

EYE / PEOPLE

## Artist Zoë Buckman Celebrates Feminine Resilience and Tenderness in New Work

The artist's solo exhibition is on view at Lyles & King gallery in New York.

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There's a lot of care embedded in "Tended," artist Zoë Buckman's highly personal new series of work.

Currently on view at Lyles & King gallery in lower Manhattan, "Tended" marks a shift in Buckman's work toward embracing a more tender side of the female experience. Using colorful embroidery, Buckman stitches tactile portraits of intimacy, nurturing and community.

Buckman is known for multimedia works composed of materials associated with female labor — textiles like lingerie, doilies and wedding dresses — to address subjects ranging from abortion to gendered violence. In 2018, she collaborated with the **Art** Production Fund to install "Champ," a neon sculpture of a uterus with boxing gloves as ovaries, on Sunset Strip in Hollywood.

For "Tended," Buckman depicts strength more softly but no less saliently. For her first solo exhibition in **New York** since 2019, she uses tablecloths and dish towels as the canvases for textile paintings. The series is a natural evolution from Buckman's previous exhibition in London, "Bloodwork," which explored female strength and resilience "as an antidote to trauma," says Buckman.

"I was depicting my friends and people in my community dancing and showing sides of themselves that are immediately strong and coming from a fierce place," she says of "Bloodwork." "And I think that says a lot about where I was at in my own healing and my own journey," she adds. "Putting that work out there, I myself felt lighter, and then



"Moving Down the Strings of My Lifeline," 2023. CHARLES BENTON

was naturally drawn to looking around and thinking about this softer and more tender aspect to our experience.”

Buckman’s intimate works in “Tended” feature imagery of her friends and family paired with text sourced from personal writings and messages.

“It was important for me to pair some of these beautiful, introspective, quiet and tender moments between people with writings that I’d done about abortion, grief and abandonment,” she says. “Offering the idea that our capacity to care for each other and to keep loving is a way to overcome the hardships and the injustice that we experience in these bodies.”

Her use of text also serves as an invitation into the works, beckoning the viewer to come closer where the handiwork — all done by Buckman’s own hand — is most salient. Her use of communal textiles, and gestural quality of the hand-sewn images, underscores the humanity and lived quality of her subject matter.

In one image, Buckman’s sister-in-law braids her niece’s hair; in another, a woman in a rainbow bikini lounges, head thrown back, ostentatiously in leisure. The image is from a photograph taken of one of her best friends, a nurse and two-time cancer survivor. “She’s got this long scar down her torso as a result of the cancer surgery, and yet she accentuates it,” says Buckman, who highlights that aspect through loose, hanging threads, a purposefully undone and recurring mark within her images. “This was her reclining and celebrating her form, and I find that really awe-inspiring.”

The scene is bordered by text that Buckman wrote before an abortion, which took place shortly after her mother’s funeral. In another piece, which shows her mother washing her own hair, conversational text addressed to Buckman is partially obscured by a tangle of florals. Blooms are a recurring motif throughout the works, a reminder that moments of beauty and darkness are often intertwined. Another enduring Buckman signature — boxing gloves, a marker of strength — also appear in the show.

Buckman is working on several upcoming group exhibitions with The Broad in L.A. and San Francisco MoMA for next year, as well as her first solo museum show. Not yet announced, the retrospective will highlight her works around abortion, miscarriage and birth.

