

# This City's Centre

A new public art and performance project is taking the city centre by storm, explains CAT RADFORD



The golden towers of the Cathedral bathed in the last of the day's sun, the hum of traffic on a busy roundabout, and the quiet oasis of a private garden are amongst a collection of domestic vistas shared with artists' collective 'Blind Ditch' as part of the public art and performance project 'This City's Centre'.

Over 40 Exeter residents living within a 10 minute walk of Cathedral Green have contributed to the project. The residents' views and

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their opinions about them form part of a contemporary portrait of the city made through digital media and live performance. The project happens in three parts, and the first to launch is a video installation at

the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, until 22 September. Composed of the video and audio footage gathered from the windows, the installation shows a city that reveals itself time and again, in new guises and from angles that even those familiar with it seldom have a chance to experience.

Blind Ditch is also working with six of the contributors in the making of a live performance event, 17-21 September, as part of arts festival 'Unexpected', which has recently launched in the city.

**Above:**  
Observing  
Exeter



## Tickets

Tickets for the live performance at Unexpected (17-21 September) are available at Exeter Phoenix £10/£8. A map walk with digital interactions can be bought for £2 at outlets across the city centre. The video installation runs until 22 September at RAMM, free entry.

Upload the view to your window to the project website at [thiscitycentre.net](http://thiscitycentre.net)

**Above:**  
Observing  
Exeter

“I got involved with the project having seen an article in the local paper and started thinking about the range of different views there are in such a diverse city as Exeter,” says Nina, a participating city centre resident. “It is not often that I sit in silence at home, just listening to the sounds around me. While my view was filmed, I was able to hear the birds singing and the gentle buzz of traffic outside of my window. I now realise that as well as my favourite view of Haldon Hill, I can probably see every car park in Exeter from my flat. I am pleased to be involved in such a unique project and excited to see it unfold.”

“Nina is one of the Exeter residents that will be working with

us as ‘cinematographers’ and technical performers, framing their views in different ways,” says Paula Crutchlow of Blind Ditch. “We are also collaborating with a range of local professional performance makers and volunteer students from Exeter College who have been responding to those views to create surprising events for passing members of the public and for the webcams operated by the residents.

These images will be streamed back to our main performance space in a vacant city centre shop where the assembled audience will experience a mixture of live and streamed performance, pre recorded video and digital interaction.”

For one week the company used a vacant pasty shop on a busy thoroughfare at the Guildhall Shopping Centre as a performance space during the June theatre festival ‘Ignite’. “At least 200 people engaged with us over the course of that week,” says Paula. “Some

watched us through the windows, but others felt comfortable enough to walk in off the street and sit with us as we rehearsed.

“We want to offer public access to the making of our art as well as the showing of it. Online forums and social media are a growing part of our daily experience. We are interested in how those things can effect how we make public art and performance.”

The project has been supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and by Exeter City Council. Paula says: “This is a very ambitious and ground-breaking project which wouldn’t have been possible without organisations across the city coming on board and working together. We’re really grateful to the RAMM, Exeter Phoenix, Exeter College, and Exeter City Council, as well as to all of the Exeter residents themselves for being so generous with their time and effort.” ■