



Bev Butkow

re-weaving m/other

20 August - 30 September 2023

GUNS & RAIN



re-weaving m/other

2023

site-responsive installation

Origins Centre Museum, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

all images © Bev Butkow, Anthea Pokroy, Guns & Rain

Artist's statement

re-weaving m/other is a site-responsive installation of my abstracted-woven-stitched-painted-mixed-media constructions with fraying edges that converge and entangle into the space of the Origins Centre, Wits. Made of detritus and surplus, I invite viewers to actively engage with its tactility, physicality, and immersive, meditative qualities.

I embrace instinctive, make-shift, playful and experimental ways of working with tactile making practices, forging a unique path through my imaginative experimentation and exploratory playfulness. Embracing the ritualistic, meditative rhythm of weaving, my process trusts in the intelligence of the hands. It is grounded in the integrity of the everyday materials I find and gather, yet unfolds on multiple ephemeral levels beyond my physical forms. My collaborative, physical and research-based approach to studio activities results in make-shift constructions that transgress boundaries between textile art, painting, sculpture, and installation.

The soft arts are always the space of the Other (Weiwei Wang), and it is from this perspective that this exhibition serves to provoke, question, and reframe how we exist in the world as individuals, in community, and in relation to all other living beings. Woven throughout *re-weaving m/other* is the presence of care – care for my tactile human-made materials, for an ailing planet, for the body, and for one another. Continuing and evolving my investigations into notions of care and co-existence, it centres among other, the body, materiality and excess, women's labour, and the traces one leaves on the world.



resurface-reskin - installation view



Networks of care converge and entangle in Bev Butkow's solo exhibition *re-weaving m/other*

Bev Butkow's newest body of abstracted-woven-stitched-painted-mixed-media constructions is a continuation and evolution of her investigations into notions of care and co-existence, seeking to provoke, question, and reframe how we exist in the world as individuals, in community, and in relation to all other living beings.

The constructions in *re-weaving m/other* are the result of Butkow's collaborative, physical approach to studio activities that trusts in the intelligence of the hands. Through a combination of weaving, painting, installation and projection, the artist invites viewers to actively engage with its tactility, physicality, and immersive, meditative qualities.

Woven throughout Butkow's exhibition, and deeply embedded in the works themselves, is the presence of care – care for her tactile human-made materials, for an ailing planet, for the body, and for one another. Through this modus of care, four key themes arise to animate the exhibition – the body and art, a material uprising, the value of women's labour, and the traces we leave & the impact we make.

The body and art considers how gesture, physicality, and the performance of the art-making process inform the work of art, both in its making and viewing, while a material uprising speaks to the contrast between the build-up of excess and material waste in the contemporary world and the intimate, symbiotic, synchronistic and receptive relationship that the artist has with her materials. The value of women's labour looks at the presence of mothering, nurturing and care in the studio and the domestic space, and the value society places on this labour. Finally, the traces we leave speaks to our impact – materially, socially, environmentally and otherwise – on each other and Mother Earth.

