

ALBERTA UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS

coming together, coming apart, again

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Abstract

This essay explores the transformative effects of care on domestic textile objects and makers. The form and content of the paper mirror the process by which a body of work is co-created. Co-creators include the woven pieces from which (and within) the new objects are made, the life of the artist and everyone in it, writers and theorists from the fields of textiles, feminisms, social geography, information sciences, and phenomenology. The paper is framed and voiced in the same way that the studio practice is structured, which allows for a seamless and egalitarian integration of craft practice and craft authorship. The focus is not on the weaving process itself, but on the impact of attention, affection and gratitude in the building of relations with objects, spaces, processes, and concepts. The experience of living alongside objects, and the practice of deconstructing and rebuilding the domestic, is in active engagement with a queer experience of the margin, and actively seeks to document queer resilience and resistance.

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Preface

Dear Readers,

I am a creature of nostalgia, I wish to keep, to remember. This is not a radical desire, but it does make me prone to romantic spells, swoony language and starry, wet eyes. I have cried when trying to describe the feelings brought on by the process we are discussing, and I am under no illusions, as I embark on this process of documenting, that I will be slowed by the blurring of the words by tears as I try to explain.

I wish for you to feel as I do. I wish for you to sit at my desk with me, on the bench of the loom, to kneel over a tub washing, standing at the ironing board. I wish for you to know the feeling of gratitude when a hem reveals a hidden secret, I wish for you to know the feeling of duty to bundles of threads. A responsibility that you don't feel quite equipped for but have agreed to. I wish for you to know that I trust you. I trust you to walk this path with me, to humour the huge feelings devoted to seemingly small objects.

These feelings do muddy the water, they bleed, diluted in the bath, colouring the way I see the work, the ways in which I research, the ways I speak. The research done here is done through practice. Practice of the caress. The practice of affection. The practice of writing love letters, making of playlists, the stacks of recipe cards with illegible notes and scribbles, words circled indiscriminately. The research evolves, invitations are sent to those who feel close to the work, or who have helped us to understand one another. It feels like I am writing a maid of honor address, (I have plenty of practice) how did you meet, how did you fall in love, how do you know each other more perfectly than anyone else, how did you ask one another to spend a lifetime together? I promise that this saccharine and painfully optimistic ode will be tempered? It is tempered by the acknowledgement of my failures, my grasps and misses. Ultimately it is all underscored

by the knowing that this rosy and emotionally driven making is muddy, an attempt to convey and connect the practices of making/writing/researching. We aren't scientists here, I reluctantly had to go to math tutors, instead we are just dance partners, and I have little rhythm and big feet. Sway with us.

Introduction

PROCESS AS GUIDE: There is always a reason. A reason for each decision. Even so, it can appear as if making happens by alchemy, or is practiced by incantations. Maybe we arrive here purely due to detailed map creation, compass in hand. The truth, as with most things, is that the path of making is somewhere between the magic and the map. There are always reasons. There are reasons why the paper is written in this way. The most important being that this process, this making, and unmaking, is the north star on which I rely. It is the pendulum swinging. To write to the work, I need to write to it in the ways that it can hear. My dog chooses to hear me only when I drop my voice several octaves, my nephew hears me only when I coo, I can only hear when I am being asked, not told. The work, I then predict, will listen best when I speak to it in the way that we have listened to one another in the process of making. It is more at ease.

There is an invitation. An invitation that is required for the work to move. If this project is a dinner party, if we are all sitting down for a meal as a group, we get to select who we eat with, who gets to see us, crumbs in our laps, spinach in our teeth. We get to select who we have a cocktail with, who gets to see us softened with libation, surprised by a belch and a giggle. In order for the experience to be filled with joyous revelry, productive conversation, and moments of sincerity, we need to curate a guest list. Too many times have I sat down for a meal, only to discover that my dinner companion isn't willing to have a conversation, rather, they are wishing that their monologue might find an audience. Too often meals have been consumed with someone who is unable to enjoy the food for what it is.¹ We are creating a guest list in hopes of setting a tone, in hopes of lubricating the conversation, in hopes of maintaining a dialogue. I do not wish

¹ I wish to be clear here, we are sitting at a table, having a conversation over a meal, the guest list including writers, theorists, objects, makers, audience. We are not consuming the objects, they are guests as much as the rest of us are.

to push myself away from the table in frustration, and more so, I do not wish for the objects to have to endure an uncomfortable dinner.

The drive to convey the knowledge gleaned from this process comes from my experience of being on the edge of the academy. A place, not for wee little kates, and certainly not for wee little objects. This sense certainly comes from inside the house, but in many ways, it comes from my experience of being near academics, in their homes. Raised around the corner from Western University, I was a prolific babysitter, a Capricorn vibrating at the most earth sign one can imagine, stained with the mark of responsibility.² This meant that I was in the domestic spaces of many scholars, all of whom were welcoming to this teen who, for all her sense of duty, was still plagued by all the pitfalls of being a teen. These families made me feel like an important part of their home structure. When thinking about the way I am writing *to* the work I am making, I am attempting to channel the same ethos as the employer who would gently describe her research in applied mathematics, just as clearly as she would describe how her husband's socks would be folded and slipped into a drawer.

This gentle clarity is why I am careful when I invite other writers to contribute to the process. We have a very strict no assholes policy in place here. In hopes of continuing my care for the objects there is a keen eye on who are my dance partners, my collaborators, I have approached the curation of the dinner guests, with the same intensity that I would apply to who would be invited into my home. From the beginning to the now of this process, I am responsible for my charges. We are all guests here, but if the energy brought, the language used, makes them a poor dinner date, then they can't come, invite rescinded. It is my job to act as a shield for these delicate little objects, and I find myself swatting away those who would dominate the conversation, who would bring the vibe to a less than ideal place. I will staunchly rebuff the advances

² Whenever met with the inevitable 'you are SUCH a Capricorn' I can't help but take offence, even if it is another system to understand and orient individuals. And to be fair with a chart of Capricorn, double Virgo, I do deserve a certain amount of disdain, after all.

of a bullish would-be party goer. I relate this research to a choir, all parts of the song are shared among us, it is an opportunity to harmonize, to work together, to translate those symbols into something more accessible.³ My accountability is to the objects I work with, and the way that accountability is made manifest. It is in the very careful and slow demonstration of radical love.

These dinner dates I have chosen, some are from disciplines that seem far away from the practice of weaving. But I am tapping on the shoulders of experts: feminist authors, geographers, library science researchers, queer thinkers, and textile theorists. These practitioners all offer ways to circle in closer and closer to the sensations, to the making, to the processes. It's as if we are pacing around a very specific point, and every time a new voice joins in, we have a new way of understanding. It's like turning an object around in your hands over and over, learning something new from every approach, the skin grazing your fingertips, the scent that enters your nose when taking a sneaky whiff, the taste that floods your senses when placed upon your tongue. By inviting scholars of many disciplines, we are able to sense, to caress, to circle, until we come closer and closer to a clearer description of what is happening in these moments of radical love, in these moments of gentleness, these moments of searching, these moments of memory, of annotation.⁴

³ Can you tell I don't read music, or that I chose to play the French horn in elementary school so I could sit next to my best friend? A perfect plan, Kyla and I were the only people who volunteered to play the French horn, there were only two of them in the band room, but we underestimated how difficult they were to play for two people not endowed with musical ears. Also, French horns are a pain to lug, too heavy and shaped like something trying to roll away from you, a lopsided wheel, a horn constantly seeking to knock your knees out, at least when you are still under 5'5"

⁴ I have a wish that we could all annotate, cite all our references, that filmmakers would cite scenes that influenced them, that songwriters would detail where and how they learned particular chords, that cooks could point to the meals that inspire their pallets. I suppose that is one of the reasons I diverge, why I include the little crumbs that have lead me here... I also do wonder if there is something inherently Camp about the desire to reference, the urge to find a common language. Perhaps it is the language of Camp that allows us to find one another? Sontag takes great pains to define Camp in relation to our old craft progenitors, which also makes me wonder where we are landing in this process on the Camp continuum... binary? - Sontag, Susan. 'Notes on "Camp."'. Penguin, 2018. See also LaBruce, Bruce. "Notes on Camp - and Anti-Camp." *Harvard Gay and Lesbian Review: A Quarterly Journal of Arts, Letters, and Sciences*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2014, pp. 10–13.

The implementation of radical love is rather soft. The guiding principle here, is that we (the objects and I, and also you, if so inclined) will step into a world that is understood through the lens of making, of care, of process. This process includes earning the trust of volunteers, disintegrating to our base structure, keeping our pieces, rebuilding anew/aold, making a home, and eventually going through these steps, all over again. It is a process that allows us to foster intimacy, it allows us to connect, it allows us to generate knowledge, it allows us to share the secrets we keep. We will be going through this process together, step by step, sitting, legs crossed on a chair, elbows resting on a desk, wedged between the pages of a book, perched on a bench at a loom, and eventually afloat in the tub.

All these poetics, all this romantic and floral language are not meant to obscure, they are a means to clarify, to bring closer, to incite a closeness with the objects, to incite an intimacy with the writer, the reader. But to be clear, this is a project about woven textiles, domestic objects the weaving experience, and the transformation possible when we are wandering the landscape that is created when we craft ourselves, alongside one another. The words displayed on this page are woven as much as the objects described are. Tensioning the warp threads, and slowly filling it in, pulling apart writing and ideas, then gently placing these ideas into the threads, loose and wild, slow and methodical. We are working the same way all across the project. There is no difference, other than the physical form at the end. Here we have a stack of pages, a stack of woven objects, a stack of fuzzy books, a stack of bones and flesh.

1. Requesting Volunteers

Pre-dance Object

This object, a napkin, colour included in the woven cotton plain weave structure creating a pattern, is just as much of the process here as any of the preceding objects. It is showing signs of love and use, showing signs of work and service. Seemingly simple in its construction, this object acts as an example of what happens when the object's autonomy is asserted. Standing here being heard, the rolled hem intact, the threads in place, unfussed with. One of a set, autonomous from its siblings, clearly declaring its independence, it has willfully given the directive that it isn't ready to dance. There is no way for me to describe how this directive has been given to me, the prospective partner. I also have not been ready to engage, I do not have the capacity, time nor attention to give the object the deserved affection. Therefore, our relationship stays where it is. It is so important to emphasize: this object, does just this, it objects. Truly it gives me such glee, not only because we have come to an arrangement and understanding, but because of the saying no thank you, or the fuck no, it has asserted its autonomy (see fig. 1 Figure 1)

THE DANCE CARD, A TOKEN OF THE POSSIBLE: To fill the lines of a dance card, to hold out the paper, filled with empty slots, every line an opportunity, a space, an offer, a vulnerable gap. Holding a dance card in my hand, approaching others to fill that card, it is a quiet panicked feeling, also a feeling of possibility, the unknown ahead. Who will accept my offer? Who will be interested in slowing down, interested in placing their hands on my hips, interested in allowing me to clasp their shoulders? A handing over of the card a gesture of vulnerability, a wish for newness, an opportunity to become a new person, the scent of a new partner's shampoo filling your nose. We are in a room full of possibility, we are in a space, full of taffeta, and cummerbunds, hands sweaty, cradling tiny golf pencils. An anachronistic event, a structure that would have been familiar to generations past, a chaste signal of availability. A formal structure embraced by the

painfully twee young adults in the local queer community, a community in search of a structure in which to embrace one another, a structure that allows for organized and careful openness. I suppose that the butterflies of asking someone to dance will never flutter away. I suppose that the stiff and laboured swaying to an Aerosmith ballad with a stranger will never soften. I suppose that learning the motion of a new partner's rhythm will never be smoothed. The potential of a refusal, always looming, but also a grace. An antidote against the terror of the dance with the unwilling, against the sidling up to someone less interested, against the risk of being six inches from the face of someone who isn't ready. The mitigation of the potential of being faced with your inability to read another's indifference.

This is a dance, this process, a series of steps. A process that is familiar, worn into the body, like the steps of the hustle, the bus stop and the bunny hop that I will never unlearn.⁵ This is a dance that is taken on as a community, a network of threads, objects, people, spaces and times. We are going to drift across the floor, again and again retracing, relearning, remaking ourselves with every new song. These objects, we sit alongside each other, our dance cards ready, hair coiffed, dresses ironed, looking to one another, who is ready...? Who would like...? Who is curious...? We are all standing at the edge of the dancefloor, waiting for direction, a cue of interest or dis. Demonstrating our grace, humour, gentle dispositions. Eventually mustering the bravery and even audacity to ask: Who would like to dance with me? Never forgetting to mention that I vow to do my best to not step on your toes, I will do my best to lead, and to follow, to generate the steps together. Guiding one another across the tired gym floor.

This dance, this consideration of agency is detailed by Barbara Wisnoski in "An Aesthetics of Everything Else: Craft and Flat Ontologies" Wisnoski states:

⁵ I give all my thanks to the elementary school librarian who maintained a side hustle (ha) selling his beautifully crafted, hand knitted throws, and ran our dance club, where he taught us the steps to these dances after school.

The de-privileging of human agency, makes possible an ethical model of making as a relational “dance of agency” among all sorts of objects (humans included). If all things have agency, a flat aesthetics—a reconciling of the ordinary with the extraordinary, of art and life—becomes possible (208).

We are flattening, we are pressing and squishing ourselves, sitting on a plane of evenness, of attempted collaboration. With that, an egalitarianism must be established, and empowered across our relationship, an attempt to balance the power. A seesaw sitting parallel with the horizon, our legs swinging in mid-air, the closest to floating we can experience, while being anchored with gravity. We are sharing this agency and doing so by becoming airborne, by suspending ourselves in the lake, by floating on a draft, by sparkling in a sun patch, by allowing ourselves to hang out of our back pockets.

THIS FIRST STEP REQUIRES A TRUST: A trust in the objects, the books, the loom. A trust in the words and ideas that swirl around us, and a trust in myself, and most importantly, a trust in you. This is a net of mutual care that we will rely on. This does not require an automatic yes. It does ask you to consider being here, and staying if you are interested. To experience us, as I am, as the objects are. It is an invitation to sit with us, to curl up like a cooked shrimp at a desk, slowly falling apart. It also is an invitation to sit on a shelf, feeling your ends loose and dangly, but also held. It is an invitation to sit at a loom bench, *reading* a book of threads, tangling yourself in a linen stream. It is an invitation to get into the tub, to absorb the soapy water, to float along the surface. It is an invitation to wrap yourself in a towel, and squeeze so carefully so you become part of a many, of a one. This is an invitation to settle into this home we are building together, to create comfort and ease. If that is what you are looking for. This is the invitation. To settle in, to become enveloped in this edge, to press yourself into this hem, for now.

TO FILL THE DANCE CARD, YOU NEED TO ASK: Like being at the edge of the dancefloor, ready to approach a prospective partner to join in an intimate act, an act of closeness. This could

be a request of a familiar friend to change the way we relate to one another, it could be a total stranger who has dropped a cue, indicating interest. Being in this position places all parties in a state of vulnerability. The question being posed is that of prospect. Are you interested in dancing with me? Are you interested in forming a relationship with me? Be it for a long time, or for a fleeting moment.

This moment of vulnerability, this asking, happens with the knowledge that the answer could be no. A no is enthusiastically received. A no is **as** enthusiastically received as a yes. Every no is received as a sign that the objects are demonstrating their agency. I love the no s as much as I love the yesses. There is no questioning of a no, there is no negotiation.⁶ The objects and I, we can both opt in or out, we are equally capable of stepping aside, stating our boundaries. Additionally, the opting out does not change the affection felt towards these objects, they are all loved so dearly. We may never engage, and that is perfect, the object might raise their hand to volunteer, and that is also perfect. The ability for an object to say no, confirms that the maker has the capacity to listen, and that there is a level of comfort felt by both object and maker, that there is an existing material knowledge of self and boundaries.⁷

The collaboration with a material is a trope familiar in craft practice. Makers are prone to romanticism, the desires of the material becoming a defining narrative structure within the making process. Some days I do wonder if I too, have fallen for this. I worry that I am imbuing these objects with feelings, with needs, all conceived solely in the service of storytelling, of making the studio lively with voices, of sharing the ownership of mistakes, of making physical manifest my own anxieties about damaging or hurting objects. I cannot be certain that I am not doing this, but I am in active pursuit of ensuring that I do my best to collaborate, to hear the whisper of the objects, to hear its thoughts, to feel how its body reacts to my touch. Textiles, these domestic objects are

⁶ I hope it is clear that there is an attempt at removing the hierarchy here.

