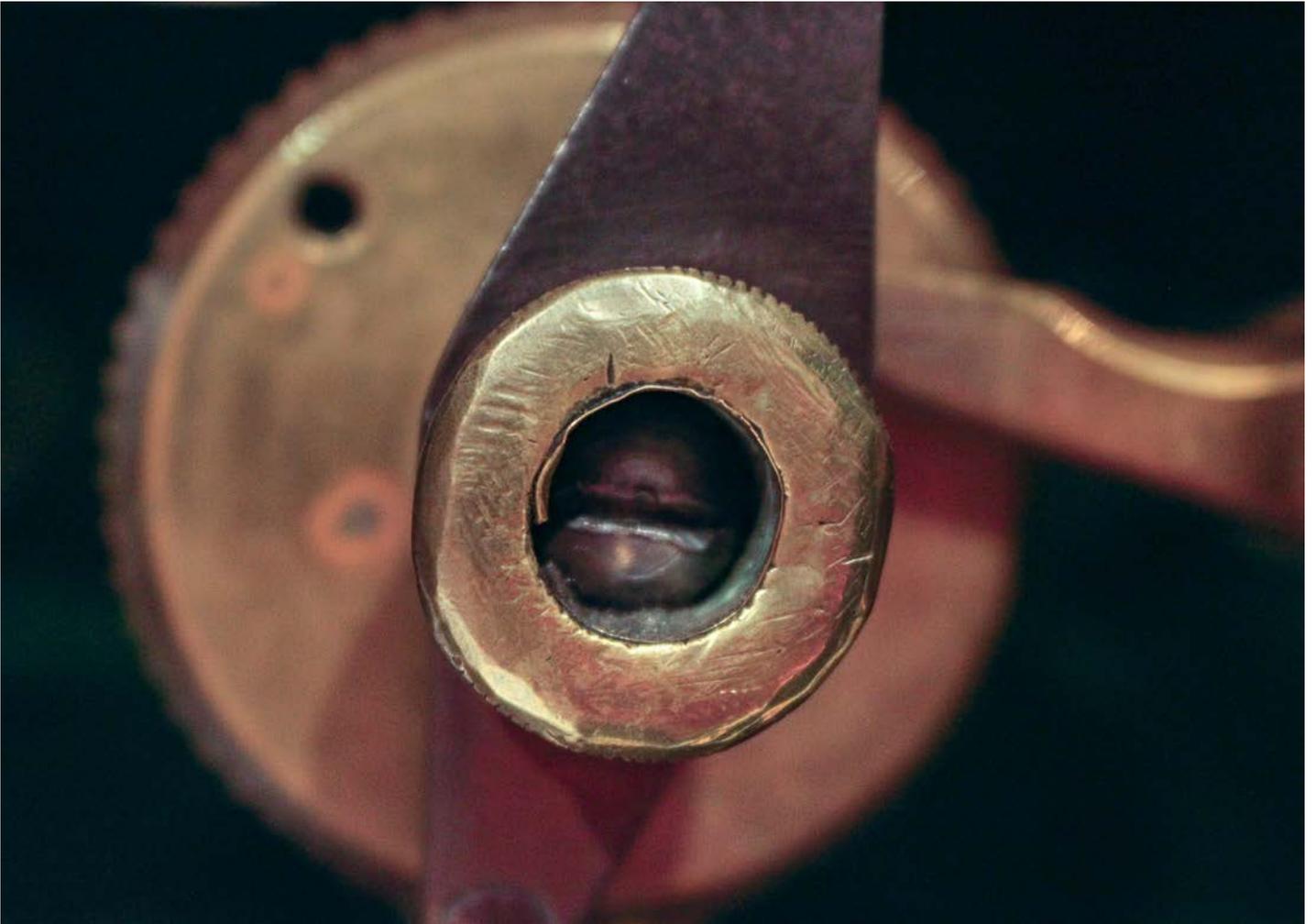
It was a real thrill to watch young people being presented with their developed films on a weekly basis, catching their reactions of the work they had produced. Young people articulating how shocked and surprised they were of the quality and proud of the photographs they took. I look forward to the moment whereby young people get the opportunity to showcase their amazing work in the local community, they deserve the recognition for their contributions and impact.

It feels amazing, brilliant, fantastic, all the other synonyms you can think of!



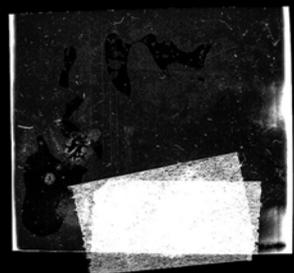
Katie Reid

Just really proud of myself and the rest of the group, which is a nice feeling



Tammy Whalen

GY: WEEK 1 - VEST POCKET KODAK



Really grateful to have been able to take part in the project. It's been a fun couple of months and something I'm really going to miss!

Francis Bunt

Just dead good! I wasn't sure about the project at the start in general, but it became something I looked forward to every week.



Hannah Stevenson

I had studied photography at college, but I loved having the creative freedom this project allowed for.



Summer Frail

I feel like the work produced reminded me that nature itself is art.

