

Through Rows and In Stitches – Entangled
a sweater as (an) archive

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores how words might be more like art and how art might become more about artfulness. It grapples with my own relationship with words and their seemingly static, readable, and conclusionary nature, against the elusive, multiple nature of art and making. It considers the place and use of both these practices in academia and everyday life. To do this, the thesis takes the shape of and examines research-creation practice within a Canadian context, using the process-centric craft of hand knitting a sweater to explore how feminist materialism and the anarchival might offer me ways to resist or refuse the value and static notion of capture often granted to words.

Beginning in June 2022, early in Halifax's short summer season, this thesis follows my process hand knitting a sweater as I went about my daily life, and records, through autotheoretical and anarchival practice, some of the (un)usual traces this process created. It asks the question: how can hand knitting a sweater be both an anarchival and a knowledge making practice?"

June 5th 2023

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CHAPTER 1: PRELUDE AND INTRODUCTION

“... (Please don't start protesting here that there are no thoughts outside of language, which is like telling someone that her coloured dreams are in fact colorless). But writing does displace the idea— if it extrudes it, as it were, like grinding a lump of wet clay through a hole— where does the excess go?”

- Maggie Nelson, *Bluets*

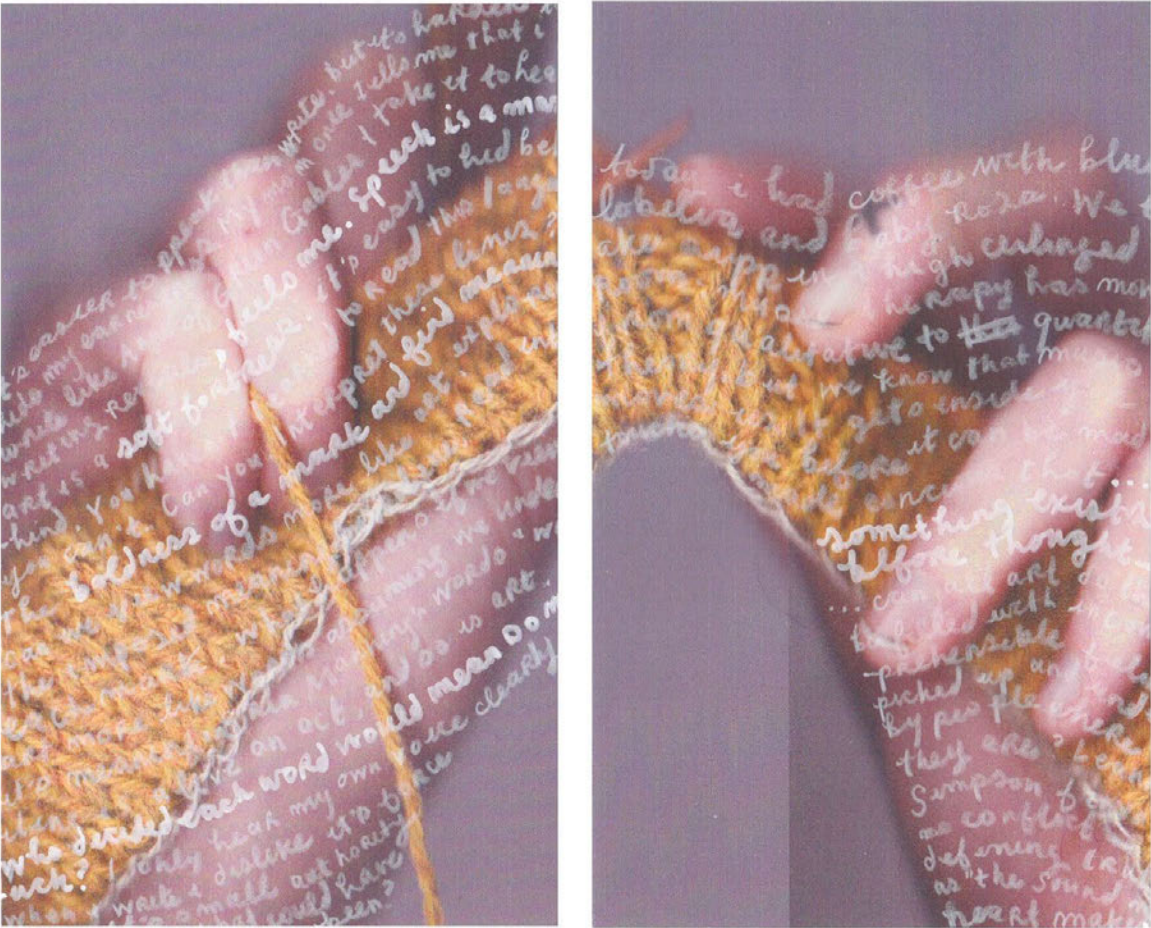


Figure 1: *Thought Rows and In Stitches*, 2019, photo and paint pen

PRELUDE

In the early days of this Master's I began unpacking my discomfort with words: their apparent weight and my continuing struggle to both vocalize and inscribe them precisely and coherently. A drawing and a piece of writing from those days has been echoing in my head throughout these past few years of on-again-off-again study. Trying to come to terms with my discomfort with writing and my relationship with art, I wondered if my preference for the non-linguistic might be a cowardly excuse to escape direct relationships, direct communication, and the feelings of both vulnerability and stagnation. The drawing is featured above, and the words were these:

It's easier to write than speak, but harder to hide my earnestness. My mother once told me I write like I'm Anne of Green Gables. I take it to heart.

I stopped drawing when I learned how to knit. I stopped writing when I couldn't bear not to forget.

When I learned how to knit, I stopped drawing.