⁷ For more information on listening, please see - Robinson, Dylan. *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*. University of Minnesota Press, 2020.

some of the most intimate. These objects, they are heavy with meaning, I will be careful here, not to venerate textiles, but I will own the fact that I am deeply in love with them, and therefore cannot be trusted entirely to be hardened in these relationships. Does this make sense? This is a tired line, but textiles are familiar, they are intimate, they hold us, they hold those we love, it is no wonder they take on a personality of their own. Solveigh Goett describes the domestic textile in “Materials, Memories and Metaphors: The Textile Self Re/collected” by saying:

The laundry itself, I suggest, is a textile multiverse: every garment on the washing line of memories imbued with mixed belongings; every textile process with its traditions and myths, histories and practices attached; every fabric with its unique sensory properties, its texture and weight, its particular way to fall, drape, stretch or tear; every thread and fibre a different relationship between nature and culture (121).

Textile objects are constant companions, they are witnesses, they are participants, they are active in the creation of relationships and of histories, they generate their own dance moves. At all points there is a textile object there, wiping tears, wicking stress sweat, gracefully hiding the secret of unkempt hair, their voices calling to be folded, to be unfurled, to be bathed, to be pressed, to be included. These objects are witnesses of connection, but they are also the conduits for it. They are supportive, irritating, loud, sticky, and comforting.

If the driving ebb of this project is care, I am not going to Misery these objects.⁸ My affection for these little figures might be deeply emotional, but it doesn't drive me toward the sadistic, to the smothering. I am not a Kathy Bates character. I just hope to be loved back as much as I love forward, but am conscious that this is not a hope that should be enforced or pled for. There are moments in which a balance has been a

⁸ Reiner, Rob. *Misery*. Columbia Pictures, 1990.

tipped. There are moments that have resulted in the bullying of the threads, moments of disregard. This forcefulness has been a source of regret, a misstep, a misreading. Any attempt to instrumentalize an object that seems less than enthusiastic results in heartache, a heartache and damage left upon a body that had clearly announced their disinterest in the process, and a delayed, also, guaranteed heartache for me, a creeping dread, a deep guilt. When reflecting, when realizing that my own voice has been prioritized over the objects, it points to the ways in which I was willfully ignoring signs, willfully placing my own needs above those exhibited by the object, considering my own desires over the desires of the threads, of the objects. I receive these failures as a lesson, a reminder, a way toward knowing, lessons so filled with sorrow. This sorrow, it was a constant reminder of how to do better. It feels awful to think learning to listen has to come at the expense of the body of something so dearly loved. To be so misguided, to be so insensitive. Please know that this type of learning, these lessons are not the way that I wish to accrue knowledge.

The offering of consent by objects here isn't permanent, it isn't a boundless and never-ending consent.⁹ It is the beginning of a relationship that requires a constant revisiting, a consistent checking in. a continual practice of agency assertion, and recognition. There are many who have detailed a practice that decentres the human, recentres, and reminds us that there is a larger network.¹⁰ There is a larger community at play, of all matter, and that this matter, these individuals should be listened to. This ability to hear the objects and the needs they are asserting comes from a long list of failures. A list that is comprised of the ways in which as a dance partner I have stepped on toes. There exists a list of apologies written for those mistakes, and with that clumsiness and recklessness comes an opportunity to listen again, more carefully, now that a yelp of a stepped-on toe echoes in my ears, but also an opportunity to remake myself. A way in which the objects have also been asking me to volunteer. We are together, we are

⁹ There is no such thing.

¹⁰ See Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

listening to one another, and as much as the objects can consent to our dance, I can too. There is a limit. There is a limit to my expertise, there is a limit to my capacity, we are enforcing our boundaries while melting into one another, or separate from each other. Always in relation.

When approaching the objects, there is a need to communicate reciprocity. No consent is met without an offer to potential partners, the offer of a vow and an oath. These words, similar, but chosen specifically to convey separate, yet connected methods in practice. The vow and oath come hand in hand, as a pledge of intended care and affection. The vow is the personal promise made to each object, the intimate writing, the storytelling, the object's vulnerability, met with the same, from myself, another object in this relationship.

The oath is a promise in action and structure, this is a more formal practice, signatures on paperwork, a tidy and concise abstract, a presentation that formally introduces. Both the vow and oath are similarly weighted, but attempt to do different things, the vow is the whisper in the ear it is the finger running along the hemline, the potential of intimacy in action. The oath, it is the attempt to legitimize. This feels cruel, it feels when said in this manner, that there is a need to legitimize, that there is a need to run to the courthouse in order to avoid community scorn. Like heading to the nunnery. That is not it, it is closer perhaps to doing justice, (that is not the word either) it is the making of an honest woman (what a joke), it is the meeting of the vulnerability, the fragility, it is the meeting of consent with the promise that this object, the napkin, the hankie, the tea towel, the tape measure will be celebrated for this softness offered, an attempt to open this practice up, so that others, those other than myself can celebrate, can relish, can see. Look! Look what this tea towel is capable of! Come, please celebrate the possibilities offered by this hankie! This oath, it is the work that must happen to ensure that this labour as offered by the objects is able to labour upon a larger community, no matter how uncomfortable, no matter how tender.

There is still a sigh, there is still a moment in time to matter how many promises made, no matter how much civility demonstrated, there is still a moment that hangs in the air, will they? Won't they? Are we able? It is a freezing of a moment, the anticipation.

2. Falling Apart

Tape Measure

This yellow measuring tape has been disassembled thread by thread. The nature of its original state offered many opportunities to learn about this tool that I carried with me for years. Woven, and then caked in paper, this tape measure had been so well loved and employed that it was stretched and no longer able to enact its job as an accurate measuring tool. For years it lived in my home as part of a still life of retired older notions under a cloche. It sat with a pin cushion, rusty dulled glass topped pins, wooden antique spools of thread. This assortment became a little shrine to tools that act as extensions of the textile person's hands, those that allow the maker to multiply themselves, duplicate fingers to hold things, count things, and so forth.

When coming apart, the woven structure would almost breathe, for every short little weft thread pulled, there would be a little gasp of dust, covering the maker, floating through the air, settling on surfaces. A battle ensued, the attempts to keep these little threads in order, stored in the correct direction, forced a slower than usual process of keeping each 1.5 cm thread between the pages of a book. I realized half way through the process, with these long tentacle tails of warp laying in my lap, that I was being unreasonable in my expectation for these tiny little threads, that keeping them separately meant that they no longer had a relation to the thread that would be pulled next, so in reaction to this discovery, I covered a piece of cardboard with double sided tape and pasted these baby threads down so I could tease out the rest of these long tentacles.

Eventually, these long threads untangled from the grid of woven structure, loose and unwieldy, tangly and charged with static, hung loose from a band hung on the wall. The short threads were vulnerable to being lost, misunderstood, misplaced, or read upside down. Whereas these long threads were vulnerable to knots, breakage, and being caught up in something unwanted. Though from the same place, these two types of thread offered their little bodies to totally different risks, which hopefully, I have mitigated (see fig. 2Figure 2)

WE ARE PICKED, WE PICK ONE ANOTHER: This picking, and this foundation of mutual care and vulnerability are deliberate. The conscious decision to work with objects that consent to be picked allows for our dance to start. The initial seed of this project is grief. The grief of loss and the acknowledgement of clumsiness. After a night lying awake, asking: 'What would happen if I tried to unweave something and reweave it into a new context? What would happen? Would it still be recognizable?' I arose the next day and attempted the process. This attempt was rushed and excited. Though successful, there was this mournful feeling once I had completed the pulling apart. I realized that I had been insensitive, brash, and reckless. This recklessness resulted in a snow drift of threads on my desk, wantonly snipped, torn and displaced, not considered. This pile of disregarded and fractured threads was a monument to the ways I had failed the object, of how destructive the process of making can be, regardless of outcome. It is not an exaggeration to say that I was heartbroken, I was disappointed, I was ashamed. I had taken this object, torn into it without any care, haphazardly teasing out its warp threads, when the object was showing any resistance, I would disregard the message and keep working, using destructive methods, pulling out scissors – working without care. I had forced my desire, I had chosen speed over thoughtfulness. I had disrespected the vulnerability of the object and asserted myself as maker. I was able to yank at these threads, remove them from their comfort, but did that mean I should? I disregarded the fragility of the thread, I took advantage of the ability of this line, this thread, to break,

and I instrumentalized it. The fragility that the thread had offered was used against it, recklessly and without thought. This desire to produce without consideration, the lasting impact of carelessness, and inattention resulted in the drive to apologize—to make amends—to recognize the collaborative nature of this process, my responsibility to the thread, and to continue forward with the promise to do better, to learn from every mistake. I vowed that this moment of clumsiness would be a turning point.¹¹

TO BE THOUGHTFUL, TO BE CAREFUL, TO BE GENTLE, THIS IS THE WORK: I say that with a sigh, it is the work. The work to be encoded into every step of this process of making, but also in every movement made. In the process of making, certainly, there are visible signs of when this fails, the scissors being pulled out, the cut threads clinging to my clothes, tiny reminders to be gentle, to be patient. There is more difficulty in how this ethos can be pulled into this work. ****points at page**** how can this process be reflective of that? ****points at napkin**** In order to do this, I am deliberate. Careful if you will, of who is invited to the table, and whose other ideas are coming to intersect with the work. In order to do this, I attempt to employ a slow process of teasing apart writing, teasing apart theory. Slowly pulling at the strands that the work is comprised of, disintegrating the words from the page, keeping them stored away, slipped into a system of recipe cards and notebooks, to be worked with later. There is no new idea, so the dance partners become that many more, the authors come to assist in this process. This fragility, the ability for the words to break apart, is a twin nature to the objects I work with. This form of fragility is described by Sara Ahmed in *Living a Feminist Life* where she delves into the ways in which fragility intersects with the lived experience of those on the margins.

Instead of thinking of fragility solely as an attribute of an object or a person, Ahmed details how fragility is also a quality of interconnectedness (164). There is a point here

¹¹ Sara Ahmed provides cold comfort, but comfort nonetheless in *Living a Feminist Life* by saying “Clumsiness might provide us with a queer ethics. Such an ethics attends to the bumpiness of living with difference, so often experienced as a difference in time; being too slow or too fast, out of time”(166). We are in time. Out of time. Lacking a temporal rhythm

where the fragile individual and the fragile state of the world exist on the same plane. This fragility is shared between the part and the whole. I am fragile, and you are stressed out too. The use of the word break, it bristles on my lips, but the concept of the shattered, or the scattered, the fragment, this state resulting from an event feels closer:

When a stone breaks, a stone becomes stones. A fragment: what breaks off is on the way to becoming something else. Feminism: on the way to becoming something else. Shattering: scattering. What is shattered so often is scattered, strewn all over the place. A history that is down, heavy, is also messy, strewn. The fragments: an assembly. In pieces. *Becoming army* (186).

This image of the fragments together, the ability to reassemble, to rebuild, and reconstitute from the disassembled state points to a potential. A potential new way of being. These objects, their fragmented state, are in a constant state of becoming. Of course, the wiggle of the thread it is a perpetual motion machine, moving at a glacial pace.

This ability to fall apart is a gift; it is the vulnerability of an object in motion. To willingly fall apart is an acknowledgement of fragility, to be vulnerable, to be aware of mortality. The willingly is important. This willingness comes due to the promise, that vow and oath. It is the creation of a space that allows one to willingly fall apart with the knowledge that the author will also fall apart. This understanding that we are both going to go through a transformation, that promise of mutual care allows for mutual vulnerability and therefore mutual transformation.

This falling apart, this fragility in motion, this ability, this quality of being mortal and available, reminds that the ability to be fragile is a demonstration of our relations. It is a demonstration of connection, an acknowledgement that we can fall too. Ahmed states “fragility itself is a thread, a connection, a fragile connection, between those things deemed breakable” (164). Whereas, the immovable, the untangleable, the resistant and

flouting of this relation, there is a conscious and deliberate removal from the many, from the home, from the space in the action to do this.

This fragility and disintegration, this smudging of edges, is the action. We are rubbing off on one another, we are collapsing into each other's arms, we are reaching for one another, reminding the other that our fragility and our edges are reflections of each other. To disintegrate in each other's hands is an ability, it is an utterance of trust, it is a pact in action. This is different from destruction. There is uncomfortability for certain, but that comes in the showing of bellies, that uncomfortability comes not in the act of falling, but in the strangeness of being vulnerable. This is not destruction. This is the inevitability that comes with the creation of relation.

Our margins, our selvedges, our edges, the perimeter, the space that is defined as one, the margin as a border, a differentiation of self, are all evidence of our need for self-preservation, the need to isolate others from our bodies. No one is required to release their edge, there is no need to undo your hems, no need to let threads loose. The decision to keep the self as a whole is the same as the falling, this is the assertion of autonomy in action. It is not the particulars of a decision, but a decision itself. It is a fragile way of being. It is the acknowledgment of the ability to break, the willingness to mush, to slip between the fingers of another. It is not an erasure of boundaries; it is not a total release of control. It is the acceptance and trust in the impact of that ability to fall, to disintegrate, and to be remade, to be reconstituted, to subject our bodies to two different kinds of risk, and to allow fragmentation to become interconnection.

3. Keeping as Care

Book Singular

The act of keeping here has been a constant. The act of keeping is one that both dance partners are striving for. In order for either of us to do this successfully we have to rely on a third, and isn't that always the way? In this case we have both turned to books, we turned to a copy of Little Women a book just plucked from the shelves of books that have been carted from home to home in hopes of making a familiar space for myself and my loved ones. It is the dream that this book acts as a home for these threads, who have been gentled pulled out of their familiar grids to be held in wait. The settling into these homes, these homes made by the pages of this book, creating little tunnels to keep their little bodies in place, burrowed into the markers of how the maker has been read by others, and read by themselves, markers of how they wish to be read (see fig. 3Error! Reference source not found.).

I am a babysitter, a caretaker. There is no instinct to mother, but there is an instinct to watch over. I am always a big sister, an auntie, the neighbourhood kid who seems together enough to watch your multiple children. There is a distinction in this. I am a placeholder, distinctly nonparental. In my mid-twenties I was one of a network of caregivers for my dad, who was dying of stomach cancer. We all could act in vastly difference registers, all taking turns to fret, to coo, to yell at dad, all with good reason at any given point. You see, dying can bring to the fore grace and grumbles, for everyone involved, and sometimes he was a pill, and sometimes we were. I tended to be the call for emergencies on the rare occasion when my mum wasn't available, and this meant because of luck, I was the primary caregiver and advocate in moments of extreme emergency.¹² This role as a caregiver in the moment of crisis is one that suited. One that

¹² These emergencies blend, but I remember distinctly, when my mother and sister were on a weekend away, the first they had taken in years, my father, walking up to me, a pale green, saying how he had to go to emergency, now. This was unusual, he generally had to be badgered into entering the hospital, as

fit. The ability to take on fulltime caregiving, the living with, was outside of my ability, but I was capable, I was a reliable call, likely to pick up and likely to speed over, even if it was out of my depths.

This challenge to provide care, this prospect that I could provide care, to any of the people who asked me to, was a symptom. With reflection, it is clear that this potential was demonstrated by my disposition, it was a reading of my capacity to care before I was aware I was able. This act of being tossed into the deep end, was a call to provide care, but also to receive it. The form of acceptance and receptiveness materialized in the form of reading and trust. This seeing and reflecting of aspects of the self, unclear without the relational highlighting. The knowledge highlighted in these moments is created due to the generosity of the other party; the care demonstrated by the dance partner. The steps might not be known by all of us, but in reflecting each other's motions we are able to mimic one another, carefully witness one another and generate a new way of moving. The reciprocal nature of care is the foundation upon which the work is pieced together in my practice. This administered care is enacted by calling upon

he was always convinced it was easy to get in, but next to impossible to get out (definitely true). So, my father, asked me to take him to the hospital, I was confused, but I knew he must be worried, or in pain, or both. So, I got in the driver's seat of his Ford Edge (a car wide enough for him to load his golf clubs in widthwise) and I sped to the closest hospital that he trusted. Every bump on the road, he winced. I can remember driving over the train tracks that ran through the centre of the city, and cursing under my breath, and apologizing to him. He had his stomach removed three months earlier, and had been suffering from post-surgery complications, specifically that the staple gun that the surgeon was familiar with to was out of order, so she had to use another model, and this allegedly, had added to the issues he was having... the issue was, he had a leaky join, stomach acid running into his thoracic cavity (can you call it *stomach acid*, if the stomach is no longer in the equation?)

