

SOCIAL FABRIC



THE *Ritual* ISSUE

AN ANTHOLOGY
ABOUT THE LIVES OF
OUR BELOVED TEXTILES

3

ALLISON KEIRSTEAD JONES
FOUNDING EDITOR, ILLUSTRATOR
MAX BRUMBERG-KRAUS
EDITOR

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Editor's Note	4
May Day	
The Magic of Pockets - Debby Tepper Glick	6
Bedtime - Analeise Jarvi-Beamer	7
Summer Solstice	
Tsua Qhov Puab Hlub Peb (Because They Love Us) - Tshab Her	10
The Story of the Chuppah: An Affirmation of Life - Max Brumberg-Kraus	12
Lammas	
Stitching the World To Come - Shug Munic on the Olam Haba Quilt	18
Where the Boundary Breaks - an interview with Awanigiizhik Bruce	23
Fall Equinox	
A Pledge of Allegiance to our Hearts - A.P. Looze on the Here Forever Flag Project	28
Halloween	
Fishing Hoodie - KB Bieger	34
Weaving the Garments of Meaning - Jason Lansing on the Lotus Sutra	36
Winter Solstice	
Made to be Touched - An interview with artist Mikha "Mikhamik" Dominguez	40
The Fibers of our Being - Michelle Kaisersatt	45
Candlemas	
Dreams of Melting Ice - an interview with Riv Shapiro	48
Portals to my Inner Self - an interview with Hend Al-Mansour	51
Ostara	
Between the Warp and the Weft - a conversation with Sheryl Schwyhart and Phil Romine on their custom stoles	56
A List of Bracelets That Tie Me to My Mom - Natalie Wareham	61
Acknowledgments	65



Introduction

It's easy to forget that every inch of this world is sacred. In fact, forgetting this truth can be a protective measure. The enormous weight of that knowledge suffuses our lives with a great and terrible responsibility to others and to the Earth. If divinity lives in our neighbor's hearts, it's a lot harder to turn them away when they're in need. If divinity lives in the river that runs through our town, it's harder to stomach the pollutants that flow into it. If divinity lives in our t-shirts, it's harder to throw them away after just a few wears. To feel the full weight of this all the time would be crushing. So we numb ourselves, and we forget. But to be disconnected from this sacredness also means to lose sight of the reverse side of that responsibility: that we are cradled in a holy network of all beings, and that each of us belongs here. We need to remember this truth without being immobilized by its hugeness.

This, I think, is why we need ritual.

For this issue of Social Fabric, I set out to investigate why human beings perform rituals and how textiles help us to carry out this important work. I reached out to an extraordinary group of artists, clergy, scholars, teachers, healers, and friends to see what we could learn.

Just as I embarked on this journey, Operation Metro Surge was declared and an army of ICE agents descended on my home state of Minnesota. Our world was turned upside down as squads of heavily armed agents roamed the streets kidnapping, wounding, and, in the cases of Renee Good and Alex Pretti, killing our neighbors. In the frenzy of mutual aid, street patrolling, and protesting that followed, I noticed how crucial ritual was to our community in this incredibly hard time. Whether it was a solemn street corner vigil or an exuberantly political art sled race, ritual practices gave us a way to metabolize these horrible experiences. They helped us build the strength to fight another day, but they also turned us back toward our reasons for fighting in the first place: because each of our neighbors shares the same divine spark, and anyone's suffering is everyone's suffering. Ritual took on a new significance in the face of this grave material and existential danger.

Rituals create a time and space apart from the everyday. We can see this in Mikha Dominguez's transformed gallery spaces and Riv Shapiro's sacred naptime.

A ritual textile can alter our bodies and our consciousness. We can see this in Sheryl Schwyhart's thoughtful pastoral stoles that transform Phil Romine into Reverend Phil. We can see this in the way Awanigiizhik Bruce describes their self-made clothes as medicine.

Ritual textiles literally and figuratively hold us during the most significant moments of our lives. We can see this in the warm embrace of the Brumberg-Kraus wedding chuppah and the ancestral comfort that KB Bieger derives from their torn hoodie.

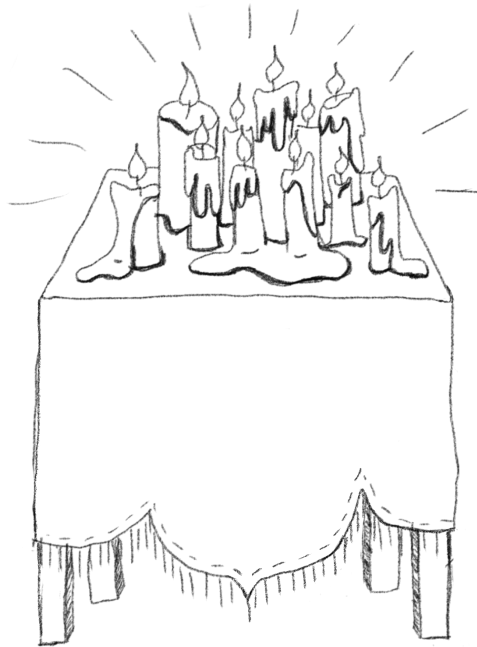
A textile ritual can bring people together and create community. We can see this in the unbridled trans joy of A.P. Looze's flag ceremonies and Shug Muncie's account of the many hands that made the Olam Haba Quilt.

At the core of all this is the act of turning our attention toward what is important. In ritual, every movement is done with intention. It gives us the chance to embody our values. To practice living well. To find the magic in the mundane. To slow down - you'll notice that phrase come up over and over in this anthology. With the help of our ritual textiles, these acts can re-illuminate the existing sacredness all around us.

As you explore the stories in this issue, I hope you are inspired to celebrate the sparks of divinity within your beloved textiles, your neighbors, and yourself.

With gratitude,

Allison Keirstead Jones
Founding Editor



Editor's Note

This issue of Social Fabric is structured around eight banners by Lacey Prpić Hedtke that represent the stations in the wheel of the year. Each piece has been sorted under one of these stations. This does not mean that the pieces are explicitly about this festival or time of year, but rather that they are thematically resonant in some way. Some of the pairings are very straightforward and others more oblique, but each pairing is an invitation to consider how the paired pieces draw out meaning from one another. These beautiful works by Lacey highlight the ways that ritual can ground us in the cycle of the seasons and orient us to what is most important. Below is Lacey's artist statement.

A New Heaven and a New Earth, May It Continue

In tribute to Slavic embroidery, my tufted and satin photo banners contain protective symbols for the climate crisis, one for each station on the wheel of the year, and in tribute to the circular kolo ("wheel") dance. They act as altars and placemarkers for our journey through the year, the wheel of the year also representing the cycle of life. Creating symbols is a bid to create our future, while also acting as a record of what the concerns of a society or community were. Many Slavic embroidery symbols still apply to our modern concerns—symbols for protection from violence, a call for health, and energetic protection. I made these rugs with aprons while in reverence to and communication with my Slavic ancestors, with a prayer in mind for each piece. One of the ways we can fight for the future of our planet and neighborhoods is keeping our ancestors present, connecting with their traditions and magic and the ways of living they left us with to continue and adapt. This includes everyday objects like textiles, clothing, furniture and food, many of which have magical and protective qualities.

The borders of each rug are traditional Slavic embroidery patterns, with my own designs with that station of the wheel of the year in mind, using symbols that hold magic for me.

-Lacey Prpić Hedtke

MAYDAY/BELTANE



May our planet remain protected by the otherworlds.

The Magic of Pockets

BY DEBBY TEPPER GLICK

I am obsessed with pockets. Always have been.

I have no patience for manufacturers who design women's clothing without pockets.

Herbert Hoover's campaign slogan was "a chicken in every pot." Mine would be "a pocket in every garment."

My love of pockets comes from my mother. She was a fashionista who had all her clothing custom made. She loved snazzy design and color.

When she passed away, I inherited her clothes, which I had made into a quilt, each square featuring one of her signature pockets.

As I sit in the waiting room at the hospital with my pregnant daughter, I wonder about the quilt my children might design to remember me someday and the story it would tell. And I think about how this hospital is woven into the tapestry of my life.

Most people think of Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC in Pittsburgh, Pa., as a Happily Ever

After Baby Delivery Factory. For me, it is that and more.

Around every corner I've seen snapshots in time colored in shades ranging from light to dark. Euphoria to despair.

A hysterectomy a couple of years ago.



Breast cancer before that, with my husband holding my hand through surgery, chemotherapy and radiation.

I was on the sidelines as a good friend lost her battle against ovarian cancer.

As a 20-something, Magee is where I delivered a stillborn child.

Nowhere else in Pittsburgh have I experienced, or seen others experience, such achingly empty pockets.

But Magee also is where I gave birth to my healthy, pink-faced, squalling babies.

It is a place I have met amazing nurses, doctors, technicians, parking attendants and other patients who have guided me from Cancerland into the Paradise of Good Health.

My pockets have overflowed with joy and blessings at Magee-Womens Hospital.

This time I am at the hospital accompanying my daughter for her five-month prenatal checkup. If there is a lovelier sound than hearing your grandson's heartbeat for the first time, I don't know what it is.

As I walk down these familiar corridors, my grandson's heartbeat still ringing in my ears, my eyes well up with tears. I reach into my pockets to find a tissue and what do I discover?

Miracles. Pockets full of miracles.

BED TIME

BY ANALEISE JARVI-
BEAMER

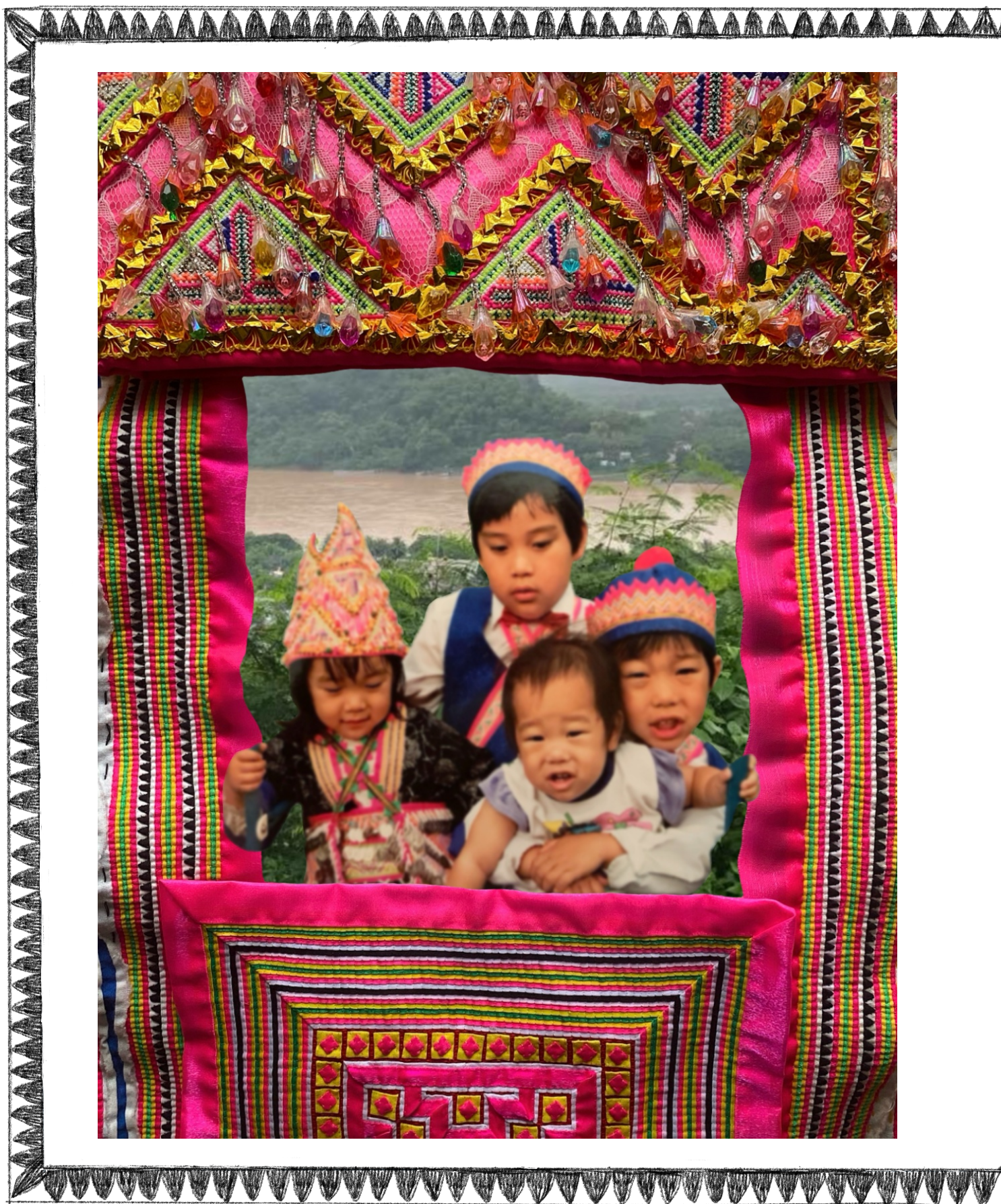




SUMMER SOLSTICE/ KUPALA NIGHT



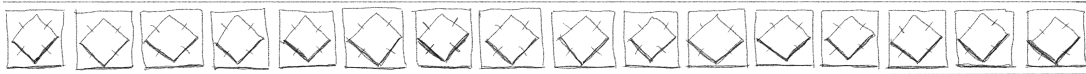
*May we equally distribute resources so all living things may be
healthy and abundant.*



TSUA QHOV PUAB HLUB PEB

(BECAUSE THEY LOVE US)

BY TSHAB HER



Held by the matriarchs in my family, the legacy of paaj ntaub lives in me and I have created this textile photo collage in honor of them. I am grateful for their example as women who, despite experiencing war, persecution, and displacement, continued to sew so that we would remember who we are, where we've been, and why we keep going. I sew because they have sewn and taught me that beauty is created with love, attention, resilience, persistence, and care. When I was a child, I was clothed with the vibrant patterns they had embroidered and felt their labor translate into Hmong pride and joy.

Tsua Qhov Puab Hlub Peb (Because They Love Us) centers a photograph of my siblings and me as children wearing traditional clothes made by my mom and grandmother. Layered behind this photograph is an image of the Mekong River taken by my parents on their first visit back to Laos in 2018 since immigrating to the United States as refugees 40 years prior. The edges of the photo collage display 4 different textiles that were handsewn by my maternal grandmother and great grandmother. The beaded textile on top of the collage is a hat my grandmother had made for me as seen in the center photograph (I am the first child from the left).

When I surround myself with my family member's paaj ntaub, I experience the intimacy of their hands guiding me into a sense of purpose which carries me along my creative journey as an artist. I am grateful for their example and love.



The STORY of the CHUPPAH: an AFFIRMATION of LIFE



MAX BRUMBERG-KRAUS
WITH MAIA AND JONATHAN BRUMBERG KRAUS

Max: What is a chuppah?

Maia: A chuppah is a wedding symbol that's very traditional, that represents a home. It also sort of creates a holy space for a ritual that takes place. It marks it.

Jonathan: It's kind of a microcosm of the home that you build together. But it's also the community that supports you as the chuppah fabric is held up by pole holders. It's the only time that the full communities that you're bringing together are actually there. And it's kind of like there's something it's more—it's a home that is but isn't yet, and it's also a potential that you carry with you for the actual home that you make together.

Maia: They do this thing now where the chuppah is all set up: it's very fancy. But when we got married, the first people who walked up were the four people holding the poles, and they came there and they stood up. That was really important to me because it represented that we were starting as a community and as a family to build a home together. And then our family members and friends who were going to be under the chuppah came. And then we had very important people sort of sit around it or near it.

