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Edinburgh's City Art Centre celebrates capital's neo-classical architecture with brand-new exhibition



Royal Scottish Academy - photo © Colin McLean

Classical Edinburgh

9th November 2019 – 08 March 2020

City Art Centre, 2 Market Street, Edinburgh EH1 1DE

Free admission

Images available to download [here](#)

In **November 2019**, **Edinburgh's City Art Centre** hosts a fascinating new exhibition connecting the work of architectural photographers Edwin Smith and Colin McLean whose images, created 50 years apart, celebrate Edinburgh's world-famous architecture. An accompanying photography competition will provide an exciting opportunity for budding

photographers to exhibit alongside Smith and McLean in celebration of this UNESCO World Heritage city.

Classical Edinburgh explores and examines the changes that have taken place in half a century of development which has seen the neo-classical New Town transform from an area of refined respectability to an integral part of a bustling cosmopolitan city. Using Edwin Smith's black and white images published in 'The Making of Classical Edinburgh' (1966) as a starting point, Colin McLean embarked on re-shooting and re-interpreting these seminal images.

The book, first published in 1966, quickly established its position as the authoritative work on the New Town, and helped stimulate a new interest in its Georgian architecture and the need for its conservation. The exhibition will contain some 20 original prints by Edwin Smith, taken between the mid-1950s and the book's publication in 1966, alongside 40 new images by Colin McLean, as well as one of Smith's cameras and some of his technical notebooks, held in the Photography Collection of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in London.

The exhibition is accompanied by a varied events programme, including talks by eminent architectural historians, adult classes, family events, a descriptive tour for the visually impaired, and a special 'in conversation' discussion on the history, conservation and future of Edinburgh's New Town.

This will be a homage to Smith's photography, a celebration of the city's neo-classical architecture, and a reflection on the changes the New Town has seen over the last 50 years. In September, Edinburgh University Press is launching a new version of 'The Making of Classical Edinburgh' with a new preface by Colin McLean and a selection of his new photographs.

An **exciting competition**, launched in conjunction with *Classical Edinburgh*, is inviting budding photographers to capture their own images of the New Town, with winning entries being displayed alongside the exhibition in the City Art Centre from 9 November 2019 to 8 March 2020. There are four main geographical areas which the judges would like to see captured, encompassing key sites in the New Town. Photo entries will be accepted within the following categories: 1) After Dark: views of the city once the daylight has gone, 2) Seasons: the heart of Edinburgh throughout the year, 3) Working Life: the daily hustle and bustle of city life, 4) Architectural Gems: unusual glimpses or facets of buildings, interiors, streets, panoramas.

Jessops will produce the chosen works and winners' names will be credited on the Acknowledgements panel within the exhibition. They will be invited to the Private View of the exhibition on Thursday 14th November along with 4 guests and their work will be promoted across all City of Edinburgh Council media channels and on the website.

Full competition guidelines including instructions for entrants can be found [here](#).

Councillor Donald Wilson, Edinburgh's Convener of Culture and Communities said: "We're exceptionally lucky in Edinburgh to have such outstanding architecture on our doorstep and it's not difficult to see why generations of photographers have drawn on the beauty of the City for inspiration.

"This fascinating exhibition and accompanying events programme will shine a light on the

Capital's neo-classical architecture and the competition is a fantastic opportunity for budding photographers to share their views of Edinburgh and see their work displayed in our City Art Centre."

Colin McLean said: "AJ Youngson's book and, as importantly, Edwin Smith's beautiful photographs, were significant catalysts in creating the environment in which Edinburgh's New Town became the subject of one of Europe's most significant architectural conservation programmes. It has been a joy to revisit Smith's images with my own camera and capture the architectural legacy created by the skilled architects and tradesmen of the 18th and 19th centuries."

ENDS

For more information, image and interview requests please contact Kate Bouchier-Hayes - kate@thecornershoppr.com / 07825 335 489

Images can be downloaded [here](#)

Venue Details:

Address: City Art Centre, 2 Market Street, Edinburgh EH1 1DE
Telephone: 0131 529 3993
Website: edinburghmuseums.org.uk
Twitter: @EdinCulture
Facebook: Facebook.com/City.Art.Centre.CAC
Instagram: [instagram.com/museumsgalleriesedinburgh](https://www.instagram.com/museumsgalleriesedinburgh)
Opening hours: Monday to Sunday 10am - 5pm

NOTES TO EDITORS

City Art Centre

The City Art Centre is one of Edinburgh's main public art galleries. It is owned and managed by the City of Edinburgh Council. It is home to the City's collection of historic and contemporary Scottish art, one of the best in the country. The gallery hosts a vibrant programme of exhibitions from its collection and by contemporary local, national and international artists and makers.

Colin McLean

Colin McLean is an architectural photographer, who studied architectural history at Edinburgh University. He has spent the last two years re-interpreting Edwin Smith's evocative black and white images of the city in the 1950s and '60s. In his first year economics classes, he attended lectures by A J Youngson (author of 'The Making of Classical Edinburgh') and has been familiar with the book since his time as a student.

In 2017, Colin embarked on re-shooting Smith's photographs from the book, out of personal interest from a photography perspective, and an interest in how the New Town had changed in the intervening half-century.