It's easier to write than speak but harder to hide my earnestness. It's easier to draw than write but harder to express anything static. Art is soft, easy to hide behind. When I started speaking more, I stopped writing and drawing but I kept knitting.

What is panic when expressed--held--in stitches, in sweaters and socks.

There is a shoe box of high school diaries somewhere in my parents' basement. Raw and nostalgic. Sometimes I think about burning them but can't bear to part with that version of myself.

What was I thinking? I promise myself I'll never be that vulnerable again.

Can we view words more like art? Exploring the imposed meaning on each mark. Could we view art more like words, assuming we can understand it completely? Who decided each word would mean so much and each movement and mark so little?

I hear my own voice clearly only when I write. I dislike its earnest certainty. Its small authority.

It's easier to write than speak but here I can't hide my earnestness.

I get dinner with an ex-boyfriend. Almost 10 years to the day we broke up. He tells me I have always been nostalgic.

That's why I am here with you now. Never fully formed until lost.

This project has grown out of these musings and a deep examination of research-creation as a practice within and outside the Canadian university context. Trained as an artist, having both a

diploma in textiles and a BFA in interdisciplinary art, when I began at Saint Mary's University in this Master of Women and Gender Studies, I was committed to the idea that I would be undertaking “real” written research about the gendered and classed separation between craft and art. I was not going to make art; I was going to read and research, and I was going to write in the form of a traditional thesis. This was a conviction that did not last long and one that I began to recognize as an internalized conception of knowledge superiority—that reading and writing within the traditional academic institutional setting was the only significant or valuable way of learning and creating knowledge.

In this project, I attempt to understand how words might be more like art and how art might become more about artfulness. I grapple with the seemingly static, readable, and conclusionary nature of words against the elusive, multiple nature of art and making and their place and use in academia and everyday life. To do this, this thesis takes the shape of a research-creation project, using the process-centric craft of hand knitting a sweater to explore how feminist materialism and the anarchic might offer me ways to resist or refuse the value and static notion of capture often granted to words. This project focuses on the concept of making as a knowledge making practice through an exploration of the archive, research-creation, and the value inherent in the excessive (often uncapturable) nature of life.