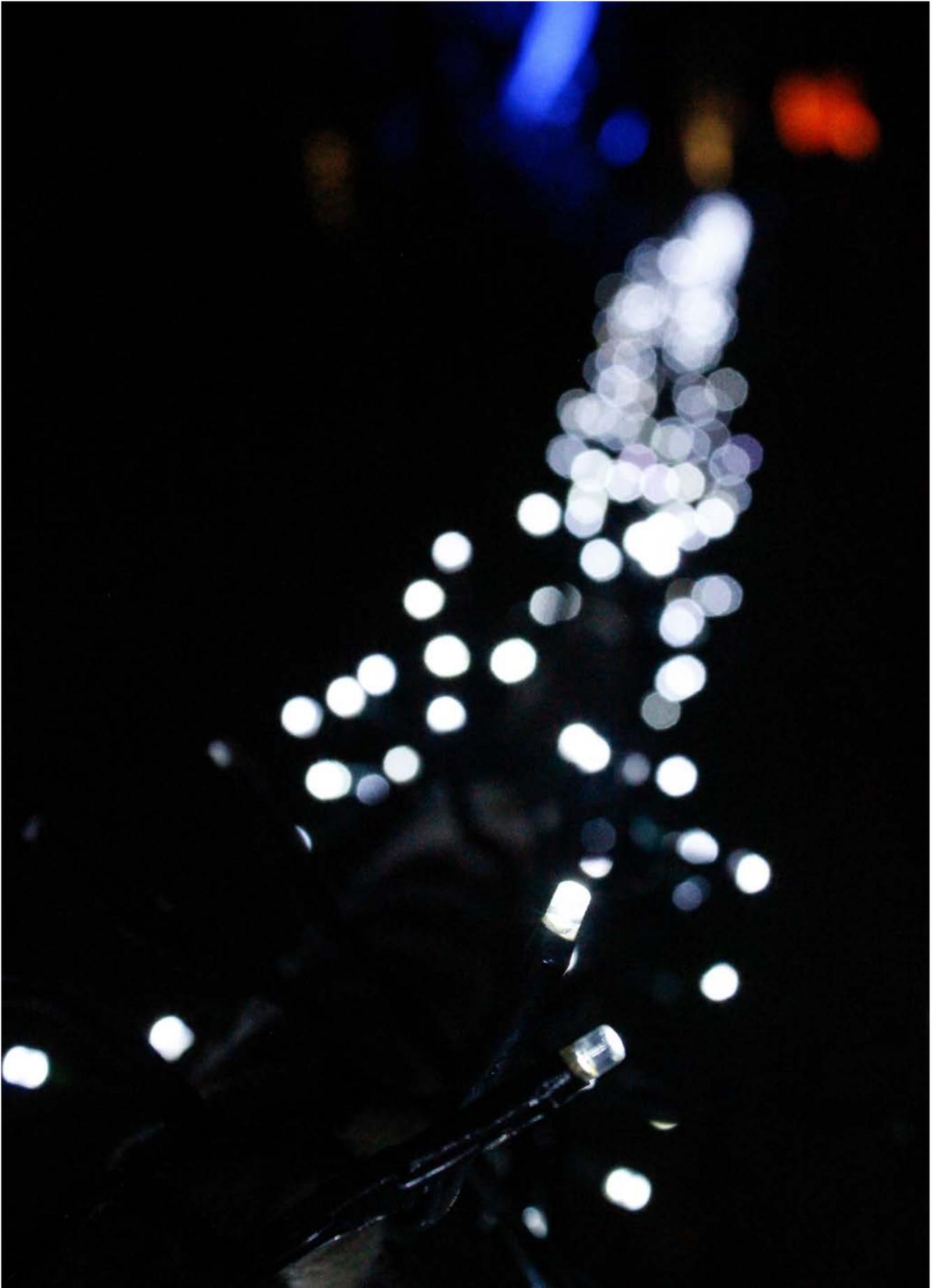


Summer Frail



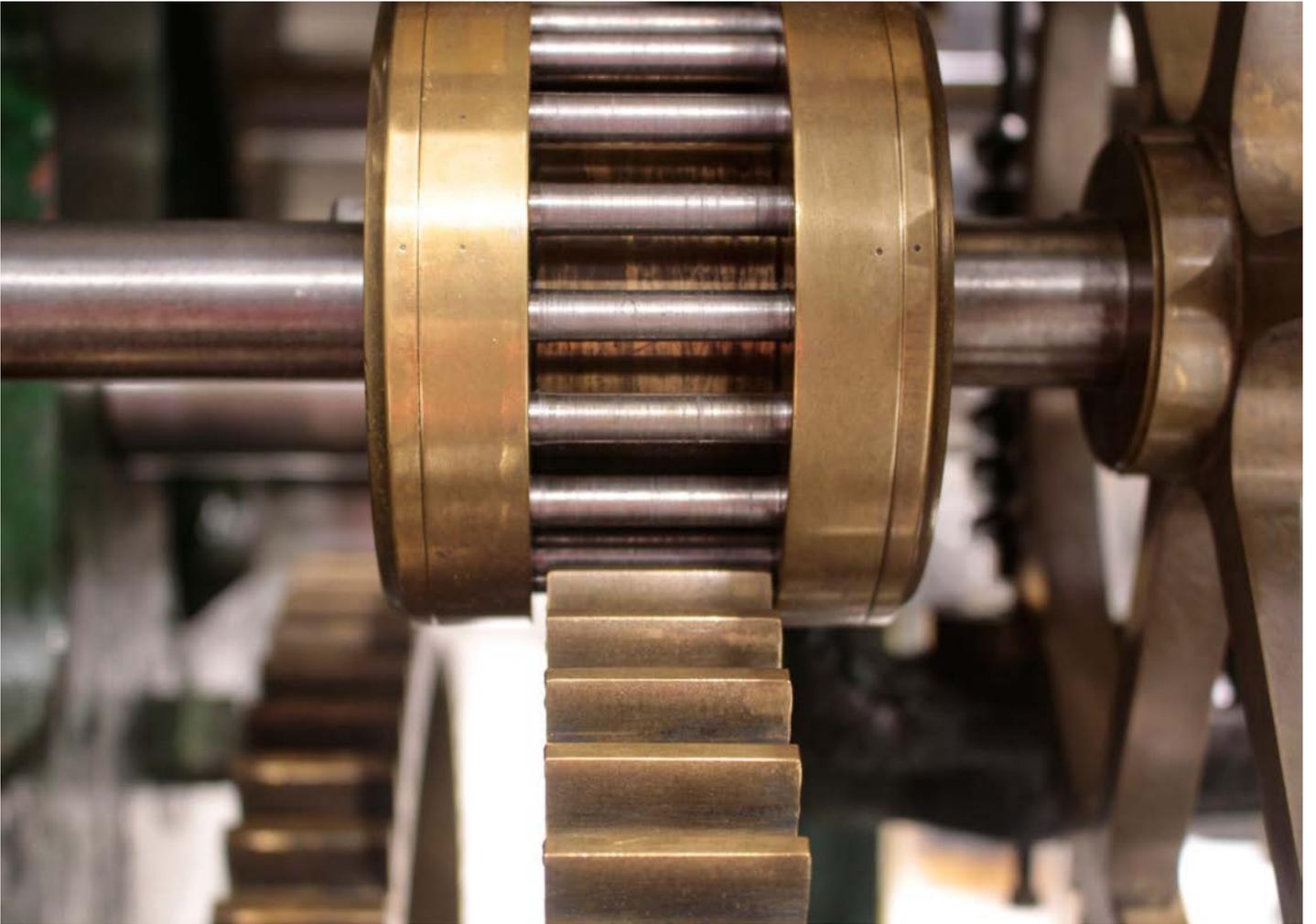
I'm dead pleased with how it all turned out!

