

CREATIVE HUB

DECEMBER EDITION

Welcome to your monthly update on all things creative in Exeter! In December we reflect on the progression of past Scratch Night commissions, get an insight into the creative processes of artists Bryony Gillard and Yara El-Sherbini, and hear about how our 19-25 Devon Film Commission is going! In January we are taking a break, so the publication will next return in February 2026.

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?

Follow us @exeterphoenixcreativehub on Instagram and Facebook.

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Image credits: South West Theatre Photography

Scratch Night Alumni: Playing Dead

Ahead of our next Scratch Night in collaboration with Exeter Northcott, we're interviewing our Scratch Alumni to find out what they got up to next! Rosalie Roger-Lacan and Alice Bebbler presented their work in progress *Death, Cheddar and Other Urgent Matters* earlier in 2025, which has now been renamed to *Playing Dead*.

Tell us about your Scratch Night experience at Exeter Phoenix. How valuable was this opportunity to the development of your work?

The Exeter Phoenix Scratch Night was such a lovely experience. The team created a really warm, welcoming space that made it feel safe to take risks and try things out. We came in with the first 20 minutes of something I'd written and honestly had no idea how it would land with an audience, but the feedback afterwards was brilliant. We'd given a few questions for the audience to think about in relation to our piece and A3 pieces of paper were put up in the auditorium for audiences to go between and write any thoughts. I liked this way of giving feedback because it gave

people permission to respond in their own time and in their own way. Everyone was so engaged and generous, and it really helped shape how the piece has grown since.

You recently went on to perform a full version at Elevate Festival; Exeter Northcott's annual celebration of South West artists and their work. How much did you find your changed from the Scratch to this performance?

It's changed loads since the Scratch! We definitely had the spine and bones of it back then, but it's been through so much redrafting and rethinking since. Elevate at Exeter Northcott was a huge help, actually. Through them, we got R&D time, space to play, and some brilliant dramaturgical support that helped us shape the piece. This play has really enormously benefitted from the wonderful artist support of the city.



What advice would you give to other artists considering applying to Scratch Night?

Do it! Scratch Night is such a supportive and encouraging space to test out early ideas and see how an audience responds. You don't need to have everything figured out, because it's a place to play, take risks, and find out what works (and what doesn't!) in a really low-pressure environment. Plus, you meet loads of brilliant artists who are all in the same boat, which makes it feel like a little creative community.

Our next Scratch Night will take place on Mon 23 Feb 2026, 7pm - 9pm. Callouts are currently open, find out more in the Opportunities section below.



A Q+A with Bryony Gillard

Bryony Gillard is an artist, curator and educator and a PhD Candidate at University of Plymouth. Situated between writing, workshops, performance and moving image, her practice reflects on events, states of being, materials and organisms that refuse or resist normative capitalist structures and temporalities. Her current research centres the politics of waste — as matter both in and out of place. *May the earth lie light upon thee* is her latest short moving image and explores ideas of presence, attention, and care within landscapes shaped by loss. We asked Bryony about her creative practice and process ahead of her screening and discussion with us on National Grief Awareness Week .

Tell us about your practice and the themes you explore

My work sits between writing, workshops and moving image, and I'm drawn to things that don't fit neatly into dominant ideas

of progress or purity—grief that spills over, illness that disrupts order, and materials like sewage or seaweed that blur boundaries. I'm interested in forms of feminist labour that are relational, improvised and often invisible. Through film, text and collaboration, I explore how bodies meet infrastructures and how personal experiences echo wider ecological and political pressures. Lately I've been focusing on waste—especially wastewater—as a way of understanding porous bodies, uneven systems and the messy circulations that connect us.

How do you approach filmmaking and what kind of processes/ collaborations do you enjoy working with?

My practice is very collaborative, whether that's with other creative practitioners, people interested in the same topic as me (such as scientists, enthusiasts or people with lived experiences) and also with more than human collaborators such as animals or physical sites. I like to see my work as a space to bring a plurality of voices and stories together, and this often comes about through the facilitating workshops with others. My approach to film making is quite open, I don't really storyboard





or a have a clear idea of what I want to make in advance. I like to see the process of filming and editing as a form of improvisation - listening and responding to the materials in front of me.

What do you enjoy most about the creative scene/having a creative practice in the South West?

We have a very solid and friendly scene down here, despite having less arts funding than many parts of the U.K. One of the things I find most inspiring is the DIY attitude and ambitious level of artist-led projects happening across the region. I also really like the fact that people aren't afraid to make a bit of a trek to support art - I think because the scene is quite dispersed (and in many cases rural), it makes us all a lot more willing to travel to see stuff - and that's a really good thing!

May the earth lie light upon thee will be screened at Exeter Phoenix on Sat 06 Dec at 2pm, and includes a discussion with the artist. Tickets are free and can be booked [here](#)

Image 1+2: May the earth lie light upon thee, Bryony Gillard 2025, commissioned by Rame Projects

Image 3: Bryony Gillard in her studio at Spike Island, Bristol with dog, Nell (2023), photo by Lisa Whiting



Film Commission Update: On The Same Earth

Our 19-25 Devon Film Fund Commission On The Same Earth by Sam Cox is well underway and Sam has given us an update on how it's been going.

Eadlin, a Saxon settler, is injured after trying to break a mysterious dragon egg. When faced by Leir, a displaced post Roman Celt wanting to protect the egg, they apprehensively try to communicate. Switching between modern English, Cornish and Old English we watch from each of their perspectives seeing and hearing the voices of the past as they begin to accept each other.