INTRODUCTION

This project was designed around the time spent knitting a sweater as I navigated a “post” covid summer as a queer maker living in the transitory, yet close knit city of Halifax. The biggest city in Atlantic Canada, with a modest population of just under 500,000 and hosting six universities

and a rental vacancy rate in January 2023 of 1%, Halifax often feels to me like a transitional place where people come and go with the seasons. The summer is a vibrant time in Halifax; after seven months of cold, the winter grey, snow, ice and rain lifts and my friends and I head out to the patios and beaches and soak up every ounce of sunshine and community possible, before the fall creeps in again and we separate off for various jobs and school. This project began in June 2022, in the middle of this summer season and ran (though the precise beginnings and endings are foggy) into the early fall, late September/the first few weeks of October. It asked the question: how can hand knitting a sweater be understood as an archive and a knowledge making practice?"

The idea for the project began when I started reading about research-creation within the Canadian context. I had at this point already decided I would need to do an artistic project. Sitting around a table at SMU talking about defenses and the thesis process in the WGST Graduate Seminar, I realized I would not be able to complete a project that was comprised 100% by the written word, if solely because the thought of standing in front of a group of people to defend it with nothing but myself for them to look at would be almost impossible for me. Part of this had to do with my intense stage fright and part of it was the need to have the project physically grounded alongside me in the space for me to think about it and learn from it. I did not yet know what shape this project would take, but I knew it would need to take up more space in the world than the traditional written thesis and that I wanted it to create a physical interaction: a back and forth in between myself and the work, and myself and the prospective audience. My comfort, as a trained artist, was in the gallery space, the critique, having an object stand between me, my thoughts, and the other participants.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND LITERATURE

RESEARCH CREATION - CONCEPTS

Even though I come from a “fine” arts background (I dislike this term and hesitate to use it but to separate my art school background from a more traditional arts training in the university) my first introduction to research-creation as a concept came in this thesis project and through Natalie Loveless’s 2019 book *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation*. In this book, Loveless provided the background for how research-creation had come to exist within the university and the possibilities it offers for the university. Loveless’s work is informed by Lacanian psychoanalysis and storytelling practices, like Donna Haraway’s material-semiotics (2012, 101) and draws on feminist, antiracist, queer, and decolonial theorists to unpack how pedagogical ideologies and “regimes of truth—configure the parameters of legitimate research questions as well as what counts as rigour and excellence” (Loveless, 2019: 13). Loveless positions research-creation as indebted to “a history of academic interdisciplinarity ...interventions such as feminist studies, cultural studies, critical race studies, Indigenous studies and gender and sexuality studies—interventions into not only *which* knowledges might be deemed valuable, but *who* might produce these knowledges and *how*” (2019, 14, *emphasis in original*).

Since I first read it, Fred Moten’s description of “study” has stuck to me. In conversation with his friend and frequent collaborator Stefano Harney and interviewer Steven Shukaitis, Moten reflects on the many intellectual practices that happen in day-to-day community that are not often recognized as intellectual. He asks:

Is there a way of being intellectual that isn't social? When I think about the way we use the term 'study' I think we are committed to the idea that study is what you do with other people. It's talking and walking around with other people, working, dancing and suffering, some irreducible convergence of all three, held under the name of speculative practice. The notion of a rehearsal—being in a kind of workshop, playing in a band, in a jam session, of old men sitting on a porch, or people working together in a factory —there are these various modes of activity. The point of calling it 'study' is to mark that the incessant and irreversible intellectuality of these activities is already present. These activities aren't ennobled by the fact that we now say "oh, if you did these things in a certain way, you could have been said to be studying." To do these things is to be involved in a kind of common intellectual practice. What's important is to recognize that that has been the case— because that recognition allows you to access a whole, varied, alternative history of fact (in Moten and Harney, 110).

