



SOCIAL FABRIC

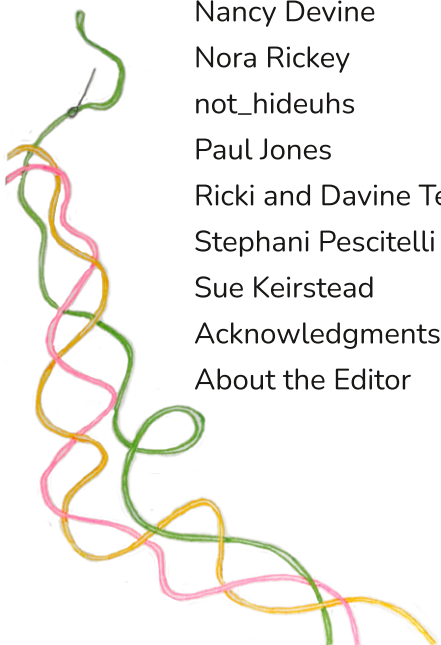
THE LIVES OF OUR
BELOVED TEXTILES



AN ANTHOLOGY ZINE
EDITED BY ALLISON JONES

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Introduction

*Do you have a shirt that you really love?
One that you feel so groovy in?
You don't even mind if it starts to fade
That only makes it nicer still*

-Donovan, I Love My Shirt

When I was a teenager, I bought a jean jacket from a thrift store. I bleached it, embroidered on it, and sewed on patches in an attempt to make something that was truly my own. Each stitch felt like I was imbuing the jacket with power—the power of creative expression, self-actualization, and most of all, care. I don't wear it anymore, but I'll probably keep it forever because my teenage self and her budding identity as a queer woman live in the warp and weft of that garment. At the same time, I know that the jacket lived a life long before it got to me, and the memories of its makers, sellers, and wearers all live alongside mine.

This is only one of many textile objects that has had a profound impact on my life. This project came about because I knew that if I have objects like this in my life, others must too! I was curious about the stories, memories, and connections in the textiles that live in our homes and next to our skin. How does this object connect you to other people and to the Earth? What truths are revealed through your object? What is its power?

I decided to reach out to the wider community with these questions, and you answered! I was blown away by how many people responded to this prompt, and with such care. In these pages, you will find stories about all kinds of objects—handmade and mass-produced, special and mundane, decorative and utilitarian. Each one has endless truths to reveal. Each one is buzzing with life.

Drawing attention to our favorite objects illuminates the fact that these things don't just spring into being: each one was made by human hands. So often, these processes are invisible to us. We are alienated both from the fruits of our labor and from the people who create our vital goods and beloved objects. The more I think about the work and the materials from the Earth that go into creating these objects, the harder it is to think of them as disposable. If our textiles hold lives within them, how does that change our relationship to consumption? To labor? To one another? Taking a little extra care with the objects in our lives can help guide us to a more just and sustainable world. As you take in the stories in this zine, I invite you to consider the hands that have touched your favorite textile objects and the threads that tie us together.

Thank you for reading,
AJ



Addie Washington





Alice Gehrke



My parents have a lot of fun t-shirts. Before my younger brother and I were born in their early 40s, they lived a spontaneous, active lifestyle; riding horses, playing hockey, and competing in kayak races. This shirt is an artifact of their life before kids.

“Support Women’s Ice Hockey
UW Tournament 1980!”

This shirt was passed on to me in my teenage years and I’ve worn it regularly ever since, proudly letting people know that the shirt was designed and drawn by my Mom, and that my Dad stood in as the model.

In the past 10 years, my family has gone through some great challenges that disrupted us as individuals and strained our relationships with each other.

Recently, I noticed holes beginning to grow in my hand-me-down t-shirt.

The shirt I used to wear weekly now sits in a drawer, fragile and distant.

Can I forgive it for falling apart?

What if I mend it— I am an expert mender. I could mend this shirt but then again, I’ve been mending and mending before the holes got big, and now my fingers are tired and numb.

As my shirt becomes more delicate, I wonder what my relationship to it will be. How often will I wear it, and when? I want it to remain in my life but I know it can’t be there in the way it was before.

I love this shirt. I’m still figuring it out.





Alison Morse

Conundrum Dream Dialogue

You bought those red panties? Why?

Ma, they're sewn by adults — not kids — in buildings that don't fall down. The cotton is organic.

Isn't organic a marketing ploy?

No. Organic means farming without cancer-triggering chemicals. Cotton, labeled organic,

doesn't binge-drink hundreds of gallons of water before becoming panties, doesn't soak in water poisoned with cancer-causing treatments. Ma, you died of cancer. Remember? Don't remind me. You bought those panties new? The red. It's faded.

My panties are good for the soil. No heavy metals; no cyanide. Red from plant roots.

You're going to wear faded fertilizer? What a lousy deal.

My *sheyneh meydeleh*, for how much did you buy those bloomers?

Twelve bucks, Grandma; thirty for three. Maybe not a steal —

What? I get a deal at Alexander's: a dollar sixty-nine for three.

My sister could sew bloomers for you. Ida wasn't a garment worker for nothing.

Grandma, you've been dead for thirty years. Alexander's went belly up in the nineties.

For twelve dollars, Ida could buy *gut shtof*, make you a new something.

Aunt Ida is dead, too. And sorry to say, I didn't inherit her seamstress gene.

If I could, I'd sew tank tops from my old panties, start my own label.

I can't even fix a hem, let alone make a new something.

Does your underwear have a Bangladesh label?

Amina, my panties' label says "Made in India." Sorry.

What about our jobs? Buy panties we make in Bangladesh factories. We make droves.

I'd love to buy Bangla-made underwear, but don't you receive the world's lowest salaries?

We won't be paid at all if you don't buy our clothes.

I swear I'd buy "Made in Bangladesh" panties if the factories there were fire proof, with boilers that wouldn't explode like M-80s into your flesh, if your bosses paid what you needed to thrive, wouldn't fire you if you were pregnant, would listen when you demanded safety,

a raise. But beyond boilers, our planet is exploding with toxic clothing waste. I need to buy red panties made with organic cotton from rose madder plant dyes. Are you joking? Listen, my children won't be able to eat if I don't get this month's wage.

Organic cotton, plant dyes? Are you sure they're not marketing ploys — lies?

Delicate Cycles

1.
The jeans I wear
weigh heavy on me.
They hold the loss
of eighteen hundred
gallons of water
consumed to grow, clean
and dye their cotton,
not to mention the gallons more
I contaminate
whenever I wash them.

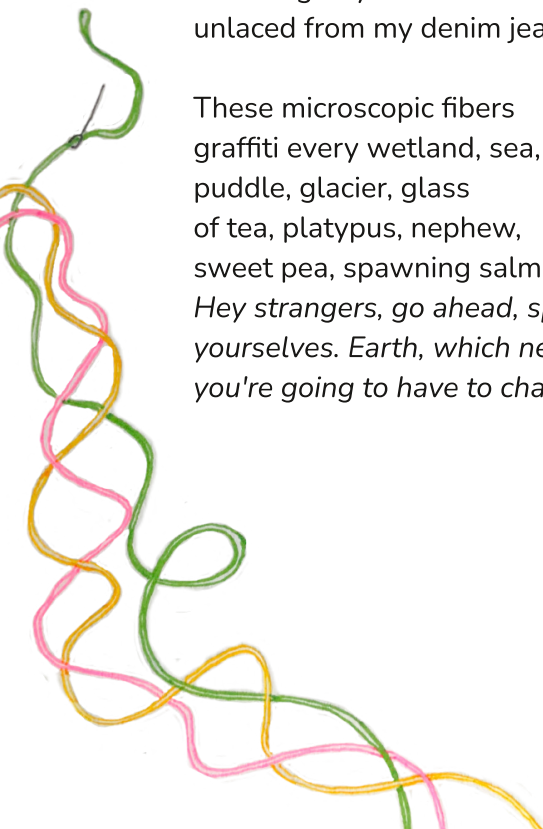
At fifteen, I never
washed my jeans
more than once a season,
pissing off my mom;
her recreational shopping
and washing of countless
women's separates
was her rebellion against
my grandma
who — at fifteen —
kept meticulous
handwritten records of

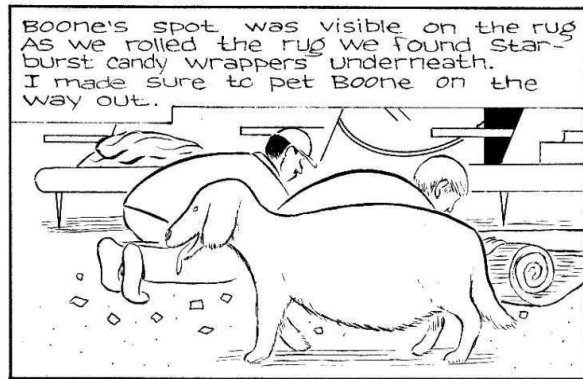
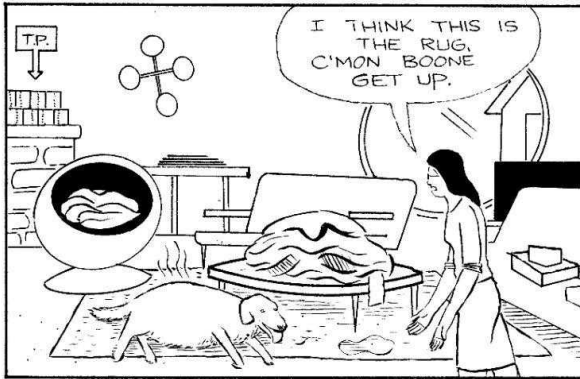
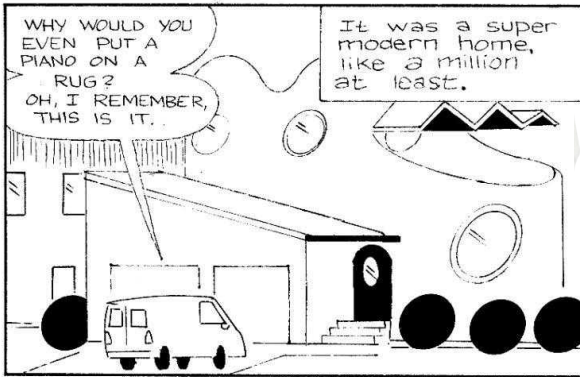


fabric made, hours
spent and wages paid
in the ledger of
a New York City
knitting mill
while her sisters sewed
in factories, a Jewish
immigrant family
my mother never
talked about
with pride.

Decades later, attempting
my little part to conserve
Earth's clean water,
I began cultivating
greenish denim again,
washing my jeans once-a-year
on a resource-efficient machine's
cold, Delicate cycle.
Despite my effort to live
more gently on the planet,
I've learned that Delicate's
water-logged massages
softly release tons
of everlasting fabric fibers
into lakes and rivers,
ocean depths and animal
bellies — plankton to human —
including tiny elastane threads
unlaced from my denim jeans.

These microscopic fibers
graffiti every wetland, sea,
puddle, glacier, glass
of tea, platypus, nephew,
sweet pea, spawning salmon, with the message:
Hey strangers, go ahead, spoil your partners, those natural resources that sustain you. Destroy yourselves. Earth, which never belonged to you, will continue without you. To save your world you're going to have to change the only resource on Earth you may be able to change. You.





JUL 26 2021

Andy Wieland



Ann Larabee

Miss Jenny's Shawl

Winter is coming. I can feel it in my bones. The days are shorter leading to longer, cooler nights. Last week I saw the first yellow-brown leaves assemble in my driveway, today I wore Miss Jenny's shawl as I sipped my morning coffee on the front porch.

For 45 years that shawl has warmed me autumn through spring, and comforted me through cold Wisconsin winters. Crocheted of odd lots of yarn left over from other projects, it is not haute couture but crafted with all the care that failing fingers could give it. It is my "coat of many colors" and I treasure it as much as I treasured the lady who made it.

Fresh out of college, I took a second shift job as a CNA at a local nursing home, about a mile from my apartment. I soon came to know the residents almost as well as I knew my own family: all their quirks, likes and dislikes, as well as their stories. All but one, a tiny lady who lived on another floor and whom I only saw when I escorted some of my ladies down for craft work. There they made Christmas ornaments, knitted baby blankets, quilted lap robes and pot holders, and crocheted afghans, many of which were sold through the Talent Shop outlet.

They were a gregarious bunch who gossiped, told tall tales, and shared family news while offering advice. They taught as they worked, insisting that I bring my own crocheting along so they could teach me new stitches and critique my work. Except for Miss Jenny. Always Miss Jenny. I never learned her last name or story, since she never spoke directly to me. Silent, busy, hands never idle, she claimed all the odd bits of leftover yarn so they wouldn't go to waste, and fashioned the most beautiful shawls I had ever seen.

The workmanship was exquisite. Never once, in over four decades, has one color parted from another! Her multi-hued shawls were in high demand and sold out nearly as fast as she could make them. I craved one, but could never scrape together the money to commission one and there was a long line waiting for one of Miss Jenny's shawls.

Each day she sat in her favorite chair in the craft room, never speaking, never joining in the

camaraderie. Her focus, her passion, her very essence went into each shawl she crocheted, and often I saw her lips move as she worked. Was she counting stitches? Reciting her memories to herself? Talking to a loved one no longer there? Praying? I never pried. I sat near her so I could admire her work but we didn't chat the way I often did with other ladies there.

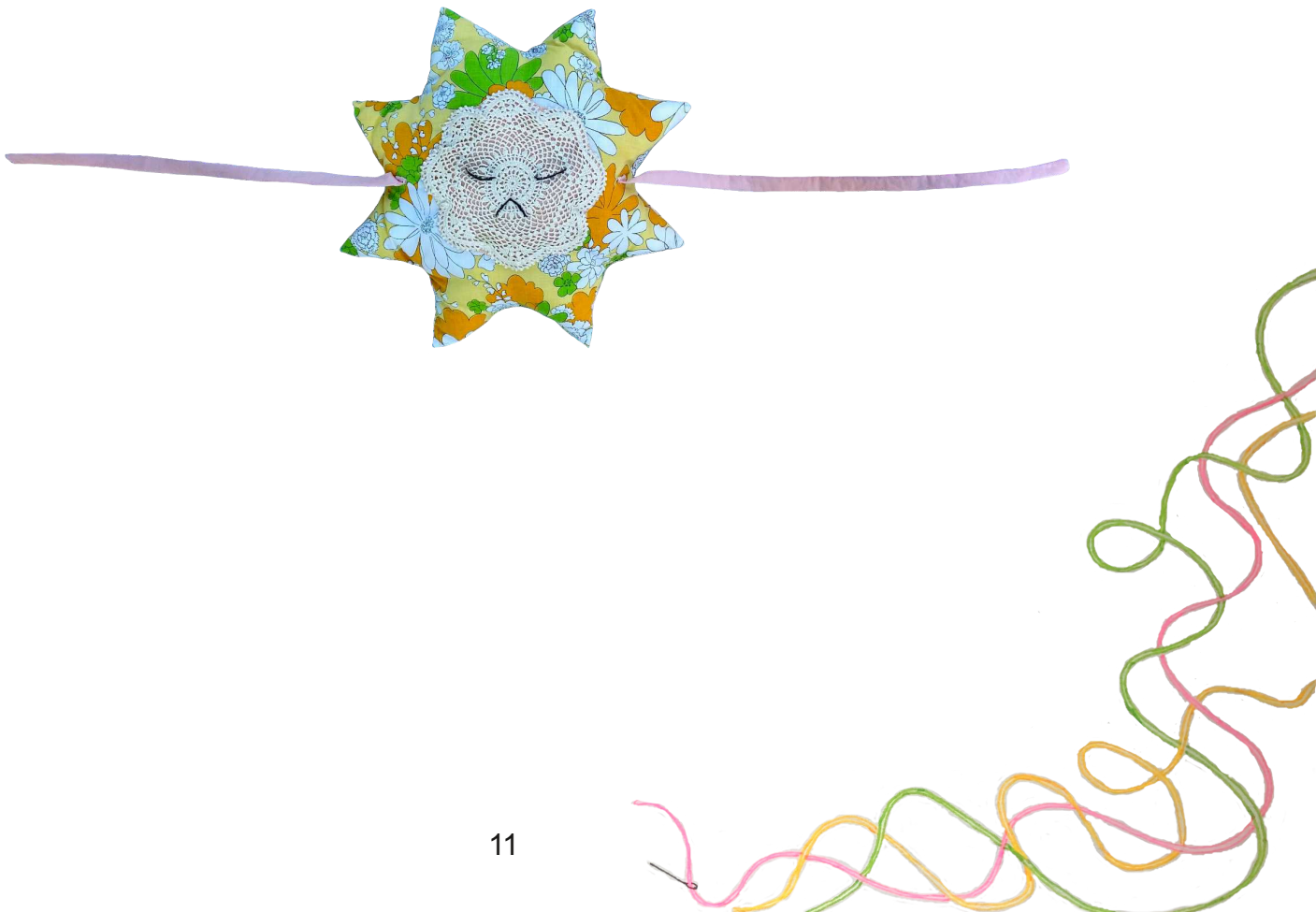


Each time I complimented her stitchwork or her choice of color combinations, she would smile her thanks or squeeze my hand.

