



SINGING WINDOWS

Singing Windows is a sound installation project for town centres, bringing together retailers, the general public and composer Robert Jarvis. Using Feonic audio technology, multiple shop window fronts are able to function as loudspeakers, each capable of playing gentle sounds, affecting the street's atmosphere and enticing the unsuspecting general public.

To date, there have been three completely different versions of this installation: in Sittingbourne (where the sounds used were connected with the different shop trades and their window displays), in Thanet (where the sound of birdsong was used) and in Lens, France (utilising keynote sounds that defined the region's identity). Each *Singing Windows* project used around fifteen shop window fronts to broadcast discreet audio to the unsuspecting public.

In Thanet, the installation was so successful that it was repeated in collaboration with an external evaluator and also the local police force, following claims from the retailers that not only had their trade increased but that anti-social behaviour on the street had reduced dramatically. The resulting evaluation is available on request. This *Singing Windows* version made use of manipulated recordings of birdsong placed at the various locations. The exact sounds used, the timing and overall feel of each installation was worked out in collaboration with the hosting retailer. Where a number of locations were in earshot of each other the audio was synchronised with the effect that the birds appeared to react to each other. The experience of the pedestrian was also considered so that the sound was not repetitive or infringing on personal audio space. The fact that the origin of the sound was not obvious, enticed passers-by to search for the sound and therefore relate to the area in a different way, raising curiosity, inspiring conversation, and adding a sprinkle of cheer.

In 2014 *Singing Windows* was awarded the Digital Culture Award for its series of installations across East Kent. The judges admired the installation's ambition to make an impact on all kinds of social and environmental factors in a sometimes challenging high street space, and described the work as "a really innovative, but also lyrical and poetic digital piece that made connections with all kinds of audiences in easy to access ways".