

SOFT LOPPY STORIES

Soft, Sloppy, Stories
by
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Abstract

Typically, books made from fabric are intended for infants, as a safe space to learn to read. However, my books are made for lovers, survivors, artists, her, him, them and me. The primary focus of my research is investigating and exploring the aesthetics of “Sloppy Craft” and textile-based publications. The publications examine power dynamics in female- and male-identifying relationships. In the secondary area of my research, I explore mental illness and trauma-based memories. The final collection of books borrows visual language from sketchbooks and journal entries. The books have an unfinished quality to help visually demonstrate the worsening of mental health. These books are intended to be interacted with in a gallery setting as they are created in relation to the scale of the body and how the body may interact with the books. The form, appearance and tactility of the books is a connection to the physical worsening of depression and distress through deconstructive elements such as fraying and ripping. My project invites open dialogue on mental health issues, but primarily anxiety and heartbreak.

Key Terms: Sloppy Craft, Materiality, Textiles, Punk, Archive, Trauma.

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To Noa Billick: the queen of resin, books, and yellow. Thank you for the infinite laughs, late night phone calls, memes and support. I feel like I have known you my entire life. You are so incredibly talented and simply put: on top of your shit. You are a leader, a mentor and an icon. Coming into this program, I didn't expect to make many friends... Somehow I ended up meeting you; a person I want to continue growing our friendship with until we are old. I have visions of our kids hanging out and making sloppy books together.

Thank you to Kate Jackson who has been my stand-in-queer-craft-mom. You are all of the things I want to be when I grow up.

Graeme, thank you for always being interested in my work and helping me put up shelves.

Dad, thank you for teaching me to be resilient and to always advocate for myself. You taught me the three most important life lessons. *Goodfellas quote here*

Mom, you are the original Sloppy Crafter, despite what this paper may say. You have shown me what it means to be a woman: to have boundless love, patience and sacrifice through your actions. Thank you for all that you do for me, including the things I don't always see. Punks not dead.

Dillan, of all the words I've written in the past two years, this dedication seems to be by far the most tricky because I fear nothing will be enough to express my devotion and appreciation for you. You are my everything: my best friend, my partner and my soulmate. Thank you for loving me unconditionally. Thank you for the hours you have put into listening to me speak about this project. Thank you for the feedback you have given me. Thank you for everything in-between. I love you more than I will ever be able to put into words, and somehow I love you more each day. Forever and always.

~~To the people in the memories across the pages of my fabric books, without the pain you caused me, I wouldn't have grown and felt inspired to heal through Craft. Fuck you.~~

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Introduction

This thesis paper and exhibition were completed during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic. Nothing has ever prepared me for how challenging these times have been. Without a studio space, my cohort and an immeasurable amount of other losses, it is so incredible that this project has come together. I have learned new things through the pandemic I would not have learned otherwise. Saving fabric scraps and archiving became important. Sculptures happened. New thoughts on my relationship, togetherness, and co-dependency have emerged in my work.

In chapter one I will introduce the theoretical frameworks that I use to situate my work. I will outline some historical understandings of professional Craft and then transition to contemporary Sloppy Craft and explain why I use this methodology. I discuss activism within Craft, the archive and how feminist storytelling inspires me and shapes my work. I describe Wabi-Sabi and relational aesthetics as alternative ways to think about my books and their relationship to space and beauty within the imperfect. Throughout chapter two, I explain my methodologies and the ways I think about making. From my studio habits to suicidality, I deeply explain what compels me to make the way that I do. I explain how I think about archive and what it might mean to be post-punk. In the third chapter, I present my studio practice more in-depth and reflect on why I make books, only use my handwriting, screenprint, and use black and white throughout my body of work. This chapter has moments of personal voice and memoir concerning each interdisciplinary practice and concludes by contemplating the body archive. Chapter four offers a look into my exhibition planning, final execution and reflection. Lastly, chapter five concludes my paper and how I feel about my completion of this project.

~~Strikethrough text is included throughout this paper. This is my personal voice. This is my less-academic brain. This is the shit I wish I could say and the way that I talk in real life. I have used strikethrough as a signifier of my voice and challenge the expectations of this font style. In places where it is appropriate, strikethrough text is right-justified for more visual separation from the academic language.~~

Personal History

My grandfather worked at York Litho for the majority of his life. He “borrowed” many printing supplies from York Litho. Inks, rolls of paper, strike-off prints; anything that my mother could use. In the early '80s, my mom was (and still is) a self-proclaimed punk rocker. She's shared images with me of her tall mohawk, leather jackets, shredded and pinned clothes. Her bedroom has piles of photos, concert tickets, patches and magnets stacked high. She attended an alternative high school where she focused mainly on arts. In her final year, she was encouraged to apply to university. She applied to McMaster University, where she was accepted and earned her BFA. I can see the connection between my grandfather's work and my mother's inspiration from the arts. My grandfather is the grand optimist who is so proud and supportive of any endeavour. I feel a certain amount of pride and responsibility to be carrying on with both of my grandfather's and mother's trades.

My mother taught me to sew when I was a pre-teen; I think she showed me how to sew much before that, though. I would sit in front of her tirelessly when I was a little girl while she constructed beautiful velvet quilts, pyjama pants, liners for construction worker's hardhats, along with many other seamstress projects. Of all her projects, I was always enamoured with her crazy quilts made from odd scraps and seemed to be a very intuitive process. My mother is persistent. She will often say, “I am fighting with my sewing machine.” While she claims she is not a “technical” seamstress, she taught me everything I know.

I took a sewing course in high school and learned basic stitches and construction skills, essentially re-learning to sew correctly. I regularly consulted my mom to help me with my homework projects. My relationship with my mom grew at this time- she became an icon and information well for me. When it came time for me to pick a post-secondary program, I applied for the Sheridan College Textiles program. She was so excited for me and encouraged my love for the arts and fabric. Through time and understanding of my practice, I easily recognize my mother's crazy quilts as my first encounter with Sloppy Craft.

Research Questions

This project intends to engage with how the critical discourse of Sloppy Craft can be combined with a punk methodology to explore the materiality and meanings of my textile publications. My research questions are as follows: 1) How can the fabric book be used as a feminist and punk methodology to “flip” experience? 2) How can linen and textile be used to create intention and affect in the reading experience? 3) How does the act of reading a tactile fabric book influence traumatic memory? 4) How can the aesthetic, intention, urgency and tension of Sloppy Craft inform my fabric books? Supplementary questions include: How do we read with our entire bodies, and how can I encourage my audience to interact with the publications? I intend to continue this research and further inquiry in the following years.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

Literature Review Introduction

While there are countless sources of my inspiration, in this section I have chosen to speak to the writers and artists whose work has inspired the theoretical approaches for my textile publications. I will discuss my work in the context of Western Craft history, Sloppy Craft, Craftivism, archive and memory, feminist story telling, amateurism, textiles, Wabi Sabi and relational aesthetics. Throughout my writing I am capitalizing Craft as a capitonym, or a way to signify my position with Craft. In most cases throughout this paper Craft references professional Craft or fine Craft, which both honour materials, precision and excellence. I am also referring to Craft as a contemporary practice including a variety of disciplines such as: ceramics, woodworking, jewellery, glass, and textiles.

From Craft To Sloppy Craft

To describe Sloppy Craft, I must first give context for how I understand and contextualize Craft and its historical importance. Merriam-Webster defines Craft as 1) skill in planning, making, or executing 2) an occupation or trade requiring manual dexterity or artistic skill 3) to make or produce with care, skill, or ingenuity ("Craft"). While the dictionary is a technical archive of their words and their meaning, Merriam-Webster has not accounted for the community and social aspects of Craft. The definition does not refer to guilds and apprenticeship. Craft is a kinship that lives through objects, processes, people and gallery openings with cheese and crackers. Craft lives through shows and festivals like Toronto Outdoor Art Fair, where the public and the artist are on the same level for discussion and purchase. Publicly funded organizations such as Craft Ontario, Textile Museum of Canada, Harbourfront Centre, The Living Arts Centre, act as spaces for Craft to thrive in the Greater Toronto Area.

In a historical and Western context, Craft is often seen in relation to the legacy of William Morris. According to Edward S. Cooke, Jr.'s summary of Morris' impact on Craft:

Morris was one of the first writers, and certainly the most prolific and influential, to use the term decorative arts in the manner in which we commonly understand it today, as that great body of art, by means of which men have at all times more or less striven to beautify the familiar matters of everyday life. (227)

During the Arts and Crafts movement (approximately 1880 to 1920), Morris was an advocate for Craft and its importance in human lives through beauty in the handmade and functionality. Morris also desired to heighten the respect given to Craft objects in the 19th century in that “By focusing on ‘ornamental workmanship’ Morris sought to elevate quotidian objects so that society ascribed value to them even though they might not equal the ‘higher’ ‘arts of the intellect (architecture, painting, and sculpture)’” (229).

Morris had a distaste for manufacturing and commercial making, "In his call for serious consideration of this class of artistic production, Morris popularized the term decorative art, rejecting the other period terms such as "industrial arts" and "applied arts" because of their manufacturing and commercial connotations" (Cooke 228). When I think about Morris, I imagine him as the purest of the purists and Craft, in a historical sense, as defined by time, dedication, expertise and skill. Concerning my relationship with Western Craft history, I think about the way I understand and deconstruct my materials. I am careful to respect the “nature” of fibre and the physical limitations of linen. The understanding of my material (or respect to its nature) feels like a sloppy revival of William Morris. I am conscious of my responsibility as a Craftsperson about the things that I make, the materials I use, and how they affect the world around me. I will speak more about my artistic practice and screen printing process in chapter 3.

The term Sloppy Craft was first coined by Anne Wilson in 2001 (XXIV). At the symposium "Out of the Ordinary: Spectacular Craft," Wilson was describing a former student, Josh Faught's textile work, as "rough craft" or “Sloppy Craft.”

In a spirited and somewhat light-hearted manner, I used the term sloppy craft in conversation with Faught as I was referencing an aspect of his new work that I felt was exceptionally intelligent and formally progressive. I wanted to underscore the criticality of Faught's decision to make work in this way. The rough craft of his weave and crochet was a critical choice driven by the content of his work, certainly not by any lack of knowledge or skill to make work with a neater, more refined technical aesthetic. That was my point—his was a critical, content-driven decision to work sloppy. (XXV)

The term, Sloppy Craft has come to refer to this looseness or freedom within Craft. Josh Faught is a San Francisco-based fibre artist who creates sculptures, textiles, collages, and paintings. His work incorporates techniques such as knitting, crochet, and weaving, and addresses topics of Craft and queer history. Faught's work has been influential to me through his contribution to contemporary (sloppy) Craft and queer arts. The characteristics of Faught's work and his methodologies are what makes him "sloppy." His works are misaligned, droopy, and raw. Faught's work tends to merge woven textiles and campy found objects. There are feelings of anxiety and necessity in his works that come from the repetition of weaving and the text used within the works. His use of untraditional materials support his discourse around feminist textiles and domestic beauty. *BE BOLD for what you stand for, BE CAREFUL for what you fall for* (see fig. 1) has the following items in the materials list: hand-dyed, handwoven and crocheted hemp; indigo; cochineal (made from ground-up bugs); weld flowers; wool; cedar; greeting cards; sequins; lamé yarn; Nine to Five (VHS); Clockwatchers (VHS); pretzels (plastic); pins; scrapbooking stickers; Halloween decorations; fake flowers; metallic cheerleading pom-poms; engraved stone; and a jar with the "ashes of telephone solicitors." The use of materials, methodologies and looseness of Faught's work all contribute to my understanding of Sloppy Craft.



Fig. 1.

BE BOLD for what you stand for, BE CAREFUL for what you fall for (detail)

Josh Faught

2013; site-specific installation; hand-dyed and hand-woven textile.

Commissioned by San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Courtesy of the Artist and Lisa Cooley, New York;

Photo: Ben Blackwell.

It is crucial to distinguish the dichotomy created by using the term Sloppy Craft. Craft is traditionally a term used to describe skill, mastery or trade. In traditional Craft it may take seemingly countless years and practice to achieve mastery. A Craftsperson would go through apprenticeships and formal training to receive credentials of a master of their Craft. Sloppy infers that the skill is taken away entirely from the Craft and may invite amateurism. The term "Sloppy" may also allude to a lack of ability or DIYism. Sloppy Craft, as a strategy, allows Craftspeople to be free to choose how much skill is used or how finished a form is.

Through my exhibition and supplementary paper, I intend to share my narratives through the lens of imperfection and Craft. I want to encourage other victims and survivors alike to communicate and heal through materiality. While I cannot always ensure that I achieve this, I sense that if I can be brave enough to share the most intimate and vulnerable parts of myself publicly, others may identify themselves in my work. Sloppy Craft, is a theoretical framework in which to situate my work and to contextualize and celebrate imperfection. Wilson means that to intentionally be sloppy when one is, in fact, a skilled Craftsperson, is a "position" to take – letting the work be sloppy to refer to choosing to leave a rawness and unfinished quality in the making and meaning of the work. Using this type of strategy or methodology, however, has many implications within the Crafts community in terms of amateurism. The intention of sloppiness through concept and technique is critical to my material processes and my understanding of Sloppy Craft.

What isn't Sloppy Craft? Hastily painting a picture frame (for example) and gluing rhinestones onto it is not what I consider Sloppy Craft; this is a hobby Craft. A professional ceramic artist dripping glaze onto a pinch pot may also not be making Sloppy Craft. Not all 'cut and paste' projects are sloppy, and through personal experience, not every artist with a care-free methodology wants to be called sloppy or wants their work to be classified as Craft. One of my undergraduate degree peers is a ceramic artist who talks extensively about the flow of making and the conversations she has with her clay while she is making. Many of her pots and cups are lumpy and frumpy. She refuses to call herself a Sloppy Crafter and wants no part of it.

The term Sloppy to some may be too casual or simple. ~~I do my best now to avoid the conversation.~~

For me, it is most important not to confuse Sloppy Craft with the DIY culture as expressed by Martha Stewart in the early 2000s for example or to consider my work amateurism (Beegan and Atkinson 305-313). In my Punk chapter, I discuss the ways I have “hacked” commercial craft objects in order to re-imagine my practice. My distaste of Martha Stewart and her glamorous take on domestic philosophy reminds me of the different hierarchies that exist between fine art, fine Craft, hobby Crafts and Sloppy Craft. Each stream of making lives on a separate pedestal but all sit closely together. Depending on your personal context or preference, some pedestals are higher than others. Agnieszka Ługowska offers insight to these hierarchies in their paper “The Art and Craft Divide – on the Exigency Of Margins”:

The emergence of the hierarchy of art and craft ...originated in the Renaissance when first claims were made for painting and sculpture as “liberal” rather than “mechanical” arts...By the mid-eighteenth the separation of the fine arts from the mechanical arts was fully established. By the nineteenth century, the associations of the latter with the notions of usefulness, skill, the use of “lesser” media, as well as adherence to traditional form, were commonly accepted as marking the division between craft and art. The institutionalization of the art/craft divide on the basis of these characteristics remains evident and has found its embodiment in the relegation of crafted objects to the category of decorative arts and in their general exclusion from the history of art and aesthetics. (286)

Even though I am considering the hierarchies *within* Craft and not the differences between art and Craft; I think it is important to include the historical context presented by Ługowska. Opinions around usefulness and skill are prevalent within Craft hierarchies. “Usefulness” may be a comparison of non-functional Craft verses functional Craft. “Skill” may

refer to hobby Craft verses professional Craft. While it pains me to contribute to the creating hierarchies within Craft- I have spent time studying and refining my materials, tools and process. I consider myself a professional Craftsperson who chooses to be sloppy. I also make my distinction from amateurism through my formal education in Craft. In my case and in general, Sloppy Craft is typically associated with Craftspeople who have received formal education in Craft and yet choose to be sloppy (Hickey 115). While my work is non-functional Craft, I have chosen to help communicate my concepts around dematerialization and deconstruction within traumatic memories in a Craft context.

Others who use Sloppy Craft also stress their separation from amateurism. There is an intention and critical decision to work sloppy, depending on the content. Susan Surrette, co-editor of *Sloppy Craft: Postdisciplinarity and the Crafts*, stated in an interview for *American Craft Magazine* "[Another] reason that artists might adopt a sloppy approach is that it helps them break away from tightly skilled work and bring in a playfulness, an openness, creativity, and innovation" (Logan). Surrette very eloquently discusses how sloppiness may be an appropriate methodology in modern Craft, though she uses the term artist as a blanket term for Craftspeople.

Why Do I use Sloppy Craft?