And the chuppah itself, we made it with friends. I mean, you don't have to. But we asked our friends to put things on it made from felt that meant something to us. The base of the chuppah was a tablecloth, which felt very meaningful since meals were a big part of our life. Some of our inspiration was from the book *The Keeping Quilt*.

Jonathan: Yeah, Patricia Polacco's book, which is a really good book.

Maia: It's a children's book by Patricia Polacco, who's a fantastic writer. It's about this piece of cloth, a blanket that things kept getting added to, and it kept getting used for all these different symbolic events in her family's life. She used it

for her wedding and it became her children's blanket and then they would inherit it for their weddings. And I can't remember exactly, I mean, it's been about a million years since I last read it. But we got ideas for baby naming ceremonies from the book. She had all these great ideas of symbolic gifts you would give somebody to make meaning like chocolate for sweet life and flowers for beauty. But yeah, our chuppah was used at different family ceremonies. We used it again...

Jonathan: For your birth...

Maia: For Zoya's birth... for your naming ceremony.

Jonathan: For the b'mitzvahs?



My parents getting married under their chuppah.



My sister, Zoya, under the chuppah at her wedding. My father officiates.

Maia: For the bar mitzvahs. We even hung it for a while next to Zoya's crib. We didn't have a lot of money, and we couldn't buy a lot of stuff, so we used it like a mobile. She liked to look at it, you know, all the colors. But then she sort of started pulling at it.

Max: Was my bar mitzvah the last time you used the chuppah? Was it involved at all with anything for Josephine?

Maia: Oh, you know what we did do it for her baby naming. Yes, we did use it there.

Max: Is there anything special about the shape of a chuppah?

Maia: The four corners of the chuppah represent the four corners of the world: east, west, north, south. And traditionally, weddings would be held in the evening so that the witnesses would include the stars and the sky, sort of the whole cosmos coming together.

Jonathan: In my own experience as a rabbi, a lot of people make their own chuppahs. But traditionally, it can be somebody's tallit, and some people do that. And even our chuppah, we cut up parts of another tablecloth to make it tallit-like because it had blue borders on it.

Maia: Your uncle Daniel and aunt Laurie had a round one. It was very cool, with a circular frame.

Jonathan: One of the coolest chuppahs was the first commitment ceremony I ever did. Sadly, that couple's not married anymore, but I remember they made the frame out of branches of wood local to the forest, and they made it as a loom and all the people wove ribbons into it. It was literally weaving.

Max: Was the chuppah for Aunt Alice's and Lenny a tallit?

Maia: Yes. Max: There's something I like about using a tallit, something that's more day-to-day ritual or normal and turning it into something special through its special use in the ceremony. Do you remember anything about Zoya's chuppah?

Maia: They made it out of this kind of metal and just a beautiful piece of fabric.

Jonathan: Zoya likes building things. It was one of her construction projects.

Maia: It was very pretty.



My niece, Josephine, at her naming ceremony, with her grandmothers Rebecca and Maia.

Jonathan: With a lot of people, and for us, it was really important that ours was handmade, like how a home is handmade. We really did not want prefab things because we weren't making a prefab home. A home is dynamic and alive.

Maia: There's something I don't like about very fancy chuppahs that are standing there all ready. I love the everybody building a space, and with the chuppah and our presence, we consecrate it for that time. In traditional Jewish weddings, the couple would be brought down the street, followed by all the people, and there's a lot of movement. My friend's daughter actually rode a donkey through the streets of Jerusalem to her chuppah. People on the sides of the street, the communities celebrating too. Traditionally in Jewish society, if you celebrated, there had to be a reason. You didn't just have a party—it had to be a holiday or a life cycle event. I've been to a lot of weddings, and I've been to Hasidic weddings, to Christian weddings, and some of them I've really liked, and some of them I found kind of weird. But it's really about people creating a sense of holiness of the moment. A chuppah helps to bring that together in a very visual way. And it is such a Jewish symbol. Oh my God, when you see a chuppah, you know it's a Jewish wedding!

Max: What were some of the components of the chuppah? Like what did people add to it? And you mentioned that you've used your chuppah for a number of different rituals, for Zoya, for me, so did you also add to it over the years?

Maia: We added one of your baby shirts.

Jonathan: We had the baby hat that they put on Zoya.

Maia: I wish I'd done more in over the years, but it sort of got harder.

Jonathan: We also put things made out of paper in like magazine pieces. So it is very ephemeral.



The chuppah procession at my parents' wedding.

Maia: My brother was like, I don't know what to put on it. All I know how to draw is Karl Marx, Not Karl Marx, I meant Groucho Marx. I was like, Fine. Whatever. It's like, I let him do it. I should have said no.

Jonathan: On the other hand, that is part of our family. Remember aunt Mary? She said it felt really meaningful putting it together. She was the elder statesperson there, really. She signed our ketubah. She felt it was really special to be a part of making the chuppah.

Max: Are the ketubah and chuppah the key, obvious Jewish wedding items? I guess the sheva brachot are pretty important. The seven blessings.

Jonathan: In terms of the icons of weddings, it's chuppah, it's ketubah, but also the meal, the seudat mitzvah. It's a very, very important part of the Jewish tradition.

Maia: Breaking the glass, I guess.

Jonathan: Yes, which is interesting because it's not really an obligation, but it's a custom that has become like you have to have it.

Max: It's maybe one of the newest traditions, right? It has to do with—what was it? There was like a rabbi and the wedding party was getting out of hand, so they broke a pottery jug. I think there is some story like that, but it was to get everyone to kind of come back and calm down.

Maia: It does give that sort of finality to the ceremony. It's like, boom, okay, we're done.

Jonathan: But it's also with the same symbolic stuff of not finishing something, like leaving a part of a corner of your house unpainted, or not having musical instruments. It's the memory, technically, of the destruction of the temple, but generally of incompleteness.

Max: And there's a reference to that in in Sheva Brachot, like the return—

Jonathan: —To the city, a restored Jerusalem—the bride and groom dancing in restored Jerusalem.

Maia: I went to a wedding in Mea She'arim where the only instrument was a drum. And the whole night, this one man sang all the dance melodies and played his drum, and there was dancing for hours. It was really cool. Men and women, we were of course separated. They brought everybody together for the chuppah, but as soon as the chuppah was over, they did separate dancing. These were men dancing with wine bottles on their heads. But at our wedding, obviously not.

Jonathan: Well, we started out separate, men and women — how did that work?

Maia: The men were in the men's room, women were in the women's room, and then you came in to do the bedecking, singing at the top of your lungs. We were all singing in our room, but you broke in and it was like, boom, here comes a loud obnoxious man. And very symbolic. Jon was wearing his kittel, and my grandmother was saying, "you could take that off now."

Jonathan: "You could take that off now."

Maia: Then everybody walked up to the chuppah and lined up. We didn't do a rehearsal. We just said: go over here. Our whole wedding was very casual because things happen, like the caterers got stuck in traffic, so our friends set up all the tables. The flowers came late because the battery in their car died, so other friends gave them a jump start. I mean, our friends set the tables, but in a way, it was another way of bringing people together.

Maia: A lot of our friends said it was one of the best weddings they'd been to. One uncle said it was the first time he'd felt like part of the family. It was really important to us to make people feel like they belonged.

Max: Who stood under the chuppah?

Maia: We had people from all over. In our minyan before the wedding, they had us go around the room and our friends and family, were like "I'm here from Israel," "I'm here from Switzerland," "I'm here from Prague," "I'm here from Washington," and then we got to my grandmother and she said, "I am the Bubbe. Even my children's Gentile friends call me Bubbe." And the whole room said, "Hi, Bubbe." It was really cute. But now I think about who's not with us anymore, you know, while I try to remember who was standing there, then.



Wedding guests light havdalah candles from my mom's mother's candlesticks as they bless the couple.

Phil, Daddy's closest friend who died about 20 years ago and who made our ketubah. And my friend Veronica. My cousin Evan, who I was very close to. Oh, Anne-Marie, from Switzerland.

Jonathan: Anne-Marie. Wow. Yeah. Yes. That was so amazing.

Maia: There was of course my father and your step-grandmother Josie, and Grandma and Saba and our siblings. Many of those people are not here anymore. My grandmother didn't come into the chuppah, but she was right in the front. She and John's great-aunt Mary, the two oldest women, walked together to the chuppah as part of the procession. We did this thing that I had seen at a Hasidic wedding, where you have people lighting and holding havdalah candles. You might have seen that in movies. And the havdalah candles are obviously very symbolic, right?

Max: They're woven candles. Separate strands that are braided to become a new one.

Maia: At night, it's really beautiful. We had people for the sheva brachot come up by twos, one in English, one in Hebrew, so we could find something for those who could speak Hebrew and who couldn't. And they'd light one of the Havdalah candles with two candles we had from my mother's candlesticks, and then drink out of Jon's grandfather's wine cup and say one of the brachot.

Max: So you used your mother's candlesticks and Jonny's grandfather's cup?

Maia: At weddings there's always the feeling, the elephant in the room, the person or people missing. In my case, it was huge. It was my mother. So we brought it up at the beginning. We said, these are my mother's candlesticks. The idea is to invoke those people. I guess at traditional Orthodox weddings, if one of the parents is dead, they actually start with, El Malei Rahamim. That's how serious it is to make sure that that person is remembered.

Max: You have the literal quilt that you made for your chuppah, but the binding different people, places, ritual objects like candles and wine cups, the living and the dead, the future and the past, all of it together is very quilt-like. A woven piece of fabric is unified, solid, while the borders, edges, and remix of fabrics are what define a quilt. Different elements together without being flattened into one solid material. It's an appreciation of that dynamism.

Jonathan: Your language about the quilt really captures what we were trying to do in the wedding: bring diverse people and parts of our life together. Putting the chuppah together the night before was one of the ways that we really got to physically do that.

Maia: I think a marriage is an affirmation of the continuity of life and of community, and so the chuppah really told that story for us.



My parents, Maia and Jonathan, on their wedding day.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Chuppah - Jewish wedding canopy.

Ketubah - Jewish wedding contract.

Kittel - White ceremonial robe traditionally worn by Ashkenazi men on Yom Kippur, and sometimes while leading the Passover Seder, when getting married, and for their burial.

Sheva Brachot- Seven blessings at said at the heart of the Jewish wedding.

Tallit - Jewish prayer shawl

Bubbe - Yiddish for "grandmother."

LAMMAS



May we create with the earth and spirit with pleasure.



Max: How would you define Olam Haba?

Shug: Olam Haba roughly translates to "the world to come." In more left-leaning Jewish circles, it's almost viewed as this value direction: in the world to come, there will be no prisons. No one will be living on the street. Everyone will have a home. And thinking about if this is the concept of heaven, or the most ideal world that we're trying to move to, how can we enact that in the everyday? I feel like it's very "hope as a discipline," to borrow Mariame Kaba's quote.

Allison: What was the origin of the Olam Haba Quilt, and who was involved in the inception of this project?

Shug: Shortly after October 7th, 2023, I attended a Jewish Voice for Peace meeting here in Minneapolis. In these breakout sessions I was like, I know I want to create some type of collaborative quilt project where people are able to process and show solidarity and grapple with some of these questions, but I really don't want to do it alone. And that's where

I met my now good friend, Sophia Alhadeff, and they were like, "Yeah, I'll do it with you." And we just dove in headfirst as the two main collaborator/organizers for the project. Then I got connected with Donna Goodlaxson at Spill Paint Not Oil, who has since become a quilting mentor of mine. Spill Paint Not Oil volunteered the space to assemble the quilts.

Sophia and I put out a call on social media and some of our listserv circles, like community connections, asking people to create a quilt block that responded to questions like, how are Palestinian liberation and Jewish safety inherently connected? That was a really big question because at the time, a lot of people were bringing in this term of Jewish safety and putting it in opposition to Palestinian liberation. And Sophia and I really viewed those things as inherently intertwined. There's been a lot of great grapple conversations and questions around the sentiment of doykait: "you're Jewish where you are." How do you cultivate community on the land that you currently live on?

But, yeah, we put out a call asking folks to make quilt blocks. At one

point in the Twin Cities, I hosted: just come. Bring some fabric, bring your sewing machine. If you want to participate in this but you're a little intimidated with sewing, I will be there as a support, and other people will be there as support. So people both mailed in quilt blocks from around North America, and then also a good amount of people made quilt blocks locally. We totaled 36 quilt blocks, which is a Jewish holy or significant number - double chai. Once we received all the quilt blocks, we would meet every other week, sometimes every week, at Spill Paint Not Oil. It took so long to decide the orientation of how we wanted the quilt blocks assembled because there's just always a constellation of options. But then we sewed the quilt top together doing a mix of hand stitching and machine stitching. We then also created this sashing border. And Kelsey Sharp of Sharp Signs Co. helped us laser-cut the fabric for the poem that's bordering the quilt. And that was also a really exciting exchange of learning more about how to laser cut fabric and how text could amplify the message of the quilt. She was also

really interested in getting more knowledge around sewing at the time. So it felt like there were a lot of ways where people were just coming in with knowledge that they had, and it all got to play a role in making this piece come together. We wrote the poem framing the quilt as a collective.

"What does it mean to work on something really slow in a time of real urgency?"

I wouldn't say there was a ton of ritual within the actual making of the project, but a question that we kept coming back to was, what does it mean to work on something really slow in a time of real urgency? And we kept coming back to this word steadfast, steadfastness. But making this quilt has really meant that I keep engaging with these questions, or engaging with these politics, or like, don't walk away from these ideas just because the news cycle is walking away from covering the Palestinian genocide. When we initially started making the quilt, we were like, wow, what if this ends before we finish? It took about 10 months to make. We were like, what if Palestine is free before we finish the quilt? That would be awesome. But what does that mean? Maybe that's hope as a discipline, or maybe that's just delirious because it's three years later and the genocide is very much not over. But a lot of the people working on it, and I, had that hope. Seeing the news, we were all like, you can't look away from how devastating this

is. This is obviously crazy. But it just became something where, because we were consistently meeting as a group and working on this together, a lot of times we were talking about the construction of the piece, but other times we're also talking about how we feel. We're talking about what we've seen on the news. We're talking about things that we're participating in. So I think that those relationships just kept us engaged and made it so that we weren't turning away from what was happening.

Max: That's really powerful. It feels like a contrast to one of the ways people "didn't disengage," which is to always be on phones or always seeing social media. And this is a way to be steadfast and engaged that isn't only doomscrolling, but really being with people, making something. And I'm sure it wasn't always the same people every time, but seeing enough similar people and returning to these thoughts, there is a real discipline to that and a real community that forms.

Something that you mentioned about just the sheer length of time, the amount of time spent making and being with other people, it seems really a key component of this whole project.

