In her installation of animated paintings titled ‘Terra Infirma’ Betsy Dadd offers a poetic vision of the vulnerability of the British landscape, one buffeted and worn by forces of nature. All the images are both static and in flux. Inspired by the coastal landscapes of South Wales and Norfolk she depicts scenes of relentless coastal erosion, abrupt rockfalls and fleeting local tremors that cause crockery to quiver and shake. Such incidents might seem relatively minor in isolation, but for the artist they are ‘small moments that allude to a greater crisis.’ It is as if everything in the world is revealed to be unstable, in motion, in a state of transition. The whole work speaks of, as she puts it, ‘the uncertainty of the ground.’

The work was conceived as a series of animated paintings, to be installed as objects in space within a gallery, or as a stage set, although it also exists as a short film where views of the landscapes and domestic scenes are intercut. Materials and processes are intrinsic to her envisionings of nature. Her paintings are often vast in scale, making the animation process physically demanding and her drawing rigorous. For Dadd size and materiality are not only important as a working method, but also as a way to represent the magnitude and fragility of the landscape.

The animations evolve as a painting develops; each stop motion frame captures part of an unfolding sequence as she adds new detail and eliminates earlier marks — paintbrush in one hand and scouring pad in the other. She explains: ‘I destruct the images frame by frame, and eventually the paper erodes, as do the subjects within.’

Betsy Dadd refers to her work as ‘durational painting’ and speaks of its ‘animated stillness’. She says, ‘I find subtle movement draws one to look closer. And, as a counterpoint to action, minimal movement and slow motion suspend time and create quietude.’ She quotes the philosopher Alain Badiou who suggests: ‘It is a matter of constructing time for thought that is slow and leisurely, for what makes our world is speed.’ As opposed to driving a viewer’s thoughts through the linear progression of a narrative idea, the ‘Terra Infirma’ paintings provide an expansive space for reflection.

Betsy Dadd is available to work to commission.

Betsy Dadd studied Fine Art Printmaking at the University of Brighton (2005 – 2008) and recently graduated with an MA in Animation from the Royal College of Art, London (2013). She was
numerous exhibitions and screenings in the UK, France, Germany and Japan and as part of dance performances at the Lilian Baylis Studio and Sadler’s Wells Theatre, where she has collaborated with Russell Maliphant, Jasmin Vardimon and Random Dance companies. She has also undertaken commissions for a range of clients that include Tate Merchandise, BBC Radio 4 / St Martin in the Fields Charity and Wichita Records.

www.betsydadd.com

Marsden Woo Project Space is curated by Tessa Peters.

The Marsden Woo Project Space is a space for experimental new work in art, craft and design and runs alongside our established programme of solo and small group exhibitions by gallery artists. The Project Space allows us to respond quickly to significant bodies of innovative work, particularly that of talented emerging artists and designers, as well as fresh directions in the work of more established artists. The exhibitions are organized at short notice, so please check our website regularly for news of forthcoming shows and events.