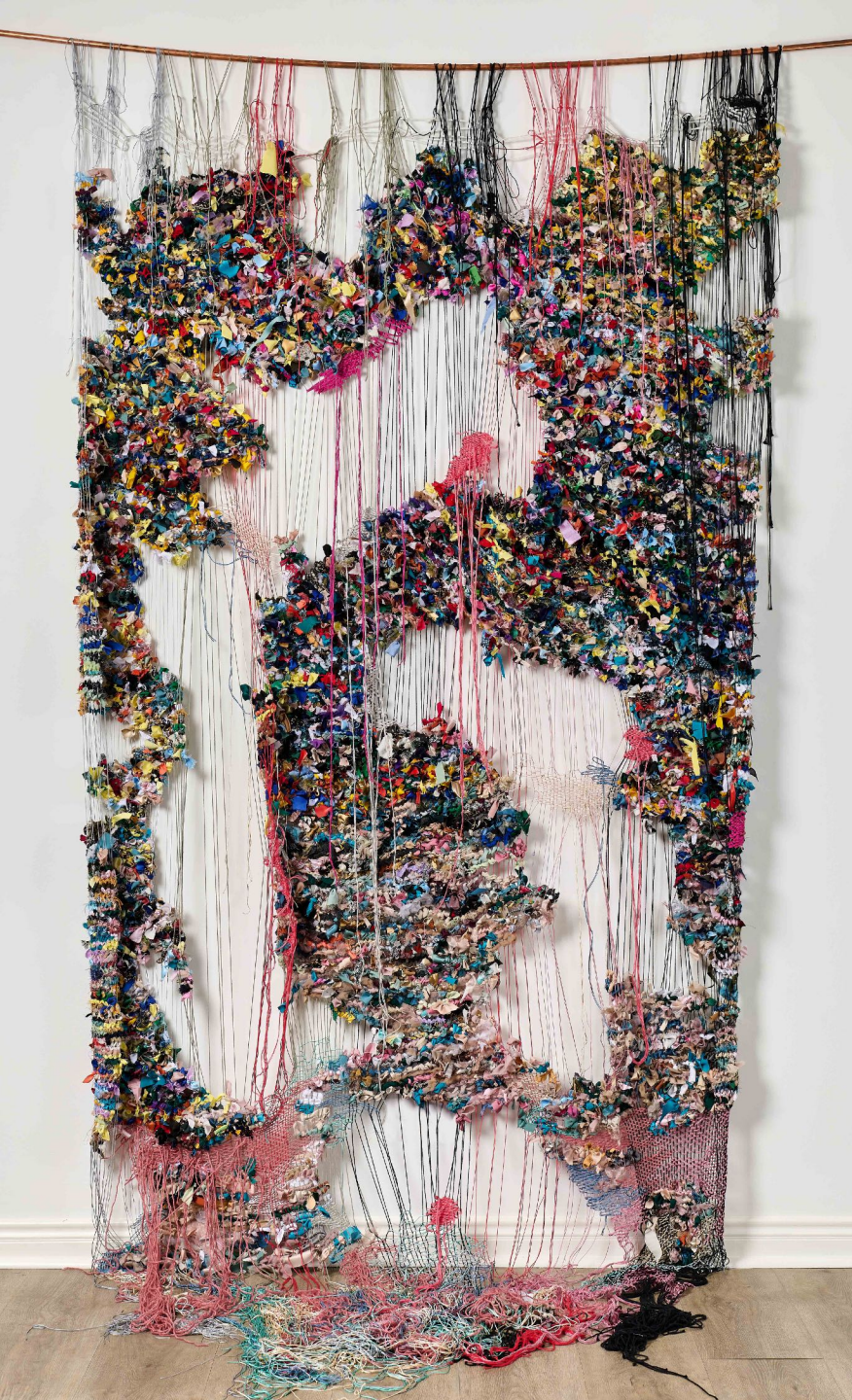
Butkow asks, "what opportunities arise when the mode of caring that defines woman/motherhood – that contradiction between nurturing and extending – turns into a creative methodology that guides my way of working in my studio?" She adds that "mobilising the immense power of mothering, nurturing, and care in the studio has allowed the materials to speak, and to reach their full potential."

Through embedding these notions of care into her process, Butkow ponders new ways of being in, and engaging with, the world.

