

CREATIVE HUB

APRIL EDITION

Welcome to your monthly update on all things creative in Exeter! In this month's edition we find out about Magic Carpet's Art Trail, hear from Emergency Chorus about their collaborative practice, reflect on The Gifts Commission by Tabatha Andrews, and announce our Open Door Festival performers.

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.

Contents

News

Magic Carpet Art Trail

A Q+A with Emergency Chorus

Reflecting on The Gifts Commission

Announcing our Open Door Festival Performers

Opportunities

Events

Networking

Professional Development

Recommended events



Magic Carpet Art Trail

This April, Magic Carpet will be popping up across venues and businesses across the city centre with exhibitions and artwork from their members who attend their mental health and disability art groups. One of the venues is Exeter Phoenix's Walkway Gallery, so ahead of the launch we caught up with Magic Carpet Manager Hannah to find out more!

What have the group been working on for their show in the Walkway Gallery?

Magic Carpet is taking over the Exeter Phoenix Walkway Gallery this April with an explosion of colour. For the Love of Colour explores light and colour through a range of techniques, textures and processes including wet felting, giant quilling and group doodles. The work has been developed by various Magic Carpet art groups for adults with learning disabilities. Particularly, our Exeter Phoenix groups 'Tuesday Club' and 'Snapdragon' use art as a way to respond to the seasons and the shifts in mood and atmosphere that they bring. The exhibition focuses on experimentation — Texture plays a central role, adding depth and structure while reflecting each artist's individual approach. This collection highlights the diversity of creative voices within the group. While connected by a shared interest in colour and seasonal change, each artist brings their own perspective and method, resulting in work that is both cohesive and distinct.

What do you hope people will discover from taking part in the art trail?

We are incredibly proud of the talent that exists within our Magic Carpet community. From the diverse artist approaches within our

mental health support groups to our learning disability art sessions. By exploring art and being creative together in our supportive and accessible sessions our participants build confidence, friendships, purpose and art skills which they take into their everyday lives to promote positive mental health and joyfulness.



We hope as people explore the April Art trail they will discover stories behind the artwork, the journeys that

some of our participants have been on and enjoy seeing art work from a different perspective. Whether the exhibitions and artwork is inspired by the seasons, colour, stories or personal journeys there is something for everyone in our April Art Trail.

What does the group enjoy about the creative community in Exeter?

Magic Carpet sessions are welcoming, inclusive spaces where everyone is valued and encouraged to explore their creativity without pressure. Our members especially enjoy being based at Exeter Phoenix, as it places them right in the heart of a vibrant creative hub. Seeing their work exhibited in the walkway gallery is a really exciting and rewarding experience for everyone involved.

Grab a map and [explore the artworks](#) across Exeter from the 3rd April.





A Q+A with Emergency Chorus

This month, collaborative duo Ben Kulvichit and Clara Potter-Sweet, known as Emergency Chorus, will be bringing their new dance-theatre work *Ways of Knowing* to Exeter Phoenix. We caught up with them to find out more about their collaborative practice and the themes within their work.

How do you approach collaging different artforms together?

We are proud jacks of all trades. We've always enjoyed stealing from different disciplines, and doing things we don't 'know' how to do. For instance, we come from a theatre background, but we got really interested in dance a few years ago, and choreography (both set and improvised) has become a really central part of our shows — we like the way it can interrupt things, and provide space where meaning is a lot more slippery, or altogether unimportant. Because we don't have bodies that have been shaped by dance training, we also have very idiosyncratic ways of moving, which I think is nice to watch — we're very plainly ourselves.

I guess when we're making a show, there's not one way of approaching something that feels 'right' to us, but what does feel right is to incorporate loads of different approaches and aesthetics. This attempt at formal collage is our way of trying to come at something from lots of different angles, to try to get at the heart of whatever question is bothering us.

Why do you think it's important to approach the themes in your work (eg. ecology, capitalism, technology) with playfulness?

The work we make is experimental, but for us that doesn't mean it has to be difficult or self-serious. Experimental to us describes a process more than an aesthetic; it means we start making something without much or any idea of what the thing is going to be — we are experimenting! And that sense of playing in a sandpit, of making discoveries and being surprised and delighted by them, is what we hope translates into the work. I love being surprised when watching something — when rules are broken, or something is seemingly making up its own rules, or I have no idea WHY something might be happening on stage in the moment that it's



happening in front of me. I think that can unsettle how you look at the world, and give you something to chew over. The ways that we ('we' as in society) approach so many things – like the themes you mention – need to be unsettled and overhauled. Theatre can provide us with tools for thinking differently, but I think that only happens with it confounds our expectations.