Time is not infinite for us and several of my surrogate grandmas and grandpas passed away in the years I spent working there. At last, it came my time to leave, to move on with my life: a new town, a different job, a budding relationship with the man I would marry. Reluctantly I said goodbye to my friends on the staff and my family of residents. As I cleaned out my locker, one of my co-workers stopped me and handed me a package.

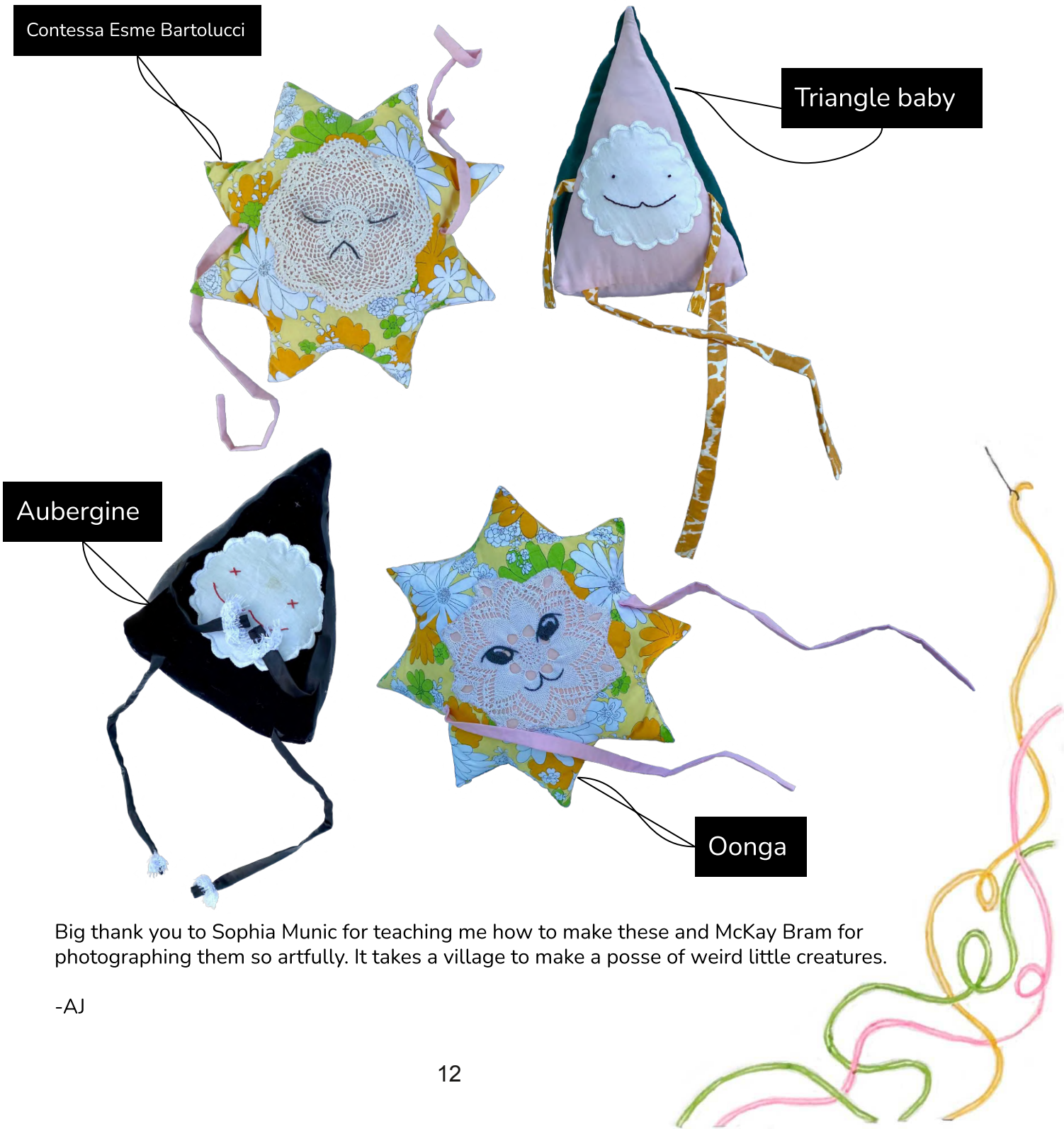
It was a shawl, a beautiful multicolored crocheted shawl, a Miss Jenny original. A work of art just for me. I cried all the way home, just as I cried sometime later when I heard that she had passed.

Oh, how I wish I had known her better, that we had shared our stories and laughed or cried together. But that wasn't Miss Jenny. I know her as well now as I ever did, and her silent friendship continues to warm me over the years. Each time I wrap her gift around my shoulders I see her shy smile and feel the squeeze of her hand. We shared a love of needlework that transcended any need to talk. Across time and space, her gift connects us in thankfulness and love.



A note from the editor:

You may have noticed these creature-friends hanging out on the pages of this zine. I made them out of discarded textiles: old frayed pillowcases, sheets from a garage sale, doilies pulled out of the thrift store bins. I think of them as entities who live in your grandma's couch and absorb your memories and emotions. They kind of turned into the mascots for Social Fabric. They may look cute, but don't underestimate them - they're very powerful.



Big thank you to Sophia Muncie for teaching me how to make these and McKay Bram for photographing them so artfully. It takes a village to make a posse of weird little creatures.

-AJ

Annita Vogelsong Losey

A Quilt for Myself

I have made many quilts in my 70 years, but never one that I kept for myself. I started one once, but circumstances changed- many relocations, a divorce, small apartments instead of a big house, and finally no apartment at all, just an art studio and then a small bed in someone else's home. The quilt I had stated for me didn't seem correct anymore. I wasn't the same person. That first personal quilt was finally finished 30 years later as a gift to a friend; it was perfect for her.

But this year I decided I wanted my own quilt again. I have been working on quilts for all my siblings (8) and here I was, still going to be without one of my own. The time felt right.

A lifetime ago I had a huge Victorian house, full of old furniture and with lots of rooms always full of visitors. All those brothers and sisters and their kids filled my house and my family with joy. One sister made me a beautiful cross stitch wall hanging that read "Laughter brings sunshine into the home". It was so completely true. Our family loved having everyone visit.



Recently I found that cross stitch sampler in a box. It moved me to tears, because that sister and I no longer speak. There is no possibility- at least at this moment in time- of ever again laughing together.

What came between us to destroy that ?

It's actually an easy answer. Just as families disintegrated during the Civil War and other historic moments where people have to choose how to stand for their beliefs, my family members took their sides. Gay rights, far right extremist politics with

Trump as their leader, Green initiatives, immigration policies that put babies in cages...and finally Covid, which asked people to vaccinate in order to save the vulnerable.

I took my stand, unapologetically liberal, always hoping to save others from ignorance-inflected horror. My sister and other family members took their stand. And we are judged, I believe, by how we stand, and if we stand up at all for the weak. There are some things we do not accept.

My great extended family does not exist anymore.

So I looked at this beautiful sampler and decided to honor its history, because history doesn't change, even if people do. It is still carrying memories of laughter and sunshine. It did not change, only my sister did. Or maybe she didn't change, and her psyche has always dwelt in fear and ignorance. So I put the sampler into my quilt.

And every night I sleep beneath it.



Azania Tripp/Obsidian Pause



How does this object connect you to other people and to the Earth?

- The scraps of cloth is from my mom's collection. I remember seeing the gold thread shine at the top of the shelves in her closet.
- Clothes for special occasions.
- The mixed media collage shows my love for mystical cats.

What truths are revealed through your object?

That memories can be altered and repurposed

What is its power?

Fire, homes on new planets, magic

Beatrice Cosgrove

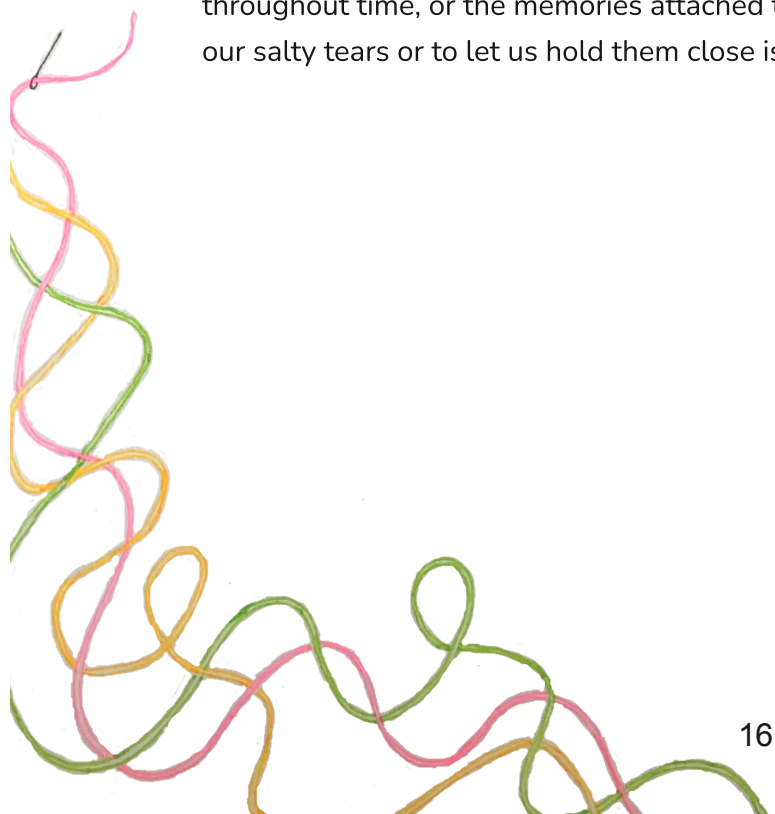


Arbitrary Thoughts on a Bunny

Nothing lasts forever and maybe that's why life is so sweet. Those things you hold so close to your heart are priceless and, believe me, I have thought a lot about it.

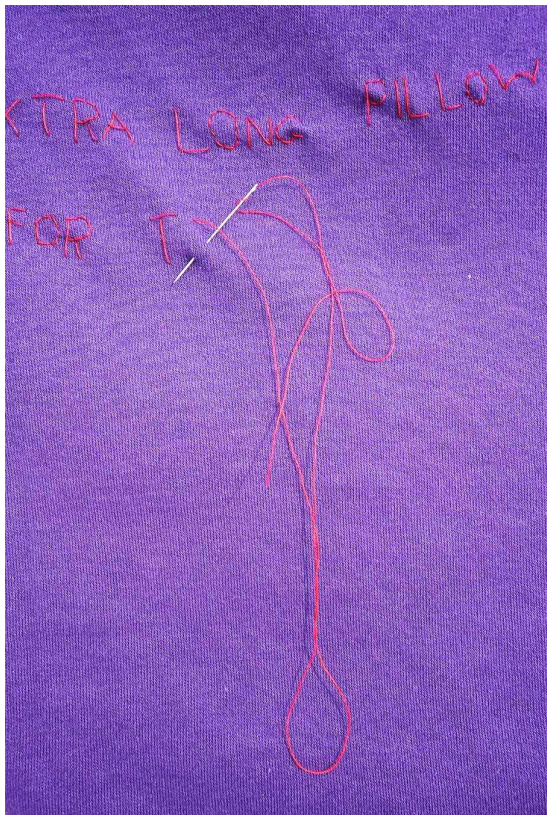
White fur, no longer feeling as soft as it did brand-new, untouched and pristine. The rush of excitement when bringing something new into my life has died down considerably from when I first set eyes on the pink-nosed bunny. There was something familiar about her, but, writing this, I cannot put my finger (or pen!) on what. Smelling just like home she has been with me for more than eight years, but has lived for many more. Picture this: Sometime in the early to mid-80s a company produces a stuffed bunny. Simple enough, right? But no one could have guessed how much it would mean to a little girl in St. Paul who aspires to own a band-aid shop. Bunny-Bunny (lovingly named) has had a special impact on my life because of her connection to my mom, who had her before I did. Because that bunny was linked in with so many experiences, difficulties, triumphs and encounters, I feel a special respect towards her, which might sound a little silly, but it's true! That bunny has endured and 'lived through' so many things, she has always been there, providing me with comfort when I needed it, letting my tears soak into her fur and letting me hug her is not a choice (she is, after all, an inanimate object) but I have a feeling she would be a pretty selfless human.

There is something alive in these kinds of objects. It could be all the energy they have gathered throughout time, or the memories attached to them, but they will always be there, to soak up our salty tears or to let us hold them close is a gift unto itself.

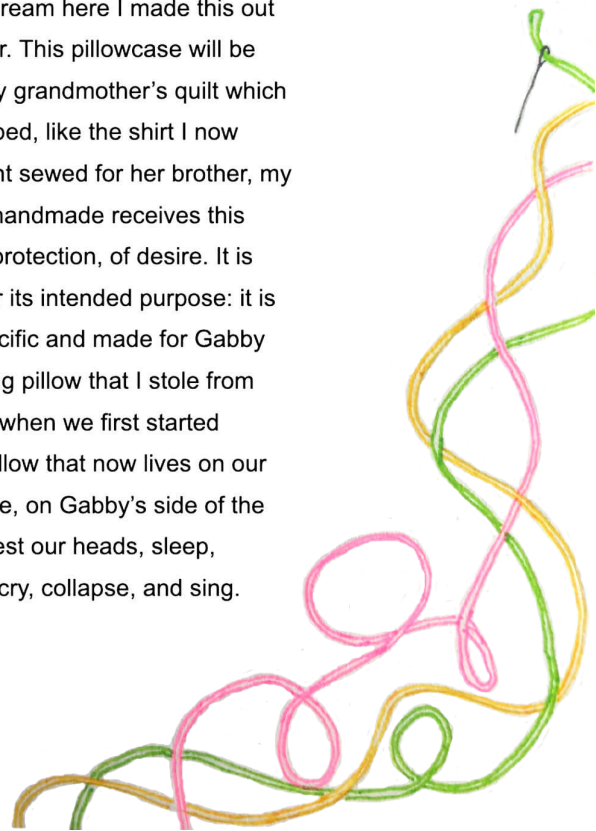


Charlotte Richardson-Deppe

Pillowcase. 2021, Charlotte Richardson-Deppe. Cloth, thread. Wall piece accompanied by text. Text is a transcription of embroidered words. 32" x 16"



This pillowcase is for my lover's pillow she will rest her cheek on these words she will sleep here and dream here I made this out of my love for her. This pillowcase will be cherished like my grandmother's quilt which also lies on this bed, like the shirt I now wear that my aunt sewed for her brother, my father. Only the handmade receives this level of care, of protection, of desire. It is tailored solely for its intended purpose: it is singular and specific and made for Gabby for their extra long pillow that I stole from them each night when we first started dating, for this pillow that now lives on our bed that we share, on Gabby's side of the bed, where we rest our heads, sleep, dream, whisper, cry, collapse, and sing.



