

Gathering 1

THE BODY AND ART

Wednesday 30 August 2023
4-6pm

PROGRAM

Welcome – Bev Butkow, Candice Allison
Centering – Shanti Govender
Introduction to prompter – Katherine Dewar

Keynote provocation – Buhlebezwe Siwani – Reconceptualising the body

Speakers

- Fatima Moosa – Where do you go when you pray
- Prof Jenni Lauwrens - Touched by an image: how? why? and so what?
- Dr Kirti Ranchod - Neuroscience, art & brain health
- Shanti Govender - States of being? exploring artistic creativity and healing

Panel discussion and Q&A

Closing

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF PROCEEDINGS

Editor's note – in places, spoken phrasing and repetitions have been cleaned up slightly to facilitate smoother reading

WELCOME – Bev Butkow – convenor and co-curator

Welcome fellow gather-lings to the first of our creative gatherings on woman's labour, *woman's work as creative practice*.

This is a sacred gathering.

It gives me great pleasure to open these proceedings. My impetus for taking on this momentous task was twofold:

- the first was recognition of the supportive network of people that I have around me, helping me to grow my creative practice. I would like to extend that as much as possible.



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- the second comes from my creative and intellectual imagination and curiosity: I know that there are fellow creators working with some of the questions as I am working with. I am curious to know how they address and approach them.

The response to these talks so far has been really incredible and heartwarming. It proves that there is need for a space where artists who are women, mothers and carers of all kinds have a space where they are held, and where they feel that they have networks of care around them.

my provocation

While working on my solo exhibition upstairs *re-weaving m/other*, it became clear to me that this mothering, which is core to my identity, has also insinuated itself into my studio. When I'm working in the studio, the methodology of mothering, of care, of nurturing comes through in the ways I work. I would like to present a provocation here: I know we think about mothering and caring as private, domestic, intimate kinds of moment between two individuals, but my provocation is actually to think about it on a more political—and a wider social—kind of level.

The values of kindness, trust, mutual support, lifting others up in our community become the basis upon which our society is structured. It gives us an opportunity to revision our existence in the world.

That is my provocation to every one of us, whatever kind of life you lead. We want you to be here today thinking about nurturing, about caring, and about holding hands in community for everybody around us. I think that there is an opportunity to break down the egotistical, individualistic, greedy, excess capitalistic, bureaucratic, power-hungry kind of life structures that exists in our world. That is what this space is here for.

Please will everybody put their phones on silent, so that we don't disturb proceedings. With that, I am really excited to open the first of our talks which is on *the body and art*.

I want to welcome my partner in crime and the curator of these talks, Candice Allison, who is joining us from the UK.

WELCOME – Candice Allison – curator

Hello everyone. I'm Candice Allison curator and collaborator with Bev Butkow for the *woman's work as artistic practice* gatherings.

The themes and concerns of the gatherings are something that Bev and I have talked about since I met her five years ago. I am overjoyed that we have finally been able to come together with all of you to grow our network of caring and like-minded woman creators.

Unfortunately, I cannot be with you there today but I wanted to just take a moment to make a few acknowledgements.

To all of the speakers and prompters, thank you for being generous with your time and sharing your work and thoughts with us today. Thank you to Origin Centre for being such welcoming hosts and to everyone who has been working so hard behind the scenes to support the smooth running of these events.

And finally to Bev, thank you for being a caring, generous and inspiring friend, mentor and artist.

I hope that the seed we are planting with these gatherings will take on a life of their own and grow into whatever it is that each of you needs to support and sustain your work, research or practice.

CENTERING – Shanti Govender - playing singing bowl

Good afternoon everyone.

I'm going to clear our energies and there is no better way doing that than just clearing whatever is in our minds. I'm going to play the singing bowl and, if in that time, you can just focus on your breath. You can have your eyes closed or open, but just focus on breathing in and out. Breathe with the sun and allow that to enter your body. Sit comfortably and become comfortable in your body. There is no right way and there is no wrong way.

INTRODUCTION TO PROMPTER - Katherine Dewar

Good afternoon everybody my name is Katherine Dewar and I will be today's prompter. I will quickly run through how everything will work today. I'll start by introducing the topic and then move onto our 5 speakers. The one that is not with us today, she is our keynote speaker but we will be able to see her on a screen.

A little bit about myself. I'm Katherine and I'm an architect, lecturer and a visual artist. I'm currently doing my Master of Visual Arts around the feminist intersectional themes of othering, invisibility and trauma, specifically as experienced by mothers. In my practical work, I embroider plants into resistant plastic materials as a subversive processing art form. The repetitive rhythmic actions of suturing, puncturing and labouring-through relieves difficult thoughts and feelings, making visible the invisible, and leaving traces and evidence.

When I create my work, I work with my body and it's transmitting something that is locked in the body and mind onto something physical. This leads us into today's topic of our first gathering which is **the body and art**. Body, Action and Gesture and a bodily knowing. There is a global trend towards restoring the perceptive material body as a location of individual sensory experiences. But also as a broader social, communal and political tool. Bodies become sedimented with knowledge and perception from their unique combinations of internal factors such as genetics, psychology, personality as well as from external factors, like familial social and cultural experiences.

The discussion today explores the bodies of both the maker and the viewer within the creative process. And the nature of the somatic dialogues that occur in the aesthetic encounter.

INTRODUCING BUHLEBEZWE SIWANI – Katherine Dewar

I will now introduce our keynote speaker for today, Buhlebezwe Siwani. She is a sangoma, an artist and the winner of the 2021 Standard Bank young artist award in Visual Arts. She works in performance, photography, sculpture and installation, as well as video works and on paper. Her process may be described as documenting performances.

Siwani's work interrogates the patriarchal framing of the black female body and black female experience within a South African context. As an initiated sangoma—a spiritual healer working in spaces of death as well as in spaces of living—her artistic practice focuses on the rituality and relationship between Christianity and African spirituality. Central to her work is her own body, which operates on multiple registers such as subject, object, form, medium, material, language and site. Her projects deal with the relationship between ancestral rituals and modern life that touch on social and political topics of the female body, black communities, histories of colonization and the paradoxes of contemporary society. This is all seen through the filter of the artist's own biography and experiences.

Welcome Buhlebezwe Siwani.

KEYNOTE PROVOCATION – Buhlebezwe Siwani – Reconceptualising the body

My name is Buhlebezwe Siwani. I am a multi-disciplinary artist. I don't like to put myself in a box, so I like to just say I'm a multi-disciplinary artist. I tend to do what speaks back to the work, or I let the work live in the best way that I think it should live. Whether it's a performance or an installation, a video piece or a photograph, I just let the work speak for itself physically.