Shug: Something that's felt really special about this is that a lot of us still keep sewing together. I've really formed a lot of meaningful relationships from this project. There were some quilt blocks contributed from people in Brooklyn, and they later hosted us to do a showcase of the quilts. And I'm still friends with those people. We're still talking about what one another is making in the studio and our lives. Donna was a letter of rec for me for grad school. We still sew all the time. I'm much more of an improvisational quilter and just being like, yeah, use whatever. You don't need to measure anything. Just sew it and cut it as much as you need. And Donna is incredibly meticulous. Like, we don't measure twice, we measure three times. And her work looks absolutely perfect, she can make the



most intricate pieces. I felt like we really got to playfully and lovingly duke it out from opposite sides of the spectrum. But we're still good friends. This person is still in my life. And we also all still sew together. Now, the local people from Olam Haba, that has grown into a handwork hang where we come together to sew once a month, and we still meet at Spill Paint Not Oil. Typically, it's bring your own project. And there's been times when the news is gutting. We'll show up like, I'm devastated. I'm heartbroken. And sometimes I'll be like, I really wonder and hope if next month when we meet, we'll all be holding things a little bit differently. And then we'll meet again and we'll be like, wow, it's so good to see everybody. But I just think something that's really unique to any type of organizing or movement work is that

- I mean, this is so "Dean Spade™" - it's about the relationships. But the fact that people just want to keep being in community together is really sustaining and helps. I think this is even something that Dean Spade said in his last

podcast episode with Andrea Richie, but he was mentioning something about during 2020 of COVID being like, Yeah, I really was doomscrolling a lot because I just wanted more



information. And I was freaked out, but it wasn't really supporting me through that experience. And I think there's something about, I'm not seeing these people every day, but a month passes, and I'm like, you're further on your cross stitch. And how are you? You get to see people in these buckets of time that I think really help me stay engaged in the moment. We're currently working on a smaller quilt together now that Donna is facilitating that asks, what is the opposite of fear? And that's been the response to thinking about a lot of the ICE occupation stuff in the Twin Cities. Because, yeah, shit's been really scary. What is the opposite of fear? It's been a really interesting question to get into. And then also, how do you visually communicate that? That's nuts. But it's felt so special that even three years later, people want to keep making stuff together. That's really sustaining for me. And that's also something that I think is really unique to making things with people outside of institutional spaces, where it gets to take whatever organic shape or timeline makes sense for the group.

Max: What has been the life of this quilt after it was finished?

Shug: It's really had a life of its own. It's been a part of a lot of different rituals for High Holiday services, or last year, Sophia and I hosted a



Passover Seder. So having the quilt be a backdrop for Jewish ritual, and it's been a lot of holidays. It's also gone a lot of places. Sometimes it's tough to keep up with the CV of this quilt.

Sophia brought it to Chicago for a showcase. I mean, even before that, when we finished the quilt, we submitted it to the state fair. It got fourth place. But being summer 2023, something staunchly anti-Zionist in a really public space - that felt really powerful.

It's been to Brooklyn for a showcase. It's been to Duluth. People will message me and ask if they can borrow it for different things that are going on, or like, can this quilt be present for this? When the quilt was completed, Sophia and I hosted a Shabbat potluck,

where anyone that had contributed and friends could come see it. It really felt like we were blessing the completion of this project. It's not an exclusively Jewish quilt. Anyone who identifies as anti-zionist is able to contribute. And since then, the quilt's been used as an educational object and object to support Jewish ritual.

Allison: In many ways, this is a very Jewish project, and it was conceived at the JVP meeting. But also it sounds like it coalesced more around a crafting community than on the Jewish axis. And it's interesting to hear about its life in Jewish

"I'm not interested in the exceptionalism of 'oh, you don't have this identity. You don't get to come.' It's more like, 'do we share these values? Do we have these desires for the world?'"

ritual, and also that it's in many ways a multi-faith project. What was it like doing a project with these Jewish roots with a broader multi-faith coalition of people?

Shug: The values that I hold as a Jewish person aren't separate from my values as a queer person or a more left-leaning person. I want to be practicing solidarity with people outside of my identity. The Jewishness or Jewish values get to be there, but everybody's welcome. I'm not interested in the exceptionalism of "oh, you don't have this identity. You don't get to come". It's more like, "do we share these values? Do we have these desires for the world?" We all get to

bring our identities and lenses to that. There's a lot of different materials in the quilt. There's an oil painting in one of the quilt blocks. And you can't iron that, so there's a lot of fun technical challenges of how to assemble this object. There's another quilt block that my friend Alter made. It has gauze and iron pour spillage bits on it. So that's something where you can iron that, but these little pieces of metal would, anytime you touch them, flick up. So you'd always have to iron it so that it lays flat. But that's something where it's like, that could



accidentally cut something in the quilt. How do all of these different materials and different ideas coexist in one piece? So many people made it.

Allison: As you're describing the process of putting it together, the metaphor feels like it's hitting me over the head. Like, "how can we make all these different diverse things coexist in one piece?" It's something that you can look at and see the parts and the whole and the way that they work together. I don't

want to put words into your mouth, but it feels almost like an embodied prayer for pluralism.

Max: And including also you and Donna having different practices. That's another form of bringing all those differences together, not just the different materials and people, but literally, how are we going to build this thing together?

Shug: That's a fun way to put it. I think that quilts are just what it's all about. Quilts are traditionally made

in community. Like the quilting and assembling of a piece, that is historically done in a group, not in isolation. And I think going back to getting disillusioned by doomscrolling, taking in all this information alone can be really isolating. But doing something with your hands in a group of people really helps you to not turn away from what's going on. Quilts are really conducive to continuing to show up because you gotta keep coming until it's done.



WHERE THE BOUNDARY BREAKS

AN INTERVIEW WITH
DIVERSE MEDIA ARTIST
AWANIGIIZHIK BRUCE

Allison: Tell us about your performance in the NE/X Indigenous performance art festival.

Awani: The title is Dapishko Manidookewin: Gaa-izhi-zhiizhoobii'ishimon. The translation [from Anishinaabemowin] is "Akin to ceremony, the way of painting/dancing."

Allison: How did the idea start for you?

Awani: I saw a call and then I was like, "you know what? I should try it." I didn't know if I was a performance artist per se, but it's always something that I wanted to do.

In my own community and practice, within ceremonies we have closed community, invite-only, societal dancing. If you take that out of its context, they are like a performance. It's not really - to call it just a performance would anger everyone, because it's a culture-bound reality. So to simplify it as a performance would be blasphemous. But thinking about some of the ceremonial dances that I do, in some aspects it's actually a type of dance. It's much more than



"There's this shirt that I have with silver ring brooches - if I was to go in a time machine, they'd probably be looking at the cut like, where did this shirt come from? We've never seen a cut like this. But seeing the ring brooches, it would look normal until they looked at it closer. It's supposed to be representative without actually being period fashion from that time, but it's supposed to be expressive of it."



"Awani: I want to start putting robotics into clothing. Part of that is I want to have motors - like there's some artists who will solder into motors and actuators where they'll have spinning elements or flapping elements. But right now I'm just going put a computer chip in. And I want it to be club wear, because I love dancing, I love going out. So you'll literally be the brightest in the room as you're dancing.

Allison: It sounds like it's really important to you to work with materials that your ancestors would have been using, and then also materials that that no one else is even using yet, or that are on the cutting edge of contemporary culture.

Awani: Maybe I'm like the Native Samurai Jack."

a dance because you're working with different medicines and different teachings and different spirits, as you'd say. In a way I have been a performance artist for over a decade. People just don't see that side of me. So I was building on those ideas. How can I incorporate things into a performance, an open, public, everyone-invited spectacle? I was thinking, well, I'm naturally a storyteller and a researcher and then also a transdisciplinary,

multidisciplinary artist. I can fuse all these things and also talk about higher ideas of what are all these intersections, what are all these boundaries, where the boundary breaks.

Allison: It sounds like you went in with some questions about what happens when you decontextualize these movements, or what is to be gained from performing in a space that's open to everyone versus a

closed cultural practice. I'm wondering if you found some answers to your questions, or if you found some new questions.

Awani: I refused to do anything that was the actual dancing. I had some of my bear hides and my buffalo mask, but I refused to use them for that context. It took a lot for me to even bring those things since they're technically ceremonial items. There's so many protocols on things,



"This one is reminiscent of Métis or Cree style, and then this one's more Ojibwe style. So two different cultures. They're meant to be asymmetrical, but also they're the same. They're a fusion of three different medicine moccasin types. These are called round toe instead of the traditional split toe, but they also are ankle length, which are reminiscent of the split toe. And I gave it such a huge tongue to make them look like basketball shoes. So it's a fusion of many different ideas."

people, or situations that should not be near ceremonies. For example, within some of these ceremonies, women on their moon time [menstrual period] do not go to ceremony because they're in their own ceremony. They're supposed to be at home being taken care of and doing their own healing and praying. So in that aspect, I wasn't going to police and say who and who couldn't be there. I just made sure that I smudged the space before and after. And also being Two-Spirit, I have my own ideas with some of those things. All I'm getting at is a lot of the things were taken out of their context, and some of the movements were more performed, in the sense of the war clubs I made into painting sticks, a lot of that stuff was unique to that performance.

Allison: What were some of the other things that you created to take what's appropriate from the ceremonial space and bring it into an art performance space?

Awani: I think a lot of it was unique. I was switching between storytelling mode and community engagement with the audience. There were four two-hour performances, and every one of them was completely different depending on the audience. There'd be a lot of similarities with the stories taught, but for example one of the days there were more conversations about differences between Dakota and Ojibwe because there's Dakota and Ojibwe people there present. It was interesting to see the different crowds or interactions or people that

show up.

I wanted to engage critically with the audience because I was anticipating both Native and non-Native audiences and I wanted to see the interplay there. The goals were to share information but also give boundaries that, if this is Native knowledge or ceremony or cultural storytelling, it isn't to be co-opted or appropriated. I wanted to have healthy discourse.

Allison: It sounds like there were a lot of practical considerations about how the audience is going to experience this, like really foregrounding a sense of safety. And then also things like, how am I not going to get this room totally covered in ink but still have the freedom to move? But I love that

"I've been exploring the fusion between Indigenous and European or other wears. The first one that I made was a strap dress tunic, so it's a tunic length. For me, it's just a long shirt. The fusion is from old references I found from Ojibwe and then Plains cultures like the Dakota and the Cree. It's a women's style, but this one is a strap dress shirt. And if you notice there's ribbons on the sides of it, 'cause I widened it and then I made ribbon jeans with that [same material]. So that's also an exploration of how you transform a shirt into a realm of not quite feminine, not quite masculine."



it was about creating a space that changes, just like the audience changes the performance each night. It's ephemeral in this way that performance is. It's bridging the gap between performance and ritual. The world of art has a lot of really specific rules, and then the world of ceremony has a lot of really specific and really different rules. And you are finding a space in between that allows for new things to emerge, which is really cool.

I'm also noticing a parallel between your approach to performance and your approach to textile. In your performance, you recycle and

repurpose ceremonial elements to create a new whole. I also know your textile practice involves a blend of different materials, traditional and modern, new and used, etc. Can you speak to this?

Awani: In my own practice, I'm slowly changing my wardrobe to clothing that I'm making. In the performance, I wasn't wearing a lot of the things I made, but in some of the conversations I was talking about another series that I'm doing and what it represents in a greater cultural and a greater fashion sense and a greater artistic sense and cultural sense. I really like upcycling and painting clothing or adding historic

pieces that they would have used in the 1700s, but I'm making them in a modern sense now that it's 2026. That's part of Native culture. Like with parfleche, which is painted rawhide, the culture is to recycle, so parfleche was used to make into moccasin soles. They were used to make knife sheaths and other things. The idea of reusing and recycling isn't unique to modern culture. A lot of tribal societies around the world all did that. It's a very human thing to do. Why? Something that you took that much effort and energy to do, you're not going to let it go easily unless there's reasons to do so.



"[When I put on my clothing,] I feel like it empowers me. This is definitely a Native way of saying things—I feel like it's medicine. In some cases it could be armor, protection. It could be empowering, giving you strength, energy, and ability."

AUTUMN EQUINOX



May the planet rebalance and find equilibrium.



Allison: Can you start by just telling us and the readers of Social Fabric a little bit about yourself and your general artistic practice?

AP: I categorize myself as multi or interdisciplinary. I have mostly made solo performances from storytelling to then including music and animation and dance. During the pandemic, a lot changed, and there weren't as many live performance opportunities. And frankly, I get stage fright like you wouldn't believe. I shifted my practice to some more visual art, and flagmaking took hold. People have asked me, "When did you get into flags? Or why did you get into flags?" And I cannot, for the life of me, identify what triggered that.

Max: Tell us about the Here Forever flag project.

AP: I received funding from the Minnesota State Arts Board to create a flag-making project in which I interviewed 12 or 13 people. I synthesized the interviews to then create 13 thematic flags based on those interviews. I then held a public

flag-raising ceremony in the Powderhorn Neighborhood of Minneapolis where I told the story of each of the flags and raised them on this poll. But "Here Forever" started from a custom Pride flag I made for the Textile Center in 2023, where the only requirement was that it had to use the Progressive Pride flag colors. I added the pink triangle, because I wanted to have those be two cornerstones— the Holocaust and the AIDS crisis, two historical moments that



contextualize queerness today. That flag was called "We Will Not Be Eradicated," but how do we say this in the positive? Oh! "Here forever." That feels like a more celebratory and legacy-driven way of describing the fact that we have never not existed. We've always been here, and I wanted to celebrate the interior lives of trans and non-binary people, something beyond identity. In the face of rising fascism, when we're essentially being litigated out of existence, no matter what, trans people will always exist, even under oppression, even under fascism. There is evidence of us for thousands of years. Trans is not an isolated political identity that exists now. I mean, there are certain ways that being trans and non-binary today are defined by things that we have access to, like hormones and surgeries and stuff that maybe were not accessible in the past. But even without hormones, even without surgeries, we're still here. And I think that's something that I'm wanting to remember, that even

as we probably lose access to these life-saving and life-changing alterations to our bodies, even without them, we're here.

Max: What do you mean by "beyond identity?"

AP: It wasn't until I did some research about the original 1978 Gilbert Baker flag that I realized this was never about identity. This was about values. So, can I

re-imagine flags that have more of a value and heart-centered way of looking at who we are rather than just definitions of our sexualities and genders? The current queer flags have taken on this hyper niche identity-based way of looking at ourselves, which can separate us, silo us, and actually disconnect us. One of our strengths as artists is to choose really complicated things and turn them on their heads and have this non-dual

way of perceiving the materials that we work with. I abhorred the Pride flag for many years as a result of it being co-opted by corporations. Just wearing rainbows, thinking it's because we all fit under a rainbow, almost like multiculturalism. And then I come back to the Gilbert Baker Pride flag, and I remember the original impetus.



Max: Target is a great example where people bought Pride flags on sweaters, wallets, waterbottles, and pencil boxes. A corporation made these identity markers, sold them, profited off them, and then, when it was politically inconvenient, totally stopped. A kind of erasure. In some ways that parallels legal categories: if you narrow trans to an identity— a protected class— we are then beholden to judicial opinion or

"One of our strengths as artists is to choose really complicated things and turn them on their heads and have this non-dual way of perceiving the materials that we work with."

legislative processes that characterize us, limit us, and mark us according to their whims. The law can speak us into being or disappear us. Is that what's at stake when we focus on identity?

AP: Identities have been created as a result of colonialism and white supremacy, as a way to control,

oppress, and create differences. When I say "I'm trans," I'm flattened to a one dimensional shape. I've transitioned from one thing to another: only that. It becomes which bathroom do I use and what was it like to be a girl now you're a man. A linear, one-way, time-based flattening just as whiteness and colonialism are flattening: one singular way of looking at the world. But how do we animate multiple worlds? How do we animate the interior in a way that allows us to perceive the world in a prism? Trans people, when we're not living in the flattened manner that the world wants us to live in, illuminate the imagination. And that's what makes us dangerous. We offer an alternative way of living and an alternative way of seeing. When we've gone into this route of hyper-focused identities and micro individualisms, we rupture some spirit from us. Identity is so devoid of spirit. It's sterile. So with these flags the whole point was to break through the constraints of flag, pride, identity. To push the form. That's what trans

"That's what trans and non-binary people do. We push the form of being human."

and non-binary people do. We push the form of being human.

Allison: Hearing you talk about multidimensionality and people's inner lives, I'm interested in the interviews that you did. What were some key things that came up, and how did you translate them into flags?