Charlotte Richardson-Deppe

Just a Shirt. 2021, Charlotte Richardson-Deppe. Shirt, pins. Wall piece accompanied by text. 16" x 18" x 1/2"

A hotel near the airport in the suburbs of Chicago. The final night of choir tour, the spring of my senior year of college. I'm leaving someone's hotel room party with several friends to go back to our rooms, flushed and happy, wearing this shirt:



A man, middle-aged, enters the elevator. He makes conversation; I tell him that we're a college choir on tour. My friends and I exit the elevator, go into our hotel room. I think nothing of it.

The phone in my hotel room rings. My friend picks up the receiver, confused. A man (the man) is on the other line: he asks if a girl in a black and white striped shirt is staying in this room. The three of us make panicked eye contact with each other; gesture violent shakes of our heads, mouthing silent no's. My friend on the phone lies, says no she isn't in this room you must have the wrong room, hangs up. We are scared.

We double-lock the door to our room (the man must have seen me enter this room from the elevator). We call a male friend. He is tall and strong. He goes to the front desk, asks them to change our room. We move rooms at 1:30am. We double-lock the door to the new room. It is hard to fall asleep that night.

Eleanor Miller

My textile discovery

I first discovered cross-stitch 10 years ago. I had never done any needlecrafts but picked up a cross-stitch kit at Goodwill for 50 cents. It was a 1950's American scene of a white boy and girl opening presents at Christmas, that could be made into an ornament. Since it was cheap and seemed simple, and all the pieces were included, I decided I'd give it a try.

I sorted the colored threads, creating 3 strands of 2 from each color of 6. I thread the needle, very slowly and carefully so as to not miss the eye. (I often missed and had to re try). I counted the squares, made the Xs that give cross-stitch its name. This is when I discovered that if you lose count and mess up by one square, you can throw off the whole pattern. (I've since accepted this and found ways to work with mistakes.) In this first project, the children's faces turned out strange, their cheeks are bloated yet square, and look giant on their tiny bodies. I have never hung this ornament, or even shown it to anyone. Still, I cannot throw it away. When I came across it in a bin of cross-stitch thread recently, I looked at it fondly. I still feel proud of my accomplishment, and pleased this kit helped me discover the craft.

I have made many larger "pieces" since that first one: various fairies (winter, garden), Guanyin (the Chinese Goddess of mercy and compassion), mermaids, the 12 signs of the zodiac. Some I started and never finished. My most recent completion is a small wall hanging of an autumn scene with an owl, which I have displayed on my back porch. Since buying my first house a year ago in Minneapolis, the porch has become a haven for my funky owl obsession which reminds me of comforting older women like my Grandma Minor. While my owl collection is a whole other story, the autumn scene in this wall hanging includes orange and yellow leaves, acorns and mushrooms, and a big owl next to a big birdhouse. It makes me happy right now as we transition to fall.



Still embracing the end of summer, at the downtown farmer's market this morning, I met a Thai woman with a large booth of colorful textiles. All fun, yet functional: wallets, hair ties and barrettes, purses, cell phone cases, keychains and bags. As I showed my appreciation for all the color and intricacy of detail in all this needlework, she told me the items are made from women in Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. Most of it is handsewn or otherwise handcrafted (with a few that were made in factories). This woman was from Thailand herself, but an American citizen. Prior to the pandemic, she would frequently travel back and forth, getting textiles from these women and selling them here at the farmer's market. Now Covid has made it too expensive to travel, so she cannot bring back or sell as many items.

She says the women are of all ages-adolescents or young adults who need money for college. “These are made by women over 70. The government doesn’t give you money over there” she says (referring to social security) “and they still need a way to live.” So the women embroider, cross-stitch, hand sew and do other needle crafts with perfect details. She brings them to the U.S and sells them here at the Minneapolis farmers market.

I thank her for sharing all of this with me and promise to return to her booth. I admire beautiful and intricately patterned billfolds made by Hmong women in Cambodia. I might have to return for a bright orange one or a subtle blue one, both of which stand out in my mind still as beautiful. I also want to share with friends and family, and talk with this woman again. At home I look at my purchases for my niece’s birthday: a goofy blue tassel keychain and a puffy Santa Claus hair tie. I

think about this woman, and all the women who made the textiles. I later remember how I intentionally called them artists when I thanked her. I think about the role of needlecrafts in their life and in mine. Are we all artists? Creators? Some of us making things to enjoy, to pass the time, to hang on walls or give as presents. Others making things so we can live.



Emily Levang

An Ode to the Outgrown Pajamas

I never thought I'd cry over outgrown pajamas; never thought I'd be that person. My co-parent Ryan and I dressed our three-month-old baby in tandem that night, Ryan threading little waving arms through the soft bamboo fabric sleeves. Pajamas were easier than daytime clothes because they zip rather than going on over the head, but regardless baby Ronan never liked the process of getting dressed.

Stretching the fabric down to insert the right foot over wildly kicking legs, I paused for a moment as it became clear that there was too much baby and not enough fabric. I pulled hard, stretching the print of light and dark ivy green leaves. We were already two diaper and pajama changes past bedtime, and meltdown was imminent. Plus, we had nothing else clean, so this had to work. Legs in, Ryan yanked the two sides together to meet in the middle, and I zipped it up, smoothing the elven print around my son's body. "Last time he wears those." Ryan said, matter of fact. My eyes welled up with tears. Over pajamas.

I cried so many tears in the first months postpartum, the liquid love ~ blood, milk ~ more than my tiny human heart could ever contain. This love filled me and emptied me, overtook me, humbled me, remade me. I never thought I'd cry over outgrown pajamas, in fact my former self would have ever-so-subtly judged the woman who would. Like what does that say about your life if something so small has such sentimental value?

A dear friend of mine tears up every time she talks about her kids. She's also the friend who told me to stop agonizing about the decision of whether or not to become a mother. "You're going to do it, you're a mother at heart." I simultaneously resented her for this statement, and secretly tried it on, wore it close, inspected it in private. Was this one of those things people in the mom club said to recruit new members to the monotonous yet apparently joy-filled cult of motherly duty?

Back when it seemed everyone was trying to convince me to have children, they all talked about the love. "Yes, it's hard, yes there are sacrifices, but it's the most love imaginable." Sure maybe for you, I thought. I never doubted that these people experienced a profound love for their children that was outside anything I'd experienced, yet I felt a strong resistance to all of it, particularly to the pressure.

I bought those pjs the day I went for my last haircut before giving birth. I knew it might be a while before I'd make it to a salon again, and I had a palpable sense that this could also be my last day out alone with myself. On my way down Selby in St. Paul, Minnesota, a sustainable boutique with a colorful sale rack caught my eye. I stopped to ogle a red and orange African print jumper but knew it wouldn't fit then and who knew what my body would be like after. Nonetheless I was lured inside, where the woman at the counter told me to come

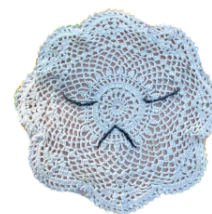


back in a few months, and in the meantime to check out the baby clothes store next door. Oh. Yeah, baby clothes, ok. Thirty-seven weeks pregnant and I still hadn't bought a single article of clothing for the little one residing within me.

I went next door like a tourist taking in foreign sights and sounds, walking directly past the baby overalls, little boots that seemed utterly pointless, straight to a rack of pajamas. My hand grazed the softest bamboo, gravitating straight toward a long-sleeved set, white with strands of alternating light and dark green, perhaps ivy. Perfect. Something in me warmed. Sure, we had clothes for our baby, these weren't really the first clothes, but the rest were gifts or hand me downs. This was the first time I picked something for my child, something that felt a match for the unique energy of the being I had been holding, growing, talking and singing to, waiting to meet. I went up to the counter and the woman informed me that they were buy two get one 50% off. "No thanks. I only want this one."

This first set of pajamas made our connection real, and indeed, after my son was born and we finally got around to putting clothes on him, these ones suited him perfectly, as though he felt himself in them, comfy and relaxed. In the pjs I had chosen. Because I knew him, felt him, loved him long before he arrived. Because I am his mother.

This reality still feels new, mystifying yet natural. Even after the technicolor dream state of sleep deprivation and love tsunamis eased up, life normalized, but my heart will never be the same. I am now someone who has cried over outgrown pajamas. But why? That they don't fit him anymore, that he already has grown so much, that those precious first weeks are now in the past, that I am perplexingly proud of his growth and simultaneously tenderized by the loss of his tininess? That he will only get bigger and bigger, growing more and more independent of me? Yes, all this, and just, *I love him*. More than I ever imagined possible. z



Emma Mooney

The Text(iles) of Marguerita Mergentime

A few years ago my boyfriend gifted me a tablecloth, originally designed by Marguerita Mergentime. Mergentime worked as a textile designer between the 1920s and 1940s, primarily in New York City. I am always struck by both the boldness and creativity of her work as well as her lack of name recognition—even amongst historians of art and design—despite notable commissions including carpets and wall textiles inside Radio City Music Hall.

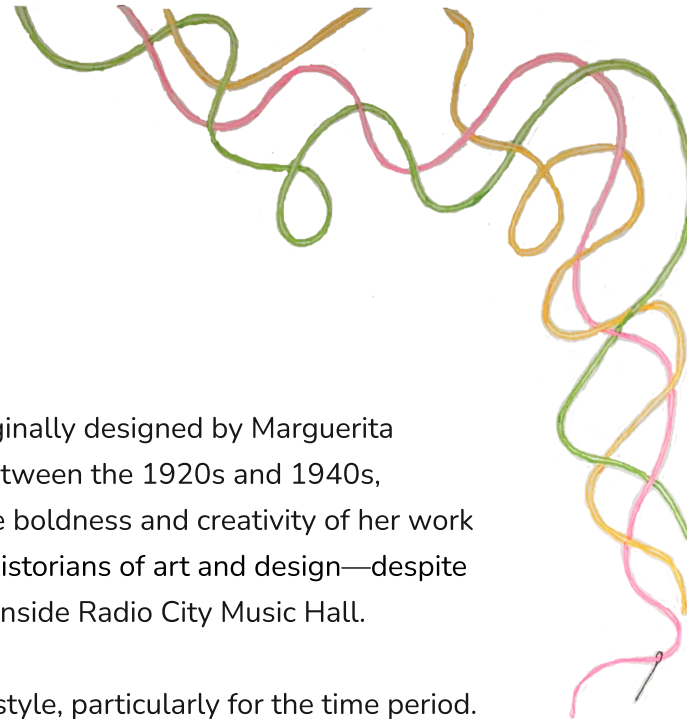
The tablecloth in question is unconventional in its visual style, particularly for the time period. However, central to Mergentime's approach was keeping one foot in tradition and the other in Modernism. Many of her designs blended 1930s aesthetics with both the frilliness of the 19th century and the simplistic motifs of early American folk art.

What's particularly unique about this tablecloth is its use of text. Titled *Food for Thought*, it was designed to inspire bold conversations at the dinner table. An accompanying pamphlet provides further context to all 98 of the words and phrases included, which Mergentime predicted would “separate families, sever old friendships and create general havoc.”¹

Food for Thought is particularly fascinating as a historic object because though some of the phrases could still easily spark discussion at the 21st century dinner table (*Share the Wealth; Prosperity is Just Around the Corner; Free Homes for the Homeless*), others reference now relatively obscure social movements or political moments of the Depression Era that likely require a Google (or a look through Mergentime's pamphlet) to understand (*54°40' or Fight; Mugwumps; Barnburns; I do not choose to run*). Both then and now, the tablecloth is a functional textile with built-in trivia and conversation starters.

Food for Thought is an incredible mosaic of the Depression Era. But in our contemporary situation of extreme disparities, emboldened bigots, and an abandonment of public services, the climate of the 1930s feels all too familiar. Of course, the way we communicate now is wildly different than it was when this tablecloth was first sold in 1936. More often than not,

¹ *Fashion Group Bulletin*, October 1936, 3 Fashion Group International Records, New York Public Library, box 144, folder 8, cited in Virginia Bayer, “Marguerita Mergentime: Inventing Tablecloths,” in *Marguerita Mergentime: American Textiles, Modern Ideas*, edited by Donna Ghelester (New York: West Madison Press, 2017), 21.



Gavin Glen

Disorganized Closet

My nicer shirts are hung above
the forgotten huge pile of clothes
common sense.

I stretch out, wrinkle up
I plan on getting to the homeless
as I freshen for a date
that should take a little
one sweater- greenish beige
I pull out on colder days
This other one- however-
has abstract stripes.
I wear it now and then to
make my chest more rectangular
but not too similar than
past December.

I gloat in the mirror.
I get chills sprang to my shoulders.
As I massage myself,
I just know this sweater
could never protect me from the cold, again.

When taking vanity and posture,
you gain more comfort.
Matching shoes, matching socks, business suits.
The organization is bound to groom you up
in the best of times.

You keep an earthly space.
Boxes stay in-line for moving day.
Emergency storage keeps this closet
free to wear *whatever* and then... I hide.
I'm on the phone; "Hello?
I have to reschedule our date.
Today's my Boxing Day."





Gregory T. Wilkins

Vortex

March 9, 2020, I was caught within a mass of swirling air of tourists and locals trying to make sense of a world gone mad. Captured by Covid and stranded in Florence, Italy, I was unsure as to how and/or when I would be able to leave and return to the United States. Not knowing where the world was to go as it marched forward while body bags piled higher and higher in city squares and within the erected Red Cross tent on the Santa Maria Nuova Hospital plaza, I found serenity in the city's landscape and chapels scattered cross the void. I was to become part of her fabric and woven into Florence's Corona virus response.

Everything was closed and shuttered – the Uffizi, the Duomo, galleries, cafes, and pensions. Only chapels remained open for morning prayer and confession. Fiorentinos flocked to the countryside to visit and care for their families, as tourists flooded the Amerigo Vespucci Airport desperately trying to escape. Military tanks and police enforced the rules while towns were shut-off from one another and people had to shelter in place. Quarantine was proclaimed for everyone by Italy's Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte.

I was handed the keys to my hostel, and the manager proclaimed I had the run of the estate. I was given a code to the front gate, my room upgraded, and was told I would have to fend for myself. I did so obligingly like a king in his own castle.

The cathedral, mere meters away, was my gauge as I would listen to the ringing of the church bells and observe the changing of the military guard around the Duomo steps. The city once filled with bustling traffic, university students, and the Roma, now remained death-like. I patrolled the streets and alleyways with my camera in-hand witnessing a once in a lifetime event.



While Covid was ever present as the dead were carried out in body bags, the streets once filled with life now loomed with death around every corner. Funerals, weddings, and baptisms ended by presidential decree. The city was heavy in mourning, and yet despite the onslaught of dread and fear, the locals checked-in with me to inquire if I was okay.