(video plays of the film piece 'uNgenzelephantsi')

The video that you have just seen is titled 'uNgenzelephantsi' and I made it in 2015 while I was doing my Masters. I studied at the University of the Witwatersrand. I did my undergraduate and my honours there. (The space) where you are was built when I was a student and it's nice to see that there is a lot of things happening at the Origin Centre.

Discussing the body has been something that I have been working on for a very very long time. I have been very interested in how the body works, how the body speaks, how the body works with absence and presence. And how it works in a liminal space as well. This leads me to explaining how I got into performance. I started performing because I felt that there was a performative element in every single artwork that anyone makes. An object can perform, but I think that the body's absence and the body's presence can say multiple things. The body can become an object, the body can become a subject. I think at the time I was in training to become a sangoma when I decided that I wanted to really delve into performance. And so that leads me to what I had to say about the body and the trace. Each time I perform, I must ask my ancestors to walk into the performance with me. Not to overpower me, but for us to manifest as one physical being. With that, there is a risk of falling into a trance unwillingly or having the work taken over by my ancestors. In all my performances, I have felt that my body is not something that I own, or have full and constant control over. For this reason, I look at the conceptual contradictions embedded in the notion of firstly, the body as a medium, secondly the body as a vessel, and thirdly the body as an instrument.

The body is regarded as the primary medium in performance art and in that way one can begin to think about the implications for such activity. In my practice, there is *a double play on the word 'medium'*. While the body is regarded as the medium in performance art, it is also used to describe the isangoma as a spirit medium. We all know that you can't see the spirits, but the person is actually the trace, if you understand, if you are following what I am saying. Since isangoma communicates with the ancestors, there is the assumption that isangoma is in constant communication with people who have passed on that you cannot see. We are the trace of their DNA.

However, ancestors are alive... present... and can inhabit bodies. It is in this way that I describe the body as a vessel. It is also an instrument through which political assertions can be made. These

conceptualizations of the body locate it in a network of racial and gendered relations, where violence is implied. In this sense, my body is situated amidst numerous colliding social, racial, gender, political violence and therefore becomes a complex and multifaceted site of expression.

When I started thinking about how we reconceptualize the body and performance, I then thought of this video 'uNgenzelephantsi' where I examine the body as medium through consideration of pain and mortality. In this video piece, I am covered entirely with white chicken feathers that I pluck off my skin. The use of cold glue to attach the feathers exacerbates the pain felt through the performance. The display of the video is such that one sees one projected frame, the top half of my body and in the other from the bottom half of my body. The body in this performance is corporeal but, more significantly, it is represented as a critical site of thinking about race, gender and mortality. The reason I used white feathers rather than black feathers in my performance is because black chickens are used to rid one of evil spirits, while white chickens are used to bring about light and luck. In this way, the body of the chicken is seen as a carrier assigned a medium, through which good or bad forces are transferred.

The performance revisits and questions the many distinctions on black and white. As a black woman, I pluck off white feathers. By doing this, I am able to destabilise the dichotomies of black is evil and white is light and good luck.

I wanted to address the positioning of animals in relation to the human body. In my performances, I use a plethora of animal traces, so chicken feathers, cow skulls or like, you know, goat skin. These animals in my practise as isangoma represent ancestors and will represent various spiritual forces and this is why I use them.

Thank you.

THANK YOU - Katherine Dewar

Thanks to Buhlebezwe Siwani for that mesmerising art piece. Rather uncomfortable as well and I could really see the ritual aspect in doing something over and over again with the body. I wish she was here for us to ask her more questions. But just thanks to her for that. And for issues of time, we will move swiftly along to our next speaker.

INTRODUCING FATIMA MOOSA – Katherine Dewar

Our next speaker today on the panel is Fatima Moosa. I will quickly introduce you. Fatima is a process-based artist who works in multiple media such as drawing and painting.

Her practise is inspired by the relationship between physical and metaphysical energy and explores this through process and materiality, with a focus on the idea of how elements can evolve to create new narratives and meanings. Fatima has taken part in numerous shows locally. She took part in the Amsterdam Art Festival with the Centre for the Less Good Idea. In 2019, she took part in a six-week residency in Knysna, invited by the South African Foundation For Contemporary Art (SAFFCA). She was a participant in the 2019 RMB Talent Unlocked program in association with VANSA and Assemblage, where her art was shown at the Turbine Art Fair.

In 2008 she did her bachelor's degree in interior design. And then in 2019, her BA Honours in Fine Arts at the University of Hertfordshire. She currently lives and works in Johannesburg at her studios at the Bag Factory.

Thanks Fatima.

SPEAKER 1 – Fatima Moosa – Where do you go when you pray

Hi everyone, I am Fatima.

I'm going to speak a little bit about my practice and its relation to the topic today '*Body and Art*'. I'm a process-based artist and I work with gesture, mark making and a lot of intuitive motion and movement of the body.

My practice is inspired by my experience of prayer. When I pray, I'm there in my physical body but, as prayer progresses, there is a point you reach where the body is not as relevant and you are experiencing yourself not in just your physical form, but in your emotional, spiritual awareness of yourself.

I'm going to click through (the presentation) as I go. I ask the question about *where do you go when you pray* because I think it is different for everyone obviously. But there is a resonance that happens when you pray, that you feel and it feels like an energy, like a vibration. My work is about exploring and expressing that through paint and mark-making. I look at my process and my work where paint is an expression of the prayer, and the canvas is the prayer mat.

I'm going to click through a little bit. These are little studio moments that I thought might be informative. I don't use a reference image when I work. The way I see it is, the reference image is what you see when you look within. Obviously inside us, we know in our physical body we have organs, livers, hearts, circulation. There is a cycle happening within us, a circulation in our blood, a connection between all our organs. But there is more than that obviously: there is what we are, who we are in our spirit. When I look within, that takes on movement, it takes on energy. I feel it and I see it as something that I express in my work.

I generally work on the floor and get into my canvas. I sort of switch off the conscious decision-making and thinking and just allow whatever it is, the knowledge, the feeling and the energy within the body to be expressed in the work. I get into the canvas, and my mark-making starts off with a lot of moving and shifting, and smearing paint with my hands and my arms. All of these marks are literally multiple hand movements and hand and pushing and pulling paint on the canvas.

Working in a large format is quite interesting for me because you sort of don't know where you are going. You are looking down and you have to have this faith that somehow or the other, all of these marks are going to come together to show you something. And obviously it is surprising for me as well because there are times where I get lost in the work and, when it's done, I look up and I'm like "oh wow... ok... that was what was inside me in that time". I think that is really interesting because it is really part of this journey that you take within.

These are also hand marks and tapping, lots of repetitive tapping. This particular work was very much inspired by what we call dhikr. Basically it is a, I want to say mantra, but it is a word, or an aspect, or attribute of G-d that you repeat and recite repeatedly that gives you a sense of peace. It has its own

energy and it affects your body in a certain way and, generally, it's like you use your hands to count your mantra as you are going. This is what inspired this work for me, because it felt like that's what it is.