Robyn Sime



I feel like my photos have a running theme of finding light in dark places, which wasn't intentional but seems quite fitting!

Robyn Sime



Tammy Whalen

EXPLORING CAMERAS AND COLLECTIONS: OUR FAVOURITE THINGS

Julie Gibb

Assistant Curator, Science, Science and Technology Department.

In 2018, I put together a handling collection of early to mid-20th century film cameras that could be used to explore not only developments in photographic technology but also the role that the camera plays in recording our life stories. The collection proved popular with visitors of all ages with some reminiscing about using the cameras while younger people were fascinated by how these strange devices could create a photograph! One question I was often asked was whether the cameras would still work. This stuck with me, and when asked for ideas for a Scotland 365 photography project, the opportunity arose to get the cameras serviced and brought back to life.

The cameras range from the Vest Pocket Kodak – the camera that allowed soldiers in the First World War to capture their experiences in the trenches – to a 1980s Minolta SLR, a familiar yet still slightly alien camera to those of us used to the convenience of digital photography.

At the first session, the group took turns in experimenting with the cameras, each one slightly different to use than the last. Some members found a favourite that they continued to work with while others stuck firmly to 21st century digital technology. Whatever camera they chose to use, the group created some fantastic images.

My personal favourites were taken in the Science & Technology large object store. By looking at these objects from a different perspective, they have captured details of familiar objects that I hadn't noticed, proving that sometimes it takes a fresh pair of eyes to discover something new about our collection.



Tammy Whalen

EXPLORING ANALOGUE PHOTOGRAPHY

Zoe Hamill

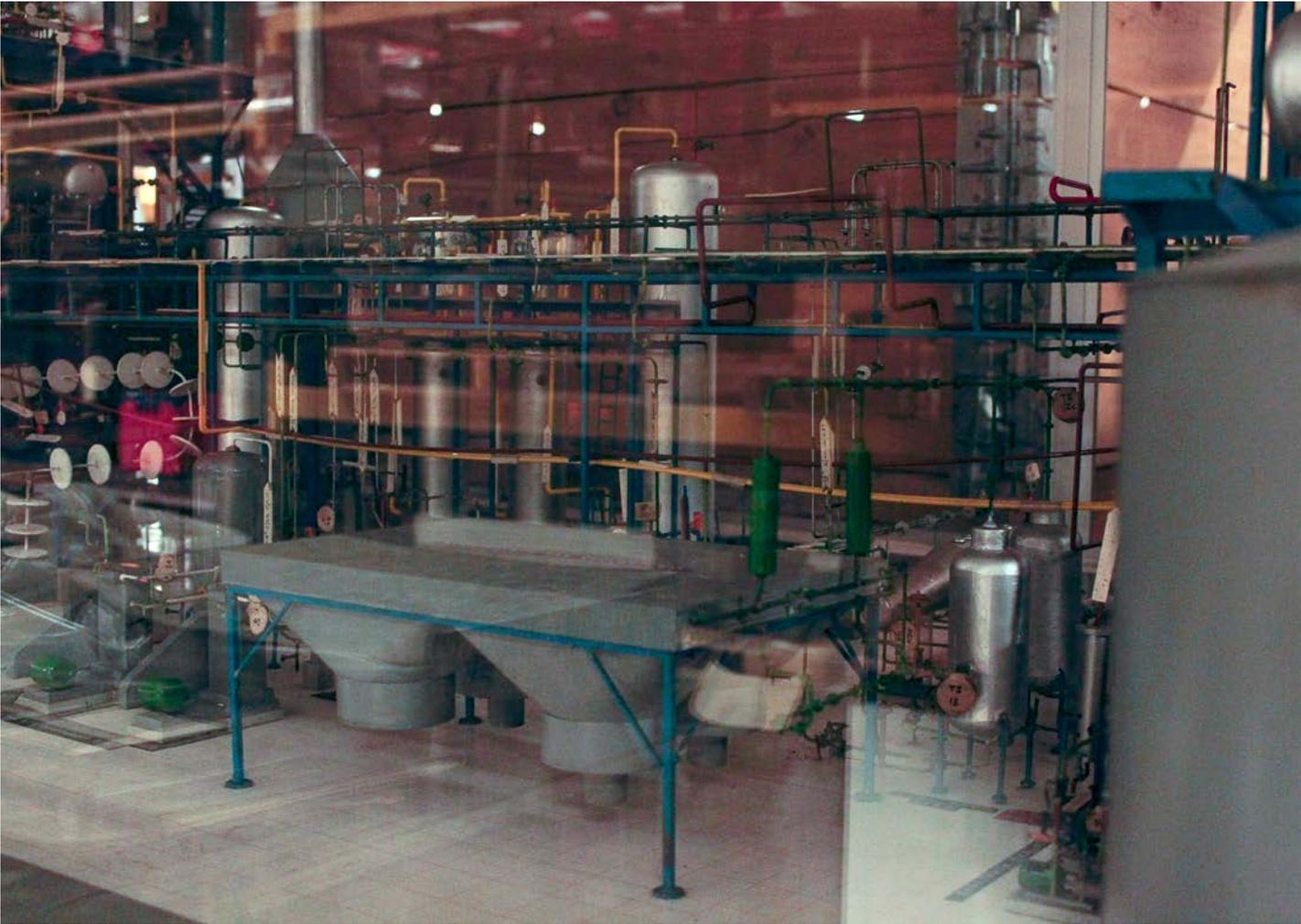
Artist and Tutor, Stills Centre for Photography

While digital photography is a democratic and omni-present medium, the process of analogue photography is one that not everyone has access to these days. Like the various historical cameras that we used in this project, analogue photography has its own particular quirks and challenges that once understood, make for a wonderfully different and rewarding experience. Manual shutters force us to slow down, a limited number of film frames encourage us to consider the value of every shot before taking it, and there is the ever-present possibility of light or chemical mishaps that might erase all our hard work.

Despite all these uncertainties, or maybe because of them, this group of young people produced beautiful and unique photographs of the museum collections and beyond. To adapt to these old and intricate cameras was impressive enough, but the creativity and imagination from the group was truly inspiring and I hope they are all as proud of their results as I am.