Sloppy Craft has become a way for me to express traumatic memory and heal through making. Sloppy Craft has become a lifestyle, an attitude and a habit for me to work. Thus the theory around making has dripped its way down from my mind into my hands, becoming a methodology. As Craft curator and writer Glenn Adamson states, "This is, perhaps, the dirty secret of sloppy craft: there may be nothing so difficult to pull off convincingly." ("When Craft Gets Sloppy" 40).

After being introduced to the term "Sloppy Craft" in my undergraduate program, I discovered the book *Sloppy Craft: Post-Disciplinarily and the Crafts* which has acted as a compass for me through making and writing, questioning my work and eventually the text itself (Paterson and Surette). Sloppy Craft has been the perfect way to describe my experience within the Craft community, my methodology, materials, and conceptual outcomes. I use the term Sloppy Craft to describe how I feel that I am fated to work. Adamson goes on to discuss how content and materials work within Sloppy Craft as an approach when "Technical skills are presented and taught quite rigorously, but not with an emphasis on fine-tuning as the goal. The concept is the goal. To [Wilson], Faughts's devil-may-care approach was perfectly acceptable. It was well-matched with the content of his work..." (16).

The justification for my sloppy work is through the concepts and themes I am exploring. The decline of mental health and well-being is mirrored through my material. I defend Sloppy Craft as Craft theory and methodology, and not art, in the case of my work. I have my materials in mind, whereas an artist has the final project in mind first and will use whatever tools are needed to complete it. Gloria Hickey is an independent curator and craft writer, and contributor to the book *Sloppy Craft: Postdisciplinarity and the Crafts*. Hickey defines the post-disciplinary maker:

I have come to believe that there are roughly two types of craftspeople: one group is based in materiality, and the characteristics of their chosen medium largely determine what they make; the other group is concept-driven and will use whatever medium or

technique is at hand that will help them express or realize their conceptual goals. This latter group would be the post-disciplinary makers while the first is more traditional in approach. (Paterson and Surette 113)

I find this passage perhaps a little too “black and white.” This insight into types of Craftspeople is conducive to the discourse around the differences between art and Craft. To me, the latter definition, of post-disciplinary maker, is closer to an artist. The materiality obsessed Craftsperson is more in line with traditional Craftsperson. An issue arises for me as a textile-obsessed-sloppy-conceptual-Craft-artist. I feel as if I am neither one of these types of Craftspeople because I am fascinated with linen and textile methods but still work through conceptual questions. Ultimately, I have to kindly reject the term “post-disciplinary” to describe myself or my work. Surette goes on to state that “For Adamson, the post-disciplinary world that sloppy craft inhabits is one in which ‘no one activity has any more right to be called art than another’ and makers are free to call themselves whatever they like or to not call themselves anything at all” (Paterson and Surette 9). I believe that Sloppy Craft is a position taken against fine Craft or professional Craft through its deconstruction of Craft’s connotations. Taking the refined skill away from the Craft object acts as its objection to Craft and the expertise involved. When asked about the future of Sloppy Craft and how skilled Craftsmanship fits into the picture, Paterson responded:

The reverence for careful craftsmanship hasn’t disappeared, and sloppy craft and fine craft don’t preclude each other. Sloppy craft maybe draws attention to careful craftsmanship by virtue of its omission. We’ve simply shifted gears, and there are different ways of thinking. The key is to enjoy the innovations and improvisations that go along with sloppy craft practices and integrate these into a larger language of craft, while still appreciating a skillfully made object. (Logan)

I also want to note that in millennial culture, through rap and social media, the term “Sloppy Toppy” is a popular slang term to describe giving or receiving oral sex. The song “Sloppy Toppy” by rapper Travis Scott may be the epicentre of the phrase, although there are conflicting opinions on where the term came from.

When I explain my work to my personal friends, they usually giggle when I say “Sloppy Craft” because of its sexual connotations. This reference to oral sex is appealing to me and mirrors the content within my work.

Perfection Ruins Everything

During my undergraduate degree, I was always pushing myself to make beautiful textile works. I measured myself to my classmates, who created stunning, natural dyed scarves, quilts and garments. My peers all seemed to have endless patience for perfection, primping and finishing. My two hands could never finish anything to their level or make something “pretty.” Critique after critique, I got the same comments: “Olivia, this is great work, but please continue to work on your attention to detail when it comes to cutting threads.”

I was sick of it. For a final assignment in a screen printing course, we had the opportunity to create anything we’d like, with open requirements. We were only instructed to print something and then make something with the printed fabric afterwards. Many students made pillows or t-shirts. I decided to make a book, which was something I always wanted to make. The delivery time on this project was rapid, and I only had one day to use the print tables in the studio. I went in very early on a Friday morning but had to leave the studio around noon to let a class use the tables. I started printing, and then I looked up; I had covered the print table in my words and images. It was almost noon. I had tears in my eyes. My forgotten emotions and innermost thoughts were all laid out on the table. It looked like a crime scene. I went home and finished sewing together the book, sewing the whole thing inside out, leaving edges raw and jagged, and the threads an arms-length hanging. This book was a total turning point for me as a creative, academic and survivor. Going into my thesis year, I knew I needed to continue with this body of work. My books look the way I feel. I was finally able to let go of expectations and comparisons to others in my program. Through making, I have gained perspective on memories by reflection and inquiry to my experiences in trauma.

Craftivism

Coined by Betsy Greer in 2003, Craftivism is a concept that utilizes Craft as an act of political outreach and platform. In 2014 Greer edited and published an anthology called *Craftivism: The Art of Craft and Activism*. The book includes 33 different artists' and Crafters' insights into Craft as activism. Craftivism offers language in relationship to my work, the intention in my narratives and my love of material. As Greer states, "Craftivism has a certain amount of quietness through its crafts-delivery" (10). She goes on to say:

When you first start to craft, you may find that the most rewarding aspects are personal. It's just you and your materials, intertwined in a silent conversation. It's a tale as old as time, part conjuring—as you try to create something you can see only in your mind's eye—and part gift, as you begin to see it unfold in the outside world, there before you. (14)

I touch on the silent conversation I have with materials in my Wabi-Sabi section and at the very least, the rewarding nature of Craft. The act of making becomes a mode of control and dominance in my life. I am the maker of objects, decisions, writing... everything in my practice. My work allows me to process agony and take a stand against intrusive thoughts. Making, sewing and collaging is a (mostly) soundless protest against the violence that replays in my mind. I mention several times throughout this paper that I want my exhibition and work to be a contribution to others and affirmation that you can heal through sharing.

Faythe Levine is a photographer, author, and prominent figure in the Punk Craft community. Levine outlines this in *Craftivism*:

I want people to realize that they have the power to make their lives what they want them to be through simple personal choices. [...] I said, "I believe the simple act of making something, anything, with your hands is a quiet political ripple in a world dominated by mass production ... and people choosing to make something themselves will turn those small ripples into giant waves." I still believe this: once you empower

yourself through the act of making, you begin to want others to feel the same. By sharing our own work, our seemingly simple acts can become turning points not only in our own growth, but in that of others. (109)

I believe that even if my work doesn't create "giant waves" or even "small ripples", I know that somewhere out there, someone must relate to my books. Through re-telling of narratives, I am assured that thoughts and memories in my head have been transferred through my arms, down my fingers, and into the fabric. Once my thoughts have been re-processed through language, they have no longer have a hold over me. This moment of conquering is named in chapter "Crafting Resistance" by Otto von Busch in *Craftivism*:

Craft may, in this sense, act as resistance to obedience. It is a training camp for empowered autonomy. It is fearlessness toward the decrees of consumerism and peer pressure and, in its most expressive form, the violence of fashion. Craft can be a tool for overcoming fear. It is a way to be free. (144)

In conjunction with Sloppy Craft, Craftivism informs my work and intention around concepts and activism. There is power in community and sharing, and I want to be a part of it. ~~Craft is fucking punk.~~ In the chapter "Craft: Embracing Empowerment and Equality" Levine discusses her punk culture experience and connects it to her Craft practice. I found this particular chapter critical for my connection between Sloppy Craft and punk. Levine states:

Punk taught me many important life lessons and opened my eyes and ears to conversations surrounding gender, race, and radical queer politics. The power of communication and community began to take form and became important to me. I hadn't been familiar with feminist theory; punk also opened that door for me. (49)

Levine has identified punk as a crucial moment for critical thinking, I also feel this way about punk and Sloppy Craft. Initially, art or fine art was a real eye-opener for Levine: "When I

first saw zines—I'm not sure how else to describe it—they spoke to me" (48). The indescribable qualities of art and Craft is something I touch on in my chapter on Wabi-Sabi. Levine also explains the similarities between the punk scene and Craft as an attainable and tangible way to create community. As she grew older, her role of being an artist changed to being a historian and truth-teller. Craft took her to many public spaces to speak about Craft as an approachable platform and was a way to connect with the public, "It was like those punk shows where I watched the bands eye-to-eye; craft can be put on a pedestal, but its reputation keeps it with the people and keeps it real" (50). I infer many similarities between Sloppy Craft culture and post-punk, including both aesthetics and ethos. I feel that to be Sloppy (within Craft) is to surrender to thyself. To surrender is to accept one's rawest and most ragged parts of yourself. To surrender is to heal. Levine probes this idea of surrender within punk and Craft:

Punk was a permission-giver and, in turn, craft became my vessel. Punk allowed me to connect with others and formulate how I wanted my future to look through creating approachable artwork [...] I want people to realize that they have the power to make their lives what they want them to be through simple personal choices. (52)

I admire the notion that punk became a permission giver for Craft in Levine's case. Giving yourself permission to make is liberating. Both punk and Craft have the very same essence at their core: creation and community. A general acceptance of others and ingenuity is a commonality and goal of both cultures. In the publication *Some Wear Leather, Some Wear Lace: The Worldwide Compendium of Post-Punk and Goth in the 1980s*, Photographer Jez Smith recalls the punk scene in a similar way to how I see the (Sloppy) Craft community:

Many were attracted to the community because of the acceptance of sexuality, gender, and appearance; there was a feeling of belonging, when in other aspects of life, they were outsiders. It felt very freeing...after endless torment at school and from the general public for looking like a 'freak,' to be in an environment where I was accepted and there were others like me who shared similar tastes in music and aesthetics ... It didn't matter

if you identified as [being] straight, bi, or gay. It didn't matter if you were rich or a street kid. As long as you were genuine and accepting, you were generally welcomed.

(Harriman and Bontje 56)

Archive and Memory

I didn't always have the words for what I am trying to produce or resolve through my books. I knew I wanted to share experience, inform and influence, but I now realize I have been creating an archive. In my Winter 2019 semester, I was assigned to read a single chapter of Julietta Singh's *No Archive Will Restore You*. It's so amusing how if a text is assigned to me, I have to muscle my way through it. I remember feeling lost the first time I read it and not seeing its relevance to my practice. The only memorable part for me was the mention of Redbull and its inclusion in an academic text:

I decided the ethical move was not to defend against him but to find a way to welcome him, to make his forced entry feel less violating. I put a post-it note in the fridge affixed to a can of RedBull that read Please Feel Free. The note was a strange welcome to my unwanted intruder; an offering of something that it would not hurt me to lose. In fact, the RedBull was the remnant of some other visitor, someone I had already forgotten who had left behind an item I would never consume. I knew there was an ethical flaw at work in my act of strange hospitality, of offering something to my intruder that I myself did not want. I was deep in self-critique even before the sticky had stuck; I was young and cold and could feel my body aging. (16)

At the time, only the word Redbull stood out to me, and I couldn't even grasp the words surrounding it. Deep into my writing and making, I decided to revisit Singh after gaining more experience and understanding of theoretical texts. Now, I can make connections from the Redbull excerpt to my exhibition (see Redbull, Urgency and Death section).

While reading, I asked myself repeatedly, “But what if you hate the archive?” The archive doesn’t know whether or not it’s liked or even valued. It just exists. I hate my internal body archive and my aesthetic body archive. As the artist creating the “outside” body archive, I have the power to change it and represent it as I please.

Call it lying, call it auto-fiction; just don’t call me fat. The archive and surrounding thoughts have given language to the smaller, quieter parts of my practice, such as:

- Saving fabric scraps
- Sorting and filing old photographs
- Revisiting journals and self-editing/censoring the same artwork multiple times through editions

I will speak more about the archive and its relation to my Craft practice in the section The Body, The Archive and The Linen.

Feminist Storytelling

In my methodology chapter, I discuss *So Sad Today* by Melissa Broder as a significant inspiration for my auto-ethnographic memoirs and biographic narratives. Broder is a large icon throughout my practice with her raw honesty and grounding in theoretical frameworks in poetry and philosophy. Through Broder and my secondary advisor, I was introduced to Roxane Gay. Both her books *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body* and *Bad Feminist* critically look at the world women live in through memoir and offer her voice on these issues.

I read *Hunger* in the summer of 2020 without a synopsis of the book further than “content warning: sexual abuse, body issues including dysmorphia and eating, and social pressures on the body.” Based on the title and the brief description, my assumption or expectation was that this would be around the narratives of anorexia—a story of someone rotting away to skin and bones. Within the first pages, I realized I was far from correct:

To tell you the story of my body, do I tell you how much I weighed at my heaviest? Do I tell you that number, the shameful truth of it always strangling me? At my heaviest, I weighed 577lb, or over 41st, at 6ft 3in. That is a staggering number, but at one point, that was the truth of my body. (Gay 6)

Gay’s insight into eating disorders is imperative to add to the conversations about disordered eating. When a person is already thin and struggles with an eating disorder, there seems to be more urgency. When a person is heavier to start with, their eating disorder becomes a success story. This rhetoric should not exist. All eating disorders deserve to be treated and healed. I connected deeply with Gay’s voice and commentary. As I read more and more, I felt captivated by her. I never felt like I was a third person looking in. I felt like I was sitting next to her, having a conversation. Somehow, she made me feel comfortable while being so concerned for her well-being throughout the text. Gay ponders her dislike for her body: “I hate myself. Or society tells me, I am supposed to hate myself, so I guess this, at least, is something I am doing right. Or, should I say, I hate my body. I hate my weakness at being

unable to control my body” (148). This excerpt is like many others in her essays. It starts with a broad statement and funnels its way into a more direct thought, more authentic and accurate. This writing style feels parallel to stream of consciousness writing, or again, like a conversation with Gay.

The absolute most gut-wrenching and compelling notion from this memoir has been “eating to hide yourself.” Gay’s trauma of sexual abuse as a young teen has been tragically informative to her adult years and still has a physical impact on her everyday life. I think there is something excruciatingly beautiful about changing your body physically by emotional trauma. Her weight gain felt like it went back and forth between unintentional and intentional, “My body is a cage of my own making. I have been trying to figure a way out of it for more than 20 years” (30). She wanted to conceal herself from men’s desire, but I cannot help but infer she struggles with food addiction. Something fundamental is Gay’s supportive parents and their role in her life. It was incredibly relatable to me as my parents are still together (which feels rare in 2021) and are entirely supportive of everything I do. Sometimes I feel ashamed that I can’t get my shit together because I have such great parents and had a pretty good childhood. Gay expresses these feelings as well.

Gay often uses short sentences and snippets of poetic devices. Her sentences can sometimes be repetitive, which I find helpful to hammer in a concept or idea. I also enjoy her occasional contradictions. I connect with Gay’s internal battles written out on the paper and appreciate the different viewpoints on eating disorders that Gay lets us in on. Additionally, I think it’s crucial to balance theory and practise writing such as memoirs and short stories, especially for my practice. “Here I am showing you the ferocity of my hunger. Here I am, finally freeing myself to be vulnerable and terribly human. Here I am, reveling in that freedom. Here. See what I hunger for and what my truth has allowed me to create” (304).

Bad Feminist addresses issues within feminism, race, popular media and culture (Gay). I am particularly fond of the introduction and the final two chapters titled "Back to Me." Her truthfulness and criticism of feminism is refreshingly informative and has made me reconcile with my own feminism:

I openly embrace the label of bad feminist. I do so because I am flawed and human. I am not terribly well versed in feminist history. I am not as well read in key feminist texts as I would like to be. I have certain . . . interests and personality traits and opinions that may not fall in line with mainstream feminism, but I am still a feminist. I cannot tell you how freeing it has been to accept this about myself. (Gay 8)

Gay expresses that she is a feminist but rejects the "F" word I relate to this rejection with my upbringing of feminism. I was about 16 in 2014, at the height of what I call "*Tumblr Feminism*." Tumblr feminism generally focuses on appearing progressive and liberal while not focusing on gender equality or woman's rights, all while done on social media. It seemed to be a lot of unproductive call-outs and keyboard wars.