This one too it was the same sort of thing. All of these are done on oils and canvas. The way I see it is, when you experience yourself deeply, you experience aspects of G-d, of source. We are all connected and we are all coming from the same space of being. And there is an inherent-ness that is the same within all of us as human beings. I think that is also a reflection of G-d.

I use that to guide my connection, to guide my process.

These are also lots of hand movements I work into the work. There are lots of layers that go into them because they happen over time. It is this buildup of layers that come together that describe specific moments. I work with transparent and opaque paints to sort of describe how we see each other in an opaque form. But there is this understanding that we don't have with each other all the time, which is that transparency. I feel that it is relevant to how we see ourselves as well, and how much we see of ourselves. That becomes interesting for me in the layers of paint and how they build up together.

As I go through working in the studio, there is lots of residue that comes out of paint. It happens during prayer because you come to prayer with who you are and you leave in a different way, leaving stuff of yourself behind, constantly shedding emotions, feeling, experiences good and bad. This is an expression of that, that you never leave,. There is an energy that you leave behind that renews as you go along. That is what this particular work is: it's oil paints and residue from my palate that builds up over time. Shedding colours that I don't use any longer and needing to get rid of them. That is where they end up – on actual prayer mats.

Then, of course, the journey within is not always pleasant. There are aspects of ourselves that we don't like to face and don't want to look at. For me, that happens in the studio because you are not thinking too much, you are just expressing. There are works that end up being not what I want to see in myself, and needing to transmute that, because that energy can be quite heavy to carry with you and shoulder. Those sort of works become sculpted canvases that I sort of shape and transmute into something else.

Thank you.

Q&A

Bev	I noticed that some people might have one or two questions. I'm curious about something: does your head come into your making at any time? Would you stand back and look at what you have done and think "oh, I should try and shift it in this direction? or is it purely intuitive?"
Fatima	It is purely intuitive, but where you have an inner work, I feel patterns within it that I obviously created intuitively and intentionally and work into it to enhance them, to bring them out. To build on, or highlight, what is there to allow the work to take the form that you need to take. Being intuitively generated, obviously you never know what the outcome is going to be. It's almost like when you take one step that is when the next step gets revealed. It's working.
Katherine	I have a question as well. How do you access that subconscious space from what you are working?

Fatima	So, it honestly has taken me a while to actually recognise and feel that space. I think it has a lot to do with our nervous systems, and also with a tracking of daily life. It's actually a practise that you have to engage in, to push all of it aside and find that betterness. And also be at peace with it because of whatever that is on that certain day.
	And, honestly, praying daily and ritualistically has been a vessel or carrier for me to find that space. Getting onto my prayer mat, I see it as getting inside. I won't say leaving wealth, but it is this space of being where nothing outside of it matters.
Katherine	It also takes practice, or whatever, for that certain daily dedication and prayer.
Fatima	Absolutely. What made a difference for me to get there is the ritualistic aspect. It is five times a day. It's clearing your mind five times a day. I find it really enriching. Obviously, it's not always free flowing and easy, because sometimes as moms and people who are doing lots of other things, as well as our work, there's so much that is running through your mind. The busy-ness of life. It is not always where you are able to push all of that aside. I think that's what changes the intensity of my work as well is that, how much of that is in or out? So, how submerged am I in the prayer, and how am I just floating along the surface of an ocean... you know... keeping my head above, looking within you.
Katherine	Sorry, just for the issues of time, we're going to carry on. But please remember your question and we will definitely come back to it when we open the floor. Thanks Fatima.

INTRODUCING PROFESSOR JENNI LAUWRENS – Katherine Dewar

Next, I'm going to introduce to you Professor Jenni Lauwrens.

Professor Jennie Lauwrens is an associate professor in visual culture studies in the School of the Arts at the University Of Pretoria. Her research focus is on the intersection of visual cultural studies and sensory studies. She is interested in how the senses are solicited, performed and experienced in encounters with art, visual culture and digital technologies. She is also the co-editor of the journal Image And Text.

Thanks Jenni. Welcome.

SPEAKER 2 – Prof Jenni Lauwrens – Touched by an image: how? why? and so what?

Thank you, Katherine. I also want to say a big thanks to Bev and Candice for inviting me to participate in this event. It is a big honour for me. And thanks to everybody here for giving up of your time to listen to what I think are turning out to be very interesting presentations and an exchange of very interesting ideas.

There is going to be a video playing in the background as I speak. My presentation is called "Touched by an image How, why and so what". The video that you are going to see is by a Brazilian artist by the name of Casilda Sanchez. I met her when she was studying at the school of the Art Institute in Chicago in 2010. When I saw this work, I became a little bit obsessed with it and most of my research since then has been inspired by the questions that I began to ask about my own experience of this video work.

What I have been trying to figure out is:

- How can an encounter with an image, such as this one, be understood as embodied, rather than primarily visual?
- What theories can be used to understand or explain how such embodied, or more than visual, experiences of images could be understood?
- What would be the point of doing so?
- Or, how might paying attention to our bodily responses to images enrich the critical analysis of the image, and the critical potential of the artwork itself?

Initially, I thought it was a little absurd to even consider that looking at images could involve more than our eyes. Was it not better to stick with participatory and immersive installations where audiences are invited to move through or around, or perhaps even touch the artworks physically? But even though a person does not physically interact with this video by means of actual touch, she or he nevertheless experiences it somatically.

how might a viewer be touched by an image?

Why do I say this? This brings me to my first question in my subtitle: how might a viewer be touched by an image? I turned my attention to you, the audience, and ask what are you feeling right now as you look at this video? You don't have to tell me, don't worry. Where in your body are you feeling it? Is it a physical feeling? Are you perhaps holding your breath? Are you blinking? Are you squinting? Are your eyes watering?

Or is your response emotional? Are you feeling uncomfortable? Are you irritated? The images on screen are possibly soliciting somatic responses across your whole body.

These might be sensations on the exterior of your skin, which we call exterior receptive responses.

Or they could be deep within your body, touching your viscera, your lungs, your heart, your bowels. These are referred to as interoceptive responses.

For some people, possibly for most, looking at eyelashes touching an unblinking eyeball is utterly unpleasant. Many people who see this video find the experience unbearable, and I can see on some of your faces, that some of you are in agony, and some of you are disgusted. If you are feeling that way, you are a responsive viewer and you have merged with the image on screen. Although this merging has not taken place physically, the effects of the image have registered somatically somewhere on or in your body.

We might say that you have been touched by the image.

why is this happening?