What do you enjoy about collaborating? Can you tell us a funny/unexpected/inspiring story about how it has changed your work?

Collaboration is everything — making work together in a long-term partnership is fruitful, rewarding, painful, like second nature, incredibly difficult, the whole gamut. We are quite different people, and we enjoy that collaborating brings us together and helps us see things from different perspectives. I think it makes the work more robust, but it can also be quite a tricky thing to navigate. When you are in a flow, though, and it feels like the art is almost making itself, it's just the best feeling in the world. You create your own little world with its own rules, where things makes sense perhaps only to you. I don't know about funny, unexpected, or inspiring, but I think that the main way in which collaborating pushes us is that having each other as our primary mirror or way of reflecting on the thing we're making means we are not thinking very much about the 'audience' at that point, or how something will come across or be received — we are each the only audience we have for the work. I think that helps us make art that is more distinct and uniquely 'us.' The one time I tried to make a solo piece I remember feeling very adrift, second-guessing myself a lot, and ending up with something that felt almost as if someone else had made it. Emergency Chorus is the vessel through which we express ourselves best.

Catch [Ways of Knowing](#) on Mon 20 Apr, 7.30pm at Exeter Phoenix.



Reflecting on The Gifts Commission

The Gifts is a socially-engaged, multisensory sculpture made for and with learning disabled and neurodiverse communities of Exeter to form a lasting community legacy. It was made by sculptor Tabatha Andrews and co-created through the artist's long running relationship with Freefall+, a group of young adults with a range of learning disabilities who meet weekly at Exeter Phoenix to engage with the arts in an inclusive space.

It was commissioned by Exeter Phoenix as part of Tabatha's wider, 2025 Arts Council funded project, The Slightest Gesture, a sculpture, dance and film project. The work now resides at EP Sidwell St (an Exeter Phoenix off-site project space) under the care of Pelican Projects, a collective of adult learning-disabled members, families, teachers and partner organisations offering regular groups, projects and social activities that reduce isolation and raise quality of life.

The work is available for learning-disabled and neurodiverse communities of Exeter to access, use and enjoy as a lasting legacy of the project.

The Gifts were launched with a sharing event at Exeter Phoenix, where friends, family, and participants in the project were invited to take a first look at the completed commission and engage with it. The work was then moved to EP Sidwell St where it is now housed, and members of the Pelican Project SenseArt group have been using it in their sessions.

“For us the real value of The Gifts lies in how it positions our members not as recipients of inclusion, but as leaders within their creative community. Through sustained collaboration with Tabatha Andrews, and access to quality materials, processes and professional artistic relationships, our members gained meaningful experience and agency, and in return, they taught the artist and audiences about the nature of their multisensory interpretation, non-verbal communication, and embodied ways of knowing. Since the work’s arrival at Positive Light Projects, it has been striking to see its resonance with people from so-called ‘mainstream’ backgrounds, reminding us that sensory curiosity is something we all hold, but often forget. At The Pelican Project, we value this work for resisting fixed blueprints of



inclusion: The Gifts quite literally holds the physical impressions of our members at its centre. A huge thank you to Exeter Phoenix, Tabatha Andrews and SouthWest Dance Hub for making this collaboration possible, and to our members for shaping an experience that has been generous, transformative, and deeply instructive for us all.”

- Charlie Robinson, The Pelican Project

Creating immersive experiences that both unsettle and enthrall the senses, The Gifts explore how we communicate and create meaning through objects and materials. The series of objects explore material, formal, sonic and haptic sculptural qualities, and can be interacted with in a range of ways.

“Thank you for making sure my boy is not forgotten. Through The Gifts, his ways of experiencing and expressing the world have been given space, value and permanence, and it means everything to see him recognised as part of Exeter’s creative life.” - D, Liam’s Mum



Announcing our Open Door Festival Performers

Open Door Festival is a joint project between Doohickie Productions and Exeter Phoenix and has been created with the aim of platforming artists who may have previously been excluded from programming opportunities. From selecting our performances out of a hat, to guaranteed payment for all our artists (regardless of ticket sales!) this festival is doing things differently. We are pleased to introduce this year's selected artists:



South West Dance Hub Presents: A Studio Sharing of new works from Swift Dance Collective

South West Dance Hub presents an evening of new works in progress from Swift Dance Collective. Join us for an eclectic evening of dance.

