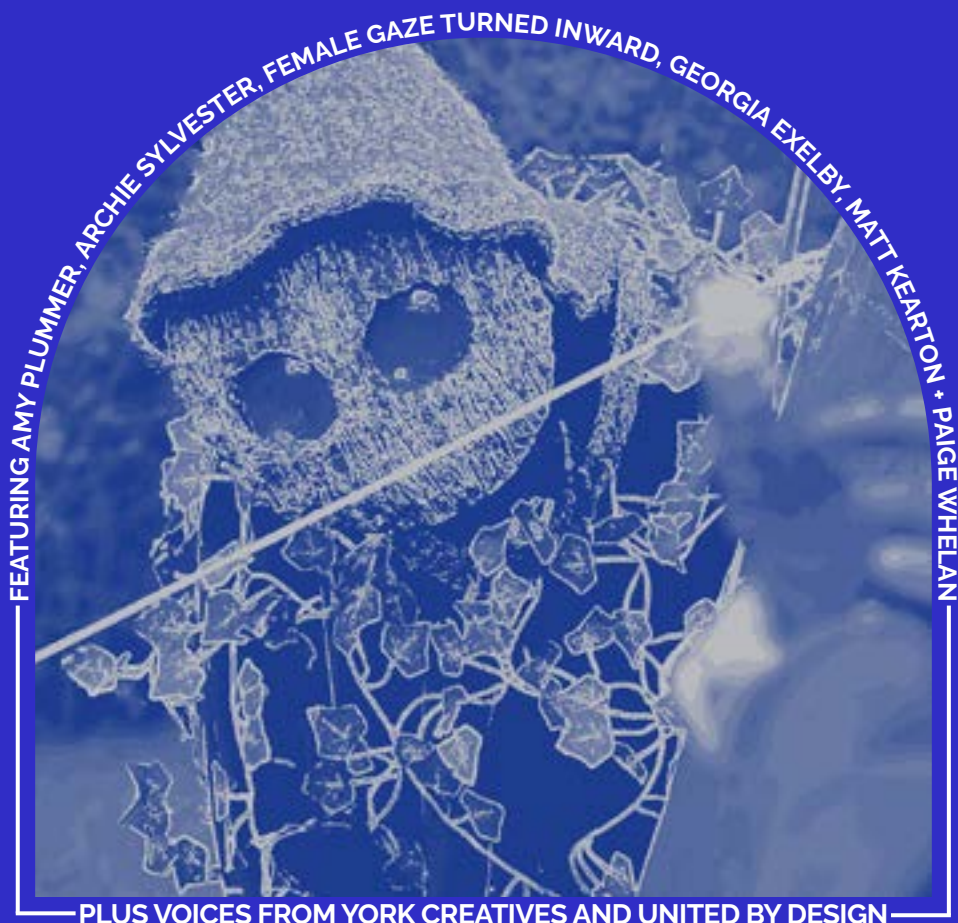


JUNE 2026

£3.00

# MIDDLE



PLUS VOICES FROM YORK CREATIVES AND UNITED BY DESIGN

**ISSUE ZERO**

Cover Image: Paige Whelan

There are a lot of disagreeing thoughts between lecturers and industry professionals about what we should do and how we should present ourselves.

For example, with portfolios, one person was saying to include sketches and process leading up to the final work, but another was saying not to do that unless you're going to be there to talk through the portfolio.

I was with Owen on Wednesday and handed him my portfolio, and he just looked at me and said, 'Explain.' I thought he was just meant to look at it.

When they looked at mine, they put the page down and just stared at me. I thought we were going to say hello first.

Students are creative. We have brilliant ideas among students, and there are certain competencies that can be taught during a degree programme that we aim to build confidence with.

However, that is different from applying those competencies within the professional sector. There is a certain safety within doing it in the classroom.

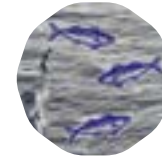
So, transitioning into professional practice is really important. Anything we can do to parallel learning with that real-world understanding is valuable.

# ASPACE BETWEEN STUDENT THINKING AND INDUSTRY REALITY.

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Charlotte Jeffery, Claire Hutchby,  
Leah Share and Rebecca Stenton



A collaborative third-year Graphic Design zine series exploring the female gaze through real words, experiences and self-reflection.