Why is this happening? There are a number of ways in which to explain what is happening in your body when you look at this video. We could turn to neuroscience and mirror neurons. We could turn to empathy theory, or we could turn to phenomenology. My theory of choice is film phenomenology because I think it provides a useful way to understand our responses to seeing open eyes being caressed by eyelashes. Film phenomenology is a strand of film studies that emerged way back in the 1990's and its key starting point is that intellectual ideas emerge through bodily experience and not

the other way around. The famous film phenomenologist Vivian Sobchack speaks of carnal thoughts. In other words, meaning emerges through the sensuous and especially the haptic qualities of a film.

One of the concepts that has emerged in writing of feminist films phenomenologists in particular, is haptic visuality, which is especially useful for explaining what is going on here when we respond somatically to Sanchez's video. 'Haptic visuality' is a concept coined by the philosopher and film scholar Laura Marx. And the foundation of haptic visuality is the idea that the spectator's relationship with the film is based in touch and not primarily in sight. Its focus is on the ways in which films, through their shape, texture and colour evoke a mode of looking, or a way of looking, that is tactile or haptic. The notion of haptic visuality actually stems from a much earlier time, when the Australian art historian Alloy Regal used it to distinguish between haptic and optical images. It has to do with both the ways in which the image is represented to us, as well as the way in which we look at the image. Optical looking scans objects according to their outline and their position in space. While haptic looking focuses on surfaces and textures, optical visuality requires a separation between the viewer and the optic of the gaze so that one can perceive distance and see clearly. Haptic visuality requires a kind of intimacy and a connection with the image as the eye moves over the surface to see texture, rather than illusionistic depth and form. Haptic visuality can call up tactile memories. It reminds us of our own sensory experiences and our own experiences of having something touch our eyeballs. These sensory experiences might even extend beyond the tactile into our sensory memories of smell and taste.

Film techniques that evoke haptic looking include the composition of the frames, camera angles, close-ups and blurry images. On the other hand, a viewer like you might be able to respond to an image haptically because you are predisposed to do so or willing to do so. In other words, you can learn to experience images haptically. It is precisely through haptic visuality that an empathic connection can potentially emerge between the video and its viewers. I say potentially because it's not the same for everybody and you might have felt absolutely nothing whilst looking at that video.

so what?

This brings me to my final question so what? An approach to images that begins with the body does not consider images as texts to be read and interpreted. They are not considered to be containers of meaning. But that doesn't mean that they are meaningless. Instead, this kind of analysis begins with a relationship between an image and a viewer. It wants to understand what meanings emerge in, and are articulated through, this fleshy, muscular and visceral encounter with an image.

The experiential somatic encounter with art must become self-reflective, so that the critical potential of the artwork can be realised. We can't just leave our analysis at a pure description of what we are feeling when looking at an image. When we watch as inside as the eye can see, we must reflect on our experiences. According to Laura Marx, optical looking tends to gaze, while haptic looking tends to graze. Is this not precisely what the eyes in the video are doing? They are surely grazing each other, rather than gazing at each other. Marx says that in haptic visuality, the eyes themselves function like organs of touch. And we might think of this video as a philosophical reflection on vision as a form of touch. As viewers, we are also grazing the image as we are unable to make our deep receding space, and our attention is focused on the surface of the scratchy eyelashes and the shiny moist eyelids and eyeballs. Paying attention to our somatic interaction has allowed us to reflect on the nature of seeing and the relationship between vision and touch because we literally feel the connection between vision and touch.

We can go further to think about the intimate and haptic exchange that is happening between these two people who look each other directly in the eye. We know what it feels like to be looked in the eye

by another person. Why do we sometimes want to look away? Is it because their looking pierces or grazes our very core?

An approach that begins with the body thus potentially enriches how we understand the effects of being touch by images.

Thank you.

INTRODUCING DR KIRTI RANCHOD – Katherine Dewar

Thanks so much Jenni.

We are going to move onto the next speaker, and we will do questions all at the end. Next, I'm going to introduce Dr Kirti Ranchod, who is a neurologist and a brain health consultant with an interest in the field of neuro aesthetics, including the impact of art on brain health.

With an appreciation of art, she has used drawing and creativity to help in her medical studies and later in her works as a neurologist. She was influenced by her culture, surrounding cultures, professional and personal experiences. Her work explores the points at which Neuroscience, art, yogic science and other knowledge systems intersect.

Thanks Kirti.

SPEAKER 3 – Dr Kirti Ranchod – Neuroscience, art & brain health

Thank you, I am going to start with a few lines I read outside Bev's beautiful exhibition and what I am quoting is from that poem outside. It says:

*networks of care converge.
Can care heal a broken world?
Can art heal?*

I love that because there is this little magic in those words, and this is exactly what happened in terms of my journey and in terms of what I've been doing in combining all these different knowledge systems and finding that point of convergence to actually get people to be healthier, including myself actually. To me, it was magic both reading it, and understanding what we are going to be doing today.

my journey

I will start a little bit with my journey in terms of how I got here and why I started combining all these different interests, which I think is also represented in what the speakers were discussing. I didn't grow up with a very strong separation, this line that I became aware of from other people, between Art and Science. I was very fortunate to grow up in a home where art was just normal. My father started to teach us to paint, I would have been about eight and my brother four, and I have a sister in the middle and a very patient father. We would sit on Friday evenings and we would paint with canvas and charcoal and grids and oil paint. And this is what my dad would do on a Friday evening. I never actually grew up with the separation that was something different from what I had to do, because you know he was teaching me maths as well. It was just all integrated.

And within, I have also been doing yoga since a child, and yoga is very integrated in terms of combining very different forms of movement, vision in terms of yantra images, mantras using sound. It is a very integrated form leading to spirituality. We may use it for healing, but the purpose is spirituality.

And medicine to me, I don't think I could have gotten through medical school without this enjoyment of art and drawing. When I was in second year, I was reading 'The Agony and the Ecstasy'. I don't know how many of you have read it, but it goes through the life of Michelangelo. Michelangelo illegally had the opportunity to work with bodies to learn anatomy so that he could create his sculptures. I was in second year, and part of second year is that we have to dissect. But for me, it was like "oh wow, this is what he had to do, and here is me with this opportunity".

art as culturally integrated in belief systems

I use drawing to learn anatomy, pathology, and other sciences to help me conceptualise, to problem solve and also to help me feel calmer. Because that's what art does in different forms within my culture, and again referencing Bev's art upstairs, as I was walking through looking at the weaving and the threads. Today is a particular festival that we celebrate called Raksha Bandhan and, in part, there are lots of delicious things to eat, particularly sweet things. But the other part of it is that we tie a woven thread for brothers. Sacred thread, often with beautiful beadwork. This again references that art is integrated in our cultural systems and our ways of living. It creates that bond between us, between our brother and the way we define brothers is really dependent on us actually, in terms of who we tie this for. It creates community bonds.

