

CREATIVE HUB

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FEBRUARY EDITION

Welcome to your monthly update on all things creative in Exeter. We are back after a short break in January and have lots of exciting interviews, events and opportunities for you! In our February edition, we get ready for Two Short Nights with some creative collaborations, hear about the upcoming Exeter City Slam, and find out more about a new exhibition space in the city. Read on to find out more.

What have you been up to this month?

Have a piece of creative news or an opportunity you'd like to be shared? Send us a message on our social media channels and we'll include what we can in future editions.

Want more updates, opportunities and creative news?

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Two Short Nights Collaborations: Laser and Grain



Each year Two Short Nights invites a handful of individuals to collaborate with the festival by submitting a piece of work in relation to the programme. Contributions can be anything from a review to illustrations, podcasts to video essays. Anything goes! We share these responses in the lead up to the festival to celebrate alternative perspective and new connections to the filmmakers we are platforming. This month we chatted with one of the creatives behind Laser and Grain, Annie Gould, who is making this year's awards.

Tell us about Laser and Grain - how did you get started?

I specialise in making bespoke wooden laser engraved items. I started the business in lockdown, I had lost work and wasn't eligible for furlough so I took it as the perfect opportunity to set out on my own! I was building my van at the time and wanted a way of creating beautiful, functional and sustainably conscious pieces that were custom fit for vans. Since then, I have branched out in to my own products and now predominately make sustainably focused merchandise, bespoke signage, medals and awards for small businesses, educational settings and charities.

What has been the inspiration behind the design of these awards?

I wanted to create something that was visually bold enough to convey the esteem of the awards whilst using natural materials. The Two Short Nights logo lent itself really well to layering cut and engraved wood - I used maple and walnut for contrast.



Annie Gould, one of the founders of Laser and Grain

What are you looking forward to seeing/taking part of in Two short nights?

So much! But the Doclab presents screenings are a particular highlight for me - the lineup of short documentaries is so incredibly diverse and I'm looking forward to every one of them.

What do you enjoy most about being a part of the creative scene in Exeter?

The community. My first experiences as a maker was selling at markets. Fore street flea, St Thomas Christmas market, Maker Mart and Map pop up space have introduced me to so many different makers and creative opportunities/spaces, from there I discovered how broad and welcoming the creative scene is in Exeter and I consider myself very lucky live here.

[Two Short Nights](#) takes place from Thu 06 Feb - Fri 07 Feb, with a variety of shorts screenings, commission premieres and socials. If you want to see the awards for yourself make sure to attend the 48 Hour Film Challenge Premiere with Award Ceremony (and after party!) which wraps up the festival on Fri 07 Feb, 8.30pm.



Vitrine



A snippet of 'Camouflage', Janet's exhibition currently displayed in Vitrine

Exeter-based contemporary artist Janet Sainsbury (whose exhibition 'A Gift of Nearness' was at Exeter Phoenix last year) is currently showing some work in Vitrine, a new exhibiting space set in a domestic setting in the city. We asked Janet and curator of Vitrine Sarah Bennett about the experience of showing work in this unique space and how the project came about.

What is Vitrine and how did it come about?

(SB) Originally a shop display case circa 1900, Vitrine stands in a corner of the living room in my 1920s home and replaces a small makeshift cabinet that I cheekily called my 'museum' that previously housed treasured artefacts given to me by art students and artist friends. Vitrine has three glass sides, a glass door, and four glass shelves, and as a modest curatorial project, it is offered free to any artists in my UK and global network to use as an experimental and temporary installation space with the intention that the artist(s) can invite a selected audience to engage with their work. Vitrine was

conceived during the global pandemic as a way to provide artists with a unique exhibition space following a period of creative isolation, and as a focus to bring artists together in engaged conversation. Each iteration of Vitrine is co-curated between the artist and myself, and is professionally documented, to be compiled into an occasional, limited-edition publication.