There also appeared to be a misunderstanding that women were supposed to be valued more than their counterparts. Tumblr feminism ran rapidly through my high school, and I often felt like an outlier because I could identify that while social media is a part of our lives, it is not life. I am no one to judge or decide which feminism is best, but I knew there was much more to feminism from the posts I saw online. My friends confronted me because I was not playing along in their Twitter agendas. I explained to my friends that while I believe in gender equality, this brand of feminism wasn't for me. I was also confused about feminism at this time because I was becoming more and more aware of my pleasure for masochism around age 16. I wanted men to control me and use me, but that definitely wasn't a feminist act. I was cast out from my friend group, and my perspective of feminism shifted to something negative. Gay describes a similar experience:

When I was younger, I disavowed feminism with alarming frequency. I understand why women still fall over themselves to disavow feminism, to distance themselves. I disavowed feminism because when I was called a feminist, the label felt like an insult. In fact, it was generally intended as such. When I was called a feminist, during those days, my first thought was, *But I willingly give blow jobs*. I had it in my head that I could not both be a feminist and be sexually open. I had lots of strange things in my head during my teens and twenties. (9)

While different sectors of feminism may seem flawed, I am still learning and understanding my own feminism. My voice as a woman is powerful, but I want to ensure that those around me have equal opportunity, and especially those whose voices are not heard. Feminist story-telling has become a part of my practice as a way to support other womxn to share as I have done. I use broken and incomplete narratives throughout my work to capture how trauma breaks memory and the re-telling of events.

Feminism, Amateurism and Textiles

In *Thinking Through Craft*, Glenn Adamson sketches an outline of feminist artists' use of Craft in the 1970s:

Feminist artists did not simply inhabit the sphere of domestic amateurism uncritically. [...]

They called attention to the long history of domestic arts - textile arts such as spinning, quilting, embroidery,[...] and even the "craft" of homemaking itself - and argued that these amateur activities should be recuperated as a lost art history. (150)

~~I feel like shit about my work—a lot of the time. I constantly feel as if I am trying to prove myself outside of amateurism. I do not make hobby Crafts. I don't want to be mixed up with someone who does textiles for "fun." I do textiles because I have to. If I don't keep sewing, I might die, or at least it feels that way. I think about women before me who have made the space for women like me in the textiles field. I imagine women sitting in small stone houses making quilts and mittens for their families. I think about my mom and my other family members who made baby blankets for me. The care and nurture that are bound to textiles are immense.~~

Judy Chicago touches on the reframing of woman's work in *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist*, when reflecting on the exhibition "Womanhouse":

Women had been embedded in houses for centuries and had quilted, sewed, baked, cooked, decorated, and nested their creative energies away. What would happen, we wondered, if women took those very same homemaking activities and carried them to fantasy proportions? Instead of making a pink-and-white, filmy, feminine but functional bedroom for one's daughter, the space might become pinker and whiter and filmier and filled with more and more ruffles until it was a complete environment. Could the same activities women had used in life be transformed into the means of making art?" (104).

~~I think about how Judy Chicago would feel about my Soft, Sloppy, Stories.
I imagine Anni Albers looking down on me in the studio, spitting on my work as my disrespect for
traditional and discipline Craft grows. "To let threads be articulate again and find a form for
themselves to no other end than their orchestration, not to be sat on, walked on, only to be
looked at..." (Albers).~~

~~I imagine Tracey Emin coming into my studio and seeing right through me and seeing me as a
poser who has never seen the truth and mess of "My Bed." I imagine Melissa Broder reading my
poetry and puking on it. The difference is, though, I am not an amateur. I am a person of Craft, a
lover of objects, a martyr for my materials. I just don't care about being painfully perfect.~~

Wabi-Sabi

When describing my practice to someone who has little context for my work or Sloppy Craft, I will use Wabi-Sabi as a stand-in to represent my textiles practice. Many aspects of Wabi-Sabi neatly interact with my understanding of Sloppy Craft. The book *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets and Philosophers* by Leonard Koren is the main text I have examined while researching Wabi-Sabi. The Japanese theory is defined as: "... a beauty of imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete things. It a beauty of things modest and humble. It is a beauty of things unconventional" (Koren 7).

I see myself in the definition of Wabi-Sabi, or maybe even most people. I am imperfect, flawed, and often incorrect. My body is temporary and will only exist on this Earth for perhaps two hundred years, including decomposition time. I am incomplete and have not learned all that I can so far. I try to be humble and modest where I can be while maintaining boldness so that I may stand on my own. Lastly, I see myself as unconventional - or at least in some aspects of my life. I will explain more in chapters 2 and 3 about how I am connected to my work.

Often, I hear other Craftspeople refer to the aura and magic of Craft. Adamson, in his introduction to "Craft in Theory, Aesthetics, Essence and Status" in *The Craft Reader*, he provides context for the origins of the term "aura" in Craft:

The idea of craft as something unspoken, but which might also become the subject of poetic or religious consciousness, was also of great importance to Walter Benjamin. He describes craft as the natural counterpart to oral tradition, pointing to the fact that traditional narratives are often recited while craft work is happening. The tacit values of one reinforce the other, in a woven fabric of knowledge... For Benjamin, the craftsman (like the storyteller) is important because s/he embodies a particular position in relation to time— to craft is literally to embody the material qualities of inherited memory as a foil to other kinds of history. Unlike Heidegger, for whom technology was fatally out of touch with the body and the earth, Benjamin had no fear

of industrial production. In fact, he argued that because mass produced copies lacked the 'aura' of handmade originals, they actually might be preferable, as they would afford audiences and users greater cultural determination. (337)

The importance of handmade objects, and the Craftsperson's aura is integral to the "worth" of the objects. Those of us that are deeply in tune with our materials can feel this metaphysical presence start creating a synergy, and aura, between our hands and the objects. Koren discusses the ethereal nature of Wabi-Sabi:

In Japan, however, unlike Europe and to a lesser extent, America precious little material culture has been saved. So in Japan, saving a universe of beauty from extinction means, at this late date not merely preserving particular objects or building, but keeping a fragile aesthetic ideology alive in any form of expression available since Wabi-Sabi is not easily reducible to formulas or catchphrases without destroying its essence, saving it becomes a daunting task indeed. (8-9)

The daunting task of describing, preserving and justifying Sloppy Craft feels so much like writing this thesis. There is nothing in this world that I know better than my practice, but putting it into words for others to read and expecting them to understand is so hard. Koren describes this inability to explain Wabi-Sabi within Japan and Craft. Thus far, Sloppy Craft has been discussed in connection to traditional Craft disciplines, amateurism, community, etc. None of these qualities address the way making feels; the moments in which I am making feel so unquantifiable. Everything around me slips away, and I can only feel what I am making with my hands. This feeling can be described as "Flow" as defined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in *Flow: The Psychology Of Optimal Experience*. *Flow* is a rich text with powerful wisdom about activities, sex, culture, enjoyment and "achieving happiness through control over one's inner life" (Csikszentmihalyi 6). In the chapter *Flow Activities*, optimal experience is described through various pastimes. "[...]What makes these activities conducive to flow is that they were

designed to make optimal experience easier to achieve. They have rules that require the learning of skills, they set up goals, they provide feedback, they make control possible” (72). Art is mentioned, along with dancing and music as interests that are conducive to Flow.

Wabi-Sabi is described as Zen and a state of mind, which may be Flow’s counterpart (Koren 16). The acceptance of imperfect, unconventional and unfinished is nirvana in the eyes of a tireless Craftsperson. To put aside the expectations of what a book or cloth should look like is bliss or “Acceptance of the inevitable. Wabi-Sabi is an aesthetic appreciation of the evanescence of life” (54). This internal acceptance of what has been made stretches outward to the audience, who can see the raw honesty of the imperfect. Both Sloppy Craft and Wabi-Sabi hold the truth about both materials and concepts. There is a tension between the beauty within the broken in Wabi-Sabi that inspires me to continue telling my story through Craft objects. A comparison can also be made between the material qualities of Wabi-Sabi and Sloppy Craft:

The suggestion of natural process. Things Wabi-Sabi are expressions of time frozen. They are made of materials that are visibly vulnerable to the effects of weathering and human treatment. They record the sun, wind, rain, heat, and cold in a language of discoloration, rust, tarnish, stain, warping, shrinking, shriveling, and cracking. Their nicks, chips, bruises, scars, dents, peeling, and other forms of attrition are a testament to histories of use and misuse. Though things Wabi-Sabi may be on the point of dematerialization (or materialization)—extremely faint, fragile, or desiccated—they still possess an undiminished poise and strength of character. (62)

This suggestion of frozenness in time is essential to highlight. The violent ripping and fraying of linen to create the emotional ties around deconstruction- the action of tearing your work apart- that exact moment of despair - lives on the surface of my books. The beauty comes from the messiness, the broken and the worn.

I identify two main differences between Sloppy Craft and Wabi-Sabi. Wabi-Sabi's importance of nature is one of the most recognizable tenets. To connect to Sloppy Craft when reading about Wabi-Sabi, I will replace the word nature with linen [or material if you wish]. As a Craftsperson, materiality is nature. It is noteworthy that Wabi-Sabi is developed through use and age while Sloppy Craft is intentional and in my case, immediate.

Relational Aesthetics

In the glossary of Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*, relational is defined as:

- Relational (aesthetics)

Aesthetic theory consisting in judging artworks on the basis of the inter-human relations which they represent, produce or prompt.

- Relational (art)

A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.

I want to take a moment to recognize that Bourriaud and relational aesthetics is sometimes flawed and I respect and admire Claire Bishop as another speaker on the radical museum and interactivity. I think it's important to talk about Bourriaud because he is the "face" of relational aesthetics but that doesn't mean that he's perfect. Books are meant to be read, gazed at, held and sometimes a little abused. Active participation with Craft objects is usually done at home and close to the body- a ceramic plate, a glass cup, a knitted sweater. If I made this collection, and no one read one of the books, they would be scraps of fabric sitting in a white, well-lit room. They need activation and performance to thrive.

Bourriaud discusses the interaction between people as "The exchanges that take place between people, in the gallery or museum space, [that] turn out to be as likely to act as the raw matter for an artistic work" (37).

Relational aesthetics was the first critical theory I was exposed to before coming into this program at OCAD U, and I still manage to hold onto it so tight. I was (and am) fascinated with the thought of directing the viewing of my work or the situation. I feel powerful being the one in control of the space I have created. Being a conductor of the situation gives me another layer of power and authority within the work I make. I'm sure that the control I so desperately desire is closely connected to the lack of dominance and control I have had in the past. In 2019, I showed a collection of books at the Textile Museum of Canada, and in my efforts to

have people touch my work, I titled my books "Please Just Fucking Touch Me." This titling demands the audience to interact while simultaneously referencing the book as my body and creates a sexual innuendo.



Fig. 2.
Please Just Fucking Touch Me
Olivia Mae Sinclair
2019
Embroidery on linen book

I have not set out to create an exhibition that honours relational aesthetics. I do, however, think about how relational aesthetics gives context to the interactions of my books and their function within Sloppy Craft and the performance nature of my work. I have made my Sloppy Craft books and objects and have shown them in a formal or traditional gallery space. I love a white cube. The white cube is a sterile place to reflect on these objects; though it is cold, I believe it is neutral. To show them in a coffee shop or other untraditional space is to taint the books' essence with too many factors I cannot control. I don't want the atmosphere of somewhere warm and cozy to overpower the content's wretchedness in my works.

Furthermore, as the books themselves are uncomfortable, I want their space they are shown in to be uncomfortable as well. It is exciting to "infiltrate" the high-class arts space. It is appropriate for these books to be fitted into space where they might not fit. I desire the white cube because I want to break the unspoken rules of the space. I also want to be taken seriously within Craft- I want to work from the inside to create anarchy. These books dismantle the expectations of what might happen in a gallery. Flipping through one of the books emphasizes the sloppiness of these boundaries within the space. There is an aliveness to the books. Being in the moment with the books and the information that an audience member takes away is the lasting impact I can hope for.

Bourriaud discusses the availability of an artwork and how there are more classist and less classist examples, stating that "Performance is the most classist" (29). Bourriaud suggests that performance arts are the most classist of the exhibitions because of the circumstances and flux involved within a performance. The gallery's open hours, the scheduled time of the performance. To see it, you must be there. Viewing a performance is different than a painting. For example, online images these days are often much better resolution than you would see in real life and are accessible at any time. As well, looking at painting is static and still. When viewing my books, the experience is much more unique than simply gazing at a painting or watching a performance. The interactivity, intimacy and tactility of holding and flipping my books is how I want to achieve affect in the reader. I don't think of my books or the experience

of reading them as a classist act- I am much more interested in telling my story and sharing recovery as a platform and open discussion about suffering. I want people to feel how I feel and reflect on their own sexual experiences.

But what does it mean for people to touch my books? The audience may not get to bring the book home, but the multi-sensory experience of feeling and seeing is what I hope they encounter (19). I also poetically consider the act of someone touching my book as touching me. This brings up ideas around the consent of handling the book and how you want to feel the book. Bourriaud states that:

Art represents a barter activity that cannot be regulated by any currency, or any 'common substance'. It is the division of meaning in the wild state-an exchange whose form is defined by that of the object itself, before being so defined by definitions foreign to it. The artist's practice, and his behaviour as producer, determines the relationship that will be struck up with his work. In other words, what he produces, first and foremost, is relations between people and the world, by way of aesthetic objects. (19)

Bourriaud brings up key points about relationships between the maker, the object and the audience. Intimacy runs through my understanding of the work, making the books and the experience of holding the books. I mirror and *flip* my experiences with sexual abuse with the books. I am welcoming the evidence of the performance and touch. Loose threads on clothes, more ripping and fraying are all encouraged and welcome. In no way can I control those who read the books; they may leave halfway through, flip but not read, or not even pick them up. In the very best case scenario, I hope for someone to take their genitals out and plop them on the shelf and have sex with it.

I have a deep desire for my artwork to be touched, groped and fucked. Part of this may be hyperbole, but my fascination with having my work defiled might be sort of cosmic full circle fantasy. I have poured my most vulnerable parts of myself into my books for the world to see as a way to reconcile with my memories and heal from sexual violence. Wouldn't it be so ironic

to curate objects and a space for a desire to feel in control and have power over my thoughts just for sexual violence to happen all over again- but to my books? Through therapy treatment, I have been exposed to psychodrama as a technique to replay and rectify the past.

"Psychodrama is an action method, often used as a psychotherapy, in which clients use spontaneous dramatization, role playing, and dramatic self-presentation to investigate and gain insight into their lives" (Holmes 8). My use of interaction, audience participation and directives through my exhibition may be a way to replay or re-process events in my life, as each piece serves as a memoir or look into my life. Psychodrama is typically more based in formal theatrical practice. Paul Holmes describes the typical procedure:

Zerka Moreno (Moreno's widow and the co-creator of modern psychodrama) describes psychodrama as the process in which you can explore life, taking risks without the fear of punishment (personal communication). It is a form of group psychotherapy in which action techniques are used. Group members do not sit in a circle on chairs discussing life and its problems. Life is brought into the room and enacted using group members as the cast of the drama. The process is rich, enlivening, and fun. Solutions are found to problems using the creativity and spontaneity of the group. The group leader (or therapist) is called the 'director' because psychodrama is a dramatic form of therapy. It uses some of the conventions and language of the theatre; the group is held in a 'psychodrama theatre'. Within this theatre there is a stage, ideally with coloured lights that can be changed, dimmed, or turned off. The group becomes, at times, an audience, at other times members of the cast. (8-9)

I am so deeply woven into my works. It saddens me to imagine them in the gallery without me there to defend them and love them unconditionally, as they are such a close part of me. As part of this relationship I want to perform with the books and witness and conduct the audience's performance with the books. Trigger warnings are another part of examination within the discussion around my exhibition and its relational qualities. While I want to make

people feel uncomfortable and confront their innermost thoughts, I don't want to put strangers into acute distress. I regularly censor myself while making and remind myself that some things are better left inside my head, but I do want to push myself and other people to be vulnerable with their experiencing of the work. If a trigger warning was placed on the front door of the gallery, a viewer may not enter the space because of the warning. I feel that those who will most align themselves with my work, are people who have suffered or have been effected by trauma. By giving a warning, my concern is that there could be lost opportunities to connect and create community because of fear. I do recognize that there are people who will simply not be able to cope with the material I speak about- and that is okay.

