

## **Kobold Listening Party**

**Murmur, Amsterdam, 6 September 2024**

Selection and words by Caspar Stalenhoef,

in response to [Kobold on the Unemployment Line](#),

an exhibition by Helena Sanders and Michael Petri at puntWG, Amsterdam

### **1. Hildegard Westerkamp, [Kits Beach Soundwalk](#) (1989)**

Kobolds are fantastical creatures in folk mythology. They come in many, often frightening, forms. Helena and Michael relate to them as spirits impersonating humans in coal and silver mines. I remember reading\* about kobolds as creatures living at the edge of the known/inhabited world, where cities and farm lands give way to the dark forests of fairy tales. This border zone between cities and nature, a space for fantastical projection, made me think of this one by Hildegard Westerkamp, a classic in sound art. Here she's trying to record sounds of nature—a lake and the barnacles in it—while being disturbed by the sound of the city, which she likens to a monster. Then, by leaving the (sound of the) city, Westerkamp is able to enter the space of fantasies and dreams.

\* Ton Lemaire, *Filosofie van het landschap* (1970)

### **2. Singers of Himarë (organized by Kristo Çipa), [Mother](#) (2016)**

Folk music was another inspiration for Helena and Michael. That, plus two quotes by Etel Adnan included in their exhibition text, made me think of an LP that caught my eye last summer, which had Adnan top-billed. It was made for the Albanian Pavilion at the Architecture Biennale in Venice in 2016. Four choirs from different regions of Albania, using a traditional combination of voices called 'iso-polyphony', sang about their land and migration, about departure, longing, and return. One of the twelve texts written for the choirs, 'Mother', was by Etel Adnan. The audience at the Biennale listened to these songs on high-end speakers (one for every singer in the choir!), a bit like we did during the Kobold Listening Party at Murmur.

### **3. John Luther Adams, [The Wind at Maclaren Summit](#) from *Three High Places* (2007), performed by Robert Black (2023)**

Adams's music is often a response to the landscape, of Alaska in his case. In this recording, by Robert Black on double bass, I can almost feel the cold wind blowing over the alpine tundra. Helena and Michael mentioned the importance of 'stewardship towards the land we occupy' and I think Adams (and Black) are urging for the same, through music. Of course I was also looking forward to hearing Black's crisp and tactile recording on Murmur's excellent speakers.