

CREATIVE HUB

FEBRUARY EDITION

Welcome to your monthly update on all things creative in Exeter! This month we hear about the behind the scenes processes of some of the films featured in this years Two Short Nights festival, learn about the practice of exhibiting artist Donna Mitchell, and learn about the development of one of last years Scratch Night commissions.

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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Contents

News

Gabby Hoad: The Porous Body

Scratch Night Alumni: The Ocean Can Be A Bridge

Libby Bove: Roadwytch

Things Fall: A Q+A with Donna Mitchell

Opportunities

Events

Networking

Professional Development

Recommended events



Gabby Hoad: The Porous Body

Two Short Nights is returning in 2026 to celebrate another year of creativity, diversity, and emerging talent. Now in its 24th edition, Two Short Nights champions innovative storytelling through a dynamic mix of screenings, commissions and our renowned 48-Hour Film Challenge! Exeter based artist Gabby Hoad has her short film *The Porous Body* featured in Shorts #3: Something Feels Off - so we caught up with her to find out more about her practice and the process of making a film.

What is *The Porous Body* about and how did the idea come about?

My moving image work *The Porous Body* is based on first-hand accounts of séances from the late 19th and early 20th century. It focuses on female mediums who manifested otherworldly materials, sounds and objects, seemingly from their own bodies. Some of the phenomena were deemed worthy of serious scientific investigation; on other occasions they proved to be cleverly engineered conjuring tricks. I'm interested in this meeting of science, scepticism and faith. I'm also exploring contemporary notions of ecological entanglement: that the human body isn't autonomous but always existing in relation to other entities.

You've recently started working on more moving image works - how have you found the process and what are the similarities/differences between filmmaking and your wider visual arts practice?

As a visual artist, I've often used video to document my practice but, in recent years I've also started to explore moving image in its own right. I like the way it can stand alone and be shown in many different contexts, not just the gallery. It brings together my interests in sound, image, archive, sculpture and text, and has given me the opportunity to experiment with narrative.



Although gathering footage can be a fairly structured, pre-planned process, I still enjoy just switching on the camera and seeing what I can make (or let) happen in front of it. I find there's a useful dialogue between digital recording and other making. For example: making sculptural objects and filming the way they interact with the environment. The video camera is an interesting collaborator - another eye and ear that perceives things differently to me.

You've been attending DOCLAB at Exeter Phoenix - what has been your experience of these sessions and how have they fed into your practice?

Although I'm an artist film-maker rather than a traditional documentary maker, I've found DOCLAB sessions at Exeter Phoenix very supportive and informative. I've gleaned so much from the presentations and discussions, whether it's about the mechanics of fundraising, the structuring of narrative or the ethics of telling real people's stories.

Watch [Shorts #3: Something Feels Off](#) at Two Short Nights, Thu 05 Mar - Fri 06 Mar, and find out more about Gabby's practice [here](#)



Scratch Night Alumni: The Ocean Can Be A Bridge

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! Riversmeet presented their work in progress The Ocean Can Be A Bridge in our February 2025 Scratch Night.

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

Our play The Ocean Can Be A Bridge is about the visit of Frederick Douglass (escaped slave and leading American abolitionist) in 1846 and his impact on the people in the local abolitionist movement. It is rooted in and reflects issues that are still relevant in current struggles against racism. It has been developed over the last two years through a series of workshops and consultative events including several with people from the local Caribbean community and refugee groups.

The opportunity to take part in the Exeter Phoenix Scratch Night in February 2025 gave us the opportunity to focus on dramaturgical issues and think about how certain scenes would

work with an audience which was incredibly valuable. There is no substitute for trying something out in a good size space in a live performance.

You recently went on to perform a full version across the South West. How much did you find your work changed from the Scratch to this performance?

The team at the Phoenix organising Scratch Night and providing technical support were incredibly helpful and made sure that the whole experience was well supported and so we could focus on our performance.

We then took the work on a mini South West tour playing to six sell out audiences. We didn't make major changes but we did shift around elements of one of the scenes we performed. Most importantly our Scratch Night experience allowed us to make adjustments and improvements which really polished our piece. It also gave us really important feedback from people with access issues which we could act upon and improve the viewing experience for all.

