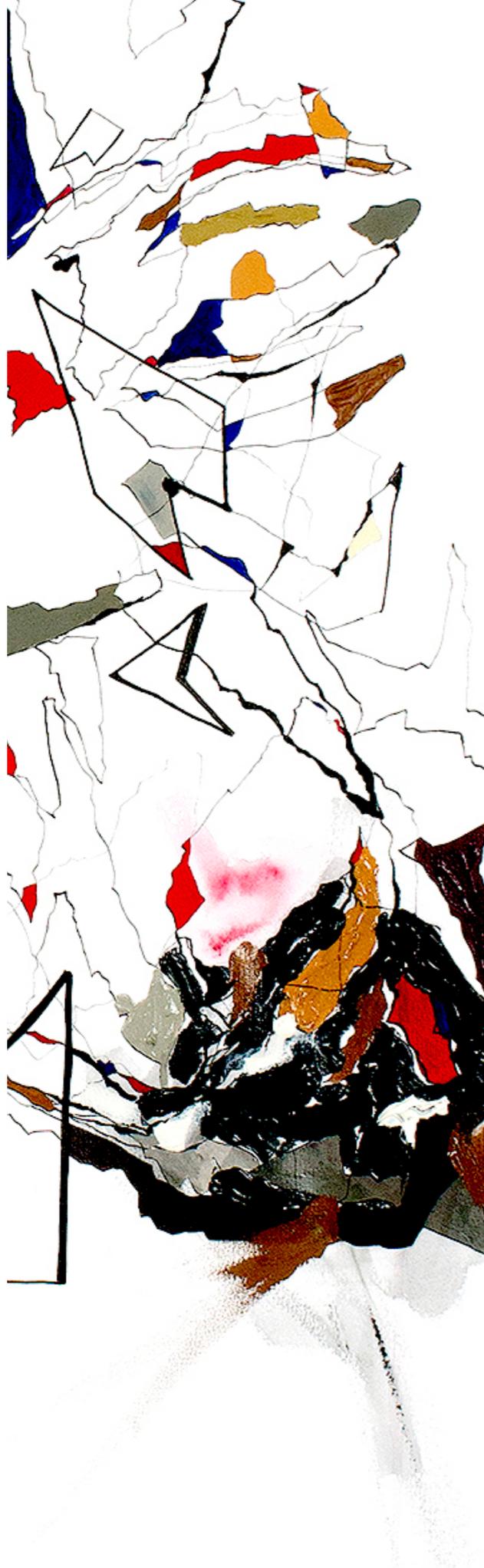


BEV BUTKOW

*m/other*

LIZAMORE  
& Associates

06.08.15 - 29.08.15



Bev Butkow was born in Johannesburg into a family of second-generation Eastern European immigrants.

She holds a degree in Chartered Accountancy from Wits University, and is a self-taught artist, obsessed with learning and innovation.

She exhibited for the first time at Turbine Art Fair in Johannesburg in 2013. Since then, her work has been featured on several group exhibitions, including the 2014 Top 100 *Thami Mnyele Fine Art Award Exhibition; Thinking in a Space, Nirox; Out of the Cube* and *Dptych*. She won a Merit Award at the 2015 *SA Taxi Foundation Art Award*, resulting in her artwork being reproduced onto 10 minibus taxis. She has been selected as one of nine “Young Talented Artists” for the *Fresh Produce Exhibition* and mentorship programme at this year’s Turbine Art Fair.

She works from her studio at Assemblage in Newtown, Johannesburg, blocks away from where, decades before, her beloved grandfather peddled eggs at the Fresh Produce Market.



