

CREATIVE HUB

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JULY EDITION

Welcome to your monthly update on all things creative in Exeter. In our July edition we hear from our 2025 Green Phoenix Festival intern, get an insight into the next Gallery333 installation, and find out more about a local comedy collective.

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.

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Green Phoenix Festival Internship Reflection



With our Green Phoenix Festival 2025 quickly approaching on Sunday 6th July, Festival Intern Lucy Facer reflects on the experience of working on the project and the importance of collective green action:

‘Soon Green Phoenix Festival will offer a series of free sustainability-focused performances, screenings, workshops, stalls and learning activities for all ages, in partnership with local groups and green organisations.

The festival is important to me because I think climate action can feel inaccessible because the prevailing attitudes are overwhelmingly focused on the individual. Like many people, I

already make an effort to boycott fast fashion, eat plant-based when I can and opt for zero-waste options, but realise that governments and businesses need to implement solutions on a much wider scale. Unfortunately, the world simply isn't set up in a way that makes it easy to reject unsustainable ways of living and this can bring up a feeling of powerlessness.

Working on the festival has been the first time I've meaningfully engaged with collective campaigns for a greener future, which are a testament to what can be achieved when people connect over a shared vision. It has been genuinely rewarding to see the programme for the festival grow and evolve since January, which has equally pushed me professionally to become comfortable in the creative space.

One of the challenges of an event like this is striking a balance between the serious reality of the climate crisis and providing hopeful, actionable ways we can mitigate further damage. My personal aim for the festival has been to involve young people, especially students and people in their twenties like me, because I think as a group we



often feel passionately about climate issues but can be prone to feeling isolated or paralysed into inaction in the face of such a huge challenge.

I expect the day will bring together individual action with group perspectives, with talks on topics ranging from how to create a wildflower garden to a beginner's guide to activism. I'm particularly excited for the Challacombe Chronicled performance by Richard Chappell Dance company which will delve into the history of the Dartmoor landscape. Exeter's connections to Devon's abundant green spaces have been a source of well-being since I moved here from Birmingham and are something I'm sad to leave behind after graduation. Equally, there will be plenty of interactive activities that can help spark the conversation about nature with younger children, and Ride On's Smoothie Bike should be a highlight!

Since wrapping up my final year of university studying English, I have been able to dedicate more time towards the festival which I hope will be both a celebration of the natural world and a call to action. People often understate the value of writing but how we use language can change narratives and challenge systems that contribute to climate change.

Part of what attracted me to Exeter Phoenix when looking for an intern role was their commitment to sustainability, along with accessibility and diversity, as a core value. Initiatives like the Green Phoenix project, which puts sustainability at the heart of everything Exeter Phoenix does, show that the arts sector in particular can lead an alternative way of doing things that is eco-conscious. The overarching project is backed up by real data showing that changes like using solar energy, reusing rainwater and insulating window have an actual impact. Along with this evidence-backed approach, I think that the innovation of artists, filmmakers and other creatives will prove to be instrumental in the fight against environmental crisis.

The internship has been a hugely valuable experience. Going forward in my career, I'll be hard-pressed to find an employer in the arts that puts sustainability at the forefront with such care.'

Join us for the [Green Phoenix Festival](#) on Sun 06 July, from 11am, and find out more about our wider Green Phoenix project [here](#).

A Q+A With A Press Of Suspects



Exeter Phoenix Scratch Night alumni Will Skillington and his company A Press of Suspects are producing 2 upcoming events at Exeter Phoenix this summer. A Press of Suspects is a collective of people creating noise and words to express themselves, using comedy and laughter to create experiences that bring us together. Ahead of the events our Performance Programmer Katy Danbury asked Will about his practice and what advice he would give to aspiring comedians!

[Content warning: Please be aware that the following article discusses mental health and mentions suicide.]

What do you enjoy most about the South West comedy scene?

Hmmm....this is a bit tricky for me to answer at present because i've been away for around 2 years.

I was seriously ill and wasn't functioning at all. For 2 years. I've returned to see new comics/nights entering the fray in Plymouth, Cornwall and Exeter. This is a really healthy development, but I feel a bit removed from it at present.

Before I got ill I enjoyed the supportive nature of the 'scene', there wasn't many of us in Plymouth/Cornwall but this has definitely changed during my illness. Apologies for blowing my own trumpet a bit, but I do feel I helped contribute to the 'scene' before I became ill. I'd like to think some comics regard me as someone who was supportive and gave opportunities to perform.

What advice would you give to new comedians starting out?