This short was a long time in the planning but very special to film with two great locations in a wonderful authentic roundhouse and native woodland. Learning so much about this era from clothing to languages was so interesting and seeing the actors in costume speaking these languages made it very magical. Having so many crew across the 3 days was great and whether in new or experienced positions we learnt and shared tips with each other. We've finished all the shoots so now looking forward to the voiceovers and putting it in the edit.



A Q+A with Yara El-Sherbini

Yara El-Sherbini is an internationally renowned multi-disciplinary artist and has been hosting her provocative and fun pub quizzes for the last 20 years around the globe, from Tate Britain to Melbourne International Festival, from Dubai to New York.

As a passionate human rights activist and a parent of Palestinian children, Yara has been using her socially engaging art practice to raise awareness and fight for social justice in Palestine for over 25 years. Ahead of her pub quiz fundraiser for Palestine at Exeter Phoenix (which is fully booked!), we asked Yara about her creative practice.

What do you think humour brings to engaging with social and political issues in art?

In my art practice I use humour to engage with social and political issues as I feel it creates an accessible entry point to talk about very difficult issues, and allows us to say things we couldn't normally say! Humour can sugar coat really heavy ideas, where people are laughing at something, and then afterwards slowing taking in the weight of what I am speaking about. So for me, humour is a very serious thing. My challenge is make work that does not make light of painful realities, but does bring them into the conversation.



Why are play and participation important in your practice?

I'm in a new book called [Challenging Contemporary Thinking on Play](#), exploring the power of play and participation. To give some context of how and why I started to use both in my practice; in 2005 I published a joke book with BOOK WORKS called Sheikh 'n' Vac. I turned my jokes into stand up comedy routines, and while I loved performing on stage to roaring laughter, I felt something was missing - I really wanted to actively engage people as opposed to passive viewing. I feel active participation opens a new way of deeply engaging with content, so play became my medium. I subvert existing playful formats from pop culture so people immediately feel at ease and know how to engage.

What has been your favourite and/or most impactful project to date, and why?

Putting a Hole in The Wall has been my favourite work. It's 1 of 9 mini golf holes that form Doug Fishbone's Leisureland Golf and was commissioned for the 56th Venice Biennale, and then toured the UK. It totally embodies my practice. My golf hole was based on the Israeli built West Bank Separation Barrier, with roadblocks, a checkpoint, turnstiles, barbed wire, and a catapult with the aim of getting the golf ball in a small hole in a replica off the concrete wall.

If you would still like to support the quiz but don't have a ticket, you can donate directly to [Medical Aid for Palestinians \(MAP\)](#)

Callout for open mic night for neurodivergent voices

As part of Neurodiversity Celebration Week, and in collaboration with Exeter University, We Are ND will be hosting a spoken word open mic night for neurodivergent voices at The Mermaid on Weds 18th March 2026. We're currently looking for participants, and would especially like to hear from anyone who has not tried spoken word before and would like help preparing a piece of writing for the event. We will be running a workshop in January for anyone wanting to do this.

[Find out more and apply here](#)

Exeter Phoenix Scratch Night in collaboration with Exeter Northcott | Deadline: 10am, Mon 19 Jan 2026

Exeter Phoenix Scratch Night in collaboration with Exeter Northcott 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. Scratch Night will take place on Mon 23 Feb 2026, 7pm - 9pm

[Find out more and apply](#)

OPPORTUNITIES

Creative Enabler / Support Worker | Deadline: Wed 31 Dec

Theatre & multi-media performance artist Hugh Maylon is seeking a people-person to support with day to day practicalities and in their creative practice.

[Find out more and apply here](#)

Two Together: Porthmeor Studios Residencies | Deadline: Mon 15 Dec

The Two Together: Porthmeor Studios Residencies is an open call residency for pairs of visual artists. This opportunity invites artists from Devon and Cornwall to apply in collaboration with another UK-based artist. Together, selected pairs will work at the historic Porthmeor Studios in St Ives, living and working together across a month-long residency.

[Find out more and apply here](#)

The AREVA Writers' Room II | Deadline: Wed 03 Dec

A 6-part, 3-month programme helping organisations examine institutional language, reduce bias, and create vocabularies of equity and care.

[Find out more and apply here](#)

OPPORTUNITIES

Networking

[Playwrights Cafe Exeter](#) | First Thursday of the month | Exeter Phoenix | £6 OTD

[DOCLAB](#) | Wed 10 Dec, 7 – 9pm

[We Animate on Tues](#) | A new monthly animation gathering!

[Exeter Film Collective](#) | First Wed of the month, 7pm - 9pm

Professional Development

South West Dance Hub | Second Fri of the month, 12.30pm - 2.30pm | [Find out more](#)

Recommended Events

Spork! The Not Dead Poets Society – last Tuesday of each month, 5:30pm – Exeter Library, free, drop-in.

[Sarah Ryder: Artist's Talk](#) | Sat 31 Jan, 12pm, free (booking required).

[May the earth lie light upon thee, Bryony Gillard Screening and discussion](#) | Sat 06 Dec, 2pm, free (booking required)

[Jo in the Water - Extra Preview Screening Added](#) | Sun 28 Dec | 2.30pm

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Illustrations by Darren Shaddick

Edited and copy written by Erika Cann

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exeter**phoenix**

BRADNINCH PLACE, GANDY STREET, EXETER, EX4 3LS01392 667080EXETERPHOENIX.ORG.UK