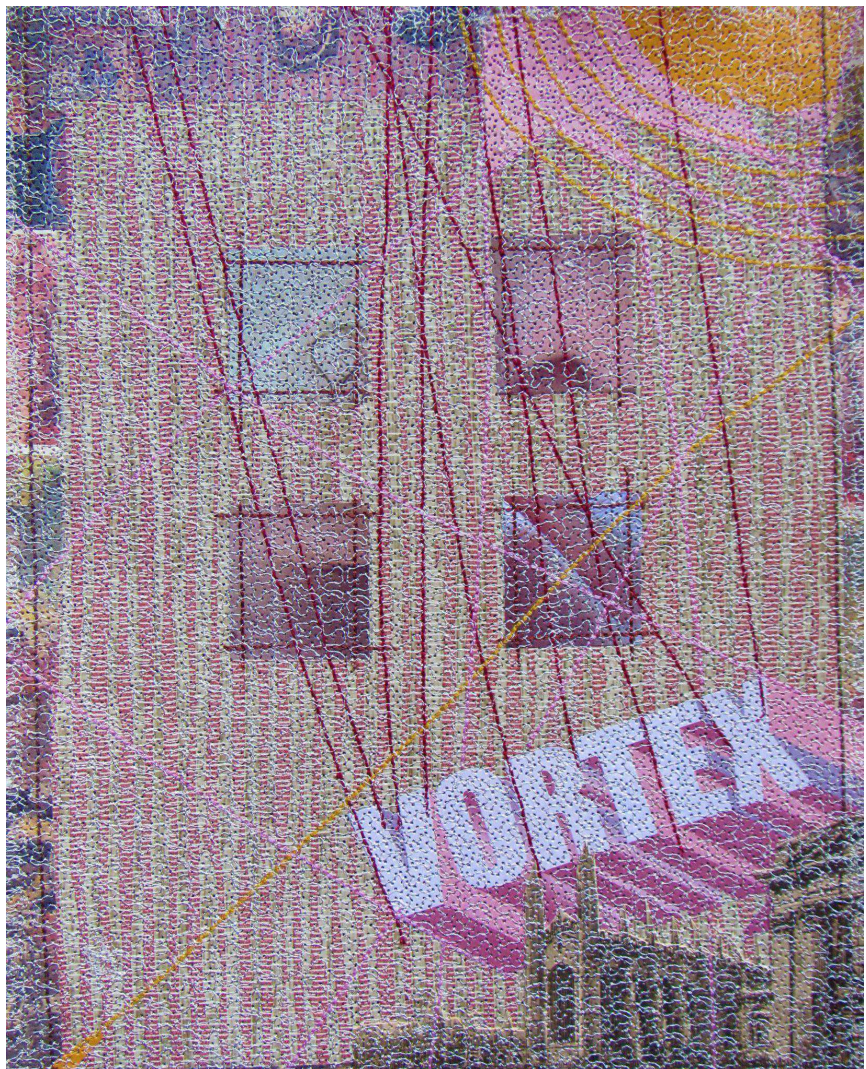
Between charades and poorly spoken Italian and English, we supported one another in this time of crisis. And through their pain, there remained hope and joy as windows and balconies were filled with music echoing across the emptiness. I got to know my neighbors

across the way by glances, laughter, and music. And as evening approached, I would say a prayer and wished for a better day tomorrow.

Hospitality, art, and religion are a rich, historical tapestry in Florence's provenance. Florentines saw a surge of artistic, literary, and scientific investigation in the 14th-16th centuries. This was facilitated by their strong economy, based on money and global trade. Art and religion were testament about who spent their wealth on buildings, jewelry, textiles, and utilitarian objects with considerable assistance from the Medici family. Today, we can thank them for the stardom of Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Donatello.

My art piece "Vortex" is a recognition of the past while threaded to the present. Instead of the Duomo, I have borrowed its religious reference with a modern structure of "church". As the center of faith and art inter-mixed, it is a reminder of our collective past while investigating where art and faith remains in the here-and-now. Stitched by hand and machine, it reflects couture and industrialization. Days rise and fall. Power comes and goes. Faith is destroyed and reinvigorated. Our coming together in times of sorrow, fear, and questioning while expelling the mythology of science and religion is inter-woven in humanity's existence. Covid is no different.

As my whirlwind of an adventure was brought to a close, I was eventually able to return to the United States. And while Americans fought each other for the last remaining rolls of Charmin extra soft toilet paper in the grocery store aisle, I breathed deeply because I was thankful for what the Italians bestowed to me -- a vortex now of lifelong memories. Their fabric of hospitality was a blessing and will forever remain a cherished moment.





Hedy Tripp

Hedy Tripp is a writer, ethnobotanist, community elder, and multidisciplinary artist who lives in St. Cloud, MN. We met in the cohort of artists and community leaders that was the catalyst for creating this zine. Hedy graciously allowed me to interview her about her collection of beautiful Ulos, or woven shawls, that she received during her time living in Indonesia years ago. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

AJ: This one is over 100 years old?

HT: I think so. I don't know the meanings of it, but you know... it's tactile! Touch! These designs are not arbitrary, but it's from many, many generations. And usually it's [made by] women. Look at the designs - it's all cotton and dyed with indigo. Then you have the more plain ones that are usually in funerals. Again, look at how they're doing this. I mean, they don't exactly measure. Here's another one where they used beads, you can see them coming out. This one is usually for carrying children around so it's a little plainer but very strong.

AJ: It feels really durable but really soft.

HT: And then this one was gifted to me. Can you read that?

AJ: Hedy?

HT: Yes!

AJ: Wow!!

HT: Hedy Boru. The clan group is Saragi.

AJ: So someone made this one custom?

HT: Yeah! My sort of adopted mother. *Horas* means "hello/goodbye" and *mamake* means "blessings to those who use it."

I didn't have time or capacity or ability because languages are hard for me - I only speak English. So I didn't really get to study what they meant. But what I did was I watched them make it. And for me, watching was drawing. This is

what I found and what I had. These are copies: the originals are archived. This is the spinning wheel and the treadle. They got a whole lot of cotton, and they're putting it into these. Okay? That's what is dyed: she's dyeing it. She soaked the indigo plant until the blackness came out and that's a brush, so she's brushing it on.

AJ: Is she doing all this thread one color, or multiple colors?

HT: Different colors. This might be black, then she'd do the red. I'm not sure how they get the red in, what dye is used. After it's dyed, they wind it into a ball. Then you put it onto the—I'm not a spinner, but I'm trying to get this information through my art. And then they weave it. It's a backstrap loom. It's all connected to her back. I did big drawings and then I got that reduced. This is a book I edited and illustrated. This is the house, the wood of the house, and then she backstraps here. What you can use here is what they call proverbs. This one's in Batak, and here's the translation:



Spindle, loom bar, backstrap, footrest: People are really blessed if they agree with each other.

Because it's a whole, right? Every part works.

AJ: Exactly. That feels like my experience of using a sewing machine: if the bobbin isn't cooperating, or the thread isn't cooperating... they all have to work together.

HT: Right: a metaphor for how people need to work together.

This one is on indigo - *sala on* is indigo. These are *ulos*. The *ulos* is the sacred shawl, woven by the women. And it's a central part of ceremonial wear. There are blessings by stroking the jaw with the shawl. It's not just that the *ulos* is used, but how it's used.

[Showing a photo] can you see? It's there on their shoulder. They don't exactly dance: it's not performance. It's about how you relate to your relative. If your family has given my family a wife, I honor you. And I honor you by stroking your jaw, with or without the *ulos*. And you are blessed because you have given me a wife, to my family. And you will do that by placing your hands on my head. So that's what's happening. At a ceremony - could be a funeral, could be a disinterment of bones. Usually they're funerals. Marriages are a little different.

AJ: So it's usually for more somber occasions?

HT: Not really. I mean they dance! I say dance, But it's celebrating life

AJ: And family connections?

HT: Yeah, and family connections.

AJ: Did you use *ulos* growing up? Is that how you first came to know about them?

HT: Very good question!! No. I am not Indonesian, I am Singaporean. I met my husband in Singapore in 1975, maybe? 76? My first husband. And he was an anthropologist from New York. Ithaca. He had chosen this place - this is in Sumatra - to study. I have illustrations in his book. These are my illustrations.

AJ: Say more how these particular *ulos* came into your life. This one was from your adopted mother?

HT: So when you go there as strangers, as anthropologists and anthropologists' wives, it's important for you to belong. My husband was given the main clan, that was the Sagala clan, and the Sagalas usually take wives from the Saragis. So I was given the clan Saragi. So I was Hedy Boru Saragi.

AJ: So it's sort of welcoming you into the community, in some ways?

HT: Yes. I mean we were there two years. So, we were very much part of their life. And I tended to blend in as long as I didn't talk. This is more what I did in terms of observations.

I was trying to figure out what they used and, you know, it would take a lifetime. Looking at how they were putting it in. And I have no idea about weaving. I asked them what's this, what's that... and I drew it first and then asked them. They



Figure 2.5 Weaving



Figure 2.2 Spinning (Spinning)

were fascinated by the drawing. So I was putting in what I understood them to say, what the words were and how it looked.

AJ: So these are clearly very special, sacred fabrics in general, but I'm interested why they're special to you specifically?

HT: It reminds me of the time there, and that was a very rich experience. Two years. And you know, I have boxes of notes still. My first husband was in a car accident when our daughter

was 10, and it was a fatal car accident. We had already divorced. Thank God my daughter wasn't in the car with him. He has like 20 boxes of stuff

that's in the archives at Amherst college in Massachusetts. I visited that a couple years ago, trying to get my stuff, because everything went there after he had passed. But those two years, to me, were a very rich time. It was the first time I was in the presence of shamans, and I was an observer. And I was able to be almost invisible as an observer, because I'm a woman and, you know, because I can pass. It was just my perspective because I didn't know the language well enough. I can't forget this time. it will continually be a basis for my memoirs.

[One time] I was able to be part of an elopement. Having a wedding, or an exchange of all the families, takes a long time, a lot of money, you know, things like that. So, the head man's daughter basically said "we're eloping tonight." The parents knew about it but



pretended they didn't know. It was at night. Her good friends, at least one older woman, myself - I was just tagging along - and because it was the elopement of a woman, my husband couldn't go. And then we got to her partner's - the guy she was eloping with - his village, the family home. And these are amazing batak houses - art in itself. And it was full of garlic! Because they had just harvested garlic! I mean it's like piles... and I was like "whoa!" And then we got in the car and went to sleep because we had been walking most of the night to the village.

So you know, as women, you always wear an ulos: an ulos is part of a woman's traditional dress. This is one with a baby, can you see? I learned a lot about women and children. And nursing is what everyone does. And in the market, and the market is down the mountain, it was a mountain village, there was a woman from a bigger town. And she was feeding her baby with a milk bottle. And all the women gathered around her. It was like, what a strange sight to see! I don't understand the language, but there's a lot of body language that I can sense and then I give my own perspective, what I think of the situation. Who knows what was going on? But the women there were like, what's going on with this woman?? Lots and lots and lots of stories.

I think women anthropologists have different challenges but I think they get you different stories. So if you go to a coffee shop there and if you're a male anthropologist, who speaks to you? Men, right? So one particular, I don't know who this anthropologist is, but he made a statement like, oh, the women are the ones who work in the field, it's women who do most of the work... yeah, right! All the men are talking to him, right? So you know, the women had to go work in the field instead of on laundry day where it's the whole family. Fascinating, in terms of that!

AJ: What role do these pieces play in your life now? I know you had one on display.

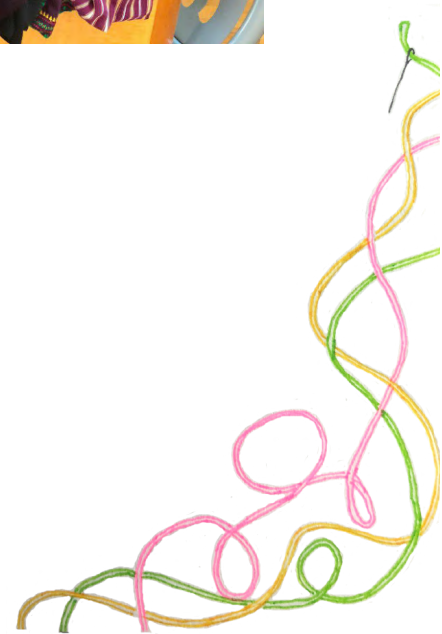
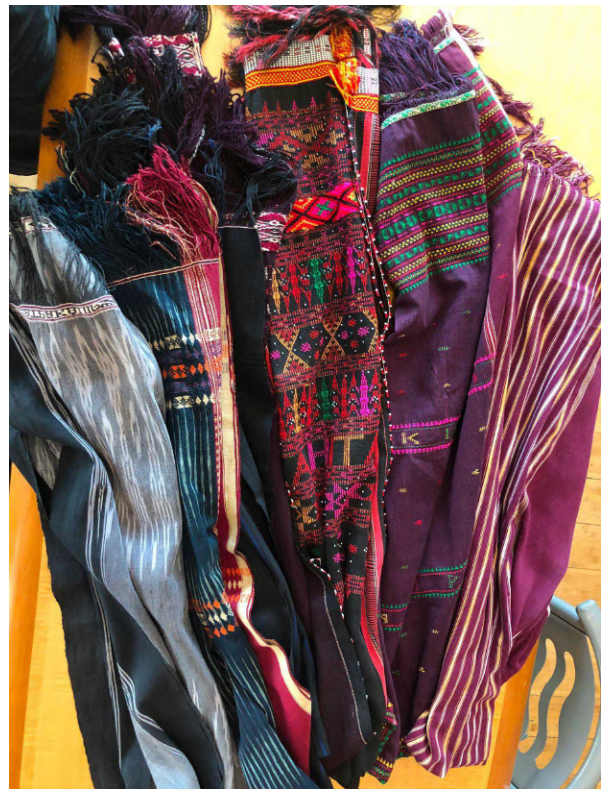
HT: Yeah! One is on display in Azania's [*Hedy's daughter's*] home, I have a few others too, and I use them sometimes if I have an event. Like this one, I would just use it. Beautiful. I have this in the back of my screen for zoom meetings, remember? And I can change them out. They are beautiful clothes, and it's very unique. There's none other, right? So it's become part of what I wear, I guess.

AJ: That's great that they're still getting use. They're so full of memories but so active in your life too. What are your hopes for the future, for the rest of the story of these objects? Are you hoping that your children will take them?

HT: Yep. This is part of my legacy, I guess. I think they have dibs on them. But here's another story! So this was my first husband, and like I said he was killed in a car accident when my daughter was 10. She's now 40. So when she was... maybe 15 years ago? When she married her present husband, and before the kids, they decided to go to Indonesia as part of a trip. And they came back down and tried to find this place and they did, and I got a phone call, because now everybody has phones, right? And you know, my Batak is kindergarten level. But Ruth was saying, you know, we're here! And this is the village where her father did his work! And they remembered, you know, how could they forget this person. And so they were gifted more ulos but nowadays the ulos are made by machines because they have to make tourists buy them. And you can get various other colors. and... very hard to find, these would be. You only gift them, in a way. You can't really buy them. Or if you can, it would be like museum pieces. I've seen them in the New York museum. Margaret Mead, you know, the anthropologist? She has a little section on Batak. And I saw a few of the old ulos there. I was like, ooh! You know? So they are museum pieces.

When Ruthie was a baby, I did use this to wrap around. It was practical. So I think I learned a lot about babies and children just by observing. And how natural it was to nurse. The most

natural thing in the world, right? And she was born in what used to be a commune. In Massachusetts. That's why George, my first husband, chose farming. It's an organization of farming, in this village, because he was learning it as a commune member in Massachusetts. Part of the hippie movement. But by the time we married and lived there for a while, it had become more different communities. It wasn't a commune, but some of the original was kept, the farm, they still have it. I was able to slip into that community very easily. So it was quite an adventure. And so for me, my stories draw from all these different places. And this is just part of who I am, I guess.