Once we were at the hospital, and my dad was lying in a hospital bed, a resident wandered in with a chart. I explained to him what I had told the triage nurse, and he suggested that he unpack the wound that would not heal, and repack it. Now, I had changed his bandages, not this packing, but I had watched the home nurses repack this weepy hole in my father's gut a number of times. I knew, this resident, new to us, new to the situation, new to this wound, was not equipped. So I advocated, asked to speak to someone else. But he carried on, removing the top layer of gauze, and pulling on the cheese cloth tail that hung out of this hole. He started to perform the most macabre, unfunny magic trick. Just yanking a ribbon of bandage out of my fathers would be stomach, dry. Faced with a situation that I was not equipped, left to trust my unpredictable gut, my dad didn't have one you see.

the ways in which I was taught to nurture. It is the mirroring of care both called on and applied as a way of tending to the outside, while being able to listen and receive.

We are as objects in a tangle, in a process, these threads, these books, these napkins, this maker, we are in the throes of a promise made to one another. We are actively engaged in holding up both ends of our negotiations. Due to this, there is a battle to ensure the promised safety. There is a need to ensure that the vulnerability that is being offered, that the fragility exhibited here, is sufficiently met with assurance, with the demonstration of, and enactment of the promise. This means, we must keep. This keeping is necessary, and it is necessary that we do it ourselves. These objects have done this work, these objects hold upon themselves their own records, their own notations, in the form of imprints.

We have pressed into each other, we have left traces of ourselves upon one another. This is the impact of being in the world, of being in space. There is no way, no amount of carefulness that can prevent this. We are holding the stains of one another, these marks, some temporary, the wrinkle of a pillow pressed into a cheek, or the shadow of wetness that appears on the plane of a napkin. Some of these impressions are permanent, the silver line left after the healing of a scratch, the wrinkle left on washed linen. Most of these impressions though, are somewhere in the middle. Between permanent and in. These impressions are not singular, these impressions are stacked. We are perpetually writing ourselves on each other. Palimpsests, or maybe mirrors? Certainly surfaces, surfaces and edges. We are all napkins; we are stacks of folded laundry towering up due to the stability or instability offered by our neighbours.

The books are a physical manifestation of the care and focus steeped in the process and making. In searching for a way to keep threads ordered and honoured, I look across the terrain of my desk and I see the books stacked around me, I think immediately of the ways in which books are used as repositories. Examples of how books are used in

unusual ways flood forward, the hollowing of books I did as a delinquent teen, books bought from second hand stores with imprints of previous owners, cash stashed between pages for safe keeping. Books are keepers of information, they are keepers of histories, personal stories. These keep not only the words, but the places they have been. If you look closely, you can read the physical form of a book like you would the borrowing list in a library loan.

There is something about keeping the threads between the pages of the books that cannot be mimicked by other methods of keeping. There is a way in which it allows each thread to be individuated from its neighbours. It allows for a quiet home of solitude, they receive their own address, a page number denoting residence, a little tiny burrow between the pages, nestled and safe. This keeping, this meticulous keeping is transformative. It is the moment, it is the moment that communicates the care in making. This is the vow in action. This moment is the promise in play. By slipping the threads between the pages of a book, there is a dream that this action allows it to be its most book, all flappy pages and strong spine. The book gets to help fulfill a promise, the thread gets to reap what is promised. This system is not perfect, it is not fool proof, especially since I am a fool, and I blunder about with static running through me and a fallible attention span. There is no guarantee of perfection, instead it is a promise of doing the best I am capable of within my ability.

The care exhibited here is not maternal, I am not brooding over a clutch of eggs, at least not most of the time. There is a care that is given and applied, that in this case, stems from somewhere else. It comes perhaps from the recognition of fragility as demonstrated by the threads and a desire to fawn over that fragility. This care springs from an identification of the maker's own vulnerability, and innately breakable self. I bestow the attention and affection that I wish to be applied to me. This is a wish demonstrated in the writings of Alison Mountz, Anne Bonds, Becky Mansfield, Jenna Loyd, Jennifer Hyndman, Margaret Walton-Roberts, Ranu Basu, Risa Whiston, Roberta

Hawkins, Trina Hamilton and Winnifred Curran in “For Slow Scholarship: A Feminist Politics of Resistance through Collective Action in the Neoliberal University”, a paper that was written collaboratively by a group of feminist geographers in response to the pressures placed upon them as instructors working within universities. By proposing collective action steeped in care and slowness, the authors resist the university’s demand for productivity and the dangers within by stating: “Take Care. A feminist ethics of care is personal and political, individual and collective, we must take care of ourselves before we can take care of others. *But we must take care of others...Do not shy away from talking about life and how intertwined life and work are*” (1251). This is just a singular directive in what reads as the most radical and gentle manifesto, but it calls out to the ways in which care work can be invisible, the ways in which it is expected, but unquantifiable. There are ways that the authors are looking not only at care work, but at the ways in which this work can change the way that time is experienced, that is it slows down. This call is a reminder that the process of generating knowledge can be embedded in the way we live. That this way of working is contingent upon relation and on the ability to be full of care, that research and scholarship cannot be generated alone, and they point toward the ways in which they (it?) can exist outside the walls of the academy, or the double-spaced page. The tension and relationship between the care for self and others is sly, a flip, a way to reach out, perhaps pressing on a soft spot, care for others is hinged upon the care for self. The call and reminder to foreground a care full practice is in direct conflict with the neoliberal university, due to its deprioritization of productivity, the very pulse that governing structures measure. This though does not exist solely within the academy walls. The emphasis on care over production, pulls at the threads of most large governing bodies, and in pulling on these threads in a space that actively discourages the humane, we have the opportunity to transform, not only in the ways we participate in structures, but in how we transform the understanding of time, and what it means to experience it. It is not lost on me that the word *take* is here. *Taking care* is so strange. It is my belief that care cannot be taken; it can be asked for. It can be requested, but this request, in the context of this work, the

work of Mountz etc. is a request of the self, followed by the imperative to take care of others, is like a beautifully wrapped present. This care is a gift, but it is also a necessity, is a means of acknowledging our fragility. A practice of care acknowledges the ability to break. And that is just what is happening here. By emphasising care in the context of both the collective and the self we are able to move differently.

To take, to keep, these words, they are both exploring the ways in which ownership has occurred. To take, it feels like agency is being enacted, but without request. This could be my more sensitive nature, but to take doesn't require giving. To keep doesn't mean to take but we are possessed, to keep. I will always attempt to avoid dualism, to avoid the binary if I can, I will not reduce this to a word comprehension game, but I do wonder, why am I keeping, and not taking? How is this difference seen? How does that exist separately? How is it that we are inciting a change? How are we changing our relationship?

By allowing the books to be bookish, not in the way that we understand a person to be bookish, but instead, in that they are existing in their most bookness, allows for them to engage in this process. To allow them to assist in their most formal way. I find myself existing in my most kateness in this process using my hands, knees, teeth, allowing me to escape out of the rat cage that is my own brain, and to exist solely in my body, to exist solely **as** a body, as a body in a space, in a time, as a body here with you, on this page. In Sharon Blakey and Liz Mitchell's "Unfolding: a multisensorial dialogue in 'material time'" they describe emplacement, which "suggests the physical places in which one's body dwells, but also how one dwells within one's own body—the body as a storehouse of memory, of both the autobiographical and muscular kinds" (7). This ability to be inside not only a physical place but also within the physical self, is a means of orienting the self in making. Being emplaced, an individual is allowed to be situated in multiple planes of existence, it allows the self to exist within a space, but also within the self.

Time as a clicking second hand skimming the surface of a clockface, the flipping of a calendar, the length of my nails, these markers of movement, the movement of time feel inaccurate. This isn't what is happening, at least not here. Perhaps we can get closer if instead of considering time as a concept in motion, we think of it as place, in this space of keeping. In this enacting of care, we are embedded in time, we inhabit it. We are nestled between the pages of past and present, held *in* relation to time. There are ways in which time feels like a pressure, but to work inside of it, changes that relationship.

4. Coming Together

Tiny Towel

This is the first example of two objects being one, in one object being bifurcated. This is a rag, rescued from a ragbag kept in my small storage space. A quarter of a well-loved and long used Ikea tea towel, torn into fragments to act in a studio space, cleaning up after a painter, this rag crisscrossed with blue lines, forming a grid, carrying the stains of a studio space, has been split, I bristle at the use of the word split, perhaps it is more accurate to say that it has dissolved, but this feels like we are avoiding the relationship here between rag and maker. This rag has transformed. Not from one discrete thing into another, instead it has transformed from one rag into one rag in two places.¹³ Instead, it is twice, it is twice. This object, like its siblings is in two places at once, straddling. But if we think of this rag as component parts, all also autonomous of each other, its atoms are also individually being recognized. Or at least are striving for recognition.

Interestingly to me, and maybe no one else, since this is a rag that once existed as a part of a larger tea towel, it has been split before. This rag also was a part of a tea towel that was part of a larger grouping of tea towels, once again separated. Its existence and

¹³ Hopefully this is not as detrimental as Jeff Goldblum and the fly in David Cronenberg's *The Fly* (1986)

persistence aren't alone, it isn't despite these separations, but instead because of them. This is not a rag about loss, because these separations haven't happened without additions. The life lived by this rag wasn't a simple equation of inevitable decay. The impressions of experience are carried on its surface. The marks of attendance are immovable. The new selvedge created on the new and fresh edge are all markers of presence. The fact of its continued use long after a recognition of shabbiness conveys the continued need to keep and retain it in a home.

In its relationship with the maker, it continues to be needed, wanted, loved. In this case instead of splitting it into quarters, the rag has now been split into infinity, with the attempt to reconstitute this infinite into a new form. The linen warp. This white warp holding its vulnerable and fragile threads holding these infinite selves in place. After a long process of slow keeping and organization, the threads here are held, firmly, attempting to continue to support a form that is as recognizable to the way it was before. All marks of love and attention are noted and supported. Holding a hem in place, the stains of labour still marked on each fragment.

There is a clear space of before and after, but this rag holds both, and all. It retains all its beforeness, and nowness. It can be seen in all states at once, it is in a state of becoming and unbecoming all at once. There is no one moment that can be identified as was and is in this object, it is transforming in this moment. It is overlapped, in this overlap hopefully there is potential, not as a more than before idea, but in what can happen in any moment. It is happening in this moment, it is happening to every atom of the rag, maybe it is happening to every atom of the maker too. We are both blurred with potentiality, what can be, what is, what has. We are blurred into each other too, we of course are singular from one another, but also overlap. In that overlap is a place of becoming.

The membrane between the before and the now is imperceivable, where is the was and the is? It's as if the maker and the object have melted together (see fig. 4Error! Reference source not found.).

THERE IS SOMETHING SO STRANGE ABOUT BEING VULNERABLE: Showing your soft parts isn't conducive for survival, or so we've been told, but I am reminded time after time of the ways in which that vulnerability is rewarded, not with prizes, not with fanfare, instead with a meeting. An acknowledgement, an acceptance. This exposure means by most accounts that you can be greeted with connection, a warmth, a gentle handling.

Weaving, working with threads is a promise of a near constant practice of untying, detangling, and the practice of unweaving an object is a compounded version of this. An object who, after conceived, has become a plane, no longer a line, capable in its planeness, acting in this form. To intervene and ask the object to reconsider how its form is materialized, is a request to unmoor, to consider all minute aspects of the self, the self of the thread. If I could ask the object to become just a pile of atoms, and that I would help in the disassembly process, I would. What a joy to be a cloud of atoms.¹⁴

Detangling was the most difficult thing as a kid with frightfully curly hair, and no one around to guide me in the management of my ringlets. I was surrounded by straights (hair), not the only or last time. I remember sprinting away from my mum brandishing a brush that looked like a device created solely to cause me pain. Battles would break out, punctuated with squirming and sobbing as she would work through the tangles, the mats at the nape of my neck. She would negotiate, reminding me that she wasn't allowed to have long hair, this hair was a privilege. With that undoing of intergenerational parlour fascism, my mother found a place where she also could experience having this hair, long hair, learning to braid, then French braid, styling my

¹⁴ The bulk of my life has been scored with the pleading refrain, "why can't I be a cloud, a ball of gas? Why do I have to exist in my body"

mop of frizz in ways that would have been entirely out of reach for her utilitarian haircut. We had a book, a children's activity book, by Klutz that taught the eager to braid, a child was posed on the cover holding her side rope braid rakishly to the side of her head. Hair smooth, held in place by two prominent scrunchies. I dreamed of that, or maybe more accurately, we dreamt of that, the dream of having a perfect braid, certain to make me the delight of the neighbourhood. The battles didn't stop though, we continued to face off; I would run, hide, flail. I do wonder if my mum recruited my dad in hopes of having another soldier on her side because one day, he picked up a rat tail comb, and a scrunchie and sat me down book in my lap, so I could recite the steps. I didn't run, because the familiar force used was not there, no tugging, no hand on my head to hold it in place. Uncertain of how to handle this new material, he followed the directions faithfully. The unfamiliarity maybe tempering his approach.

How is it that the act of detangling is relatively painless when performed on the self? Whereas when someone detangles for you, it is the type of discomfort that comes from the impending end of worlds. The end is never in sight, the ability to know the sharp needling pain of a hair pulled from the unreachable root. This moment of relational realigning, of organizing, can feel entirely lonely, isolated in the throes of a most intimate act. How is it that when my partner plucks my eyebrows, my head laid in their lap, I sneeze, but when I do it myself, I am stony and unreactive.¹⁵ Is it the ability to prepare for the pinch? I do wonder if there is ever a way to be one in that moment, if there is ever enough gentleness and caress to match what can feel like clumsy ripping.

We are still dancing, there is a hope that this object, undone, unravelled, frayed, vulnerable, fragmented will not run, will not be stubborn, will be able to see the care, will be able to feel my caress. To know that the vow given in the before still stands. I wish to care, I wish to detangle, I wish to assist. I wish to be as undone as they are, as

¹⁵ I still prefer them to pluck the stray hairs for me, as I have never been able to shake the fear that these plucked hairs will reroot if I am the plucker.

free to be luscious to be as wild and unruly, a wish to help support, to help braid their hair, to give what I wish I could have. It is the promise enacted. The safety offered, the scrunchie tied in place.

We are making a structure together, sitting at a loom bench, book in lap, warp pulled taut, threads loose, a shuttle in hand. The tools needed to build a home, to map terrain, to walk a path. An invitation. This invitation is one for threads to work their way into a new form, to allow themselves to be in concert with another party, to weave themselves into a new plane, to accept a new form of stability. To become something new, to become themselves again. To re-form. The coming back together, the reassembly is a practice of generation, a building of a place, of a land of new, the overlapping of homes of bodies, and this overlap is one that allows for the newness. We are familiar materials, we are made of what we were, with the gaps filled in with linen.

Linen as the harmonizing voice in this duet has been selected for a specific reason, as all parts of this project have been selected. The quality of this material allows for the objects, reformed into their new context to act, to have body, to shine. Linen has a magical way of forming planes. When brought together it gleams in the light. It is stubborn and temperamental, it is not easy, this is not a material choice made with convenience in mind, instead it was invited with the needs of the objects in mind. It is imperative that these objects are afforded a structure that lends support, a structure that asks the objects to reflect their personalities. It is a constant here, linen is the home for the loose threads. Of course, there are many constants, but this is a choice that strives to support the continued autonomy of the object. I strive not to wrangle nor contain, not to mute nor turn down the agency of the materials being woven into these new contexts, instead I hope to make little structures that allow the objects to be another version of themselves.

