If we could talk to the animals...

Marcus Coates is one of Britain’s most original – and oddest – artists, writes Richard Dormer

In the summer of 2008, Marcus Coates hit the headlines in his bid to communicate with the birds of his local patch of woodland in South London. He spent five days creating a dummy that – after taking a few steps away from its audience, the thrushes and blackbirds of Peckham Rye Park – would mimic their calls. The result was a series of video art installations in which they could interact with the creatures of the wilderness in their own language. They were based on a 90 minute installation in which the artist projected images of himself communicating with birds using a series of electronic devices that translated his voice into bird songs. The audience was invited to watch the birdman’s efforts and listen to the birds’ responses. The project was a success, with visitors commenting on the way in which the birds seemed to respond to the artist’s efforts.

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Coates, who is based in London, has been working on similar projects for several years. His work often involves the use of technology to connect with animals and nature. In 2010, he created a series of interactive installations in which he used virtual reality technology to transport visitors to a remote corner of the world. In this project, Coates used a combination of digital animation and sound to create an immersive experience that allowed visitors to explore the landscape and interact with the animals that lived there. The project was a huge success, with visitors commenting on the way in which it allowed them to experience a sense of connection with the natural world.

Coates’ work is often based on a desire to create a sense of connection with nature and to encourage people to think more about the environment. He believes that by using technology to connect with animals and nature, we can learn more about the natural world and gain a greater appreciation for the beauty of the natural environment. His work has been exhibited in galleries around the world, and he is widely regarded as one of the most innovative artists working in this field.