

*BALANCE: ARTIST STATEMENT*

In the play, *A Delicate Balance* (1966) by Edward Albee, the characters Harry and Edna arrive unexpectedly at their friends Agnes and Tobias's house, with a request to stay for a while, as they need to escape an unnamed terror. In explaining this terror, Harry and Edna state:

HARRY: There was nothing ... but we were very scared.

EDNA: We ... were ... terrified.

HARRY: We were scared. It was like being lost: very young again, with the dark, and lost. There was no ... thing ... to be ... frightened of, but ...

EDNA: We were frightened ... and there was nothing.

As a starting point, my exhibition draws inspiration from this quote. The theme of the show explores the relationship between real and imagined fears. It considers the extent to which we can sometimes feel controlled by invisible, unnamed terrors. In mapping imaginary landscapes, the works aim to reflect upon the negotiations and manoeuvres we make within the complex, at times disconcerting and chaotic space of South Africa.

Cotton waste, a cleaning material used in printmaking studios, is used extensively to construct the artworks – in the video installation, animation and prints. As a waste material, it performs an essential utilitarian function yet is seemingly insignificant, ostensibly “nothing”. Upon closer inspection, we see it is made of thousands of shredded cotton threads, forming a large mass of nebulous chaos. Throughout the exhibition, the cotton waste represents the element of unknown fears and the threat of disorder. As with imagined fears, ill-defined yet wholly present in our minds, the formless piles of cotton waste become subterranean underworlds, hindering the movement of the figures that wander across its terrain. The figures in *balance* appear to be lost, on an endless struggle to escape the nameless terrors and break free of the anarchic mass.

By uttering the fear and searching for ways to describe the phantoms, the works endeavor to present a way to deal with the feelings such fears inspire. A sense of play is used to confront these nameless terrors. With a spirit of mockery and laughter, I hope to highlight an element of the absurd present in the strange worlds of imagined fears.

Creative methodology

In my creative work, I am interested in exploring the intersection between traditional art media and digital technologies. I search for ways to include elements of the handmade and the making process, as a means to import haptic qualities into the digital realm. In the stopframe animation, the sets and characters are made from cut-out drypoint and monotype prints. The landscapes of the sets are composed of cotton waste. By integrating products and materials from the printmaking process into the animation, traces of the handmade become integral in creating a more tactile digital product.

The medium of stop-frame animation also lends itself to creating a more organic, “mortal” digital product. A stop-frame animation is produced by taking photographs of the characters' tiny movements over space and time. These photographs are then seamed together in editing software to form a moving visual sequence. Because each character or individual body part needs to be moved incrementally, traces of the artist's physical presence and movement become part of the work.

The element of animation is extended in the printmaking process as I use printmaking as a way to storyboard and map out the narrative for my animations. The monoprint (or monotype) lends itself to producing multiple iterations of an image, and in this way, the series of monotypes with successive “ghost-prints” become a form of early animation. Individual acetate figures and body parts provide a versatile means to modify each following print. These drypoint fragments can be shifted into new poses, altering the composition of the monotype while the “ghost-image” retains the trace of the characters' previous positions in the early stages of the image's development.

Traces of the creative process are further incorporated into the body of work in the soundscape of the animation. Musician João Orecchia recorded the sounds in and around my studio while I was working. This included recording the sounds of my equipment, such as the printing press, the CPU of my computer and the lens of the digital camera. All these sounds were then montaged together in digital software to produce a haunting soundscape that extends the disconcerting atmosphere of this strange underworld.