They're not all in focus, some may not be quite what was planned through the viewfinder. But like the young people who took them, I think these photographs offer a new and inventive perspective on the NMS collections. Different viewpoints like these are essential to making sure that the NMCC, and heritage and collections in general, remain relevant and welcoming to everyone.

BEST BITS



Tammy Whalen

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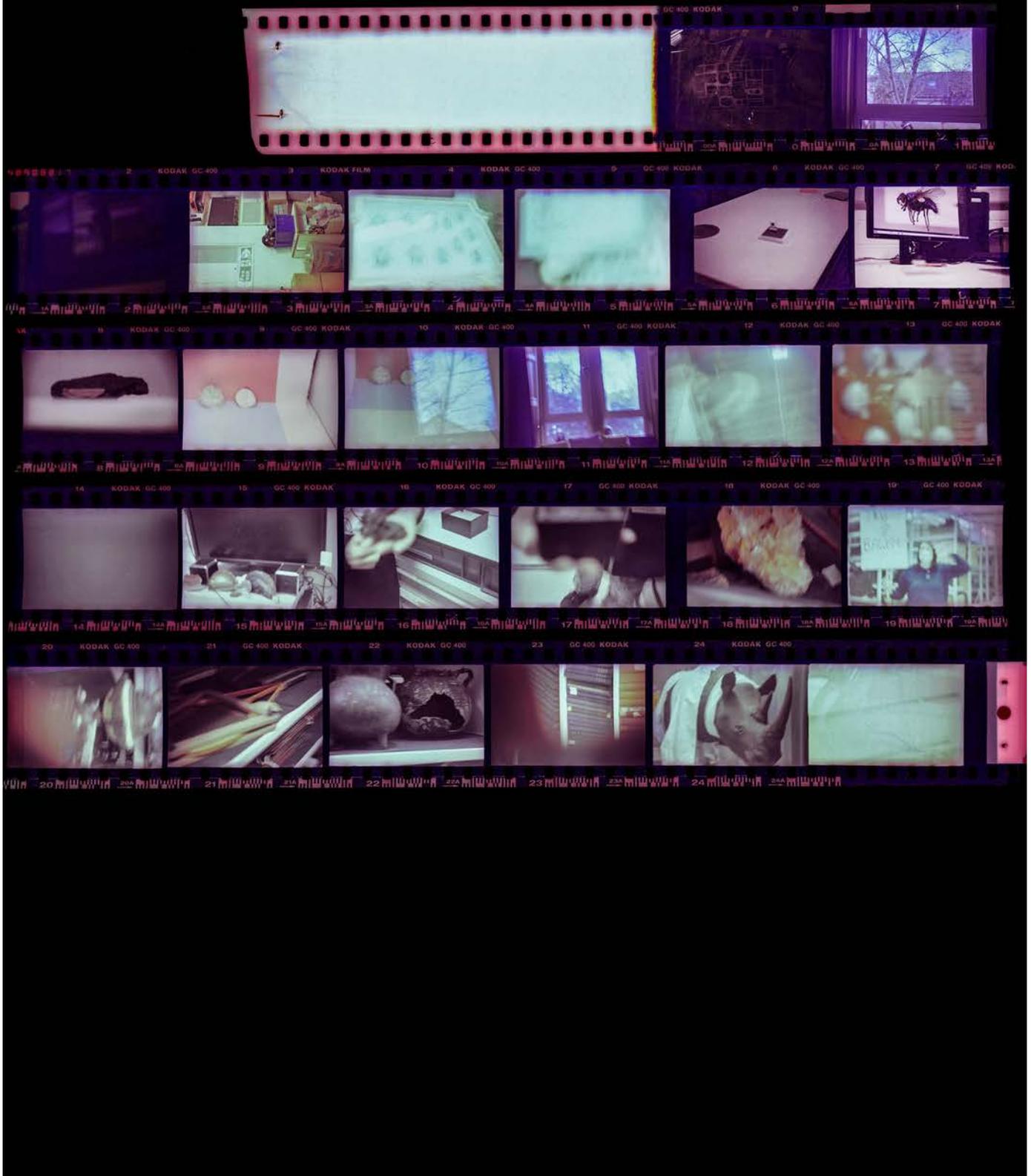
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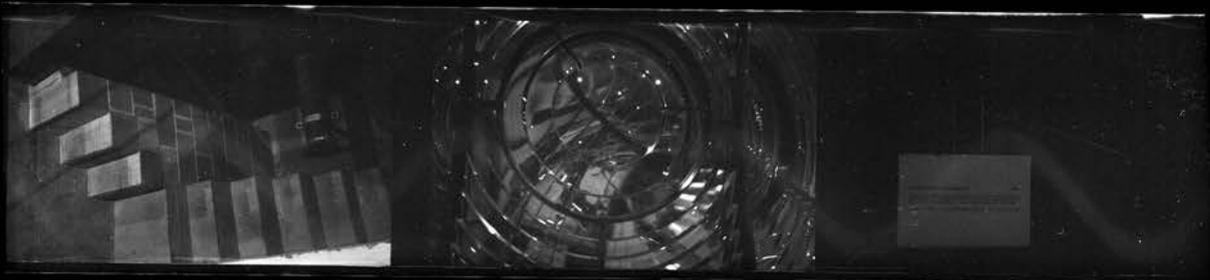
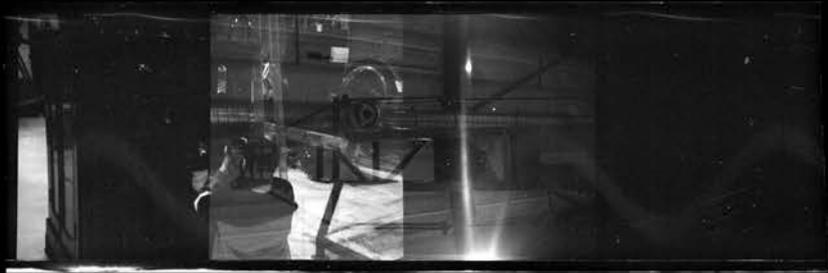
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Well, it's got to be meeting Gary! (See pages 38 & 39).