AP: Each interview was different from each other, because people's personal experiences, stories, history, age, the generation that they're in is different. But almost every person made reference to history and lineage, whether in the form of political movements or particular individuals or cultures. "Time and Ancestry" was really clear to me. The "Resonance" flag was also really clear

to me. Other flags were from a salient moment in specific interviews. The Illusion flag came when I asked someone was, "what is gender?" They were like, "what do you mean by that? There's so many ways to look at gender, it's too slippery for me to understand, and it feels like an illusion." So I pulled out specific phrases people said that felt like they could have a universal arc. But also a personal one. The youngest interviewee said their gender felt like both sun and star, and I folded that into the story of my grandmother and her allyship with queer people and my own trans identity. There were broad strokes themes. There were individually salient things that individuals said, and there was my own personal history.

Max: The Sun and Moon has this elemental side to it. There's what those symbols meant to your interviewee and the story of you with your grandma. And also these giant, celestial images. It speaks to the cosmic things and to the small and intimate and to the middle, to the communal. A flag for all these different levels.

AP: Definitely. I think often the more personal the story, the more universal the feeling. Storytelling is at the core of all of my art making. I don't know what those flags would mean without the stories I offered with them.

Max: What was it like preparing for the big flag raising ceremony?

AP: Everything was happening so quickly with anti-trans legislation, and there was recent heavy news





from the Supreme Court. People needed meaningful experiences where we were together and tending to our hearts. That's why I lassoed Seth Anderson-Matz into the project. His experience with theology and public ceremony felt like a really important component. We've known each other a long time, and we've seen each other through many different seasons of our lives, and I have a lot of trust in him. It all came together like magic: through trust and deep relationships that I have with people. I didn't even know who the volunteers were until the day of the event. They just showed up. I laid the flags out on the ground and had each person choose a flag that they were drawn to. Ultimately, they chose flags that they needed in that moment. And the person who was carrying the "I Heart Butches" flag just burst into tears afterwards and just was like, "I didn't know I needed that. It was such a gift to carry that flag." The ceremony was accompanied by Unlawful Assembly marching band and culminated in the revealing of a 25' by 42' trans flag reading "Here Forever" that my partner Heather McKenzie and I made.

Max: Where else have the flags been

raised or been part of other ceremonies?

AP: My 10' by 15' version of the "Here Forever" flag was used in a trans rights of passage ceremony that was created by Walken Schweigert, Max, myself and Seth. 2025 hit, and all the trans people I knew were just in heaving sobs. It was just so terrifying. I presented that flag with a pledge of allegiance to our hearts. I thought, the American flag can never be put on the ground. What if this is put on the ground, and what if this flag becomes a prayer rug and people are asked to lie on top of it and be with it after we pledge allegiance to our hearts and the transgender way of life? And soon the giant flag will be at Trans Day of Visibility in Saint Paul where everyone is going to do their hormones on it if the weather is nice enough. And we will march with it in the Mayday parade this year. It is very special to make these flags and

share these stories. I wouldn't know who I am as a queer person without the storytelling of other people. It's how you come to understand who you are and who we are to one another. That's what I've been coming to ask in my artistic process: what if love were the methodology? What if that were what is driving me and not my intellect? The more that I make art from that place, the softer I feel and the softer I become. And I think our world just needs more softness.

Allison: Softness like fabric.

AP: Yes!

Allison: What was important about it being a textile to you?

AP: Textiles are part of queer culture. I think of the AIDS Quilt and that being collectively sewn and being so massive. And Gilbert Baker's first Pride flag was sewn by 30 volunteers in this collective experience. And while it wasn't necessarily a collective experience to make my flags tangibly, they were collectively created by way of these interviews.

Allison: And the specific materials?

AP: My mentor, Peter, taught me about these very colorful nylons. I love color! It's so important to me. And so I used UV resistant nylon and some other types of nylon so it doesn't fray. And then the fringe flag was literally a bunch of fringe and ribbon that I had around. I was working with materials that I

had some experience with that I know are used for flags. Heather, my partner, has extensive experience weaving and sewing and has made wedding dresses and a lot of garments. So when I was like, "I want to make a giant flag," Heather was like, "we can totally figure that out." Their problem solving and extensive experience with fabrics and textiles made that giant flag actually possible. Now, sewing the seams of that 40-foot flag was one enormous ritual. Whenever we got into the studio, we had to unfurl the fabric. We put knee pads on, and we basted a 40-foot seam down the floor, and we did the same motions over and over and over again, kneeling on the ground, touching edges, sewing edges together, and creating a strong bond between two pieces of fabric. And then we brought it to the sewing machine, and sewing a 40-foot seam takes a long time. We entered a trance state, with how long it took and the vibration of the machine. With ritual, first we do this, next we do this, next we do this, and, finally, we end with this. We know when it's going to begin, we know when it's going to end. It's repetitive. I think of praying the rosary as an extremely repetitive task. And I feel like sewing is no different.

Allison: I love that. As a fellow textile practitioner, I feel similarly that there is this spiritual significance. When you're doing a project where you're really noticing the spirituality as you're doing it, it can impact the holiness or ritual use of the finished object, too.

AP: You might not like all parts of a church service, but you know they all need to happen in order to complete it. So, of course, there were parts of making this flag that I hated doing. I

did not like it, but they were required for it to happen. It's sacred requirement. There's purpose in every part of it. Nothing is superfluous within the making of a flag.

Max: "Purpose in everything" is a helpful way to parse ritual time and space from day to day life. In ritual, there's a purpose for everything. Whereas in my day to day life, there's a lot of randomness, thoughtlessness. There is a level of intent or beyond meanness in the ritual space.

Allison: What is significant about the Twin Cities being the setting for this project?

AP: I think there's something about the Twin Cities and its queerness that is really different than other parts of the country. This place is particularly trans compared to other places.

Max: The highest percentage of adult trans people in a state is in Minnesota. AP: Yeah, by a significant number. On the day of the event, I was feeling anxiety about potential haters coming. I talked to someone and they were like, "We're in our home right now. We're in Powderhorn. This is a

particularly queer and trans place. We have people here who can help de-escalate if something does come up." And this person had done a lot of abolition work and was just saying the solution to all of our problems is already present here. And I think one of the most marked moments, was the person carrying the giant T4T flag had just moved here from Tennessee, and they didn't know anyone. And they couldn't believe they showed up to this event where they felt like they could be themselves and be home, and they hadn't come out yet until they came to Minneapolis. There's some alchemical magic here of people feeling safe enough to express themselves and be fully who they are.



SAMHAIN/HALLOWMAS



*May we remember that our ancestors are in the air, earth, water and fire
and treat them with care.*

FISHING HOODIE

BY KB
BIEGER

At the end of every setnet salmon season--when we did not have one item of clothing free of scales or slime, when our wrists ached and our skin forgot the feeling of a shower, when we were all so tired we could fall asleep instantly no matter how cold or slimy--my aunt would give us each three things:

Words of thanks and feedback
A check to last (me at least) the next 6 months
A sweatshirt

Every year the design would be different. Sometimes they bore my aunt's artwork--a bird's eye view of a skiff or a side shot of a crew picking



the net. Other times they came ready-made. The colors were almost always drab--black, gray, pale or navy blue. The sweatshirt I'm writing about is a slate gray, purchased from Nomar, the company that manufactures the mesh brailer bags that can hold over 1000 lbs of salmon as they are craned up out of our skiffs and into the icy hold of the tender (my aunt would want me to write of course that at Reddog we kept our bags under 500 lbs to improve fish quality). On the back there is an old fashioned double ender (see picture) and on the front a small captain's wheel with the Nomar logo.

To me there was nothing special in particular about that hoodie. It didn't carry my aunt's artwork. It didn't say the name of our crew or the year of the season. It was really just some company's hoodie. It rotated equally with all my fishing hoodies--until one day, in a wave of grief, I tore the pocket.

Writing about Jewish traditions makes me realize the extent of my insecurity around my lack of Jewish knowledge. But losing my grandma, who raised me, flung me into something I had never before known. And as little as I know about Jewish tradition, Jewish tradition seems to know a lot about grief.

Somewhere along the line I'd learned about a practice of tearing clothes in grief--this at a time people owned few clothes--and then repairing them visibly, not in an attempt to hide what had taken place. The practice is called *Kriah*; I'd experienced it once or twice at Jewish Voice for Peace vigils and similar events. I'm sure there is much more to learn about it if you want to look it up. Mostly I stored this information away and didn't think much of it.

Fast forward to fall 2024. I'd spent the last week sitting next to my grandma's bedside, as I sang to her and she did not recognize me. Once that week there was a flash of recognition and she grabbed me and

kissed me on the top of the head. Her words still weren't quite English or any language, and then a few days later she went silent except the rattling of her breath, and then about an hour after I'd left I got the phone call that she had stopped breathing. And then at my kitchen table I thought of all this all of a sudden all at once and I tore that Nomar sweatshirt. I ripped the pocket about an inch and a half.



I'm never really sure what to say about my grandma. It feels wrong to me to stitch her up into a few sentences. I wish you could have just met her. I wish she was here. Every sentence I say about her feels like a flattening, a betrayal. I wish I could articulate her back to life. My memory doesn't feel good enough, my words don't feel good enough, for this to be all I have left.

What I can say is this:

I love my grandma more fiercely than the Ugashik tides pull on our nets.

I love my grandma through the mudflats and back with a lunch bucket, a gas tank, a raft, and a shoe that won't stay on.

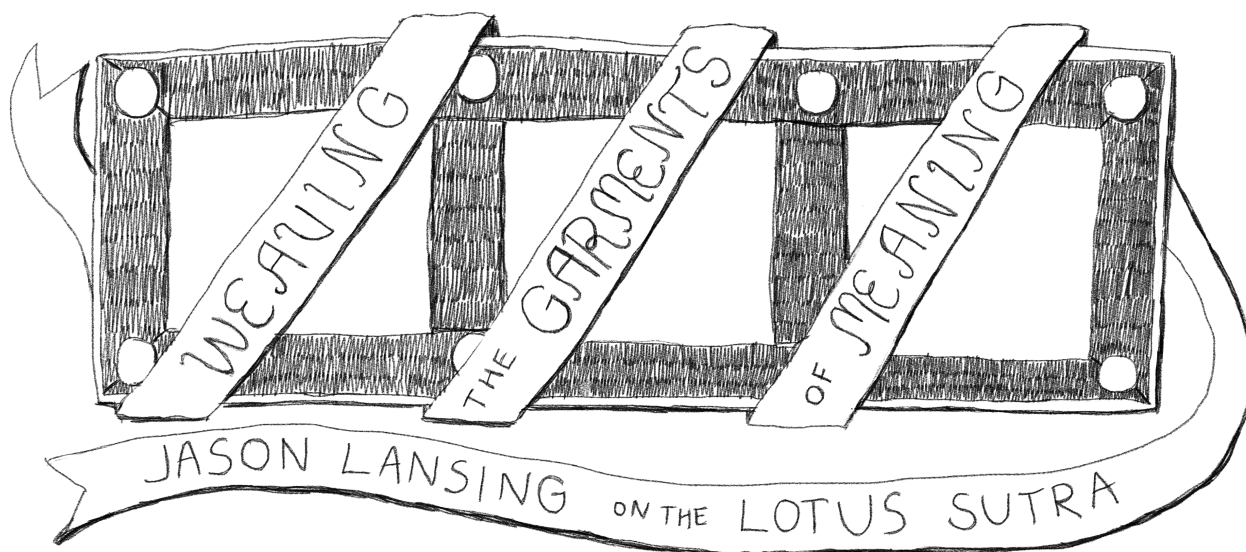
I love my grandma plunging into the icy clear tundra lakes that take your breath and all your thoughts away.

I love my grandma spinning out on 94 in the car she used to drive me home from school in, spiraling past semis, hitting nothing, coming to a stop feeling her presence in the passenger seat.

I love my grandma in each wave of grief, the skiff bucking, fish sliding, the gunwale thrown dangerously close to the water. I'm worried the skiff will swamp. But setnet skiffs are built with flared sides for buoyancy in rough weather. The boat bounces back, the fish slide the other way, and we wait for the next wave to hit us.

I still haven't stitched up my sweatshirt. I plan to do it with dental floss. Maybe my grandma will come sit by me, darning socks on a light bulb, laughing, finding the words I never could.

I love you grandma.



In the 13th century, the Third Karmapa (Tibetan spiritual leader) Rangjung Dorje wrote that “we love to collect beautiful brocades for our books, but that does not make them easier to read.” The use of brocade fabric to wrap around and protect Buddhist texts remains an enduring practice. Buddhist scriptures were originally written on loose palm leaf, and eventually paper sheets that were held together in a stack. The texts were not bound, so the cover was essential in protecting and keeping Buddhist scripture intact. In some Mahayana texts such as the Lotus Sutra, Buddhist scriptures are considered to be a physical manifestation of the Buddha’s body. Physically wrapping, holding, opening and closing the Buddha’s teachings becomes a way to honor, and engage with his physical body after his death. When a practitioner unwraps a Sutra, they engage and enliven the most intimate aspects of the Buddha’s body. When a Sutra is wrapped and put away, the practitioner cares for and protects the Buddha’s body after his death.

Likewise, the teachings within a Sutra are a way for the Buddha to clothe his followers after his death. The

tenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra, “Teachers of the Dharma” promises believers will “be covered by the Tathagata (Buddha) with his robe”

When a practitioner unwraps a Sutra, they engage and enliven the most intimate aspects of the Buddha’s body.

When a Sutra is wrapped and put away, the practitioner cares for and protects the Buddha’s body after his death.

and that they “will be protected and kept in mind by the buddhas” throughout time and space. When the Buddha’s followers wish to teach the Sutra, they’re instructed to “put

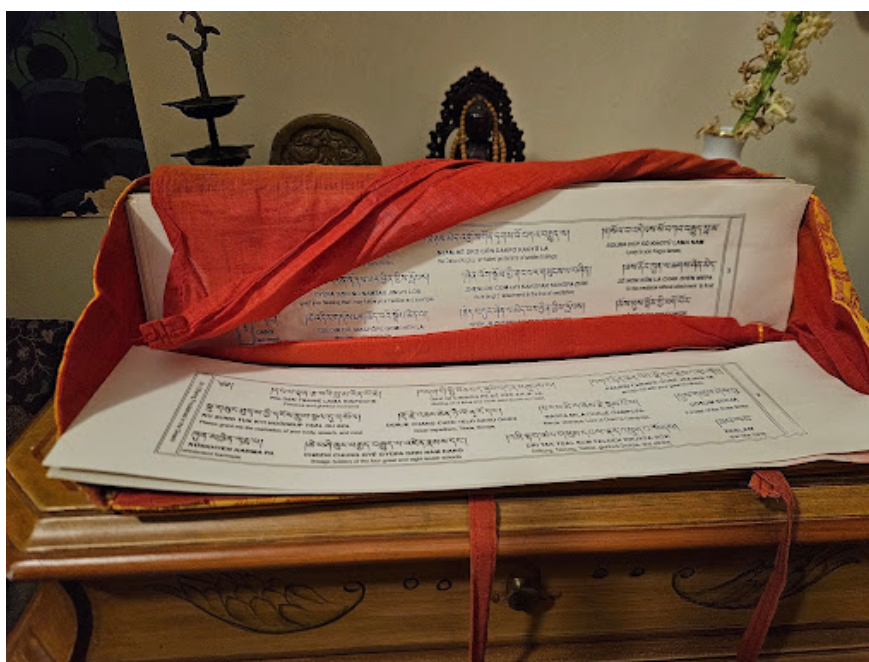
on the robes of dharma” which are made of gentleness and patience. Just as the practitioner honors the Buddha’s otherworldly body through brocade, physical textiles, the Buddha clothes the practitioner through his teaching. The etymology of the word “sutra” comes from the Sanskrit root *siv*, related to “thread”, and the suffix *tra*, related to a type of device or mechanism. The word Sutra literally means “a device for threading” and is related to the English word suture, stitches. The Sutra stitches together teachings, sometimes embedded in very short verses that are elucidated by a teacher, or the text itself. As the practitioner learns, accepts, and begins to practice the teachings in a Sutra, they begin to stitch their own spiritual dharma robes which they can use to help propagate the teachings. These robes are cosmic, invisible, but according to the Lotus Sutra, wearing them amounts to “putting on the adornments of the Buddha” and will result in being honored by all kinds of sentient beings.

