





ARTISTIC EVOLUTION

A transformative new Art and Design Centre at Stonyhurst is redefining creative education, combining cutting-edge facilities and access to the school's historical collections to inspire pupils across artistic and technical disciplines

Opened in September 2025, Stonyhurst's new Art and Design Centre represents a bold and timely investment in creative education. At a point when access to subjects such as Fashion and Textiles is narrowing across the region, the College has expanded its provision, creating a fully resourced, specialist environment that brings together Fine Art, Photography, Fashion and Textiles and Design and Technology all within a newly designed, repurposed area of the school.

The result is a light, open and inspirational space that reflects both the College's historic foundations and its forward-thinking approach. By removing old panelling and opening the layout, the former art department has been transformed into a bright, airy hub, with dedicated areas for each discipline. Upstairs, a space known as the attic room provides Higher Line (Sixth Form) pupils studying A level and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses with a dedicated studio-style environment. "This is where they have their own space and workstations, it reflects a professional art studio," explains Head of Art Martin Harrison.

Mr Harrison brings a global perspective to his role, having worked as an art teacher and Head of Department in English-speaking schools across the world, including China, Beijing, Moscow and Abu Dhabi. That international experience is reflected in the ambition and outlook of the new centre, which is already attracting pupils from local, national and international schools.

"We have pupils coming from all over the world just because of their interest in art and design," he says. "The new centre is having a tangible impact – there is a real buzz about it throughout the College."



At the heart of the department is a commitment to offering both artistic and technical pathways. Pupils move seamlessly between traditional practices and cutting-edge processes, supported by high-tech equipment including laser cutters, 3D printers and digital printers. In the Design and Technology department, these tools have already been used to produce intricate Christmas decorations, combining precisely cut plywood with individually designed textiles.

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Photography is equally well resourced, with professional-level digital cameras, videography equipment and an A1 printer allowing pupils to produce large scale work. Across the department, five specialist teachers support pupils at every stage, ensuring a balance between technical skill and personal creative expression.

Art clinics run every evening until 6pm, covering photography, textiles, painting and sculpture. "Pupils can come back into the department as it's always open," says Mr Harrison. "They can work while listening to music. It becomes a very social space."

This accessibility has helped foster a strong sense of community and enthusiasm: "The engagement of staff and pupils has been fantastic," he adds.

The centre also reflects Stonyhurst's wider STEAM approach, where creativity sits alongside science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Design and Technology plays a key role in linking creative thinking with materials, engineering and innovation, equipping pupils with skills increasingly in demand across modern creative and technical industries.

A defining feature of this Stonyhurst experience is access to its Museum and Historic Collections, which are actively integrated into the creative curriculum. Working closely with curator Jan Graffius, pupils draw inspiration from rare artefacts, manuscripts and textiles. This 'history









in their hands' approach encourages them to connect past craftsmanship with contemporary practice.

Recent projects have included a study of gargoyles inspired by the Waterton Collection and a stained glass project that combined mathematical principles with artistic design. "This brought together maths and art, disciplines often seen as opposite ends of the spectrum, and gave pupils a deeper understanding of the architecture and history behind stained glass," Mr Harrison explains.

During a printmaking project, pupils also discovered an extraordinary resource: "To our surprise, we discovered that the museum has 100 prints by Albrecht Dürer," he recalls. "To have a historic collection of this magnitude within the college is just so amazing." The Dürer collection at Stonyhurst is the second largest private collection in the UK, surpassed only by the Royal Collection.

The department's exhibition programme is another key strength. The former art space has been restored to include a glass-fronted viewing area where work is displayed and regularly updated. "When it's time to refresh the exhibition of work, pupils often gather outside, eager to see what's new. It's really exciting – everyone is just so impressed," says Mr Harrison.

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The new centre will be showcased at the Great Academies event at the end of May, the College's annual celebration of pupil achievement, where pupils will exhibit International Baccalaureate, A level and Syntax (Year 11) work for parents and visitors.

Looking ahead, the department is exploring virtual exhibitions to connect with the wider Stonyhurst community, including its sister school in Malaysia. Collaborations with professional artists continue to enrich the curriculum, while a major partnership with the award-winning design company Joseph Joseph, founded by Stonyhurst alumni, offers the potential for future apprenticeships and pathways into creative industries.

"As a department we are always looking at how we can develop further," says Mr Harrison. "We are beginning to see the impact of this work. It is a ripple effect, showing just how much more is possible." ■

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