In December 2012 twelve poets were commissioned to write a poem inspired by the Lindisfarne Gospels. These poems were published as a pamphlet entitled Shadow Script, and were turned into a sound installation entitled Antiphonal by digital artist Tom Schofield. Antiphonal was sited in two iconic places: the newly renovated Lookout Tower on Lindisfarne and the crypt of St Aidan’s Church, Bamburgh.

This was the first use of the crypt, which had been newly opened to the public. It was well received by members of the church and community, who took ownership of the project. So involved, they asked for there to be chairs so they could sit and listen over a period of time. The sound installation produced from the poems worked in a different way from the written page, enacting a dialogue between the poems, and demonstrating the emotive power of the human voice. The project reworked medieval themes and images, translating them and re-interpreting them for the present. It also placed poetry in new settings and involved different audiences.

The project was a communal act of making, involving a group of poets and digital artists sharing inspiration on two journeys to Bamburgh and Lindisfarne, before they embarked on the commission. Eminent medievalist, Professor Clare Lees, King’s College London, was also involved in a conversation with the poets and artists, providing relevant texts, images and stories. The installations ran through July and August 2013 but the impact of the project continues in two further exhibitions, and a radio programme. Antiphonal was exhibited, with films of its two original sites of Lindisfarne and Bamburgh, in the Sanctuary Artspace, St Edmund’s Chapel, High Street Gateshead, from 15th – 21st November 2013. This included a performance by the poets on 15th November. It will also be exhibited in the London Street Gallery, Derry from 30th November to 1st December 2013 as part of the Derry City of Culture 2013 celebrations. BBC Radio 4 is also broadcasting a programme about the making of the project on 24th October 2013.

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