Francis Bunt

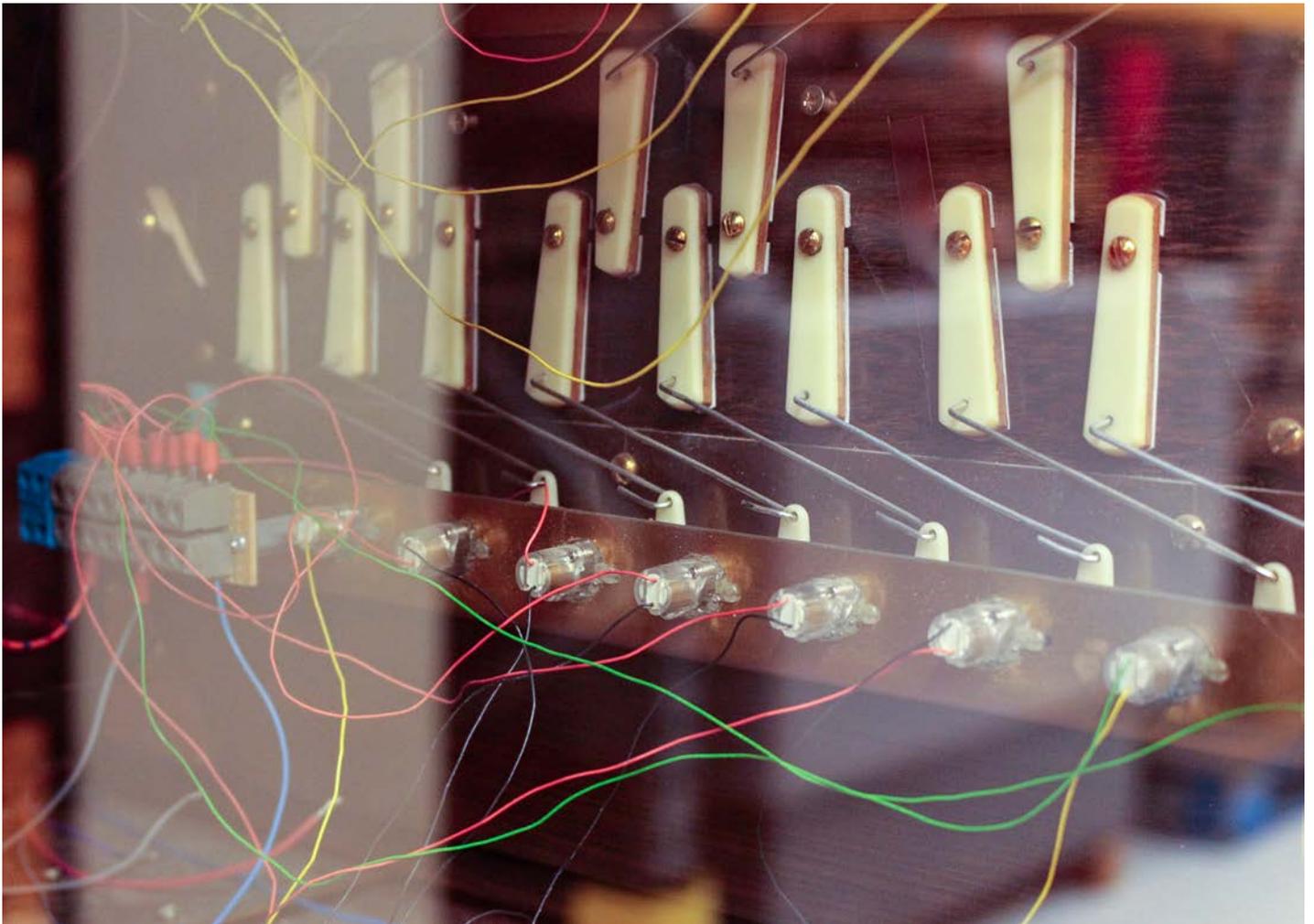
GY: WEEK 1 - KODAK BROWNIE



Probably when we first got to use the restored film cameras, some of the photos they produced are really other-worldly looking and have a nice retro feel.

Hannah Stevenson

Learning how to edit our photos with the staff from Stills was a real eye opener for me, as some images I'd taken I'd written off as bad pictures before learning how to do this. Some of these have become my favourite shots from the project!



Tammy Whalen

Visiting the Geology department at NMCC was super interesting! Seeing Meteorite fragments and stalactite fragments and their naturally occurring beauty was lovely!



Katie Reid

The staircase at NMCC is a favourite of mine, and the subject of one of my photos, it sounds strange to say a set of stairs but I just like the way they look!



Hannah Stevenson

The large lighthouse optic at the NMCC store is so pretty, it would never look the same twice when looking at it too!



Summer Frail



Katie Reid



Carly Russell

EXPLORING CONTEMPORARY COLLECTING

Ailsa Hutton

Assistant Curator, Modern and Contemporary History, Scottish History and Archaeology Department.

National Museums Scotland is a museum of past and present. As well as collecting older objects, we are also dedicated to collecting contemporary objects that reflect the social, cultural and political changes happening around us today. One of our priorities is to collect protest material and record people's responses to issues surrounding political protest, climate change, gender and racial (in)equality.

How do you collect protest materials?

There are different ways through which we collect protest materials. We can acquire different types of objects - such as banners and placards, Papier-mâché models, sewn or knitted fabric panels - from specific people or through fieldwork. Curators often have to make quick decisions whether to collect an object before they disappear.

How do you know what is important?

It is often challenging to know which objects should be collected. Sometimes contemporary objects, such as banners and placards, don't seem valuable or important to people or are ephemeral. But these objects represent key moments in history so we feel it is vital to save them and preserve them for future generations.

Do you know who made any of these?

We often know who the makers/users of protest materials are, which means we are able to record their responses in more detail. However, objects of resistance are sometimes collected through fieldwork - left and found in public spaces - and so we never know who made or used them.

Are any materials too controversial to show?

Contemporary Collecting means collecting history as it happens and recording people's responses to it, so controversial material is often unavoidable. We strive to stimulate discussion and curiosity through engaging with objects, so while we are mindful of sensitive issues we don't shy away from controversial subjects.

If people saw flies like this, they wouldn't kill them.



Summer Frail

EXPLORING ENTOMOLOGY

Ashleigh Whiffin

Assistant Curator of Entomology, Natural Sciences

The Entomology collection at National Museums Scotland is more than 200 years old. It is particularly rich in Scottish material, but also contains insects from all over the world. We care for Nationally significant collections of British moths, flies, parasitic wasps, beetles, dragonflies and damselflies. One of our key objectives is to ensure the collection continues to be a centre for research and information about Scottish insects, as well as a resource for the local recording community, students and even artists. Lots of exciting work happens here; everything from naming brand new species, to supporting insect conservation projects.