The use of textiles and textile imagery provides the ritual means to be in reciprocal relationship with the Buddha. It bridges the cosmic and the mundane, allowing the Buddha to

propagate his teaching after death, and allowing the practitioner to clothe themselves in the embrace of the teachings. In contemporary Euro/ western style editions of the Lotus Sutra, the need for a brocade wrap has faded. Now we adorn our sacred

texts with beautiful gold and silver inscriptions, decorative flourishes, and silken bookmarks. Whether I am reading a sutra using brocade, or with western style binding, I am ever cognisant of the fact that the beauty of the text(ile) does not make it any

easier to read. But internalizing the teachings, allowing them to stitch a fabric of meaning which helps me be gentler and more patient makes the world easier to live in.





WINTER SOLSTICE/ YULE/SATURNALIA



May today's sun die and a new one be born out of the darkness.

MADE TO TOUCHED

an interview with artist MIKHA "MIKHAMIK" DOMINGUEZ

Allison: How do you see ritual come up in your art practice?

Mikha: My work is all about a ritual. It's always following that same pattern. With my photography, it is all about finding the person, talking about the project, then figuring out

apartment, sometimes it's a new room, sometimes a whole new country. So you gather whatever you can and that's your new self at that time.

Aliens Looking for Home is all about that ritual of undoing and unweaving and weaving myself

back into a new society, a new culture, new people, a new job. Anything that is taking you to a place where you have to adapt to this new world. Sometimes that adaptability works, but sometimes you don't ever get to adapt. You either move on and find a new place or you keep

how we can adapt the person's life story and experience to the project. And then it always has flowers, it always has to be a queer person, and it always has to be religious iconography in order to heal. We are in 2026, And we haven't found an openly trans virgin, or a non-binary character that belongs in the Bible.

In my fiber works, there is the fact of still having to follow the same ritual, having to pack all the things that you think are part of what you are at that time, put them in a couple suitcases and move to a new place. Sometimes it's a new house, sometimes it's a new



weaving and keep working. I created Aliens Looking for Home during the ICE takeover of Minneapolis. I was basically trapped in my house, and everywhere on social media, everywhere on the TV, it was like ICE was on me. Everything was very scary, so having my looms gave me an opportunity: every time I got an anxiety attack, it was, "okay, let's go weave," or "let's go work on the fiber pieces." And then these people had invited me to do a show. And it became literally a ritual for all of January/February. I was weaving in this apartment. It was yarn and weaving stuff everywhere.



Max: It sounds like something happens when you're at the loom. What happens physically, emotionally for you when you're weaving?

Mikha: It makes the time pass in a different way. I am not doom scrolling on your phone. I am not thinking about anything that is giving me stress, like, am I gonna get taken by ICE? What happens if I get taken? What am I gonna do with my cats? I don't have any money. If I get taken, how am I gonna pay for this? I'm not working because ICE is here, so I don't have money to pay for rent. But during the weaving time, it's literally a switch that just shuts off the mind completely. I'm focusing on being right here, right now, making, creating with these materials, these emotions. The process became sort

"My pieces are dead, always, until the viewer comes and activates them."

of a medicine, a very healing moment in time. It got to a point where I was weaving all day, for 3, 4, 5 hours.

I really, really, really enjoy what it does to me because a photograph is completely different. You set everything before, get the model ready, get the costumes, get the makeup, take the picture, that's it. But with this, you're using your mind, your body, you're counting. You have to be aware of going too far back, too forward, or — I don't know the

terminology, I'm very empiric with weaving - but like, how am I gonna go 6 forward and then 4 backwards to create the wave? You have to be aware, you have to be present. So I guess that's what it does to me. It keeps me in the present without having to be in a future that doesn't exist, the million what-ifs.

Allison: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And you do so many different media. You're definitely an interdisciplinary artist. It seems like [fiber art] is a different frame of mind than photography, and that there's something healing and transformative for you doing all these different steps. And that relates to some of what we were talking about with rituals, like numbers, space, time. You're using

repetition and being present in a different way to create something.

Mikha: Some people put a little mat on the floor and meditate. This is my meditation time. I'm focused on up and down for 4 hours. Up and down, up and down, up and down, up and down.

Allison: And it's embodied. That's what I love about doing fiber and textile art. The repeated motions do something.

Max: Earlier, you talked about the ritual of preparing to take photographs. As a portraitist, it seems like creating a relationship with the subject is really important for your work. I'm curious about that process generally, and then also specifically the role that textiles play. What happens to one of your subjects when they put on a garment or take it off? How does that transform the subject?

Mikha: In my photography world, it's all about creating a moment. I always say, "this is a therapy session. This is a moment for you, with you, by you, I'm happy to be here capturing the moment." It's all about getting a mixture of both worlds [queer and religious]. I'm a survivor of conversion therapy, so my photography is very heavy on religion. It happens that a lot of my subjects have also been harmed by religion. It's very trauma-healing with a lot of the baptisms. You have a queer body covered

"If you're feeling some type of way, you can put those emotions in an art piece, a piece of paper, a wall, a fabric, a sculpture, and it will leave your body and will come to that realization or materialization of that object."

completely head to toe in water. It creates a moment.

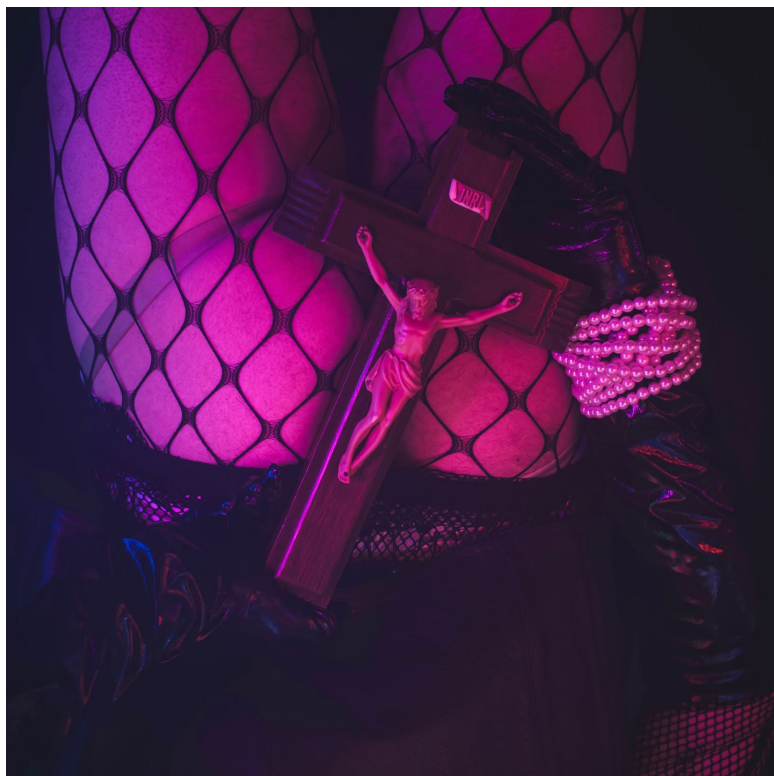
When I work with fibers, especially sculptures, my pieces are compositions. What I like about this is some of the pieces are wearable, but it was not intentional. My teacher Ivonne Yanez made us an assignment and she said you have to make a

house, whatever home means for you. I built a cute little house, and left a triangle that I didn't sew so you can wear it. My pieces are dead, always, until the viewer comes and activates them. All my pieces are made to be touched, especially if they are sculptures or fiber work. They completely and totally need to be activated by the viewers. That's why I always say explore, experiment, and play. It's about channeling your inner 6-year-old and coming back to the experimentation process. When I see people playing with my pieces, or experimenting with the pieces, or saying "wow" or "what the fuck?" I'm like, yes! We did it! Because we are trying to create that kind of interaction.

I believe that emotions are energies. If you're feeling some type of way, you can put those emotions in an art piece, a piece of paper, a wall, a fabric, a sculpture, and it will leave your body and will come to that realization or

materialization of that object.

Max: It's reminding me of how in Catholicism, you have certain objects like the rosary, holy water, and the Eucharist that are not sacraments until the priest does something to them. I'm recognizing a parallel in your art. You don't have to be a priest to make it happen, but there's a way that the human interaction with your





sculptures endows a sacredness or life to them. There's a relationship that the audience has with your pieces. Do you see a parallel to what you're doing as something kind of religious?

Mikha: Oh, yes, definitely. And to me, it completely is a way to protest, but also it's about empowering and trying to gain places and spaces. It's 2026, and we don't adore a trans saint. It doesn't exist in that way. Like, who can tell me about a trans saint? A saint that considers themselves a trans woman or a trans man or like a non-binary character?

Max: So many saints— think Joan of Arc, right?— lived in a way that a woman was not supposed to live, dressed in a way that men dressed. Or someone like Saint Francis abandoned his role as what an

upper-class male is supposed to live like and adopted a life that transgressed what men are supposed to. So many saints are not talked about as trans, and especially in the majority of churches.

Mikha: There are some examples of those things, but you don't go to a church to adore X non-binary saint or X trans saint. So to me, it's about creating a space, creating another stage or another category into the sacred world. Because again, we don't have it. We still are not celebrated. We are still seen as abominations in many, many cultures and religions. It's about creating a space where you feel like you belong here, you are part of this. That's why also the titles are always "celebrate me, adore me, pray for me," the same way as you will go and pray for any other virgin, any other saint.

Max: Building a world feels so resonant with my experience of your shows where the curation of the space for your portraits is so intentional and inviting. The way you created space at SpringHouse, you transformed that entire room. It wasn't just easels with photos on them. There were giant rosary beads, there was fabric, there were candles, there were places to kneel, there were places to pray. There were things to touch and interact with. What does it mean to transform space for your art, or how does your art transforms space?

Mikha: I feel like my art is my healing process. It's my way to heal all the things that happened to me in my childhood, being a queer immigrant from Venezuela. I come with a lot of baggage and there's a lot of things to unpack. I don't want

to go to a church. Being in a church, you're seeing these saints. Oh, I remember when they made me pray 3 hours in front of this saint. Oh, I remember that they hit me a thousand times with the whip in front of this one. But at some point I had a boyfriend back in 2016 that brought me to All Children's Church. And it was one of the most incredible services, the singers and all of it. Like, I remember I ended up crying. He was like, 'What, you crazy?' I was like, 'Wait, you just don't know nothing about this.' So it was very, very healing.

And then, slowly in around 2017, 2018, I picked it back up like, 'What if we start turning into saints?' But I was more mythological, so I was doing Dionysus because he was the god of the party. Or I was doing like Athena or like any like golden character, but then it slowly was coming like, no, I'm just gonna like start fucking around with religion. At the beginning, it was a mockery of it. But then I was like, no, we cannot mock something that does not exist. So let's fucking create it. Let's make it at the same level as you are creating a story book about the Virgin Mary. But now we're gonna do the same thing with a trans woman, or we're gonna do all of the things about The Passion of Christ with a trans man, or like that kind of thing, because we suffer the same way. Like, we are judged by people, we are punished by people, they take our rights away. People think that they can attack us whenever and wherever they want and how they want. It's the same thing. It's just about translating the names to your story, my story. And we all are sinners, and we all are suffering, we

all are carrying the fucking cross. Your cross is bigger or smaller than mine, but you're carrying your cross, I'm carrying my cross. Can I turn all this into a moment that I heal, you heal, and we empower? It started about let's make fun of this shit. But now literally almost 10 years after my first Dionysus picture in a little red robe with white underwear, look where we are. So it's like conquering churches and going to places where we never felt welcome.

Allison: This is something that I see as being really different about someone who is maybe being critical of religion, or at least is trying to imagine new paths for religion, and someone who really came from being in it versus someone raised in, like, my kind of upbringing that was very secular. It was easy enough for me and my family members to say like, "Oh, that's bad." But I didn't grow up with an appreciation for why those practices emerged in the first place. And one of the things that's so exciting about your work is that you are recognizing something valuable in some of the practices, the aesthetics, the objects of the same religion that oppressed you. When you had a positive church experience, you were like, we need this. But [hegemonic Christianity] got so many things super wrong, saying that this is only for certain people, or you need to put yourself into a mold to be able to access this divinity. And you're like, "no. I know from personal experience that there could be a different way."

Mikha: Yeah, it's true. It's not a rule book. It's the same thing. How do you cook rice? How do I cook rice? It is a universal recipe, but you do it

different, I do it different, but we both know how to cook rice. I think religion should be the same. It's about being communal, being there for your neighbors, and just be there for people to help, like help when you can, and just throw good karma to the universe. The universe will draw good karma to you. It's not that hard.

Allison: Is there anything else you'd like to say about your work or textiles in general?

Mikha: I think everybody should do fiber. Fibers are not one thing, which is the most incredible thing. You can do so many things with fibers. It's not only crochet, weaving, knitting. It's so much, like so much.

Allison: I agree. I love that we can now print that in the zine.

Mikha: Yes, it's so, so, so, so much. And it's just like a switch. It gets to a moment where literally the only thing that's in your mind is the stitch that you're doing. If you're doing simple stitch, you're just focusing on that. So it's nothing in your mind. I think it's good therapy. Everybody should do it.

Max: We all deal daily with fiber. We're wearing this. Like, I love paintings and I see paintings every day because of our home, but they don't have the same intimacy. We all have to eat food, we all wear clothes, we all sleep, and fibers are part of those 3 things.

Mikha: We eat, breathe, and shit fibers. Oh my God, I love it!

THE FIBER OF OUR BEING

BY MICHELLE
KAISERSATT

The fiber of our being.

We are energy. Stardust. Formed into different patterns, from one place of Origin.

From soil, to roots, to plants, to winged and four-legged relatives, to creatures in the ocean, to our family of two-legged human-ness. We are all one and of the same.

I realized this connection at a young age, when my sister passed, and again when I experienced the death of my beloved. Their essence leaving through the window of time, their body returning to Mother Gaia, their love carried somewhere in our hearts. My heart began searching for that connection with my beloved. Marks

bleeding from my pen tip, knitting threads into sterile fibrous cotton, spinning words of pleading and searching into entwining thoughts,

transformed me, as I lay under an inter-woven blanket, heavy with grief. Until one spring. What I had used to piece my life back together,

became a new tapestry. A freshly woven blanket. Light, airy. Filled with more promise than had been felt in years.

Like witnessing shells carried from the ocean floor, floating into my palms, invited from the edges of the tide, I wonder. Is life like a sea creature who leaves one shell for another? Was my beloved in the ocean called Origin, being returned by the tide, back to Mother Gaia in search of another shell? Mother Gaia weaves her threads into a tapestry of all existence, and I find myself humbled by my own fiber woven into this tapestry of life. Of us all connected as one.

I am here now in this life, as an artist creating ritual—through blankets.

shaped messages—wrapped in a blanket of tear drops. This ritual of pen to paper





CANDLEMAS/IMBOLC



May we devote our resources toward creating a healthy world. The silhouette of the human blood is the blood that Sister Megan Rice threw on the walls of the Y-12 National Security Complex nuclear weapons facility.

PORTALS TO MY INNER SELF

AN INTERVIEW WITH HEND AL-MANSOUR

Can you tell us a little bit about you and your general artistic practice?

I am a Minnesotan Immigrant who came from Saudi Arabia to seek independence and freedom of expression. Soon after I left my first home, I left a long career in medicine to focus on studying and making art. It was my first love and my best means of expression. My primary media are printmaking and installation; however, I am also drawn to painting, drawing, and animation. I use vibrant colors like hot pink, regal gold, playful yellows, reds, and blues. Henna paste, a symbol of tradition and adornment, finds its place in my work, bridging the gap between history and modernity.