The structure, the home, the walls of this work are not always plain, the structure created, though sturdy and safe for those wiggly and wild threads are a grid. They will always be a grid. There is still a need to create a little home, a home that isn't always the same. The woven structure is a home, but in a practical sense it is a pattern, it is the diagonal lines of bricks being offset from one another, it is the floorboards nailed to beams, it is the windows that let in the light. There was much anxiety over the imposition made upon these threads, these threads that have been generous and vulnerable, these threads that have been extricated from their siblings, there was an initial instinct to allow the new homes to be as nondescript and simple as possible, the cube gallery, the white walls of a show room. There was a desire to avoid distraction. Though this worry still rings though my head, I have stumbled upon a different answer. If the threads are anything like me, they are curious and infatuated with the homes they inhabit, the quirks of apartments, the questions raised by an environment make for a joyful home.¹⁶ Therefore, soon after we began dancing, it was decided to allow some quirks to show through, decided to try and make homes for the threads that would allow them to be, not on their own but in harmony with the space they were in. To allow these threads to tread creaky floors, to learn the personality of sticky doors, to embrace their drippy taps. Not due to a lack of care, again, maybe just in the projection of desire on the threads. I have only ever inhabited strange old homes that held the impressions of previous tenants, never have I entered a space that didn't already have writing upon the walls.

LINEN IS HEAVY WITH MEANING: It is laden with eons of history, a material that was written upon, keeping stories and lists, documenting histories of those no longer here. A material that is allowed to be its most material, a material that is embraced for its tendency to wrinkle and show wear, but also a material that in the home is starched and pressed to maintain its formality. This dichotomy is one that I wrestle with regularly, the

¹⁶ And certainly sometimes a frustrating one.

need to convey a pristine flat surface.¹⁷ This flattening is akin to the straightening of a home before visitors are at the threshold of your door. This need for performative formality has been abandoned, and a swing to the other side is necessitated. I love laundry, (I promise there is a point). I love laundry, I feel as if my practice is 90% laundry, the washing in a tub, the hanging on a line, the wringing of sopping work, all these actions are inherently wrinkle inducing. I know my material, I know that if I accidentally allow a wrinkle in any step of the process, there is no erasing it, there is no undoing. This is evidence not of negligence, I argue, or at least hope, but that instead these wrinkles are evidence of our home making together. It is never perfect, I will always leave an impression on the bodies I come up against, I will always carry the marks left on me by those I brush up against as well. We are impressions of one another, and these new homes these linen planes, homes for threads have been pressed against me, and I on them, in all my disorganized, disheveled self.

How could I have become the person I am if I didn't live in that home that had doorways exactly Kate height, keeping out all those who towered above me? Who would I be if I didn't live in the home that required me to drag a dishwasher across the kitchen floor, thirsty, looking to lap up the water that flowed from the sink? There is a desire to allow these threads to live in homes that are not blanks, allowing them to show themselves, not in spotlight, but in a totally new context. Sometimes this home is relatively simple, floats of linen drifting across the body of nestled threads, sometimes these homes are wild, threads securing themselves into unruly and unpredictable settings. Never placing them in danger, but instead placing them in a space that holds and encourages a little bit of character.

The interlacing of object with object feels familiar, not due to the intimacy generated in this world building, but familiar due to the recognition of this phenomena in our world, the big world, the world outside of the one built here of threads and knots, looms and

¹⁷ This is the voice of every textile person echoing in my head

pins. Something that helps me explain what is happening when these two discreet objects come together, to help me understand what is happening is the ecotone. The concept of the ecotone as a phenomenon in nature, one of the overlap, or the melting into one another. The concept, one that is found in ecology, enters as a lens to help clarify why these abutments are so rich. The scholar Florence Krall describes in 'Ecotone: Wayfaring on the Margins' that "... in the natural world, edges where differences come together are the richest of habitats" and goes on to describe how "Cultural ecotones are the pluralistic contexts out of which conflict and change emerge: they are the places where society smooths the wrinkles in her skirts" (5). These instances of intersection, this overlap, is one that is happening with these objects. These objects are, pardon the Spice Girl parlance – two become one, in many ways, but I also posit that perhaps these objects are ecosystems intersecting, these objects are layered not only in the sense that they are in the linen warp of my genesis, but also in the of overlap with the maker, they are also an overlap of every other person they have existed with. These objects, in coming together, have created terrain that is entirely new, these objects, in their creation, have created an overlap with me as well, perhaps we are a trio of spaces that have joined together, we are all in conversation, it is almost as if there is no clear boarder between where the object ends, the linen starts and where the maker is.

Krall spends time in her paper describing the ways in which she has both been relegated and/or chosen to stay on margins. By applying the metaphor of the ecotone, and the abutting of two disparate spaces as a striation of tension and learning. Krall is writing from the 1990s; she writes of the ways in which her divorce and re-entry into academia force her to the margins. The margin is not what we might think of generally, as a finite, an edge, instead it is a place of more than one. The more than one. The spaces where two become one, become many, allowing for the genesis of infinite place. By seeping into each other, these environments are generating a multidimensional space, allowing for a temporal shift. The times of many places tangled upon one another, slipping between one another, supporting their other time places. The bringing together of the

disparate isn't just the creation of the new, though it is certainly that, it is also the ability to have your feet in two disparate places all while also standing in a third space, a new less definable space. And no matter where you exist within, if you shift a centimetre to the left or right, you are able to experience something totally new.

The ecotone as it exists in this practice is the same. It is a place of dawn that is able to exist because of the vulnerability of the objects in play, it is an overlaying of threads so different from one another, a transformation happens, not a new place, but having your foot in two places at once and with that a creation of a third.

5. Have a Bath

Printed Napkin

This was a surprise: a napkin that appears so dignified, so structured, with so much beauty in that stoicism. The measured spacing of geometric pattern gild the edges of this napkin, almost mirroring the rigidity of the square shape of a napkin, so familiar, so ubiquitous, so square. Its strangeness, or surprise, was revealed in the hem of this square piece of fabric that had been enlisted on to the table. What this napkin revealed felt like a cosmic joke, as it came apart it told a secret of how it had been masquerading. It was printed off grain, you can see. This slow warping at the edge, losing its squareness, slowly dissolving its edges. It comes to this practice, in the hands of someone who had been told their entire life that be-to-be off grain is to be off, to be out, to wrong. To be not quite right, to be unsuccessful. You should always square your work, stitching a small cross at a pieces' centre, identifying clearly the direction and intended squareness of the warp and weft intersecting. This unapologetic declaration of self, this napkin's admission of being off, of being twisted or tilted is highlighted as soon as it communicated its willingness to dance. Its willingness to get on the floor demands a recognition, it was always there, a queer little napkin, a little off, looking much like its siblings, exactly, in fact, unless intently studied. This little napkin, loosed and reformed, is squealing out:

look at my edge! Look at what has been hidden in my hem! Look at the ways in which I was and look now! I want you to see my parts! To see what has been lost by being off grain! Come, see all the glory that can occur when I allow these parts to fall away! Look at how my atoms are an army of singular actors, all holding examples of how they are and were. How they nestle into their newer context, a linen warp, highlighting the success of this shedding of the need to be perfect. This napkin has reimagined itself, this napkin has sighed into its newer home, settled for the time being (see fig. 5Error! Reference source not found.).

The work, when it comes off the loom, when we have finally and imperfectly rebuilt ourselves, unrolls with a sense of ceremony. The apron releases with a rhythmic click, it feels as if we are all exhaling sharply. The weight of the previous wisps is in your hand. All these loose threads are to be reformed, rewoven. The crosshatching of traces, of lines over one another: a little document, a little body, a space formed by compression. A space formed by removing the space. Though not entirely set nor always anticipated, there is repetition, there are steps, there is a path. Not a straight line, not paved, not even on a map, this is a path that we have traced out with our bodies, with our gestures, with our repeated attention.¹⁸ There is familiarity here, this new context, this new woven form is not that different from the original. There is a mimicking, like a copy of a copy, but still new. Like a new home, like a new apartment, we need to settle in, a need to enact our nesting rituals to ensure that we have populated the new space with self. Without a ritual settling there is a feeling of otherness that distracts. The difference between sitting next to a pal on a busy bus, versus sitting next to a chatty stranger. Sometimes I wonder if the threads are haunted by a desire to crawl out of their skin, now that they are in a new space with unfamiliar materials, if they wish to get off the bus a stop early. Here we are, making ourselves a home, in order to become a shred less other.

¹⁸ See Prus, Benjamin P. F. "ACTIVATING HISTORY: The Living Counter-Archive of Urban Vernacular Paths." *Public*, vol. 29, no. 57, June 2018, pp. 228–35. https://doi.org/10.1386/public.29.57.228_7.

The objects leap off the front of the loom, released from the tension placed upon them. We are taking a huge breath, the breath you take before you take a huge leap, like a gasp of courage, a mustering of energy? A slumping of exhaustion? The feeling of getting home and taking off your bra and letting your hair out of a ponytail, the slipping of slippers and the jimmying of jammies.

THE PROCESS OF MAKING HOME IS AT HAND: We have come apart, and rebuilt, we have moved, we are different, the same, we now have to make the space our own. This means taking a hemstitch to the selvedge of the work, adding insurance to the already sturdy structure, a clicking of the lock, and the return to ensure that the lock turn really did happen. That we are secure, allowed to breathe easier. A hemstitch is simple, it is repetitive, slow, and in some ways second nature to me. It is one of the first stitches I remember becoming competent at, as competent as an eight-year-old hand be at stitching that is. This hemstitch recalls security, the ability to be secure enough to become familiar. Secure enough to take a bath.

THE BATH IS AN IMPORTANT MARKER: I am not a bath person, exactly. The sensation of cramming myself in my always too short or too shallow tubs is incredibly revealing. No matter how much bubble, or scrunching I end up doing, somehow my tits are always cold. This is a true heartbreak as I am a water baby, in near constant search of the floating sensation, of being fully submerged, in a state of float.¹⁹ The sense that I am a giant woman, limbs clumsily flailing from the old apartment tubs, is often a reminder of how I am not able to fit, not able to uniquely match the scale of the homes inhabited, but this reminder doesn't force me out, sopping, standing on a bath mat, instead there

¹⁹ I am terribly good at convincing folks to take baths, or even worse, convincing them to buy bath products. I have a sordid history of working retail, at the store you might imagine a queer with heavy bangs might work, shilling bubbling and foaming bath products, but also at a store where you might picture an older British lady in a blue apron offering tea alongside the bath salts. I always thought it was a funny thing that I was drawn so directly and specifically to the bath informed retail world, especially since I was always living in apartments with old tubs, worn with age, never appetizing or welcoming.

is a drive to find a way to squish, to make the best, to embrace the halfness of the experience.

The tub stands as a place of reflection, there is an alchemy, in the warm water turning cool, in the quiet sloshing. Many moments of realization have happened over bathtubs for us, water and cleansing, clarity and mournfulness all go hand in hand. Bathtubs acting as a place of refuge, and place the wounded run to nurse their bruises, or to tend to rawness. A place where you can sit in your vulnerability, your chest in the coldness of the bathroom air, goosebumps flashing across your skin.

Layne, my sister in everything but blood, is one of those people who has always run for the tub. She is complicated, sensitive, empathetic, gregarious, and bewitching. I was in love with her the moment we met. She was so adept at making me feel the most special. I just wanted to be around her, wishing for what I loved in her to rub off on me. Being on the precipice of twenty, two little babies playing at being adults, we grew together, witnessing each other's coming undone. It has been close to fifteen years now, and we are mirrors of each other, reflections of how we have touched one another, still wearing each other's shoes, our voices interchanging, words that come out of my mouth are hers. We have imprinted upon one another. We are tub girls, and when Layne was hurt or sad, she would lock herself in a bathroom and have a bath. There was a New Years Eve that we spent together, so blurry now, which ended with a tub visit.²⁰ Layne laid in the tub floating, eyes looking forward, at something I couldn't see. I remember the feeling of the water gently lapping as I held her hand, the water getting cold, the click of her ring on the side of the tub. The feeling of being out of my depth, not a familiar one in that bathroom, this wading pool of a tub had never felt so much like a deep abyss, bottomless. I remember desperately trying to grasp at her, moving slowly as to not startle her. I might have had her hand, but I couldn't grasp her

²⁰ We nicknamed this time, tub timez

hard enough to keep her from being broken apart, all I could do was attempt to hold her threads, keeping them from floating away. To be a hemstitch, to be a book.

Maybe tubs are the moments when we feel the most untethered? The float and drift of it all.

This holding, this keeping, is a reaching for a mirror, ungraspable, like a reflection in tepid bathwater, shimmering, moving, uncapturable. A wish for a reflection, a wish to be loved back, a wish to be held, a drip and a ripple. In the moments when feeling incapable of creating a space of care, because care is not able to be enacted as a supreme edict, the only thing you can do is attempt to hold, to keep track, to witness.

Our bathtubs act as a way of making a home, a way of dissolving yourself, making yourself many, making yourself infinite. Molecules of self, suspended in the bath, specks of self wetting your hair, plugging your ears, molecules of self, whirling down the drain. the water impressing upon you, and you releasing yourself into the water.

HERE I FIND MYSELF WAXING POETIC ABOUT BABYSITTING: Layne was not a baby, but she did call me mum.²¹ The actual children I was left in charge of much to my bewilderment were in need of care, much like Layne was. I remember leaning over a tub, bathing two kids, as well as a sixteen-year-old can execute this task. These children were both under eight, and one of them only spoke Finnish, so I relied on his big brother to translate. My reliance upon a seven-year-old to communicate to the five-year-old—I was already in over my head. These two unbelievably blonde scrawny children were playing in the shallow water, floating boats, more interested in enjoying themselves than the task of washing themselves, who can blame them? The tub is an escape from the terrestrial

²¹ in a singsong voice, as all my friends did when we were out. I think I was acting more closely to a shepherd dog than I was a maternal figure. I was eagle-eyed to make sure the group of unruly twenty-year-olds made it home.

world. You get to be a fish, a whale, a seal. I was a teenager. I was still just playing in the tub sometimes. Being a sitter, being the most grown, I knew there were things that I had to get these kids to do, and if I was told to give them a bath, I was going to do so. Here I was kneeling next to a tub filled with soapy Finnish children, and I hear a grunt, not the grunt of a tugboat, not the grunt of a seal, but the grunt of a kid pooping his pants. I knew this grunt, but I also knew that there were no pants in this tub, and I swung my head around to the far end of the bath, never has a tub felt longer, and so tiny. The smaller of the children was having rather casual diarrhea in the water, with his brother, who in this moment also realized what was happening and started screaming. Trying to splash the poop slowly floating toward him. To my horror the smaller child had started playing with the shit that now clouded around him in the water, giggling the gleeful peels of a kid who knows that he has received a reaction, which is what all kids want. Springing to action, and being a teen, I had no path clear to me, I had to make my own. I pulled the plug and drew the shitstorm downstream, toward the faucet, and the older brother, who just howled even louder. I got it, I also had that feeling of being out of control. In my infinite lack of knowledge, I just turned the shower head on, so cold water rained down on these children, washing away the soil of the tub diarrhea, so now I had two screeching children wet and angry. After they had been sufficiently hosed off, I reached in, one by one, hands covered in a towel, wrapping these miserable bathers into little packages, all terrycloth and misery, I was terrified they would slip, I would drop one, that one might squirm away.

When I move to a new place, it isn't home until I have a bath, no matter how weary I am with the size or condition of the container, there is a way in which being vulnerable and allowing the space to hold me in an incredibly intimate way makes it feel like it is a place that is ours, the apartment and I, intersecting and joining. The ritual of cleaning the tub, discovering the marks that are movable, and those that are not, the chips in the enamel, the scale around the overflow drain, I get to see the evidence of the previous relationships the tub has had, how it has been treated, and by scrubbing, rinsing,

installing a new showerhead, it's a way for the tub to show me itself, as much as I will, when I inevitably fill it with water too hot for my skin. No matter how much I feel like I am made of asbestos, the dance of dipping and squeaking, dabbing and eventually slowly lowering myself, always raw from the heat, frozen in the near boiling water, waiting to adjust. Sitting in the dark of an unfamiliar room, vaguely scented with vinegar from the earlier ritual. I am waiting to be transformed while steeping in the waters of a new place. I do my best to crunch down, to mimic what it feels to float in the lakes that transformed me as a kid. I ensure my ears are below the water level, trying to listen for a heartbeat, to listen for a breath. Oftentimes, all I can hear is the sloshing of the water, feeling it lapping at the edges where I am in and where I am out. Or maybe I can hear the slow drip of water through a resting plug. We are slipping into each other, trying to grasp each other's hands.