August 2023
Text by David Mann
Writer, editor & arts journalist







Available works

Of generations past, and future

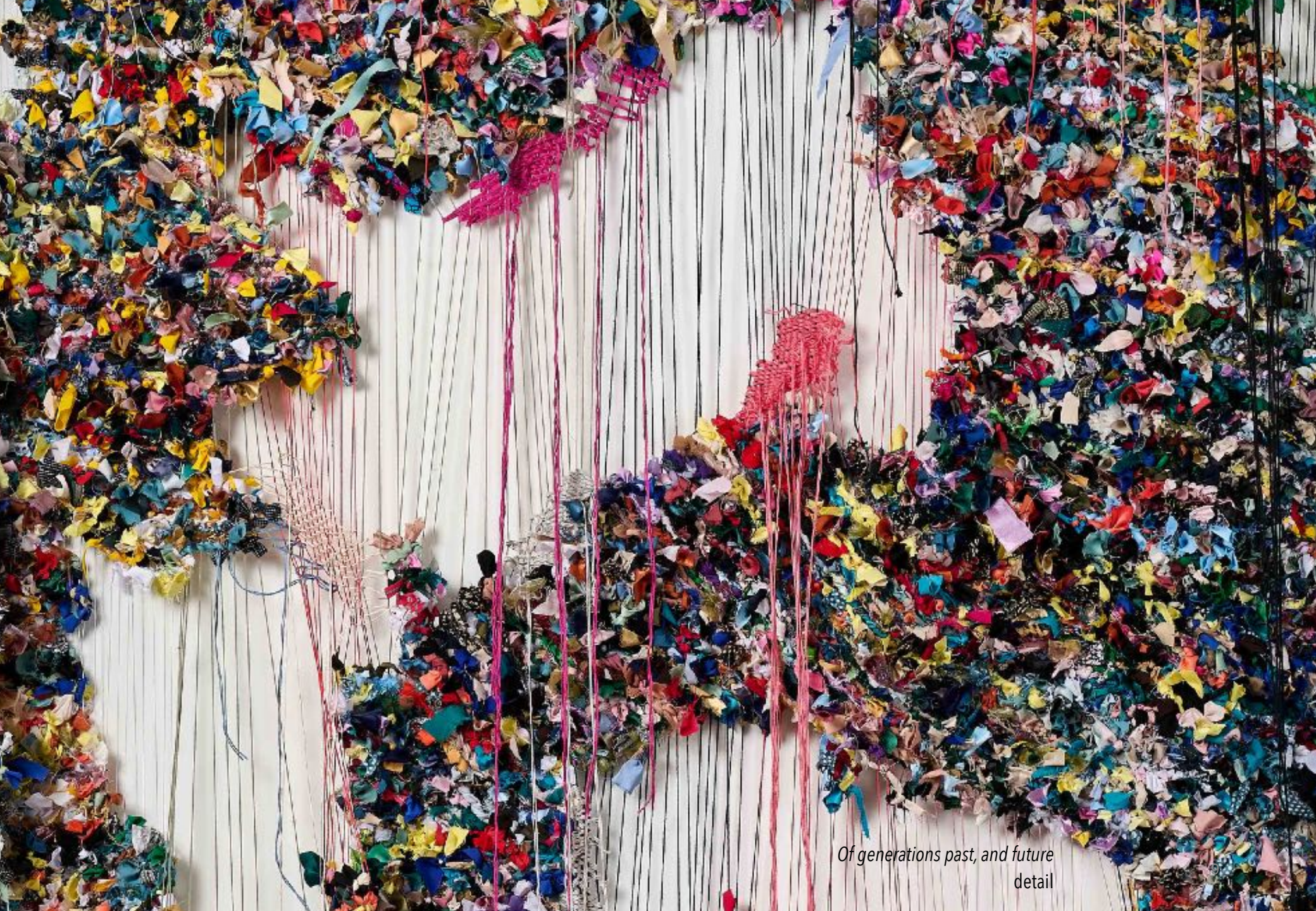
made with Thandiswa Maxinyane

2023

thread, dressmaking scraps, copper rod, time and labour

approx. 380 x 170 cm

provenance – Yi Tai Sculpture & Installation Projects, 2023 Art Central Hong Kong



Of generations past, and future
detail



Of generations past, and future
installation view



Of generations past, and future
installation view



never static

made with Thandiswa Maxinyane, Danily Hunga
2022

wool, dressmaking scraps, string, ribbon, twine, disused
wooden painting stretcher

175 x 245 cm

provenance – Yi Tai Sculpture & Installation Projects, 2023 Art
Central Hong Kong



never static (l) and resurface-reskin (r)
installation view



*never static
detail*



never static
detail



beneath our threshold of awareness

made with Thandiswa Maxinyane and
Danily Hunga

2022

thread, wool, string, disused wooden painting
stretcher

210 x 210 cm

provenance – Yi Tai Sculpture & Installation Projects,
2023 Art Central Hong Kong



beneath our threshold of awareness
installation view



beneath our threshold of awareness
detail



Challenge the bounds of acceptability

2020

made with Marguerite Sanders

plastic mesh, string, wool, plastic and wooden beads, imitation pearls, repurposed

canvas, cable ties, fabric, ribbon, metal washers, insulation tape, plastic cord

approx. size excluding hanging fringes 105 x 61 x 20 cm



Challenge the bounds of acceptability
front (l) and back (r)





Challenge the bounds of acceptability
detail



gestural intensity

2023

acrylic, acrylic ink, oil paint, glitter, wax, market pen, gold leaf, silver leaf, pigment powder, graphite powder, dressmaking scraps, enamel paint, cold wax on Belgian linen

180 x 140 x 5 cm

,000 (ex VAT)

gestural intensity
detail





gestural intensity
Installation view



surplus

made with Cynthia Maxinyane

2023

fabric offcuts, plastic mesh, beads, time and labour

250 x 160 cm





surplus
installation views



poetic acts of despair

made with Thandiswa Maxinyane

2023

wool, thread, dressmaking scraps, glass beads, fishing gut, time and labour

approx. 165 x 145 cm

provenance – has never been exhibited

poetic acts of despair
Detail





unmapping VI

made with Thandiswa Maxinyane

2023

wool, thread, dressmaking scraps,, time and labour

47 x 57 x 4 cm (framed)

provenance - Soft Power, Guns & Rain with Addis Fine Art, London



Unmapping I

made with Thandiswa Maxinyane

2023

thread, wool, ribbon, cord, perspex rods, time and labour

72 x 54 cm

provenance - has never been exhibited



unmapping I
Detail

Creative gatherings

Alongside *re-weaving m/other*, independent curator Candice Allison and Bev Butkow gathered a powerhouse of 25 artist-women and thinkers from South Africa and the global South in a series of creative gatherings around the topic of *women's work as artistic practice*. The gatherings, which were supported of the National Arts Council (NAC) and PESPA, served to provoke, question, and reframe how we exist in the world as individuals, in community, and in relation to all other living beings.