My art draws on calligraphy, Islamic geometry, and henna patterns, usually placed around a central portrait. Thus, my artistic practice fuses two elements: the human figure and Islamic geometric abstraction.

Many works are grounded in early Islamic stories and in those shared by contemporary Arab American

women, whose experiences of leadership, struggle, and cultural memory rarely appear in mainstream narratives.

What was the origin of your exhibition *Mihrab: Portraits of Arab-American Women*? Why did it feel like the right thing to make at this time?

A mihrab is the decorated niche in the interior of a mosque that marks the direction of prayer. I wanted to use that metaphor as a feminist compass to honor the beauty and complexity of Arab and Muslim women's lives. Each mihrab represents an architectural portrait of a real woman who live/d in Minnesota. The last one, *Living Threads*, is a portrait of a Palestinian American woman who is a writer and an ASL teacher. I made it during the recent Gaza tragedy. *Living Threads* and the other mihrabs meant to humanize Arabs and Muslims while personifying them as women.

Mihrabs are usually made of hard materials and built directly into the wall of a mosque, but yours are

made of soft, pliable fabric. Why did you choose these materials for this project?

I wanted the viewers to pass a threshold that brings them into an intimate presence with those women. To evoke a feeling of comfortable enclosure where they are surrounded by beautiful, friendly things. To make them feel entrusted with another's self-revealing. To identify with those women and recognize the commonality that links all humans.

"I wanted the viewers to... feel entrusted with another's self-revealing."

What connections did you notice between textiles and architecture in making this project?

They are both the physical containers that keep us safe, warm, and private. They both can be tailored to our personal needs. They

represent our aesthetics and cultural memories. In my work, I draw on each woman's ethnic architecture to create it in fabric.

Tell me about the textile techniques you used to make these pieces (notably screen printing, but others as well). Why did you choose these methods?

I used canvas and glassine paper. I screen-print and paint on them. I use fluorescent ink sometimes to make the image pop out and be more fun-evoking. I screen-printed calligraphy, portraits, and geometric patterns. Some geometric patterns are derived from the contours of the portraits themselves. A way for me to affirm women's participation in cultural production.

How did ritual show up in the process of making these pieces?

The screen-printing process is very methodical. It follows a certain sequence: research/interview, make themes, make images, color separation, make a screen for each color, prepare the canvas, screen print in piecemeal manner, one section at a time, until the whole fabric/paper is covered.

The other parts of the process include determining the architecture's shape, deciding on the logistics and the supporting material, and cutting the canvas accordingly.

This project is heavily shaped by interviews with your portrait subjects. How did you get

connected with these women? And how did you translate their interviews into textile objects?

Some of them are friends; some I sought out and asked about. Not everybody I approached agreed; I am lucky to have found the people I ended up with. They generously gave me their time and opened up to me. The hardest part was to translate what I learned about them into images and forms. During my conversation with them, I took notes on the objects they mentioned. I asked them about their aesthetic preferences, the books they like, their hobbies, their favorite books, and movies. From all that I decide on colors, shapes, and objects, I will make. I framed all that in their ethnic version of Islamic architecture.

Some of your mihrab portraits feature a figurative representation of the subject, and others don't. Your previous exhibition concept for this space was postponed, due in part to controversy over the inclusion of a figurative depiction of Mohamed. How do you think about the figurative in your work?

One woman did not want a portrait in her space, and I respected that. Despite restrictions on depicting human forms in Saudi Arabia, I was drawn to figurative drawing and painting and fascinated by Western artists. At the same time, in my daily life, I was immersed in Islamic art aesthetics, Arabic calligraphy, and local women's artistic traditions, such as henna patterns, Sadu design, and Qutt art. I became aware of this aesthetic when I moved to the US. Awakened by its absence, I rediscovered the richness of Islamic art and the genius of its geometric



and floral designs. So, I ended up creating figurative images set against colorful Islamic patterns and calligraphy.

In 2024, I had installed an exhibition at MIA, but it was cancelled at the last minute because I had depicted Muhammad and two of his wives. The show was exhibited later at SooVac. I wanted to highlight the roles of early Muslim women and how crucial they were to the success of the fragile new religion. I understand the mentality about gender equality in my homeland. It all has to be "approved" by Islam. Therefore, I chose the faith forum to talk about it. I want to say that those women are equally instrumental in

"Awakened by its absence, I rediscovered the richness of Islamic art and the genius of its geometric and floral designs."

early Islam, and we should remember that.

What have been some community responses to this exhibit? How have the subjects of your portraits responded?

The women subjects loved their spaces and gave me their blessings. The work received a generally encouraging reception, and people found it welcoming and meditative. Children, in particular, have a lot of fun running through one of the



spaces where I have a dark space printed with fluorescent ink.

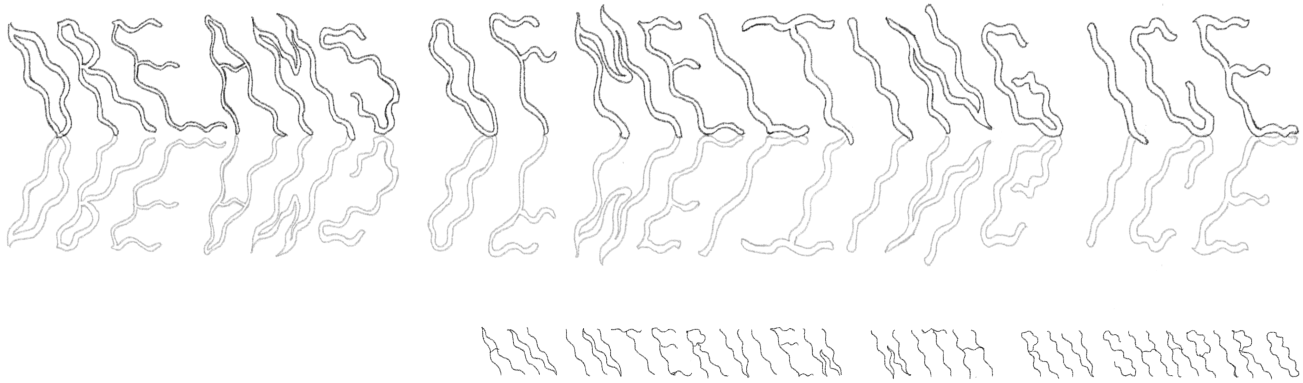
In our working definition of "ritual," one aspect we highlight is that rituals connect us "to a larger story. Maybe the story of who you are, who your people are, or what matters most in the universe." What story is this body of work telling about who you and your people are and what matters to you most?

In a way, each woman's story is a portal to my inner self. I compare their life stories with mine and see myself from a new perspective. Being thousands of miles away from where we were born meant that we were shaped by diaspora. We had a broad, comprehensive

perspective on our home cultures and a more detailed, intimate view of our new home. We found out how easy it is to alienate the other and to glorify the self. It is easier for us, as immigrants, to be empathetic toward other nationalities. I think you need to step outside your tribe to see the humanity of others.

What future do you see for this project or similar ones? What kind of "life" would you like these mihrabs to have?

Originally, I planned to make 22 mihrabs. One for a woman from each of the 22 Arab countries. For many reasons, I abandoned that idea. If I cross paths with someone who moves me, I will ask them to be my muse.



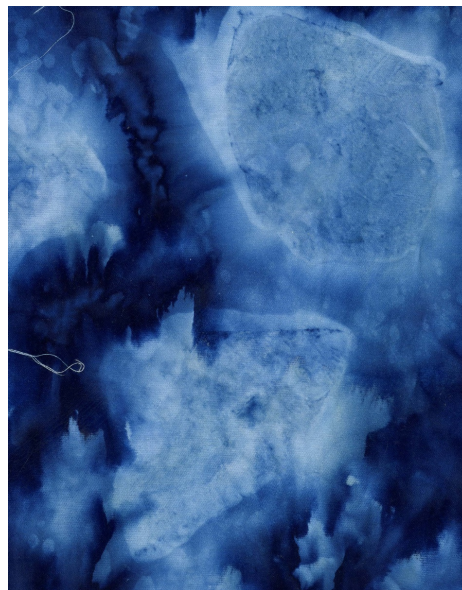
Riv: I've always been obsessed with water. I just love water. I'm a scuba diver. I swam in high school. I always want to be in the water – pisces bitch through and through. In my artistic practice, I really like to work with elements of spontaneity and improvisation, relinquishing some of my creative control. I collaborate with elements.

Allison: How did your project get started?

Riv: It was a ritual emerging from the most intense part of [Operation] Metro Surge, telling myself you need to rest or you will not make it for the lifetime of worldbuilding. It started with one nap. I would make a cyanotype of ice or of snow melting while I nap. Dreams of melting ice. And in that deep winter time, it takes a long time to make a cyanotype that really has contrast. Whatever my body is actually saying it needs in a period of rest, that's the period of exposure. And it was so fun because I get this little gift when I wake up from my nap. That's a very visceral reminder that rest is not always passive. Judaism has taught me in a really important way that rest is part of the creative process. It's not extra. It's not superfluous. It is actually a crucial element of creation.

As we're in this long road of world-building, rest is active and generative. And these have been a really potent reminder of that. So yes, I've been doing cyanotypes of ice melting. I went up to Lake Superior in mid-February, and I'm going back in a couple days to do some more. On my birthday, I did a self-portrait photogram cyanotype of my body. There were little patches of snow or ice and wet earth that come

there's no mixing and it's reversible. But then when it gets into turbulence, that's when you have this dynamic, disordered state, and you start to form eddies, little whirlpools. At that point, there's a big mixing of nutrients and transport of energy. And I've been thinking, how do we effectively transport resources for collective liberation across the planet to have a global effective uprising for collective liberation?



through the cyanotype where they make contact with my body or where there were large accumulations of ice and snow. I am interested in the laminar to turbulent flow transition, where what I've currently been capturing is laminar flow, where water is moving in parallel layers and

Allison: There is clearly a water science element coming into play with your art, but can you share more about the Jewish, Anishinaabe, and Buddhist theories of water you've written about?

Riv: A Jewish theory of water can be a place of regeneration and of purification, of renewal, of birth, both in the sense that we all come from being held in water, and also the Genesis concept of *tohu vavohu*—the chaotic deep waters of void where life emerges. Last summer, while a friend of mine was dying from cancer and other changes were happening in my life, I learned the Buddhist Five Remembrances: that everything is impermanent and my actions are my only inheritance. I inherit the consequences of my actions, but everything else I will lose someday.

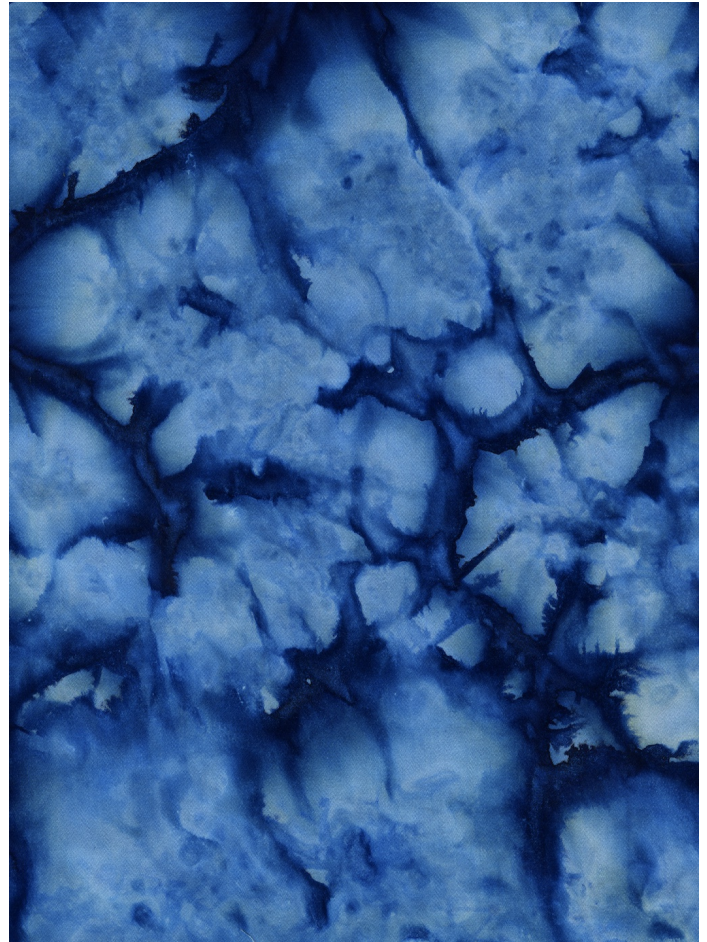
And the counter part is the Buddhist theory of continuation that there is no death, no birth, there no coming and going. Energy can't be created or destroyed. In *No Death, No Fear*, Thich Nhat Hanh uses water as a metaphor for that. We might see a cloud and think, "Wow, that cloud is so beautiful," and then it disappears and we could be sad. But we need to look for the cloud in the river or in the rain or in the ocean. Water is not just a metaphor. It's a proof. Water shows us that there is change but not really loss. In *Theory of Water: Nishnaabe Maps to the Times Ahead*, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes about sintering—the process when snowflakes fall to the ground and build bonds with their neighbors right around them, to form a structurally stable apparatus. It became a metaphor for the bonds we're building with our neighbors in the federal government occupation and how we withstand pressure. This book helped me put together how every

"Every drop is all the water that has ever been on the planet and ever will be. Water is a messenger, a means and site of communication across time, space, and species."

drop is all the water that has ever been on the planet and ever will be. Water is a messenger, a means and site of communication across time, space, and species.

Max: Time seems to be an important component of your work. How has this project, and the ritual of making the cyanotypes, affected your experience of time?

Riv: I did an installation last semester where I dismantled my grandfather's grandfather clock. I suspended some of the pieces throughout the room, and then I had cyanotype images and water images projected around the space. That was kind of a thesis prototype. I'm interested in spaces that collapse time and make it possible to speak to the past and the future. That has definitely been a part of how I've related to connecting to my ancestors across gaps in knowledge. Judaism has survived diaspora by relating to sacred time more than sacred space. We've had to relinquish our connection to land over and over and over, but time is a way that we've been able to maintain a feeling of the sacred. Cycles and circles and spirals. It was actually on Purim when I made one of my favorite cyanotypes. Because I was in



chag [holiday], I felt dedicated to a certain level of flow. That's what chag means to me. I don't follow all the halacha [Jewish laws], but it's important to me to feel connected to the sacred, open to perceiving and responding to the universe. On Purim, I was out on this walk before an acupuncture appointment, and I looked up at the sky, and I had never noticed it before, and I haven't seen it since. The clouds looked like my cyanotypes. The next day, going back into my life, no longer in chag time, I realized the way I normally live is extremely oppressive. I wake up every day burdened by a humongous list of things to do, and I imagine that the way to get free is to move as quickly and get as much done for my list as possible. I don't think I would have received this revelation and transformed my relationship with time

if I hadn't had those interfaces come into conflict during and after Chag. I started playing with the question, what if I don't move with that kind of mitsrayim, narrow place and vision? My priority is to feel flow, to discern what is real urgency and necessity, to discern what can give, bend, and actually be facilitated in a much better way through will and force. "Ozi v'zimrat ya'vayehili lishuah." I have to calm down to have more time rather than speed up to get through things.

Allison: In your project, water is both a material and kind of a collaborator. But then there's another aspect of it, that's the fabric, the base. Why fabric?