Why is this important in health? And how do I combine it with science?

the Neuroscience of art

I will start first with an aspect in terms of science and again why I started looking at this. Understanding that there was a whole body of work looking at the Neuroscience of art to me was quite magical. Firstly, what art does in the brain, which I think you (Fatima) discuss so beautifully in terms of that similarity between prayer and making art. The network of the brain that gets activated is called the Default Mode Network. Somewhat dreadful name, but it describes what the scientists initially saw. They were imaging people through MRI scans, and they realised this network is active when people are not actively engaging with the outside world.

What your brain is doing at default is the Default Mode Network. When is this network active? When we meditate and when we create art. So actually, a very similar network is active in meditation and in creating or viewing art. They are slightly different, but they are similar. What does this network do? Again, I reference Fatima and Buhle. This network helps us with autobiographical memory. We remember past events, we relive and process them. In the present, we understand ourselves and potentially understand others. It allows us to project and imagine the future, with us in the future. It is a network to help us understand ourselves and problem-solve with regards to ourselves.

Why meditation works, why art works, is that it helps us to understand ourselves. More than anything else, this is what it is doing. This is quite key for me as medical Doctor. I don't know if there are other doctors here, but I'm sure many of you have seen a doctor. I'm sure a doctor has given you a list of advice and I am sure you have ignored it. But this is the point of it. Advice can only work if you

understand what works for you, what doesn't work for you, how to motivate yourself. And that is why I started using art also in terms of this process, in terms of encouraging development of that network in a very subtle active way.

Very briefly, one of the health benefits in terms of art is, in one of the studies, they combined two groups of people. One group of people had to create art, and one group of people were actually visiting a gallery viewing art. Both had actual specific benefits. Viewing art is also quite healing in different ways. In the group that created art, they found that heart-rate, blood pressure and cortisol levels were reduced. All of these go up in terms of stress. Art, like meditation, can be used to help us to reduce our levels of stress.

They did a scores in terms of psychological resilience, so there are specific scales they used. They found that in the group creating art, psychological resilience was increased. What is important here it that it's about the process. It wasn't about how good the art was; or how valued the art was, whether you actually liked the art or not. The process is important for this to make an impact, to activate this network. Often when I do this, people get very anxious about having to draw because they want a particular outcome, they assume that they can't draw. But what I do get is quite beautiful drawings.

I started doing it. I used to ask people to do a self-portrait, so you can imagine how challenging that was. I've had to simplify it, but the reason I chose self-portrait firstly was because you understand yourself better by drawing yourself. It is also quite challenging. But, of interest, was that people drew a representation of themselves with no art practice. They didn't draw me, irrespective of how simple that drawing was. So, we all have some sort of ability to create this visual image without training. And perhaps that training and particularly schooling system sort of makes us shy away from this, when we don't really have to.

I am going to end with one of my favourite stories regarding art. It is regarding an artist called Phutuma Seoka. On one of my visits to the Wits Art Museum, they had the "Stars of the North" exhibition and it focused on sculptors from Limpopo. Sculptors like Noria Mabaso, Jackson Hlungwani, Johannes Maswanganyi and Phutuma Seoka all took part. And his biography stood out. He was having these recurrent horrible nightmares. One of the sculptures actually you see him wrestling (I'm assuming it's him), you see him wrestling with a snake larger than himself. Really quite dreadful nightmares, so that he could not sleep. And he goes to see a traditional healer to help him in his village. The traditional healer recommends that he sculpts. Now isn't that profound advice? And nothing in my medical training would have allowed me to offer that as treatment: I would have given you a tablet.

What this traditional healer did for Phutuma Seoka is empower him with a tool to help him to manage stress, to make a subconscious concern tangible. Because he is sculpting his problem in real life, he can deal with it as a tool to understand himself, so that he could work out what he had to do for himself going forward. Isn't that incredible? That is the beauty of art. To connect to this thread, that is also a large body of work that I do. I think we have so much, as has been illustrated here I will continue in future talks, so that we have so much within our traditions, within our cultures, within our communities that can nurture us as communities. Art within our traditions, within our cultures, is not separate. It was really integrated in the way we lived, in the way we communicated, in the way we created our communities.

I'm going to end as I started, with a quote from the poem and referencing again this story with regard to Phutuma Seoka in terms of art and that process of creating.

*this is an invitation to touch and engage
to unravel and re-become.*

Thank you.

INTRODUCING SHANTI GOVENDER – Katherine Dewar

Thanks so much Kirti.

Our last speaker of the day is Shanti Govender. Shanti is an artist and breath work practitioner. She did her Masters in Fine Arts at Wits. She is currently the senior manager of the Pareto group, managing organisational, strategy, performance and quality.

Today she continues to make art in collaboration with other artists. Core to her practice is a healing space through collaboration and healing through the creative process.

Thanks Shanti

SPEAKER 4 – Shanti Govender – States of being? exploring artistic creativity and healing

Firstly, I want to thank you Bev for inviting me into this panel. I completed my Masters in 2020, and I haven't actually had the chance to bring it up and talk about my work. I've done it in private gatherings at a space I created called Gaia where I run healing sessions using creative practice. But this is quite special, so thank you for the collaboration.

When I did my Masters, I had done my undergraduate in '94, graduated in '98 and then joined the corporate space. Since then, I've worked. In 2012, I decided that corporate was enough. I resigned and came back into making art. Around 2015, I decided to do the Masters: I needed a discipline, and I needed a path. That is how Bev and I reconnected, as I started just before her.

It was quite a journey to come back after all this time and make art in a different way. Not as a student anymore, but as someone who has lived in the world and has a different purpose for making art. I have taken snippets out of what I have written, because I felt there was quite an interesting story that developed out of this project. And I call it a Masters project because I almost put myself in an incubator for a period of time.

the body as incubator

That incubator was my body, and my body showing up to make art again. Prior to the Masters, I created another body of work called 'From Body To Being' because I needed to go back and rewire my body to make art again. When you write a lot and suddenly you have to write in a different way, it takes a different way of your body responding to it.

I actually worked with the body: I worked with the brain, I worked with the heart, I worked with the lungs, I worked with the spine. I physically had to go into the body and rework my body to be able to say to it "we need to understand what you can do".