In contrast to the framework of relational aesthetics, this exhibition is not a collaboration with the audience. There will be no space for others to write in their own experiences. The collaboration only comes from the willingness to perform with the books. The performance would involve approaching the books and interacting with them as instructed, or hopefully, by violating the books.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Methods and Methodologies used to seem like these tricky concepts thrown around to distract artists from making. I wanted someone to present me with a “master-list” of all of the methodologies to scan through and pick my own. I have since learned not to be afraid. Methodologies are meant to serve me and my making practice. They are what I make them - or rather how I create.

Studio Based Research or Practice Led Research

My research is studio-based, and practice-led. My practice is a distinct combination of listening and understanding the material and responding to a stream of consciousness thinking with my hands and my tools. To illustrate my approach, I find it appropriate to describe the space. The floors are covered with tiny scraps of cut fabric. The walls are littered with sticky notes, printed papers and scanned copies of fabric. Two desks stand adjacent to each other. The wheels of my office chair that sits between the desks are stuck in place from loose threads winding tightly into their mechanism. The south-facing window has drips of paint down the middle. Basically, it's just a fucking mess. Generally, my studio research steps follow this order: Have a traumatic event, Cry, Mourn, Sketchbook, Photoshop, Indesign, Screenprint, Cut and rip, Sew or put back together. I used to think my methods of making were “intuitive”. I've since learned that nothing is intuitive. Everything we make is a series of choices. I make in the way a textiles artist would make. My training is my intuition to pair scraps together or cut something up.

Sketchbook Methodology

My sketchbook is the place where I can be my most free and authentic self. I fill at least one or two sketchbooks every six months and do the best I can to save them all. I have sketchbooks from my first year of high school art in 2013. I have rituals within my sketchbook, and all are dated and in order on my bookshelf, which is the most organized and structured area in my studio space. I try to buy and use the same sketchbook, usually an 8.5 x 11 hardcover, although recently I have been using a soft cover. I was introduced to decorating and putting love into my sketchbooks early in my undergraduate studies. One of our instructors brought in many of her old sketchbooks for us to flip through. I vividly remember a moment where she held up a sketchbook covered in fabric, hugged it, and held it close to her body. The unconditional love she had for the work she had made was heartening and hopeful to me. This moment shifted the way I thought about sketchbooks and my relationship with them. They were no longer just objects; they became a space of warmth and ultimate acceptance of the self in every form. While they may not have a conscience, they are created from my consciousness. Therefore, I see myself living through the pages in ink. In "Notebooks and Narratives: The Secret Laboratory of The Architect's Sketchbook", Paul Clark states:

In considering the notion of what a sketchbook is: a portable blank book that absorbs all aspects of notes, sketches, lists, collages, and paste-ins, its real potential lies in its initial emptiness and scope for sequences to emerge. A void waiting to be filled, it takes shape as it evolves, and allows continual reflection over time. (490)

This passage articulates how a sketchbook is in flux and is a personal space for exploration. The sketchbook becomes a tool for documenting, archiving and developing through low-tech, low-fidelity and low pressure. Later on, Clark clarifies the similarities between architects and artists:

I believe there is no difference between the architect and the artist in this regard, in that the architect's sketchbook does not implicitly carry (as many people have presumed)

the obligation to direct everything towards the design of a specific building (as the direct materialization of an idea) in as much as the artist does not direct all observations onto the single work of art. But that the drawings, thoughts, and observations in a sketchbook should be considered as work in their own right. (494)

The sketchbooks becoming or being acknowledged as valuable artwork on their own is vital to my sketchbook methodology. Most of the time, what is in the sketchbook, will go into a final work. The sketchbook is less of a place for planning for me- it is a safe place to execute plans. I don't aim to create finished works in the sketchbook. Blind contours, quick outlines, wonky words and mock-ups all stand-in for finished works. My sketchbook methodology, in reflection to Sloppy Craft, is so closely parallel. The emphasis for both approaches is to praise gesture and tactility. My sketchbooks serve many functions within my daily life; I use them as a place to jot down ideas, draw exhibition plans, make agendas, to-do lists but mainly, it's a place for the thoughts that no one else should see.

There are things in the sketchbooks I wouldn't tell my therapist for fear of being admitted to the hospital. ~~My life changed when I started bringing a sketchbook to sexual encounters. I was able to document in real time what was happening and how I felt without having to take a picture on my phone.~~ I have a sketchbook specifically for travelling as well. It is covered in drunken thoughts and escapism from my real life. My sketchbooks are a place for playfulness, honesty, acceptance and evolution of my work. The sketchbook itself is a home for escapism.

Redbull, Urgency and Death

The act of making for me is compulsive, obsessive, and reactive. I often cry while I am drawing, enough to put a sign up on the wall of my studio that reads “If I am crying, I am making good art” as a signal to my studio mates that I’m fine and to leave me be. I can’t stop making. I fear if I stop producing work, I will stop existing. If I were to give it more explicit terminology, I would use “Suicidality” or a similar word. I don’t fear my death. To me, the fear around death is the discontinuation of making. Make, make, make and make some more. If I die, I can’t keep making. Contrary to suicidality, my practice’s reactive nature is not an act of suicidal fantasy, ideation or plans. In fact, my approach is the opposite. Through my research, I have come to find the term Psychache. In the article *Suicide: “Psychache and Alienation”*, Michael Sperber outlines this condition:

Psychache, a neologism coined by suicidologist Edwin Shneidman, is unbearable psychological pain-hurt, anguish, soreness, and aching... Unresolved psychache results in suicidal behaviour. In almost every case of suicide, psychache is the cause. Psychache stems from thwarted or distorted psychological needs . . . every suicidal act reflects some specific unfulfilled psychological need. (Sperber)

I have consumed approximately 2,592 cans of Redbull so far in my time on earth. I am desperately and hopelessly addicted to its sweet taste and familiar rush. “The Redbull” has been a reoccurring topic of discussion with my therapist over the past three years, often used as comedic relief while digging for a deeper understanding of self-loathing and how we fill the holes in the psyche. During my MFA, I have produced three publications around my thirst for it. In the final collection of books, one image of a Redbull can is hidden amongst the shadows and bodies. At least a dozen empty cans await for my return in the now-abandoned graduate studio, nailed to the wall like a crucifix.

During the production of this thesis, I was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). When I told my therapist after proper diagnosis and medication trials, she exclaimed, “Isn’t it funny how our vices mirror our illness?” Is it funny, or is it just painfully true and masochistic to torture yourself with pleasure? I know now that the hole I was trying to fill was an empty grave of distractions and desires to be productive with a straw and sugary beverage when I needed a shovel (or, in my case, twenty-five milligrams a day of Adderall). The urgency, pain and anguish are relieved by the act of making and extruding my masochistic tendencies onto my fabric. Ultimately, if I stop making I will be left alone with the psychache and fear what will happen.



Fig. 3.
Redbull Illustration
 Olivia Mae Sinclair
 2021

Photo Manipulation/Digital Intervention of Archive

I think about the distortion of images, like how memory is often wrong and how we so desperately want to remember something differently than how it happened. Being able to manipulate an image digitally gives me that sense of power over my life moments that I wish I could forget. I get to decide how it looks, and that can't hurt me. Digital processes also aid in my journey, mainly Adobe Photoshop and InDesign. Layering filters before screen printing ensures the desired effect on linen. Creating high contrast and erasing distracting backgrounds is common in my editing. Bitmaps are used to transfer images to screens, but I look past their technical use and reflect on what it means to distort the images with tiny dots. Information is destroyed in the bitmap translation. Manipulation and distortion are used to protect the identities of the non-active participants in my work. Because of health and safety concerns around COVID-19 and the closure of studios, I have not produced as many new screen prints as I would like because of spatial and technical limitations. To combat this, I have adapted to re-imagining older works through self-editing and censoring. The ripping and cutting of the fabrics are the most significant to the concepts in my project. The deconstruction of the linen best represents the parallels between my body and the fabric. Collecting and using scraps is a way for me to archive the deconstruction of the prints. Collage is an excellent way to contextualize the work.

Punk

MY BOOKS ARE JUST SILENT
SCREAM SONGS

I define modern-day punk or "post-punk" as a political position and aesthetic that stands with anti-mass production, anti-sell-out, anti-capitalist methods. I look to the 1980's British and New York City punk movements as the Hellenistic period of punk and Goth culture. In the publication *Some Wear Leather, Some Wear Lace: The Worldwide Compendium of Post-Punk and Goth in the 1980s*, authors Andi Harriman and Marloes Bontje discuss the subcultures' influence on music, fashion and other artists. They outline an emphasis on the individual and the eccentric:

Post-punk's influence in the 1980s filtered through diverse regions because of its particular appeal to those who did not conform to society. As Sean Chapman, a new romantic from Brighton, United Kingdom, says, "Our only real ideology was to create and to live life as unconventionally as possible." Artists, poets, designers, and creative minds gathered within a subculture that understood and sympathized with one another. These sentiments were translated in the lyrics and attitude of the music. (8)

The appeal of the unconventional, the underdog story, the reject and the outsider are the allure and muse of the punk movement. Art, music, poetry, and fashion became vehicles for the "disturbed" to gather and feel community. Despite all odds:

The punk movement thrived on the idea of the lower-class anti-hero who had suffered enough suppression from the government and state. Punk's rebellion in fashion and music was a form of independence, a chance for the poor and oppressed to finally depart from the crowd and become their true 'self'. Post-punk formed from this expansion of rebellion but with old elite values: a combination of art and individuality with an air of aristocracy."(14)

I am enamoured with aesthetics around punk fashion and artwork in my academic and personal life, which I discuss a little later on. The punk aesthetics' tenets may be considered the following: black and ripped clothing, mohawks, large teased hair, dark eye makeup, brightly coloured hair... fishnets, spikes although the punk aesthetic reaches beyond fashion:

Aside from live performances, the visual art of albums, flyers, and videos were just as striking. Stark black and white motifs, blurred and distorted photos, and mythical or funereal imagery were prominent indicators of goth art. (56) As a means of promotion, flyers and posters were often printed to spread the word about up coming performances. A heavy do-it-yourself aspect derived from punk was brought into the production of flyers with hand-drawn illustrations alongside cut up photos and collages that formed an assemblage of goth iconography. (58)

From my own experiences in the fine/professional Craft community, members are generally accepting and encouraging of each other. I do acknowledge my privilege as a white, female-identifying individual and recognize that not every person in the Crafts community has this experience. However, I hope that Craft is a place where individuals have the freedom to be whoever they want and express themselves where it is safe to do so. Both Craft and punk allows people to share and learn about the world through a lens of acceptance. Be political, yourself, loud, and sloppy.

In the summer of 2019, I was challenged with the complete lack of studio due to quarantine and the rising cases of COVID-19. I felt so lost without the security blanket of the studio. My tiny five hundred square foot High Park basement apartment was stuffed full of screen printing equipment. I could no longer pretend to try to make digital textile work or make work that didn't involve new screen prints or imagery. It was my goal to expose screens from home, which was something I had never done before. I purchased Speedball emulsion and made my positives, and got to work. While working through this process, I realized that what I was doing was finally in line with what I was thinking about. Previously, I was writing and

thinking about punk while sitting in the state-of-the-art studio at OCAD U, worth thousands of dollars. I never thought about this tension before, and I was never confronted with my Crafts privilege until I had it painfully torn away from me.

As a Craftsperson and maker, I feel the need to experience something to understand it fully; I need to live it and feel it in my hands to reflect and remember. The weirder the world felt with isolation, the screen printing I was doing also got more bizarre. I stopped using my prefabbed squeegees to print – I started to use discarded cardboard to screen print. Then I stopped using my proper textile inks and started using the cheapest acrylic paint I could find, mostly paints from the dollar store. I had to unlearn and disregard what a ‘studio’ is to learn that the modern-day studio is classist.



Fig. 4.
Screen Printing with Cardboard
Olivia Mae Sinclair
2020

I consider concepts around “the studio” classist because of the division of accessibility of materials and equipment. Between studio fees and material fees, it is expensive to be an artist in Toronto. I am living through the punk methodologies that I have named in my proposal and writings. I am standing for anti-mass production, anti-establishment, and engaging with conversations around “high” and “low” art. Sloppy Craft also evokes questions of high/low Craft, which is intriguing to me. What is “good” Craft? What makes something “good?” How does value change within high/low Craft? Previously I worked in professional studios with professional materials and professional people, trying to make sloppy work about having a messy sexual and personal life. I figure- the sloppier the process, the sloppier the overall work.

Post-punk spills beyond and between containers within my life; meaning punk is not just a method I am interested in academically. The way I dress, create artwork and articulate are post-punk. I am easily influenced by my working environment and space while making. In my studio, I absolutely must be listening to music. I speculate that if I can replicate the emotions I am discussing in my poetry while writing, like longing, sadness, hopelessness; the final product will be more genuine and authentic. Examples of artists I listen to are \$uicide Boy\$, Ghostmane and Lil Peep (see appendix A).

Rick Owens is someone I think about as a post-punk fashion icon. Although it is essential to clarify that I do not always associate Rick Owens with “traditional punk” as his garments for retail are priced outrageously high and do not align with the working class ideology highlighted in traditional punk. Rick Owens is a modern and high-art example of punk. *Sphinx*, the fall and winter 2015 collection featured black and a dark earth tone colour palette with mixed textures such as leather and heavy wool (Owens). The runway models were styled with buzz cuts and spiked hair. However, the most shocking and impactful material used in this collection was cock. The garments were constructed, cut and cropped to showcase genitals. Rick Owens has openly spoken about his relationship with sexuality and gender identity. In the material, political and aesthetic choices Rick Owens makes, he embodies many post-punk qualities. I look to him as both a punk and a textile designer influence on me.

I can't help but draw lines between punk, Craft and fetish culture. They all incorporate personal freedom, individualism, archive and moments of performativity. Material importance within these three communities are also present. Leather and latex are both common in punk and fetish culture. I also identify a desire to be "seen" or on display - either in a public gallery, on stage or through a photograph. Exhibitionism comes to mind in an abstracted way - the desire to be exposed or put on display is throughout:

Exhibitionism is the act of exposing in a public or semi-public context those parts of one's body that are not normally exposed – for example, the breasts, genitals or buttocks. The practise may arise from a desire or compulsion to expose themselves in such a manner to groups of friends or acquaintances, or to strangers for their amusement or sexual satisfaction or to shock the bystander.
(Baunach 220)

While I disagree with exposing oneself in public -for reasons surrounding ethics and consent- there is a seductiveness to archiving and showcasing my private and intimate life on gallery walls. I don't necessarily get sexual satisfaction but by "exposing" myself or revealing my innermost self; I am taking power away from abusers or harmful memories. An example of the provocative intersection of punk, Craft and Fetish is the "The London Vagabond". (See fig. 5 and 6) From their website:

The London Vagabond are London-based lovers and fetishists. They have been making work collaboratively for around four years under the alias 'The London Vagabond.' The work created together comes from two separate perspectives: a submissive male point of view which is far removed from the typical, often misogynistic male gaze, the female perspective is from a dominant female, and an advocator of female empowerment. They both want to depict the individual/s in the images honestly, and for the work to be a true and powerful representation of the subject/s in the frame.
(TheLondonVagabond.com)

The couple photographs and produces small run zines or publications exploring sexuality, power dynamics and showcases others from Fetish parties. Images are distorted, filtered and layered. The London Vagabond captures punk methodology through zines and collage. I adore their willingness to share the explicit and messy and hope that my archival practice will include more extreme images in the future.



Fig. 5.
One Night in Inanna
The London Vagabond
2019



Fig. 6.
Untitled
from the Archives
The London Vagabond
2016

Auto Ethnographic Feminist Storytelling

I have always wanted to be a writer. I love poetry. I hate rhyming. It always made me struggle and stumble around my words. I was supposed to do my bachelor's in English, but fate had something different planned out for me. I love poetry, and I guess in some weird way, I am a poet. My love for storytelling has stemmed from my love of stories - mainly autobiographies and poetry. I value other people's experiences and truth. The different types of truths are what keeps things so fascinating.