How has this experience of installing your work been different (or similar) to installing works in a gallery?

(JS) I could only show small-scale artwork in Vitrine due to its size. Prior to planning and installing my show I had seen other artists work in Vitrine, so I had a good idea of how it looks in real life with a range of different types of artwork. I was also able to visit when the case was empty a few weeks before my installation, which was very helpful for trying out ideas and meant the actual installation was quick and went smoothly.

A key consideration was how to install 2D artworks in a display case with glass walls. We decided to use wooden wedge-shaped stands to prop the postcards against, the stands were not visible which gave the impression that the postcards were floating. As all Vitrine's walls are made of glass, it was important to make sure the installation worked from the sides also.

Sarah was on hand offering advice and helping with the lighting and stands. As co-curators we both wanted the installation to be simple and uncluttered, allowing the postcards to be seen clearly.

A lovely aspect of showing on glass shelves is that the postcards were reflected creating a double image, which I particularly enjoyed.

What have you enjoyed most about working together on this exhibition?

(SB) Excited and intrigued by seeing a series of portraits of women artists and writers on pairs of found postcards in Janet's studio, I asked if she would be interested in working towards installing them as part of Vitrine. I sensed that the scale and subject matter of the images would lend themselves to the intimate space of the cabinet and highlight the visual and psychological tension arising from the ubiquitous landscapes over which the mask-like faces are painted. Janet enthusiastically accepted my invitation and decided on 'Camouflage' as a title for Vitrine #7. As part of the co-curation process, she tested the pairings in Vitrine, joined by me once she had explored an initial installation plan. With remarkable ease, we concurred on the selection and positioning of eight artworks, and quickly found ourselves deep in conversation, noticing subtle transformations in the visual qualities of the portraits, and



resonances between the sets of pairs, once they were installed and illuminated. During the viewings I have enjoyed listening to Janet talking with her chosen guests about making the portraits, and hearing their responses, such that I feel that I have got to know the work at a deeper level.

(JS) I was delighted when Sarah suggested I might like to show my painted postcards in Vitrine; during a visit to my studio she saw several works in progress and immediately thought they would fit well.

The whole process from this initial invitation to the art supper and launch event has been easy going and pleasurable. Working together on this project has been a lovely way of getting to know Sarah better; her generosity and openness meant that being in her home felt relaxed and comfortable. I am very grateful to Sarah for hosting and initiating Vitrine - it is a wonderful addition to Exeter's contemporary art scene!

Why is it important to have these alternative installation spaces for artists in Exeter?

(SB) Since its inception in November 2023, Vitrine, with its regular viewings, has been welcomed by participating artists as an alternative installation space for Exeter. It hopefully complements the endeavours of locally based artists to create alternative public-facing arts spaces outside of the established curated and funded gallery sector. Such projects - in empty shop fronts, abandoned buildings, and pop-up venues, screenings and events - are dependent on highly motivated individuals or groups of artists, and are run with scant funding, and are often time limited, with local authorities being keen to support creativity and public engagement, yet unable to provide sustainable long-term capital or revenue investment. As a non-public space, Vitrine is perhaps similar to 'living room theatre', but also reminds me

(though on a very modest level) of the celebrated Salons of 16thC Italy and 17th/18thC France, and the art Salons of the 20thC, all hosted by women. Whether public or private, it is an emphasis on experimentation, open dialogue, ideas exchange, and 'attentiveness,' that makes diverse alternative installation spaces, important resources for artists.

(JS) I think it is very important that there are a range of different spaces for artists to show all types of work at any stage of their career.

Vitrine offers an opportunity that is hard to find elsewhere in the city: a chance to show new or experimental small-scale artwork in a domestic setting. Each viewing is limited to six guests; this leads to an intimate atmosphere and relaxed conversations - an integral part of the experience.

Showing my postcards for the first time in the unique setting of Vitrine has allowed me to view them differently; less as 2D pictures to be framed and hung on the wall, more as expressive objects.