*what usually goes unseen*

2014  
assemblage of perspex on perspex sheeting  
130 x 100 cm  
R 22 000 incl VAT

what usually goes unseen (detail)



being both (detail)



***being both***

2014  
assemblage of perspex on perspex sheeting  
84 x 77 cm  
R 15 000 incl VAT

***Initiate or Initiation***

2015

assemblage of vinyl, perspex and wood

75 x 42 x 25 cm

R 15 000 incl VAT





Initiate or Initiation (detail)



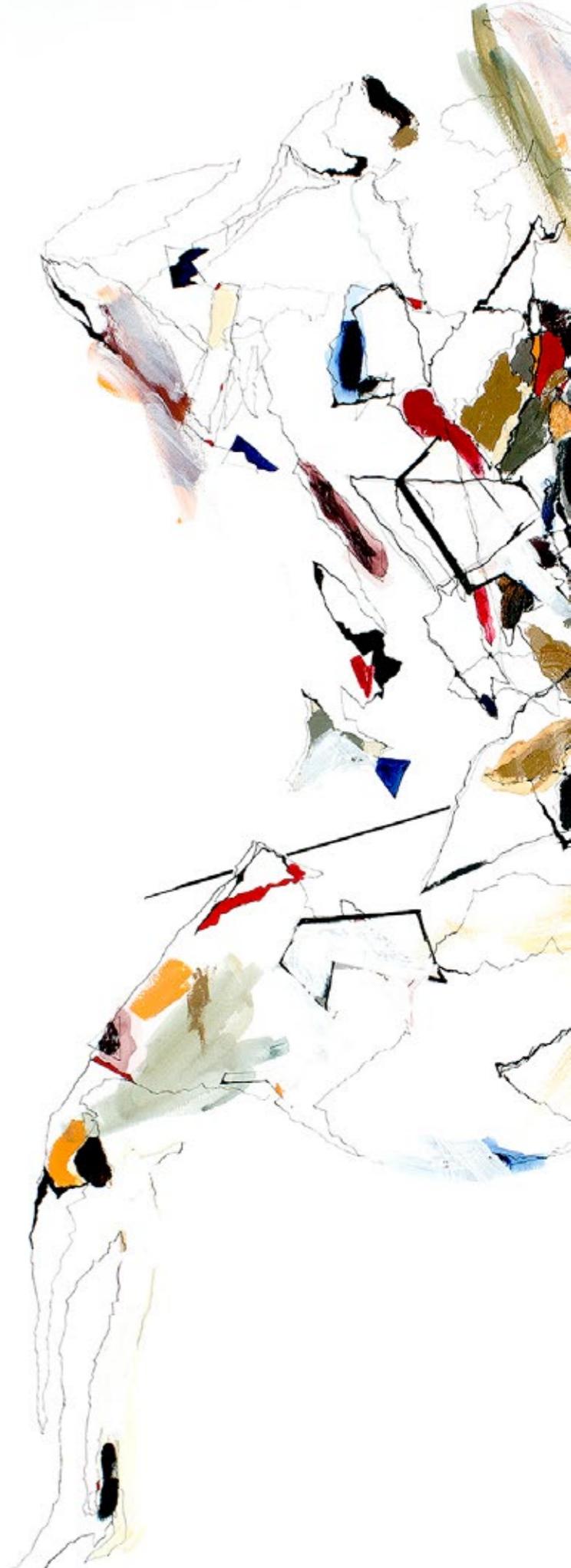
# *m/other* artist statement

In her first solo exhibition, *m/other*, Bev Butkow traces, draws, presses into and crosses the fraught line between fragility and strength.

Her semi-abstract, broken-up depictions of girls in states of striving and submission point to the existential realities of gender inequality and the denial of access to education and opportunity experienced by so many girls in South Africa. Drawing on her experience as a mother, she explores the uncertain territory between support and social judgment, and the layers of protection we put in place to achieve belonging, community, family, acceptance.

*'My intention is to draw the viewer into works that surprise or enthrall by pushing the boundaries of the visual and physical properties of my media to open a conversation, to create a point of connection. I think of my work as a form of story telling' she says. I am interested in the effects of the human tendency towards stereotyping or discrimination – the labels we apply to others to exclude them from our world and the fine line between othering and the extreme oppression and violent exclusion that have informed apartheid and the Holocaust.'*

Process and making are crucial aspects of her practice. In its multiple textures, her work reflects dual impulses – tenderness and care, but also an unrelenting determination to push the medium to new limits. Her starting point is photography. She photographs girls in their school uniforms and shoes – some in power poses, others more reticent, caught in a moment of personal struggle or striving.