So Sad Today is a publication housing a collection of essays by the widely popular Twitter poet @SoSadToday. Previously an anonymous Twitter user, Melissa Broder, revealed her identity for the release of this book. She was already an established writer and poet and was nervous that coming out as @SoSadToday would damage her career. The essays retell Broder's experiences with anxiety, addiction, substance abuse, romantic longings and "mommy issues." Originally from Philadelphia, Broder took her BA at Tufts University, then moved to San Francisco, then to New York to take her MFA in poetry. She now lives in Los Angeles (Melissa Broder). Her essays are hilariously uncomfortable yet sadly relatable:

My Sexual Preference is Me. Actually, escaping me. In every obsession, Internet obsession, make-out, fuck, and actual relationship, I've embraced my fellow man (and woman) on the highway of low self-esteem in the hope that I could be convinced of my own okayness and/or disappear. What I have sought in love is a reprieve from the itch of consciousness—to transcend myself and my human imperfections—but this has yet to happen. (Broder 25)

I bring up *So Sad Today* as a significant inspiration for my artwork and its content. I honour Broder's writing as it feels fresh but gives incredible insight while remaining accessible to a large audience. I think about using social media as a performative element to the writing

which could potentially activate it more than print media can. I think about social media's reach and how it can be such an excellent tool for spreading information. I tell my stories through my work with memoir, images, poetry and material narrative.

What is “Flipping”

Flipping is a methodology that my primary advisor, Dorie Millerson, has helped me identify through critiques and conversation. While working in the studio, I will regularly ask myself, "how can I make this (object, book, print) the opposite of itself." I use flipping as a tool to challenge my practice and the course in which it heads while working. The simplest example of flipping is, if I am using black ink on white linen, I will “flip it” and print with white ink onto black linen. I also envision flipping methodology like using Command-I hotkey in digital image manipulation software (Photoshop), which is used to invert colours and filters. I also muse on what the implications are of inverting colours, which I will discuss.

When I reflect on where this methodology came from, I am reminded of my first project in my undergraduate degree. The project was titled Hard/Soft and was created by instructor Rachel Miller. The project brief instructed students to complete a three-dimensional interlaced form inspired by a contemporary, minimalist sculpture or an industrial form heavy in weight (e.g. steel, metal, lead, etc.) The project was to be crocheted or knitted and urged students to consider the balance between materials. I crocheted two blocks informed by a sculpture by Tony Smith.

Another way to interpret flipping is through sewing construction techniques. When sewing a garment, the project is constructed entirely inside-out, until the last step, where it gets turned right-side-out. From a technical standpoint, all of my books are sewn inside-out or incorrectly. Instead of constructing them with the photographic images facing each other on the inside and then turn them right-side-out, I sew the pages with the photos facing out (see fig. 7).

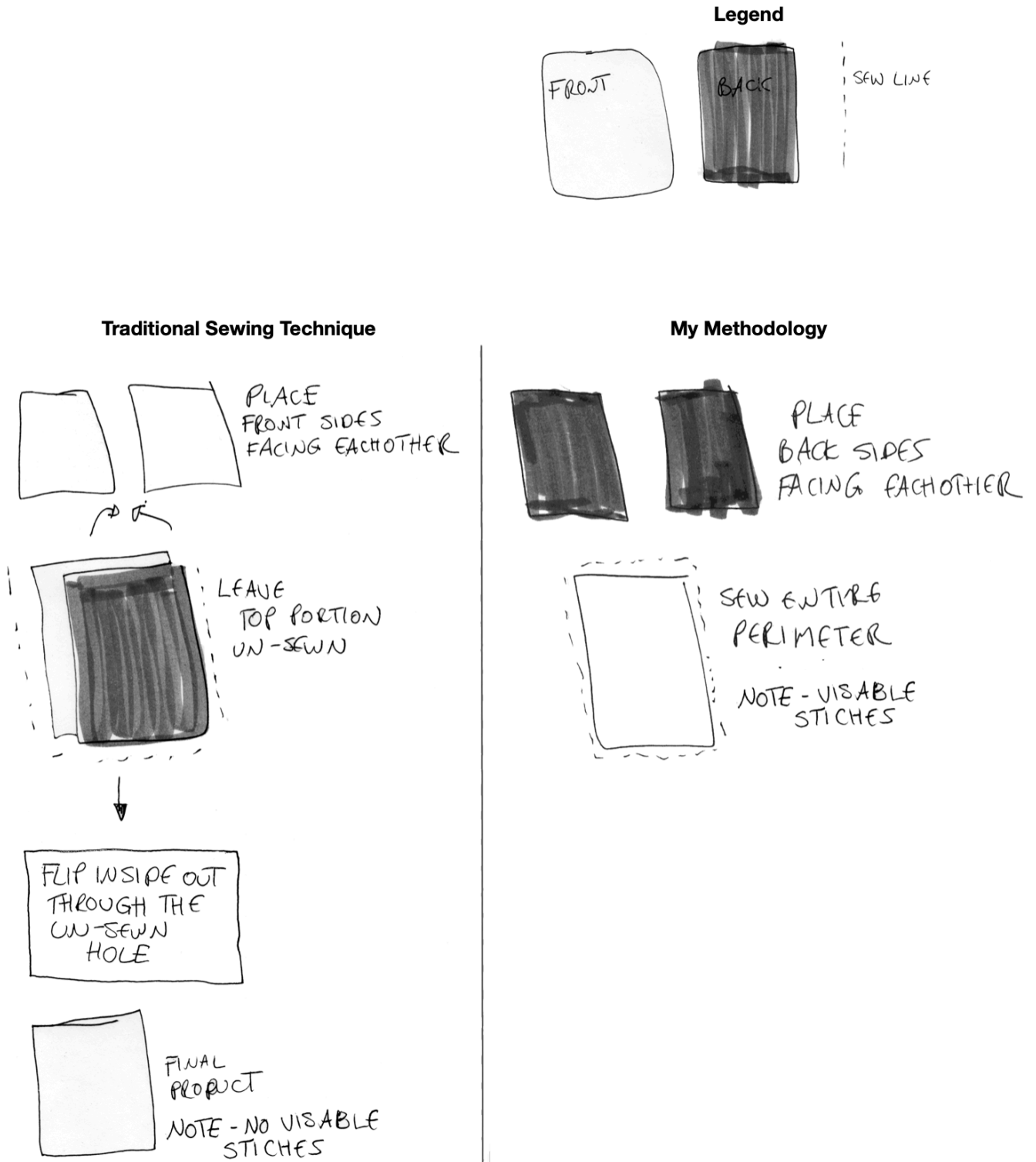


Fig. 7.
Sewing Diagram
Olivia Mae Sinclair
2020

I purposely sew my books inside out to showcase a top stitch on the pages. This sloppy technique is also much faster and by extension, less precise. Jagged cutting, contrasting and crooked seams hang out and are visible for all to see. This may be compared to seeing the backside of a painting on canvas. Note the contrast stitching in Fig. 8 and 9.

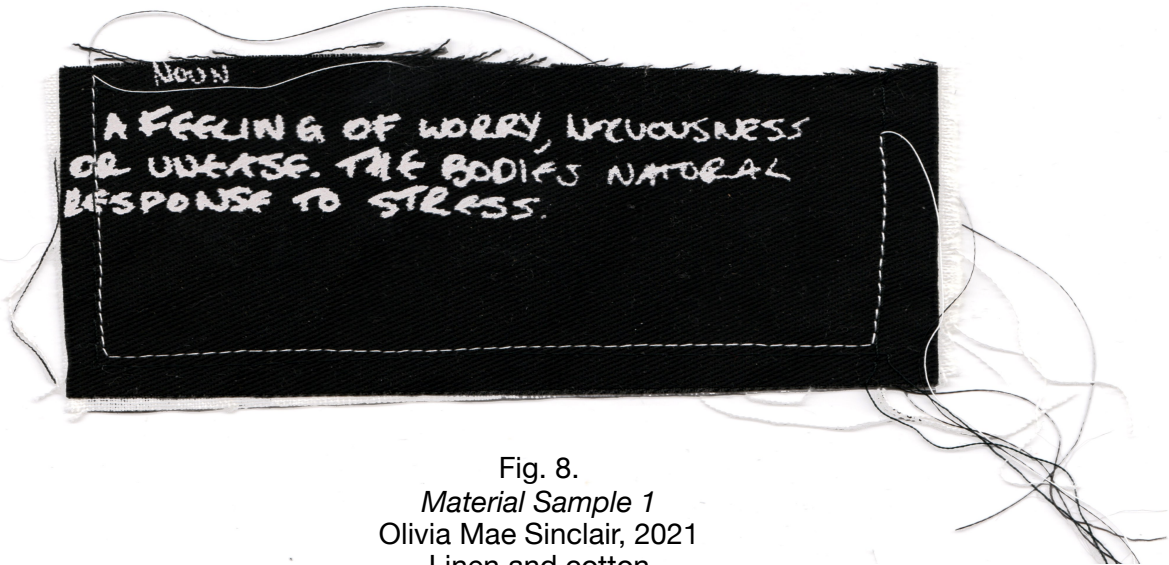


Fig. 8.
Material Sample 1
Olivia Mae Sinclair, 2021
Linen and cotton

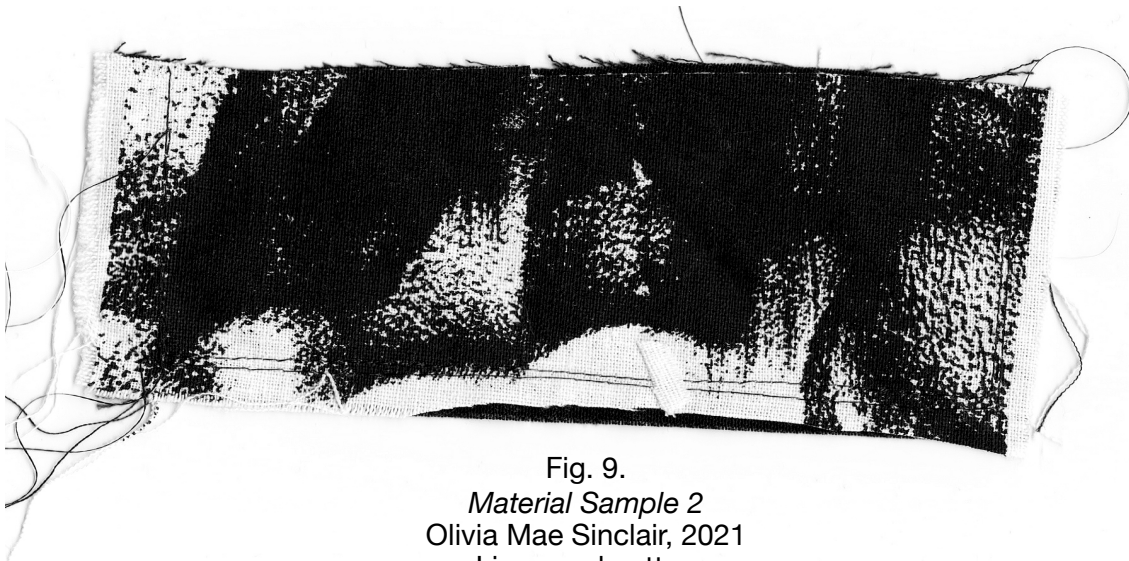


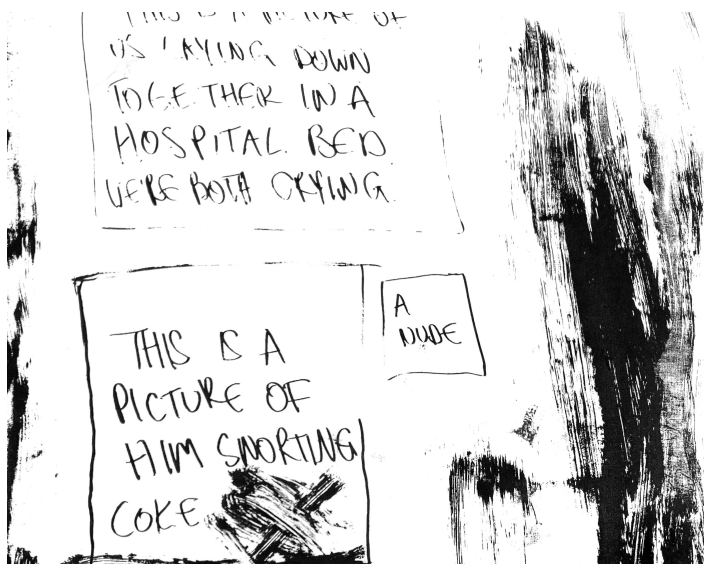
Fig. 9.
Material Sample 2
Olivia Mae Sinclair, 2021
Linen and cotton

Flipping can also be *meta* at times for me within my screen printing practice. In the screen printing process, positives (or all black images) are used to create negative space on a silkscreen for the ink to pass through the tiny holes to mark/stain/print the fabric underneath. By flipping the colours of my images and printing white ink onto black fabric, I disrupt the cues of the printing production or processes within my work. There are other implications of printing a negative image conceptually. What does it mean to print the opposite of a photo? Is there a signifier for the reversal of time or the moment it was captured? It may distort a viewer's understanding to see an image with negative colours. I believe there is something uncanny about it, which I embrace and use as a technique. There are instances within my books where photographic images will have fabric within the composition. This means that a picture of fabric is screen printed onto; fabric. An example of this happens in a photo of cum on a bedsheet in one of my publications. I purposely include these images with other fabric types to flip. Printing the surface texture of a thick, quilted bed sheet onto linen is provocative to me and adds tension to the print. I am altering the material without using a fabric other than linen. In other cases, I will print on either side of a piece of fabric, and when ink bleeds through the linen and each image can be faintly seen on either side which can add meaning or context to either image. This may be referred to as a palimpsest. "In textual studies, a palimpsest is a manuscript page, either from a scroll or a book, from which the text has been scraped or washed off so that the page can be reused for another document" (Lyons 215).

The palimpsest is intriguing to me as it splits the meaning of a print into three parts:

- 1) The original image printed;
- 2) The new image printed over top;
- 3) The interactions that occur between the original and new image.

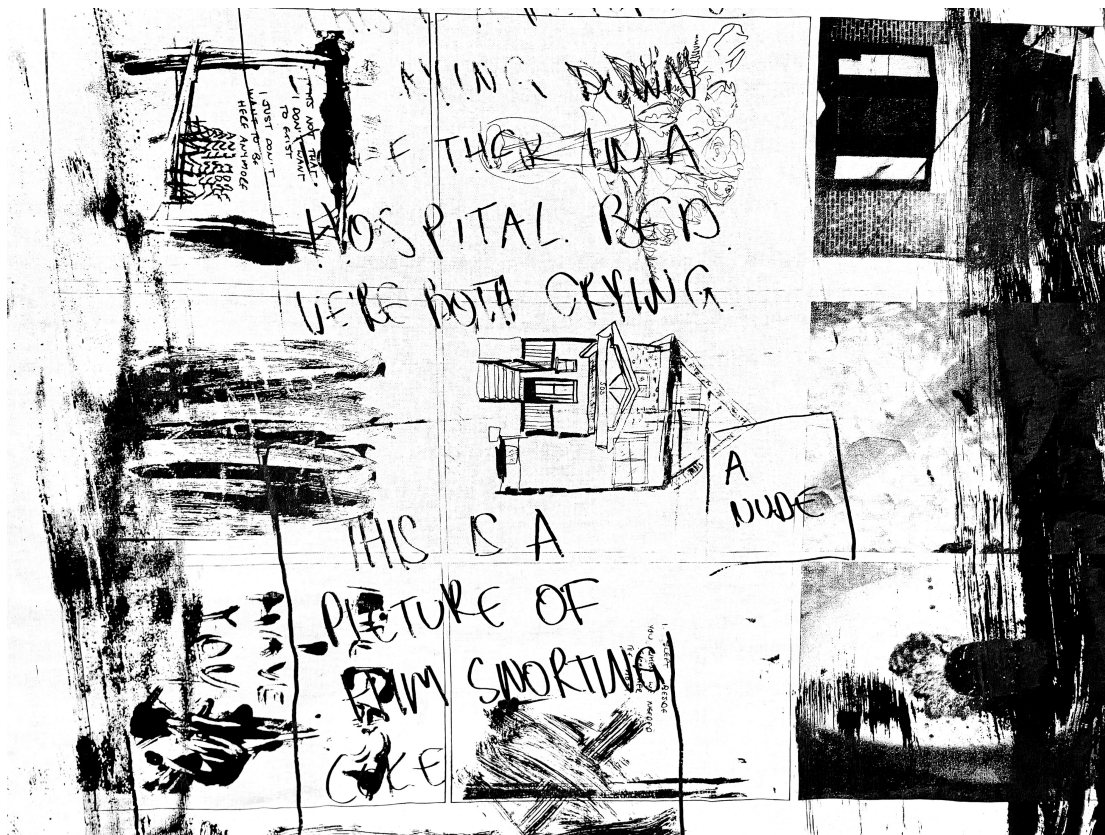
I think about the palimpsest in my work and the implications of self editing or covering images. I purposely overlap photos and text that correspond to each other and have planned for interactions in some cases (see fig. 10 and 11).