Like the corporate behemoths Nike say - Just Do It. And keep doing it. You're gonna have good gigs, ok gigs and gigs that will make you want to curl up into a ball and sink into the earth. Every gig you learn something. Keep going. I'm 7 years in and still feel like a beginner.

Your material, songs and skits cover a variety of topics based on your real-life experiences, including your Bipolar diagnosis. How would you describe the experience of speaking very openly and honestly to your audience about such personal anecdotes?

I just wanna monetise it ;)

Seriously though, I, and my family, have been through hell the last 2 years; I'm 46 and have only been diagnosed with Bipolar Type 2 and ADHD in last few months. I felt embarrassed, guilty and ashamed for 2 years. I didn't want to be here.

I no longer feel that shame/guilt/embarrassment as I accept I was incredibly unwell and it wasn't my fault.

If I can channel this experience into comedy and speak out to help others then that is win win win. I find it cathartic to talk openly about it. Hopefully audiences will also feel the same catharsis when someone is being so open about their struggles. Everyone has, or knows someone, with mental health issues: one of the biggest killer of males is suicide and I completely understand why now. I lost a cousin to suicide.

But I survived, my family saved me. I want to let others know there are ways out, no matter how dark it gets.

Join Will for the events below coming up at Exeter Phoenix:

Saturday 30th August: President Obonjo – a larger-than-life stand-up comedy character who has been taking the comedy scene by storm.

Friday 26th September: The Joke Clinic – Charlie Bowers and Walter Jack are The Joke Clinic, bringing the success of their critically-acclaimed YouTube series to the stage. Each night the clinicians host guest comedians – transforming tired material into comedy gold!



Rachael Coward: Gallery333



Rachael Coward is an artist working across installation, printmaking and sculpture. For *Speak/Easy* in Gallery333, Rachael combines found objects, ceramics and prints that speak of liminal threshold markers in a sculptural intervention that allows for closer inspection of the often overlooked. We asked Rachael about the process of working to the dimensions of the gallery space, and what she enjoys about being a creative practitioner in the South West.

Can you tell us a bit about your practice and what you've been exploring for your exhibition?

I am an artist based in the Carnon Valley in Cornwall. I work across installation, printmaking and book works, my interests lie in heritage, language and thresholds. I use my practice to explore my sense of identity as a woman living and working in rural Cornwall.

Recently I have been creating monuments to my lived experience based on thresholds and markers I have been finding in everyday settings and extracting them, placing them into new contexts and transforming them. Duality is also a key theme in my work, and I enjoy exploring the grey area that sits in, around and between opposing forces; full/empty, internal/external, presence/absence, analogue/digital.

I have been working towards my first solo show this Autumn at the Heseltine Gallery in Truro and the Gallery333 commission has been the perfect opportunity to test out some ideas for sculptural assemblages ahead of the show. I have been exploring how to represent my interactions with liminal threshold markers that I encounter in my everyday travels and putting them under scrutiny so that there can be close inspection of the often overlooked.

I like using ceramic to create pieces of hardware, flipping its intended use on its head and creating an air of tension and fragility, drawing your attention to the hardware itself as opposed to what it is that is being held/bordered/restricted.

How have you found working to the dimensions of Gallery333?

I really love working with specific sites, but this part of my practice has declined in the last few years. My piece for Gallery333 has given me the chance to



revive this and create a purpose-built installation. I have been toying with the idea of using clamps to present my ceramic works and this show has given me the chance to try this out. Originally I was planning on using pre-existing stands to hold the clamps, but they felt like they would be lost in the gallery and not give the overall work enough visual structure. Instead, I used the gallery's dimensions to build a frame specific to that space before introducing pre-made ceramic and paper components. It is something that I would have likely not tried had it not been for the unique dimensions of the space and I feel that as a result I have a new direction to take the presentation of my sculptural works.

What do you enjoy most about the South West creative scene?

The culture is so supportive, it celebrates and lifts others up rather than fostering a competitive environment. Despite how small the region is there is a lot of variety in the kinds of practices on display, and I think there is a bit of an underdog attitude when it comes to showcasing ourselves against the rest of the UK, despite our rural challenges we have the skills and drive to compete with the big cities. Often you will see the same concepts or concerns appearing in each other's work thanks to our geographic location but the variety in what people practice makes the outcomes really engaging. I am also very grateful for organisations like CAMP & Creative Kernow Associates who are brilliant for enabling creatives to connect, collaborate and stay in touch.

