



◀ 'The communal spaces are all about order and routine but the prison officers have tried to soften them to an extent. Some of their attempts are telling, and slightly bizarre. Here you have the bars on the window, but the yucca plant in front. Yucca plants are the ubiquitous office plant because you can leave them in the corner and they survive on very little. 'It was quite difficult to take this photograph because of the light coming through the window. I probably shot half a dozen sheets, bracketing the exposures to find one that worked.' All photographs © Edmund Clark.

general's wall – but, he says, this prison was a tough nut to crack.

'It's a unique place and a bit disconcerting at first,' he says. 'Some of the inmates are very old men but they are all life prisoners because they have been convicted of very serious crimes. I didn't take a camera for the first 10 visits, I just spent time talking to the prisoners. Eventually we got to know each other.'

And even when shooting got underway it was slow progress – with Clark sometimes spending a day at the prison and shooting only four sheets. The project took about a year in total – slotted in between commercial projects – and Clark took a total of about one hundred photographs.

Initially taking portraits of the prisoners, Clark soon found himself drawn to the fabric of the prison itself instead. This was partly driven by the fact that portraits of prisoners have to be vetted by their victims, but also by the fact that he wanted to show the institution rather than the individuals.

'When I conceived of the project I thought of it as a portrait series,' he explains. 'Portraits are strong and evocative, but I think they are possibly more accessible – maybe I would have had more success if I had done more portraits. But I started to find the still lifes much more interesting. They say more about the institution itself, rather than the people.'

Clark became interested in the bars, grids and partitioning of the wing, for example, which he felt reflected the strict regime imposed on the prisoners' time. One of his favourite images, for example, is a daily guide to the newspapers, each day crossed off as it passes. 'It's a physical manifestation of time,' he says. 'The crossing off of the days reminded me of the five-bar gates that prisoners traditionally tick off, but for these men it's also a crossing off of the days they have left.'

By the end of the project, Clark amassed about 100 images, 40 of which he hopes to publish as a book. An American publisher has

# Still life

An editorial and commercial photographer by day, **Edmund Clark's** latest personal project provides a thoughtful insight into the world of life-prisoners

**BRITAIN'S AGEING** population and increasing predilection for custodial sentences is creating an interesting problem for its prisons – ageing prisoners. Only one prison, E Wing at Kingston Prison, Portsmouth, is devoted to ageing lifers, however,

housing murderers, rapists, paedophiles and other criminals from their late 50's onwards. It is, as photographer Edmund Clark points out, the future for our prison services, and a mixture between an old people's home and a jail.

Clark started working at the prison in 2002, finally gaining permission to photograph it after months of lobbying. Clark's previous work in prisons helped him gain entry – a poster from his *Baby Fathers* series was on the Kingston Prison director





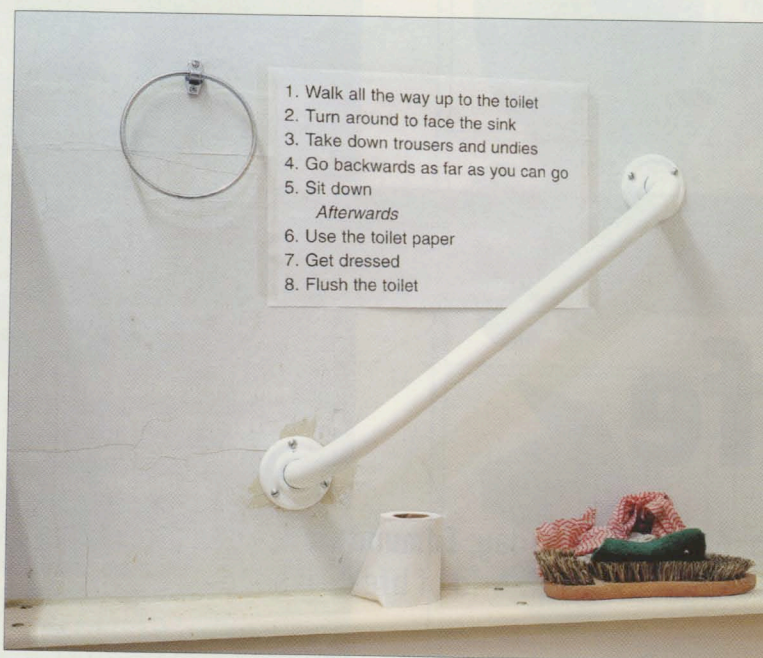
approached him for the US, but he is keen to find a UK publisher. 'I'd like to publish about 40 images, with text at the start,' he says. 'In its purest form you could get it down to 10 but with a bit more room I can expand certain points.'

Photographs from the project are also currently on show at London's Frame Zero, some of them blown up to 3x5ft. 'Ideally I would love to have some of the images absolutely huge to mirror the sense of claustrophobia but it's a smallish gallery,' says Clark.