We are having baths together, and the joy here is that this bath, that this home is one that though still a little misshapen (because to be clear, I am not too big, it is too small) this act of making the space we are newly inhabiting is an act of adaptation, an act of nestling. The forging of a new space, the specific and intentional claiming of home, of the familiar. We are carefully painting the walls, we are carefully hanging curtains, we are placing out our signifiers of home. We are waiting to populate this new space, this ecotone, this biome, this landscape.

This home. This home that the threads have made, is impermanent, much like the home they have made between the pages of the books, this home is a stop on the way, is a step, is the heel click, is the little shimmy in the hips. This nestling, this new context, familiar, close, not exact, but certainly not necessitated to be the same. Nothing is the same in a reconstitution. The home made here is one that holds the threads, it is a home that is formed by its new context, it is a rebuilding.

The act of making a home, of making a queer home is a practice of falling apart and coming back together. Equipped with our loose hems and the recognition of familiar

structure we are able to reconsider if and how we lace back together, that we can play in our joyful hems and seams, untethered and floating in the bathwater, tangled and unruly, agitated and pressed. Susan Fraiman writes in *Extreme Domesticity* of the literary tool of “shelter writing” a practice that she details as “a mode that may center on anyone whose smallest domestic endeavors have become urgent and precious in the wake of dislocation, whether as the result of migration, divorce, poverty, or a stigmatized sexuality” (25). Oft repetitive and detailed in description, this type of writing allows for a communication of desire for home, safety, and comfort. This making of a home, this writing of a home, the weaving of a home enacted by someone who is pursuant of finding a place, the creation of a space of comfort. She is clear in that for a dislocated person: “homemaking, which appears teleological compared to housekeeping, may also actually be work that is never done, a kind of ritual necessarily repeated many times throughout a lifetime” (42). She is clear that the making of a home appears to be a task to be completed, but in actuality, it a process that has no end, and must be redone, we are in constant pursuit of making a home, and keeping it.

HERE WE ARE, THREADS AND MAKER, WOVEN SURFACE AND LIBRARY: We are making a home, and remaking it again, we are attempting over and over to try and make our place, nestle into a place of comfort. Here we are the same, constantly being tangled and untangled, living on the margins, living in the overlaps, livening the seams, attempting to undo and redo over and over.

And at once, I must address the desire, the need, the elephant in the room, this is a dance taken on with the objects of a home, the objects found in my home, generated not in critique of nor even direct conversation with the domestic as we assume. These objects are generated in a way of breaking apart a dissolving of the home, a dissolving and remaking of the home, these objects are generated due to the domestic skills accrued as a queer, the domestic skills honed, in reaction to the homes on the margins. The existence on the margin affords some skill. The queerness of the work hopefully

seeps through, like watching a towel slowly soak up a spill, the queerness of this work is not only because of the hands that have engaged in the process, the queerness of the process, the queerness of the objects is one. We are acting on margins, we are on the edge because we are the edges. This disassembly of the domestic object is not a direct disassembly of the hegemonic structures, but it's also not, not that. It is a happy accident. It is a gleaming and glowing result.

6. The Fold

Napkin turning corner

How can I convey why we are doing this twice? How can I convey that there are many ways that this project could continue forever? It is going to happen forever, whether actively weaving or not. This is just a snapshot in time, this is an arbitrary stop in a long process, a process of building and breaking apart that requires constant review. This object, a napkin made of printed yardage with a simple serged edge, wandered into my linen closet with the assistance of my partner, who confided that they thought of me when they saw this sweet 1980's print. The colour and exuberance of this print just sang to them. Here we are, an object a little different from the others in this group of work, not different, a new being.

Not to be too on the nose, but this is a the turning of a corner, a turning in the labyrinth, we are still in the same space but in a corridor, same building, new room? This napkin has fallen apart, it has slowly disintegrated from its little tippy toes, thread over thread, slowly opening itself up, slowly revealing how its individual atoms were aligned. Showing the way it was built, the ways in which it was tightly woven together. The napkin has offered forward a bodily hinge, a hinge that it had always contained, one of an infinite amount of hinges held in its form. This ability to turn a corner is a demonstration of the napkin's ability to hold its own form, to hold space, to be a dimensional object. This unpredictable form is only possible due to the napkin's willingness to come apart. This form is only possible because of the vulnerability offered. This form is only possible because of the other objects that have been vulnerable, this form is only possible because of the objects innate understanding of its own physical form, its own ability to break and turn (see fig. 6Error! Reference source not found.).

THIS IS WHERE WE START OVER: I ask that we fold, we bend, upon ourselves. We will walk the same path as these objects do, repeating our steps, retracing what we have done in an attempt to find our way, or even to see something we haven't seen before, or been before. The fold, as enacted here, is a labyrinth as described by Gilles Deleuze as a "multiple, etymologically, because it has many folds. The multiple is not merely that which has many parts, but that which is folded in many ways" (228). The body, since porous, both hard and soft, can and will fold upon itself infinite times.

All will be familiar; we may however, find something that helps clarify this experience of un re making. This is not only an exercise of wayfinding, but it is also the embodiment of the experience of being in relation to this practice. We do this all over again, not in a *Groundhog Day* style purgatory, but as a gift, an activation of the promise of the infinite. We are looping, always with a different outcome, a new piece of knowledge, a new secret shared, new skills enacted.

Folding, enfolding, refolding, unfolding communicates not only an action of doubling over, but also expresses the process and how it is constant, unending and without end. A fold is a test of temporal dislocation as well as social dislocation. To ensconce and join, to become and unbecome, allowing for a nonlinear orientation. To sit outside of, as well as inside of. By folding in this moment, I hope for us to look both backwards and forwards, to remake ourselves again in the process, seeing how we recall it to be, and to stretch forward.

7. Requesting Volunteers II

Hankie and friends

This object, a bandana, broken down and rewoven, alongside a napkin, also pulled apart and reconstituted. All in one an amalgam, a group, a blending. These brought-together objects though disparate, are not unfamiliar to one another. One is an object of communicating desire, the other is an object projecting domesticity, both are the same. These objects in my queer home serve similar purposes. Both are objects of utility, both act and work in their roles as communicators. These objects, though read as somewhat dissimilar, have an overlap. They are brought together in their new context, in their new home, in order to understand one another. Historically, they have lived in the same home, the linen basket at the end of my dining table, they both have been carried from home to home with simple and repetitive jobs at their fingertips.

The bandana accepted this dance, but it had rules for how it was going to engage. It strongly asserted itself in its disassembly. It made clear how it wanted to be handled. Within the first few moments of the dance, it communicated its needs, slowly ripping in almost perfect thirds, as if it was moving my hand over its body, showing how it wished to be touched. Showing how explicitly it was willing to engage, opening itself up to show its preferred method of coming apart. It was a directive; it was a way of setting its boundaries. Funny how an object that is heavy with connotations, heavy with meaning, heavy with vernacular, all heavy with a language of desire, was able to continue to speak even in its disassembly: Consenting, volunteering, directing, leading the dance. It clearly was a bandana from a left-hand pocket.

This assertive bandana clearly directing its own dance now in direct conversation with an object, a napkin, also directing the conversation. This conversation, though not as assertive, is still heard loud, ringing in my ears, echoing through my hands. This napkin, carried from home to home, this napkin, a signifier of just that, a home, a home that has

been built over and over again, an active participant in dinners, a member at the table. Also much like this bandana that was assertive, a left pocket inhabitator, this napkin, also the most at home on the left, as a table setting requires.

I was tasked as a child with table setting, a job that required an active engagement with community building, the building of the family table, that conveniently enough kept me out from underfoot. A role that asked me as a child to consider each family member, or at least this is how it was approached. Calling out who would receive which placemat, “Mady, you get the platypus, Mum you get the Kangaroo, Dad, the Cockatoo, I am getting the Wombat” this ritual of place setting is one that happened every day, as every meal was eaten at the family dining table, always with placemats. A way of telling people who they are to me, a reverse flagging with, if you will (see fig. 7Error! Reference source not found.).

Once again, we find ourselves at the precipice of the dancefloor, eager, hopeful, longing. No matter how many times we spin on the floor to *Love is a Battlefield*, there is always gas in the tank for another go. That project is never done. In the same way, once the objects have made themselves comfortable, they are not done. We are always able to pick up where we left off, if called to the floor.

Like a person from your past, who, when you call on them, answers with familiarity, the history you share with them colouring your conversation, the in-jokes, the knowledge shared between you and someone who was once in your range. This person might know a different version, a pre transformation version (when are we not transforming?) from before, but they know a version. There is a way you fill each other with these new versions of self. These new threads are glinting between you, someone might know a you from before, and are able to know the you from now, if you are brave enough to step forward onto the floor.

We are doing this all over again, we are searching for enthusiasm, we are looking to one another to find if there is a willingness and curiosity. There is no guarantee that the objects will be willing to accept the advance. There is a possibility that the consent being asked for, will not be given. There is no need to qualify. If the object isn't ready, there is no rush, there is no pressure. We can take it slow, a no doesn't result in a push, or an act of convincing. There is no asking for reasoning. This is reciprocal, I might not be ready to take on a new relationship. We don't have to force it. To push for a relationship we are not both ready for, serves no one, it is counter intuitive to the process, to the creation of intimacy.

To clarify, this search for enthusiasm, this search for a reciprocity, is not a search for ease. Once we start up together, there is no coaxing over the finish line, instead, there is joy in the work, in the nurturing of the relationship we have. It is never taken for granted. Just because we were able to work together earlier, in earlier versions of our transformative process, doesn't mean that we must work together again, that we have a standing agreement. These objects might be versions of themselves, but they are not exact replicas, they have components of their earlier selves, but they are themselves but rebuilt, transformed by their previous undoing, keeping, redoing, and bathing. They have components of themselves but are fractured, but larger, like drops of water being drawn to one bigger puddle. We can, if willing, become and come apart again.

How did we meet one another? Did you slink out of the drawer? Did you knock on my window? It's likely that we have brushed against one another a number of times, but what changed? How did we finally see one another? How did the object know that they were ready? How did they catch my eye? The way of communicating without using words, being able to communicate interest. I am not known for being terribly coy or aloof, be it due to my stubbornness, my flighty nature, or perhaps it is on account of my feeling between, being on a threshold, inside and outside of my community. Due to this feeling of being on the edge, not quite queer enough, I took to flagging for years,

walking around my life, bandanas hanging out of my pocket, a way to speak to family members who might not recognize me. A way of reaching out to try and find those who love me back. It felt not only like a wave to the present, but it also felt like a way of reaching backwards, reaching in time to try and grasp the hands of those who came before, reaching for queer elders I never had access to. Looking to remember, looking to be found. The bandana stuck in my pocket as a bookmark. To be found with my flag wagging in this way, was always a moment of bliss. To be seen, to be recognized, to be witnessed, this is a luxury. Moving in this body, I am afforded safety and the pleasure of being recognized as I am, the innocuous white lady, this is true, this is accurate, also being read as an ally, someone's enthusiastic and supportive friend, also true, also accurate. There is security in this, but there is also a loneliness. This loneliness has created a space, a space that allows me to take joy in the communication of belonging, a red bandana tied to my fanny pack, whispering, I belong here, I am not an interloper.²² This shorthand affords me the ability to dangle my allegiances, my belonging, my desire, with immediacy. These little bookmarks have been recognized, and every time they are, I wish I could say that I blush, but instead I sigh, seen.

There are so many ways we find each other, there are so many ways that we are waving each other down, reaching forward, with hand open, inviting, body language, the gestural invitation. This non-verbal, sometimes haptic, sometimes visual way of reaching out benefits from the symbols that we can share, particularly when we are living in the hems, when we are living in the selvages. These objects, these little wiggly squares are flags, not autonomous and constant confirmations, but instead, potential answers. These objects, voice inherent, imbued with their own personalities, preferences, and perspectives are loaded with direction, with instruction, with intention. These objects are not constantly speaking singular affirmations, but instead they are constantly speaking, constantly communicating their needs, constantly communicating their desires. This constant stream of information is their flag. Not always ready to be read,

²² Can you imagine anything more quintessentially queer?

depending on their audience, but with the correct, overlapping information, history, and reading they are able to find a partner, they are able to match. Imagine for a moment these objects are both the hankie and the hankie wearer. These objects are the subject as well as the object, they are both.

At the beginning again, we find ourselves, showing our bellies, our preferences, our needs. We are in search of promises, these promises are familiar, but to be uttered once again, we get to fragment, we get to dissolve again, if we both agree, we are in constant negotiation with one another. Every moment –making a decision every moment—an opportunity to assert ourselves in our relations.

In the bodies of these objects, there is a spectrum of how readied they are, some objects, uncertain of whether they are able to go through the process again. Some of the objects have a sore back from leaning over the other, we are at various levels of ready. We are at levels of rebuilding. We are vastly different then when we were when entangled last. New wrinkles gliding over our surfaces, blemishes fresh, or even a newfound sense of mortality. This change is evidence of how we have related, how we have learned. As a kid I was an enthusiastic risktaker, nails through the bottom of my sneakers were nonchalantly yanked from the bloodied sole, leaping off garage roofs, ripping down the parking garage ramps of my apartment complex, grating the skin of my knees, allowing bandages to heal into my wounds.²³ This risk, the inherently bouncy nature of a kid, washed away one day, specifically when I hit puberty. The body changed, risk still interesting, but manifested in a new way. No longer would I trust myself to stay upright, my centre of gravity changed, the new tits that I had been wishing for, they changed the way I stood, the way I could fling myself around, I was officially top heavy. This new form, it changed the way that I existed in the world, it transformed me. It changed my ability to connect to the world, not bruised, not wounded, but tender. Differently balanced, the balance changed the way that I could be

²³ I love to think of a piece of woven cheese cloth floating in my body

in a place, it changed the way that I moved through the world, it changed the way that I would exist, it changed the way I could be emplaced. The transformation of the body, the transformation of my ability to connect with the landscape, tumbling over my feet, uncertain and unstable, the same way that these objects are now top heavy, heavy with change, a new way of moving through the world. It changed the way that these objects could accept the intimacy offered. I, a prospective partner am also top heavy, newly endowed, but my vision obscured, our relationship perhaps no longer viable, we are rebuilt, with the threads of another, but not always ready to be read.

THIS CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS IS A REQUEST FOR INTIMACY: This call relies on agency, an agency demonstrated by all participants. Astrid Heimer describes this relationship in 'The Aesthetics of Form Knowledge: Embodied knowledge through materialization', "Material–agency is rather something 'between' than 'within persons and things. Not only does the researcher have engagement, but the material and the forms to come are seen as part of 'the acting ensemble'. She is not the only 'author of the act" (2). This call, awaiting a confirmation, is a call to co-author, to work alongside each other, to commit to building together. A commitment that asks all parties to consider how we are to move forward, how we rebuild, how we future, how we past. The most intimate thing, done as a partnership, the most intimate thing, allowing someone to tread along the chewed bubble gum of your brain. This relationship can manifest in as many ways as threads loosed, we are carrying on, clumsily fooling around, intellectually stimulating, all warm breath and confident hands. This flag is one of desire, and that desire, if seen, if accepted, is a desire to reveal.

We are promising to be with one another, to volunteer is the promise of exchange, to engage, to fall in the water. In "Caressing Cloth: The Warp and Weft as Site of Exchange" Catherine Dormor details this relationship:

The caress, defined as the gentle touch or gesture of fondness, comprises the mutual touch between two subjects. To consider the interplay between body and cloth as the caress is to establish a form of thinking-with-cloth from an attentive body. In (re)awakening that body-cloth relationship the reciprocal nature of the caress becomes foregrounded as one of openness, mutuality, and production. In the intimacies of the caress each participant enables the dynamic exchange of action and reception, in a mirroring or replication of the warp weft-exchanges within woven cloth. Here the agency of each creates openness toward the other and reception of their touch, carrying in that moment the erotic charge that moves touching into caressing (130).