There is a history of artists opening up their front rooms or entire homes to show art, either their own or others. It is a practical response to lack of exhibiting spaces and costs. A few years ago, I showed a painting at Subsidiary Projects, London, a gallery which was actually a room in a flat that for the duration of each exhibition was cleared of all furniture and opened to the public. For the artist and audience it is a very different experience, fun and intriguing.

Traction Projects at Positive Lights, offers a similarly valuable opportunity for emerging artists to show new work in the city centre. I've really enjoyed seeing the installations so far, lets hope we get more unique and alternative spaces developing.

Find out more about Vitrine [here](#), and more about Janet's work [here](#)



The postcards in Janet's studio

Two Short Nights Collaborations - Annie Doody



Our second Two Short Nights collaboration has been produced by Annie Doody, a third year student at Exeter University studying English and Film. As part of her dissertation she is collaborating with Exeter Phoenix and Studio 74 to explore short filmmaking, particularly in local contexts.

Annie is creating a series of videos and blogs which will explore short filmmaking, specifically at Two Short Nights, highlighting past submissions and discussing the festival and its role in local filmmaking. Her aim is to build interest and excitement ahead of the festival, offering people deeper understanding of the creative landscape and history surrounding the event. Annie says:

“My research highlights how events like Two Short Nights encourage creativity and inclusivity by promoting short films as a powerful and accessible medium for storytelling— a message I am eager to share. I hope to increase understanding of the value of short filmmaking, as it is often overlooked in mainstream discourse!

What makes Two Short Nights such a standout festival? Since its launch in 2001 it has been championing local talent and contributing to a vibrant community of filmmakers in Exeter. This video showcases the role of Two Short Nights in promoting filmmaking regionally and across the globe. Featuring insights from Luke Hagan, a programme coordinator at the festival, you'll get a behind-the-scenes understanding of the ethos that shapes the festival's success. Join us in celebrating the remarkable impact of Two Short Nights!”

[Watch the video here](#)

Stay tuned for the March edition where Annie will be sharing her reflections on this year's festival. [Two Short Nights](#) takes place from Thu 06 Feb - Fri 07 Feb, with a variety of shorts screenings, commission premieres and socials.

Spork! X City Slam



Shaday Barrowes-Bayewunmi, who won a Spork! Slam event a few years ago

Exeter UNESCO City of Literature, Spork! Poetry and Taking the Mic are back and joining forces once again to present the 3rd annual City Slam; an exciting competition to find the best spoken-word artist in Exeter (and across Devon).

12 poets will battle it out across 3 rounds of fierce but friendly competition. With feature slots from previous City Slam winner and stand-up poet Edward Tripp, as well as the brilliant published poet Bryony Littlefair, and an electric headline set from comedian, author, popular science endorser and now poet Robin Ince.

We chatted to Chris White of Spork! to find out more about the Slam, how to get involved (see the current callout in our opportunities section!), and his favourite moments from previous spoken word events.

How did Spork! come to be and how has it grown?

Spork! started up about 6 and a half years ago, as a poetry night at Little Drop of Poison. It was an open mic that would usually have a couple of featured artists on the bill. The audience gave cash donations (cash was still a thing!) and I'd pay the acts whatever was in the bucket.



Chris White, founder of Spork!

From the beginning I wanted Spork! to be a live poetry night with a difference. I wanted it to be fun and raucous, and not always particularly polished. I'd programme diversely, and have a whole range of poets on the bill, from more traditional page poets to very much performance poets, from the funny to the punchy to the political.

Since then we've hosted almost 100 events, and done everything from Haiku Slams, to workshops and pop-up performances. We've programmed big names like Rob Auton, Vanessa Kissule, Joelle Taylor and Harry Baker, as well as lots of local emerging and established poets too - plus comics and drag queens and rappers and even brass bands. We often host shows at Exeter Phoenix, but also all over Exeter and beyond.