Riv: Perhaps a not very satisfying answer is that I just happened to have these pretreated fabric sheets. But what I learned by using them is

"We might see a cloud and think, 'Wow, that cloud is so beautiful,' and then it disappears and we could be sad. But we need to look for the cloud in the river or in the rain or in the ocean. Water is not just a metaphor. It's a proof."

that they do something that paper does not so much: absorb from both

sides. When I lay fabric on top of snow or on top of wet earth and put ice on it, I'm getting a double image. There's a porousness to fabric and there's a way that the chemicals travel through fabric that they wouldn't with water and paper.

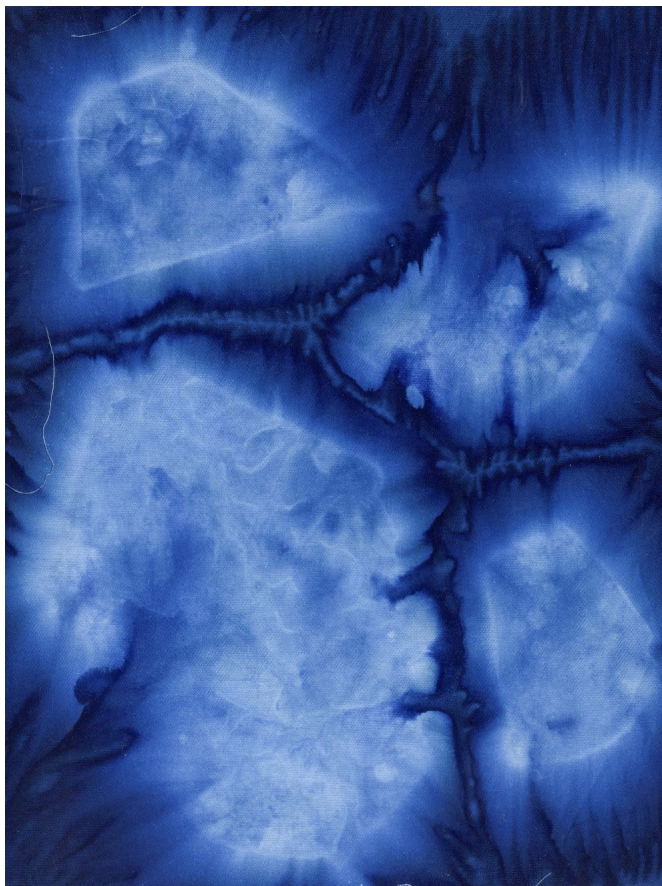
Max: In this project, you're taking elements that are "just there" in day-to-day life, and like an eddy, you swirl them together until they transform. There's something in the ritual that changes these

things that are not fundamentally outside of anyone's day-to-day life..

Riv: I love that reflection. And I'm still working out what happens when you enter the eddy. Like, let's say, let's just say for now that the black box theater in my exhibition is going to be an eddy. It can be a place of rest. Eddies have these dual properties where sometimes they're a calm spot in a river, and sometimes they're like a place of intense chaos and motion.

Allison: You create a ritual for yourself as the creator. Are you also thinking about it as creating a ritual for the people experiencing your art?

Riv: Definitely. As a kohenet [Hebrew priestess], I'm used to facilitating live rituals. But this work asks me to design a ritual through installation that people can intuit without me being present and guiding them through it. That's my challenge. Part of it is letting go of some control and letting people have choice, but using the layout of the space and what's in the space to draw people into different relationships. There might be ambient sound in the space that's more like literal water sounds or my vocals that are mimicking water. And how can I play with this dual nature of the eddy to give people choice to engage with it in the way that feels authentic to them by either resting and contemplating or by participating in the world around them? Rest and movement are important processes of healing and integration for us as creatures: shake out the trauma and also rest from the impact of the trauma.

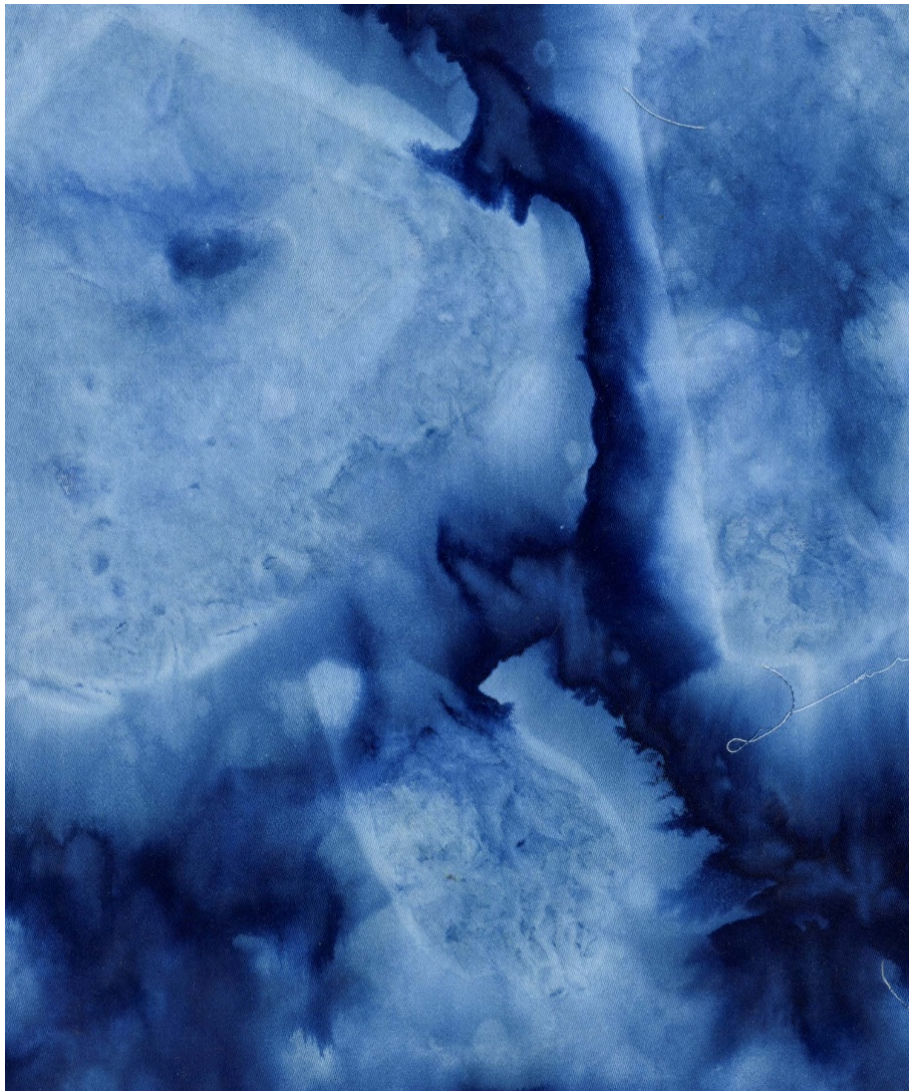


Max: Earlier in our conversation you asked, “how do we create another world?” At the same time, there's this real familiarity with substances, materials, and processes that are part of day-to-day life. How is the day-to-day material, how is the day-to-day time, how is day-to-day process a doorway into what could be another world?

Riv: Water physics have been teaching me a lot about this. There's a way that water in its fractal nature teaches us that our hyperlocal connections do ripple outward. We

start really immediate and small and in the possibility inherent in any interaction. There's kind of the momentum toward habitual response that's always gonna be there, and also as we evolve as a species towards more compassion and more awareness of our interconnection, we can cultivate this space of being able to witness what is my habitual response and what is the world., what is the world as it is, and what might I do right now to maintain that world, or what might I do to shift us a fraction of a degree toward a different world.

In a text study with the Jewish Studio Project for Rosh Hashanah, which I think came from the Reconstructionist Siddur [prayer book], says teshuvah [“repentance”] and transformation does not have to be this huge 180 shift. If you shift even a fraction of a degree, it totally changes the outcome in the long run. All we have is all we have, but there's these constant moments of choice where we can just make a slightly different, a little shift toward embodying that world that we want, and that's how we build that world.



OSTARA / SPRING EQUINOX



May we continue making art as a sign of hope for a new environmental era.

BETWEEN THE WARP

A CONVERSATION WITH
SHERYL SCHWYHART AND
REV. PHIL ROMINE
ON THEIR COLLABORATIVE STOLES

AND THE WEFT

Allison: tell us the story of how these stoles came to be.

Phil: Well, in my tradition, stoles are worn over top of robes. And it's supposed to be a symbol of service and humility. It's supposed to represent, in its most explicit form, the towel that Jesus wrapped around his waist and used to wash the feet of the disciples the night that he was betrayed. It's supposed to be this symbol of humility, service, and commitment to a community. And the stoles that I had up to that point were literally just ones that I had gotten at United [Theological Seminary] that former clergy had left, so there was nothing deeply meaningful or personal about them. And also, they were all pieces that didn't really look like things that I would want to tie around my waist and use to wash parts of people's bodies, or if somebody got a cut, that I could staunch the wound, you know?

And so I just reached out to Sheryl, and I was like, hey, can we have a conversation about making stoles? I don't know if that's a thing or not. So we met at the Tiny Diner 5 years ago and had a conversation. We got to nerd out on liturgical seasons and colors and different kinds of fabric. It started from there and blossomed

into these great, extremely unique stoles that now, almost every week when I wear them, somebody in the congregation where I'm serving will come up to me and go, "That's just so beautiful." And then when I lean in and say, "It's a shower curtain," they get this spark of something in their eyes, and it's just so cool to see. So we just kind of started the conversation. I didn't know if it was going to go anywhere, but here we are 5 years later.

Sheryl: He offered a question: why can't a stole be made from burp cloths? And that got my imagination going. The first one was made from a pair of red jeans because he needed it for Pentecost. Then the second one was for Advent, around the Christmas season. That one was made from a pair of blue jeans. I was finding and translating symbols from found objects and trying to write a story through where those symbols are placed on the stole. Something deeper than just ornamentation. I love thrifting and finding stuff that would be cool for this or that. I found a white and gold tablecloth that he can use for more casual sort of things because it's shorter. But yeah, it's really kind of intense when I do it because A, it's for someone else, B, it's I have to think about the viewer



and how meaningful is it going to be for them. And the other thing that I appreciated about what Phil was looking for is that it not say, "Here I am as your pastor," but something that would draw people in and that he could use to put around and comfort them. I put a pocket in one of them that he could put Kleenex in in case he had an emotional moment

or a runny nose with a kid, who knows. Just thinking about how it can be used to connect with the people that he's there to serve.

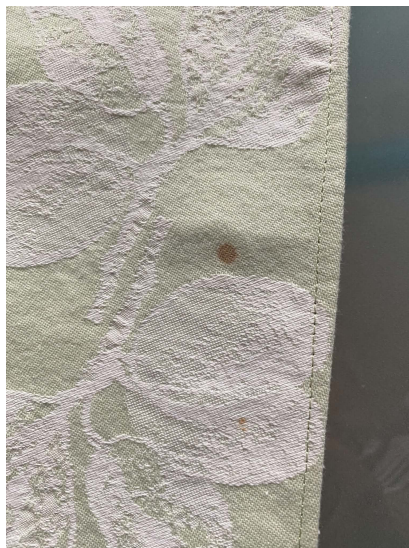
Phil: They're for different liturgical seasons. Cheryl was just saying, it's really great to have different kinds of stoles for different occasions. The white one is really great if I'm going to a march. It's a way of, again, inviting and drawing people in and not making some kind of really bold statement like, "Here I am." It's about something that we're all doing together.

As you were talking about some of the materials: one of the ones that you made for me is reversible. The primary side is a green side, and green is for ordinary time. It's the season after Pentecost, the longest season in the church year. But it's got a coffee stain on it. And it's placed in a spot where on a traditional stole, you would probably have some kind of ornamentation that would draw people's eye. It's almost a trickster effect - it's tempting people to comment on it. Like "do you know there's a stain?" And like, "yes, there is." Again, it also speaks to, what kinds of things would you reach for if somebody was bleeding? If somebody was experiencing some emotions and had stuff coming out of their face? What kind of a thing would you want to drape over somebody? To make it feel like they had a shawl over them, like you were bringing them underneath a blanket? Because that's a lot closer to what the real living symbol that it's pointing to is supposed to be about. It's the rag that you throw over your neck while you're doing dishes, or after you've been outside in the



garden.

Max: Yeah, it seems like there's a way that most traditional stoles these days and throughout the last many centuries or whatever are so abstracted from what they're referring to. It seems like this project invites a bit of a counter to that abstraction. Like, what is this fabric literally? What are these



symbols? There's these colors that relate to the liturgical calendar. That's not something you all decide, that's predetermined. I'm curious about some more of these symbols [that you're working with].

Sheryl: In looking and choosing fabric to use, I found a tablecloth, and the design on it is fruit and branches. For ordinary time - it's a time of growth, it usually comes in the spring - those symbols seemed to relate. The fact that it was a tablecloth means there's a history with it. There's memory in those fibers, at least that's how I see it. What were the stories around that table? And where did that stain come from? [At first] I was like, I can't use that part. But it's like, that's the point, it invites conversation. So I try to look beyond just the superficial color or sheen or design to what's behind it. What came before? What memory does that cloth have?

One that I found, the shower curtain, had a design on it of a forest scene where the light is shining through the trees. That's so Minnesotan. It's relatable for the people who are sitting in the pews, or the people whose bedside he's sitting at. It brings that energy between Phil and the people that he's talking to, and he wanted things that might spark a conversation to invite connection.

Phil: That particular shower curtain, up near the chest area and in the center, where people's eyes would normally be drawn, the way the light is shining through the trees is very evocative of an empty cross, which is also kind of a perennial ordinary time symbol. And it's a path. There are multiple layers of beauty and

abstraction that clearly come through with intention. It never ceases to amaze me that during ordinary time, it is almost a constant conversation piece. Even if it's just a comment about how lovely the stole is or something, it's not a glancing comment. People lean in a little bit. Every time I put it on, I think about this whole initiative, this project, this experiment we've been doing over 5 years, and how much joy and interest it's evoked to me. Every time I open my closet in my office and I see it, I see Sheryl, I think about these conversations. Using my tradition's language, it incarnates this spirit sense of joy that's extremely tangible, that I feel in my body at a deeply personal level. And when I put it on, that can't not impact me—how I show up, how I move through my day.

Max: What happens to you, Phil, when you put on a stole? What's the difference between Phil without a stole and Phil with a stole?

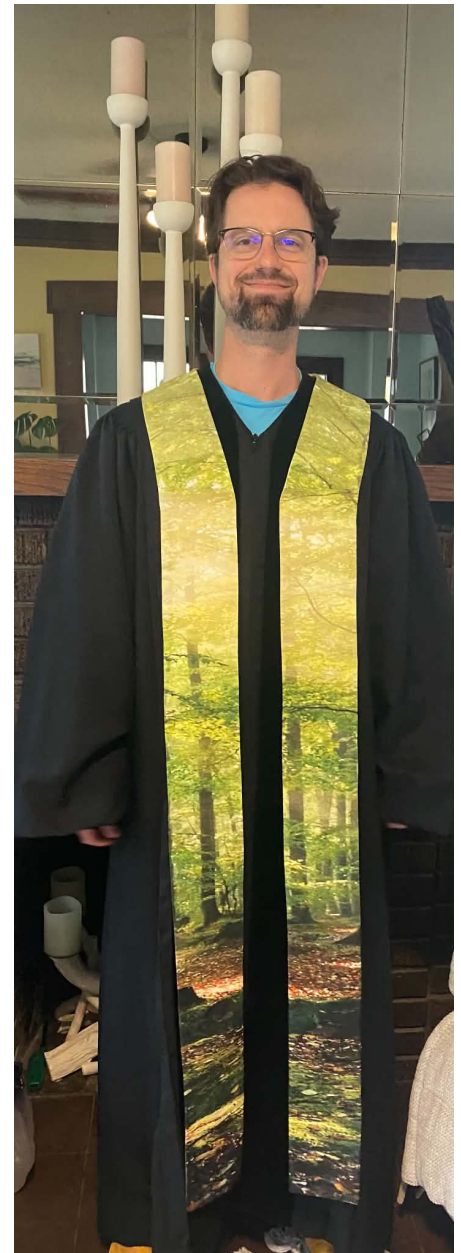
Phil: Phil with a stole has to slow down. You're constantly thinking about a thing that's around your neck. You don't want it to whip off and hit somebody else, and you're also very aware of like, is it cockeyed? Do I have to reposition it? You're constantly shuffling with it. It's forcing me to think about my presence in a different way. And I have to slow down. There's this sense of weight, like actual physical weight, that comes with putting it on. And that's another reason why I really love



these fabrics too, the durability of them and the fact that they've withstood the test of time means they are heavier. There's a set of stoles that were gifted to the church for Advent and they are made from the exact same material as these really beautiful parochial stoles that we have, which are wonderful, but they're very, very fine-textured silk. When I put that on, I can actually feel the lack of weight, and I don't think about it as much. It just sort of swishes around with me. The other thing about the stole is you're never quite sure if it's actually centered. So you're constantly shimmying and playing with it. But I think about these stoles in a little bit of a

different way because if people can't see that coffee stain, that's not right. I've got to make sure that people can see that. That Ordinary Time stole that is a scene of nature that people can be walking through, if it's really off balance, people can't actually feel like they're coming into it, that they're walking on the journey with me. So that's the difference, I would say.