Do you collect both living and dead insects?

Yes, both. We conduct research focused fieldwork in which we collect live insects, but we also pick up dead insects that we happen upon. Insect collections from private collectors and entomologists are also donated to us, so that they can be preserved long-term and made accessible.

Do any of these insects come from Granton?

Yes, some of them. During the last year we have been surveying the biodiversity around the National Museums Collection Centre, so some of these insects were collected right on our doorstep. We usually need to collect a specimen to work out which species it is.

Why are the Australian butterflies so big!?

Insect development is closely linked to temperature. Australia has a warm climate and insects tend to grow larger in warmer places.

Top quotes of the session:

Male wasps don't sting? My whole life has been a lie!!

You should have put a sting on it...



Katie Reid



Summer Frail



Hannah Stevenson

EXPLORING EARTH SYSTEMS

Emily Brown

Assistant Curator, Earth Systems, Natural Sciences Department

The Earth Systems collection at National Museums Scotland contains around 70,000 specimens of rocks, minerals, meteorites and gemstones. The collection began as a teaching aid nearly 300 years ago, and it is still being used for new research and to spark people's interest in geology today.

How do you know this came from space?

Meteorites have distinctive characteristics, like a melted outer crust that formed when it travelled through our atmosphere. We also have scientific techniques that let us analyse the elemental composition of a meteorite. From this we can work out how old it is, and where it came from!

Are crystals all around us?

While we were in the collection centre? Quite literally, yes! That room is full of crystal specimens, even the rocks are made from crystals of different minerals. In day-to-day life you are also surrounded by crystals, quartz is found in devices like your phone or TV and even the cameras the team were using have small crystals of silver halide salts in their film!

Are any of these collections from Granton?

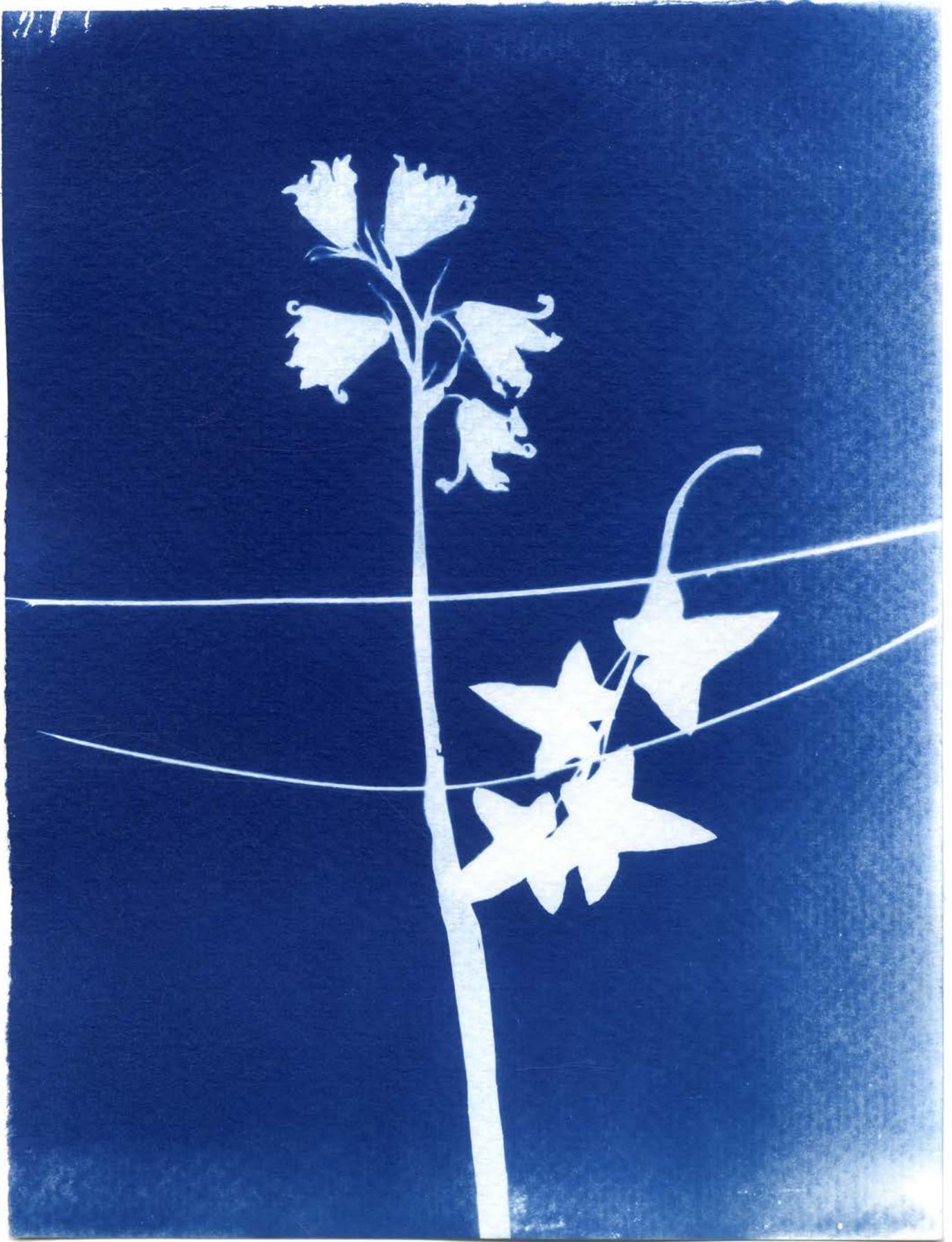
Yes! We have some specimens of the mineral ilmenite from along the Granton Shore, and wurtzite found in fossil poo from Wardie Bay.

Tell us about the giant gold nugget!

This is the Welcome Stranger nugget, the biggest gold nugget ever found! Rumour has it that the nugget was found when it broke the axle of a cart which ran it over. It was found by two Cornish miners who had moved to Australia during the gold rush. Sadly for us, though, this one is only a model as the original was melted down.



Francis Bunt



Robyn Sime



Francis Bunt

EXPLORING THE STORES, WITH GARY THE RHINO

In the store, we found a Rhino, who we named Gary... Here, we imagine an interview...