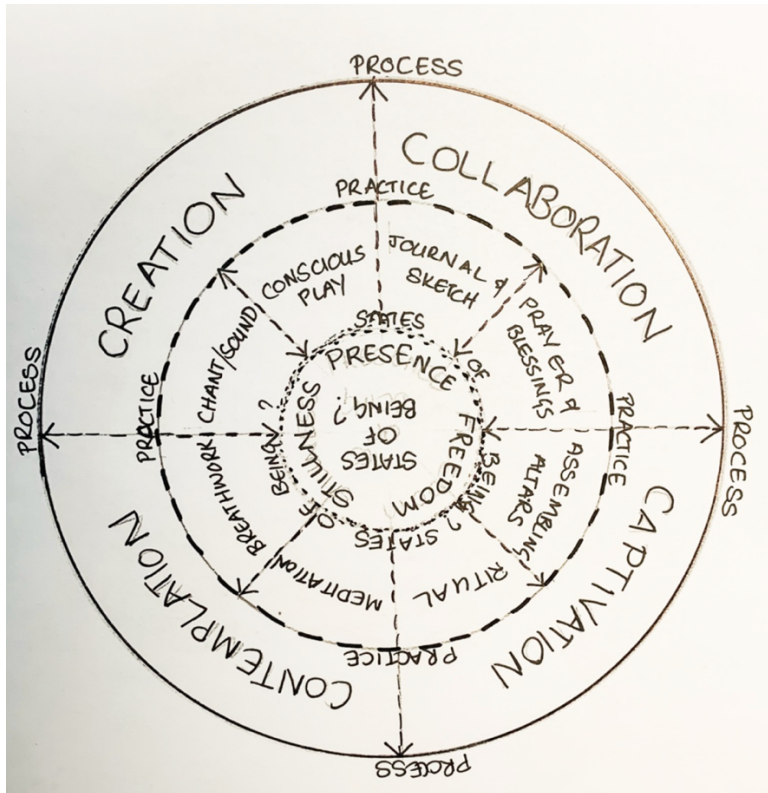
My Master's exhibition was titled 'State of Being' because it was also a shift: "now that you have worked in yourself and in your body, and you have rated yourself. You understand what you are made of. How are you going to show up in this? What are you going to create?"

I think one of the most important things around the body is that, as much as we are present in our bodies, there is such a great absence. One of the things that happens with the art-making process is the process of becoming present in the body. It is an opportunity: as artists, we often focus on the product. Yet, the process is where you become present. This is not seen enough, and it really makes me happy that today we are hearing everyone actually talk about that process, and what actually happens in that process.

Another really important aspect that stands out is your **state of being**. When you make art, it's not all great and wonderful. When I started exploring these **states of being**, I tried to understand how I showed up to make a piece. Because sometimes you have to become something to make something. You have got to become a mother to make a certain piece. Or, you have to become a labourer in some instances. Sometimes, I thought I was a wood carver in India or a stone, to almost transport myself into another kind of body, or another person's profession, to be able to make something. You are constantly shifting. In Hinduism, they give us millions of gods and goddesses. Sometimes, you have to become Kali (fierce feminine mother) to be a warrior. Because when this piece is just not working out, how do you become the warrior and fight that? Your **state of being** is constantly being challenged; you have to recognise that.

creative framework

And then there is the art making process itself, which became very clear through this period. While going through this process, it became very clear that there were 4 stages emerging. The one I will talk to with the following slides is around **Captivation**. I will go deeper into that, which was really important. Something had to capture you and once you were captured, there was a need to **Contemplate** what captivated you. Once you spent enough time contemplating, the **Creation** would take place. And that creation means nothing without a level of **Collaboration**, which can be in whatever form.



conceptual map of my creative process, practices and states of being

I remember this drawing. Frameworks are always like squares and boxes and I sat for a whole month, and then I told my partner that I cannot have the framework that is there. I did a circular drawing sitting and understanding what it was and what was actually happening. There was this process emerging, and within that process, there were things, there were rituals, there were behaviours. There were different practices showing up that had a direct impact on my **state of being** and that were leading eventually to something.

Ultimately for me, this whole process became a journey of healing. I will talk through it as we go through.

On **Captivation**, I included this image of a snake because it is something I grew up with on a farm. It is a piece of wood that I found when I was still in school, I think, a long time ago, and is something that I have kept all my life. I wondered if I sat with it because I didn't have a good way to start. When I saw it, I remembered my childhood and, for that reason, remembered my dad killing many black and green mambos. I thought that a snake is a form of emerging, and I need this energy now and I am going draw from something as far away as possible. It may have no meaning, but for some reason, it is significant. I took the snake, and I adorned it, I gave it some decoration. I made it special. I decided to ask: "where does this take me?".

From sitting with this **Captivation**, I went into a second stage of **Contemplating** various stories. This happened throughout the art making process. **Contemplation** is important because, if it doesn't stay long enough with you, then it's probably something that wasn't significant, or you may have decided not to do the work because it is too hard. I think contemplation is something that we must always keep. Like meditation, you clear the mind. If I did not sit with the idea enough, it goes away.

What is important about the **creative** practice is that, when you look at Bev's work upstairs, you see a ritual, you see meditation, you see breathwork. You have to breathe through all of that. You see play, there is the journey and setting. Bev, you talked about prayers and blessings, and assembling alters. A lot of pieces upstairs in your room look like alters. You can sit with meditation because it captures you for a long time. In that creative process, there are many practises that are really important, that contribute towards our healing.

In terms of **Collaboration**, within my exhibition I worked with breathwork practitioners, because breathe is important in every process. I explored intuition: as artists we have this amazing ability to connect to intuition and I worked with a sensorial medium to heighten my intuitive capabilities. I looked at plant healing therapies, and how we connect with nature. I worked with Raja meditation teachers, because they help to teach you how to clear the mind. And then I worked with many other artists practicing in different disciplines, which was really quite special.

Ultimately, with this comes a **state of healing**, of resolution. Through this, presence, stillness and freedom were three things that start to reveal themselves.

images of artworks

In terms of some of the visuals, I worked a lot in this with dreams. Starting from a dream, I started to channel and move into silent pieces by trying to work very differently. I allowed flow to guide me. The piece on your left is quite significant, because I felt I could break away from structures. But, actually, it was about finding freedom within structures. Because, no matter how we think we are breaking things apart and tearing them apart, we are creating new structures within which we are still bound. You almost have to find freedom within the structures that you are really creating. You can bind yourself within a structure, even if you think its not a structure when it was created.

This is a piece called 'Still Point' which is special in the sense that the material started to tell me what I needed to do with it. I was just collecting aloe and things that I couldn't throw away. And I didn't understand why, until it came into being.

These are images from the exhibition where we had audience participation. We were breathing with the work, we did guided meditations through it as a focus on how you experience the artwork. People wrote letters about other artists collaborating with pieces that resonated with them. I end with this piece because I have started out a new series of work.

And you can see Bev. I love this picture because of this immersive quality of you making and what you can say happens; there is no way healing can't happen in this process. It's there. It's so in the making.

This is the piece I am working with in terms of blood and water that our bodies contain. There is this whole story of migration and crossing the seas. There are these palm pots that have these beautiful flowers. So, it is about that fluidity.

Our **state of being** are constantly becoming and shifting with whatever we make, and how we then use whatever we find to help us to become who we are. It's fantastic, it's a privilege. But it is just becoming, you know everything yourself.

Thank you for this Bev.

I hope the rest of your sessions go well.

PANEL DISCUSSION AND Q&A – led by Katherine Dewar

Thanks everyone for listening and being here.

