



Natalia Papaeva, *Yokhor*, 2018 (video still)

Inserts

I Wish This Was A Song

28.03—15.06.2025

Bani Abidi

Tim Ayres

Pavel Büchler

Laurent Fiévet

Becket MWN

Natalia Papaeva

Susan Philipsz

Anri Sala

Tris Vonna–Michell

The exhibition *I Wish This Was A Song* is the first in the series Inserts and is part of Tlön Projects' Satellite Programme. The Inserts consist of interventions or additions that create alternative narratives inside existing exhibition contexts. They encourage the critical examination of traditional exhibition concepts as well as how artworks relate to their exhibiting environment.

I Wish This Was A Song runs parallel to the *Zing!* exhibition at the Luther Museum Amsterdam. 11 contemporary works of art have been installed in the museum's period rooms making the former a temporary part of the historic collection as if past and present unfold simultaneously, and chronological time doesn't exist.

Songs and singing are deeply anchored in culture just like art. They play an integral part in creating an identity and in social relationships. Music and lyrics can incorporate poetry, messages of love, explanations or reasoning. They can create unity, tell stories, transport listeners to the past, elicit nostalgia and emotions or cause controversy.

It seems so contradictory to exhibit something as invisible and evanescent as singing and songs. Despite the availability of recording technology, they remain intangible in time and space. Nevertheless, the artists in this exhibition play with songs' properties and meanings, making them part of their expression strategies. The exhibition shows the multifarious ways in which singing and songs can be translated into art. Offering a wide range of artistic approaches varying from purely auditory experiments to entirely visual interpretations, and everything in between.

Susan Philipsz' work examines sound's psychological and spatial options. She uses recordings, primarily of her own voice. The Irish ballad *The Dead (The Lass of Aughrim)* (2000) which is played on a turntable, acts as a monument to something lost. Philipsz uses that which has passed or is absent as a means of transporting audiences back to the present.

Natalia Papaeva delves into the memories and experiences provided by her Buryat–Mongolian ancestry. She uses this material to create performances and installations which combine singing, spoken word and stories. In the video performance *Yokhor* (2018) she sings two lines from a Buryat song, the only two sentences she can remember in her mother tongue at the time. Buryat as a language threatens to disappear. Her project *Minii Ger* (2024) restores contact with this language and the melodies of her youth using a ritual setting and communal singing.

The complex relationship between personal, cultural and national identity also plays an important role in Bani Abidi's video *Anthems* (2000). This video examines music's influence on the creation of national identity and patriotism.

Tris Vonna–Michells *Audio poems: distracted listening* (2015) is based on recordings the artist made in Japan. These constitute the basis for a compilation of audio poems edited into a single sound work that combines Japanese and English speech and rhythms. This work was synchronised with a series of 35 mm slides shown using a Telex Caramate projector.

Just like Vonna–Michell, Pavel Büchler often uses obsolete technology. The work *You Don't Love Me* (2007) consists of a reel–to–reel tape repeating a song announcement from an unknown singer. However, the ease of the words spoken and the rotating tape are disturbed by the presence of a partially empty whiskey bottle on its side used to replace the spools.

The sculpture *Speeches from the Factory* (2020) by Becket MWN plays three speeches by celebrities critical of the MTV Awards show. The mix of artists' voices over a background of industrial sounds create an interesting tension between human expression and mechanical production.

For his video *Water Bucket* (2015), Laurent Fiévet edited a brief excerpt from Walt Disney's animated classic *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* from 1937. The work is part of the *On The Tip of The Tongue* series of micro edits which unfurls film excerpts involving singing, yet continually refers back to a prior moment, thereby illustrating the intangible character of memories, but also to what extent the latter are elicited by melodies.

The Anri Sala exhibit consists of a piano with three keys and a score with none of the notes this piano cannot play. The work, entitled *Was it Mi* (2013), was inspired by the song *Question in a World of Blue* used on the soundtrack to David Lynch's film *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* (1992).

Words and sentences are central to Tim Ayres' paintings. The texts conjure–up sounds and images for the audience: memories of songs, snatches of poetry or half–forgotten impressions. Ayres reveals how language, poetry, music and art can become one. The title for this exhibition *I Wish This Was A Song* originates from one of his paintings.



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The exhibition *I Wish This Was A Song* presents a variety of artworks selected from the *imaginary collection* of Tlön Projects. This *imaginary collection* is formed by the convergence of selected artworks from various international private art collections, whereby Tlön Projects aims to make artworks — that would otherwise have been largely shielded from the public — accessible.

The works comprising *I Wish This Was A Song* originate from the following collections: Akzo Nobel Art Foundation (The Netherlands), Kervahut—Collection Laurent Fiévet (France), Family Servais Collection (Belgium) along with other collections that wish to remain anonymous.

Curators:

Chris Bestebreurtje en Petra Kuipers

Venue:

Luther Museum Amsterdam
Nieuwe Keizersgracht 570
1018 VG Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Opening Times:

Thursday to Sunday: 11:00—17:00

Public Programme:

28.03.2024
Opening, 17:00—19:00

For more information and images: enter@tlonprojects.org

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