Gary: Hello Granton Youth and welcome to NMCC!

GY: Hi Gary, what kind of Rhino are you?

Gary: I am black rhinoceros, *Diceros bicornis*, if you would like my Latin name!

GY: How many rhinos like you are left in the world?

Gary: Well, black rhinos are split into different subspecies depending on where they live, so some black rhino populations have lower numbers than others and the agreed number seem to vary! Us black rhinos are critically endangered with only around 5000 animals left in the wild.

GY: How did you get to Granton?

Gary: That's a story! I was purchased in 1902 for £100, from Edward Gerrard & Sons, a firm of taxidermists that sold specimens to both museums and the general public - I don't have my original horn. For ten years, I was on display in the 'Adventure Planet' gallery. I came down to the Collection Centre while the gallery was being redeveloped, and I will now stay here. I like it here, nice people!

GY: Are there any problems with displaying or housing rhinos like you, Gary?

Gary: Well, that would be telling! But, black rhinos like me are very large and heavy which means that a team of people are needed to help move us. There has to be enough space in the gallery to display us, and enough room in the stores when we are no longer on display. A taxidermy rhino has very thick skin and can become dry which is why you can see some areas where my stitching is showing.

GY: Thanks Gary!

*with special thanks to Julie Gibb and Zena Timmons for assisting Gary with the interview.

Honestly, it was just something I really loved doing. A great experience and it taught me some things, art can be made by and for anyone if you give them the opportunity as well!



Katie Reid

EXPLORING TREASURED MEMORIES

Ross Combe

Enabler, Learning and Engagement, National Museums Scotland.

As the fierce winds of storm Arwen began, I met the young people of Granton Youth for the first time at Stills. Together with colleagues from the museum, we descended to the cellar level of the building to the dark room and lab. With danger to life warnings across the country, this storm would later uproot trees, rip the rooves off buildings and disrupt communities across Scotland. It felt like we were entering an emergency shelter, away from the hustle and bustle of the chaotic outside world.

The feeling of being in a shelter was completely appropriate. Within this safe space we were all reminded of the transformative magic of creativity and of the empowerment of learning new skills.

Firstly, we were shown the process of cyanotype and each encouraged to experiment with arranging a selection of leaves, flowers and feathers. Following this we entered the red glow of the dark room to try the photogram process. Watching the young people repeat the processes of exposure and then washing the photo paper to capture the reactions was wonderful. They become increasingly comfortable with the use of tools, equipment and materials.

I was particularly surprised by the change in energy in the group. Reluctance and bashfulness was rapidly replaced by self-assuredness and excitement at the possibilities. Compositions became more thoughtful, ambitious and delicate. It reminded me of my own experience of art school where fresh perspectives were gained through working together and sharing ideas. It was fantastic to witness this change in such a short period of time and to see the beautiful and striking results of these collaborative experiments.



I felt very privileged to be able to take part and the fact that I've cemented friendships with others in the group is my biggest takeaway.

Francis Bunt

Meeting new people and experiencing new things has meant the most to me.



Hannah Stevenson

IF WE HAD MORE TIME...

Take more photos!



Hannah Stevenson

I'd love to spend more time at Stills and learn different techniques of developing.



Francis Bunt

I'd have loved more time to edit photos!



Tammy Whalen

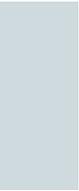
Visit more departments in the store at NMCC!