### HEY GIRL

Georgia Exelby



A small-format zine giving visibility to the experiences of neurodivergent women and girls who grew up feeling unheard.

### FROM CONCEPT TO CAMPAIGN

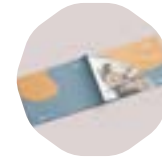
Matt Kearton



An alumni poster project for Overpass showing how graduate work can move into a real public-facing creative campaign.

### DESIGNED FOR CARE

Archie Sylvester



An alumni editorial design project for the INO Care Chair, developed within a professional healthcare context.

### WIDER CREATIVE VOICES

Amy Plummer and Paige Whelan



York School of Art students work showing how MIDDLE can grow beyond Graphic Design into wider creative disciplines.

### VOICES FROM THE MIDDLE

Luke Savage, Sarah Williams and  
Owen Turner



Founder reflection, creative community insight and industry perspectives on student visibility, connection and professional transition.



## THE FEMALE GAZE TURNED INWARD

Charlotte Jeffery, Claire Hutchby,  
Leah Share, Rebecca Stenton

York St. John University  
BA (Hons) Graphic Design, Class of 2026  
@thefemalegazeturnedinwards

The Female Gaze Turned Inward is a series of 4 magazines. Collaborating with 4 designers, we each created a zine focusing on different themes within the idea of "the female gaze", whilst taking real words and experiences from real women. We collaborated on this zine as empowering women is important to us, especially in today's society.



hey girl, feeling deeply doesn't make you wrong

you care too much about little things

Some brains take in sound, light, colour and movement at a much higher volume than others.

This flood of input can push the nervous system into sensory overload, a state where the brain can't filter or prioritise any more information.



Some brains are wired to notice the details in people's words, tone and body language.

That can mean catching the joke that goes too far, the eye-roll, or the friend who suddenly goes silent.

All of those "little things" add up. When your brain is already carrying a lot, one more small hurt can tip you over into tears, shutdown or melting to go home.

you're too sensitive

hey girl, that was a sensory overload

hey girl, you're already trying your best

you just need to try harder

hey Girl

Issue 1

written and illustrated by georgia exelby

This zine is dedicated to younger me, who is in a world that never seemed made for her, and to all the girls who also are wondering why they feel everything so intensely.

This issue compiles responses from neurodivergent women and female-identified people about the privileges they've heard that make their experiences feel small or invalid, and explains what those words really mean to them.

In a world where most research centres on boys and men, hey girl puts neurodivergent women at the forefront.

Some people burn through energy much faster, especially when there's lots to remember, switch between or hold in mind at once.

That can look like starting at a page, re-reading the same line, or feeling drained even when you really want to get it done.

If something keeps feeling impossible no matter how much you try, that is a sign the environment or support needs to change.



Weird, childish, lazy, emotional, stupid and messy  
Weird Bossy, late, sensitive, messy, incompetent, too much but at the same time, very uncaring? Do better. You're so lazy and disorganised. You must not care because you're... fill in blank (late, messy, rude, etc) That I'm lazy and dramatic, and that everyone struggles so if I just tried harder I'd be fine. That it's all in my head (but, duh, if we're thinking literally). I'm late diagnosed so a BIG one has been "You've been fine your entire life. Why are you chasing labels/excuses?" And for a cherry on top, "But you don't look autistic" Too sensitive or dramatic, I care too much about some minor things, other people lived the same things and weren't affected by them so if I'm affected it means I have some kind of problem Too quiet, over sensitive Weird, childish, lazy, emotional, stupid and messy

## HEY GIRL

Georgia Exelby

York St. John University  
BA (Hons) Graphic Design, Class of 2026  
georgiamayexelby.framer.website  
@maydoes.art

Hey Girl is a small-format zine for neurodivergent women and girls who grew up feeling unheard. The project began by collecting many "throwaway" comments often directed at autistic women, gathered from my own experiences and a survey of autistic respondents.

By stacking these phrases together in dense layout on the back spread, the zine turns casual remarks into something visible and difficult to ignore.