Original Image



New Image



Example of Palimpsest

Fig. 10.
Palimpsest Diagram
Olivia Mae Sinclair
2021

The palimpsest exists in many other spaces in my practice within memory and is connected to my sketchbook methodology. In the third chapter of *Recto Verso: Redefining The Sketchbook*, Illustrator John Hendrix explains how the palimpsest exists in memory and in the sketchbook:

The quality of palimpsest can be found in urban landscapes, Rome being the best example, where buildings or streets are composed of traces of past buildings or streets. Most importantly, the quality of palimpsest can be found in the human mind, where layers of consciousness are composed of traces, of memory fragments of visual and aural forms, and of previous layers. Through palimpsest the sketch can emulate the human mind, and be a tool [...] tool in urban design and architectural composition, which connects the built environment to the human mind. The sketch should thus continue to be a mechanism to produce increasingly creative, insightful, and meaningful design. (125)

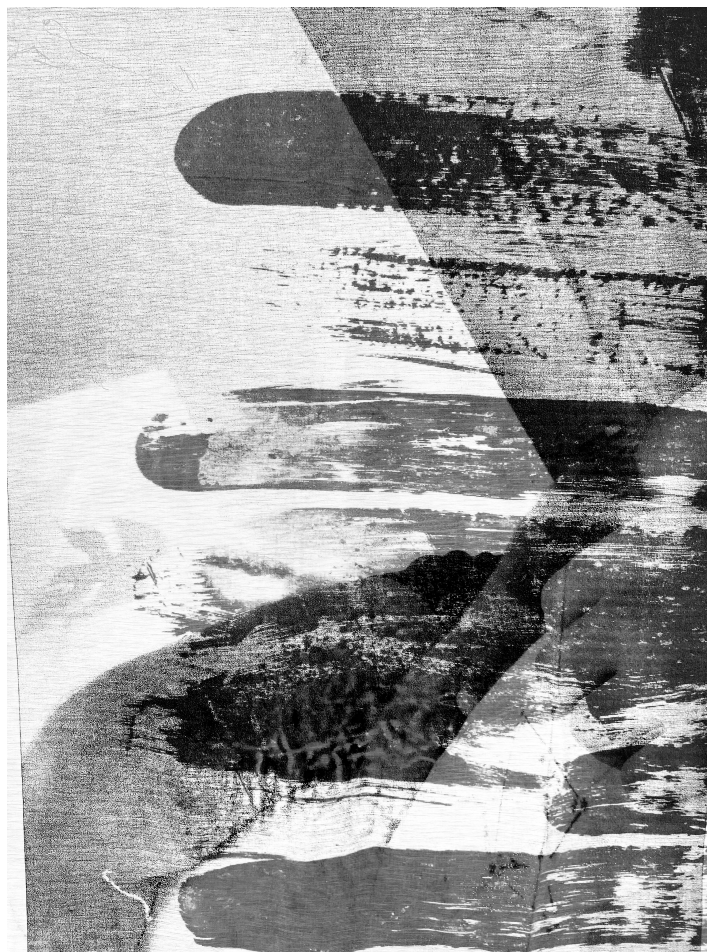
~~The extension from memory, to conscious mind to the sketchbook to the final sloppy product is exactly what my intention is when bringing in palimpsest to my methodology. Only I know the order in which the prints were applied. Only I know the order of the events in the photographs. Only I have agency in the palimpsest. Memories are messy, and sometimes we think we have all those little details correct; but it's really hard to get everything right. For me, choices leading up to the moments of trauma are lost because the pain takes up so much room in my mind. The layer of pain is the darkest and deepest black in my prints, however you may see it.~~



Front of Fabric



Back of Fabric



Backlight Photo of Fabric

Fig. 11.
Palimpsest Diagram 2
Olivia Mae Sinclair, 2021
Linen and cotton

In my first studio project at OCAD U in Graduate Studies, we were challenged to do something we have never done before and accept failure. We were encouraged to stay in the realm of our current practices but to push them to our limits. To create something entirely outside of my comfort zone, I asked myself, "what is the exact opposite of linen?" Concrete. Concrete is the exact opposite of linen. I then created a 6-page book made from concrete and cement to challenge the weight of trauma. (See fig. 12)

The Weight of it All strips away all softness and comfort from the books, which is a tactile quality I usually embrace in my work. It is important to me that my readers have something soft to hold onto when they are reading vile words and seeing graphic imagery. When I started mixing and pouring my cement, I was much more interested in the deconstruction of "book" and wanted to push this project into a more post-modern sculpture space in contrast to my soft, sloppy, sculptures. This book-sculpture is a physical representation of the weight I carry with me all the time. I carry the weight of all the books I have made in the past, I carry the weight of intrusive memory and thought. I carry the weight of being a woman with a voice and a platform. The crumbling of cement is striking to me and speaks to the fragility of emotions and strength. This book also acts as an artifact for previous work and relationships. I question where this particular piece fits in with my ideals of "Sloppy Craft." The sculpture itself pushes away from traditional techniques of pouring cement and disregards structural integrity.

To flip *The Weight of it All* onto itself, I think there would be a space for *trompe l'oeil* in this work. I could digitally print high resolution photos of the cement onto linen and sew similar shapes to the existing cement book. The cement-linen book could include material manipulation techniques (like ripping) to emulate the decay of concrete. Both the cement and linen-cement books could be displayed side by side to create tension and dynamic interaction with audience members through texture and heaviness.



Fig. 12.
The Weight of it All
Olivia Mae Sinclair
September 2019
Concrete

The most conceptual (and successful) example of my flipping methodology was in December 2019 when I did a performance where I read one of my books, covered in fabric corresponding to the book's content. (See fig. 13) My creation of the performance came from my research question, "How can I encourage my audience to interact with the publications?" I decided to flip the gentle word "encourage" with the more violent and non-consensual term. The question for the project became "How can I *force* my audience to interact with the publications"

I made the change of wording because at the core of my project I want to influence traumatic memory through the act of reading/experiencing one of my tactile fabric books. It became clear to me that sound was the best way to deliver the content without consent of the viewer or in this case - listener. Normally, an audience member would need to know to pick up one of my books in a gallery and read it willingly. Sound is much less respectful of our space and consent. I held the performance in the entryway of the 205 Richmond Street West building. While my cohort was watching, many strangers and other students entered the building. They had no choice to not-hear the performance (unless of course they had headphones on or jammed their fingers in their ears.) The secondary "flip" within the performance was that I became the book. The book was no longer without life, sitting on a shelf waiting to be picked up. I, the book, forcefully penetrated people's ears.



Fig. 13.
You Save My Life Every Single Day
Olivia Mae Sinclair
December 2019
Stills from live performance
Photos courtesy of Noa Billick

Chapter 3: Studio Section

Why Books?

I have always been infatuated with books. I am one of the last generations to grow up with books and not iPads. I read Stephen King when I was ten years old and was gifted the time to have an imagination, the time to spend outside playing in the grass with my thoughts, the time to doodle on the back of recycled paper. The structure of a book is so captivating. Books are predictable; comfortable. Manageable in size. They always seem to have a beginning, middle and end. They come with fronts and backs, housing their contents and to protect the information within. The way they live on a shelf, tattered, and mismatched in colours. Books even have a delicious smell when they grow old or are taken to the beach. We carry books close to our bodies and in our bags, they travel on subways and on airplanes. To disturb a book's order and predictably is appealing.

Exaggerating their shapes, forms and deconstructing their perfectness brings them into a new type of life with more expression and even personality. Challenging what is considered a book is playful and thought-provoking, to me at least. What are the rules of a book? A book doesn't really *need* be bound, with plenty of examples of scroll type books available. Pages are interchangeable with anything that is modular, or even close to modular. Information seems to be vital to a book's properties. Though, for example, if there was a book that did not have a single word on it, the quietness of the book would be enough to draw an inference of a concept. The reader could make their own concept around the book - therein lies the book's information. Anything can be a book. In Fiona Banner's *ISBN 0-9548366-7-7* project, Banner registered her name as an ISBN and tattooed it on her lower back.



Fig. 14.
Portrait of the Artist as a Publication
Fiona Banner aka The Vanity Press
2009
Photograph, leterset
6 x 4 cm (photograph)
30.5 x 22 x 2.2 cm (frame)
Edition of 10

And then I found zines. I can't really remember the exact moment, but there was a distinct shift for me in my undergraduate program when I discovered that self publishing is "cool" and had deep roots in the punk community. After doing several zine fairs, I definitely align my work with "artist books" over "zines" - even though my work has *zine-ism*. Zines serve me as inspiration and context for my work.

I have been asked why I typically stick with a five by seven format for my pages. I have been challenged to break this standard size to help exaggerate the sloppiness of the books. While this may be an interesting body of work to explore, keeping the five by seven standard preserves the shadow or outline of a mass market paperback. I want my books to still be recognizable. Five by seven is also a standard size for printed images, which also plays into nostalgia, memory and identification. Five by seven is a familiar size but also a comfortable size to hold in your hands.

~~The action and performance of books are also appealing. There are motions associated with flipping through a book. Flipping, breezing, skimming, going back and fourth, revisiting.~~

~~———It is all very sexual to me. The repetition of flipping through pages of a book feels like the rhythm of thrusting during sex.~~

Handwriting

“The digital medium strips communication of tactility and physicality.” (Han 24)

Handwriting has become sacred in this modern age. *In the Swarm* by Byung-Chul Han has been an influential book for me, and even more so in the age of COVID-19 and social isolation. While social media and digital platforms bring people together, the togetherness is cold and artificial. Han at many times references the delivery of digital media to be cold and faceless (24).

A couple of years ago, a guest critique artist asked me why I didn't use any font faces in my work. They said it would make my books feel “more like a book or newspaper” and “less like a diary.” I was heartbroken at this comment, the artist completely missed the point and intention of my handwriting. The imperfections of handwriting are what make it so personal and intimate to read my books. I want to give my viewers a break from screens and Helvetica. Han discusses how digital media is less memorable and effective as a whole, “In contrast, digital communication enables affective discharge right away. On the basis of its temporality alone, it conveys impulsive reactions more than analog communication does. In this respect, the digital medium is a medium of affect” (10).

The differences in the reading experience between a newspaper and my books relies on my handwriting and the inconsistencies within. I like making my audience guess and “work” for what the pages actually say. This plays to my advantage, as I can use messy handwriting as a way to conceal my own words, and censor their meanings. I can write words smaller or larger depending on their importance. I can layer words over top of one and other, and within that flux, new words may appear. I may use repetition of words or sentences to also create meaning. The mentioned techniques I use within writing may be used with a font- yes- but the reactivity and urgency of the hand is relevant to the concepts I am discussing around affect and distress.

While it may seem that I am trying to break all the rules around traditional or fine Craft by using Sloppy Craft, the preservation of the “mark of the hand” and evidence of the artist is meaningful to my work. The recognition by the audience, of my processes being done by hand is what makes the connection between the books and storytelling. The intimacy of the work and the confessions within, combined with my handwriting is what makes it feel all the more real and vulnerable. It is less easy to dismiss a text if there is a tactility and gesture attached to the writing. The tactility and distance from the digital is also mentioned in *Sloppy Craft: Post-Disciplinarily and the Crafts*:

There are numerous theories as to why this turn to a more informal aesthetic. Certainly, as in Faught’s work, the content of the art is a primary driver. However, I would assert that it is also the ubiquity of computer screens, the infiltration of digital media into so many aspects of life and the availability of seemingly easy perfection that demands its opposite—the wish for a more sensorial experience, materiality and the mark of the hand, privileging foible and imperfection, irregularity and uncertainty. (Paterson and Surette, XXV)

Towards the end of my undergraduate studies I created a font using my handwriting. The font Olivia Mae has allowed me to incorporate my “hand” into digital mediums and essays. When working through layouts for my books on InDesign, I can use Olivia Mae to act as a place holder, or sometimes it is included in a final print. Olivia Mae is a much faster way for me to design on the computer and still keep the authenticity of my handwriting. Although Olivia Mae is a strange soulless version of my actual handwriting, I suggest it is a middle ground for digital Sloppy Craft.

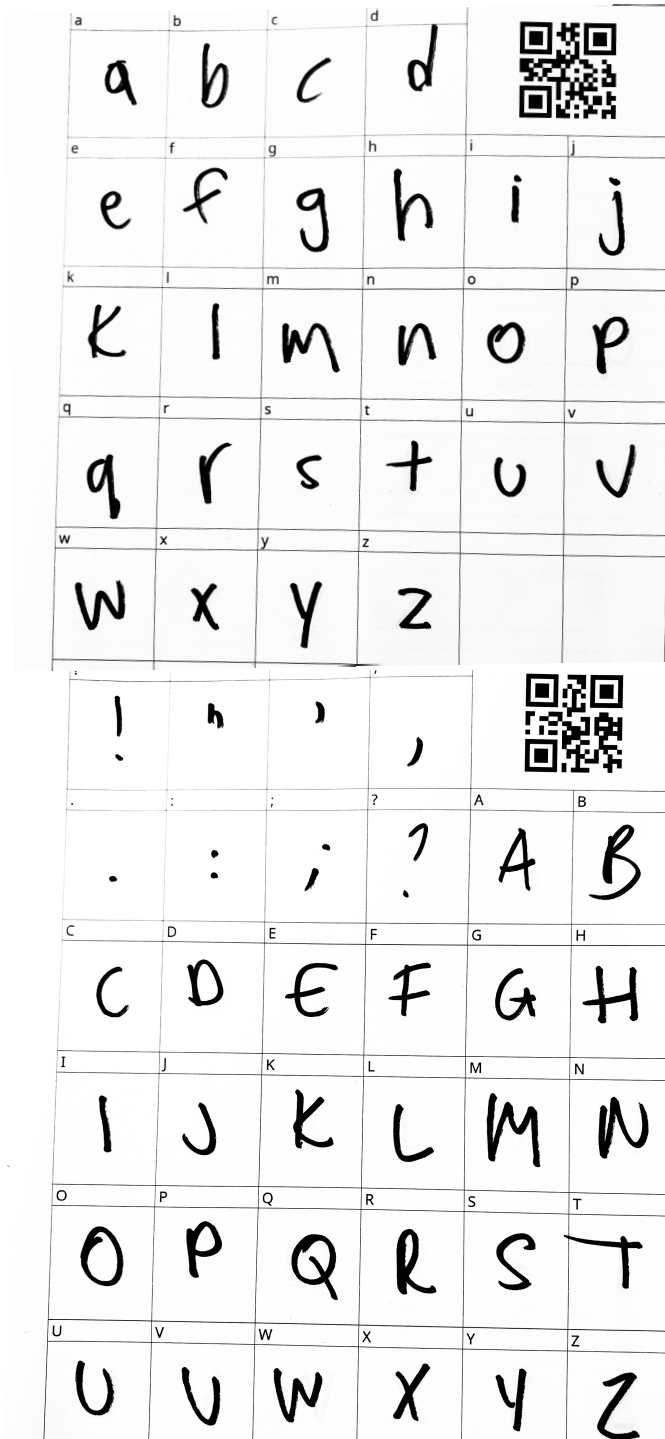


Fig. 15.
Font Formatting Example
Olivia Mae Sinclair, 2021

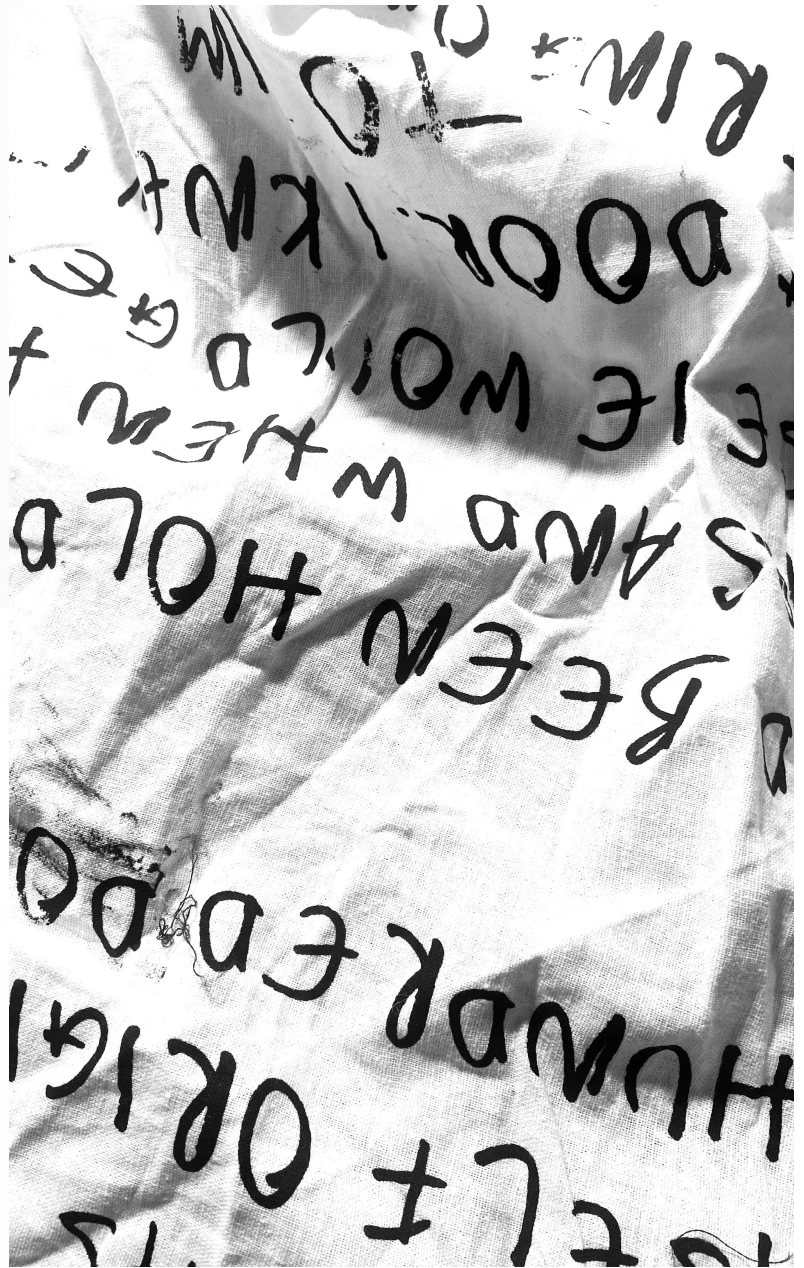


Fig. 16.
Font on Fabric
Olivia Mae Sinclair, 2021

Black and White

Colour is a distraction. There I said it. I am often asked if I will add colour into my work. No. Focus on what is in front of you. The overall concept of colour is not just whittled down to hue. Words, type face, texture and collage may all be used as colour.

