

CREATIVE HUB

OCTOBER EDITION

Welcome to your monthly update on all things
creative in Exeter!

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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Photo credits: Dom Moore

Gallery333: The Embodied Vivarium

Gemma Mackenzie is an artist whose practice investigates the shifting dynamics between control and its collapse, the reversible and the irreversible, and the transitional states that occupy the space between these conditions. She questions these ideas through the interaction between materials and the outcomes that emerge when they are combined, working across print, sculptural forms, and drawing. We chatted with Gemma to find out more about her current installation in Gallery333.

What inspired your piece in Gallery333?

The Embodied Vivarium in Gallery333 explores the idea that we can never fully escape our thoughts and feelings. Our bodies become comparable to a cage, with our thoughts and emotions as the creatures that inhabit it, moving restlessly around their enclosure. I'm inspired by spaces of containment, and Gallery333 is a perfect fit for this work as its architecture evokes the reptile

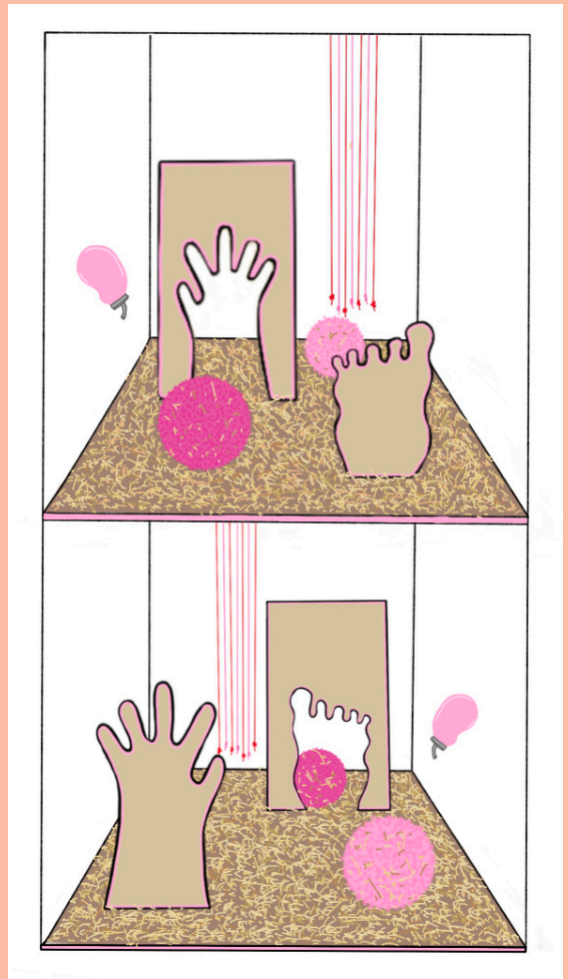
and amphibian enclosures found in zoos, highlighting themes of confinement, observation, and interior worlds.

How do you choose what materials to work with and what is your process for making your works?

I'm drawn to materials that can be distorted or disrupted, and that create outcomes I can't fully predict. Much of my work centres on the tension between being in control and out of control, so I look for materials or objects that naturally introduce

unpredictability or break a pattern. In my current work, for example, the cat toys move on their own terms, creating their own paths and interacting with surrounding objects however they choose. Their movement isn't something I can plan, and that element of uncertainty becomes an essential part of the piece.

My process usually begins with experimentation. I spend time researching materials and items to see how they react, either within a space or when paired with another material. Once I've explored their possibilities, I



Sketch by Gemma Mackenzie

start sketching and mapping out how these elements might come together and how they might interact.

What advice would you give to artists making work in the South West?

The South West has a wonderfully supportive creative scene, where people are genuinely invested in each other's work and success, which is both inspiring to witness and rewarding to be part of. Even though we may not have the same level of resources as other regions, we're consistently good at finding ways around these obstacles and making things happen. My advice for emerging South West artists is to get involved as much as you can, even when it feels daunting, as connection and participation are what keep this community strong.

Visit [The Embodied Vivarium](#) in Gallery333 until Sat 31 Oct



OUT THERE

Fringe Fest'26



THE SOUTH WEST'S FIRST **QUEER FRINGE FESTIVAL**

18TH SEPTEMBER - 17TH OCTOBER 2026



Out There Fringe Fest: Queer culture, centre stage

Out There Fringe Fest, the South West's first queer fringe festival, is back in Exeter until Sat 17 Oct with more than 50 events across the city, several of them here at Exeter Phoenix. When it launched in 2024, the ambition was simple: create more space in Exeter for LGBTQIA+ people to see themselves, their stories and their creativity reflected in the arts and culture around them.

Why does Out There Fringe Fest exist?