The zine itself talks back to these comments, with bright, slightly overwhelming colours and chunky speech bubbles mirror the emotional impact of this language. This invites allies to reconsider their language and understanding of neurodivergence.





## GRADUATE WORK IN PUBLIC VIEW

What made this project important for me was seeing the work move beyond a portfolio context and into something more public-facing. As a graduate, it showed me how a visual idea could begin to operate in the real world, not just as a concept but as part of a wider campaign.

For MIDDLE, this project reflects the kind of transition the platform is interested in: the moment where emerging creative work starts to become visible, shared and connected to real audiences.

hierarchy and composition, allowing the series to feel connected without every poster being identical.

### Why is it useful for student or graduate work to be shown beyond a portfolio?

Showing graduate work beyond a portfolio gives the project another life. A portfolio is usually private, whereas a publication makes the work more public, visible and part of a wider creative conversation.

For a project like Overpass, this matters because it was designed to feel like a public-facing campaign. Featuring it in MIDDLE helps show how graduate work can move beyond assessment and begin to operate as real visual communication.

## OVERPASS

**Matt Kearton**

York St. John University  
BA (Hons) Graphic Design, Class of 2025  
@mattgraphicdesign

For my Overpass poster series, I wanted to create a visual campaign that felt bold, atmospheric and connected to the energy of live music. The project was developed as a poster concept for the band Overpass, using layered texture, reduced colour and strong typography to create a system that could work across multiple tour dates.

I wanted the posters to feel direct and performance-led, while still having enough consistency to sit together as a campaign. Each design uses similar image treatment, type



# INO CARE CHAIR

Archie Sylvester

York St. John University  
BA (Hons) Graphic Design, Class of 2025  
@sylvester.design  
<https://archiesylvesterdesign.com/>

As one of the UK's leading healthcare equipment suppliers for the NHS and private clinics, Agile Group continues to strengthen its presence across treatment chairs and couches. When I joined Agile in September 2025, my first full-time post-graduate design brief involved developing two 8-page brochures for the INO Care Chair, tailored for maternity and therapy environments. The project allowed me to progress my editorial design practice while exploring a specialist healthcare sector. Through concise layouts, considered imagery and tone-focused messaging, I aimed to communicate empathy, intimacy, and brand trust – positioning the INO Care Chair as a supportive solution for specific clinical practices.



**Why does graduate work belong in MIDLE?**  
MIDLE gives young and emerging creatives space to reflect on what they stand for. Design is not just something to look at; it is a way of understanding process, growing through practice and figuring out our next steps through curiosity and experimentation.



No matter where my progression takes me, or which area of graphic design I move into, MIDLE allows graduates like myself to reflect on the steps made between graduation and professional practice — no matter how big or small those steps may be.

That deserves to be championed.



# THE WHALE GARDEN

Amy Plummer

BA (Hons) Film Production and  
Professional Practice  
York School of Art / York College  
@fairyclockfilm

A young girl trapped in an endless maze must put her trust in unlikely allies to aid her escape. The Whale Garden is a dreamy, surrealist short animation created entirely in Blender. The main character, our Pilot, navigates her lone spaceship through a mysterious and seemingly never ending maze when she turns a corner to find a huge pod of orcas, floating in a clearing. Between her wonder and their clear curiosity a solution to her predicament should be found, but the ride will be a bumpy one.





# ONE LAST CAMP

Paige Whelan

BA (Hons) Film Production and  
Professional Practice  
York School of Art / York College  
@nightchurrfilm

My Final Major Project was a short fiction film called One Last Camp. It's about a young woman camping in the garden of her childhood home only for a strange spirit to appear and mess with her things. It features a costume I designed and made myself, the Spirit, and a small set piece made of scrap materials, the tree stump. My goal with the project was to prove I could design and execute these practical elements, which is why the hat, cloak, mask and tree stump are all handmade. I wanted to use these elements to tell a simple and relatable story with a touch of charm, about growing up and our relationships with our childhood selves.





**Luke Savage**  
Founder and  
Editor of MIDDLE

MIDDLE began from a place I was already standing in.