Find out more about the exhibition and Rachael's practice [here](#). The exhibition is in partnership with [CAMP](#), a member-led network for the creative and visual arts community in the South West.

Right: Speak/Easy Gallery333 Install Detail – Credit Rachael Coward



Sea for Yourself: Commission Two Open Call | Deadline: Mon 01 Sep

Plymouth Culture is inviting applications for the next major commission in Sea for Yourself — the ambitious four-year cultural programme that uses art, digital innovation and storytelling to connect people with the UK's first National Marine Park.

We are seeking an artist or collective with expertise in socially engaged practice and experience working with digital technology to develop a collaborative, co-created project rooted in community voices.

The commission will explore Plymouth residents' relationship with the ocean, drawing inspiration from the rich collections and archives at The Box, and working with the communities around Plymouth Sound National Marine Park.

[Find out more and apply here](#)

Two Short Nights 2026 Festival: Submissions now open! Deadline: 31 July

Our 24th edition of the Two Short Nights Film Festival will take place between 05 - 06 March 2026. The festival is open to short films of all production techniques, including animation, documentary, drama, music videos, experimental or artists' moving image and hybrid work from low to high budgets. Films must have a maximum duration of 20 minutes including credits.

[Submit your film here](#)

Open call for artists - 'Passing Through' | Deadline: Sun 06 Jul

Studio KIND and Studio 10 Project Space at East Quay are teaming up to host two exhibitions throughout 2025-2026, and we are inviting artists from across Northern/Mid Devon and West Somerset to take part. Passing Through is an exploration of what it means to live on the cusp of a place; from the ways in which we exist between built/rural spaces, to the intersections between different landscapes and environments, to the idea of edge-lands, margins, and liminality in a broader context. Taking inspiration from the South West coastline, local landscapes and the moorland between us, the project will explore the connections within our communities, whilst also acting as a kind of mapping of our geographical locations.

[Find out more](#)

OPPORTUNITIES

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PDSW Visiting Artist Callout 2025 | Deadline: 01 Aug

Are you a dance artist ready to take the next step in your creative journey? Pavilion Dance South West invites applications for our Visiting Artist Scheme 2025: Practice Residency. This unique opportunity is open to UK-based artists working in dance or movement-based practices. Whether you're looking to explore or deepen your practice, our Visiting Artist residency offers you time, space, and support to focus on your work in a fully accessible, professional environment.

[Apply here](#)

CLOSETED - Open Call | Seeking Creative Collaborators and Performers.

We are assembling a dynamic, queer-led team for a new devised theatre production. This is an invitation to create something bold, intimate, and necessary. Closeted is a darkly comedic one*-woman show that dives into the tangled web of secrecy, identity, and self-acceptance. We are currently expanding our creative team and hiring across several roles. This is an exciting opportunity to join a bold, contemporary production committed to platforming underrepresented voices in theatre.

[Apply here](#)

Could you be Exeter's first Young City Laureate? Deadline: 12pm,

Wed 16 Jul

Literature Works is excited to be reaching out to aspiring young writers in Exeter between the ages of 14 and 19 years, as we seek the city's first Young City Laureate. The chosen young writer will be commissioned and paid to create work to celebrate special events or occasions in the city and will be invited to perform in libraries, schools and at festivals.

[Apply here](#)

Exeter City of Literature: Public Programmes Manager | Deadline: Sun, 31 Aug

Are you passionate about designing, shaping, and producing innovative public programs that engage a diverse array of people experientially, intellectually, and creatively? Are you just as happy meeting new people and building warm relationships as you are working independently? Exeter City of Literature (ExCoL) is seeking a visionary Public Programmes Manager to lead our current portfolio of unique programmes and create new programmes and events in the years ahead.

[Apply here](#)





Networking

- [Playwrights Cafe Exeter](#) | First Thursday of the month | Exeter Phoenix | £6 OTD
- [DOCLAB](#) | Wed 23 Jul, 7 – 9pm

Professional Development

- Physical Theatre & Dance Exploration with South West Dance Hub | Tuesdays, 3.30pm - 5pm | [Find out more](#)

Recommended Events

- Spork! The Not Dead Poets Society – last Tuesday of each month, 5:30pm – Exeter Library, free, drop-in.
- [Exhibition opening: Linger](#) | Sat 05 Jul, 3pm - 5pm
- [Green Phoenix Festival](#) | Sun 06 Jul, 11am (including our [Performance](#) and [Visual Art](#) Commissions)
- [Kaleidoscopic Minds: Festival of Neurodiversity](#) | Sun 13 Jul, 11am

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