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See who's coming out of the city's shadows

Market Place prepares to trip the light fantastic with £1m attraction

BY DAVID WALSH



LET THERE BE LIGHT: The gantries for the lights and projectors are erected in Derby's Market Place ahead of the start of the Under Scan project tomorrow.
Picture: Maria Marshall MM220206B-1

A £1m public light show opens in the centre of Derby on Friday.

East Midlands Development Agency's Under Scan project will see the city's Market Place transformed by a futuristic network of light sensors and projectors for 10 days.

The system will pick out the shadows of pedestrians and project still colour images of people from Derby on to the ground in their place.

Once a person's shadow reaches the projection, the image will come alive and continue moving until the pedestrian is no longer in the system's sights.

The images were filmed at Derby Dance Centre, in Chapel Street.

EMDA hopes the project will attract tourists to the East Midlands. The system has already been used in Lincoln, Leicester and Northampton.

Agencies in New York and Sydney are interested in hiring the system.

Board member Ross Willmott said: "We want to draw attention to the arts across the region."

"This scheme is innovative and interactive. It will fill a public space and attract a lot of attention."

Construction of the light rigs, sensors and projectors began last week.

The project is the idea of Mexican artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer. EMDA spent £225,000 on his fee and the system's software.

A further £485,000 was spent on the projectors, sensors and staging. The rest of the money goes on costs such as staff and transport.

The organisation receives about £150m in funding from the Government each year.

It is thought that about 5,000 people had a go in

Lincoln and 10,000 in Leicester.

Becky Dunning (28), of Uttoxeter New Road, Derby, is among those whose image will be projected.

She said: "It was great to be involved. It will be excellent if it is used in New York and Sydney."

"It's great that something so high-profile has been produced in the East Midlands."

But some people are less happy with the project.

Chris Woodward (61), of Crompton Street, Derby, said: "It's an awful lot of money to spend."

"I know it's come from a different pot but, when you think that St Helen's House needs saving and the situation that the bus station is in, it seems less deserving."

Under Scan will open at 7pm on Friday and every night until Sunday, March 5.

It will operate until 2am at weekends and until midnight on weekdays.

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HOW THE UNDER SCAN CONCEPT WORKS

1 The Market Square is lit up using a powerful projector. The beam of white light casts a strong shadow of all passers-by in the immediate area.

2 A total of 14 smaller projectors on motorised pan-and-tilt platforms, positioned either side of the paved area, will track people walking across and project a "video portrait" within the shadow they are casting.

3 The video portraits are made up from more than 1,000 local people and were filmed in Derby, Leicester, Lincoln, Northampton and Nottingham.

Pan-and-tilt sensors are positioned along a gantry. More than 1,000 video portraits are stored in 14 custom-made media servers, which are cued by a wireless link.

Artist's mock-up of what Under Scan will look like in Derby Market Place.

Film-maker Juliette Winter (pictured) scans Becky Dunning for the Under Scan project.