As an MA Graphic Design student, freelance designer and emerging creative myself, I have spent a lot of time thinking about what happens after university: how you move from making work for assessment to presenting yourself as a creative, how you build confidence in your own voice, and how student work becomes visible beyond a studio wall, a portfolio PDF or a degree show.

My own practice has always sat between different spaces: university and freelance work, branding and editorial design, personal projects and client-facing outcomes. Through that, I became interested in the gap between student thinking and industry reality. Not because students are lacking ideas, but because the routes into visibility, confidence and professional connection are not always clear.

The more I spoke to students, graduates, educators and creative organisations, the more I realised this was not just my own concern.

MIDDLE has developed through conversations, submissions and support from students, alumni, tutors, industry voices and creative partners. Issue Zero brings together third-year Graphic Design students, Graphic Design alumni and wider creative voices from York College / York School of Art, alongside educator, industry and partner perspectives.

The prototype has been shaped by student research, mentorship and industry insight from United by Design and LazenbyBrown, material support from GF Smith, print and process research through Thin Ice Press, conversations with York's creative community, and future development support from York & North Yorkshire Growth Hub.

For me, Issue Zero is not just a magazine layout. It is a test of whether a publication can become a bridge: a public space for emerging creatives to be seen, shared and connected.

MIDDLE is here to publish student work, connect creative voices and make the in-between stage more visible.

This is Issue Zero.



**Sarah Williams**  
Managing Director

**YORK  
CREATIVES**

Since becoming a CIC last year, we at York Creatives have been focused on helping York become a city where it is viable to live and work as a creative. We are looking to innovate the creative industries from the bottom up: connecting businesses to grass-roots creatives; creating more skilled work for artists of all disciplines and heading projects that will put York on the map as a creative capital.

This all works hand in hand with what we hope our student offering will become. We want to make sure that there are chances for students to get work once they graduate and programs in place for them to begin building connections while they're still students. We know that there are businesses of all sizes in York and we want to make it possible for them to easily find student, graduate and highly professional creatives that can meet their needs wherever they are.

Working with MIDDLE and Luke has given us an integral link to students and a clear understanding of what students need. As we continue to work with Luke we hope to find ways to also connect to the university and find a way to make our services free for all creative students who are interested.



**Owen Turner**  
Founder, MD and  
Creative Director

**U+D** United by Design

Creative communities grow when experienced practitioners create space for emerging talent. After nearly two decades of running a design agency in Yorkshire, one of the most rewarding parts of our work has been helping students bridge the gap between education and professional practice, preserving education as a place for experimentation, curiosity and growth, while providing exposure to the rigour, responsibility and opportunities of real-world creative work.

# THANKS TO

MIDDLE Issue Zero has been shaped by the people, organisations and creative communities who have supported the project from research through to prototype. What began as an MA Graphic Design investigation into student visibility has developed through conversations, mentorship, submissions, material support and shared belief in the value of emerging creative work.

Thank you to GF Smith for supporting the material development of MIDDLE through paper samples, print advice and early conversations around the role of paper in shaping a physical publication.

Thank you to Thin Ice Press for supporting the project's understanding of print, process and self-publishing. The risograph and collage workshop helped shape how MIDDLE thinks about experimentation, materiality and the value of making student creative work physical.

Thank you to LazenbyBrown and United by Design for their mentorship, industry insight and critical reflection, helping the project better understand the gap between student work and professional practice.

Thank you to York College / York School of Art for supporting student submissions and helping MIDDLE begin to reach wider creative disciplines across York.

Thank you to York Creatives for their continued conversations, encouragement and shared ambition to make York a more viable place to live and work as a creative.

Thank you to York St John University, the Graphic Design team, tutors and students who have supported, questioned and shaped the project throughout its development.

This publication exists because of the students, graduates, educators, industry voices and creative partners who have helped make the middle visible.



# SUBMIT TO MIDDLE

We're looking for students, graduates and emerging creatives making work that deserves to be seen.

MIDDLE is open to self-initiated projects, editorial work, zines, branding, illustration, campaigns, packaging, typography, photography, moving image, writing, process-led work and creative experiments.

If your work sits somewhere between education and professional practice, MIDDLE wants to help make it visible.

[www.middle.co](http://www.middle.co)

[@middlemagazine](https://twitter.com/middlemagazine)