What would you say to people who might be interested in Spork! who hasn't attended a spoken word event before?

If you think you're probably not into poetry, you're in good company!! Spork! is absolutely a poetry night for people who don't like poetry (or don't think they do.) It's fun, energetic, often very silly, and it'll absolutely draw you in. It's never dull, or dry or pretentious. That type of poetry night can get in the bin.

If you still feel you hate poetry, then at least come to Worst Poet Wins. Every year we host a kind of anti-slam where poets and comedians write and perform the most intentionally terrible, crappy, cliched and offensive poetry they can. It's lots of fun, and everybody kind of hates it. Next one will be in June as part of the Exeter Comedy Fest (details coming soon!)

What top tips would you give to someone interested in entering the slam who hasn't slammed before?



Jonah Corren, previous winner of City Slam

Give it a go! As competitions go it's really quite lovely. The audience, the other slammers and everybody involved are always very lovely, supportive and are absolutely egging you on to do your best. Don't overthink it, just perform or read the poem that you're proudest of. You never know what might win in a slam; it could be quiet and contemplative, it might be shouty and political, or it

might be downright filthy... you just don't know. Plus, our judges score in secret. So it's all very civilised. Plus if you win you get a big envelope of cash.

What have previous slammers gone on to do next?

This is only our 3rd City Slam, and our previous 2 slam winners couldn't be more different. Jonah Corren is an excellent poet and singer-songwriter who performs regularly all over the South West and beyond at folk nights and festivals and poetry gigs. Edward Tripp is a very surreal and very shouty stand-up comedian, who is about to go on tour with his show "No Man is an Ireland." Both of them went on to represent Exeter in SLAMOVISION - UNESCO's international poetry slam, which is basically a less problematic (but much less camp) Eurovision for poets. Jonah did really well in 2023, but missed out! And last year Ed Tripp... well, Ed's an acquired taste, and I don't know if the world as quite ready.



Ed Tripp, last year's winner

Anyway, the winner of April's Slam will get another chance to compete in Slamovision, and will win £150 and some other goodies too!

[City Slam](#) will take place at Exeter Phoenix on Tue 29 Apr at 7.30pm. Want to give it a go? Keep reading to find the callout to sign up to this year's Slam in our opportunities section.

CAMP x GALLERY 333 Callout | Deadline: Thu 13 Feb

We are teaming up with CAMP to invite proposals from their members for the imaginative use of Gallery 333. Gallery 333 is an intimate exhibition space at Exeter Phoenix, created to display small installations & contemporary art interventions in nine-week long exhibitions. The gallery has dimensions of 125cm high x 74cm wide x 36cm deep (333 litres of space!), it has a secure glass door, access to a power supply and is situated in a prime location opposite the main ramped entrance door to the building. The exhibition will take place from 28th June - 31st August 2025.

Contemporary Art Membership Platform (CAMP) is a member-led support and professional development network for artists, arts workers, and other creatives. CAMP collectively promotes and supports doing, making, and sharing contemporary art across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

[Find out more and apply](#)

Summer at the Quayside - Artists sought | Deadline: Fri, 14 Feb

Building on the success of our previous Summer at the Quayside programmes, Exeter Canal & Quay Trust are looking to commission a range of individuals or organisations to create a family-friendly offer on the Quayside over the school summer holidays.

[Apply here](#)

Open Call: Access Commission 2025 | Deadline: 17 Feb

'a space' arts are looking to commission a d/Deaf, blind/visually impaired, disabled* and/or neurodivergent artist to make new work which will be exhibited at our headline venue, God's House Tower. There is a £7,000 budget available for this commission and a separate Access Fund for additional financial support if its needed.

