

TOGETHER, ALONE MASTERCLASS

JOY



BY KATHRYN RATTRAY

ALL ABOUT KATHRYN

Kathryn Rattray is a freelance photographer and visual artist based in Dundee. Kathryn is self-taught in all aspects of her photography and artist's practice.

Over the past decade Kathryn has worked extensively across her home-town of Dundee where she has established herself as a photographer working in the arts. During this time Kathryn has created a diverse and extensive portfolio as well as being commissioned to undertake a large body of commercial and private client work.

Her photographs have been represented online, in art magazines, books and other media. The arts are her passion and she excels when engaged in this field. Her style is bold and contemporary with an exceptional use of colour and her admiration of the changing nature of light is central to how she creates her work.

Kathryn lives in Dundee with her two children - she spends her free time filling their lives with adventures.





I LOVE THIS WORD, JOY.

Saying it over in my head a few times does in fact fill me with just that, JOY!

I've been teaching photography now on and off for about 5 years. I've taught kids, teenagers, adults, older people and there has always been a mixture of both men and women. I'd say my teaching style is quite unorthodox, because in truth I'm the most untechnical photographer that ever there was!

When I first started out with my SLR Nikon Bridge Camera I had NO IDEA how to work it, I mean zero ideas. So, I spent hours and days and months and years fiddling about with the settings. I never once looked at the instruction manual and never once looked at a you tube video on how to work the damn thing. With photography, I quickly realised that the only way to learn was to do, to practice and make mistakes... and I made loads.



I remember standing up in the local high school as I taught my first night class, thinking, "I am a fraud', I can't teach this, I have no real idea how this camera works!". By that point the lessons were based around the ideas of 'shoogling' the settings. The women in my class love this teaching method and quickly under my guidance became great 'shooglers' of the settings. The men (sorry lads) were never quite as convinced, you see they wanted jargon, they wanted to know how the thing works. Sometimes my best most beautiful photographs have been shot when the settings are all 'technically' wrong.

So why am I telling you this? Well it all goes back to JOY! The JOY of you and your camera and allowing

yourself time to play with it. Time to absorb yourself into the creative world, time to allow it to become second nature and to do things your way. The JOY of shooting on a camera phone, a disposable, an SLR (big fancy camera). For me, I love using the camera phone, some of my best and most evocative works have been taken on one. These master classes can be shot on any type of camera! I decided to shoot everything you see on my SLR, not because I wanted to be fancy and show off but because I wanted the practice and to rise to my own challenges. I've not stopped learning and or improving - every photo I take is just another image added to my continuous development as a photographer.

THE MASTERCLASS

We spoke about the physical warm-up in the Movement masterclass – now let's think about the mental warm-up that goes into the development and progression of ideas in photography.

The warm-up of photography is probably one of the single most important stages. In the early days, I would always be in a rush to get the best image first time, setting myself up for failure pretty quickly. As I became more experienced, I really started to take my time at the start of the shoot which sets both me and the camera up for better photographs. The warm-up stage helps me re-align and centre myself, calming nerves and reminding me that I can, in fact, still work the camera...

The photographs that accompany the Home Studio Joy Masterclass show the development and progression of this idea. In fact, there are more photos in the warm-up section than any other. I often shoot very quickly at the start of a shoot as I warm up fiddling (shooing) the settings. I take loads of practice shots so when it comes to actually photographing what I want or need the process will be more seamless and accurate. The more photos you take the more striking the photos become. Remember it's about getting into the zone!





I found taking photos of flowers so rewarding and therapeutic. As you can see in some of the photographs, the petals started falling from the flower, I thought it looked beautiful, a reminder to me of how fragile we are. All these photographs have been shot 'in camera' which means there has been no photoshopping and or filters added to the final image. I am a great believer in shooting well in camera first so that it eliminates or reduces post-production time.



HINTS 'N' TIPS

- You can use any type of camera for this masterclass. Remember it's not the camera that makes the photo it's the photographer.
- Take your time, set aside a half day perhaps, get the music blaring. Use the home studio as time to focus on something else.
- Try to clear your mind.
- I love using coloured paper for backdrops, and A3 works best for this. A3 sheets are about £1.50 each and can be used many times especially if you are careful with them. Once I am finished with them I give them to my kids to make posters. I like to use 2 colours.
- Stick the paper to the wall and create an infinity wall with the bottom sheet. An infinity wall is a curved surface that seamlessly blends the floor and wall together so that anything you put in front of it — an object, a person — will appear to float against a simple, clutter-free backdrop.
- Use a book to prop up the paper if you need some more height.
- For this shoot I found that the table and the positioning of the paper was always uneven, no matter how many times I tried to straighten it. I even propped the leg of the table up with folded magazines. To combat this 'stress' I deliberately stuck the paper to the wall really squint. This actually added to the overall effect of the final images.

"LIGHT MAKES PHOTOGRAPHY. EMBRACE LIGHT. ADMIRE IT. LOVE IT. BUT ABOVE ALL, KNOW LIGHT. KNOW IT FOR ALL YOU ARE WORTH, AND YOU WILL KNOW THE KEY TO PHOTOGRAPHY."

George Eastman - Founder of the Eastman Kodak Company

LIGHT MAKES PHOTOGRAPHY

- Use a natural light source, it is always the best for photographs. Set up the table preferably close to a window. I chose to set my studio up outside (as it was a beauty of a day) in the shade as it kept the light level even. Direct sunlight is great too but it can be just a bit too hot and if the clouds appear the sun disappears too.





