Saddle up, please, for the Tour de Hackney

Rarely do you encounter a piece of art that requires you to tuck in one trouser leg. But Kaffe Matthews' new work at The Drawing Room gallery in East London is best experienced while doing exactly that. Mittens and a helmet also help. For the piece, entitled *The Three Crosses of Queensbridge*, takes the form of a bicycle tour.

You rattle out of the gallery on a customised bike. Customised in that, strapped to the basket, is a small transistor radio tuned to 101.4 FM. Broadcast over this frequency is the artist's electronic composition – a soundtrack she has invented for your journey. (For Matthews, a sonic artist, this is all par for the course: her oeuvre features the aural work *How Many Planes Are There In the Sky At Any One Moment?*; her latest commission, currently showing at Her Noise at the South London Gallery, is a *Sonic Bed*.) I wheeled out of Laburnum Street, my radio humming with suspense – the sound that, in movies from the thriller genre, indicates *something is about to happen*.

But what? Hackney's backstreets stretch before me in the winter sunshine: gentrified avenues named after poets and generals (Byron Close, Marlborough Avenue) or property developers' girlfriends (Clarissa Street, Anna Close). A gaggle of nursery tots is escorted across the road. Builders working on a paint job turn their heads at my bicycle, which is now emanating a sonic dribble. "Oi, your bike's making a funny noise."

The prescribed route takes me round the map in a sort of chiselled shape, tongued and grooved like a Chubb key. It intersects Queensbridge Road three times – hence the title. It's a tour configured by local landmarks: "turn left at the giant metal hook by the Regent's Canal towpath", "Go past the corrugated tin church". It's also defined by the radio signal: when I take a wrong turning, the dial slips out of its artists' loop and into a local Bengali station. And has Kaffe Matthews designed it so that the route takes in the choicest local graffiti? I passed "Anarchy Live in Hackney", "Reciting Proverbs Makes You Sound like a Twat" (stencilled), and finally, daubed on the wall opposite the Happy Nest Nursery, "Eat the Rich". They seem like angry lyrics running under Matthew's ambient tunes.

And, sampled in with the recorded soundtrack are the live sounds of Wednesday morning on the Haggerston Road: a cock crowing in the Hackney Farm, the yawn of passing aircraft, a sonorous sniff from a passing pedestrian. And, of course, the whirr of my own bicycle, heading back to base.

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