Four sessions of powerful, provocative, generative, and vulnerable gatherings were held. The topics addressed, and speakers, were:

1. *the body and art* – Buhlebezwe Siwani / Katherine Dewar / Shanti Govender / Dr Jenni Lauwrens / Fatima Tayob Moosa / Dr Kirti Ranchod
2. *a material uprising* – Weiwei Wang / Tracy Murinik / Kutlwano Monyai / Hannelie Coetzee / Bev Butkow / Adelheid Frackiewicz
3. *the value of women's labour* – mothering/ nurturing/ caring – Grace Cross / Lara Koseff / Mary Corrigan / Philiswa Lilla / Princia Matungulu / Nina Barnett
4. *traces we leave upon the Earth* – Zayaan Khan / Candice Allison / Io Makandal / Dr Meghan Judge / Miliswa Ndziba

Link to recordings: [click here](#)

creative gatherings around the broad theme of 'women's work as artistic practice'. the gatherings serve to provoke, question, and reframe how we exist in the world as individuals, in community, and in relation to all other living beings

announcing the panelists



buhlebezwe siwani
katherine dewar
shanti govender
prof jenni lauwrens
fatima moosa
dr kirti ranchod
weiwei wang
tracy murinik
kutlwano monyai
hannelie coetzee
dr adelheid frackiewicz
bev butkow
grace cross
lara koseff
mary corrigan
philiswa lilla
princia matungulu
nina barnett
zayaan khan
candice allison
dr jessica webster
io makandal
miliswa ndziba
langelihle mthembu
dr meghan judge



<https://gunsandrain.com/creative-gatherings-around-the-theme-of-womens-work-as-artistic-practice/>

About Bev Butkow

South African artist Bev Butkow (b. Johannesburg 1967) is a maker, thinker, carer, and connector, who arrived late to the arts, first holding a paint brush in her mid-40's. Switching from a successful career in finance to full-time art practice, and dedicated to lifelong learning, she obtained a Master of Fine Arts (cum laude) from University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (Wits) in 2022 under scholarship from Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Her artistic and scholarly practices are nuanced by her diverse life experiences and complexities of occupying often conflicting roles within her home-city Johannesburg.

Butkow embraces an instinctive and incidental way of working with tactile making practices, forging a unique path through her imaginative experimentation and exploratory playfulness. Her collaborative, physical and research-based approach to studio activities results in make-shift constructions that transgress boundaries between textile art, painting, sculpture, and installation. Butkow is represented by Guns & Rain, a female-led Johannesburg-based gallery for contemporary African art.

In 2022, she presented her work at the Dakar Biennale, Senegal, and at Contextile Bienal TextileTALKS, Portugal. She presented tactile immersive installations at Art Central Hong Kong 's 2023 curated Yi Tai Projects and in the curated Tomorrows/Today section of the 2022 Investec Cape Town Art Fair. She has exhibited locally and internationally, presented her research at academic conferences and is published in peer-reviewed academic journals.

Deeply committed to education and grounded in her responsibility as a maker, communicator, and social actor, Butkow co-founded a rural library and dedicated over a decade of service to the Board and management committee of 11 schools. Based in Johannesburg with her husband, four children and dog, the city is key to her creative process.



About Guns & Rain

Guns & Rain is a Johannesburg-based gallery for contemporary African art, with a strong local and international programme of exhibitions and collaborations. Founded in 2014 as one of Africa's first online galleries, Guns & Rain was established to address the under-representation of African art online and globally. Today, the gallery works with over twenty emerging artists from six African countries - South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, Mozambique and Nigeria - and is known both for its leaning towards social and political themes and for identifying new talent.

Guns & Rain has produced regular exhibitions in Johannesburg since 2015 and has had a physical space in Johannesburg since 2018. In addition to our local exhibition programme, the gallery participates in local and international art fairs and regularly collaborates with partner galleries and dealers to present a busy programme of exhibitions in Africa, Europe and the United States. Guns & Rain has helped launch several artists into international careers and has helped place African art in multiple collections around the world.

The gallery is a member of the African Art Galleries Association (AAGA) and the Association of Women Art Dealers (AWAD). We also collaborate with universities and have hosted artists and multiple interns from the University of Johannesburg and University of Oxford.

The name Guns & Rain comes from the work of South African-born British anthropologist and playwright David Lan, who wrote about guerrillas and spirit mediums in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. Lan's work is concerned with culture, identity, land, struggle, change, and other important African themes that also inform the curatorial focus and programme of the gallery.

www.gunsandrain.com

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GUNS & RAIN