We are in constant relation, we are built by one another, in the case of these objects, these sites of exchange (I would contest the site of production) these homes built, these landscapes laid in front of us, boundless and jagged. Stepping into the bar, stepping on a rocky path, stepping into a bath, a promise as anticipation, a promise as a hope, a hope for solid ground, for a reasonable temperature, a moment of seeing. This volunteering is just that. In the face of uncertainty, the pound of music behind a closed bar door, the smell of green and dirt, the gentle slosh of the bathwater, that vow, heard.

8. Falling Apart II

Tape measure II

This is not the first time I have taken something apart, not even a little bit. In fact, this is not the first time I have taken apart a measuring tape specifically. This is a tool, a tool of measurement, a means to tell if something fits in the world and maybe where, or if something is too large. It is a measure of understanding how much space to take. It is also a means of creating a benchmark, a way of understanding how much has changed: How tall are you? Marking off your height at every birthday. My second attempt at working with a tape measure was totally different. This time I came to the relationship

with new skills, a better understanding of how I could be better, more attentive more conscious of our relationship. These insights due to every other relationship I had before. I knew my own limitations, I was able to see my own shortcomings, my own clumsiness. This falling part, as with every other time, was slow, it felt like it took years, (I suppose it had). I knew how I wanted to be able to better serve this little tool but knew that I wasn't going to be able to do it the same way I had every other time. This long, winding wispy measuring tape had lived rolled up in a plastic case most of its life. A little house that had a boat proudly displayed on its case, a button, acting as a doorbell on its side. An object that comes with its own little shell or cocoon must be fragile. A little snail, soft and squishy, needs its shell to protect itself from the world, and this measuring tape is no different. It is delicate, so fine, so prone to knots and tangles. Of course, this is no different from any other object that has come apart until this point, but somehow its vulnerability was worn on its shell. I knew that there was a need to be gentle, again, no more gentle than with any other object, but maybe because of the fragility being communicated, it made me that much more self-conscious. I couldn't coax this snail from its shell without being certain I could guarantee its safety.

The only way of coming apart in this case, was to come apart at the same time. This is difficult to explain. This process was one of unmaking and remaking all at the same time. I was so fearful of losing the short threads of the tape, they were so small, so prone to being lost, so vulnerable, that in this moment, on the precipice, we stepped, we leapt, we trusted one another. I drew on all the lessons that had been taught and trusted that this little fragile snail would guide me.

slowly.

Slowly.

Following the little snail's path, thread by tiny little thread, they were loosened, and instead of keeping them in the library, these tiny little threads were imbedded into a new warp. They were falling apart, directly into their new home. They were not immune to

perceived risks, there was always the risk of a breeze too strong, or of a static charge magically pulling these little fragments into the open warp only to get lost. But there was no in-between, this tiny breathy thread would always be at the whim of the elements, but to limit the potential for loss was the solution, as the threads are pulled and placed, nestled into the new linen home, they line up along the selvedge of the cloth, slowly creating a sensitive undulating wave, signalling its autonomy, its personality.

*As the tiny threads are being pulled, there is a long tail being created, the warp threads waving, loose of the holding threads, these tiny little crosshatches, so powerful, holding in place the long and wild threads running, intersecting, organizing. In order to keep the threads from being lost, they also get woven into the same home as its little siblings. They are so in need of one another, unable to exist without the other, allowing these disparate parts to be together but separate, allowing each atom of the body to be there without being entangled in one another (see fig. 8**Error! Reference source not found.**).*

My own understanding of the metamorphosis process is still what it was when explained to me as a child: Caterpillars live their little lives, chewing on leaves, avoiding the pecks of birds, all in pursuit of eventually becoming butterflies, transforming so drastically that when placed by their siblings, or previous versions of themselves, it is almost laughable, 'how could you possibly be the same thing?' And that metamorphosis as I remember it being explained to me, happens in the strangest way, the creation of a home in order to become goo, only to reorganize themselves into their new form.

It feels analogous to the ways in which transformation happens to these objects. The caterpillar being the objects before the dance, the books being the cocoon, the threads being the emulsified version of the previous self, and the objects reorganized on the loom as butterflies. Please excuse the very Eric Carle explanation of metamorphosis, but

I wish not to over-hypothesize here. I live in my naïve understanding of how these things work.

It has also been suggested that this division resembles the process of mitosis. The connection of the work to reproduction is one that can feel uneasy, not due to any prudish disposition but instead due to my inability to speak science. After the initial giggle of the idea, and a gentle turnaround of it in my hands, it does feel possible to explain this process as a division of cells. A napkin making copies of itself, all a little bit different from its earlier version is closer to the process. Never exactly the same.

Instead of thinking of the process here in these more scientific terms, maybe I can reach more successfully for transformation as generated by relation.

This coming apart feels delicate, the drawing of threads when being loosed from their frame, like it is possible for the world to collapse if yanked too hard. Inevitably, as the loosener, mistakes are made, hands are clumsy, overeager, grasping, coarse. To be able to give the attention needed, breath must slow, eyes must focus, the partner read. So rarely can anything be used other than hands and a pin. So responsive to touch, the object calls for tenderness: Nails clipped, hands washed thoroughly, dry skin softened, thoughtfully maintained tools. It's a practice that happens outside of the immediate interaction, like writing a love letter, anticipatory, thinking of the objects before we engage, longing to care for them. Tuning myself up, ensuring that I can be the best version of myself before we sit down. There is no repair for coarsely handled threads, there is no bringing together two torn ends. Any restoration that happens will alter them indefinitely, the evidence of thoughtlessness worn for eternity. There is no way to fix this, it is why the dance is so important, so significant. It is permanent.

In "Seaming, Writing and Making Strange: between material and text" Yeseung Lee writes of the threefold existence of object, maker, and documentation. The practice that

Lee details draws the experience of “being the object via the experience of being taken apart and newly assembled during each making” (17). Lee looks to the ways in which formalized research methods, such as science and anthropology cannot capture the nuance of human generation, suggesting that: “Making is a humbling experience, through which makers learn that ‘they don’t know’, a knowledge that is constantly recalled by the contingency and displacement brought on by material agency” (19). This displacement, this estrangement, is felt here in our process, this creation of knowledge and familiarity. The more that is pulled apart the clearer it becomes that I know very little, and that there is no way to anticipate what secrets these threads will reveal.

Lee describes their research and practice and the ways in which they are integrated and interdependent, they work symbiotically. This description is a way finder, the ways in which the writing and weaving are unable to be untangled, and so unable to survive without the other. As the maker you become part of the object you are working with, you also become a surface, a plane by which you can interact with other planes, as with the objects collaborated with. It is very clear that we are both porous. We have so many entries available to each other to lope into, we are enmeshed, we are seeping into one another. We are both frayed, our structural integrity challenged. We are both loose, planes becoming lines, dissolving into our primary matter. This can only happen due to the vows having been made.

The action of fraying is one that can be thought of as dangerous, it is the unleashing, it is the untethering, I posit that it is the widening of the edges, the potential of the edge coming free. This widening, this vulnerability in action is an act of trust. It is the trust of the object that they will be cared for and listened to. It is their openness and generosity that allows for their own transformation, as well as my own. Catherine Domor writes in *A Philosophy of Textile: Between Practice and Theory* “Like the frayed cloth, the undoing does not reverse the process of weaving, so much as it sets warp and weft in a new cohabiting relationship: attached where the cloth is unfrayed, but no longer bound

together by a selvedge (or seam)” (92). This change in relational structure, is a reaching backwards and forwards, a temporal elastic allowing us to be both novel and familiar. This view of the fray is a powerful case for the ways in which these loose and fragile threads are changed, while continuing to maintain parts of their self, and the self that was contained within their earlier band of relations. These are not lost, do not worry, these are maintained, they are kept, but allowed to be many, more than one.

Sharon Blakely and Liz Mitchell discuss their dance in the attic of an archive in “Unfolding: A Multisensorial dialogue in ‘material time’ “of how they experienced an “instinctively collaborative gesture” (4). They attempt to summarize what happens in the moment when their bodies know how to fold a sheet together, enacting intimacy, demonstrating bodily knowledge with one another, allowing this sheet to act as a “ceremonial partnership” (5). Calling on the concept of emplacement, Blakey and Mitchell describe the ways in which they were able to be in a space that connects body, mind, and environment. The textile object, and the textile experience, act as a conduit for relationality, as well as a means of slipping between these planes. If these objects act as landscape, as environment, they are also capable of allowing the maker/the experiencer to exist in a state of emplacement, allowing for the body, mind, and object to transcend the simple plane of doing or being. The transformative process accelerates the slipping between, and it does this by being in multiple places at the same time. These objects are the other edge of the sheet, we are folding upon one another. We are fragmenting out, we are disintegrating in, and so we are able to exist in many places. We are able to be a bare fragment, able to recall how we were, holding the crimp of a thread laid over you, the impression of a pillowcase on the cheek, we are able to exist in the environment that we make for one another. We are untethered from the landscape in which we are traditionally found, a warp and weft, a desk and chair, a laundry basket of clean linens. We are able to transport into one another, the landscape changes to the lap of the maker, the fraying seam, we are coming undone in both time and place. We

slip under doors, weave between pages, we reconfigure ourselves. We splinter apart having gleaned the knowledge that when we fragment, we remake ourselves.

The time taken to make these works is significant, but not due to its bulk, nor to the feat of it all. You will not find me sighing about the time taken. To be honest, in this process, time doesn't play a factor. To answer the question, an earnest one, a sensible one: "How long does this take you?" The simple answer is: "It doesn't matter". The more frustrating and true answer is: "A lifetime". I roll my eyes too. It is clear that this process could not happen without the time and opportunity to fall apart.²⁴

This process, this unmaking, is infinite. We continue to fall, to slip down to our atoms, of course every time we are remade in this transformation there is loss, we are never entirely whole again. We are now army. We are multiplying, we become infinite versions of self, allowing us to be in many places at once. We are one object in many spaces. With that many spaces, we can slip between temporalities, bodies, and place. We are unmade and remade simultaneously, not despite of, but because of, the risk of wayward breath and static charge. We gather along the edges in undulating waves.

9. Keeping as Care II

Fuzzy library

This stack of books, a stack of books that add up to be a version of myself, maybe not a total version, maybe just a perception of the maker by an audience, maybe a pile of versions of self, maybe a projection of what the maker wishes to see of themselves. These

²⁴ Here I will take a moment to describe why like time, labour is not laboured upon on in this project. The issue of labour is dense and fraught within the textile industry, and really all industry. I do my best to avoid gilding my labour. It is distasteful to celebrate the labour of a middle class white cis queer woman, especially when it is in the context of the larger conversation we are having about dangerous and inhumane working conditions, as well as when the labour I am engaging in being truly 'wasteful' in some capacity.

books acting not as words on a page, not as keepers of words, but instead acting as their most book like, existing solely as bodies, as entities that can exist as pages and a spine, trustworthy and sturdy, offering their many hands to help the threads that have been untethered to be kept, to offer a safe place for the parts of these selves to be housed. These stacks of books are fuzzy, they are unkempt, they feel as if they are growing of their own volition, they are able to expand out like a heavy sigh holding these threads that when individuated seem like wisps, but when together become more weighty, when together they stretch out, asking the bindings of these books to open themselves (see fig. 9Error! Reference source not found.).

The form of care that is strived for here, is a practice of keeping, remembering, and memorializing. Not always for things lost, but for things of significance, no matter how small, how breathy, how tenuous. The care being demonstrated is created through a scaffolding of action, of thought. Not a recipe, exactly, not a frame, rigid or inflexible, it is the care that happens in moments of need, or desire, the care enacted in spaces of the informal.

In looking to the educators who wrote “For Slow Scholarship” as guides, we understand how we can change our engagement with academic structures. The authors detail, in the most beautiful, gentle, and clear manifesto-style guidelines, the ways in which we can resist the violent and greedy structure of the neoliberal university. Encouraging slowness, celebrating work that is careful, and a prioritization of care for the self, and the clear imperative to care for others. This drive to slow down is exemplified in the act of keeping in the work being created here. (Oh, how do I bristle against the use of the word **work**). Slow, slowing down, to take the time the focus and the joy in the work of ensuring these objects are cared for, and by caring for them caring for the self.

THIS CHANGE, THIS STRIVING FOR SLOWNESS IS A RESTORATIVE ACT: This act of slowness, of care can be read as a means of counter programming. Counter programming the over scheduling, the

over production. Please, imagine explaining to someone that you are using your time in this manner. On some days it feels absurd, on others, subversive. This is unintentional, it generates deep feelings of uncertainty. This is not performative subversion or retaliation, it is instead an answer to how the relationships tended to are both generative and static, and an answer (or better word?) as what happens in the moment between; the held breath, the pause of a loom treadle.

Spending time slowly taking apart a napkin seems as reasonable and logical as most of the other ways I have participated in time, particularly in the context of labour production. This use of time is just as absurd as the time used applying the dark purple/red dye on my kid sisters head in our shared childhood bathroom, with her straddling the toilet like she was riding a porcelain bicycle, overcome with giggles generated by the fumes, generated by our love for one another. Or the time given to building marble runs with the kids I used to sit, building and rebuilding with such repetition that it felt as if time had stood still in the monotony punctuated by the glee of watching cat's eyes rolling over wooden blocks, as my own eyes would involuntarily roll in search of sleep. Or the time used looking for the exact mug my partner broke at their family cottage, hidden from the aunties and uncles, so we could make a swap attributing the reappearance of the missing mug to mysterious forces. This is work that comes from love, care, affection, and it is absurd. It is unreasonable by the standards placed at the feet of efficiency. This care, these acts, are those made in the pursuit of making connection; they are dull, they are awkward they are full of joy, but ultimately a flag for intimacy.

The books allow me to have infinite hands, manifesting a fragmented self. I wish for nothing more than to be able to hold each untangled thread between my fingers, cradled. I, unfortunately, find myself short on these cradles and find myself relying on my own stacks, books that have traveled with me, as many of these objects have, through apartments, homes, rooms. These books in many cases are the ones that

wander into my life much like the napkins, hankies, and tea towels. These are gifts, tokens, inscribed with love notes, dedications, only some of which are familiar. These books are examples of connection, they are the physical manifestation of curiosity, as much as they are reflections, and the recitations of the made impressions. These objects have kept me warm, they have acted as a means of self-identification, and comfort. They have lived in bookshelves, in stacked on floors, lined drafty windows, and in many cases have laid next to me as I sleep.²⁵ These books in their bookness allow for a dogearing of time, a slowing, a being in.

HERE WE ARE MAKING A COMMUNITY: The army. The fragmented coming together. We are constantly remaking, stretching our spines, generating emplaced knowledge alongside one another, fragment of body next to fragment of body, sitting alongside propping each other up. The relationships and interconnectedness generated here are grounded not only in the physical presence of one another, not only the familiarity found when you melt into one another's hands, but the intimacy generated through becoming with.

We are cocreating a body, and with this pause, the read, the breath, we are keeping. We are not taking. Here is that difference again, we are keeping as a means of recording. The act of keeping here is one that relies on the books, on the threads, on the attention applied, but ultimately it is a way of remembering, of documenting. There are ways we could have kept, there are ways I have kept, that do not serve our work. There are ways that keeping can counter our intentions. We are keeping knowing there is no way to be perfect, the never-ending struggle to ensure the order, the gentleness, the whole cloth is kept, is a struggle that will never be surpassed. There is an amount of futility that looms over this work. There is a doom that sweeps over, knowing that this keeping, though well intentioned, is enacting damage. No matter how full of care, this keeping is

²⁵ As a kid, I would regularly empty my bookshelves and toy box of all my books and stuffed animals, dragging all these family members into bed with me, sometimes even convincing my little sister come lay in this pile of detritus with me. Sisters, books, stuffed animals, all were kept at the same distance, keeping each other company, wishing to hold all close.

stretching the spines of the books, so generously engaged in the dance, risking their physical form, the striving to keep the threads in order feels like taking the steps with the lights off, there is a familiarity, a confidence, but some days, you just miscount, you stumble, left with a bump of a reminder that you are fallible and mistakes will be made. The ways in which this keeping is a form of archiving makes me feel both easy and un-. The wish for keeping in situ, in recreating, to keeping a context. There are ways that this keeping feels like a practice of research, it is the scribbles in a notebook, a process of mark making, of documenting, and I am once again the frazzled and sleepy student attempting to keep notes from the specialist. Fallible, the hands in play are trustworthy, but sometimes they are unpredictable. Sometimes they lose all strength and drop tools, sometimes they connect to other parts of the brain, writing the thoughts boiling behind the attention given, leaving me to look at them as if they are Thing²⁶ a skittering hand that appears to have separate goals or apathy. This happens still in the keeping, the pulling of threads, I wish to trust that the impression, left is one that is generative but of course, the process of research can be damaging. Jessie Loyer, writes in “Indigenous Information Literacy: nêhiyaw Kinship Enabling Self-Care in Research” of the ways in which librarians can Indigenize the library by engaging with Indigenous knowledge frameworks. This work that Loyer is doing prioritizes the generation of kinship, within the library and in the practice of research. The process of research is a process of relationship building, there is no generation without previous understanding.