The festival was created in response to rising hostility towards LGBTQ+ communities and the loss of safe spaces. The Artistic Director, Wayne McGee grew up in 1980s Exeter without seeing themselves represented. And found identity and inspiration through the arts and queer culture, here in Exeter (performing at Exeter Arts Centre, the then Exeter Phoenix), in London and at the Edinburgh Fringe. LGBTQ+ communities deserve spaces to be celebrated, connected and represented. The festival gives people

here that opportunity.

This is the second Out There Fringe Fest. How did the first one go?

The first festival in 2024 welcomed 1,300 attendees to 40 events, delivered by more than 50 practitioners, and it went on to win an award. The response that mattered most came from our audience: 92.7% told us they felt more connected to the community afterwards. That showed us how much Exeter needed a dedicated queer platform, and it gave us the confidence to come back bigger.

What national work have you brought to Exeter?

We've brought two-time Fringe First Award winner Emma Frankland's No Apologies (Barnfield Theatre, Fri 02 Oct), and on Wed 07 Oct, Saraya Haddad's SPIKED comes to Exeter Phoenix. It's an astonishing one-woman show, based on real-life experience, about playing Ariel in The Tempest while spiked. SPIKED anchors our Out There, Safer Together campaign for safer nights out. Earlier that day, Saraya is leading If I Speak..., a free writing workshop on turning personal and lived experience into creative writing. On Sat 10 Oct, award-winning clown Riss Obolensky performs Healing King Herod, co-created by Eloïse Poulton.

We've also managed to bring UNCUT: A Celebration of Queer Joy to Exeter, created by award-winning photographer Chris Jepson with Proud Studios CIC. It is an exhibition that has been installed at the former Post Office at Bedford Street, Princesshay, running until Sat 17 Oct. UNCUT brings together striking portraits and first-person stories celebrating the power and breadth of queer joy. At a time when so much of the

conversation about LGBTQ+ lives focuses on hostility, it felt important to exhibit joy right in the heart of the city.

And opportunities for the local community?

This is where the funding really counts. London cabaret EastBenders is working with three local artists, who will perform the campest, loudest and silliest moments from everyone's favourite soap in DRAG, at Exeter Phoenix on Fri 16 Oct. We collaborated with Spork! again, and this time we could also support a poetry workshop led by Poet Kat Lyons, for LGBTQ+ writers to explore identity, experience and joy. We've also helped set up Margins, a new quarterly literary social for Exeter's LGBTQ+ readers and writers, which launched in September at the Devon and Exeter Institution. On Fri 09 Oct, The Pelican Project's IndyArt group runs Print Out!, a free letterpress workshop at Positive Light Projects – which is also supported by our Arts Council Funding. Participants can try the world's first wheelchair printing press, alongside a new exhibition by their SenseArt group. This is especially important to ensure the festival is accessible for all to get creative. As part of the programme, we also ensure free events, workshops and Pay What You Can ticketing at selected events.

What about young people?

Young Person's Day returns to Exeter Library on Sun 11 Oct for its third year. It's a free afternoon of arts, culture and creativity for 13–19-year-olds, themed Heartstopper Forever. Our Young Person's Day is hugely popular and allows for young people to get creative with likeminded people. For the second year running it is part-funded by Devon County Council's Places To Go Things To Do Fund. Our thanks go in particular to the young

people who selected the funded projects, and believe in the importance of our Young Person's Day.

How do we highlight the wider community?

Rather than trying to create everything ourselves, our cross-programme brings together events already being created by Exeter's LGBTQIA+ community, and showcases the queer work our cultural venues are putting on. The festival works as a bridge. It encourages venues like Exeter Phoenix, Exeter Northcott Theatre, the Barnfield Theatre and Exeter Library to programme more LGBTQ+ events and performance, so they better represent their communities. After 2024, Exeter Phoenix and the Barnfield both established regular drag nights. These venues are core safe spaces for our community, and we want that to keep growing long after the festival ends.

Out There Fringe Fest runs until Sat 17 Oct, and is ultimately about making more room for LGBTQ+ creativity in Exeter. See the full programme [here](#)

Out There Fringe Fest is funded by the National Lottery through Arts Council England, and proudly supported by our venue partner, Live @ Exeter, and our community partner, Princesshay Exeter. The festival is also supported by Exeter Phoenix, Exeter Northcott Theatre, Hotel Indigo Exeter, and many more.



DOCLAB: Cornwall on Camera

In October DOCLAB, our monthly meetup for documentary filmmakers, is presenting a screening titled *Cornwall on Camera* in Studio 74. The screening brings together three distinct documentary voices within Cornwall for an evening exploring a shared connection to place. We chatted with Digital Programme Coordinator Luke Hagan to find out more about what the group have been up to and what to expect during this screening of works.

What is DOCLAB? What kinds of things happen in a typical meetup?