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

My advice to other artists applying to Scratch Night is to make sure your work is at the right stage to benefit from the experience. If it's too early stage then Little Scratch may be a more useful environment. I would also encourage everyone to work hard to bring along people to create a good audience to give feedback and that has to be partly the responsibility of artists and companies taking part, not just the organisers.

The next [Scratch Night](#) in collaboration with Exeter Northcott takes place on Mon 23 Feb at Exeter Phoenix.



Libby Bove: Roadwytch

Visual artist Libby Bove was commissioned for last year's Artist Moving Image commission, which will be premiered at Two Short Nights this year, Thu 05 Mar - Fri 06 Mar. We asked Libby how she has found the process of making her film, *Roadwytch*.

What are you working on for your AMI commission?

The piece I've been working on is called *Roadwytch*. It's a short narrative film showing a day in the life of a Roadside Recovery operative: following her daily rituals of vehicle checks, foraging for herbs, and the inevitable rescue of stranded wagons from the hard shoulder.

Whilst this work is quite different from [*Rituals of the Roadways*](#), my first moving image work, it still exists within the same imagined world of Roadside Magic, where plant knowledge, magic and ritual form essential roles in the repair and maintenance of vehicles.

It's been such a joy to be able to bring [Lunatraktors](#) on board, who have produced this incredible soundtrack, which uses their signature style of Broken folk to ground you firmly in the world of the Roadwytch. Their haunting vocals trace the treads of old roadsongs, while layers of harmonies and found sound, carry the hypnotic rhythms of the road.

I wanted Roadwytch to act as this really intimate portrait, showing the daily life of a skilled practitioner, imagining a profession that could have been, had our connection to magic and ritual not been lost. Opening a conversation that Folk rituals are just as valid (and possibly far more needed) on the hard-shoulder, as they are in the flowering meadows.

How has the commission allowed you to develop your practice?

This is only my second moving image work, and I still feel very new to it all. So being supported by Exeter Phoenix to make this work, to run through the process of making a film again, to refresh myself with all the things I learnt last winter, has been really valuable.

I learnt a lot from my experience with Rituals of the Roadways, -



chiefly, that making a film with 20 fully costumed contributors, in the middle of winter, in the middle of the road, was a logically weighty operation. Don't get me wrong, it was amazing to get to work with so many other artists and performers, but for Roadwytch - I wanted to pair the process right down.

I decided from very early on that I wanted to be both behind and in front of the camera, and try to keep the majority of the filming within my bus and the workshop. This made sense with the narrative, but also allowed me to really focus on the detail, and to create something that feels very personal.

Have there been any funny, challenging or surprising things that have come out of making the work?

So very soon into starting the process I realised that I should have used a mask with eye holes - I couldn't see a thing, so had to do a LOT of takes - there's a big pile of bloopers of me failing to line my hands up with the right spanners or working out where truck door is. Also due to not having anyone on the other side of the camera, there was no one to see if a dog was blocking the camera, or if I was shooting a whole scene with the top of my head cut off. Which both happened, a lot.

What are you looking forward to with the films' inaugural screening at Two Short Nights?

I can't wait to see what everyone else has produced. We had a little introductory meeting right at the start of the project, so we all got a little taste of each other's ideas, so it's really exciting to get to see them all realised.

I'll also be bringing my roving archive of Roadlore, [The Museum of Roadside Magic](#) along for the premier on the 6th - and will be free to explore and open for all. Timings T.B.C.

Watch the [Exeter Phoenix Commission Premiere](#) on Fri 06 Mar, 7pm. Find out more about Libby's practice [here](#)



Things Fall: A Q+A with Donna Mitchell

The next exhibition in our galleries is group show *Things Fall*, which explores notions of precariousness, fallibility, and ephemerality in a time of social, political and environmental instability. South West based artist Donna Mitchell is one of eleven exhibiting artists, and ahead of the opening we found out more about her practice.

You work with found materials which you talk about being 'scavenged' - what is your process of scavenging and what draws you towards the objects and materials you collect?

