

## Stuttering Images

When we've lost the ability to speak, images can allow us to communicate again. For Scarlett Platel, who is currently doing an MA at the Royal College of Art, words simply didn't suffice to organize and communicate her thoughts. She needed to externalise them through images, and created a language that is visual rather than verbal – a language in which she is much more fluent. "These symbols provided a code when my mind was rolling around," she says.

Even if the ideas she conveys are often inspired by complex psychoanalytic or religious themes, they have the potential to touch anyone, precisely because of their visual nature. The highly symbolic images somehow reach the viewer on an unconscious, prelinguistic level.

Creating this language was a long and arduous process. Even though she was studying fine arts, Platel ended up using photography as her means of expression. "I had this weird romantic dream of being a painter, but then my tutors told me: 'You're a photographer, this is what you're good at.'" Having to learn these photographic techniques by herself, she spent days in the darkroom experimenting with different methods. "Being able to print in the darkroom was an obsession of mine," Platel says. She wouldn't stop until the image was exactly how she wanted it to be. Like the stutterer who tries to pronounce the word she's thinking of, Platel obsessively tries to make the shapes in her mind appear on paper. Satisfaction only comes when the word is pronounced or the image printed.

*Bram Van Beek*