Using Ritual, Shamanism and Magic in Theatre Performance

Philip Kingslan John from Four of Swords invites you to join him in this practical workshop, exploring invocation, transformation and rhythm.



Save the Raccoon

An immersive game show to find the best “trash artist” to save all the raccoons. Compete to win a small prize, and the ultimate accolade under a system not designed for you.



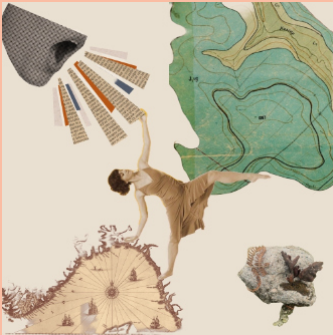


Staging Your Story

Grace Plant (Graceless) and Sarah McCourt (Fragments, Monstrous Love Revisited) draw on their autobiographical theatre practice in this practical workshop looking at staging your stories.

Wish For Bold Wisdom

Crafted through vibrant poetry, theatre, dance, music and flourished with bird song. Performers with a 50-year age gap mutually learn by sharing wisdom, passion, and honesty.



Multi-Layered Movement Expressions

Multi-Layered Movement Expressions is a creative dance workshop exploring bodies, landscapes, memories, and texts as interrelated.

Sparks

Bee and Robi have been living together for years. It's always been the two of them - they hadn't needed anyone else. That is, until one of them embarks on a new relationship.



Join us for [Open Door Festival](#) Sunday 17th May at Exeter Phoenix.

Artist Commission Open Call | Mon 20 April, 11pm

Studio KIND is commissioning three artists to investigate the heritage surrounding our home at The Corn Store, in Barnstaple Pannier Market. The commissions will investigate the heritage of Barnstaple Pannier Market, concentrating on three key areas of research that we are inviting contemporary artists/researchers to respond to. Each historical event has interesting links to contemporary issues in Britain today, whilst exploring Barnstaple Pannier Market's role at the heart of the town.

[Find out more and apply here](#)

Exeter Contemporary Open, call for entries | Submissions open Wed 01 April

Exeter Contemporary Open is an annual open submission exhibition, established in 2006 and hosted by Exeter Phoenix, a busy, multi-artform venue and contemporary art space situated in Exeter's historic city centre. The exhibition aims to provide an important national platform for contemporary visual art with an emphasis on supporting emerging talent alongside more established artists. The exhibition will run from 11 September – 31 October 2026 and is open to contemporary visual artists working in any media including painting, sculpture, photography, print, drawing, video, mixed and digital media.

[Find out more and apply](#)

OPPORTUNITIES

Open Call-Out: Reclaim Scratch Performances | Deadline: 10am, Wednesday 06 May

Exeter Northcott Scratch Night in collaboration with Exeter Phoenix 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 Clifford Room at the Barnfield theatre, 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 Wednesday 17th June 2026, 7 – 9pm.

[Find out more and apply](#)

Mentoring Opportunity: Curator Bank | Deadline: Thursday 30 April

Curator Bank offers opportunities for one-to-one meetings to talk through work and ideas with curators based in organisations. It aims to support individual artist development while also strengthening networks between artists and curators across the South West region. Selected artists will be offered a 1.5 hour one-to-one online meeting with a mentor.

[Find out more and apply](#)

OPPORTUNITIES

Networking

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

[DOCLAB](#) | Wed 8 Apr, 7 – 9pm

[Little Scratch Night](#) | Fri 24 Apr, 5.30pm - 7.30pm

Professional Development

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

Recommended Events

[Things Fall: in conversation](#) | Sat 11 Apr, 12pm, free

[Diaspora! 26](#) | 1–10 May, Bristol and South West Region

[City Slam](#) | Thu 16 Apr, 7pm

[Jo in the Water \(12A\) + Salmon Run & Q&A](#) | Sat 18 Apr, 3.30pm

[For the Love of Colour: A Magic Carpet Exhibition](#) | Thu 09 Apr - Sun 17 May

[Ways of Knowing](#) | Mon 20 Apr, 7.30pm

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.



Illustrations by Darren Shaddick

Edited and copy written by Erika Cann

CREATIVE HUB



exeter **phoenix**

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