Black is at the root of everything.

In a conversation with an instructor about my use of colour, I mentioned how I want my black to be “dirty black” after discussing the importance of lack of colour within a particular piece I was working on. Dirty black is the black that gets all over your hands, clothes, the floor. When screen printing, I use what is referred to as “waste pigment.” Waste pigment is the leftover ink that goes into a big slop bucket in the studio. It is a complete mix of colours and consistency of pigments which often has nasty little chunks in it. I take a big glob in a cup, mix it together and add black dye into it. This waste concoction is dirty black. I also want to note that my use of waste pigment is also an environmental practice. I was told that once the slop buckets are full, they are shipped to a holding centre, where they just sit and never decay. Each print I make with the slop, the less waste there is.

RECIPE FOR
 "DIRTY BLACK"
 2 cups of slop, any colour will do.
 1 good squeeze of black pigment
 1 8oz can of Red bull
 Atleast 22 tears
~~IF feeling lonely, add one top~~
~~of soda~~
 mix together, half assed, and
 you're ready to print.

Fig. 17.
 Dirty Black Recipe
 Olivia Mae Sinclair, 2021

I look to photography theory as a way to contextualize my use of black and white and apathy for colour. Barthes discusses his distaste for colour being applied on top of a photographic image in *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*:

Perhaps it is because I am delighted (or depressed) to know [...] that the thing of the past, by its immediate radiations (its luminance), has really touched the surface which in its turn my gaze will touch, that I am not very fond of Color [...]. An anonymous daguerreotype shows a man and a woman in a medallion subsequently tinted by the miniaturists on the staff of the photographic studio: I always feel (unimportant what actually occurs) that in the same way, color is a coating applied later on to the original truth of the black-and-white photograph. For me, color is an artifice, a cosmetic (like the kind used to paint corpses). What matters to me is not the photograph's "life" (a purely ideological notion) but the certainty that the photographed body touches me with its own rays and not with a superadded light. (81).

Superadded, meaning, “added to what has already been added” may be compared to applying multiple artificial (Instagram) filters onto one photo, for a millennial example. One filter is fine, but if I layered five, the image would be completely lost. All that is left is a discoloured mess that becomes a distraction to the original subject of the image. This is how Barthes interprets colour in this excerpt. I think about the tension with colour and black and white photography. There is a disconnection that may draw our eyes in, which is, a separation from the viewer and the image by taking the colour away. We see the world in colour, our eyes and our minds are overworked with colours throughout daily lives. Colour is used for symbols, direction, instruction and hazards. Like my intent around handwriting, my use of black and white photography offered a break from the coloured world.

I wish I had complete control over how my eyes see the world. I wish my entire world was black and white, so I could focus more on the things I wanted to. As an artist, limiting

myself to black and white brings forth a forced creativity of refining my photography, editing skills and screen preparation in order to make each image more dynamic and engaging.

In the world I have created (this thesis project) I have stripped away all of the colour to help my audience focus on the content and meaning behind the works. Without the distraction of colour, I aim to guide my viewers to concentrate on the text, photos, marks and composition of the artworks within the gallery setting. I am not interested in having to monitor colour trends, make cohesive palettes or consider the deeper meaning of every individual colour I use. My “dirty black” practice works as a method for me to streamline my work. I also understand that black and white monochromatic images also bring forth an emotional state. Black and white imagery does this through the destruction of grounding of time, making the photo nostalgic and timeless. Captivating drama, contrast and mood is added to an image when colour is subtracted. An engaged viewer may subconsciously try to imagine and infer what the colours looked like in the moment captured. Throughout my collection, I have images of blood stains on sheets where the bright red blood is muddled down into an earthy grey. The purpose of making bright-red-blood into grey is to remove the focal point and shock around the image. The blood shifts from a moment of alarm into mystery. Where did the blood come from? Whose blood is it? Why is this image in this book and why am I looking at it? Again, by removing the focal point, the other elements of the photo may have more room to shine; like the texture of the mattress or its relationship to the corresponding text.

~~I wish I didn't have to write this part but I do.~~ I am saddened by the destruction of black through digital viewing. With the pandemic and social distancing, the reality is that my work will mostly be viewed in an online space for my final exhibition. Our eyes have a much larger range of colour than a digital device. Scientists from Purdue University's Department of Chemistry explain the way in which computer monitors display the colour black:

When no electrons strike the phosphors of a computer screen the phosphors emit no light and the screen appears black. On a white section of a screen all three phosphors are excited and produce light with about the same relative intensities as in sunlight so

the light appears white. Grey parts of the screen have all three phosphors producing light, but at a much lower intensity. ("Colors on A Computer Screen")

This means that there is one black tone on a digital screen, and only a finite amount of greys. While there are only a finite amount of colours we can see in real life, digital images of my work may miss the inconsistencies in intensity from my "dirty black." Dirty black is a colour that is textural and has its own agency.

The Moment I Fell in Love with Linen

———The first week of my undergraduate studies, we were given samples of a few fabrics that we could print on. A couple cottons, a canvas, a silk and finally, Santa Fe Linen from Telio. I let the linen tell me what to do, even though I am its maker. I listen to my materials. I only make them do what they are willing to. I will never cover my linen in glue and try to make it form into a shape it doesn't want to be. I don't particularly like pleating or darning because that doesn't look comfortable either. Allowing my material to do what it is intended to do allows it to flourish. Linen falls apart so easily, threads unraveling endlessly. The exact amount of stretch is so little but allows me so much room to play, stuff, bend and tear. Linen gets softer and stronger when wet.

Screen Printing

“Believe it or not, I can actually draw.” (Jean-Michel Basquiat)

Believe it or not, I can't actually fucking draw. Thousands of dollars spent on years of art school and I can't draw. I have no grasp on perspective, portraiture, blending, shading, light sources... any of it. My drawing practice heavily relies on text, arrows and captions. My most favourite types of drawings are semi-blind contours. The unpredictability along with the confidence of line fakes the experience of a “good drawing.” My soft sculptures can be interpreted as blind contours made from fabric.

~~I was first introduced to screen printing at Sheridan College. This is where I felt the most pressure to quickly learn to draw. I felt that my lack of technical drawing was a detriment to my screen printing career right away. I struggled with geometric prints for about a year, until I discovered screen printing blocks of text. Then, as previously described, my spiritual experience with printing my first book. The moment that I gingerly pull the screen away from the print table to reveal the first print underneath is ecstasy. After seeing that first strike-off print the predictability is sensual. I have a pretty good idea what it should look like, but there are always surprises. I must surrender myself to the screen and trust it to give me what I need. I adore when my expectations are incorrect and the mechanical edges are interrupted by bleeding inks or a thread was caught underneath and it leaves a line through an image.~~

I taught myself how to screen print photographs. In my first two years of printing, I was only taught to expose lines, drawings, patterns and some basic texture studies. It was important to me to learn more than what I was given. I watched a few YouTube clips on how to do it, but the real learning came from trial and error. I would coat and strip screens weekly, until I found the exact sweet spot of being able to distinguish an image and leaving room for interpretation. The mystery of “what is this” or slight optical illusions within bitmaps creates the sense of piecing things together - after all, it is my story, not yours. Only I know the

context of the images printed. Recreating photographs is important to me. Showing snippets of my life is vulnerable, intimate and brave.

Why do I screen print? It's really silly actually - that I do it at all. Once a screen is properly exposed and taped off and well taken care of, the amount of editions of prints is theoretically infinite. The irony is that I rarely do more than twenty prints with a single screen, and some have been even less. As well, screen prints are generally desired to be "exact." Screen printing is a methodical and technical art. Registering screens, mixing colours, creating repeating designs and exposing images are all very finite or absolute skills. I imagine the pinnacle of screen printing being mass printing t-shirts, where a small speckle of ink in the wrong spot would deem the shirt garbage.

~~———— I'm just going to say it. I don't like Andy Warhol. He probably smelt like piss.~~

Within my ideals around punk methodology and Craft theory; I stand for anti mass production, which again is ironic, using a technique that is meant to help aid mass production in terms of its ability to be infinite. Punks used screen printing as a tool to cheaply produce posters and flyers as marketing materials in the 1980's, prior to digital printing being affordable (Harriman and Bontje 58). Artist Andy Warhol (and others) used screen printing as a tool to critique mass consumption. In his book *Andy Warhol*, Arthur Danto explains that Warhol "...was seen not only as a critic of capitalist production, but as a critic of American high culture as well" (14). Warhol's commodification of artwork is impressive and tasteless simultaneously. Warhol took pre-existing tools and "flipped" them in on themselves. To use objects of mass production (screen printing) to make commentary on mass consumption is ironic, and clever. The content of Warhol's artwork was accessible and gave "the public" art that is achievable and widely available. In his early days, he might have even been considered punk within his methodology. Danto continues:

He became an artist for people who knew very little about art. He represented an ideal form of life that touched his world from many sides. He embodied a concept of life that

embraced the values of an era that we are still living in. In certain ways he created an iconic image of what life was all about. No other artist came close to doing that. (28)

I cannot dispute that Warhol made a huge impact on art and art culture through his artwork and his personality as a living artist and celebrity. Breaking down the walls of “high art” and “low art.” These blurred lines of class distinctions planted seeds for punk to come in the 80’s:

Warhol did not simply replicate a grungy piece of commercial art. He made the distinction between a piece of grungy art and a piece of high art at once invisible and momentous. But that meant that he changed not so much the way we look at art but the way art was understood. That meant that between 1959 and 1961, the seeds of a visual and indeed a cultural revolution were planted. (30)

Warhol’s fall from grace happens for me around the time he became “Andy Warhol Enterprises” and opened multiple “factories” to turn out movies and prints alike. He “flipped” himself into becoming an icon and commodity, like the work he was creating. While not every artwork *must* have “soul” or greater purpose, it is my opinion that Warhol’s apparent obsession with money and fame got the better of him. Humbly, while I may only print 20 or so editions of my screens and seem silly, I cherish each print. I take a firmer stance against mass production by printing low batches using screen printing.

~~It is remarkably funny to me that in his criticism of mass production and fame, his work has become a commodity and vehicle for consumerism. Are there any statistics on how many Warhol Campbell's soup can socks have been produced in the world?~~

I am using screen printing as a Craft process but also as a tool to help me not only confront but convey the information chosen i.e. intimate moments. I am constantly asking myself if a material is either a book or a textile. Books are much more open for interpretation. Textiles must be woven or intertwined to be so. My screens act as a vessel to get moments from my memory, into my hands and onto linen. There is something delightful about the connection of screen printing mesh and my textiles practice. It is as if the memory must first pass through a representation of cloth in order to land in its final resting place on the linen. When I reclaim my screens, I get to reclaim my past and wash away archived moments. The process of layering, bleeding and mixing also add to the appeal of screen printing. Even once something feels like it's finished, it can always be reproduced and altered. Even once a print is "finished" I can document it and edit it and re-imagine it as a new image on a new screen.

Body, The Archive and The Linen

Even though my sloppiness comes from intentionality, I am confronted with the connection/disconnection to my tools and machines through the bodily experience. Emotionally, I am so closely connected to my work. I am my work. I am so deeply in love with my materials. I remember the exact moment I fell in love with fabric. “Santa Fe Linen” by Telio. Of all the fabrics on the racks, it was by far the most delicious. Thick, creamy with an off-white hue. Its fifty inch width is to die for. The linen absorbs the perfect amount of ink. Linen has the most infatuating ability to act as both a structural material and a dreamy, cascading cloth. With only a little manipulation, it can tip the scales either way. My body is required and needed to make the work. The pressure and weight of my arms is imperative to a successful screen print.

The disconnection I have comes from the distance from the linen while creating my work. My hands don’t do all of the making, like in ceramics. I must push my energy past my body and through my sewing machine, into the thread, past the needle and into the fabric. It’s exhausting. Even though I am operating my sewing machine, and expanding my energy outside of myself, I let my sewing machine rip through fabric and bunch up on the needle. My sewing machine has memory and is personified as well. Does my machine feel conflicted about the destruction it must make with its needle in order to stitch fabric together? My sewing machine probably has several psychological disorders for the misuse and torture I put it through.

I don’t get to see my linen at its rawest form, woven into cloth, bleached, dyed or even treated to be smooth. It might not seem important to see the linen in its raw form, but I’ve spent so many years holding this fabric, I have personified it. The linen doesn’t have a face or a voice to me: it only has a dull consciousness and agency. I want to know the material’s personal history. Did each flax seed get enough water? Does it hurt to break through the soil into the sky? At what point does the flax die and lose its consciousness? Does it die? Or are the memories of all the flax seeds woven into the cloth? What trauma does the linen hold in its memory? While screen printing, I let the ink and the mesh have its own agency more than my

sewing machine. Even though I am holding the screen printing squeegee in my hands, I let the ink overflow and bleed. There is more to give away in the screen printing process. Where do my materials end and I begin? In the chapter *The Revival of HandiCraft* in *The Craft Reader*, Willam Morris questions how machines and handiCraft will evolve together:

Are we justified in wishing that handicraft may in its turn supplant machinery? Or it would perhaps be better to put the question in another way. Will the period of machinery evolve itself into a fresh period of machinery more independent of human labour than anything we can conceive of now, or will it develop its contradictory in the shape of a new and improved period of production by handicraft? (150)

Morris considers labour and its relationship to the tools and machines that Craftspeople use in their practice. I imagine my textile work as an intimate partnership with machines- sometimes it's bliss, we get along and work together, we are loving towards each other. Other times we sabotage each other and fight for days at a time. Where does my material end and I begin? I am riddled with body dysmorphia. I reject my own body. I cry monthly and wish to be a ghost, with no flesh and bones but to still exist on this Earth as I do now; just with no body. Through therapy, I have learned that the body has an amazing ability to hold trauma all the way down into our tissue. In the article "Can Trauma Really Be Physically 'Stored' In The Body," writer and health coach, Stephanie Eckelkamp explains the how trauma is kept in the body:

Trauma often represents the violation of all we hold to be dear and sacred. Such events are often simply too terrible to utter aloud, and hence they often become unspeakable ...But when these traumatic thoughts and memories remain unspeakable or unthinkable for too long, they often impede our brain's natural process of recovery after trauma. They become stuck points that inhibit the mental reintegration that is needed for healing to occur...brings disruption to hormone secretion, neurochemistry, and immune system functioning, all of which contribute to diseased cells, organs, and other bodily systems. (Eckelkamp)

So it seems that the longer the trauma is left untreated, the worse may be for recovery. It is my hope that through my work, the agony will subside... In *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* by Bessel van der Kolk, trauma and its connection to the body is explained at length. In the prologue van Der Kolk explains:

Trauma, by definition, is unbearable and intolerable. Most rape victims, combat soldiers, and children who have been molested become so upset when they think about what they experienced that they try to push it out of their minds, trying to act as if nothing happened, and move on. It takes tremendous energy to keep functioning while carrying the memory of terror, and the shame of utter weakness and vulnerability. While we all want to move beyond trauma, the part of our brain that is devoted to ensuring our survival (deep below our rational brain) is not very good at denial. Long after a traumatic experience is over, it may be reactivated at the slightest hint of danger and mobilize disturbed brain circuits and secrete massive amounts of stress hormones. This precipitates unpleasant emotions intense physical sensations, and impulsive and aggressive actions (21-22).

