

Tus tsĩ !xurub, Rain and drought

30.05.2023

10.06.2023

MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique is delighted to present *Tus tsĩ !xurub, Rain and drought*, an exhibition by South African artist Bronwyn Katz.

Tus tsĩ !xurub, Rain and drought draws from a text written by !Ora language activist Andries Bitterbos. In the text, Andries Bitterbos recollects a ritual performed to summon rain. The exhibition *Tus tsĩ !xurub, Rain and drought* conjures a form of material translation and interpretation of this ritual for rain.

The installation presented at MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique is manifested through what Katz identifies as curtains of rain, made of copper coated carbon steel and hemp twine. This wire image of rain is inspired by the sound of rain hitting a metal roof.

Katz is interested in the potential of rain as a cleansing force, a healing force, a blessing. She posits copper as a metaphor for water, this conductor of electricity encourages wound healing.

The bed is a potent symbol that brings into play issues around land, living in reciprocity with the earth, homelessness and belonging – and which, in its horizontality, even serves as a metaphor for land itself.

Increasingly deconstructed, Katz's process involves an unravelling of the material, a peeling back of layers, pulling, breaking and repairing. The bed, metal bed springs and bed frames can be thought of as 'unearthed material'; the furniture is often salvaged from places in states of flux, cities where the artist might be living at the time or has lived in the past.

In several sculptures, patterns of coiled springs are combined with metal and plastic pot-scourers. Stretched out onto the springs to create a field of delicate, protruding mounds, the material delicacy of the scourers belies a powerful symbolism.

Scourers speak to labour, the expectation and normalisation of the black body at work, scrubbing and cleaning. A signifier of blackness, they conjure up the derogatory phrase 'hair you can scour pots

with', which attests to one of the many ways in which blackness is judged by superficial attributes.

Through the creation of codes/visual forms realised as sculptures and installation Katz offers an alternative mode of preserving, reading and understanding ritual, language and the earth. Katz's work on excavating communal history and the recognition of diverse forms of expression is crucial for the rebuilding of a South African archive and reclaiming what was assumed to be lost or destroyed. Incorporating sculpture, installation, video and performance, Bronwyn Katz's practice engages with concepts of mapping, loss, memory and language relative to land and culture

Rain and drought

*In other times, if the earth (!üb) should be very dry (!xuru),
then a chameleon (khutekakhubeb) was looked for (kx'a-he) in the veld,
and when one was found (hō-he),
it was buried (khaoʔ.-he lit. 'be dug-enter') still living (kx'üisibe)
And then great rain [would] rain (tū).
and the storm (Inanobi) [would] rage (!lxō) greatly (kaise).
And if the storm was very severe,
They went and dug it out (sī-khao-#kx'oa-si-he, lit. 'go-dig-make-be emerged')
And if it was hail-rain,
Then a last-born child (!aul'o'i)
one hailstone for a while in the mouth
was made to hold
And then it ceased (!au).*

- Andries Bitterbos

Bronwyn Katz*Tus tsĩ |xurub, Rain and drought*

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Bronwyn Katz

Incorporating sculpture, installation, video and performance, Bronwyn Katz's practice engages with the concept of land as a repository of memory and trauma, reflecting on the notion of place or space as lived experience, and the ability of the land to remember and communicate the memory of its occupation. Working with found natural materials such as iron ore, or used man made objects such as foam mattress and bed springs, Katz's approach to making is driven by storytelling and intuition. Conceptually, her sculptures refer to the political context of their making, embodying subtle acts of resistance that draw attention to the social constructions and boundaries that continue to define our environments. For Katz, the language of abstraction is in active opposition to overt representation, allowing her work to be open to multivalent readings. Hers is a minimalism that converses with early forms of abstract art; methods and traditions of mark-making and story-telling that long predate Western Modernism. Katz has held six solo exhibitions to date, including *I turn myself into a star and visit my loved ones in the sky* at White Cube in London (2021), *Salvaged Letter* at Peres Projects in Berlin (2019), */// ! ‡* at blank projects in Cape Town (2019), and *A Silent Line, Lives Here* at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2018). Recently, her work has been included in the 59th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale, the 2021 New Museum Triennial of New York and the Future Generation Art Prize shortlist exhibition. Previous group exhibitions include *Upkeep: Everyday Strategies of Care* (The Arts Club of Chicago, 2020); *We Aim to Live* (Zuzeum Art Centre, Riga, 2020); *NIRIN* (Biennale of Sydney, 2020); and *Là où les eaux se mêlent* (Biennale de Lyon, 2019). In 2019, she was awarded the First National Bank Art Prize. Katz is a founding member of iQhiya, an 11-women artist collective which has performed across various spaces, including Documenta (in Kassel and Athens), Greatmore Studios, and Iziko South African National Gallery.

Born in 1993, in Kimberley, South Africa, Katz lives and works between Cape Town and Johannesburg.

Artwork details

Bronwyn Katz
Khutekakhubeb (Chameleon), 2023
Salvaged bedspring, pot scourers and wire
80 × 200 × 120 cm / 31 1/2 × 78 2/3 × 47 1/4 inches

Bronwyn Katz
/Nanobi (Storm), 2022
Salvaged bedspring, pot scourers and wire
180 × 150 cm / 70 5/6 × 59 1/8 inches

Bronwyn Katz
!Nantūsi (Hail-rain), 2022
Salvaged bedspring, pot scourers and wire
180 × 150 cm / 70 5/6 × 59 1/8 inches

Bronwyn Katz
Kai tūs tū (Great rain rain), 2023
Copper coated carbon steel and hemp twine
Variable dimensions