Sonya Rademeyer
All we need is a Conductor

In June 2018 implemented Trump immigration policy resulted in the forced separation of very young children and their parents. A short audio clip circulated on the internet where distressed cries of these children could be heard, crying ‘Mama’ and ‘Papi’. At some point between the audible distress, a border officer is heard saying: ‘All we need now is a conductor’.

Taking this clip as the genesis for this work I slowed down each of the cries, elongating the soundwaves significantly. I used these clips to create soundwave trilogies on each of the eleven panels. Using hundreds of dressmaker’s pins in various shades of grey, silver and black, I pinned them through tracing paper and onto a woodcut print.

The print, reflecting the chaos of interweaving lines, reflects the sound patterning of a member of parliament that regularly exhibits displays of power and verbal dominance. Whether the voice reflects that of a South African or American parliamentary member is neither here nor there, but points, rather, to the relationship between voice, misused power and dominance over those that are vulnerable.

As a visual artist who is interested in visualizing sound as a vehicle to explore empathy, I often try to create a new language-of-line. This piece is about giving sound to the voiceless. In this instance, the voice of the most vulnerable is over-pinned onto those that exhibit and abuse power.
All we need is a Conductor • 2018 • woodcut prints (11) on handmade paper, tracing paper, dressmaker's pins, music stands • 170 x 400 x 400 cm
Cullinan - Gauteng
Dullstroom - Mpumalanga
Graskop - Mpumalanga
Pretoria - Gauteng
Richmond - Northern Cape