The rejection of the aesthetics of my body comes from damaging experiences in my early teen years. I don't know if I will ever fully heal from these events. "Feeling out of control, survivors of trauma often begin to fear that they are damaged to the core and beyond redemption" (van Der Kolk 22). If I can refuse the way I look, I can pretend I don't exist. If I don't have a body or exist, my trauma can no longer live in my flesh and tissue. The trauma is gone. By creating my soft sculptures books with the inspiration of body or abstracted from the body, I can re-arrange them as I please. I don't see the body and the mind as separate entities. I see the body as the ultimate vessel. A vessel to hold memories, feelings, experiences... The skin holds in all the meat and the meat holds in all the trauma. I don't always love the interpretation or inference that "all of the linen Olivia uses is a representation of skin." It's more than this. It's not myself projecting skin onto linen- I want my skin to be linen.

~~I wish my entire body was made of linen. If I was made of linen, I would repair myself endlessly. I could stitch more arms and hands onto my torso to be more productive. I could add darts to my waist so I could look thinner. I could add more stuffing to my ass and breasts.~~

~~When I am feeling cathartic and destructive I would relentlessly pick and pull at my woven fibres. My linen vagina would be tighter than my flesh vagina. My unkept pubic hair are threads that proudly fray from the edges.~~

While reading “No Archive Will Restore You” I so deeply identified with the the concept of “The Vaginal Archive:”

Pondering the idea of the body archive, I cannot resist thinking toward those palpable bodily openings: the orifices. Those holes in our bodies where other bodies have unabashedly entered and left their deposits. Among other things, the body's archive might be framed as an archive of penetration. A cellular recounting of sloughs of skin, of bodily fluids that have been shed or excreted into each body, into each of the body's canals. A history, in other words, of foreign bodily matter left inside us. In this sense, the vaginal archive also turns out to be an anal and oral and acoustic one... Each orifice an entry where we palpably open, where other bodies have been, and by leaving their traces in us have, in a molecular sense, be- come us.

This thought is at times distressing to me when I reflect upon a history of forced and unwanted bodily entry, or of those fleeting shameful affairs I have so often wished to make disappear from my archive. I do not want to retain those remnants, nor at times can I bear that to some degree, however infinitesimally, I am constituted by them. Lest I forget, though, that we also shed ourselves over time. This body is not the body it was then and is already becoming another body. This formula offers degrees of relief and panic in turn. It is also another kind of fiction. Suddenly I am aware of the body as both

archive and archivist – in a crucial sense, it gathers its own materials. Control over the assemblage that I am turns out to be pure fantasy. (Singh 31)

Memory is just as fragile as linen. It frays and tatters and is mendable. I am patching together pieces and scraps of time while lovingly sewing them back into something beautiful. The tears and loose threads represent the hardships and the moments I can't stop remembering. On the other hand, linen is not fragile at all. Compared to silk chiffon, linen is concrete. Linen is rigid, sturdy.

Chapter 4: Exhibition Section

My exhibition, *Soft, Sloppy, Stories* was held at Remote Gallery in downtown Toronto March 28 until April 3 2021. This chapter will include photos and brief descriptions to outline the underpinnings of methodology and theory relating to the exhibition. I have showcased some of the marketing materials as well.

Originally I intended to mail copies of my invitation to a couple of individuals, but in the end I sent digital copies. The invitation is embroidered black linen that I have shredded and frayed to mirror the fabrics displayed at my exhibition. I chose to use my handwriting along with a sans serif font for the details to ensure clarity.

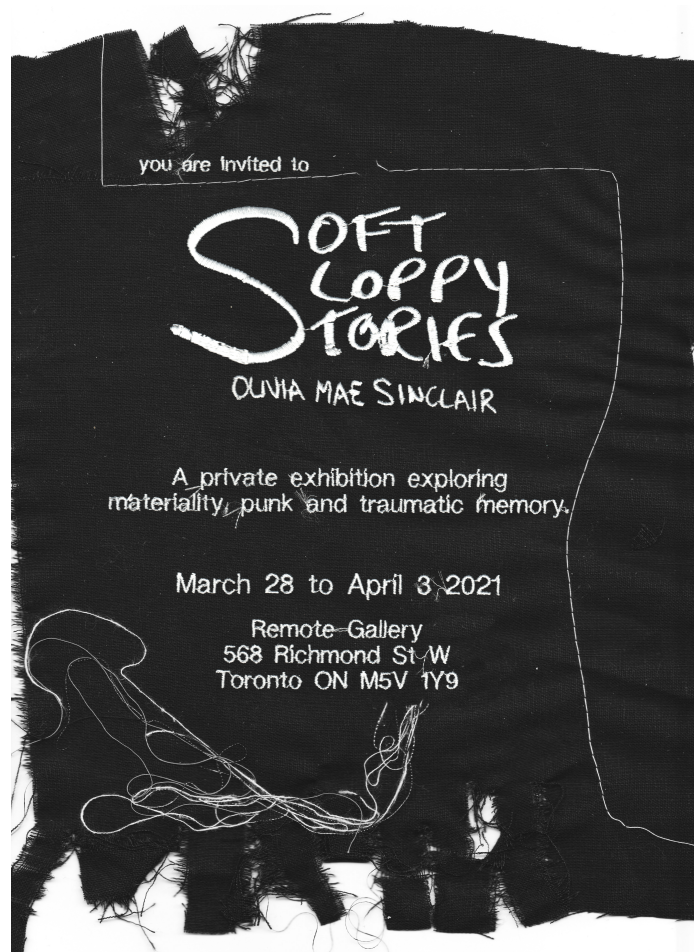


Fig. 18.
Exhibition Invitation
Olivia Mae Sinclair, 2021

Overall, I believe I answered my research questions and have deepened my understanding of theoretical texts within Sloppy Craft, punk, feminism and exhibition strategy. After having some time to think though how the audience moved through the exhibition, I will list my findings:

I set up three folding chairs in the gallery, mainly for a place for visitors to set down any coats or bags so they can feel comfortable in the space and move freely. The chairs quickly became an unexpected integral part of sharing within the space. They became a spot (or maybe metaphorically, a shelf, if we consider ourselves books) to gather and talk. I learned about many of my friends/peers who have been struggling with the isolation of the pandemic. I listened and offered advice where I could. I realized that even though I didn't aim to have the space be a two-sided conversation, it became the “platform” I wanted to have. By being vulnerable, I allowed others to feel vulnerable.



Fig. 19.
Overall View of Exhibition
REMOTE GALLERY
Olivia Mae Sinclair, 2021
Image Credit: Nicole Drennan



Fig. 20.
Soft Sculptures
REMOTE GALLERY
Olivia Mae Sinclair, 2021
Image Credit: Nicole Drennan

Even though the project is completed, I have not ended my learning and thinking about this body of work. While installing the sculptures (fig. 21) I was still working through “flipping” them in my head. I think of each object as a blind contour drawing of internal organs, represented in soft, lumpy form. I think about my perception around Roxane Gay’s book *Hunger*, and how I thought it was a story about thinness and anorexia. Gay “flipped” my expectations around eating disorder narratives through size of (her) body. I discussed earlier how Gay’s insight into eating disorders is imperative to be shared and normalized. What I realized about my work is that none of the body parts I have created are indicative of the body’s size. Meaning from the sculptures alone, you could not tell how much or how little the figurative “soft person” would weigh. There is no indication of the BMI of the “soft person”.



Fig.21.
Soft Wall
Olivia Mae Sinclair, 2021
Image Credit: Nicole Drennan

While flipping is a methodology for making in my practice, I think about “flipping” in the context of my exhibition. In the piece *Time and Memory are Fucking Delicate* (see fig. 22) pages are bound by a single thread. The pages can be manipulated, moved around, stacked, hung, or thrown around. In this piece, I am letting my audience have agency over my memories and their timelines.

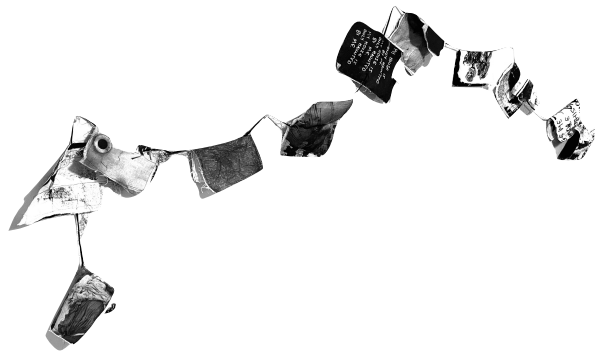


Fig. 22.
Time and Memory are Fucking Delicate
Olivia Mae Sinclair, 2021

We Are My Most Favourite Disaster is what I consider to be the focal point of the exhibition. The “pages” spill beyond the edges of the book all the way down to the floor. To flip through the book is cumbersome and awkward as threads and words intertwine. This book represents what it feels like to live with trauma and intrusive thoughts; nothing is contained, neat and compartmentalized. This book also may be compared with the palimpsest, as its layers overlap and it is disorientating to tell what was the original thought or the new thought. *We Are My Most Favourite Disaster* is displayed on a shelf, hung at waist height, or standard table top height to indicate that it is accessible by being at a “familiar” height. Pages are shedded and tangle together, making the act of reading become cumbersome. Audience members noted that they were nervous to break threads or rip the fabric further. One anonymous audience member said the following: “The long threads and fabric coming down to the floor, is hair, right? So why did you put the hair next to the images of vomit? Because normally we think of holding our hair back when we vomit.” I thought this read of the work was so insightful and positive.



Fig. 23.

We Are My Most Favourite Disaster
Olivia Mae Sinclair, 2021

Labelling is an important yet subtle way to encourage interactivity within my show. I have incorporated labels that read “Please Just Fucking Touch Me.” as a forceful and directive approach to visual cues throughout the show. I allowed others to feel vulnerable. I gained perspective on how the audience/the public behaves in a gallery setting. I learned that most people don’t read labels. I had three labels on my “Soft Wall” encouraging folks to re-arrange the sculptures with the Velcro provided. Those who read the labels moved the sculptures around, and those who didn’t were verbally invited to touch them. Mixed levels of engagement are fascinating and I am interested to think about this in future exhibitions. Most people found it pleasurable to move them around and break the rules of the gallery space, but a few people told me they found it too intimate to grab and move around.

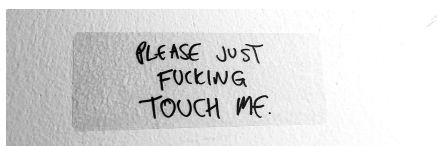


Fig. 24.
Label
Olivia Mae Sinclair, 2021

Walk All Over Me is an example of my deconstruction of “book”. I have again, changed the word “encourage” with “force” from my research question: “How do I encourage my audience to interact with the publications.” By placing this rug-like object in the middle of the floor and in front of other works, I am forcing my audience to either walk on my work or “tip toe around the subject” to be metaphoric. Having audience members step on my work is a way to fulfil my desire to have my work defiled in that “full-circle-cosmic” way. Originally, I was the doormat, I was the one being disrespected. There is power in letting the work live on the ground and be abused. It is proof to myself that the images and words that I write and print have no hold over me. The memories I have hold no importance, if I don’t let them. I have taken my inquiry into psychodrama and power-dynamics by putting the work underneath me, and

I Look Like I'm Asking For It was by far the most guttural and affective in the collection.

I Look Like I'm Asking For It is another example of my flipping methodology, where I have thought of the exact opposite of my research questions. While making this book my internal monologue (or research question) became “so how do I make the viewer assault the book or what if the book didn’t want to be touched.” We don’t ask books for their consent to read them, so I thought this would be a peculiar way to talk about consent through art. Additionally, the shelf was placed very low and in a windowsill. The viewer must bend over to flip and read through the book, putting themselves in a very awkward position for the normal social expectations of a gallery. Placing the book in the windowsill was an intentional choice, as the person reading would literally be put on display for people walking by, making potential awkward eye contact from strangers. I wanted the experience to be unpleasant but safe. In a conversation with Dorie Millerson, she asked how a male-identifying individual would feel or react to the book, as the contents are aimed towards a female-identifying audience. I had the opportunity after this conversation to carefully observe how male-presenting people interacted with the book. One person silently refused to bend over and they picked up the book and read it standing up. I was completely stunned by this choice to not bend over. I think that a successful piece of art will lead to more questions, and this book definitely did just that. With this book and interaction in mind, a research question in the future could be: How does an audience member’s gender identity inform how they will interact with my books?



Fig. 26.
I Look Like Im Asking For It
 Olivia Mae Sinclair, 2021
 Image Credit: Nicole Drennan

The Archive (Piled) is a collection of scrap fabric that I placed on a shelf, very haphazardly. The scraps ranged from printed linen to clumps of thread and span from the past five years. As the exhibition unfolded, it occurred to me that the least refined and least precious piece became the most delicate to interact with. Scraps from this piece often fell to the floor and I left them there, until an audience member felt compelled to put them back up on the shelf. Both *We Are My Most Favourite Disaster* and *The Archive (Piled)* embody the way it feels to talk about many of the major conversations my work engages with. Fumbling and carefully interacting with my books is so in-line with the contents of the writing and images within.



Fig. 27.
The Archive (Piled)
Olivia Mae Sinclair, 2021
Image Credit: Nicole Drennan

Chapter 5: Conclusion

How do I conclude something that feels like it will never be finished? My research and practice are ever-growing and expanding as I have more time to reflect, remember and revolt. I'm sure if I could spend years continuing this program and body of work, I would.

I am pleased with the outcome of my project and my ability to answer my research questions. By providing (Western) historical context and modern connections to Craft, I have explained how I use the fabric book as a methodology to “flip” experience. Through describing relational aesthetics and my exhibition, I have explored “how we read with our entire bodies” and “how to encourage my audience to interact with my publications.” Within “body” and “vaginal” archive I describe how both my books and sculptures influence traumatic memory and storytelling. In the many images of my work, I have explained techniques (such as palimpsest) to create intention and affect in the reading experience. The palimpsest and Craftivism are two concepts that I have become interested in through writing and want to continue referencing past this body of work.

While this research did not intend to collect information of others and their experience of my exhibition, in future projects, I will strive to broaden my research and include the voices of others within this interactive-feminist-punk-Sloppy Craft space. I am curious to know how others are affected by the images, words and placement of books in my exhibition. As the whole world seems to have shifted online, there are times that I feel more supported and more isolated. Every one of us is suffering from screen and information fatigue. I am grateful to those who attended my exhibition. I find social media is great for instant gratification and feedback, but it often feels like I get lost “In The Swarm.” To be open and share your experiences is hard. It can feel like admitting your weakness and brokenness. This body of work has taught me courage. I am thankful and humbled to be living and working in a time/space where womxn are encouraged to share. While my books may seem masochistic in nature; they celebrate survival and memory.

I came into this program as someone with little theoretical context or study. I was scared to leave the comfort of my hometown but excited to start a new life. The time I was on-campus at OCAD U was unforgettable. I'm not sure how anything will live up to those first two semesters. While I am still in a state of limerence over the OCAD U studio, I know that I have completed this project with the same intensity and rigour, despite the circumstances. I hope that the years to come will heal us all from the exhaustion of living through a global pandemic. My wish is that incoming graduate students will not have to face the same adversities as I did.

This program has taught me how to research and what to research. My research has given me better language around the work that I do. Towards the end of my two years, I noticed a shift in how I make; projects became more influenced by what I was reading and how I understood theoretical concepts. My work has slowly become less about the content of the memories I have and more so about how they function within materiality. My horizon seems to be endless now with inquiry and theoretical texts.

~~Thank you, Adderall, for making it easier to read. Thank you, Redbull. Thank you for reading.~~

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Appendix

Appendix A

Music Playlist:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDYEG9DDjK6wurMj4E5m_b7eezw2VzFij