

a blunt instrument

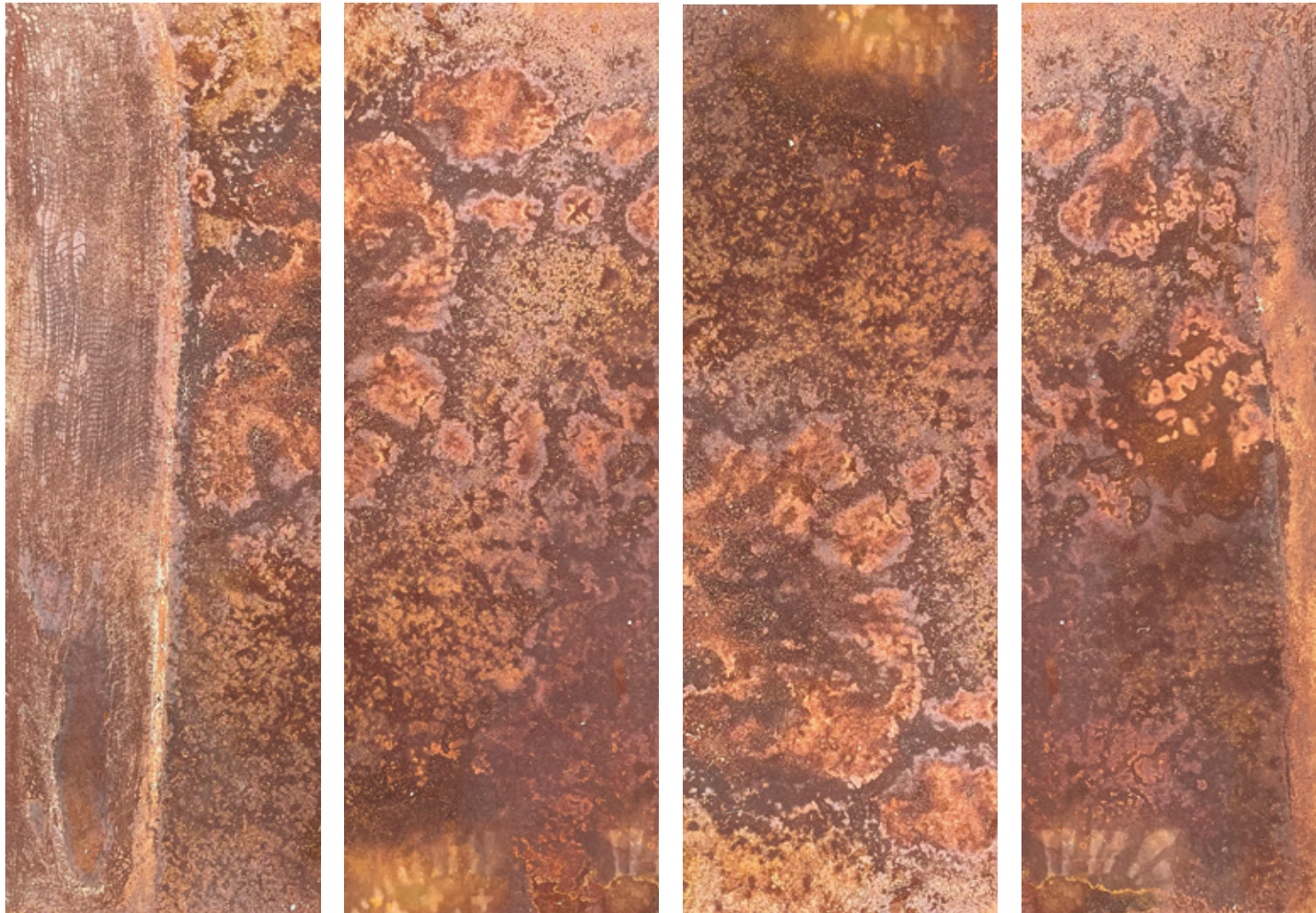
a blunt instrument confronts my experience as a midwife, specifically my complicity in inflicting pain to my patients and my subsequent attempt to mend and forgive myself. It is about the obstetric violence inherent to the institution of the labour ward within the hospital space while grappling with the notion of the sacred.

I was the blunt instrument

The rusted metal tools of my trade around me – rusty trolleys, squeaky wheels, old blood long since dried and sterilized on blunt tools; these were the things that reminded me that I too, was a blunt instrument. Sometimes I felt like a butcher, hacking through flesh with blunt scissors. My bones felt rusty, squeaking and trembling and sometimes failing me, the soft butcher.



Rust as a product of erosion, cannot exist without metal; a universal material used in western healthcare institutions. I treat the metal sheets in my work as if they are bodies inflicting trauma to the surfaces then soothing them.







