This installation comes with messages that exist on two planes: the ephemeral (or transcendent) and the physical. The stories that these animated vignettes represent are based on the Indigenous people’s memory of this region of the continent—narratives that exist across time and space. They are older than America. Their persistence over time is purposeful as they help invoke an understanding of the water, the land, and the deep sky. Today, Indigenous people of this region perceive the local landscape with these stories in mind. It is through their lens that you are invited to see and hear as well.
SUPERNAUT BECOMES THE WATER LILY

This star woman is from another place. The star people’s legends are the science and mythology of the Anishinaabe. Her reason for visiting the Anishinaabe is unknown. When she descends from the sky, the one thing she asks for is permission to stay among the people. After a meeting of the village, it is agreed that the star woman will be welcome to stay for as long as she likes. Her hosts tell her she can choose a location to make her home. She points to the shore. The star woman then makes her way down to the water and continues until she has gone completely under the surface. The Anishinaabe never see her again until one day a single white water lily emerges from the very spot where she walked into the lake.

THE MISHU BIZHIW AWAKENS

Under the icy surface of Gichi Gami lives a creature that guards the lake. As winter passes, the Mishu Bizhiw (Great Lynx) grows weary of being underwater and swims to the surface to bang its tail against the ice in an effort to break through. Stories describe the Mishu Bizhiw as being covered in copper scales with a body like that of a dragon and a head the size of a lion. This giant creature’s role, among others, is that of a protector of the water from those who would harm or deplete the resources of the lake. This story, older than Duluth, is one of many from the people of the shores of Lake Superior as it resurfaces after a long, cold winter.

GOLDFINCH COUNTS LEAVES

The American goldfinch is said to symbolize one of the spirits that keep the Anishinaabe language. Among those who know the language, the goldfinch goes by the name Aginjibagwesì, which literally means “the leaf counter.” It is said that when the goldfinch is seen jumping from branch to branch, he is making a count of the leaves in song.