10. Coming Together II

Pink Napkin

A neon pink floral napkin with serged edges, a print that includes purples and greens. A napkin that has been carried home to home, a thrilling object that is counter to the objects I have made in the past. This napkin sauntered into my linen closet as a gift. A

²⁶ I imagine Thing, from the 1990's, acting alongside, forever crush Christina Ricci -- Sonnenfeld, Barry. *The Addams Family*. Paramount Pictures, 1991.

gift that was handed over as a form of encouragement. A gift that was meant to be a generous nudge to keep making. This napkin came in a ragbag of scraps, a ragbag that was full of textile shreds that were kept, in stash over stash, a ragbag acting as an archive of interest. Little pieces of fabric that were kept by various caretakers over time, too beautiful, unusual, and coveted to throw out, a ragbag of scraps that had been passed from maker to maker, from studio to studio, contents being added to, removed, a bag of remnants too special, but not of use, or in need, depending on the owner.

This napkin acted as a beacon, a highlighter, a flash in a bag. A call from an army of objects, reaching out, flagging me down. It has been a stalwart favourite, sitting alongside me, when collections were edited, passed along, it always stayed, resilient, stubborn. So bawdy, in comparison to the usual objects of my affection, this napkin reminds me of the ways I could be. It reminds me of the people I love, exuberant, chatty, and a little retro. The print reminds me of the dresses I lusted after at the vintage shops I used to haunt as a teen, reminds me of the bedroom Teeny accepted her Oscar in, in slumber party favourite Now and Then, reminds me of a version of myself that could have been.²⁷

Dissolved a number of times, the threads of this object have been detangled and reformed, appearing to be three discreet objects, but in reality, all one, the selvages of the object the only thing keeping it separated from the other selves it hangs with.²⁸ The remaking that has happened here has resulted in threads hanging loose, ringlets falling out from its new plane, threads traversing two separate linen warps, highlighting the relations here, and in the absence of the floral, a woven section of linen, upon linen, linen that had once held a portion of the napkin, only to dance again, dissolving and reconstituting.²⁹ These bodies are imbued with evidence of relationship, tiny snapshots

²⁷ I was always chosen to being a Chrissy, not a Teeny, not a Sam, and certainly not a Roberta (this felt terribly insulting, but upon reflection accurate). Other characters I have been assigned... Beth (*Little Women*), Mike Nesmith (The Monkees), Sporty Spice (The Spice Girls)

²⁸ I would suggest four... napkin 1, napkin 2, napkin 3, napkin kate.... We are split and shared

²⁹ This does beg the question, when is the ship totally new?

of how they have been with. The body of this napkin, a version of self, over and over, multiplied over many bodies, the recognizable voice of another coming out of your mouth (see fig. 10Error! Reference source not found.).

Again, here we are, we are melting into one another, we are merging, transforming. The threads, little parts of a whole are making their way into the home. In some cases, this is not the first time they have done this. They have come undone and redone a number of times. This does not mean that they know how to walk through this space, they have been equipped with the skills to navigate, but it doesn't mean that the path is the same, they are still making traces in land that hasn't been walked before, luckily, they don't have to walk it alone, we don't have to wayfind on our own, we get to clasp upon one another and jump.

I do wonder if the objects have this strange sense of *deja vu* the same ways that I do. Occasionally, the process, the making, the unmaking, the remaking, there is so much joy, but also monotony. There is quiet, time unrolls in front of us, knowing that we get to be together for as long as wanted, but my oh my, are we walking the same steps over and over? My oh my, are we repeating the same gestures over and over? Do we fall asleep in each other's hands, startled awake by a nodding head or a hand dripping out of a lap. There is familiarity, there is comfort, I hope, I wish. I hope, I wish for those here with me to feel this familiarity, this comfort this warmth, the familiar gait, the out of sync breath, the slow atonal music made by turning pages harmonizing with the slow, out of time beat of the treadles, the lyrics comprised of coaxing murmurs, and quiet aimless hum that escapes my lips when allowed to be in the body, absolutely. There is nothing beautiful about this process, there is nothing outwardly romantic or alluring about this process. The coming together of ourselves is tedious, it is finicky, it is plagued with hiccups and stumbles, when watching from overhead, it could be read that nothing is happening, that there is some faffing around with books and threads. This coming together is in some ways the antithesis of a weaving practice that one would imagine,

there is no speed, there is no production, we are just sitting and marinating, placing ourselves in this new home, rearranging.

The objects, when observed, when we are marinating together, sitting at the bench, they appear to move with lightning speed, their voice becoming ringing clear, directing their desire. Wiggling into the home of a warp, sliding through an open shed to make their presence known. Sometimes this presence is announced loudly, sometimes a little more timidly, but always conveyed in a surprising and novel way.

These objects becoming one, becoming many, fragmented into many selves, they are able to create the maps needed to lead to a new facet of themselves, in their remaking they reveal more secrets, they reveal even more of their abilities.

When coming together the unwoven objects interceding into sturdy linen warps, linen warps that can be read as rigid, structured, these objects, these threads will pucker, their little limbs tightly packed together, demonstrate how tiny they can make themselves. These threads appear to be playing a very serious and neighbourhood wide game of sardines, all squished, stacked upon one another, stifling their gasping giggles, squirmy and snug, all sweaty and skinned kneed. Sometimes though, the threads appear to be starfishing in the middle of the bed, stretching to all four corners, luxuriating in the space afforded, taking up as much space available to them, slipping their fingers to the coldness of sheets unslept, toes burrowing out the bottom of the bedding, wrapping themselves in the duvet, making luxurious pillow nests. The beauty of fragmentation, the beauty of becoming compost is that we can rebuild as many, we can take parts of each other to fill in the gaps. This isn't the rebuilding for an ideal, it is a rebuilding for the joy of it, for the newness, for the expression of affections.

There are days that I can feel those people who have pressed against me appearing on my face, coming out of my mouth, lingering in my closet. There are moments when it is

clear that in some ways, in the process of infinite undoing and rebuilding, I have been rebuilt with the potent parts of those who have impressed upon me. We are all the building blocks of those around us. These building blocks though, these threads borrowed from the neighbouring cloth are still evident next door. They are shared across the seam, they are forces within ourselves. They are evidence of the connection had. Tiny bridges between selves.

This image of building can communicate rigidity, can be interpreted as bricks, but the little brick home, the one immune to being blown down, keeping out the wolf, is all permanence, it stays, it is solid. Perhaps the building I wish for is the one of straw, the one of sticks, the one that can tip over, revealing curled tail and dewy snout. The wish to live in a house that can be taken apart, to wish for a way to be remade. To return after being blown to bits to make a new. What if after the wolf takes your world apart, you can return? You can make a new home with the bits that serve, with the remnants of the neighbours, with the things learned from being blown down. This house is built of sticks, straw, and maybe a brick, reassembled.

Perhaps we are compost, roiling with worms, rich and dense. Wiggly and warm of our own accord. In the first grade our class pet was a box of worms. It was there to teach stewardship, to show how our scraps could become dirt again, to feed our little red wriggly friends, to generate new life. There are always rules, there are always limitations, a boundary of what to include, to be thoughtful about what is shared with our little classmates. What does a worm want? What can I share with it? What is generative for its little wormy life? This box of magic, this box allowed for growth, allowed for newness, for rebirth, for rebuilding. So much so that when turning out our family compost in the backyard with a pitchfork, I would howl, fearful for my squiggly friends, (these worms, much beefier than the delicate lacy worms kept in class, much sturdier, still vulnerable). Shouting directives to my parents begging for them to be more careful, to be more gentle, they would pull out forkfuls of worms, steaming with

warmth, with moisture, with potential, spreading them out on our garden, an army of composters, taking their skills, sharing them with the yard. Donna Haraway speaks of an understanding of the world and our relation to it by stating in *Staying with the trouble: making kin in the Chthulucene*:

We are compost, not posthuman; we inhabit the humusities, not the humanities. Philosophically and materially, I am a compostist, not a posthumanist. Critters—human and not—become-with each other, compose and decompose each other, in every scale and register of time and stuff in sympoietic³⁰ tangling, in ecological evolutionary developmental earthly worlding and unworlding (97).

This world where we are plied together, wound and tensioned, laying on, laying in, laying because, nourishing and decaying one another. This understanding, this statement, this call, it's a refrain that brings these threads to the surface, these little tendrils of making and unmaking, these shimmering glints of promise, of the promise to make and un, to build and re. These little glowing threads are evidence of what can happen in the rebuilding, what can happen when their vulnerability is embraced when they shine in their fragility.

The ability to slip within one another, the way that we are able to seep into the gaps of one another, the way that textiles relate with one another is described by Catherine Dormor in *A Philosophy of Textile* as: “the viscous honey pours down onto viscous honey, self onto self, it is held separate temporarily before the resistance is overcome and its softness yields, enfolding and engulfing the new part” (78). This moment of separateness that Dormor refers to, reads as a breath, it recalls a surface touching surface, skin to skin. This breath is the edge the place where the original form is aside the new, slipping within, sustaining. The moment when the threads are bridged in the

³⁰ Sympoiesis meaning “making-with.” Nothing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or self-organizing(58) (Haraway)

state of becoming something new, also, as described earlier, the way in which the objects will reach and stretch, huddle up, just behave, be. These edges abutted, overlapped, and the tension within are the places where we are coming together, we are experiencing an edge effect as described by Aldo Leopold in *Game Management*, where he details, the phenomena experienced at the edge of ecosystems, as it is the place hunters most often see game moving in these spaces, and mustering all the information that 1933 had to offer states: “We do not understand the reason for all of these edge-effects, but in those cases where we can guess the reason, it usually harks back either to the desirability of simultaneous access to more than one environmental type, or the greater richness of border vegetation, or both” (131). Working at understanding the ways life exists at the edges, Leopold is supposing, in only the way a person who is in the process of learning new skills can suppose. And perhaps that is what is happening, these threads laced across a space are creating that tether to access the this and that. These threads are wiggling their wormy little toes, these threads are finding richness, are finding the deeply nourishing soil of us acting, composting one another.

This ability for fibres to blend and mold into each other, to act as support, to act as an infrastructure, to be both frame and honey is a means of being. We are sliding into one another. The power exhibited by the embodied tenderness allows these objects to be new, to be old, to be the same, to be transformed, to have fluffy toes in temporal spaces, to have their hands outreached, to be multiples, to be many. To become goo and reform, to be in their unmaking, a different way, a different being but the same.

11. Have a Bath II

Maker

All nerves and yawns, this object has gotten to go through as many dissolutions and reconstitutions as there are sibling objects in this practice. The comfort searched for in

this body, is infinite. Constantly coming apart, the object is in search of a way to be held, wishing for a repository, for the tumbleweeds of hair that comes out in combs, wishing for the ability to nestle into the pages of a book, a home. This object has been worked upon by the threads that have been tangled out of its fingers, by the pockets it has been placed in, the napkins that have mopped up the evidence of mess, by the hems that have both kept them safe as well as squared.

This object, a maker, the same as the napkins, the hankies, the tape measures, also makers. Clinging, vying, vulnerable and tender. Made and remade over and over in this process, there is always a reaching for the making a new place of home. Reaching out for a sitter, having been tucked in a number of times, impressed upon by every keeper, every caretaker. Brimming with feelings of affection, of aspiration, of nostalgia, of longing. Fizzy with secrets shared, with secrets kept. Folded in the laundry basket, stacked up in a tower, adrift in the ocean of a bathtub. This object has been broken apart and appears as one formal element, just it as it appears singular, it also appears, over and over in the wrinkles, the linen, the treading errors. Fragments of self, ever changing, ever wiggly, ever squirmy, transformed by every gentle caress.

Slipping into the space, we are searching for ways to care for one another, for ways to make our vulnerability, our sensitive parts, feel protected. This protection is generated by making our spaces a home. By populating our space with our own biology, by allowing ourselves to become enmeshed with the landscape. To nestle your feet into the sand of the beach, the sense that you are being drawn into the earth. The practice of bathing the objects is a similar feeling, not entirely being swallowed, but becoming part of a landscape, of immersing the self. Wetting the body, and becoming pliable, at ease, to find comfort.

This action of placemaking, finding comfort, and space, is a means of orientation, as described by Sara Ahmed in *Queer Phenomenology*. The threads now in a new space laid

into a new context are striving to find their place. Ahmed states: “Loving one’s home is not about being fixed into a place, but rather it is about becoming part of a space where one has expanded one’s body. Saturating the space with bodily matter: home as overflowing and flowing over” (11). There is no end to attempting to find place or home, especially when you are on the outside. This existing upon edges, frayed and fragile, a place that is tenuous and at risk, is a way of being that is inherently strange making. To find ease, to find comfort in a home, is a process of populating, of relating. A relationship generated in the inhabiting.

THE TEXTILE AS A MEANS OF INHABITING: A relational constellation as a way of being with.

Catherine Dormor writes of this way of making as a way to enter:

From within the porous and enfolding textile-space, ways to explore, discuss and articulate textile practice emerges. This is not in order to stretch out that space and reveal it as it were a pelt from hunted prey, but rather to offer some entry points into the labyrinthine space and some mapping points to initiate new journeys.... Such an unfolding, enfolding and folding methodology is composed of a matrix of threads and words, loops and metaphors, intersections and spaces, textures and forms, trajectories and involutions: a proliferation of loose ends (22).

This space making allows for home making in the object itself, perhaps. The porosity of the space created allows for many entryways. An infinite amount of home, space to be created. An infinite number of sandy shorelines to be nestled into. We are the threads in the warp, finding a way to make a home that is so different from the way home has been understood or portrayed to us. Woven objects as conduit, as vulnerable, or as open, available. Perhaps this way of space making is a another means of emplacing, here we are in time, in space, in self. Maybe by making our homes squished in a linen frame, comforted, gently handled, rebuilt, is a way of being in a fibre landscape. When

Dormor describes the being held and enfolded, I picture my sister and I waking early on a weekend, dragging our duvets to the dryer, tossing them in to warm, like we were readying a roll to hold a little sausage-y treat, then taking turns rolling each other in our warmed vessels, an activity we named 'sausage rolls' (we did have variations... 'sandwiches', 'hamburgers' how we missed 'pigs in blankets' is a mystery) we are rolling ourselves here, napkins, hankies, kates, linen, all rolled up into sausage rolls, we are pigs in blankets, warm, salty and flakey. We have to be handled carefully, but when we are all assembled, we are a greater sum of our parts.

It's funny, making home without obvious guides that I can follow clearly means that improvisation has been inevitable.³¹ There are examples to be found of what a home can look like, but as someone on the edges, on the selvages, the sides, it means that home cannot be followed like the recipe cards pulled out at my mum's house. There is no role to fill that feels obvious. There is an ongoing song shared by those that I care for, and that care for me, the chorus sings that I would be a terrible housewife. When the role has been presumed, it feels as if I am acting, playing pretend. I am aware of what the role entails, I have not escaped that impression, the idea of home making. When called upon, I am plagued by a performance anxiety, an impotence. There is a moment though, when experiencing moments of reciprocity, I will perform acts of service driven by my care and affection for the individual. This mirror informs how I wish to express my love. I can cook for you, I can be a home maker, but only when the other side of the equation is meeting me at the same place. There is not a division of labour, it is work that we do for each other, no designation of roles, no inside work vs. outside work. No binary coded responsibilities. The only way this can ever work is if we can look at each other and share. To know one another, to know when to intervene, to build together. Rife with sitcom tropes I am your thankless housewife, as much as I am your dum dum husband, no, I am neither, I am the home, and you are mine. We are together in the space, we are

³¹ See Nihilist Spasm Band – a group of improvisational jazz artists from my hometown, opening their practice space to allow for folks to watch them play on their home-made instruments.

the walls, the yard, the trees scraping at the window, we are the drapes crooked with clumsiness, we are the sheets, holding each other. Entwined holding the threads of the parts we have teased apart. We are able to be what we need for ourselves and each other, fragmented across the landscape of our home we are able to hold one another between our pages, we are able in the making of our home to have infinite hands, holding each piece of each other. The home we have built is not just the warp and weft, it is only possible because we have shown each other our hems and edges, revealed secret threads and stories, and in that breaking down, to our atomic level, we are able to nestle into this new space created, safe lying next to each other, knowing that we have both done our best to keep all aspects of our selves. Our bodies, suspended, feet dangling, threads loose, sites of care, home.