Another note from the editor:

I want to tell you about one of the biggest influences on this zine: **William Morris**, a textile designer, craftsman, writer, and socialist from 19th century England. He was a founding member of the Arts and Crafts movement. In his speeches and writings, Morris made the connection between quality craftsmanship and quality of life for all - workers who make the goods, people who sell them, and all of us who buy them.

Morris lived in the early days of industrialization and condemned the trend toward factory mass production. He pointed out the way that factory pollution made his city ugly and less habitable (Morris believed that all people have a right to live among beauty). He noticed that it resulted in products that were poorly made, less durable, and less beautiful. And as a socialist, he paid special attention to the ways that this system exploits workers, alienates them from the fruits of their labor and drains the joy and satisfaction from work.

Morris' vision for the future was one where craftspeople could take pride in their work and make beautiful things that would last for generations. He imagined a world where everyone had the right to meaningful labor, enough leisure time, and beautiful, useful objects. His words become more and more relevant as the beast of capitalism continues to grow and consume our lives and our planet. If this vision inspires you as much as it does me, you can find more of his writing available online for free.

-AJ



From Morris' 1887 speech *Art and Socialism*:

"I tell you I feel dazed at the thought of the immensity of work which is undergone for the making of useless things. It would be an instructive day's work for any one of us who is strong enough to walk through two or three of the principal streets of London on a week-day, and take accurate note of everything in the shop windows which is embarrassing or superfluous to the daily life of a serious man. Nay, the most of these things no one, serious or unserious, wants at all; only a foolish habit makes even the lightest-minded of us suppose that he wants them, and to many people, even of those who buy them they are obvious encumbrances to real work, thought and pleasure. But I beg you to think of the enormous mass of men who are occupied with this miserable trumpery, from the engineers who have had to make the machines for making them, down to the hapless clerks who sit day-long year after year in the horrible dens wherein the wholesale exchange of them is transacted, and the shopmen, who not daring to call their souls their own, retail them amidst numberless insults which they must not resent, to the idle public which doesn't want them but buys them to be bored by them and sick to death of them.... In buying these things -

'Tis the lives of men you buy!"



India Johnson

Thread Library Annual Report: Future of an Artist-run Project

Since 2019, I've run a project called *Thread Library*. Initially designed as an installation for the Iowa City Public Library, Thread Library is a collection of donated threads with a card catalog. Each thread is cataloged as if it is a book. Based on the information donors provide, threads in the collection are assigned a title, author, date and place of publication, description, and subject headings. This is typed up on an index card, and added to an old-fashioned card catalog. By associating textiles with formal practices for organizing information, Thread Library invites audiences to engage with the ways curation, classification, and description mediate our experience with information—and what is considered 'information' in the first place.

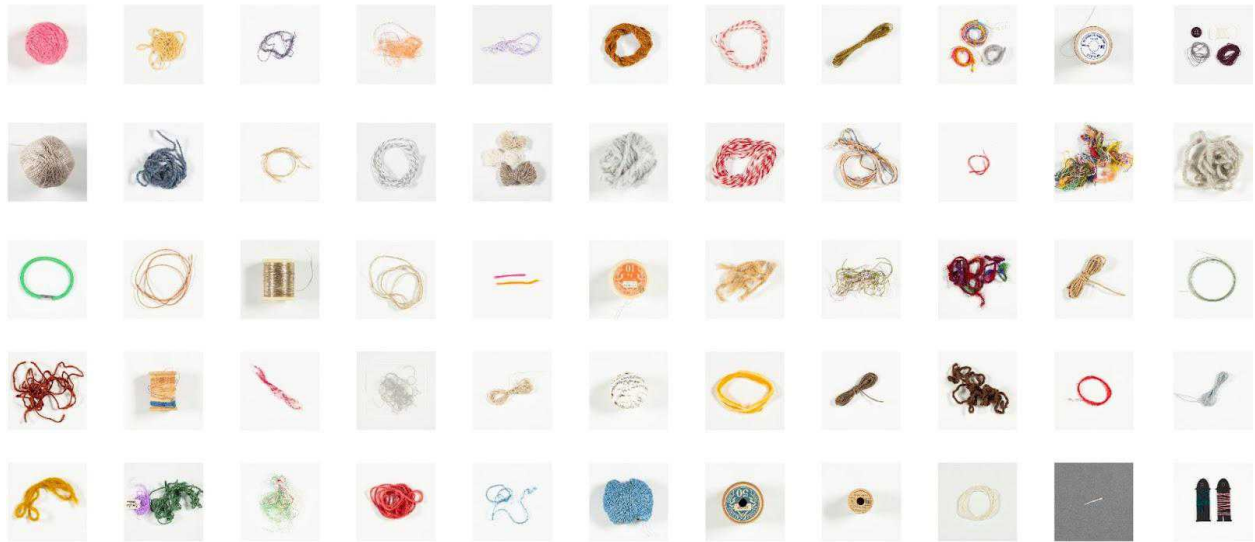


Fig. 31 - first photographs for Thread Library online catalog.
Images courtesy of Thread Library.

When I share Thread Library—in person, via snail mail, or online—I pretend to be a librarian. Whenever Thread Library is invited to give a public talk, I impersonate an entire library staff. The various staff members “collaborate” to deliver a slide lecture about thread as a technology, from prehistory to the space age. Audiences are surprised to learn about the connections between handicrafts and the 1969 moon landing. This might sound like an associative leap, but it’s quite a direct link: all the computer memory for the moon landing was woven by hand, mostly by retired or laid off textile workers, who were called “memory weavers.” Their story is just one example of why textiles are the basis of an information society.

For the last three years, Thread Library has been based in eastern Iowa; in August 2022, I moved to Minneapolis. Relocating has meant hitting ‘pause’ on opportunities to share Thread Library in person, which is my favorite part of the project. As fun as it is to interact with “patrons” while impersonating a librarian, I rarely get the chance to share what happens behind the scenes—which is just one artist, usually faced with a steep learning curve. Below, I describe challenges that have arisen over the last year, as I’ve taken Thread Library to small towns, big cities, and my local library system.

User experience design - Thread Library installs mobile exhibitions of its collection items in public libraries. The display can be touched; it is usually installed in the stacks, and never behind glass. While libraries reach a different (and ideally, broader) public than fine art institutions, it takes more time and energy for audiences to actively engage with artwork than to passively consume it. Most of the first participants in Thread Library were other artists: people with the privilege to structure their lives around making time and space for art. Whether they’re artists, crafters, or library professionals, Thread Library benefits from the participation of specialists—but it ultimately seeks to engage a general public. What is Thread Library’s plan for building relationships that will allow the project to reach a general audience in Minneapolis? What’s my first step to begin connecting to this audience?

Sustainability - Thread Library has received one grant (from the Iowa Arts Council), and generated a little bit of revenue from speaking fees. This has covered many project expenses, but doesn’t generate income. It takes significant time and energy to run a fake library—it’s

surprisingly similar to running a real library. At this point, the project probably needs a highly invested collaborator (or two)—but how would I pay them? Is there an ethical and effective way for Thread Library to generate a budget to support the artist(s) who work on it?

Library services - Before moving to Minneapolis, Thread Library partnered with a community library in Iowa City (LGBTQ Iowa Archives & Library) to circulate a selection of textile books and tools. In Minneapolis, this may not be feasible (given the lack of a partner library), or necessary (because of the specialized library at the Textile Center). Although Thread Library is an alternative library, and individual threads don’t circulate, since the beginning of the project, there’s been interest in interacting with Thread Library by ‘checking out’ resources. Is there a concrete library service Thread Library might provide to local ‘patrons’ in Minneapolis—if so, what, and how?

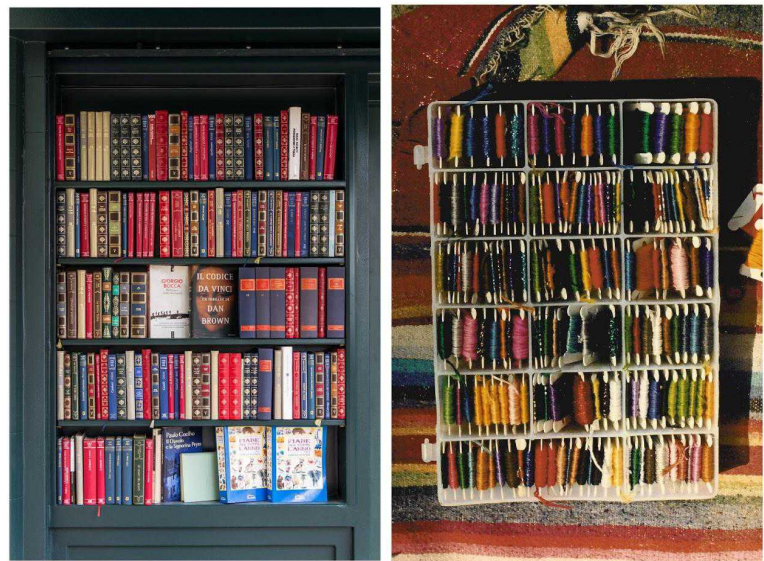
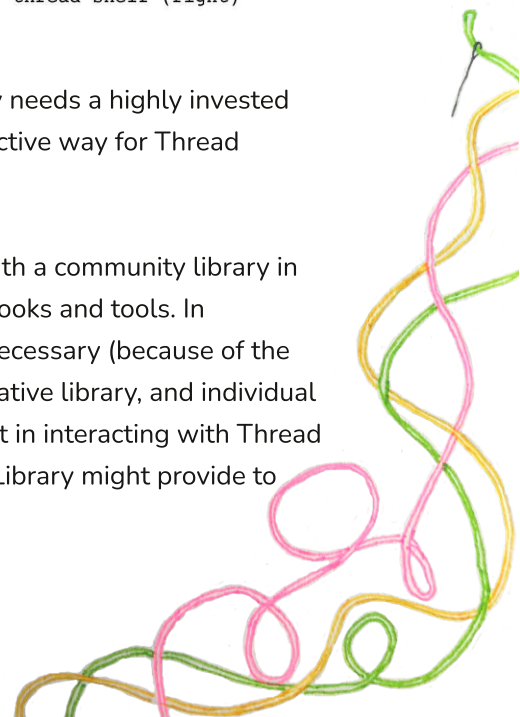
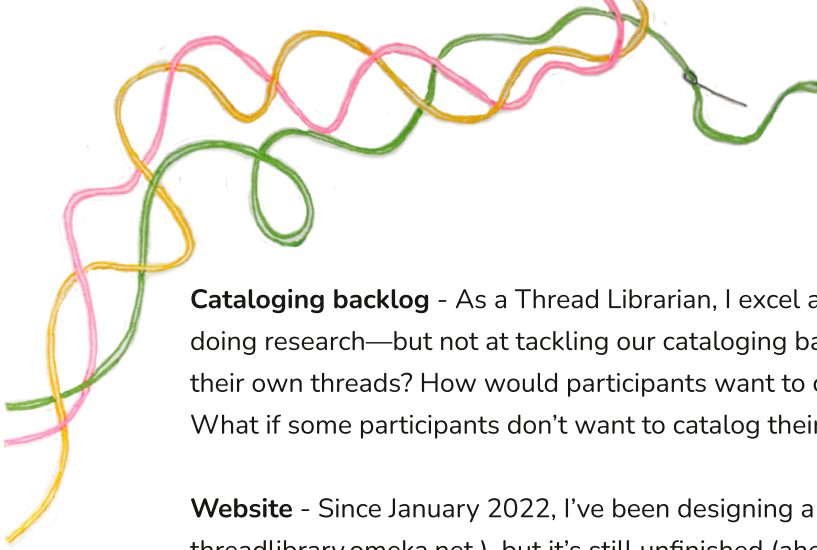


Fig. 23 - book shelf (left), thread shelf (right)





Cataloging backlog - As a Thread Librarian, I excel at interacting with patrons, public speaking, and doing research—but not at tackling our cataloging backlog. Is there a way for participants to catalog their own threads? How would participants want to catalog threads—in a workshop setting? At home? What if some participants don't want to catalog their thread, and that discourages participation?

Website - Since January 2022, I've been designing a Thread Library website (which can be found at threadlibrary.omeka.net), but it's still unfinished (ahem, *under construction*). What kind of workflow would help me find my way back into website building? How will I launch the website?

Social media - Up to this point, Thread Library has had little social media presence (an infrequently updated instagram account: [@thread_library_](https://www.instagram.com/thread_library_)). I've always prioritized smaller numbers of in-depth, in-person interactions with Thread Library over larger numbers of more tenuous digital interactions. But with a website launch in the future, how will people discover the website without social media? However, social media platforms use an exploitative piecework labor model, which originated in the textile industry. Corporations like Meta profit from feminized, tactile, visual, repetitive work that blurs labor and leisure, making every pocket of time 'productive.' Given this reality, what would it look like for Thread Library to engage critically with social media platforms?

Accessibility - Thread Library characterizes reading as a tactile, embodied activity. How might I find and pay for user feedback about our public talks, displays, and website from participants who are not sighted? What other aspects or types of accessibility do I need to prioritize?

I hope this article about the challenges of designing an interactive public art project about textiles and technology resonates with readers of *Social Fabric*. If you'd like to connect with me as I adjust the project to a new place with new audiences, I'd love to hear from you: thread.librarian@gmail.com.

India Johnson (@indi.gram)



Kat Gordon

Crocheting Doilies

How to Crochet: *Start by finding the pattern you want to make and the materials it says you need. Read the instructions first. Pretend you know what they mean but don't ask and just hope it all works out in the end.*

My aunt, my mother's sister, gave me three doilies for my bridal shower, along with a necklace with a picture of the woman who created them. The doilies are crocheted, which is a method of creating a textile using a stick with a hook and string to make a series of interconnected loops. They are made out of thin, very white, cotton thread.

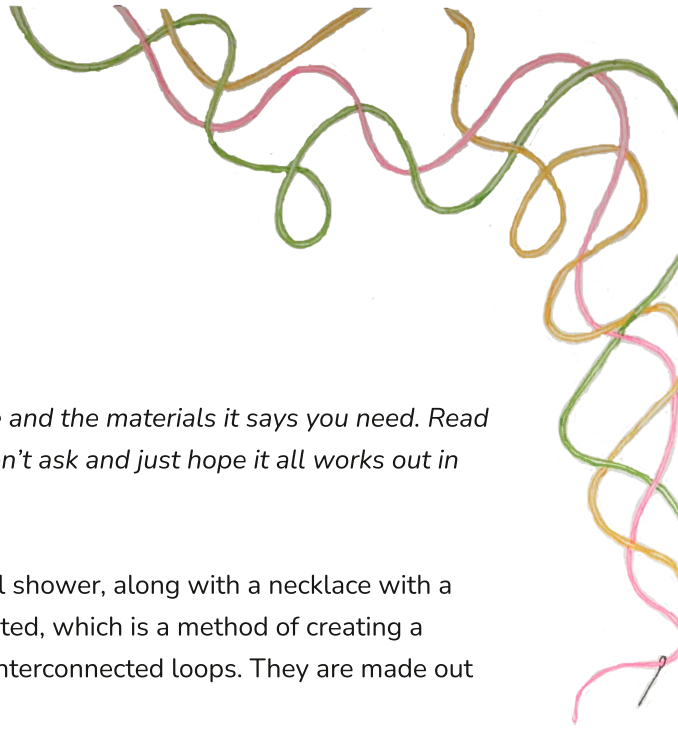
The woman who crocheted these doilies is my great grandmother, mother to my grandmother, who is the mother to my mother and my aunt. And I am the mother to my children who claim no gender.

