ECHOLOCATION

Mat Collishaw

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*Echolocation* is an eleven-meter-long, three-channel video installation that seeks to excavate more than a millennium of local history.

When Athelstan, the first king of a unified England and the first to wear a crown, ascended the throne in 925, he chose to be “consecrated” in Kingston upon Thames. Indeed, seven Anglo-Saxon kings – among them Eadweard the Elder, Ethelred the Unready and Eadweard the Martyr – are believed to have been crowned here on the King’s Stone, a sarsen geologically similar to those at Stonehenge. It survives to this day, though the original chapel outside which it stood is long gone, replaced by All Saints Church.

Using data gathered by Lidar; a method of measuring distances using a pulsed laser to construct a digital 3D representation of space, a virtual version of the church was created. It’s a process that relates to echolocation; the method by which bats navigate, determining the location of objects by sound.

Kingston is a bat conservation area, and seven species have been recorded across the river in Bushy Park. Bats are also harbingers of change. But unlike the spectral evocation of the church and its Gothic interior, which is based on its actual architecture, the bats in the video are animations, a reference to the work of Eadweard Muybridge, who pioneered stop-motion photography and motion-picture projection with his studies of moving animals and was also another Kingston resident. Born in 1830, he was christened Edward at All Saints, only later assuming the spelling Eadweard after the Saxon kings. He died, aged 74, a mile from here, at 2 Liverpool Road.

The video is projected onto a semi-transparent fine mesh made from stretched fishing net. (Kingston’s coat of arm consists of three silver salmon on a blue ground, representing three fisheries that are mentioned in the Domesday Book, after which the town became known as Kyngeston super Tamisiam, after the Latin for sieve or filter.) This gives the images both depth and an ethereal quality like a free-flowing X-ray of an unseen past, a ghostly palimpsest that interrogates the history of this ancient place.

*This project was commissioned by Canadian & Portland Estates and was created in collaboration with Lorena Popovici, BA Digital Media: Creative Computer Graphics and Media Technology, Faculty of Science Engineering and Computing at Kingston University (bat animation) and Josephine Miller, BA Art Direction, Creative and Cultural Industries at Kingston School of Art (bat texturing), in conjunction with Studio KT1*.

*Artists website: matcollishaw.com. QR code above.*