We have a few minutes for panel discussion. I will open it up to the floor. But first could I ask everyone to just stand up and stretch. We have been sitting for quite a while and this is about the body today.

I hope we all have questions for our fantastic panel today. Can I ask all the panellists to come back to the seats please. And we will open it up to the audience for a Q&A. The mic will be passed around. If you have a question please state your name or what you do, if you want to, and who the question is directed to. And then we will continue from there.

Thank you

Lesedi – audience member	I am an OT student with a question for Shanti. During the process of contemplation, could it be that, or do you need a certain level of discernment to help you decide? Or could it be a subconscious thing of “oh no... no... don't do it”. Why do we go through the process of contemplating?
Shanti	<p>I think the way I experience contemplation is that you keep it... you are not overthinking it, it's there... you remind yourself that it's there.</p> <p>If you've ever made an altar and sat in prayer or just repeated something. For me it's very simple, I wonder what it means for this image to come to me. Or I've had this dream, I'm going to remember this dream tomorrow and the day after. Or I'm going to write it down and I'm going to read it.</p> <p>It's just keeping it there, so it allows the journey to happen in a silent way. So, we are tapping not so much into consciousness, but it is sitting in our subconscious level.</p> <p>Sometimes a message will come; it may come in a dream, sometimes you think about it and suddenly you will feel this visceral feeling in your body. It's like I know it. You get a gut feeling, but that is because you have kept it. You have held it in that space.</p> <p>For me, contemplation is really important. You know a random thought would come and don't let it go.</p> <p>Because a dream you can forget really quickly, if you don't say it to somebody or it's gone. These are message that come to us.</p>
Jenni	<p>I found it fascinating to hear from the artists about your practise. How you go about the process, coming up with ideas and putting them down in material form.</p> <p>But I am thinking about my own writing from the perspective of subjective experience. Because we are, as artists, also working with your subjective experiences and art is a form of healing.</p>

	<p>It's very much, and I don't want to say this in a bad way, but self-indulgent to a certain extent. I was thinking about some of the criticism that I get about my own articles before publication.</p> <p>How do you ground this in solid academic scholarship? I was wondering if you had found this while doing, you have done your Masters and you are working in an academic environment.</p> <p>Have you had supervisors that have asked, hmm but why? Or ground this in theory? Fatima, what is your experience with that kind of criticality and self-reflection?</p>
Fatima	<p>I do a lot of reading and one of the books I have read is by James Elkins and it is called "What Painting Is". He speaks about painting from an alchemical point of view. As a spiritual substance, but also as a point of view as an alchemist and how pigments are transmuted in form and become paint firstly. How applying paint to a canvas is also an alchemical process in the sense that it shifts and changes as you paint.</p> <p>If you zoom into a Monet painting, for example, you will see so many different brush strokes. And there is not a lot of uniformity in the colours, and the way the colours mush into each other, that is an alchemical process. It takes on its own life, what he puts onto the canvas.</p> <p>I responded to that from my self-indulgent way I guess, from my experience of prayer, because I almost assimilate prayer to an alchemical experience. How we shift and change through that. But I think that is sort of my theoretical background or understanding of what I'm doing.</p> <p>Along with the way abstract expressionist approach their work was from a very cathartic gestural way that is, I would say, a Western experience. But for me, it's not that. It is – I'm a Muslim woman in South Africa, and it's my experience of how I make marks and approach gesture from that perspective.</p>
Bev	<p>The Masters is how you need to critically back-up your work. But the source of criticality doesn't necessarily have to be academic research. You could as easily back up your work using poetry, using yogic sources, using spirituality.</p> <p>They encouraged us to push the boundaries of what we considered academia, what we considered criticality, what we considered the kind of source upon which we based our work.</p> <p>As long as you think through it and you analysed it properly. And you really were thorough in the kind of processing of that. We were quite encouraged to push the bounds of what academia is.</p>
Audience member	<p>It is a sort of a follow up question. I can say I'm a practicing artist. I'm just really interested in this thing that is happening. I love the maturity of the conversation and the multiple lives that everybody has had and bringing in that very transdisciplinary experiences to express.</p>

	<p>I'm interested to hear, like also with that article of Sue Williamson's last year about artists coming back into the arts, female artists later in life when your kids are grown up.</p> <p>So, I would like to hear from the panel, and from yourself Bev, about this thing that I haven't seen in the time that I have been in the Arts, where it's like a very sort of confident revisit.</p>
Katherine	<p>I did architecture, I did my Masters at Wits in 2016 and then I took a few years to come to my Visual Arts career. It is not a career yet: I'm still doing my Masters.</p> <p>I did take this break with having a child and Covid where I was forced to take a break and then realising a little bit with age and perspective what route I wanted to take that creativity down.</p>
Fatima	<p>As much as I saw myself as an emerging artist which I am still, I think, and my practise at its infancy, yet my experience has a different type of maturity, and I found there was a push and pull in that as I delved deeper into my practise.</p>
Kirti	<p>I'm not sure if I can directly speak to your question, but I think for me in terms of that change, in terms of just doing clinical neurology and then incorporating things I think is related to journey.</p> <p>And understanding what I understood internally and integrating that. And then creating a way to actually translate that so that it become an integrated health. An approach to health using these different forms.</p>
Jenni	<p>My career started out as an art teacher at High School in the early 90's and I always wanted to go back to Academia, but I didn't quite find my way in.</p> <p>I did the baby, and then I went in to do a PhD which is quite different to what many people are doing these days. I see our students go directly from undergrad into honours into masters and into PhD, which is a luxury that I never had back in the 1990's .</p> <p>I think it has its advantages and disadvantages.</p> <p>But yes, I think life happens and you can't plan it. You have to go with the flow. And you make your sacrifices, and you go with it.</p>
Shanti	<p>I think my re-entry into the art space is because I started to remember a part of part of me that became very dull in the corporate space. And creativity and making arts was always just something that I grew up with.</p> <p>It wasn't formal but you know you made things with clay, you got stuff from the river. I remembered what it was like to play. And when you work in corporates, you can actually become very dull in very toxic environments.</p> <p>It was about how do I save myself, and still be creative in the workspace. I had no choice but to come back and complete what I started. When you choose to dance with certain materials, you know what that labour of love is going to be, and the disappointments.</p>
Bev	<p>If your read my wall text upstairs, I called myself "a reformed accountant" and that is exactly what I am. I can say that there was never a contemplation in my head or in my mind that I would ever become an artist.</p>

