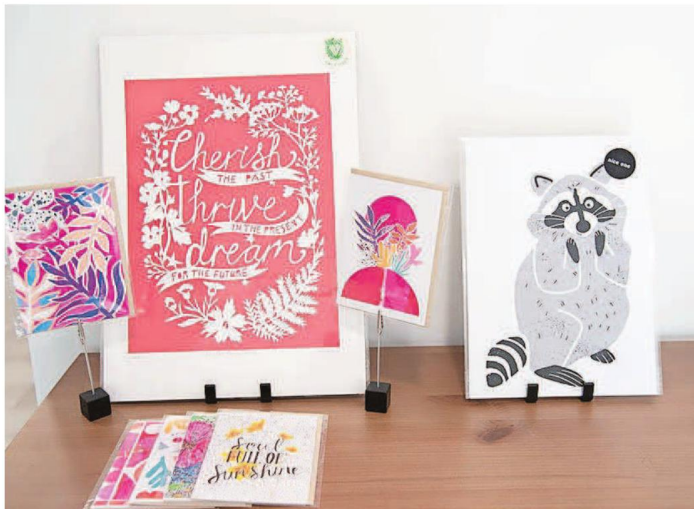


Feature



The studio and gallery also features a shop, selling art supplies and works by local artists

New creative art hub opens in the Suffolk countryside

Illuminate will feature the county's first darkroom available to hire, as well as a gallery and workshop spaces

Over lockdown, a lot of people found their creative outlets. Whether it was painting, drawing, sculpting, or even taking photos, the arts proved to be a great escape for many.

And one woman who wants to help people nurture their artistic talents is Mikaela Rackham.

An art teacher and photographer, Mikaela has dedicated her whole life to the more creative side of things – and this weekend has just opened the doors to her very own studio, Illuminate.

A hub for all things artistic, the former Suffolk New College art and design student opened the space to help bring Suffolk creatives together, no matter their skillset or level of experience.

"I've been teaching art and working as a photographer for about eight years now, and I've always wanted to be a teacher. When I was in high school and college, I had some really amazing and inspirational teachers, and I want to help inspire people now," she explains.

After completing her photography MA last year, she began to take part in more

exhibitions and workshops – and soon realised she wanted to give others the same opportunities.

"It's gotten to that point where I want to take the leap and do the photography full-time, but still teach and inspire people through workshops. So I decided to create a space where anyone can come in and learn something new, or share their experiences and ideas. I want to create a nice, creative community," she says.

Illuminate, which is located at Brightwell Barns, features a number of spaces and facilities that are open to anyone – including an artist gallery, a photography studio, and Suffolk's first photography darkroom available to rent.

"After lockdown, lots has been going on in Suffolk in terms of the arts, but there's room for so much more. I found a gap, and realised there were no public photographic darkrooms available to hire here in the area."

The space is equipped for both colour and black and white film processing and printing, and will use eco-friendly developing and printing chemicals.

"The darkroom is available for hire for beginners, as well as film



Owner of Illuminate, Mikaela Rackham



There is also a gallery at Illuminate, where artists can showcase their work

photography, hobbyists and professionals. The aim is to create an inspiring and comfortable space for artists and creatives to learn, develop and push the boundaries of analogue photography.”

There is also a shop selling a range of art supplies – as well work by a number of local artists and creatives.

“The shop is there to support a wide range of creatives and sell equipment for others to be able to be creative, too. We have a brilliant group of sellers, including Concrete & Wax with their amazing candles, Dulcie Makes with her handmade paper hangings, The Shagrooms selling tuft wall art and cushions, and Apricot Poodle selling prints of her beautiful illustrations, just to name a few,” she adds.

When you walk into Illuminate, you can't help but notice how light, airy, and spacious it feels – and Mikaela admits that the space is perfect for what she wants to achieve.

“I'd been keeping an eye out for a studio for quite a few years. I actually visited Brightwell Barns when it first opened, and I thought it would be a cool place to have a studio. I visited a few other places after that, but nothing felt right.

“But when I was off work with Covid, Ben at Brightwell Barns sent me a message saying he had a unit coming up and asked if I wanted to take a look at it. I went there and instantly I knew it was the right place. It's in a lovely countryside location, and the community there is always so

supportive. It's perfect.”

To kick off Illuminate's grand opening, the gallery will be hosting its inaugural exhibition to help showcase some of Suffolk's most talented.

“It's called 'Origin', as it represents the beginning of something, and I tried to choose a range of artists for it,” she says.

The artists exhibiting are Catalina Carvajal, Maria Clarke-Wilson, Matt Finch, Louise Craigie, Darren Beattie, Marie Soul and Christina Marie.

“My hope with the exhibition space is that artists gain the confidence in showing their work. As a photographic artist myself, I know it can be quite daunting so giving artists a smaller space to get a feel for exhibiting was important.”

The final element of Illuminate is the workshop spaces, where sessions and artist talks will be offered. Mikaela herself will be hosting one-to-one, group, and evening workshops, and will also invite artists to come in and share their skills and expertise with others.

In the future, Mikaela hopes to hold creative meet-ups, along with summer workshops for children, and even art cinema evenings.

“The aim of Illuminate is to create a space where all types of artists and creatives can come together - whether that's a painter, sculptor or photographer - to share their skills and learn from one another.”

To find out more about Illuminate, visit illuminatestudio.co.uk



Some of the equipment and facilities on offer at Illuminate



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