

**in conversation**

***This short email interview was held between Mia van Schalkwyk and Mandy Conidaris in July 2013.***

**MC - Why did this particular body of artwork come into existence?**

**MvS** - When I moved from a small town to spend time in Johannesburg, I was overwhelmed by feelings of fear, anxiety and paranoia in my new urban environment.

**MC - Do you remember a specific trigger?**

**MvS** - My creative journey was sparked by those very feelings, trying to find ways to explore and identify them, and also by the sense of isolation that these emotions led to.

**MC - Did you have any creative influences?**

**MvS** - My work was influenced by Charles Maggs' work *R.T.* as well as Gerard Bester's *Turnstile – not sure if I was coming or going.*

**MC - What role did process play in your image choices?**

**MvS** - My videos are self-portraits, because my concept was inspired by personal experiences. In all these videos I felt very uncomfortable. In *An Altered Reality* I remember being very afraid while taking the footage. The process of creating these videos was one of personal exploration.

**MC - Is there a particular metaphor underlying your work?**

**MvS** - There are several visual metaphors, all dealing with the issue of fear and paranoia within an urban environment. During the editing of these videos, the layering processes became a metaphor for the irrational thought patterns that people may develop.

**MC Do you feel that the work expresses your intentions?**

**MvS** - During the process of creating these videos, I was often confronted with feelings of fear or paranoia, and I was forced to face them. I do feel that these videos express my intentions, as I had to deal with these overwhelming emotions during the making of these videos. I believe that urban fear is something many people are faced with and can associate with in some way.

**MC - How do you assess your images afterwards from the perspective of their meanings to you, namely the memories they evoke of your experiences and thought processes during the making of these videos?**

**MvS** - These artworks certainly transport me back to that state of being overwhelmed by my experiences in Johannesburg at the time, and how unknown the environment was to me. I can recall very vivid moments of anxiety and fear. I especially remember filming in the streets of Johannesburg, and how absolutely real the possible threats around me seemed.

**MC** - **Is the work's significance to the viewer important to you?**

**MvS** - Although my experiences were of personal nature, it is important to me that the viewer gets a sense of the overwhelming feelings being portrayed, and I hope that they can relate to these feelings within their own context.

**Thank you, Mia!**