Allison: I love that idea that it's demanding some attention. Because it's in some ways an impractical



garment, it marks that you are in a different state and different function to your community.

Max: Yeah, one of the ideas about ritual that we're exploring with this whole zine is how ritual affects time and place, that ritual can set aside different times or make time work differently. The placement of the stole gives you a different awareness of time and place on a very personal level, but it's also representing the time and place of the liturgical calendar. And it's also, as you said, Sheryl, the place of Minnesota and the places where these textiles have been before; their history. Maybe not everyone knows exactly where everything came from, but it's not hiding that it was jeans. It's not hiding that it was a shower curtain. In fact, that's important, the past lives of these textiles.

Allison: Sheryl, it sounds like you were being very intentional about a lot of different factors when you were finding materials.

Sheryl: Yeah. When you walk through the local thrift store, you're always sort of looking for those kinds of things. And recently I've been looking into theopoiesis: God-making. [Art-making] and theopoiesis, they're not separate endeavors. They're layered and interconnected in the way that they work all the time. So every time I walk into someplace that might have a source of fabric or embellishment, that's going on in there. The day I found the shower curtain, I was looking for an end table. When you see it, you see it. When you go intentionally, that isn't always as

successful because you've already decided what it is you're looking for. You're leaving out that element of "this is what you're supposed to have, this is what you're supposed to get today, this is what this can be." And always thinking about the liturgical symbols, but the symbols that are important to the people who are looking at it, because he's facing them all the time. How far can you push the color envelope and keep it interesting and meaningful, but give it the honor and respect that it deserves as a representative of God? So, yeah, it's fun. I enjoy it. I have a stash of things that have yet to reveal themselves to go together. I'm not too much in charge of it, actually. It's a faith thing. It's a process thing, which I'm not real good at. This has been a journey for me as an artist as well, to be able to be patient with the evolution and the journey of the piece.

Allison: Can you tell us a little more about the ways that the materials reveal themselves to you or speak to you?

Sheryl: The design on the fabric. Does it have a connection to what a faith journey would be for the common person so that they see themselves in that fabric? Also color. In the one for Advent, there are blue, pink, purple, and white candles. I put the colored ones down the right side, but the white Christ candle is over the heart. I just kind of pull things that speak to me. Maybe it doesn't come to me for another 5 years. It's not something that I can force because when I try, it doesn't work.

Max: I see what you mean. Looking at the one with the forest: where the light descends in that image determines how you cut it, determines where it drapes, determines how it fits on a body, which was not the original purpose of that textile object.

Sheryl: Right, and you're renewing the life of that something that's been cast off, and - dare I use the word resurrect?

Max: Yeah, dare away!

Sheryl: But renewing that in a different way, reimagining. I've been reading John Thatamanil on constructive theology and theopoetics, and being able to reimagine the things that point to something else - I take that as a responsibility. While a lot of things that I do are really fun and really useful, these have a different meaning. I have a responsibility to the viewer to fill, that it's not just superficial, that it goes deeper, and that it invites people to think a little deeper.

Max: Phil, I'm curious: how often do you know the person who makes the ritual objects you use?

Phil: Part of what I love about this is how intensely personal it is. How fun and experimental it is, how much it's teaching me in the process. It really is a kind of continuation of that thrifting and secondhand and found object spirit that I had from my childhood that's carried me through. Because every time I pick up one of those stoles that I got cast off at United, I always want to know who wore this? I'm sure it was a UCC minister. What UCC— like, where were they in Iowa? I wonder about the things that I can't know. It feels so incredible and like such a

privilege to be able to sit down with an artist and just have them say, okay, here's my agenda, here are the questions that I wanted answers to. And I feed it to you with the knowledge and the hope that it comes out, but also just like so excited to see what develops. I think most people order a stole, or they see something that's really nice, or they hear of a designer who does something. But I think that even when people in my position have the ability to make a decision, even just to purchase a stole or whatever else, I think that same hunger for connection is there. So every time we get together, I feel privileged because it's like, who knows the artists that are making their stoles? And [especially] someone with whom you have a history and shared stories.

Sheryl: When we're talking about ritual: when I go to sit down and/or design, I make sure that I get my head in a space where I show gratitude for what that fabric has done before. The person who wore it, what function that had, the family that it had. I give that respect to it and honor it, that I'm going to change it but it will be as meaningful as it was before. So it's a deeply theological thing. There's a ritual that I go through in being grateful for the space, being grateful for the materials, being grateful for the opportunity, being grateful for the skills. It's important. Father Bill McNichol, who is a contemporary iconographer, said that he invites the spirit of the person into his space, into his studio. He said sometimes it comes in dreams, sometimes you can feel the presence

of the spirit in the room, and sometimes there's nothing. And then what do you do? That's where faith comes in. You just move ahead with respect and intention, and all of those things kick in and you get into a zone that next thing you know, it's been 3 hours but it feels like 15 minutes. So it's not just a task, you know? It's not like making a dress. There's just a different vibe with the whole thing.

Max: Do you see it as meditative, or worship? Or in that realm, contemplative prayer?

Sheryl: It's contemplative, yeah. And gratitude. I'm an old lady, and to have opportunities like this that stretch my theological thinking, how that works with physical things, is—not many people get that.

Allison: I love the idea of an arts practice as an exercise in faith. I feel like a lot of artists can relate to that, religious or not. When there's nothing in the air or it doesn't seem like it's coming together, at a certain point you just have to start moving.

Sheryl: I have a plate that I bought that somebody has enhanced that says, "Fuck around, see what happens." It's a life motto. Sometimes you just have to give over to that, you know? I'm learning to do that, and it's an artistic journey of faith as much as a theological journey of faith. This year has been about living into abstraction for me, so this sort of fits in. As a theologian, [art] is a way for me to speak. It's a way for me to minister. I think art and theology as a calling is as important, or as credible, as what

you do as a chaplain. It's not a job per se, but it is a calling. It's kind of a scary place to be because there's a lot of responsibility that you take on if you accept that calling. Whether it's an exhibition or a stole or whatever, it's my way of serving. It's my way of taking the divine inspiration and pointing it back to the divine for other people. And you can't do that lightly. At least I don't.

For me it's about the space between. Fabric is woven with a very tight warp, and then there's cross for the weft. But there's always a space between, no matter how tight it is. That's where the presence lives. That's where the memory of where it came from lives. The reality of God is in between the warp and the weft. You can't see it, but there's space there. Maybe that's what some of the weight is, who knows?



A LIST OF BRACELETS THAT TIE ME TO MY MOM

BY NATALIE WAREHAM

1. Green

green string with a kelly green ceramic heart

When I first heard that my mom's cancer came back, it was all I could do to pull it together. To be fair, she didn't set me up for success, as she was going to let me fly back to where I was living after a family visit without telling me. And when she did tell me, the day before I was supposed to leave, she said, "It's spread everywhere, including my brain," which wasn't strictly true. It was not in her brain, but if I knew I had metastatic cancer I probably wouldn't be thinking clearly either. At the beginning of a terminal illness journey like this, it feels important to rally together. One of my mom's friends made bracelets for everyone, all different colors, but each with a ceramic heart she fired and glazed, strung with a colorful string and a sliding knot. I wore this bracelet every day. I would get compliments on it and I would surreptitiously say thank you without disclosing that me and everyone I knew was wearing it for this one certain reason. It felt kind of like wearing a friendship bracelet from camp. A simple string or two but someone had made it for me for a special reason and I was carrying

that around with me on my wrist like a secret.

When this bracelet finally broke, I kept it to see if my mom's friend would possibly be able to restring it. It was a symbol of something important. Now that she's passed, it's a ritual to choose to put on a bracelet every day. To move it out of the way while doing dishes or washing hands, to touch the little charm, to adjust the string. Touching it is like touching a piece of her, not even just my memory of her, but my mom herself. When I'm wearing one of the bracelets she gave me, or even one to honor her, it feels like I'm carrying a piece of her with me. It's less lonely to have a physical reminder of her around my wrist.

2. Blue

sky blue string with a silver medal

The next bracelet that really came into play was one my mom had given me years ago. She gave it to me to "help with my anxiety" and I wore it for a bit before relegating it to my stash of unworn bracelets. There was some guy on the medallion and I never remembered who he was until recently when I pulled the bracelet out. My partner and I looked it up together and it turns out the random guy is actually Saint Benedict.

Apparently one of its general uses is to ward off evil, which I guess works for fending off anxious thoughts too. Exorcise those demons and get some peace!

I try to imagine what she might have been thinking when she gave it to me. Maybe it would comfort me like she was comforted by the thought of peace. Maybe it's because his death date is the same date as my birthday. On the side of the medal with the figure of Saint Benedict is Latin text encircling him that reads: *Eius in obitu nostro praesentia muniamur!* (May we be strengthened by his presence in the hour of our death!). There are some claims he is known amongst Catholics for having a happy death. I didn't grow up Catholic, but I do find comfort in knowing how those ideas might have comforted my mom or at least made her think of me.

The blue bracelet now hangs on the corner of a framed photo of the two of us on a little altar space I set up. When I pass it, I often say to my mom that I love or miss her, and touch two fingers to my lips for a little kiss then touch her head or face. The bracelet is a part of this, something she gave me that hangs by the two of us, our relationship marked by this thread of anxiety and love that connects us. I

like to think maybe the bracelet will be something to soothe her now, a little marker of what I've been working on. Maybe now that I've been addressing my own anxiety it can alleviate some of hers. Maybe it can help remind her she can have a happy death.

3. Red

red string with a silver hibiscus charm

My aunt gave everyone a hibiscus bracelet at Christmas as a little reminder of my mom. It's not like anyone could forget, just that explicitly doing things to think about her was nice. My family now associates hibiscus flowers with my mom because it was the hibiscus plant in our house that magically had flowers bloom on the day after her death. She's the one who told my dad when the plant looked long past dead to hang onto it a little longer. The string on these bracelets was meant to break— you wear it until it wears out, and then when it does fall off, it's supposed to be lucky. About a month into wearing it, I was sitting at the dining table having a serious conversation when the piece tying the charm on it had had enough and the string snapped, the little silver hibiscus bouncing off.

Just like my mom was, I tend to run superstitious. It's a bad habit I indulge in, taking normal, everyday things that happen as signs that mean something else. In this case, it felt like a sign she was sending me a message and telling me to remember my boundaries. A beyond the veil way of calling bullshit. My mom was like that, always wanting to give me advice. I think because she

had been through a lot of things herself that she saw me going through, and also because she was able to see me outside myself in a way I couldn't. The thread connecting us was that we were part of the same line, and everything that made up her was passed along to me. The superstition, the anxiety, the belief that little moments can end up meaning a lot.

At the end she was just as fragile as the string tying this bracelet together, one frayed end or weak thread and the whole thing could just snap. The more I think about it, I don't think she wanted to go. She was ready to be out of pain, sure, but I think she held on because she wanted to stay. Maybe she was also not ready to address the next step she was facing, and she didn't have that moment of a boundary being transgressed, of a string breaking, (a hibiscus blooming!) to give her a push to help her along. It doesn't really matter if the bracelet breaking was her doing or not because even me interpreting it in that way let me see outside of myself for a moment and think about what her advice would be. This imagined advice alone helped give me some resolve for how to address the situation and I definitely wouldn't be her daughter if I didn't take it as a sign.

4. Gray

gray string with a green ceramic heart and orange and yellow beads
Now let's tie this thing together. This final bracelet my mom gave me off her own wrist. I had been telling her I wanted her friend to restring that old green one from years before and

she said, "Here" and tried to pull off the one she was wearing. At this point, even that task was too difficult for her. I reluctantly helped her, because for some reason I felt weird taking it from her. Even dying, she had more sense than me, because she was able to realize what I couldn't— she didn't need it at that point. For me, it was uncomfortable to accept; for her, there was maybe comfort in knowing it was one last thing she could give to me. What she gave me is a bracelet that I constantly have to adjust; the string loosens almost immediately. This means there is a continual tightening of the string, where I have to press my fingers against the inside of my wrist and pull. Parts of my relationship with my mom required a continuous maintenance like this, but also she was always there at the sensitive points to make me feel embraced. It's not the last bracelet I'll ever wear, but it's the last one for now that ties me to my mom.

A bracelet completes a circle. A ritual is a circle. It encloses something, it is unbroken, it follows a thread until the next time you begin again. My mom and I have a thread connecting us like a life line: it pulls me out from where I'm drowning. I like to imagine there are a lot of little threads connecting us all, and this one, while only a tiny thread in the scheme of things, makes up the larger web we all rely on. There will always be another bracelet, another connection, another string that ties me to her. These connections might seem small, or fragile, but there is something powerful in taking something so simple and letting it be meaningful.

Simply put, my mom was my mom and I loved her, and I will always feel tied to her, even though this earthly thread is broken. There's still a spiritual thread that resides in things like choosing to put on a bracelet to remind myself of her. And if it's annoying or gets in the way, well, that's kind of just part of having a relationship with your mom.

p.s. Mom, if there's a way you're able to see any of this, I'm sorry I literally never let you read a single piece of my writing even though you were good at it and did it for your job. Love you.



Acknowledgments

Thank you to Interfaith America for awarding me the Building Interfaith America Emerging Leaders Grant, which made this issue possible.

Thank you to Smart Set, B-corp print shop extraordinaire, for incarnating this zine in papery flesh.

Thank you to SpringHouse Ministry Center for hosting this zine's release party, gainfully employing me, and using the power of ritual to enact good in the world.

Thank you to the contributors in this issue for trusting me with your tender and powerful stories.

Thank you to everyone who has read any issues of Social Fabric and shown interest in the project. It means the world to me.

Thank you most of all to Max Brumberg-Kraus, my partner in zine-editing and in life. Your love, support, and many many hours of work made this project come to life. I love you.





SOCIAL FABRIC

is an anthology zine about the lives of our beloved
textiles and the threads that tie us together.

In this issue:

Analeise Jarvi-Beamer
A.P. Looze
Awanigiizhik Bruce
Debby Tepper Glick
Hend Al-Mansour
Jason Lansing
KB Bieger
Lacey Prpić-Hedtke
Max Brumberg-Kraus
Michelle Kaisersatt
Mikha "mikhamik" Dominguez
Natalie Wareham
Riv Shapiro
Sheryl Schwyhart and Rev. Phil Romine
Shug Munic
Tshab Her



Keep up with Social Fabric

socialfabriczine.com

 @bloodmoonjones