Katie Reid



Robyn Sime

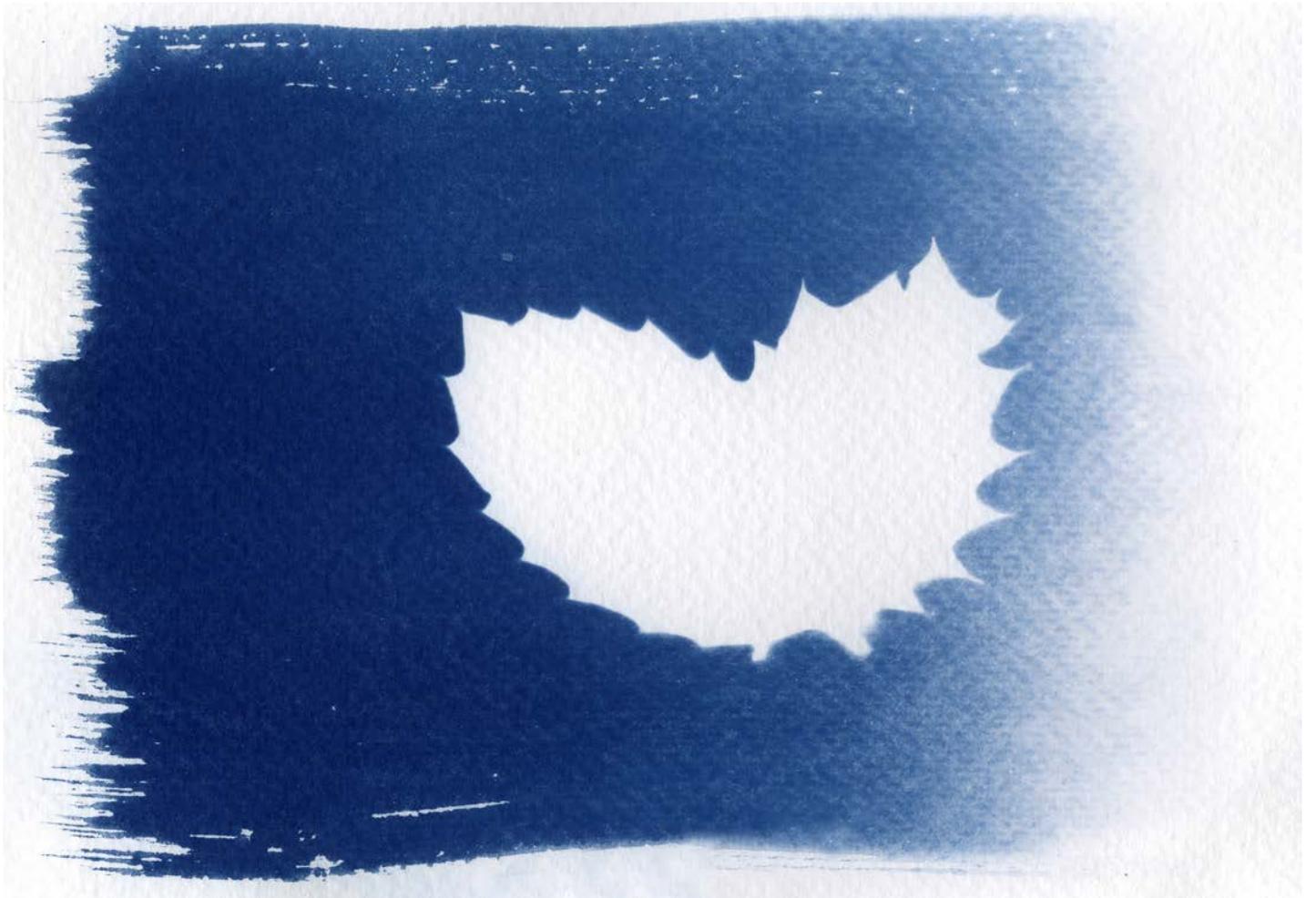


PROUD!

Ryan McGlone

Youth Work Team Leader / Youth Worker, Granton Youth

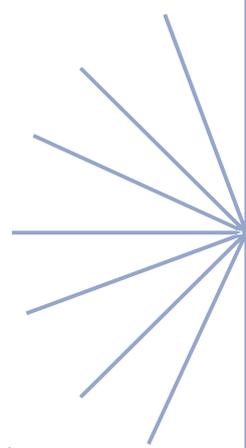
What a couple of months it's been! I can't believe it's come to an end but the results the young people have produced have blown us all away in terms of their ambition and professionalism. I'm going to feel very proud when I see their work displayed in the exhibition and with their names credited to all their individual work. National Museums and Stills have given them an amazing opportunity and to actually be a museum exhibited photographer at such a young age is something they can be proud of for the rest of their lives. I'd like to thank Linsey, Julie, Emma, and Zoe in particular for their patience and friendship with us all throughout the project. I hope to work with you on behalf of Granton Youth as soon as possible!



Hannah Stevenson

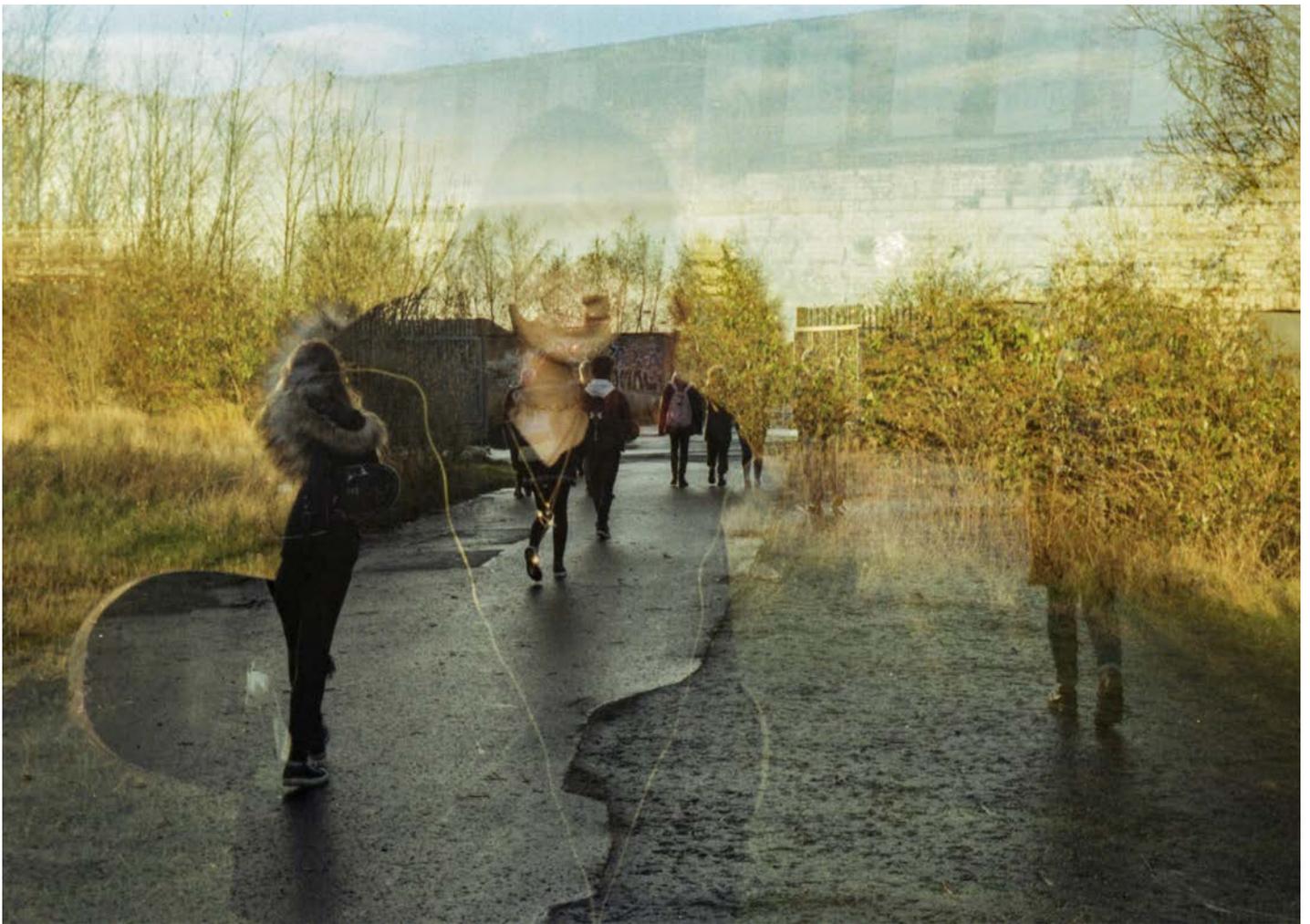


Robyn Sime



GRANTON EXPLORATIONS

Equipped with historic film cameras from the Science & Technology photography collection, the Granton Youth group set out to explore the National Museums Collection Centre. Capturing details of a lighthouse mechanism, bottled mineral samples gathered from the Granton shoreline and an encounter with Gary the Rhino, their photographs celebrate the diverse collections stored in Granton as well as the buildings in the local area and their experience at the Christmas light display at the Botanic Gardens.



Carly Russell