

Practitioner's Statement

Restless

Zoe Spooner

This work is an attempt to express the frustration and isolation of insomnia and unrest by contrast of invasive movement, which in this case represent intrusive thoughts and outside stress, to simple, still subjects.

To begin, I chose to explore the concepts of growth, decay, and the passing of time through use of movement in art. The saturated still life paintings of native fauna and plants of this years Artist in Residence, Sophie Dunlop, led me to look into birds, because I love their mannerisms and diversity and they excellently convey my initial inspiration of movement. Eventually I was lead to Meghan Howland's paintings, specifically her vibrant and unsettling series of portraits featuring birds, and shifted my focus to the contrast of stillness and movement. In this vein I experimented with animation, looking to traditional animators such as Paul Bush as well as contemporary animators and game designers Eran Hill and Lucas Cosco who structured this area of exploration and introduced me to the principles of animation. I tested out various combinations of tracing paper, paint, and collage to create short, simple animations which I found to be effective and visually striking.

Throughout my experimentation I also developed an appreciation for watercolour paints as an extremely expressive and versatile medium. I chose to develop these skills by study of contemporary artists Julie Petrova, Marlene Dumas, Steve Kim, and Maxi Quay, which eventually led to experimentation in ink. As my thematic focus developed I was drawn to the motif of sleep and the night-time. When paired with the monochromatic and limited palette works of print artists Gustave Dore and Jan Konecny as well as painters Leon Spillaert and Arthur Heming, I felt it was complemented by the stylised contemporary animation I had focused on previously. This contrast was what I focused on in my resolved work, many elements of which are influenced by contemporary photographers Martin Vlach and Jon Edwards, as well as animators Stephen and Timothy Quay, whose soft and sinister monochrome stop-motion animations exemplify the unease my work attempts to convey

My resolved work depicts a figure in three states of unrest, painted in black ink in order to emphasise the cold, isolated, colourless late hours depicted, and better simplify the subject into expressive forms. The stylised paintings aim to convey restlessness, as the title suggests, while also portraying the calm of night through smooth shadows and oval canvases. The projection over the pieces is a simple looping series of clips of birds from around my neighbourhood – it maintains the black-and white palette and is intentionally rough and jittery to emphasise the movement I am using to portray the irritating, intrusive disturbances that leave us unrested. I chose to present the three paintings by sewing them onto a black pillowcase, furthering the focus of sleep and creating an uneven background over which the projected birds warp and distort. Being black rather than the traditional white, the pillow supporting my works - rather than giving comfort as pillows and blankets usually do – also seems out of place and unsettling. I am pleased overall with the way my work coordinates to effectively express my chosen themes.

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