	<p>It was only when I gave up work when I had my 4th child that I started exploring something creative. It just feels like a guided journey, and it feels like something I have to do.</p> <p>I constantly question why, what is the relevance and how do you make a difference in the world through what, we have all said, is self-indulgent. Because in a way there is that self-indulgence, when you are sitting there on your own hedonistically playing with your materials.</p> <p>I always think of my poor husband, I mean he married a high income-earning professional, and he has got this sloppy, messy, paint-covered glitter strewn wife. But anyway, he puts up with me, so I'm lucky.</p> <p>I think I wanted to lead onto that because I think there is a question that is really interesting for me in this kind of moment between the artist who puts, as we have heard, the vulnerability, the courage, the openness. If you think of Buhlebezwe, where the courage that it takes to put your body out like. For us artists, it's a constant – it's a really hard process making art.</p> <p>I am curious about that moment of encounter, when the audience encounters that artwork and what do they bring to the process. And what are we hoping that they get from it.</p> <p>And what happens there, what kind of conversation or transmission happens in that moment? Or how do you make sense of that moment?</p> <p>I don't know if anyone wants to answer, I am just so curious about that.</p>
Katherine	<p>We speak about the maker, the viewer and the art itself. And especially with what you (Jenni) were talking about the image. You can have haptically felt the image and how would you describe the artist's intention being read by the viewer?</p> <p>Do you think that there is a link that the viewer is going to read it in a certain way because of the artist's intention?</p> <p>Does that link to your question Bev?</p>
Bev	<p>It does, and it is a hard question.</p>
Jenni	<p>Coming back to Fatima. You mentioned James Elkins and he wrote another book called 'The Object Stares Back' on the nature of seeing. There's a whole group of scholars, there's a German community and then there's William Mitchell in America, who talk about the object itself, the image itself or the artwork itself as having a kind of agency and a will of its own. So, I think there is actually more than 3 involved here.</p> <p>There is the maker of the image, there is the image itself which has a kind of an agency and then there is also the viewer who comes with perhaps no knowledge of what the artist intended.</p> <p>And it reminds me of, I am side tracking, but I am just reminded of when I went for the interview at the University of Pretoria for the job that I'm now in. I was</p>

	<p>asked what do I think about the necessity of an artist's description next to their artwork. Is it necessary?</p> <p>I honestly can't remember what I answered at that point, but I know that some artists say no. I won't mention which artist I am thinking about now. I've had this conversation with her, she believes that the image must speak for itself, it's not about what she intended in that artwork.</p> <p>I personally think that an image is made all the more richer if I'm aware of my own experience of it, what I see in it and what I think about it. And then when I read what the artist intended, it is so much richer when I read that.</p> <p>I think that there has to be a conversation. We can't just look at artworks – and unfortunately this so often happens when we go to museums or galleries – because of time you are trying to see as much as possible. But, in fact, you should try only look at 10 artworks when you go to an art gallery. And try and really understand what they are about and what the artist intended.</p> <p>This is my personal opinion.</p>
Audience member	<p>How there is the artist and the viewer. And I don't think I ever see myself as the viewer.</p> <p>I'm more in it. Maybe I'm a user? I'm engaged. I want to use art and things in my work and in my professional work, I'm a lawyer. That in itself is a challenge.</p> <p>For me, it is also about that engagement with that world and about shifting how I respond in my own world. So, for you to call me a viewer, I feel affronted. I feel like I'm something more than that, you know. I'm part of what you create and I take that into my world. Just as much as when we read, we take that experience</p>
Katherine	That's co-collaboration in a sense.
Audience member	<p>Exactly. We are co-collaborators, and I co-create your work by seeing it.</p> <p>I also don't see you as indulgent. I left academia because I thought it was indulgent, and I really resented all the discussion around theory and not changing the world.</p> <p>But when I kind of stepped back 30 years later and I look at this and I understand both academia and creativity in a different kind of way, as part of this (like you said), this co-creation is not indulgent. It's this enrichment that you are part of.</p>
Kirti	<p>Maybe just a response in terms of what you were saying. My experience in terms of galleries is different. Sometimes I do like a description, but mostly in terms of being this, like you said, I like the word in terms of collaborating in a sense.</p> <p>I don't want anybody else's thoughts. I want to experience the artwork as the artwork, and just experience what I enjoy. And think and feel of what ideas it stimulates. I think we just relate to these things differently in terms of how we visit them.</p>
Shanti	I think sometimes as well when the artist writes the description or the intention, it's probably not fully known at that time. I find even with my work I thought it

	<p>was this and then maybe like 2 or 3 years later, the full realisation of what it is, comes.</p> <p>I guess how one puts it across as well. I have always felt like it is so important for the artist to be present, so you experience the artist. To be in the space with the person that made the work because you are the creator and that is your creative product, and you tell us about your creative process.</p> <p>But the meaning of the artwork will also shift with time, with circumstances. I just feel like it sometimes becomes a timeless piece, and it has different meanings at different times.</p> <p>After you've created it, even because you may have thought that and this is the whole past, present, future. It means nothing. You can go back, and you had a memory in your childhood which you always thought was this, only to realise maybe 20 years later, 'hey, I looked at this in a very different way and I lived my whole life thinking that, but now you know'. I think it is just being fluid in our way of being.</p> <p>That process of making, weaving, allows for that tension to be massaged for the shifts to happen.</p> <p>I guess that is where the healing comes in.</p>
Audience	<p>I'm in this theory of when the artist creates art and gives it over to a society or a friend, the society then takes the art and interprets it according to its parameters.</p> <p>So, you lose possession of your interpretation when it goes out there, in music, in poetry, in sound, in movement, in everything. It becomes the possession of the community you have given it to and is not your own anymore. What do you think?</p>
Kirti	<p>Yes, I agree with you. I do think in part, and maybe because I'm not an artist, I do think how its interpreted is going to depend on the person looking at it and in the context.</p> <p>And like you were saying, on the day, on the year. There is just that shift in terms of how we interpret images, words, whatever it may be, dance, whatever it may be across different art forms.</p> <p>And so, you have an aspect in terms of all language, but you have an aspect within visual language that can be replicated and does encourage a specific thought or a specific idea. This is where symbols that are particularly rooted comes in. These symbols carry across different cultures and times because they are going to communicate something quite specific.</p> <p>But then you also have a visual language that can be unique to the artist, or to the person who is viewing it. What will happen then is there is something else that is going on in your brain, depending on your experiences, your interpretation of that. And I do think it transcends art forms as well.</p>
Katherine	<p>Thanks Kirti, very interesting and thank you everyone for all your amazing questions and participating and concentrating and being here along with us. I think this has been a wonderful and successful gathering.</p>

Thank you everyone for turning up and we couldn't be here without Bev and her amazing and beautiful exhibition *re-weaving m/other*. And as well as Candice for organising all of this. And thank you to all our panellists Shanti, Jenni, Kirti and Fatima.

And I would encourage everyone to come to the next ones. They will be every Wednesday following this one there will be four in total. Weekly check the dates. My pleasure everyone.

Please stay and have a glass of wine or juice and a nibble and we can continue chatting.

So, thanks everyone.

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