She translates the photographs into pencil drawings, tracing their shapes through the translucency of paper, and cross-gridding as she finds the points of emphasis in the image. As she does this, she breaks down the image into layers – attentive to highlights, shadows, planes, textures of flesh and clothing. Moving along the edges of the shapes in the photographs, she creates contour drawings that echo the original images, but not too obediently. She then retranslates these layers of drawings into a single composite image, editing out certain elements, adding random shapes, emboldening her line with calligraphy pen and ink – and, finally, adding colour.

This exhibition hinges on the core foundational skill of drawing. Setting up an interplay between two- and three- dimensional form, the paper drawings are translated into multiple media, ranging from perspex assemblages with transparent and vinyl-coloured elements, to vinyl affixed to wrapping plastic, to a large scale wall installation. Through the translucency of the chosen media, she also draws in shadows. The artist's presence and choices can be strongly felt in both the texturing and layering of her images as well as her retranslation of elements extracted from the various works, often leading towards abstraction and pattern-making.

Each final image emerges from multiple layers in a series of translations or conversions from one form into another, thereby reflecting the artist's continual search.



***indelible expectancy***

2015  
calligraphy ink on handmade transparent kozo paper  
61 x 43 cm  
R 8 500 incl VAT



***we don't have a solitary shred of evidence to go on***

2015  
calligraphy ink on handmade transparent kozo paper  
61 x 43 cm  
R 8 500 incl VAT



***freedom imagined carefully***

2015  
calligraphy ink on handmade transparent kozo paper  
61 x 43 cm  
R 8 500 incl VAT

# ***mothering and othering, and the history of plastic***

*by Kim Lieberman, 2015*

Bev Butkow is a mother. Literally. The way she approaches many of the very different spheres in her life is from the position of caring. I would go so far as to say constructed caring. She thinks about how she could care in ways that could be useful. How she can mother.

In this exhibition she explores mothering without shutting out othering. By this I mean Butkow embraces her investigation of the other, although she understands the context that in some ways you cannot truly represent the other - she sees it as "Why can't I?" She, as do many South Africans, come into close contact with many different lines of people. People of privilege, people of education, people of service, of poverty, of working class, of disadvantage. So in that sense if they are in your close circle why can't you hear from them, try to see them as they are [to you?], investigate them. Lives in South African society are intertwined. But Butkow is not only looking at the 'others' - that are actual particular people in her life, she crosses her art with those that are from familiar backgrounds as well. She tries to take a measuring stick across her life and see what is actually there. Who is actually there.

Then turning to her representation of them she manages to mix them in so that in many of the works one can't really tell who you are looking at. Is it a child from her son's school, or is it a granddaughter who is growing up in her household? This way of working seems to mix the other into the same. Showing how lives so different can parallel in the same space.

Although essentially a painter, Butkow has pursued other mediums to see if she can underscore the concepts she is

looking at. And through this she came to plastic. Vinyl to be precise.

Plastic is that medium that we find all over our lives. And particularly plastic shopping bags. They carry. Everyone carries them. They shift through society - either the same type of plastic bag can be seen being used by many different people, or the actual same bag can be recycled from person to person.

For Butkow, the history of plastic translates itself from her own childhood history to that which surrounds her now. Plastic being the useful substance that it is, covered her grandmother's couches. And that memory, from her childhood, was what drew her initial awareness to it - or should I say alertness.

Plastic covering a new couch means that it is protected, and there is a hope that it will stay new. With the disadvantage of plastic covering the couch. But pertaining to her grandmother's history, with little money and concerns of immigrants, this seemed a sensible thing to do.

It certainly impacted on her granddaughter who carried it through childhood - both with an understanding respect, and now with the perspective that she need not cover her own couches with it.

The geographic re-placement immigrants made on themselves has made sure of this.

Yet, Butkow, still aware of what it symbolizes sees plastic now: How useful plastic is. How useful that certain people can make a scrap of money from collecting and recycling it.

