

Tony White
***Crosswords and constraints:
notebooks, plans and
ephemera from the writing of
the novel Phantom at the Feast***

25 June-28 June 2025, Weds-Sun, 12-6pm
Then 1-10 July, Weds-Fri, 12-6pm
Archive on the Mezzanine at Matt's Gallery

To coincide with the launch of Tony White's new detective novel *Phantom at the Feast* (No Exit Press) on 25 June 2026 at Matt's Gallery, we are pleased to announce an archival presentation of related materials used and generated in the writing of the book.

Phantom at the Feast is the follow-up to White's acclaimed 2018 novel *The Fountain in the Forest*. The display includes a series of completed Guardian 'Quick Crosswords' (Nos. 4,675-4,725) originally published in 1985, that White first completed daily as a young man in Leeds, then redid en masse thirty years later in order to use the solutions as an Oulipo- inspired lexical constraint - a 'mandated vocabulary' - in the writing of the novel. For Matt's Gallery, all 51 completed crosswords used in the writing of *Phantom at the Feast* (Guardian days only, so no Sundays or Bank Holidays) are arranged in chronological order in a single vitrine, surrounded by their fascinating 'bycatch' of small ads, cartoons and random back-page content captured when printing A4 screengrabs from the British Library's microfiche readers. As Sukhdev Sandhu wrote in his Guardian review of *The Fountain in the Forest*, the crossword solutions 'emerge as the collective lexical unconscious of the period.'

A second vitrine in the display contains an array of colour-coded chapter plans, timelines, diagrams, WRDKY breakdowns ('What Rex Doesn't Know Yet'), Post-it notes, and ephemera that went into the five-year writing of *Phantom at the Feast*; offering a rare insight into the process of writing what is of course a further puzzle: a police-procedural murder-mystery and whodunnit. *Phantom at the Feast* marks the return of White's complex and compelling London cop Detective Sergeant Rex King of Holborn Police Station, with White once again combining police procedural and detective mystery genres with UK social history and literary games.

Book Launch, 25 June 2026, 6:30pm - 8:30pm
Tony White, *Phantom at the Feast*, No Exit Press
978-1-83501-579-7
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Paperback Original, £12.99

For all media enquiries please contact Sophie Goodfellow at FMcM: Sophie@fmcm.co.uk, and Claudia Bullmore at No Exit Press: claudia@bedfordsquarepublishers.co.uk

Tony White is the author of six previous novels, including *Foxy-T* and *The Fountain in the Forest*. His latest novel *Phantom at the Feast* is published by No Exit Press in June 2026 with a launch at Matt's Gallery. A former writer in residence at the Science Museum, he has reviewed for the *Guardian*, *Irish Times*, and *The Idler*. He is currently an RLF Fellow at Royal Holloway University of London, and an Associate Lecturer on the Creative Writing MA at Birkbeck. Since 1994, White has edited and published the artists' book series *Piece of Paper Press*, which was the subject of an archival exhibition *Thirty-one years of Piece of Paper Press: artists' books, artworks and ephemera, 1994-2025* at Matt's Gallery in 2025.

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List of exhibits

Vitrine 1

Completed *Guardian* 'Quick Crossword' Nos. 4,675–4,725, 3 April 1985–1 June 1985 on A4 print-outs 2014. Mandated vocabulary for *Phantom at the Feast* (2015). NB excludes No. 4,714 (Monday 20 May 1985 edition not reproduced in the British Library news collection's microfiche volume *GUARDIAN LONDON MAY to JUN 1985*).

Vitrine 2

- A. Possible character names and permutations harvested from the completed crosswords during the writing of *The Fountain in the Forest* (and 'Sylvie' from the French Republican Calendar) (2015–17).
- B. Italo Calvino, 'Note', *The Castle of Crossed Destinies* (Vintage, 1998) – annotated at pp.126–127.
- C. Completed *Guardian* 'Quick Crossword' Nos. 4,649, 4 March 1985–4,674 2 April 1985. Mandated vocabulary for *The Fountain in the Forest* (2015).
- D. Tony White, *The Fountain in the Forest* (Faber & Faber, 2018) – author's reading copy
- E. Working chapter plan/wall calendar *The Fountain in the Forest* (2015–2017).
- F. 'The Battle of Stonehenge'. *Leeds Other Paper* 14 June 1985 – scan of photocopy. (Original in Leeds Central Library, Family and Local History Department.)
- G. *The Fountain in the Forest*, promotional post-card.
- H. Scroll-format chapter plan and timeline-visual *Phantom at the Feast: Part One* (2019–20).
- I. Working chapter plan/wall calendar *Phantom at the Feast: Part One* (2018–19, abandoned).
- J. (and throughout) 'Dinkus' tests – dragged and distorted photocopies of ornament for graphic inserts at breaks in text – six loose sheets A4 (unused).
- K. Author's notebooks re. *Phantom at the Feast* 1–6 (2018–22)
- L. 'WRDKY' ('What Rex Doesn't Know Yet') breakdown for Chapter 24 of *Phantom at the Feast: Part Two*. Sheet 2 of 3 (2022).

iPad

Audio file, digitized from C90 cassette. Microdisney Peel Session, recorded 27 July 1986 (BBC producer Dale Griffin), broadcast 6 August 1986. Track listing: Microdisney, 'Armadillo Man', 'Half a Day'; The Fall, 'Living Too Late', Microdisney 'Soul Boy', 'And He Descended into Hell.' Total running time, 22:09. Recorded from the radio 06 August 1986 by Andy Hall. From the Author's collection.

- M. Author's sketch diagram of the circles of Hell on large chapter plan/visualisation for Chapter 28 of *Phantom at the Feast: Part Two* (2022–23).
- N. Cassette tape, handwritten label: 'Microdisney [John Peel Session]', August 1986. Packaging, 2026.
- O. Tony White, scan of manuscript page print-out (1995) transcript of John Peel links introducing first broadcast of Microdisney 'Peel Session' 6 August 1986.
- P. Tony White, photographic prints (from 110mm negative), *The Battle of Orgreave: Jeremy Deller* (2001)
- Q. Artangel, *The Battle of Orgreave: Jeremy Deller*, brochure (2001).
- R. 'Barnsley Miners' Wives Action Group' badge. Author's collection.
- S. Loose/detached Post-its, planning etc. notes, diagrams, from *The Fountain in the Forest and Phantom at the Feast* (2015–22).
- T. Working chapter plan/wall calendar *Phantom at the Feast: Part Two*. Colour-coded timelines: pink = present, orange = deep past, blue = mid/recent past (2019–22).
- U. Sandro Botticelli, 'La Carte de l'Enfer'. A4 print-out credited to, Botticelli: *de Laurent le Magnifique à Savonarole*, exhibition catalogue, Paris, Musée du Luxembourg, (2003). (via *Wikimedia*).
- V. *Phantom at the Feast*, manuscript print-out reference used in proofing crossword solutions on typeset pages (2026).

Matt's Gallery

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