[Find out more and apply here](#)

Two Together: Porthmeor Studios Residencies 2025 | Deadline: Sun 09 Feb

The Two Together: Porthmeor Studios Residencies is an open call residency for pairs of visual artists. This residency invites local artists from Devon and Cornwall to apply in collaboration with a UK-based artist from outside the region. Together, selected artists will work at the historic Porthmeor Studios in St Ives, fostering creative exchange and artistic experimentation.

[Find out more and apply](#)

OPPORTUNITIES

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Apply for the March Scratch Night | Deadline: 10am, Mon 03 Feb

Exeter Phoenix Scratch Night offers South West based artists in need of an audience a chance to stretch their ideas and the opportunity to test their work in the Exeter Phoenix Auditorium, along with £150 to help develop their idea and a small amount of rehearsal space before the Scratch Night.

Whether you're currently working on a show and there's a new bit you'd like to get in front of an audience, or you've had an idea ruminating that is ready to be put in front of an audience - we'd like to invite you to apply to Scratch Night, an opportunity to test up to 20 minutes of live work.

[Find out more and apply here](#)

Call for Filmmakers - Respect Cinema | Deadline 01 Mar

We're seeking films focused on multiculturalism, diversity and community inclusion to be featured at our Respect Cinema event in April. The films will be shown at Studio 74 @ the Exeter Phoenix with a view to building an annual south west UK film festival in the coming years. Films can be in any style fiction/non-fiction, animations, musical. Existing films will be considered but we encourage creators to craft something unique and powerful that speaks to these themes.

[Find out more and apply](#)

Co-Working at Alibi

Theatre Alibi are offering a free trial period of their co-working space. Morning or afternoon slots are available and at the beginning of each sessions there is a 'touch point' moment where you can grab a cup of something hot and say hello. All that we ask is that in return you fill in our feedback form.

[Find out more and book a space here](#)

Sign up to Slam! | Deadline: 5pm Fri 14 Mar

Exeter UNESCO City of Literature, Spork! Poetry and Taking the Mic are joining forces once again to present the 3rd annual City Slam; an exciting competition to find the best spoken-word artist in Exeter (and across Devon). The 12 Slammers will be picked out of a hat at midday on the 16th. To register, just send an email to Tim on slam@speakingin.co.uk with your name, age, and where you're based. Slammers must be aged 16+ and based in Devon.

[Find out more here](#)

Riddler in Residence | Deadline: Mon, 17 Feb

Working closely with partners to reach local groups and communities, you will be co-creating a literary response to the heritage of Exeter Cathedral and its significant Library and Archives collections, including the medieval votive collection. This is an exciting opportunity to devise and deliver creative workshops with community groups and young people.

[Apply here](#)





Networking

- [Playwrights Cafe Exeter](#) | First Thursday of the month | Exeter Phoenix | £6 OTD
- [Little Scratch Night](#) | Wed 26 Feb, 5.30pm - 7.30pm
- [Two Short Nights Social](#): Hosted in partnership with Screen Devon | Thu 06 Feb, 7pm
- [BFI NETWORK SOUTHWEST PRESENT Beyond Shorts: Launch Event](#) | Tue 11 Feb, 6.30pm

Professional Development

- [Amplify](#): Free professional development workshops for Musicians | Starts Wed 12 Mar, 2pm - 5pm
- Physical Theatre & Dance Exploration with South West Dance Hub | Tuesdays, 3.30pm - 5pm | [Find out more](#)

Recommended Events

- [Melanie Jackson: Hot Flash](#) | Exhibition Launch: Sat 15 February, 3-5pm, free
- [Two Short Nights Film Festival](#) | Thu 06 Feb - Fri 07 Feb
- [Scratch Night](#) | Mon 03 Mar, 7.30pm
- [Inspired by the textiles of Chilean Arpilleristas](#): Stitching Protest and Resistance | Sat 08 Mar, various sessions | £15

Have a piece of creative news or an opportunity you'd like to be shared? Send us a message on the [Creative Hub Facebook page](#) and we'll include what we can in future editions.



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