

Edinburgh Art Festival 2023: Tarek Lakhrissi at Collective

Three huge tongues – resin sculptures – lie on custom-made steel plinths. The tip of one points up, another points down.

Their shiny, red, gelatinous surfaces are like jellyfish. We want to look inside them, to see what lies beneath, but we won't. The tongue can be an instrument of pleasure, both received and given, but it can also be a dangerous weapon, quick to inflict cruel words. We are wary of its power.



Tongue Songs; Tarek Lakhrissi

Forming part of *I wear my wounds on my tongue (II)*, a new exhibition by French artist and poet Tarek Lakhrissi at City Dome, Collective on Calton Hill, *Tongue Songs* is inspired by *Bite Hard*, a poetry collection by the late Justin Chin. Chin

was also an essayist, activist and performance artist; he interrogated racism, American consumerism and queer Asian-American identity. Queer Asian-Americans were, he said, 'invisibilized' by gay white men and despised by straight Asian circles and communities.

Chin rejected mainstream pressure on queer people to "perform respectability", and encouraged them to use their tongues as instruments of pleasure, not rebuke or judgement. *Tongue Songs* both echoes and develops Chin's ideas.

Complementing *Tongue Songs* is a sound work (also called *I wear my wounds on my tongue (II)*) and produced in collaboration with Victor da Silva), inspired by the music of FKA twigs (who incorporates elements of Afro-futurism into some of her work) and TripleGo (a Moroccan-Egyptian rap duo who, like Lakhrissi, come from the Parisian *banlieue*, and whose music has been described as "explicitly cosmic and airy but somewhat melancholic."*)



I wear my wounds on my tongue (II): Tarek Lakhrissi at Collective

Lakhrissi mixes poetry, popular culture (the soundtrack to the film *Dark Angel* is sampled) and R 'n' B music (He speaks the words "I wish I had some help from a deeper force, some kind of meta angel" – a line taken from the FKA twigs song *meta angel*, while in the background we hear TripleGo's *BB veut un thug*.) It's a strange, dreamy, listening experience, sometimes ethereal, sometimes high energy trance. We could be clubbing, we could be underwater. The round shape of the Dome adds to the feeling of being inside a womb: the pulsing beats of the music could be a mother's heart. Above all we feel detached, elevated, free.

*'(he) uplifts his audience into a celebratory and euphoric space of togetherness.'***

The work is site specific to Calton Hill, where cruising

activity has been documented for at least a century, and historically targeted by the police, though nowadays police presence is largely geared to keeping people safe. *I wear my wounds on my tongue (II)* draws our attention to the hill as a common space, one where marginalised people can meet, but where they are also (still) under threat.

Lakhrissi is of North African descent, and has written about his colonised ancestors who had no future, and of his own childhood in the Paris *banlieue* as an experience of living on the edge;

*'an experience of the urban margins as a driving force for radical ideas.'****

Similarly *I wear my wounds on my tongue (II)* can perhaps be seen as an act of liberation, an encouragement to find one's own community and ignore the rest, while at the same time remaining alert, aware of ever-present threats to that freedom.

Tarek Lakhrissi's *I wear my wounds on my tongue (II)* is at The Dome at Collective on Calton Hill until 1 October 2023. The exhibition is supported by Fluxus.



Collective, Calton Hill

The Dome is open 10am-5pm Tuesday to Sunday (closed Mondays.)

Admission is free. Please note there is a short period of silence in the sound work – it continues after this, and is well worth waiting for.

I wear my wounds on my tongue (II) will be accompanied by the performance *BEAST!*, in collaboration with Victor da Silva and Makeda Monnet, on Saturday 26 August at the French Institute, West Parliament Square. Tickets cost £8/pay what you can, and may be booked [here](#).

*Interview with Olfa Farhat in *Mille*, 11 May 2018

**Collective; notes accompanying the exhibition

****Funambulist*, 27 June 2019

