



**LEEDS
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CENTRE**

KEF

SEAN ASHTON

**THE MUTES: A COLLABORATION WITH LINA
LAPELYTÉ, WINNER OF THE GOLDEN LION AT
2019 VENICE BIENNALE**

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE FRAMEWORK DATA COLLECTION

February 2023

The University's Research & Enterprise Service has requested information on knowledge exchange and engagement with the public and communities. Please complete the form below and return it to Professor Simon Morris (S.DC.Morris@leedsbeckett.ac.uk) and Dr Tina Conkar (t.conkar@leedsbeckett.ac.uk) by **21 February 2023**.

Many thanks for your support with information gathering for this submission.

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Please use the template below to detail information on all projects you have undertaken since 1 January 2019 that involved public and community engagement. Please use one form per project.

Project Title:	The Mutes: a collaboration with Lina Lapelyté, winner of the Golden Lion at 2019 Venice Biennale
Project Date(s):	from 23 Jun to 24 Jul 2022
URL Link to Project:	https://www.lafayetteanticipations.com/en/exposition/mutes
Brief Description of Project (250-1000 words max.) In the field below please give a brief outline of the project and what it entailed.	
Project description from website (with my contribution in bold): "Lafayette Anticipations presents a new musical and performative project by the artist Lina Lapelyté, Golden Lion at the 2019 Venice Biennale.	

Through music, installations, and the orchestration of collective performances, [Lina Lapelytè](#) is interested in power structures, culture, and contemporary ways of being. By overturning the dominant codes of the Western musical tradition, her works invite us to reconsider certain social constructions and thus rethink the place of the individual in the community. Her ballads address issues of ecology, gender, vulnerability, invisibility, and otherness.

For her first exhibition in France, [Lina Lapelytè](#) takes voice as a starting point to create a musical performance delivered by a choir of people who consider themselves non-musical.

Going against the classical canons that exclude those who sing off-key, *The Mutes* brings together a group of performers who do not have a “musical ear”. In this piece, [Lina Lapelytè](#) questions the notions of harmony and accuracy and, more broadly, the social conventions and norms that lead to difficulties accepting the other.

The exhibition space is transformed into a landscape of nettles—plants with well-known stinging effects and often misunderstood medicinal properties. Their presence reinforces the symbolic significance of the work, which seeks to undo conceptions of categorisations. The work also reflects on forces that constraint bodies, as alluded to by wearable sculptures of shoes with skewed soles made to straighten one up on a slant surface.

A soundtrack composed by Lapelytè with recorded contributions by experimental musicians Angharad Davies, Rhodri Davies and John Butcher accompanies the amateur performers while they move and sing in the space continuously throughout the exhibition. **The words they sing are extracted from Sean Ashton’s book “Living in A Land”, an ambivalent self-portrait in which the narrator describes what he has never done, no longer does or will never do. These poetic texts call upon our memories, desires, and regrets.**

By proposing to make the voices of those who have been deprived of them heard, in this exhibition [Lina Lapelytè](#) celebrates polyphony, attentive listening, and individual expression, while questioning the ways in which we can form a chorus and constitute a collective voice.”

Organisations Engaged with:

Please list the names of any organisations engaged with, such as Schools or Community Groups.

Lafayette Anticipations

Total participants:

Please give an approximate figure for the number of people who engaged with your project.

6000+

Knowledge Exchange Outcomes:

If relevant, in brief, please describe any knowledge exchange outcomes such as new approaches to working with a community.

Going against the classical canons that exclude those who sing off-key, *The Mutes* brings together a group of performers who do not have a “musical ear”. In this piece, [Lina Lapelytè](#) questions the notions of harmony and accuracy and, more broadly, the social conventions and norms that lead to difficulties accepting the other.

Quotes

In the field below please include any relevant quotes that you would like to share which evidence the knowledge exchange and engagement your project received.

“Here, Lapelyte is working on her own, and by comparison “The Mutes” is much smaller. Yet the intimate scale is also more relatable, and more heartbreaking. With a libretto assembled from Sean Ashton’s novel “Living in a Land,” it expresses only the things its characters haven’t done. This is music of regret, of inability, music that can underscore the feeling that “we live in time not place.” Joshua Barone, New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/01/arts/music/the-mutes-lina-lapelyte-paris-review.html>

“A band of intensely ordinary carolers orderly gather in a corner in front of a pillar, held between clumps of nettles. They chant-sing “off-key” and well. They carol select stanzas from Sean Ashton’s 2017 novel [Living in a Land](#)

I’ve never gone back/I’ve never gone back/To my childhood home I’ve never gone back

To my childhood home/and found it to be emotionally sterile/

I’ve never gone back/To my childhood home

And come to the conclusion that we live

in time not place, time, not place, not place, time, not place/

We live in time not place/time not place/time not place/time not place/time not place”

Paul Tracy Danison, *The Best American Poetry* https://blog.bestamericanpoetry.com/the_best_american_poetry/2022/07/lina-lapelyt%C3%A8s-the-mutes-at-lafayette-anticipations-on-dance-shoes-singing-and-paradox-in-the-garden.html