- Make sure your vase is dry or it will drip onto the paper.
- The trick is to fill your view finder with just the colour and the object. With lots of my photographs at the start, you can see the black masking tape in the corner of the shot, so annoying, but just keep taking more photographs until you work out the best way for you.
- Keep using your imagination. If something doesn't seem right, stop walk away and have think. This is your home studio you can make it what you want. I love how some images look all chaotic but the final outcome is so beautiful.
- Start/keep moving - take photographs from above, below, underneath, from the side and direct on. Try different angles, shoot close in and or move far away, move your objects/ flowers. Use your hands and even have them in shot. This is 'very' instagram!
- Keep checking your images as you go. I shot about 10/15 at one time before I checked. It was during the 'checking' phase that I realised how difficult it was to get a really straight line between the pink and yellow paper. Some images the paper was the tinniest bit off and it just upset the whole look of the photograph.



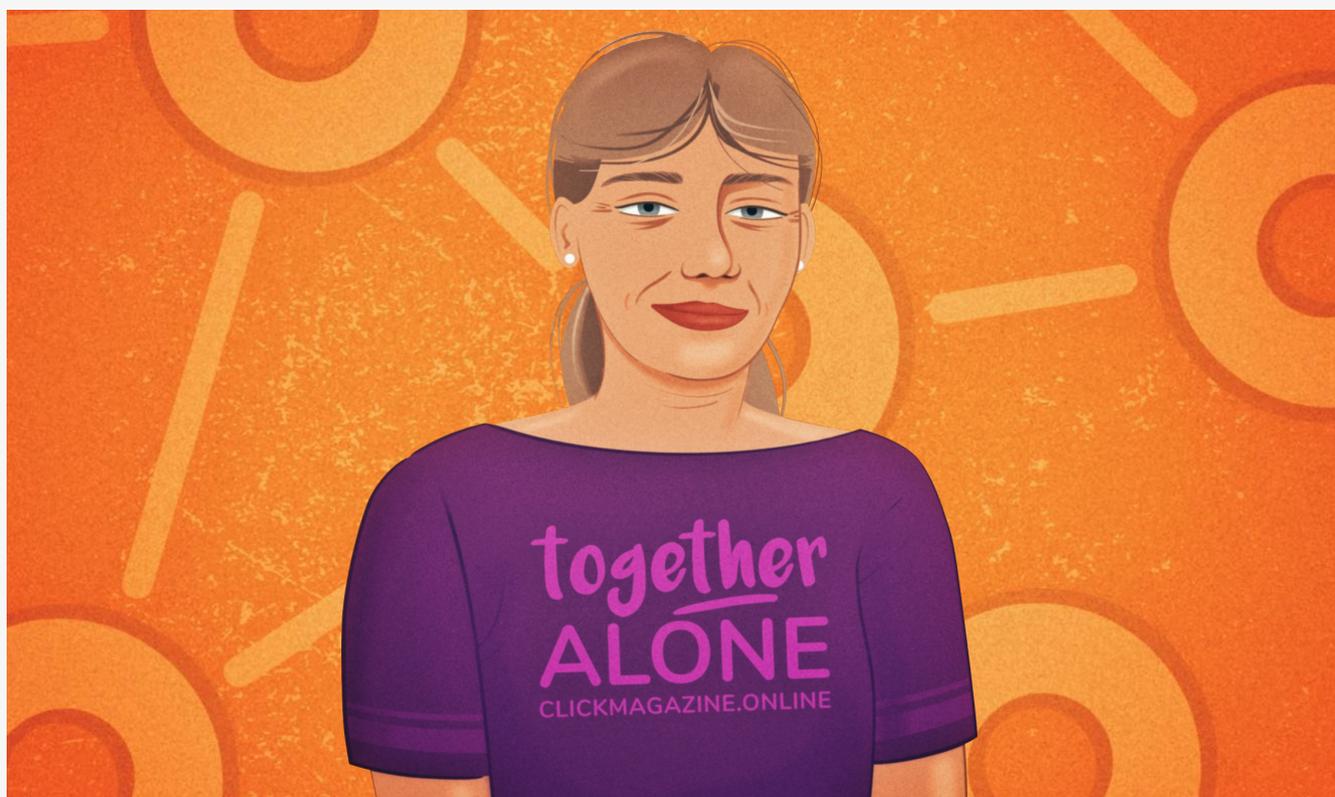


- Keep persevering, keep practising.
- Try to keep calm when things don't work out. I was getting annoyed every time the black tape appeared. I took a break, drank some tea and started all over again.
- Remind yourself that this is your home-made Home Studio, be proud of what you are doing and what you are achieving.
- Have fun.
- Share your photos with your friends and family, or with us at [CLICK](#)



Good LUCK! Love Kathryn x

ABOUT TOGETHER, ALONE



For many women in the sex industry, the coronavirus pandemic is exacerbating feelings of stigma, loneliness, and social isolation. Together, Alone is our wellbeing based arts project which aims to foster a sense of community and solidarity by building a “self-care toolkit”. We invite women to creatively share what self-care means to them. What works? What doesn't work? And where self-care doesn't go far enough, what needs to be done to better support the mental wellbeing of women?

This will be a place where we will share tips, as well as focus on the links between self-care and creativity with masterclasses from artists to build skills and ideas. You can find all the masterclasses at www.clickmagazine.online and we can also send you out a workshop pack with copies of the masterclasses, along with all the materials you might need to do them.

We would love to hear from you about what works / doesn't work for you, any tips that you have and what you think about the masterclasses. We can't wait to build Together, Alone with you!