



**LEEDS
ARTS RESEARCH
CENTRE**

KEF

DR ALEX KELLY

THE DESIRE PATHS:

PLYMOUTH

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
Email:	a.kelly@leedsbeckett.ac.uk
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: Plymouth
Project Date(s):	1 – 3 July 2022
URL Link to Project:	https://thirdangel.co.uk/the-desire-paths-plymouth
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 **1 – 3 July 2022**, we chalked a giant map of Plymouth onto the paving stones of The Piazza, at the top of Plymouth’s Armada Way. Three core-team performers (Alexander Kelly, Gillian Lees, Nisha Anil) were joined by three local performers (Bee Jarvis, Callum Stewart & Laura Denning).

<p>Organisations Engaged with: Please list the names of any organisations engaged with, such as Schools or Community Groups.</p>	<p>The Desire Paths: Plymouth is part of Historic England’s High Streets Heritage Action Zone, brought to Plymouth by Plymouth Culture in partnership with Theatre Royal Plymouth.</p>	<p>Total participants: Please give an approximate figure for the number of people who engaged with your project.</p>	<p>400 active participants; plus viewing audience of 1,500.</p>
---	--	---	---

<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 Plymouth the piece was three 7 hour days of performance / interaction, with the map left open to the public each evening and beyond. Images and stories are recorded on the weblink above.</p>
---	--

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.

Ruth Mitchell Peer Review
The Desire Paths: Plymouth

This week a great theatrical giant left us and I am reminded from the countless obituaries online that Peter Brook said, you can take an empty space and make it into a bare stage. Of course in 1968 he was referring to taking theatre away from the traditional proscenium arch of the indoor space, however since that publication theatre has moved away from many building based performance, and taken itself outside of the proscenium arch and the black box theatre. Outdoor theatre today 50+ years later can include a whole host of different forms, and this weekend I immersed myself in a Map Making Performance.

Third Angel’s *The Desire Paths* sets itself down in a city centre and re imagines the streets and avenues by asking the public to rename them with their hopes and desires. By taking an empty space in a public place and costuming it with performers in red dungarees you are setting yourself up, expecting

an interaction with the public, who walk across your space. These performers, which included Third Angel's co artistic director Alexander Kelly, showed an ease with the community engagement, there was a palpable joy in the work and the passing on of the stories gathered verbally from person to person. Oral history creating a Chinese whisper effect through conversations passed down throughout the day.

I arrived on the final Sunday after a previous day of scattered showers, so the performers were busy re marking the already named roads, bringing the map back to life.

Peter Brook also said 'in theatre the slate is wiped clean every time' [Brook, Peter (1968) The Empty Space. Harmondsworth: Penguin] and here, in the city centre was a prime example of the ephemerality of performance. Like footprints in the sand that get washed away by the tide, likewise a map making performance, chalked out on the pavements, will be taken away by the elements. I stood and read the re-named roads, T Rex Way [a young child who believed that T Rex's were much maligned], No Fascist Statue Sea [a reference to the statue of Nancy Astor on Plymouth's Hoe] and from big hopes like world peace to a moment suspended in time with Happy Birthday Hilary Road.

This kind of interaction creates stories from the participants and enables us to imagine a place we know in a new light with the eclectic dreams inscribed on the pathways - even if it's only for a day.

The community spirit is reignited with townspeople and holiday makers alike - many participants were tourists who were now seeing a part of Plymouth they didn't expect. In Phil Smith's words it's a 'counter tourism' that enables us to see a sideways look at the place around us.

[\[https://www.triarchypress.net/counter-tourism-the-handbook.html\]](https://www.triarchypress.net/counter-tourism-the-handbook.html)

Images

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

Photos by pbmedia:



