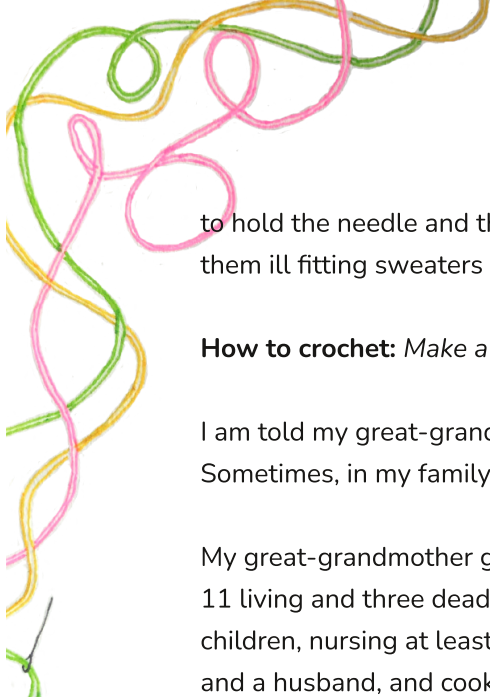
My eldest, many years ago, told me with wonder that they had been taught that a person with ovaries is born with all the eggs they will ever have already created already within their ovaries. I wondered if our bodies are part of creating the eggs held in the fetus's bodies in our wombs. I wondered how much unknown impact we have on the multiple upcoming generations of our matriarchal lineages, created inside our own bodies.

While my great-grandmother was pregnant with my grandmother, my mother was also within her;
While my grandmother was pregnant with my mother, part of me was also within her;
While my mother was pregnant with me, part of my children were also within her;
While I was pregnant with my eldest, part of any children they may choose to have were also within me.

My therapist, several months ago, told me that trauma causes changes in people's DNA, so the trauma ends up being passed down from generation to generation, tied into the genetic material that controls what our bodies look like and can do, just waiting to be triggered. I wondered what traumas have been woven into my DNA without my knowledge by my ancestors. I wondered what they would think if they knew that the stories they whispered in secret, with muffled sobs, to only their best friends or kept silent and internal forever would be branded into the future lives of their descendants forever. I wondered how the overlapping generations of traumas impact and change each other, if we can change the shape of the story told inside our cells. I did not ask my therapist these questions.

I wonder if the deep need to make things with our hands is passed down as well. Is the desire to use a thin, sharp sliver of metal and a string thinner than breath to attach cloth together to keep our children warm while they sleep, or the drive to use sticks to tie string into knots as a way to make warm coverage for our loved ones bodies also passed down? Are our hands just waiting until someone can show us how





to hold the needle and thread, or the sticks and yarn, so we can show people we love them by making them ill fitting sweaters and weirdly sized socks? I did not ask my therapist those questions either.

How to crochet: *Make a slip knot around a stick with a small hook on one end.*

I am told my great-grandmother was a stern person. I have been told nothing about her husband. Sometimes, in my family, husband's lives sometimes get lost in the wake of their wives.

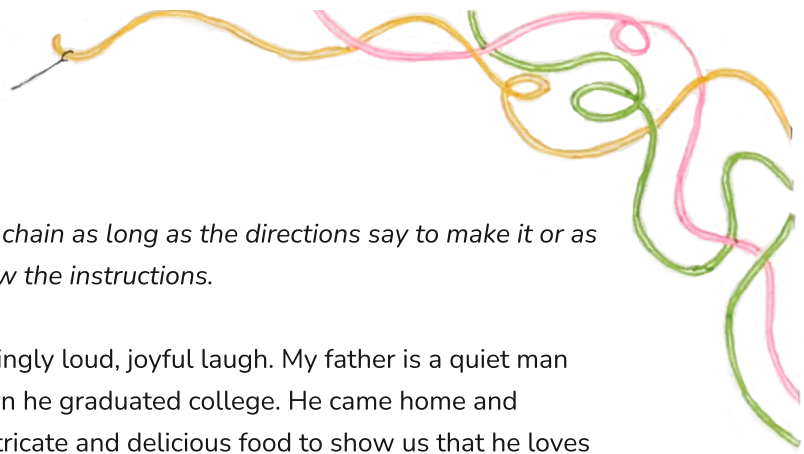
My great-grandmother gave birth fourteen times. She was 42 when my grandmother, the youngest of 11 living and three dead, was born. And somehow in the chaos of birthing 14 children, raising 11 children, nursing at least 11 children, years spent changing diapers, and doing the laundry of 11 children and a husband, and cooking the food, and cleaning the house, she found enough time and energy to sit down and crochet spotless, white doilies out of thin cotton yarn. My great-grandmother's mother taught her to crochet. It's just what women learned then. Perhaps she knit as well, and I am sure she sewed, although all of that has been lost to time. I like to think that my great-grandmother chose to crocheted tiny, white, delicate doilies to ground herself in the chaos of the world.

How To Crochet: The next step is taking the yarn and wrapping it around the stick. Slide the stick down until the hook catches the wrap and pull it through the slipknot you already made.

My grandmother was a joyful person. My grandfather was a quiet man who, but for the grace of God, almost died from polio as a baby. He was a journalist and hopped trains during the depression. He walked into the office where my grandmother was working, fell in love with her at first sight, and never hopped a train again. He never wanted children, but she did, so they had four. He used loud, clunky typewriters to turn words into pages of novels no one has ever read. I learned almost nothing about his life until his death. Sometimes, in my family, husbands get lost in the wake of their wives.

My grandmother gave birth four times. She was 40 and had been told 16 years prior that she would never birth again, when my mother, the third of four, was born. And, after surviving the depression, having expected and surprise babies, working full time while caring for a house, parenting teenagers and toddlers simultaneously, cooking lots of bacon, smoking more cigarettes than could ever be counted, and drinking whisky on the rocks every night for years until it slid into all every afternoon too, she managed to find time and energy to crochet dresses for her daughter's Barbie dolls simply to make her daughter's smile, even though she hated crocheting. She may have crocheted other things, and I am told she was able to knit and sew, although she hated doing those as well. But her creations have been lost to time. When her mother died, my grandmother was bequeathed three small, white doilies which she carefully wrapped in tissue paper and put into a cardboard shirt box on the top shelf of her closet and at some point gave the box to my aunt.





How to Crochet: *Repeat these steps until you have a chain as long as the directions say to make it or as long as you want it, I don't care how closely you follow the instructions.*

My mother is a tightly controlled person with a shockingly loud, joyful laugh. My father is a quiet man who sailed around the world with his best friend when he graduated college. He came home and promptly asked my mother to marry him. He cooks intricate and delicious food to show us that he loves us. Sometimes, in my family, husbands get lost in the wake of their wives but I try to make sure he is seen. Sometimes, I'm not sure if he wants to be seen.

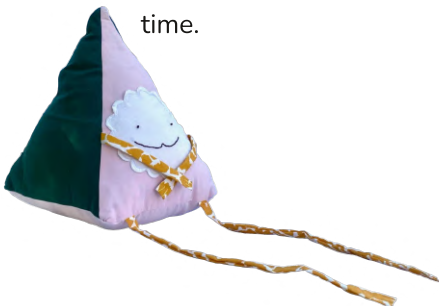
My mother gave birth twice. She was 27 when I was born, the eldest of two babies born within three years. In the midst of working full time, parenting two children, cooking and cleaning, and bringing my sister and me to one event or another, reading more books than there are numbers to count them, packing entire houses and moving more times than I have fingers, she managed to find time and energy to knit my sister and me sweet little sweaters my children wore when they were small. My grandmother taught her to knit and my mother taught herself to quilt and she makes detailed, beautiful quilts for everyone she loves. She could never figure out crochet, no matter how many times she tried.

How To Crochet: *You will always only have one loop on your stick. The chain of connected loops will drip down from the stick as you create loop after loop after loop all connected to the one before it, made from the same string. I, like my mother before me, have never been able to move past this step, so the rest is a mystery to me. Figure the rest out if it brings you joy. It will probably end well.*

I am the sum of my ancestors. My husband is a quiet man, who has escaped abuse and poverty. He wants to garden, sing, paint, and live a peaceful life. He works and works and aches to spend more time doing things he loves with people he loves. I try to make sure he is not lost in my wake and I worry that he is anyway.

I gave birth twice. I was twenty when my eldest was born. One baby, a 12 year gap, and then another. In the midst of working full time, going to school full time, homeschooling the 5 year old, worrying over the 18 year old, cleaning a house, cooking lots of food, protesting injustices, living in a pandemic, surviving late stage capitalism, I manage to find time and energy to knit during meetings, in classes, and in the quiet between moments. I knit to hold myself centered in the world. I teach my children to knit, as my mother taught me and wonder if they will continue after I am gone, or if their skill will be lost.

Someday, I will give these doilies, which live on the bottom of my dresser drawer because I do not have a spotless, white doily-friendly lifestyle, to one of my children, or one of their life-partners, who will then keep them in the bottom of a dresser drawer, or maybe they will frame them, or maybe they will decide that we hold on to too many things from the past and put them in the garbage where they will be lost to time.



Kayla Schmidt

To Have and To Hold

“Look with your eyes and not with your hands.”



This was the mantra my mom would repeat to my sisters and me before we entered any store. She knew we wouldn't shoplift, but if her errands included Hallmark or Pier 1, she feared we'd knock something over or disturb a display. Forget bulls, children in over-stuffed winter coats and thick mittens should stay out of china shops. Obediently, I'd keep my hands clasped in front of me, desperate to deter temptation. I am a very tactile person. Prone to daydreaming and anxiety, I'm always holding something in my hands, pulling at loose threads, allowing my fingertips to stay connected with the physical world even when my mind has meandered.

I'm most calm when I can clutch something. My personal, and most not-backed-by-research-or-science-or-even-a-quick-Google-search theory, is that it comes from being a twin. I've only ever known proximity. Once I was no longer wedged in the womb with my sister I must have been lonely. It's not necessarily human contact I crave, anything soft, right within reach will do.

I like to surround myself with objects that are pre-owned, soaked in some kind of story or scent or memory. I grew up in the same house my grandparents built in the 60s, so there's always a junk drawer or closet hiding treasures to adorn myself with. The peeling logo on a t-shirt from my dad's bar, or the unyielding metal of my grandma's class ring. For a time, the hand-tooled belt my mom made in shop class in high school fit around my waist. The shirts from my dad's bar always have a random name like Donny or Janet embroidered on them. These are people I've never met, who never picked up their dart league gear. My dad tried to use a Sharpie to blacken out the names so he could try to re-sell the items. It didn't work. We are all Donny, now. My grandma's class ring has her initials engraved inside the band. The belt had "P A M" shakily stamped into the leather surrounded by roses and stars. These pre-worn/well-worn items I've absorbed into my closet give me an outward appearance of someone eclectic, a collector with the confidence to pull off a thrift store, polyester, mid-century shift dress. Whether the item comes with a name, or is anonymous in origins, I love being laced with legacy.

As COVID ascended, "look with your eyes and not with your hands" became a sinister reality. It wasn't my mom keeping me in line in an aisle: hands touching things was killing people. During Zoom meetings, I was grateful for the perimeters of the screen. I could brag about my vintage

hair barrette or locally-made earrings while safely beyond the scope of the camera, I squeezed my blanket in my lap.

Blankets are remarkable. Simple geometric shapes (rectangle mostly, round for the groovy) that provide warmth and versatility. They are structural (blanket forts), meteorological ('snow blanketed the ground'), provide sustenance (pigs-in-a-blanket), provide comfort (Linus kept his for security), and means of destruction (smallpox). In general we all cover our beds with them, and are all covered by blanket rules or blanket bans. Mine has a pink plaid design.

I was watching an episode of Antiques Roadshow one day and a gentleman brought in an old wool blanket his great-great-great-something or other had owned as a soldier during the Civil War. It was a thick, brownish square that weighed down the wire holding it between two poles for inspection.

"Do you see this hole in the center?" the appraiser asked. It was hard to miss. It was the size of a human head.

"Yes, unfortunately it's always had that big hole," said the blanket beneficiary.

"It's where he would have utilized the blanket as a poncho!" remarked the appraiser.

I have also used my blanket as a poncho, repurposing a large gap in the threads where it had been torn before our friendship began. Sometimes it was a nun's habit, sometimes a princess gown, sometimes a peasant's apron. I found this particular blanket at the family lake cabin when I was a kid. I have other blankets--ones that date back from my days as an infant, fleece tie blankets that were all the rage in the early 2000s. This one had provenance. Scorch marks where sparks from the fireplace had burnt small holes. A coffee (?) stained corner. And it was nearly transparent. This is how I deemed the blanket had powers beyond the average duvet. Despite the threadbare weave, it had the ability to maintain warmth. And the pills of fabric that covered the plaid landscape like a thousand pink hay bales were perfect for my fidgeting-fingers. I'd absent-mindedly brush my hand along the soft surface, pulling at the balled string.



Blankets mark our vulnerability, our age, our innocence, or lack of. We use blankets when we sleep or when we're cold. In other words, the moments when we're the most

exposed and the most human. Speaking of exposure, Hollywood has no shortage of L-shaped sheets for couples (an implication-blanket that lets us fill in the blanks). When NPR put out a call for images of newborns wrapped in that hospital staple: a white flannel blanket with pink and blue stripes, they received nearly 2,000 submissions. Kids of my generation (and those of my nervous disposition) are all-too-familiar with the harrowing journey of Blanky, a yellow electric blanket with a sensitive personality in *The Brave Little Toaster*. When my twin sister was married, her in-laws presented her and her husband with a bulky quilt. “It’s a baby-making quilt,” she was told. I have two nephews now, but I’ve never seen the quilt anywhere near her bedroom. During one of my antique shopping trips, I came across a white fringed blanket with its original box. The top of the box featured a photograph of a red-lipped model wrapped in the blanket (and nothing else), a rose dangling from between her fingers. “Romantic Enough to Wear...” the bold text read. In the corner, a much smaller photo depicted what the blanket would actually look like when placed on a bed. A covert cover for your lover to covet. Less-sexy blankets filled other corners of the antique store. The browns and oranges of long-forgotten crocheted afghan blankets, waiting to be restored to their former glory on the back of a couch. They smelled of dust, simmering pot roast, and scratchy naps.

It’s easy to tell the stories about my favorite and most significant wardrobe pieces. I’ll proudly wear my heart on the sleeve of a vintage tee, my graduation robes, the outfits purchased for special occasions. But the items that I keep private deserve a little recognition. I will still stuff my blankets into a drawer with frantic shame before a suitor arrives. I was horrified when my college roommate discovered one of my blankets (a smaller one from my infancy that I used to hide under my pillow; one of the cats had found it and dragged it into the hall).

“Where did you get that?” I asked when I saw it in her hand.

“It was by your door, but must have fallen out of the rag pile from the hall closet. It’s pretty worn though, I might just toss it.”

And then I had to confess. Like I’m doing now. Like a soldier in someone’s family history, I carry a blanket with me. In times of strife and moments of peace. It’s out of habit, not immaturity. It provides small comfort and a kind of clarity. Some of us see clearest when we look with our hands.

Lane Henson

Grandpa's Flannel Pocket

A mahogany pipe
worn from your thumb-
stroke, flecks of burnt tobacco,
a sulfur match

the dim scent of cherry smoke
and a story of an island in the Missouri—

great-great-Grandma
never dropped the wild
blackberries she was picking
when the rattlesnake struck

she rowed herself to shore and hobbled
them clear to the front porch. There
were

bifocals for driving the eons
of South Dakota prairie
and for roadside words
announcing the fall of the Miniconjou—

all those things Black Coyote
did not hear. You carried
the weight of Korea
for years and then

the men you forgave
when your son died.
When you came home
your work took you away

again: the pure distance
of five continents,
never-ending tunnels, then

on your final trip
how the machines' teeth met
between England and France
and we found our way in the dark
beneath the great and anxious waters.
Back home, a handful of .22 shells,
a rabbit's foot and those numerals of
snow
summing each long winter
in silence.