Plastic is a force to be reckoned with. Although it's reputation does not give it its due. It is so useful that it is everywhere.

And now, mainly in the form of vinyl, it finds itself in Butkow's art.



***who to call?***

2015  
perspex and calligraphy ink assemblage  
60 x 40.5 x 12 cm  
R 12 000 incl VAT

who to call? (detail)



an action towards discovery (detail)



***an action towards discovery***

2015  
perspex and calligraphy ink assemblage  
60 x 40.5 x 12 cm  
R 12 000 incl VAT



***take up some space***

2015  
perspex and calligraphy ink assemblage  
60 x 40.5 x 12 cm  
R 12 000 incl VAT



take up some space (detail)



***Still, I rise \****

2015  
calligraphy ink, thread on transparent handmade paper  
93.5 x 63.5 cm  
R 14 000 incl VAT

\* by Maya Angelou

***going beyond the lines***

2015

calligraphy ink, acrylic on transparent handmade paper

97 x 62 cm

R 14 000 incl VAT



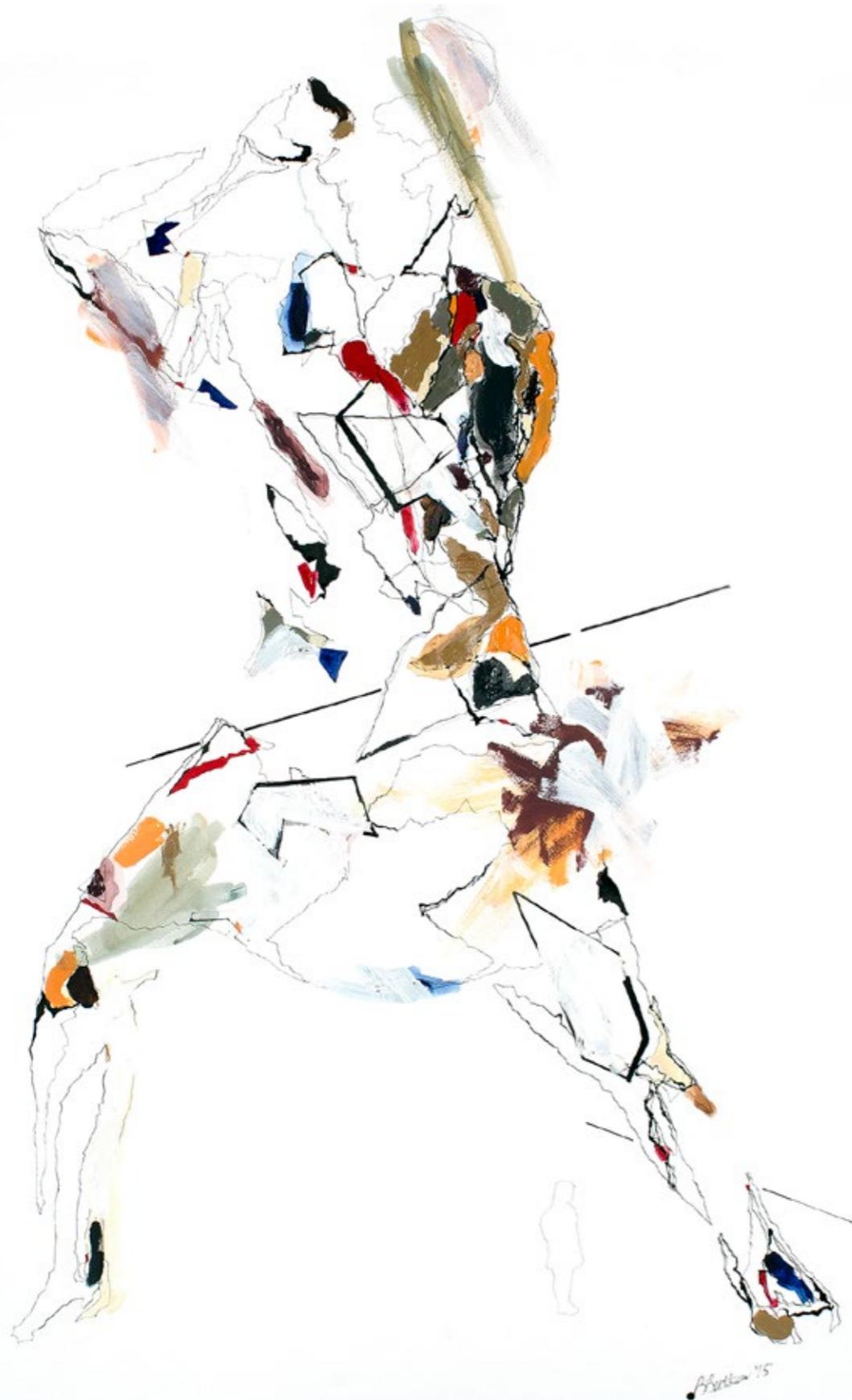
***a false move***

2015

calligraphy ink, acrylic, varnish on fabriano

100 x 70 cm

R 14 000 incl VAT



*absorbing the culture's contempt*

2015

calligraphy ink, acrylic, varnish on fabriano

100 x 70 cm

R 14 000 incl VAT



2015  
calligraphy ink, acrylic on fabriano  
100 x 70 cm  
R 14 000 incl VAT



# *even when she pitches*

*by Siphokazi Jonas, 2015*

Even when she pitches  
dreams,  
She throws like a girl.  
[The bracelet chained to her wrist  
Is as long as history]  
Runs up to the plate  
On her knees  
Because young ladies must  
Cross their legs when they sit.  
Crotchet their fingers on their laps  
So they are not tempted to ask for  
seconds,  
Or answers.

Or to take up more space  
than what remains  