Our threads have marks left, we are twisted and worn, loved and handled. The coming together this joining this mushing the blending the bleeding into one another, the multiples that are generated are not little children, these are not my eggs hatched, they are my charges. I am once again the ill-equipped babysitter doing her best, attempting to ensure that everyone gets through the evening, eventually going to bed, fed and safe. We are temporary caretakers, doing our best to ensure safety, to ensure that damage is avoided, that the glory of illicit snacks before lights out is enjoyed.

The home created here, in a practical sense, can you even imagine, is generated by frosting the space with us, with our bodies, with our biologies. We paint the walls, we hang our curtains, we fuss and preen, placing familiar pieces of furniture and knick knacks. We drench our space with our care, with every relation we have had until this point, with the evidence of connection. We create a space for ourselves, gentle and familiar, warm and secure, impermanent but sufficient, impermanent but perfect for now. Together, gently illuminating the spaces we are going to inhabit. for now. Sara Ahmed expresses in *Queer Phenomenology*: "Each time I move, I stretch myself out, trying this door, looking here, looking there. In stretching myself out, moving homes for

me is coming to inhabit spaces, coming to embody them, where my body and the rooms in which it gathers—sitting, sleeping, writing, acting as it does, in this room and that room—cease to be distinct” (22). This act of becoming enmeshed, the threads are doing this during the process, they are inhabiting. We are doing this, stretching and embodying the space of the gallery, the setting out the of the familiar, the cozying of the space. Painting the walls, installing our little delicate fixtures. Folding our laundry, detangling the knots found in our loose threads, preening, comforting, the plucking of a partner’s eyebrows, the filling of a refrigerator with favourite condiments. We are slowly populating our new context. One day we will walk in, and not recognize the smell of a strange house, instead we will open our door and not smell anything, it will be engulfed in our own scent. Our bodies bathed in the space, the space bathed in us.

THESE OBJECTS FLOATING, ACT AS SLOWLY SINKING RAFTS: Swaying to the imperceptible current of a seemingly calm tub. Floating on their backs, bellies in the sun, but they aren’t great at it. I hear my partner calling out ‘I can’t’ float’ of course you can, but in these moments, when it feels as if your feet are encased in concrete, I am happy to hold you up, ensuring that you don’t sink, that you don’t become muskie food. Let me place my hands under your back, and that perfect part of your thigh, that super tender spot that makes you shiver when grazed. Let me hold your loose threads, floating through my fingers as if to gently caress back, never to let go, let me hold your tender new seam the evidence of the threads between us. Float in the water, your hems submerged, toes sticking up from the surface, lake water collecting in your belly button, a beautiful reservoir, (what lucky drops), lake water slowly drenching you, your surface darkening, as if you are becoming the lake itself. Here in the tub, we are becoming a new thing, quiet, slow, floating and held.

These unruly charges gently removed from the tub in bundles, like squirmy kids slippery with resistance and resentment. The call in from the water is rarely met with enthusiasm (unless you are tiny little tub pooper, but even then the resistance was

clear). These bundles of threads, wrapped in towels, little sausage rolls, pigs in blankets, removed not because of the need for speed, for the need to move quickly, but because if left long enough, I fear they will become bubbles, effervescent, floating away. I fear they will dissolve altogether, swirling down the drain. If that were ever to happen, I would be happy for them, envious even. Play acting a parent running the towel over their kid's head, the most nonsensical inside joke, the kind of joke that happens in a home, in a landscape of comfort, like a distraction from the cool air, an act of clowning to cheer up these little water babies liberated from their lake. We dry ourselves, on to each other, hands being dried by little woven bodies, little woven bodies being dried by the hands that had wished to be infinite, so they could be held at every atom.

COMPRESSED, NOT BETWEEN FINGERS, NOT IN THE BRUSQUE TOWELING DOWN: Compressed, pressed, pressure applied, the right amount. So careful, we know each other so well, we have pressed into each other a million times already, it has been years, it has been a lifetime of pressing, of practicing that pressing, of dreaming about pressing, of making mistakes in that pressure. This pressure applied, it is intimate, knowing, practiced. These objects, so familiar with being pressed, spread upon an ironing board, perhaps pinned out to block out their shape, intentional folds pressed into their bodies, folds that can never be forgotten, the topography of their bodies infinite, towering over me. My hands leave marks and indents upon their bodies, evidence of inattention, clumsiness, affection and longing. These valleys, mountains, rolling hills, ravines they are little impressions, the objects parroting back my own voice, the voice of the ironing board, the voice of the linen closet, the imitation of someone's back pocket.

Conclusion

I HESITATE TO CALL THIS THAT: We are not done, we could fold upon ourselves again, and will. The practice of transformation through making and remaking, unpicking and careful saving will never be complete, we will just call this another dog ear, I won't keep you much longer dear reader, but we will call this a pause, a placeholder, as we will continue

to come apart and back together. We will, endowed with the queer audacity, continue to make homes, nestled into the hems and edges, pulling at the loose threads, tangling ourselves in our bodies and others. Looking for a path that isn't provided. We will continue to unweave, to be clumsy in our handling, to err, and mourn, to stroke the *surfaces* of that we love.

There so many ways we can fold, enfold, refold from this pause, we can look to the research done by scholars about poetry, we can look up to sky and attempt to understand the idea of infinity, (infinity as I have discovered also exists in these objects). We can look to ways in which writing and thinking and making can get closer together. How they are not three discrete things, but one, the threads of these practices are so entangled, and are shared. We can look at the scale, the shape, the transformations that can happen if we continue to allow ourselves to be remade in more strange making ways. Each time we are rebuilt, we are closer and further from the point where we started, we are moving in concentric circles, but so far, I haven't found the spot where lines cross, where we end, where we settle, but also to be fair, I have always been pretty shit at math.

This pause, has allowed us to get closer, but there is no end, this pause allows for some reflection, but in that reflection a reminder that we aren't there. To be fair, I don't believe that there is a 'there' that there in a final resting point. These objects will continue to be remade, will continue to dance, long after my knees give, long after they have tired of my lack of rhythm. We continue to hold one another, we continue to hold the impressions we have made upon each other, and will continue to speak with each other's inflections, to pronounce words incorrectly in order to hold each one another, momentarily.

This pause, is a pause, so I can take this work to the courthouse, this pause, is a pause to ensure that we can catch our breath, that we can do our laundry, that we can repeat,

we can fold, we can bathe. Again. By folding in this moment, I hope for us to look both backwards and forwards, to remake ourselves again in the process, seeing how we recall it to be, and to stretch forward.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Mentioned Images



Figure 1. Kate Ritchie, *Yellow Napkins (detail)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Figure 2. Kate Ritchie, *Tape Measure I (detail)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Figure 3. Kate Ritchie, *Bandana/White Napkin (detail)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.

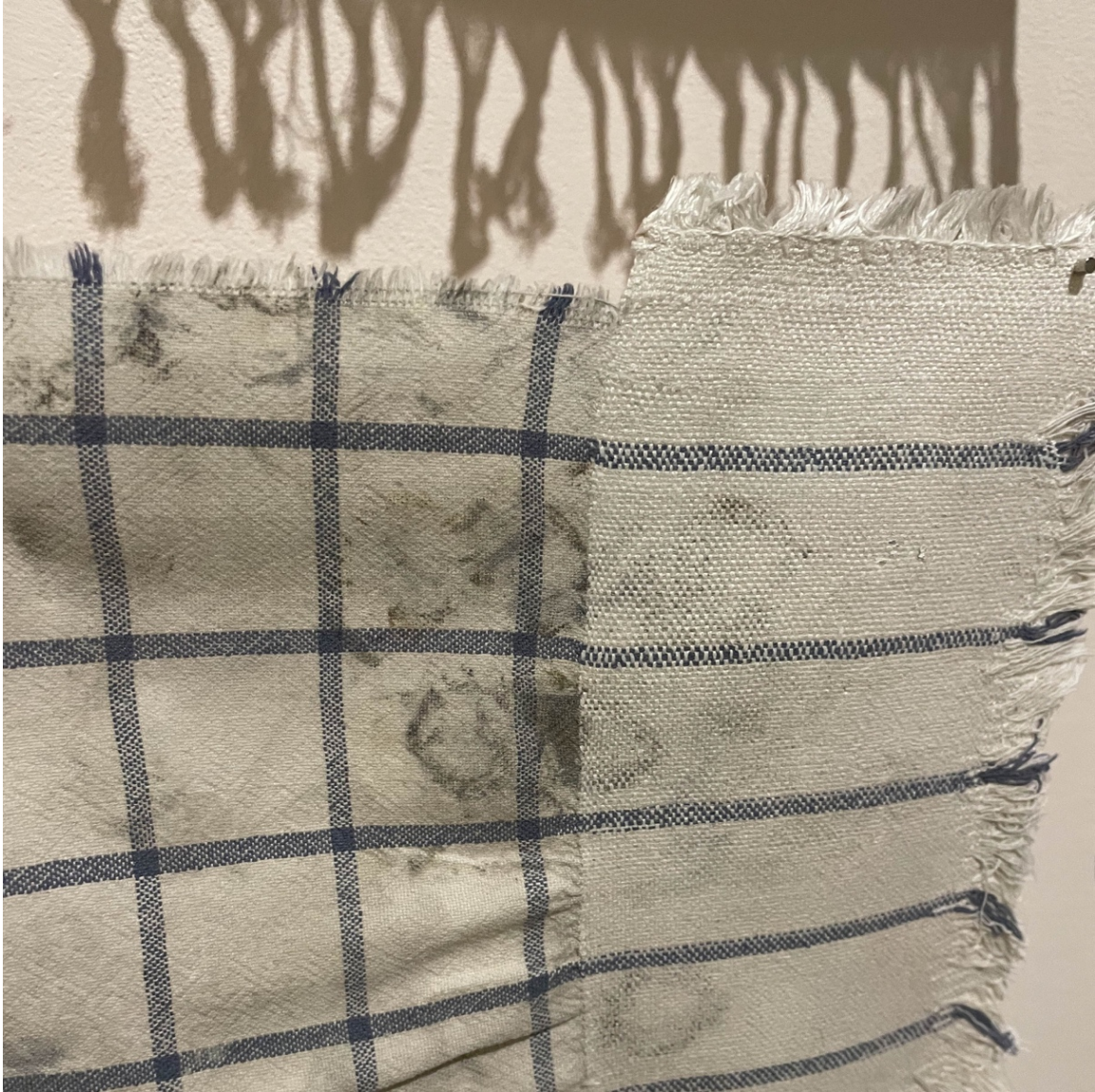


Figure 4. Kate Ritchie, *Tea Towels (detail)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Figure 5. Kate Ritchie, *Blue Napkins (detail)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Figure 6. Kate Ritchie, *Tulip Napkin (detail)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Figure 7. Kate Ritchie. *Bandana/White Napkin (detail)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Figure 8. Kate Ritchie, *Tape Measure II (detail)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Figure 9. Kate Ritchie, *Fuzzy Library (installation)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Figure 10. Kate Ritchie. *Pink Napkin (detail)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.

Appendix B

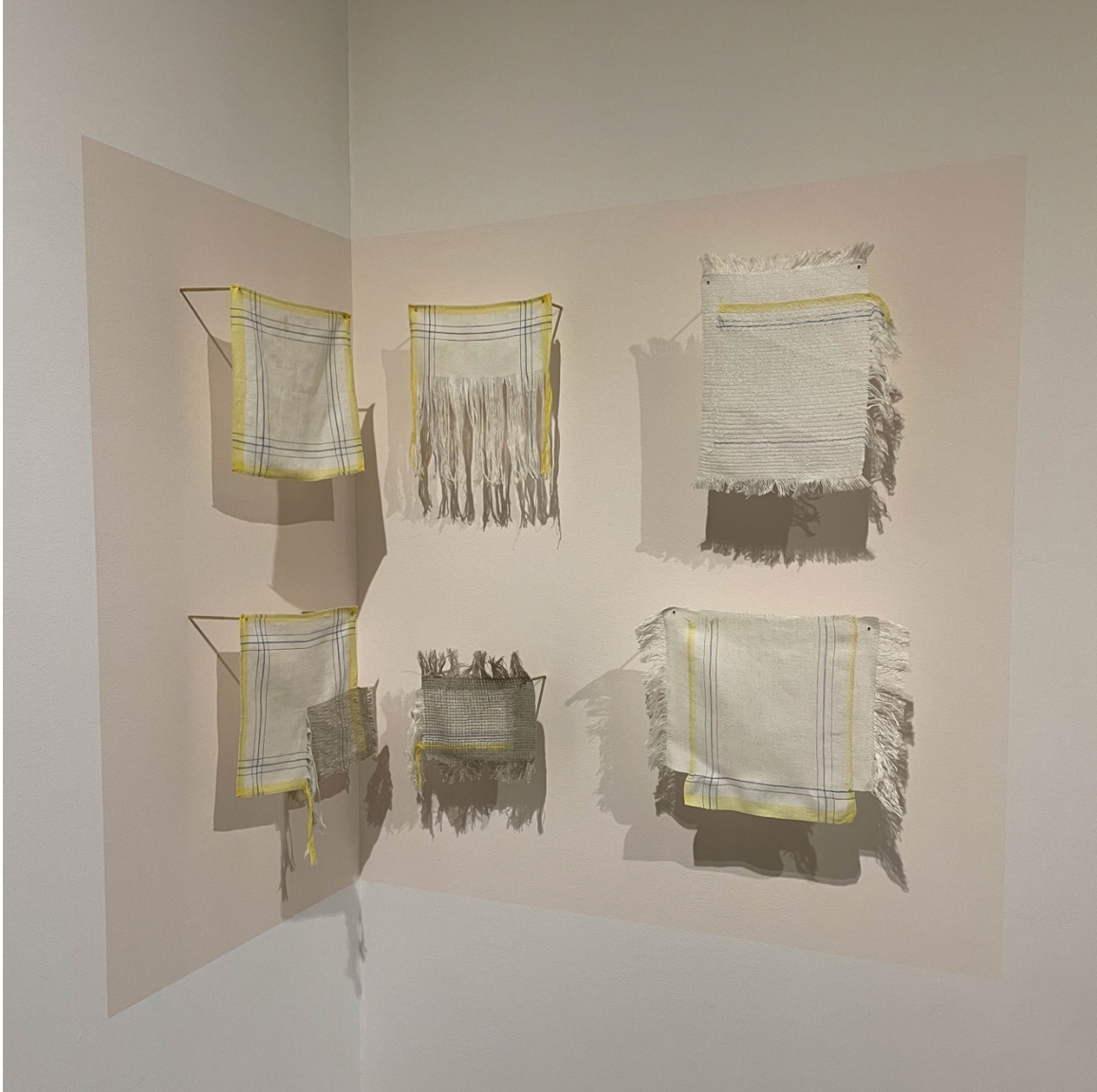
Exhibition Images



Kate Ritchie. *Tape Measure I (installation)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Kate Ritchie. *Blue Napkins (installation)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Kate Ritchie. *Yellow Napkins (installation)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Kate Ritchie. *Tulip Napkin (installation)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Kate Ritchie. *Pink Napkin (installation)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Kate Ritchie. *Tea Towels (installation)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Kate Ritchie. *Bandana/White Napkin (installation)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Kate Ritchie. *Green Napkins (installation)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Kate Ritchie. *Pocket Square (installation)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Kate Ritchie. *Blue Napkin (installation)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.



Kate Ritchie, *Tape Measure II (installation)*, 2023, Illingworth Kerr Gallery.