The contents,
these days, are softer:

a toothpick and a tiny bottle of Tabasco,
a red handkerchief

a notebook to record
the day's progression.
The names of the birds you become
each night when you close your eyes.



Lauren Callis

Grandma's Black Dress

The garments of my Grandmother's closet were largely identical but for color. Much like my own fashion, it had evolved over the years to become a softer, more elastic variety. Her's, punctuated by the "Sonoma for Women" collection at Kohl's. As a woman her age, I'm sure she had already taken many trips to thrift stores with her previous styles and sizes.

My grandmother sat on a long waiting list to get into her independent living complex. The contents of her years had been expertly whittled down, organized to fit into a 1,000 sq foot apartment. It required creative solutions, but she was successfully surrounded by her hobbies and quirks until her final days.

She died quickly, leaving us that morning on her 87th birthday.

Now, this waiting list she once climbed to the top of required us to move out quickly for another resident to take her place.

There was a level of efficiency required to the process. But my body said otherwise. I was braced for what felt like a treasure hunt with meaning around each corner. She was an expert at tucking and storing. Each year, her spoiling nature led to cash being dispensed between my siblings, cousins and I. Accompanying cheap gifts, the bills were the real prize. Delicately taped around the pencil in a stationary set, folded within the zipper pocket of an avon wallet, placed within the instruction manual of a toy; many of these dollars ran the risk of ending up in the trash. It pained her to reveal their hiding spots, a norm that was established after the year my cousin threw away a fifty. The adults knew she didn't have money to be giving in the first place, so the surprise would only last a minute as we turned over the items in search of the scotch taped bill.

Before we began the sorting that day - I barreled ahead - sneakily snapping pictures before the last spots she occupied were disturbed. My body craved evidence of her living, unable to accept her loss. I wanted to see and touch the last of her aliveness through the things she used and rhythms of her life.

Her chair was the command center. I was delighted to see our habits mirrored by the small basket holding a pair of scissors and pin cushion sitting atop her recent mail. Their use was frequent, it made sense to have them within reach. Next to her bed I found three pens poised for underlining, crosswords, or jotting down a phone number. A red chocolate tin sat repurposed next to them. Her recognizable scroll on a piece of paper, fused to the red metal with clear plastic tape: "Hair clips- Barrettes". It is not uncommon for these items to be strewn about a bedside table. Nonetheless, I relished in the fact that I too had my own collection of pens and hair ties poised for dictation.

When a family member would bring up a new area needing to be tackled, I would over eagerly volunteer. In reality, my body was unable to focus and left a trail of half-finished tasks throughout the small space. But this feigned ability bought me time to look at it all. A quest to search for her aliveness. It felt invasive compared to the typical privacy these cupboards and drawers were given in our relationship. But time was actively ticking away until the disturbances were not her own. They were mine.

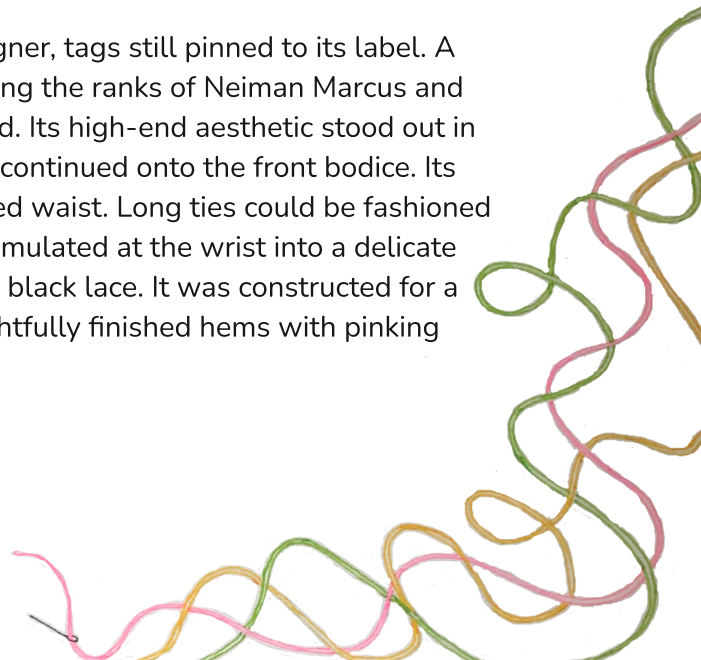
It didn't seem like anyone was catching on to my volunteering and the suggestion was made to begin going through her closets. "Great idea, I can get started on that," I said. I touched her clothes like I was searching the spines of books on a shelf. I looked for clues within the hangers of what importance there could be. Among the redundant Kohl's garments, I kept four items for their comfort and mystery.

One was a soft chambray blouse with a pattern of tiny flowers. Its tag signified more Kohl's shopping, but was not reflective of my grandmother's size when she passed. It's possible it had missed the last batch of Goodwill donations. Regardless, it was soft and fit me. I'd later swap out the branded buttons for a delicate pink and wear this piece to work often.

Next, was a white crewneck sweatshirt featuring a loud 90's heart explosion. The terry cloth fabric was so well worn that much of it was see-through when held up to the light. I don't know why she kept the ratty thing. Eventually, I would find photo evidence of it on her body; my small four-year-old self smiling on her lap. I teach people how to fix clothes for a living, but refuse to touch this one. To me, its holes represent the ultimate badge of her living. So, I save it for days when I am particularly sad and feel the need for her presence. I've never washed it and all these years later it's one of the last things that still contains her scent.

I grabbed another basic crew neck sweatshirt that hardly came off in the weeks following her death. Basic gray - with faint coffee stains - I've never been precious about this one. Its bands have worn from my use, a basic blanket stitch in colorful yarn repairing both sleeves. I continue to add to its coffee stain collection and someday, I will go through my stash of fabric and find complimentary knit bands to replace their formerly mended selves. Usually, it's in the wash allowing the heavy rotation to continue.

Lastly, there was a black dress from Howard Wolf Designer, tags still pinned to its label. A quick google search told me that this designer was among the ranks of Neiman Marcus and Nordstrom's, neither of which had stores where she lived. Its high-end aesthetic stood out in my grandma's closet. The collar was a delicate lace that continued onto the front bodice. Its closure contained four buttons and ended at the gathered waist. Long ties could be fashioned in front or behind of the garment. Billowed sleeves accumulated at the wrist into a delicate placket- fastened by a black button and complementing black lace. It was constructed for a bygone era of department store fashion; delicate, thoughtfully finished hems with pinking



shears. It's place in my grandmother's closet was baffling to me. No one knew where it came from and unable to picture her as the wearer. Gramma was practical and this dress was not.

Our journey through the apartment continued and we simultaneously prepared for her funeral. I was assigned to write the eulogy, but needed something to wear. I turned to the Howard Wolf dress. For days now, my hands had been idle from their usual pace of making- a bond that my grandmother and I shared, and she recognized in her explicit instructions for me to keep her sewing machine. I removed the machine-an Elna she spoke of like a child- from its case. A bobbin of black thread was already ready to go. In what felt like a holy act, I threaded the machine and spent a few hours tinkering and ripping seams to form the dress to my body.

I would later stand in front of the cross section of her lives in this mystery garment, telling story after story of her generosity and selflessness. Looking back at the faces of those that loved her - my search for her concluded. The evidence came in the courage of those faces and love that they translated to me standing there in that dress. Their looks signaled to me that what I was looking for all along was myself.

After the clothes were packed and worn to threads. There will still be evidence of her living.



Max Yeshaye Brumberg-Kraus

Mending the Crotch

It's always the crotch, right? That ever-wearing, ever-stretching, ever-tearing patch of never-enough fabric. I have five pants in the same style from the same company. Bohemian pants. Also called Thai. Or "harem." I wear them often. While I have yet to feel myself as the prized possession of a white-washed Hollywood sheikh (some sort of orientalist fantasy on the cheap), I wear them because they do not cling to my skin. They allow for airflow. They are patterned with paisley and elephants and flowers. They approach how I want to look better than any khaki, jean, or corduroy. But as pants intended for easy mobility, why, why, why is the crotch so weak?



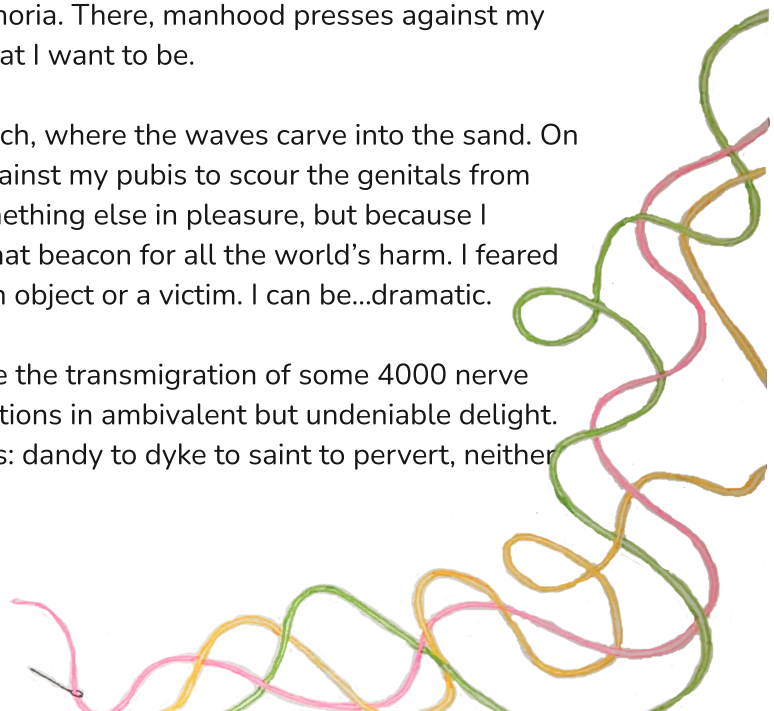
There are few options for someone of my body size, particularly someone like me with a proclivity for genderfuck. Most big and tall clothes are colorless, shapeless, and masculine in the most unimaginative way. Rough fabrics for rough lads! The soft touch of cottons or the semi-synthetics of rayon, exciting patterns, deep colors and inspired-by-nature prints... at best, these are luxuries for me but more often a fantasy. I know how to sew and could, I suppose, make some of my own clothes, but I'm definitely an amateur. It's also daunting to feel as if I can only have nice things if I make them.

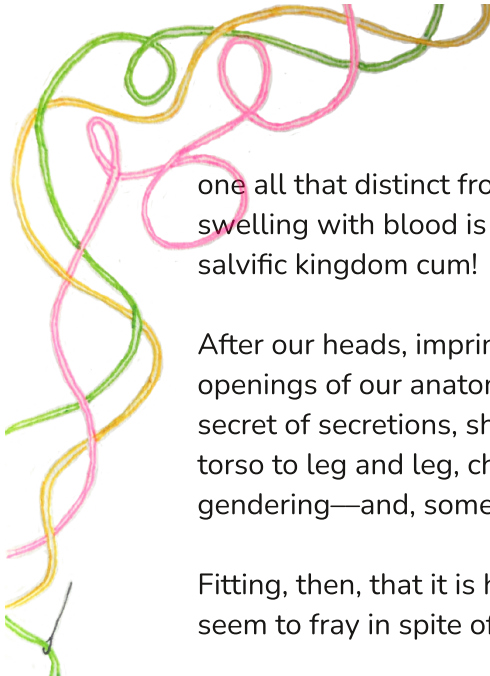
As for custom clothes from a professional, well, those are hard to afford on my artist income. So I stick to the doldrums of a fat man's wardrobe, embellishing with some dresses here, a ton of scarves there, and a faceful of makeup (significantly less so, since Covid). These accessories thrill me in a flash, but the fact of the matter is: clothes make me feel unfinished, more naked than when I'm actually naked. Clothes remind me, on the constant, that my body is too much: I am too much.

Now, if my body is an overflow of contestations (Fat. Hairy. Bear. Fairy. White. Jew. Man. Woman) the crotch is the wellspring of my dis/euphoria. There, manhood presses against my unmanly body, a reminder that I am never quite what I want to be.

During puberty, I used to dream of lying on the beach, where the waves carve into the sand. On my back, I'd hold a slate rock in my hands firmly against my pubis to scour the genitals from body—not because I desired to be someone or something else in pleasure, but because I desired *not to be* a man with his protruding limb, that beacon for all the world's harm. I feared wanting to want another, in so doing make them an object or a victim. I can be...dramatic.

But my crotch is also my tiny pleasure dome, where the transmigration of some 4000 nerve endings jive the faggot stomp, a vaudeville of vibrations in ambivalent but undeniable delight. There lies a lineage of nongenerational connections: dandy to dyke to saint to pervert, neither





one all that distinct from the other: each desiring across time and space. In that sweat and swelling with blood is history and fantasy. There is my Narnia, my Norea, my integration, my salvific kingdom cum!

After our heads, imprinted with mouths and eyes, our crotches bear the most traversed openings of our anatomies: releasing...receiving. The Transfluidic Bank of the Globe! It is the secret of secretions, shared among us all but hidden from each other, a guarded fissure from torso to leg and leg, cheek and cheek, a knot of our disparate limbs, the seal of our gendering—and, sometimes, the seed of gender's rupture.

Fitting, then, that it is here, in the crotch, where my pants are torn asunder! How easily they seem to fray in spite of their near weightlessness!

To mend the tear, we "reinforce" the crotch. And I cannot help but notice, when I pull the sewing needle out and patch new fabric to the wound, that my crotch reinforces itself in my psyche. I worry about future embarrassment or at least the potential for a surprising kiss of cold air where it is, frankly, unwelcome. I think about the shape, about space and mutability, room to breathe and stretch and elongate. I think about its peculiar shape and functions. I think about the fabric's touch, down there... God yes! That is to say, I fixate on my holes when I fix my holes. And the needle dives in/out: a textile parody of my sexual anxieties: in out/in out, puncture and tie 'til I can't take it—alpha and omega, Crotch of Crotches, why o why can't you stay strong!

Holding these garments in hand, I see my fingers through the holes. And I am reminded that my greatest fear is in the vulnerability, the widening, the opening of my heart through the opening of my eyes, through the opening of my mouth, even and especially through the opening of my crotch. Welcome to this hive of my neuroses! It's also my treasure trove. The strongest part of me. Its strength held in its invitation. Strength in the rupture, agape. Come to me...into me...in me.