from what is given to her.

[Never live loudly,  
Smile hard(ly),  
Be seen too much.]

Freedom  
imagined carefully  
is an apology in her step  
Pencil footprints  
Easily erased like  
Cloud calligraphies  
She is only allowed to see  
Through glass ceilings.  
Even as they mutate  
And drizzle away...  
Just as rain, for her, is the bucket on her  
head,  
Leaking,  
Past the geography of her hair  
And face  
She brings the river with her  
Then follows it out  
During early breaks  
Between periods  
And grades  
And classrooms left behind  
So she can make a house a home.  
Her dishes are salty lately  
She cries over the pot.

She must dream in pastel colours  
Sometimes grey.  
Never in oils.

She is written in charcoal  
Stained. Smudged.  
Broad strokes so  
So she won't burn pages  
Or have her name quite remembered.  
Yet, she carves an arc  
of light  
Between shading  
and skin  
Until her face sinks in the indentation  
Of sentences  
And deep pores of alphabets.

She will be read.

*where my secret hides*

2015

calligraphy ink, acrylic on embossed fabriano

100 x 70 cm

R 14 000 incl VAT



*self defence*

2015

calligraphy ink, acrylic on embossed fabriano

100 x 70 cm

R 14 000 incl VAT



***a sense of direction***

2015

calligraphy ink, acrylic, varnish on embossed fabriano

100 x 70 cm

R 14 000 incl VAT



*How We Judge | Self-portrait  
i-xx*

2015  
vinyl on wrapping plastic  
44 x 31 cm  
R 1 500 incl VAT (each)





***History is Open I***

2015  
calligraphy ink, graphite, acrylic, varnish on fabriano  
70 x 50 cm  
R 6 500 incl VAT



***History is Open II***

2015  
calligraphy ink, graphite, acrylic, varnish on fabriano  
70 x 50 cm  
R 6 500 incl VAT