Ultimately, he adds, he wants his personal work to be seen, and he is currently looking for an agent who can help him break into the gallery and publishing worlds. 'I'm not interested in an agent who's going to go out and get me loads of commercial work,' he says. 'I'm more interested in someone who will represent me to galleries, publishers and institutions that give out grants. I'm interested in taking pictures that make people think.' **BJP**

✳ *Still Life* is currently on show at the Frame Zero gallery, 45 Mitchell Street, London. The exhibition is open 11am - 05pm on Saturdays and by appointment on weekdays until the 22 October. For more details phone 020 7251 454. To see more of Edmund Clark's work, visit [www.edmundclark.com](http://www.edmundclark.com).

✦ 'It's dirty, in fact it's filthy. Each prisoner is meant to be responsible for their own space, they don't have cleaners coming in. But at what point do the prison officers step in? There is a medical orderly in the prison, who is himself a lifer. He does a lot of cleaning and caring and washes their clothes. If they're a bit old they can't necessarily do it themselves, and some of them just don't care.'



✦ 'This bathroom belongs to an inmate who has Parkinson's and is developing dementia. He wasn't always very rational about going to the loo so the orderly typed up these instructions for him. Ironically the bars in this scenario are being used to help him get up, and I think there is also an element of humour. It's tragic but the ridiculousness of the situation is also quite funny. 'It's also like a still life, because there are just a few objects in an arrangement. I think a lot of the images are still life images but I've just tried to go against everything you think of as a still life. Still lifes are usually really lush and beautiful.'





## DISPENSARY

◀ 'The old dispensary hatch sums up the idea of custody and care. Obviously if you're older you need a lot more medical aid. The prisoners in E Wing get their medicines delivered to their cell, this is part of the fabric of the old prison.'

## EQUIPMENT

I use a metal 5x4 film camera – a Wista technical camera. It is very heavy, and enormous, so everything has to be shot on a tripod. It's a much more considered way of shooting, and that was a deliberate choice on my part. You see lots of black-and-white 35mm cameras in prisons, I wanted to do it in a way I hadn't seen before. And once I had decided to concentrate on the detail, I felt I had to shoot it on a large format camera.

I used two lenses. As much as possible I used a standard lens for a 5/4 camera – a Schneider I think – but I also shot with a wide angle lens in some cases because the rooms weren't big enough to stand back. I tried to use it as little as possible, because in using a wide angle, I feel that you are introducing an element of drama. I want the subject itself to be of interest, not create interest through using different lenses.

It was all shot very carefully but there wasn't much pacing. I'd normally shoot at different distances, but this was all very bang bang bang – all the images were shot from the same distance really. This was partly due to the restricted space in which I was working, but I also like it because it means that the experience of looking at the photographs echoes the claustrophobia of the place. It touches on the experience of being there.

For more information about Wista products, visit [www.wista.co.jp](http://www.wista.co.jp)

## ERROR DECIMAL GUIDE

Old New	Old New	Old New	Old New	Old New	Old New
Exp	Exp	Exp	Exp	Exp	Exp
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82 41	10/2 61	12/2 81	14/2 91	16/2 101	18/2 111
83 42	10/3 62	12/3 82	14/3 92	16/3 102	18/3 112
84 43	10/4 63	12/4 83	14/4 93	16/4 103	18/4 113
85 44	10/5 64	12/5 84	14/5 94	16/5 104	18/5 114
86 45	10/6 65	12/6 85	14/6 95	16/6 105	18/6 115
87 46	10/7 66	12/7 86	14/7 96	16/7 106	18/7 116
88 47	10/8 67	12/8 87	14/8 97	16/8 107	18/8 117
89 48	10/9 68	12/9 88	14/9 98	16/9 108	18/9 118
90 49	10/10 69	12/10 89	14/10 99	16/10 109	18/10 119
91 50	10/11 70	12/11 90	14/11 100	16/11 110	18/11 120
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93 52	10/13 72	12/13 92	14/13 102	16/13 112	18/13 122
94 53	10/14 73	12/14 93	14/14 103	16/14 113	18/14 123
95 54	10/15 74	12/15 94	14/15 104	16/15 114	18/15 124
96 55	10/16 75	12/16 95	14/16 105	16/16 115	18/16 125
97 56	10/17 76	12/17 96	14/17 106	16/17 116	18/17 126
98 57	10/18 77	12/18 97	14/18 107	16/18 117	18/18 127
99 58	10/19 78	12/19 98	14/19 108	16/19 118	18/19 128
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104 63	10/24 83	12/24 103	14/24 113	16/24 123	18/24 133
105 64	10/25 84	12/25 104	14/25 114	16/25 124	18/25 134
106 65	10/26 85	12/26 105	14/26 115	16/26 125	18/26 135
107 66	10/27 86	12/27 106	14/27 116	16/27 126	18/27 136
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