It first starts with an experience - perhaps in a place I travel through frequently - and the act of noticing. I'm drawn to materials that strike an emotional or intuitive chord, and I return to them over time, allowing a narrative to build. Questions emerge—how did this object arrive here, what history does it carry, what does this zone call for? Through repeated encounters, a character or fragment of truth begins to form. Each process is different, and the concept can take many months to fully surface.

How does precarity play a part in your sculpture making?

I position myself within a chain of unfolding events, rather than in full control of an outcome. While I may set initial parameters, once the process begins the work is shaped by uncertainty. Forms break down and transform into others, with each iteration holding equal validity and interest. External forces such as weather and circumstance often play as significant a role as my own actions. I move between author and observer, allowing the work to evolve through instability. Photographs serve only to record moments within this ongoing state of change.



Many of your works feel like they can move/walk/wheel about of their own accord - where do you think they would go if they could?

If my works could move of their own accord, I imagine they'd simply carry on the journeys they're already committed to. Often conceived as travelling bodies to be rolled, pushed or dragged, they pick up scrapes and marks as evidence of the journey. As they tip or fall, a sense of character emerges, a woollen form steadily attracting dirt to itself. Our shared movement often becomes a negotiation, or mild battle, as the works are heavy and awkward and rarely cooperative. I think they would gravitate toward landscapes where they feel momentarily at ease, settling where the ground, weather and living inhabitants might quietly accommodate their presence.

[Things Fall](#) opens on Sat 14 Feb and continues until Sat 11 Apr. Find out more about Donna's practice [here](#)

D&C Film Emerging Filmmaker Fund | Deadline: 12pm, Wed 11 Feb 2026

D&CFilm has partnered with the Exeter Phoenix to offer one Devon or Cornwall-based filmmaker access to £800 in cash funding and £1500 of in-kind support to support the production of a short film of any genre, which is up to 7 minutes in length.

Four of the best ideas will be invited to pitch their film at Two Short Nights Film Festival on Thursday 5 March 2026 at a Live Pitch Event, to win the chance to turn their ideas into a short film.

[Find out more and apply here](#)

Plymouth Performance Weekender Callout | Deadline: 11.59pm, 28 February

We are looking for performance-ready pieces from professional Devon and Cornwall-based performance makers. Acts should be 40-60 minutes in length, of any performance genre. We are able to guarantee that each act that performs will receive £100 or box-office split (% tbc), whichever is higher.

[Find out more and apply](#)

OPPORTUNITIES

Two Short Nights x 48 Hour Film Challenge | Deadline for team registration: 10pm, Tue 03 Feb 2026

Two Short Nights Film Festival invites filmmakers of all abilities to take part in this inspiring challenge. No previous film experience needed. Teams just need a good imagination, plenty of energy and a camera. You can take part in the challenge from anywhere in the world.

The challenge will take place Fri 06 Feb - Sun 08 Feb 2026

Films made within the 48 hours will have the chance to be screened at Two Short Nights Festival on Fri 06 Mar 2026.

[**Find out more and apply**](#)

Rising Artists Camp

Free taster sessions for 15-25 year olds at Sound Gallery Studios are now on offer as part of the 'Rising Artists Camp' project - a music enrichment programme which offers young people the opportunity to record their music and learn new music production skills in an award-winning, professional recording studio. Suitable for: young people who are involved in song-writing, lyric writing, singing, playing an instrument or composing music.

[**Find out more and apply**](#)

OPPORTUNITIES

Networking

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

[DOCLAB](#) | Wed 11 Feb, 7 – 9pm

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

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

Morning Huddle | Mon 9th Feb, 10am-12pm | Bradninch Room at Exeter Phoenix

[Little Scratch Night](#) | Fri 27 Feb, 5.30pm - 7.30pm

Professional Development

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

Recommended Events

[Scratch Night in collaboration with Exeter Northcott](#) | Mon 23 Feb, 7pm

[Two Short Nights](#) | Thu 05 Mar - Fri 06 Mar

[Exeter Seed Bank: Seed Packing Workshops](#) | Sat 14 Feb, 2pm - 4pm, Free

[Things Fall: Exhibition Opening](#) | Sat 14 Feb, 3pm - 5pm, Free

[Dance Against Racism](#) | Sat 28 Feb, 7pm - 11pm

EVENTS
IN EXETER

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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