***Instructive Failures***

2015  
calligraphy ink on fabriano  
70 x 50 cm  
R 6 500 incl VAT



***Glass Ceilings Obstruct the View***

2015  
calligraphy ink on fabriano  
70 x 50 cm  
R 6 500 incl VAT



i



ii



iii

***Never Again - all done on June 16  
i-xiii***

2015  
cyanotype, UV sunlight on fabriano  
70 x 33 cm  
R 4 000 incl VAT (each)



iv



v



vi



vii



viii



ix



x



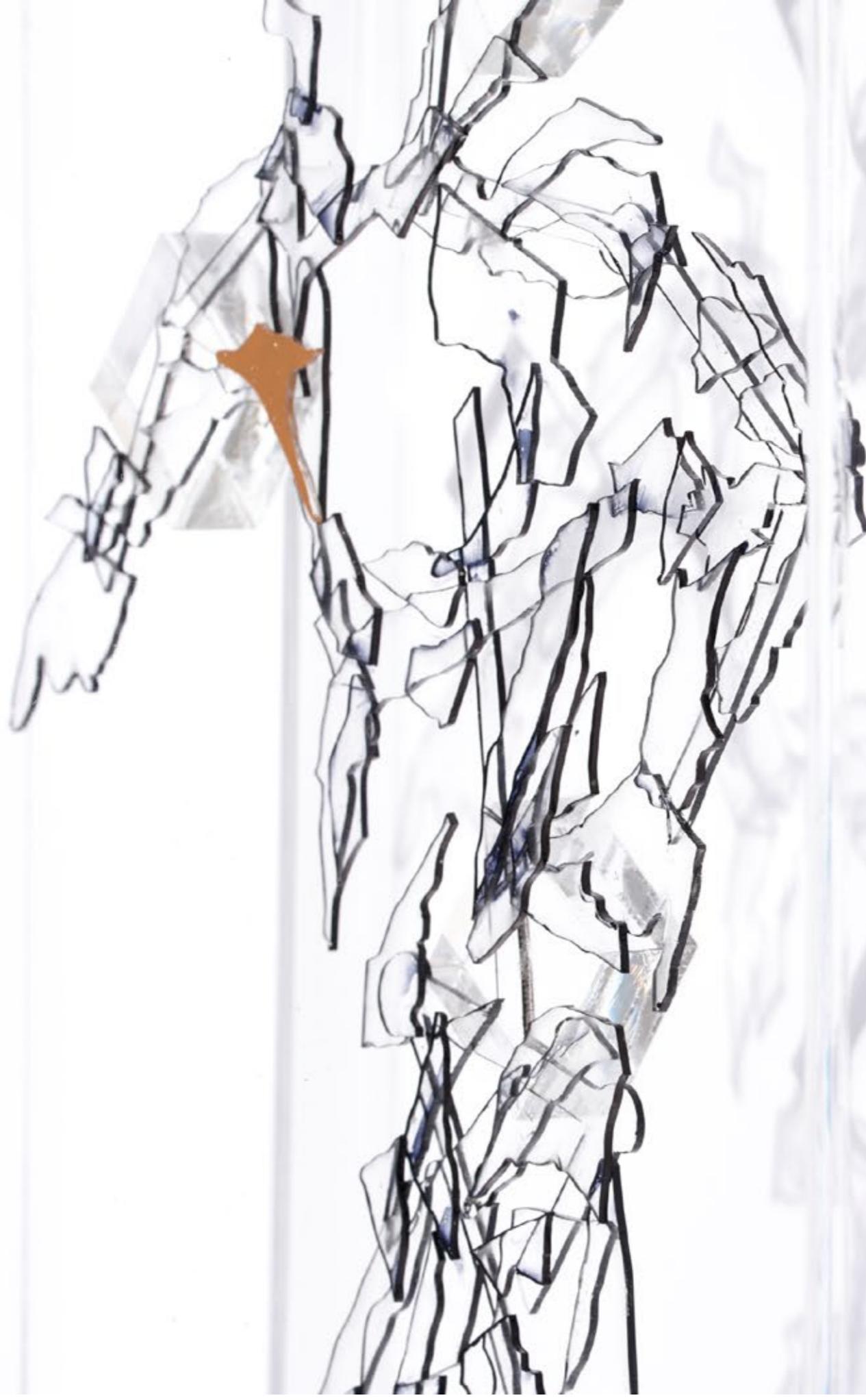
xi



xii



xiii



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