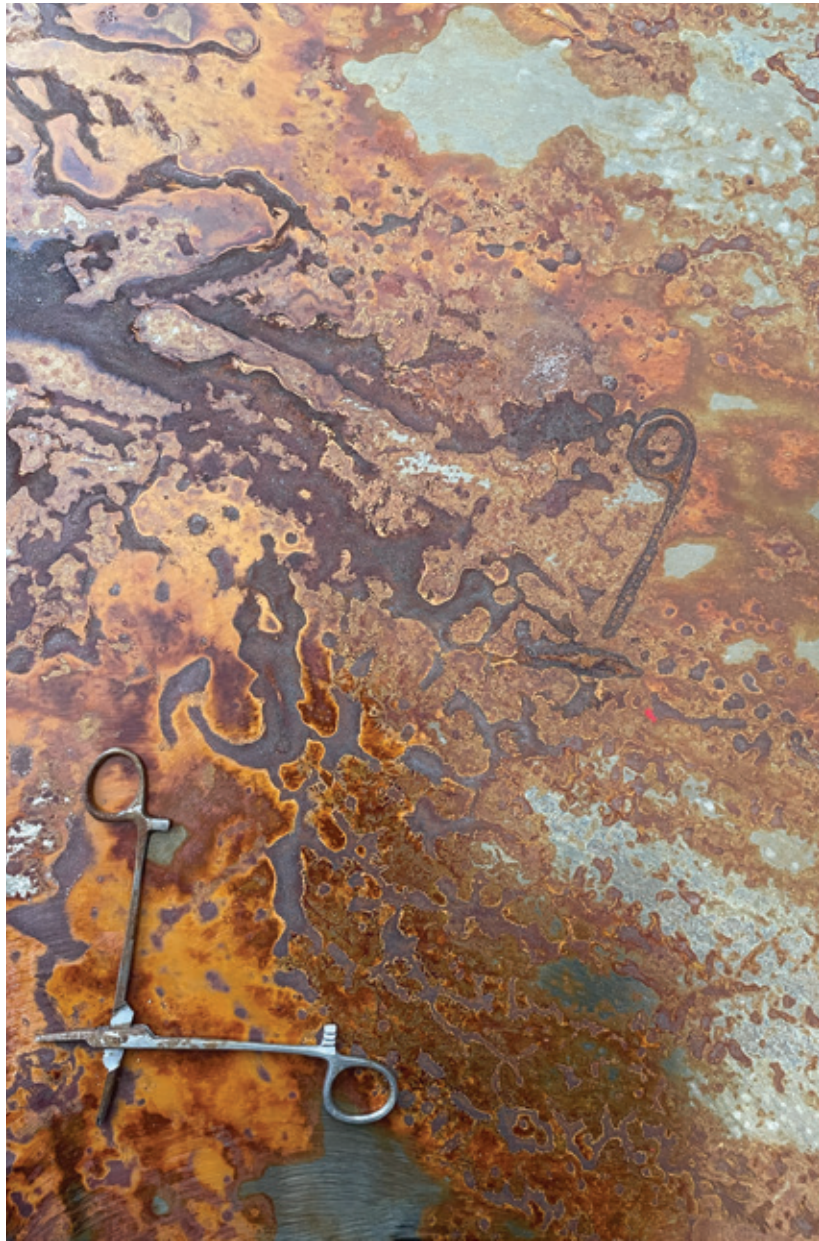
First mangling, then placating the material. This is where I explore trauma in its most brutal, basic form and where I begin to heal by healing outside of myself. The materials I use evoke the symbolic language of the labour ward: the hospital bed, the metal, the curtains, the gauze, the pads – all used in the process of inflicting and healing the damage done.

The mangled metal bodies become altars for repentance and worship, acting as thresholds where violence and healing coexist.



My work seeks to hold fear and decay in the hope that it can be transformed into the creation of a new, sacred space. Instead of retreating from the fear, I am creating a room that allows for the “reconceptualization” of the reality of violence in South African labour wards. A blunt instrument is a constant conversation between the language of the hospital with the language of the sacred in an attempt to sacralise and heal the violence I associate with being a midwife and childbirth.







Rust and blood share the same fundamental compound: iron. A small blood clot stuck in the hinge of a pair of scissors becomes rust after being cleaned poorly. Blood and rust, decay and life, are interchangeable in this work. The rust created on the metal in the formation of a blood splatter, nods to the violence of the experience of birth in the hospital institution. Bones are woven into the metal to remind us that these are bodies and that they are sacred.



Our bones, like clay, are soft and malleable when we are born. As we grow, they grow. As we age, they age. They harden as we do and crack as we do and when we die, they are what remains. This is a totem, a monolith, a lighting rod. The pillar is architecturally associated with sacred spaces like cathedrals. Cathedrals are as delicate as they are indomitable – the space inside a cathedral is like a womb. So much damage can occur and so much life. This pillar is a totem to that experience. Our hollow, hallowed bones. It is a monument of healing to all who move through the space and a reminder of our simultaneous strength and fragility.















a blunt instrument navigates the layered terrain of complicity, trauma, and restoration. By transforming my experience as a nurse into monumental, symbolic forms of art, I attempt to create spaces that hold trauma while offering the confrontation of healing. The sacred, as both metaphor and material, underpins this effort - asking viewers to engage with pain and care simultaneously, acknowledging loss and the possibility of restoration. In this way, my work functions as both a personal reckoning and a communal space. A site where trauma can be witnessed, contemplated, and perhaps partially reconciled.

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