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DR ALEX KELLY

THE DESIRE PATHS:

BEDFORD

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.

Name:	Dr Alexander Kelly
Job Title:	Reader in Theatre & Performance
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School:	LSA

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 Desire Paths: Bedford
Project Date(s):	3-5 September 2021
URL Link to Project:	https://thirdangel.co.uk/the-desire-paths-bedford
Brief Description of Project (250-1000 words max.)	
In the field below please give a brief outline of the project and what it entailed.	
"If you could rename a street of your town after a hope, dream or ambition for the future, what would you choose?"	
<p>The Desire Paths is a participatory, story-swapping, map-making performance for public spaces, created by theatre company Third Angel, of which Kelly is Co-Artistic Director. The performers chalk out a large, to-scale map of a town centre in a street or public square, and we invite the public to rename the streets of their towns after a hope for the future: personal, political, playful and profound. The public often tell us stories about the street they want to rename – as it is usually of personal significance. The show is remade with local partners and performers in each town and city it visits. Images of each map making, and the new street names and stories told to us by the public are recorded on the Third Angel website after each performance.</p>	

Kelly is co-lead artist (with Gillian Lees) on the project, having conceived the idea, co-designed the project (with Bethany Wells), and co-produces each iteration of the project (with Hilary Foster). Lees & Kelly lead on map drawing and performer training, and Kelly curates the writing and collecting of stories from all of the performers, and the editing of the collection for the website.

Guest performers in each city then join the pool of ‘core’ performers, and often perform in the work again.

From 3-5 September 2021, we chalked a giant map of Bedford onto the stone of Harpur Square. Four core-team performers (Alexander Kelly, Gillian Lees, Nisha Anil, Zishan Afsar) were joined by three local performers (Marta Beccatini, Sara-Jayne Berrill & Adie Mueller).

<p>Organisations Engaged with: Please list the names of any organisations engaged with, such as Schools or Community Groups.</p>	<p>The Desire Paths: Bedford was a co-production with The Place Theatre, Bedford, and was supported by the partners: 1 Degree East Arts Council England Bedford Borough Council Bedford Creative Arts Bedford Players Trust Harpur Trust Heritage Enterprise Hub</p>	<p>Total participants: Please give an approximate figure for the number of people who engaged with your project.</p>	<p>440 active participants, plus 1,500 viewing audience.</p>
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<p>Knowledge Exchange Outcomes: If relevant, in brief, please describe any knowledge exchange outcomes such as new approaches to working with a community.</p>	<p><i>The Desire Paths</i> engages audience participants on their own terms. As a performance the piece deliberately ‘gets in the way’ – people notice it because it is in the middle of a public space. They are invited to participate but are not obliged to. The map-drawing and street renaming serve as a mechanism to invite participation. However much people want to talk to the performers, whatever stories they want to tell, we listen. Anyone who renames a street is given a bookmark / ‘title deed’ as a reminder of their contribution.</p> <p>In Bedford the piece was three 7 hour days of performance / interaction, with the map left open to the public after completion until worn away by footfall and the weather. Images and stories are recorded on the weblink above.</p>
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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.

"We had been keen to bring *The Desire Paths* to Bedford for years as we felt it was exactly the type of highly visible, participatory activity that our organisation should be facilitating in public spaces. Working in a strongly multicultural town, we were drawn to the quiet radicalism of a piece that asks local people to reimagine their locale. Working with Alex & the team at Third Angel was a delight, especially with their desire to embed local artists within the work and ensure that the creative team were representative of the demographics of the area. 6 months on from the project we still have positive comments from the local councillors about the impact the events had in the town centre."

Alex Levene
Associate Producer - Programming & Partnerships
Bedford Players Trust
The Place Theatre

Images

In the field below please include any relevant images you would like to share.

Images by Ciara Mac Call

