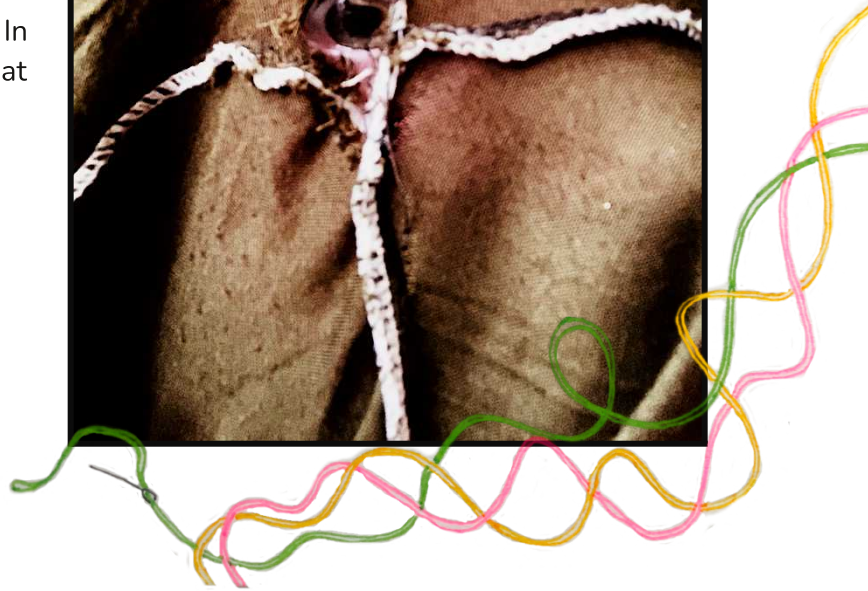
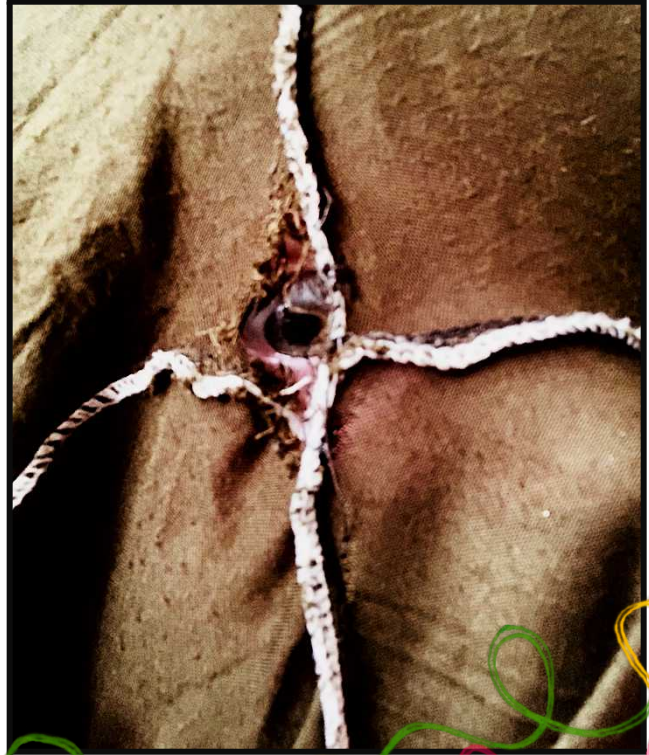
My pants—worn and reworn, torn and mended and torn again—my pants model the fallacy of the overall: to wear clothes leads them to wear. And never do they wear thinner than in that place where Adam first covered his nakedness, as if the pain and shame of being a human in love could be swept under a leaf. Surely the fig decayed and crumbled on his thigh?



The crotch demands an audience, and, while the fabric tries to smother the cry, it ultimately fails. But its failure, like all failure, feeds wisdom. Where my clothes have failed, my flesh has triumphed, discovering its potency and limitations. I learn that I am not my clothes.

In mending my pants, I am reminded that skin is not a garment for my soul, therefore mendable—my skin is, I am, unmendable because my wounds, my holes, my ruptures are foundational. Necessary to my skin are the very gaps where I invite you, who I love, to enter. To rest in me, or set me aflame, or simply look upon your fingers through my rupture and remember yourself in me as I glean myself in you.

What clothes obscure, their thinning reveals. I watch the outline of your lower spine, the darkening of your crack against the lightening of your fabric, the mounding of your ass where your bottoms fade. You glance where my exertion of movement dispels my covering, discovering me in the event of a split seam. In these moments when our interiorities flash at one another, our clothes facilitate their own undressing, and we come—and become—home in each other's flesh, and eventually in our own flesh too.



Nancy Devine

Catch

To a towel at my mouth

I was awakened by my grandmother.

I was sick; she knew

by the fitful sleep beside her

that I was momentarily not granddaughter

but intense emptying needing to begin.

I awoke another time

to my mother holding a towel

to my mouth, scratchy as dry grass.

How did she know from my sleep

that the moment had arrived

when I needed to evict some sickness?

The lesson years later as I fold

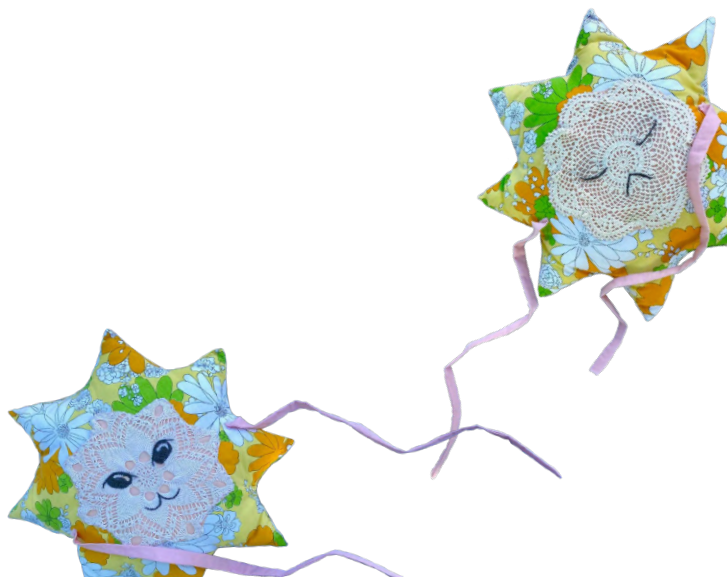
towels on a Sunday morning,

the terry cloth as pleasant to touch

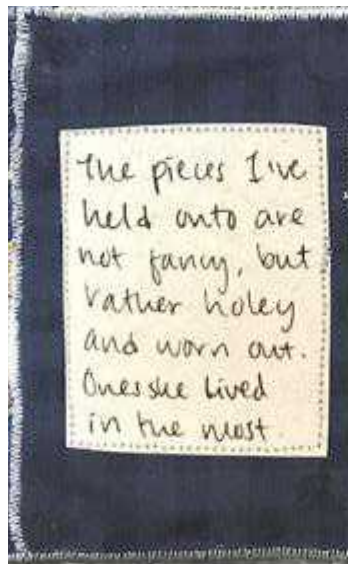
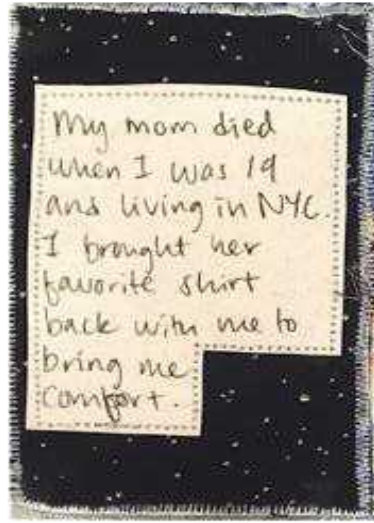
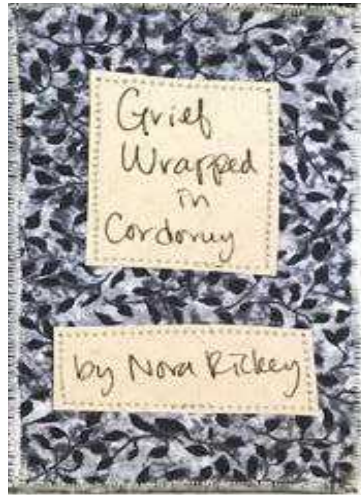
as a ground cover of thyme?

Two women knew what was in me

and loved me dearly, nonetheless.



Nora Rickey





I WAS PRETTY YOUNG
 WHEN MY MOM WAS LISTEN-
 ING TO THE BAND KOЯN. THEY
 ENDED UP GETTING ADIDAS
 FOR FREE FROM A SONG THEY
 MADE. THEY ROCKED THE BRAND,
 MY MOM ROCKED THE BRAND...
 19 YRS LATER, MY FAVORITE ARTIST
 KANYE SIGNS A DEAL W/ ADIDAS.



* MY DAD ALWAYS SAID KOЯN WAS FREAK MUSIC.
 * PEOPLE ALWAYS CALL KANYE CRAZY. I DISAGREE W/ BOTH

NOT
HID

Paul Jones

My booties

I used to be warm-blooded but now that I'm getting older I find myself chilly sometimes. Especially my feet when I go to bed. So I wear these worn out, stretched out ankle socks. They are so loose they don't stay on my feet. I always kick them off at some point in the night and they wind up stuck at the bottom of the bed or somewhere on the floor. I call them my booties. My wife laughs every single time I do. You can't ask for much more in life than having a spouse who still finds you funny after 30 years of marriage. (I still find her funny, too!)



Ricki and Davine Terry

“These ducks are from the bathrobe my father-in-law bought me the day I went to the hospital to have my son, Asher. He was adamant that every mother-to-be deserves a comfy robe and slippers to wear while they labored. This is the same love and inclusion he has given me throughout my marriage to his son. Asher was my only baby born where both sets of grandparents were able to be there for. I remember my mother and mother-in-law both helping me pick it out and I feel like I am being hugged by both of them when I see these ducks. The day before my son turned 17 it became clear the robe had seen better days but I couldn’t part with the warmth this robe has given me so I cut the ducks out. Hopefully, one day I can incorporate them into a blanket or something else to wrap around myself and feel that love again.”

-Davine Terry, 42



“This is what remains of my mother’s bathrobe. I grew up watching my mother take on the world, and it always started with her baby pink bathrobe adorned with these little yellow ducks. I can imagine the texture of the fabric in every detail on this robe from years of hugs and love. I remember my mother holding my brother in the robe as he went from a baby to a teenager. The pink fabric lost the pink over time and tore in different areas, but my mother always wore it. I snuck into my mom’s bedroom when I was about 8 to wear the robe and pretend I was a grownup. I layed on my mothers lap and played with the embroidered ducks when I had a stomach ache. My mom was wearing this robe whenever she told me her mother had passed. I remember her grasping at the ducks and melting to the floor. I remember running my arm across her back and feeling the coarse, towel like fabric as we cried. My mother wore this robe the morning of my older sister’s graduation. That time we hugged, the fabric felt a lot thinner and worn. The robe was so tattered and worn that my mother decided it was time to let go this past year, but she saved the ducks. One day, she will wear these duckies again.”

-Ricki Terry, 20

Stephani Pescitelli



My Grandma Betty has made a pair of snow people--which we at some point started to refer to as snow peeps--for each person in the extended Pescitelli family. We get our own snow peeps the first Christmas we are on our own, whether that be after moving to a college dorm or apartment, starting our own family, or moving in with roommates. After snow peeps come a crocheted tabletop Christmas tree complete with twinkle lights and an angel topper, and many of us have also received a full tree skirt decorated with bright red poinsettias and green trim.

But the snow peeps are my favorite.



In addition to signifying a sort of rite of passage, the snow peeps have also led to an annual family tradition. Sometime after Thanksgiving, my aunts, uncles, sisters, parents, cousins, and now their kids all send photos to our group text thread to announce their snow peeps's seasonal emergence. Nestled against the changing backdrops of office desks, fireplace mantles, tiny apartment nooks, and big warm kitchens across the country, our family of snow peeps reunite. What started as a silly ritual has become increasingly important as we all grow older and settle in different cities and states, especially during the travel limitations of the pandemic.

I come from a long lineage of makers. Grandma Betty and her late husband, my Grandpa Maury, made and gifted countless beloved toys, furnishings, and decorative objects and along with these a family culture of love, generosity, goofiness, resourcefulness, and ever-stretching and changing connection. The longing to make and give lives in my hands, too. While I have not found the patience and discipline for crochet and my creations often look quite a bit different from the snow peeps, I hope whatever I make in my life carries on this legacy in some small way...weaving connection, tradition, and love, one stitch at a time.



XOXO
Stephani Pescitelli

Susan Keirstead

There I stood with my arms out to my sides as Bhavneet carefully draped the iridescent silk fabric over and around my body to dress me in a saree. This was not just any saree, but rather was a gift to my former student and friend, Shivanshi, from the mother of another former student, Preethi, in appreciation for her support and help with Preethi's wedding the previous year. It is south Indian custom to gift a new outfit to all family members for the wedding day, and although Shivanshi had been unable to travel to the wedding in India, she was considered family for all she had done for Preethi while she planned her wedding from thousands of miles away in the United States. This is only one way in which this saree symbolized the connectedness of unlikely people, as Shivanshi is from north India, and so would not have likely ever crossed paths with Preethi but for their decisions to study in Minneapolis. Coincidentally, Preethi and Shivanshi studied in the same laboratory during their graduate degree program, but Preethi had graduated and was working in a laboratory in Michigan by the time Shivanshi started the program. As Shivanshi's graduation approached, I received a phone call from Preethi's employer, asking if there were any students who would be graduating soon to take on a position in their lab. As it happened, Shivanshi was ready to launch and she landed in Michigan, where she and Preethi became fast friends and colleagues. Another important connection that Shivanshi made in Minneapolis was to Kartik, another south Indian, who would become her life partner. It was their wedding for which I was dressed in the saree. Kartik and Shivanshi had been living miles apart in

pandemic were unable to travel to India to get married. Finally, unwilling to wait any longer, they decided to have a small wedding in Shivanshi's apartment in December 2021. I invited myself to the wedding in spite of some reservations about traveling during the pandemic. It had been a long, isolating time and I just wanted to be part of something joyful. Shivanshi graciously asked me if I would walk her down the "aisle" (the hallway of her apartment), and this is how I came to be dressed in the saree. This opportunity to participate in this joyous event, and to meet Kartik and Shivanshi's closest friends and her mentor was a highlight of that year. I realized how important being with people is for the psyche and the soul. So this saree represents for me the significance of the random and fulfilling interconnectedness of people, as if the fabric itself wove us all together.

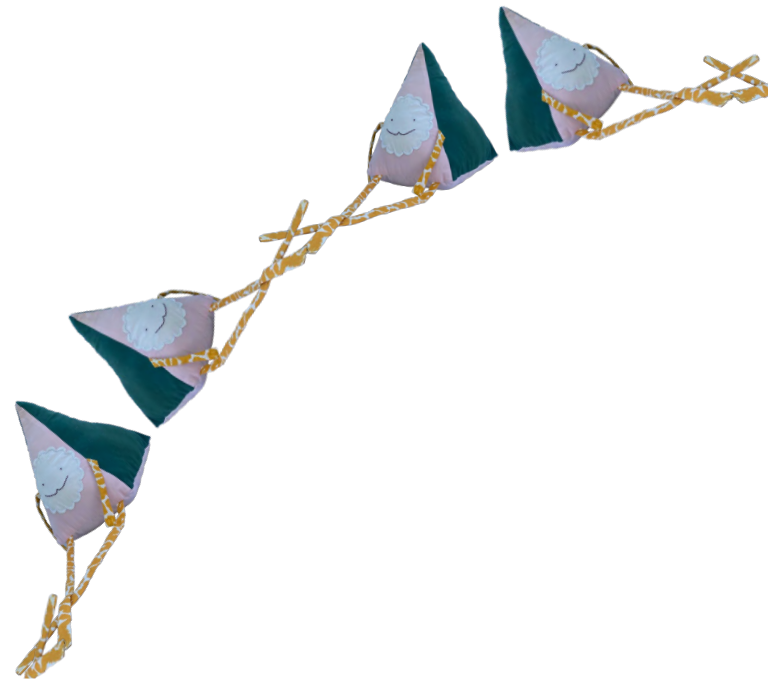


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About the Editor

Allison Jones is an interdisciplinary artist and craftsperson. Currently, she is doing embroidery on salvaged textiles as a practice of slow craft in defiance of capitalist mass production. A few of her favorite themes to work with: memory and history in objects, using organic lines and shapes to explore resonance between living things, feminism, magic and mysticism, and death and rebirth cycles. Her goal is to foster connection through her art and open up space for others to access their own innate creativity. When not creating, you can find Allison devouring horror movies and lavishing affection on her cat.

