



Link to [documentation film](#) (2:30)

Link to [source film](#) (8:00)

‘Murmur’ was originally developed as a film installation at St Clement’s Church in Old Romney as part of the Art in Romney Marsh Festival. The installation invited visitors into a dreamily hypnotic murmuration of starlings over a pink sunset, accompanied by an atmospheric soundtrack built around abstracted warning sounds from across the marsh which resonated ethereally through the church. It was an intimate and expansive textural experience, exploring the subtle, seductive power of the patterns and signals around us and the ways that we are intuitively drawn to interpret them.





INSTALLATION FEATURES

Murmur created a space which enclosed the viewer inside an immersive experience without losing connection to the physicality of the church. I built a fabric structure around the front box pews which housed the tech in a way which both obscured it from the viewer and threw the image up and into the viewing area, wrapping itself around the viewer and onto the back wall, washing the space with pink. This introduced a mirror image into the space which is relevant to my work exploring patterns which feel compulsive to us. I set the speakers up directed outwardly into the church hall, allowing the sound to resonate throughout, acting as a siren's call to visitors in the church while inhabiting the space.



FILM AND AUDIO

The film consisted of an edit taken from eight murmurations filmed during lockdown while I was working across two projects - a film about my mental health ('it speaks') and one about Derek Jarman's Modern Nature. As well as editing towards pink sunsets and skies, I wanted to draw on some of the features of murmurations that remain particularly mysterious and ripe for human over-interpretation and speculation. The footage was then blended with abstract footage filmed on a fishing boat in the English Channel to introduce a bit of sensory magic and uneasiness, whilst also randomly creating false correlations between the two movements.

The sound was built from audio taken of the starlings roosting post-murmuration, abstracted warning sounds recorded across the marsh (including Dungeness power station, the light railway crossings and whistles.) This audio has since been developed and re-installed as part of an ambisonic sound installation, introducing further textural layers and using spatial sound to create movement.



VISITOR EXPERIENCE

I chose to invigilate throughout the installation period to engage with visitors, reflecting an important part of my practice. Visitors often wanted to reflect on their own experiences of natural phenomena and drew parallels between the fractal qualities of many of these types of swarming behaviours, movements and sounds. The church also draws a huge number of visitors to the graves of Derek Jarman and Keith Collins which was a wonderful addition to my experience working with visitors to Prospect Cottage. However, it was equally important engaging with the huge numbers of visitors who wouldn't typically engage in the arts at all.



ARTIST'S STATEMENT

The exhibition offered visitors a copy of the artists statement as follows:

“During lockdown I began filming the murmurations of starlings in the marshes. They felt profoundly magnetic - both serene and frenzied. I found myself reflecting on the seductive power of the chaotic patterns that we witness in the universe around us, the messages that we search for and the effects this can have on the way we understand the world.

With this project, I've been thinking about listening and the intuitive choices that we make when we listen - particularly in what we choose to listen to and how we interpret the broad spectrum and scale of sensory information that we perceive. Sometimes we tune in to signals that we know will derail us. Sometimes we are pulled further into the spiral of a siren's call than we expect. How can we decipher the difference between resonance, guidance, correlation, intention and distortion? How do we embrace our intuition and sensitivity with care and curiosity? And how can we navigate the limitations of language against the overwhelming depth of quiet?

In sharing this film, I hope to create the space to explore our collective experience of listening with a sense of both wonder and warning.”