DOCLAB is a monthly, free to access, documentary development initiative that brings together documentary filmmakers, current and aspiring, as well as those that want to be involved in documentary film, and gives them a space to connect with each other, develop their ideas and get peer feedback and support for their work. The group was set up as a collaboration between Exeter Phoenix and documentarian Pip Piper, and has blossomed into an incredible community of talented filmmakers.

A typical session might start with everyone introducing themselves and talking about what they are working on, followed by screenings of filmmakers past work or work in progress, pitches for new ideas that people are looking for feedback on, or questions filmmakers looking for guidance or advice from the group about a particular challenge. Some sessions include guest speakers, or Q&A's with filmmakers, and we also hold screenings and talks.

A typical session will also see people working at all levels of filmmaking, from people who are new, or returning, to the world of documentary, to those making features and every stage in between. It's an open and supportive community, where everyone's opinions are valued. That collective approach has meant that people feel safe to develop ideas and seek feedback through DOCLAB, and we've seen some fantastic work and collaboration develop out of that as a result.

Why is it important to screen these films from emerging South West based filmmakers in our cinema programme?

Giving a platform for regional talent to show their work in a cinema is important for so many reasons. At the most basic level



Still from The Lost Boys of Carbis Bay, part of DOCLAB Presents: Cornwall on Camera

it's what Exeter Phoenix does best - championing regional voices and giving them a platform to show their work, but it also helps filmmakers to develop their audience, start conversations around their work and connect with other creatives. Building that community around regional talent, and giving it a platform to share and shout about it, is what helps retain talent in the region and ultimately lets people establish themselves in a place they feel connected to. It's also great for audiences to see the talent that exists in the south west, and to watch films that reflect the place they live.

On top of all that, it's just more fun to see films in the cinema!

What do you think it is about the South West that creates these deeper connections between place and creative practice?

That's a really tough question! I think people always draw inspiration from the place they're in but it's clear that there is real connection, and deep well of inspiration, that the south west brings out in people. I think that is in part because it's Place that brings people to the south west, or makes them stay there. Many people choose to pursue a creative practice in the region because of the communities, stories and spaces that exist here, and so those things also feed directly into the work they produce. When it comes to documentary film there are just so many stories to be told that are deeply rooted in the lives and landscapes of the region. As a documentarian, having a connection to Place is sometimes crucial to understanding and telling the story that you want to tell.

Join us for [Cornwall on Camera](#) on Wed 14 Oct and find out more about DOCLAB [here](#)

Creative East Devon Fund | Deadline: Friday 16 October, midday

The Creative East Devon Fund (CEDF) provides discretionary financial support to local art and culture initiatives and projects that can demonstrate a commitment to developing the East Devon Cultural Strategy. Round 5 is now open for applications. Grants of up to £2,000 are available for projects taking place between January and December 2027.

[Find out more and apply](#)

Spork! Dead poets slam performer call out | Deadline: Mon 12 Oct

Performance Date: Fri 30 Oct, 7pm

The annual Dead Poets Slam is back, as part of the Spork! Poetry Halloween Special. Six famous poets will rise from the dead, brought to life by six contemporary artists for one night only, on Fri 30 October. They'll battle it out in a chance to win everlasting life, plus a cash prize of £100. Using a mixture of their own poetry, the work of their alias, and some stuff they make up on the night. Expect punches, pithy remarks and pure fire, in the ultimate graveyard smash.

Want to take part? To apply, and for the full list of rules, email Spork! on sporkpoetry@gmail.com

OPPORTUNITIES

Exeter Phoenix Scratch Night in collaboration with Exeter

Northcott | Deadline: Mon 26 Oct

Performance date: Tue 01 Dec at Exeter Phoenix

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.

[Find out more and apply](#)

Freelands Studio Fellowships 2027 | Deadline: 15 Oct

The Freelands Studio Fellowship offers early career artists the opportunity to undertake a one-year, full-time, paid studio residency. This allows them to immerse themselves within the academic community and artistic ecology of an art school, in one of seven participating universities across the UK.

For the artist on the fellowship, working alongside art students and a faculty of tutors, lecturers and technicians, encourages them to examine their own practice, responding to tools and thoughts available within (and at times unique to) an educational context, while building their own approach to teaching.

[Apply here](#)

Networking

[Playwrights Cafe Exeter](#) | First Thursday of the month

[DOCLAB](#) | A monthly Development Lab for Filmmakers

[Little Scratch Night](#) | A test space for performers

Professional Development

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

Recommended Events

[Exeter Contemporary Open Exhibition Tour](#) | Sat 17 Oct,
12pm

[DOCLAB PRESENTS: Cornwall on Camera](#) | Wed 14 Oct

[Out There Fringe Fest](#) | until Sat 17 Oct

[Spork! Poetry Halloween Special](#) | Fri 30 Oct, 7pm

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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CREATIVE HUB



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