When philosopher and artist Erin Manning writes about research-creation she often uses Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's "study" synonymously with research-creation, describing it as being "an ally" in her conceptual explorations (in Loveless, ed., 2019: 228). Moten and Harney reflect on study in their book *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* which emphasizes, as Manning puts it, that study "cannot be limited to the university" and is "in fact, it is a rare occurrence in the university, where learning is evaluated according to pre-existing categories of value" (in Loveless, ed., 2019: 228). Manning uses the idea of "study" in collaboration with research-creation to shift research-creation away from the institutionalization that is headed towards as the term becomes more and more commonplace within academia, instead exploring how "study" is always happening outside of the university: a commonplace activity occurring in all life (in Loveless ed. 2019: 228).

Emilie St. Hilaire, in her 2018 essay, "Who Should Care About Responsible Conduct of Research in Research-Creation?" links the emergence of research-creation to a general academization of the arts in the 1960's and 1970's which led to the introduction of MFA and PHD programs (26). In the second chapter of *The Minor Gesture* (2016), "Against Method,"

Manning writes that the origin of research-creation in Canada was “instrumental not inventive,” as a funding category that would allow artist-researchers without PhDs—teaching within university settings—to organize “delineations between art practice and research methodology for academic aims” (2016:26). This delineation, which Manning calls the “practice theory split” (2016: 27), “tweaked” already existing categories of research to make arts research recognizable by academic institutions and did not take research-creation in its hyphenated form seriously (2016: 26). Manning argues that research-creation as a category has exceeded what funding agents had in store for it by becoming a “practice that thinks” (2016: 27), meaning that making and conceptualization are understood as thinking and practice in their own right (2016: 28). Research-creation generates new experiential knowledge that is extra-linguistic: knowledge that “may not be understandable within current understandings of what knowledge looks like” where thought is understood “in linguistic limitations of intelligibility” (Manning, 2016, 28).

Erin Manning proposes “artfulness” as a technique of research-creation, describing it as a technique applicable not only to artists or art projects but to all life. Artfulness is described by Manning as a return to the processual understanding of art found in its medieval definition, that of “manner or mode” (2016: 46). In its current definition, art emphasizes the “expression or application of human creative skill and imagination” where “art is not only reduced entirely to human expression” but is also often “synonymous with visual form” (46). Artfulness instead engages with matters of practice, of making and not of finished objects, form, or content. It refuses an assumed “for-ness.”

Chapman and Sawchuck, in "Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and Family Resemblances" argue that research-creation is not looking for academic legitimacy within the current university setting, as its true potential lies in questioning the universities, methods, disciplines and "regime of truth" (2012:13). Chapman and Sawchuk write that "suggesting... research-creation can pass as a subcategory of quantitative, qualitative or ethnographic research risks misrepresenting the field and its potential to generate new forms of knowledge and challenge academic standards" (2012: 13). They propose the term "creation-as-research" to emphasize a research-creation practice where "creation is approached as a form of research in its own right, research is understood as both a noun and a verb, and creation is not perceived strictly as a stand-in for art making" (Chapman & Sawchuk, 2015: 50). They argue that creation-as-research exceeds artistic practices, being an umbrella category for different practices, across different disciplines, that emphasize the different ways one can learn through doing (2015: 50).

Natalie Loveless offers a similar idea to Manning, Chapman and Sawchuck about research-creation's academic relevance both in *How to Make Art at the End of the World* and in her 2012 essay, "Practice in the Flesh of Theory: Art, Research, and the Fine Arts PhD." She argues that by allowing artistic research into the PhD we didn't just reconfigure artistic practice but also acknowledged that theory making is a "messy, fleshy, practice" (Loveless, 2019: 95). Loveless recognizes that the creation of the fine arts PhD—with the purpose of vetting new knowledge and furthering discourse in a field—means "artistic production is no longer solely an *object* of scholarly enquiry but is itself a *legitimate form of research and dissemination* which in turn raises questions regarding the book-length monograph as the only legitimate product of a dissertation in the arts and humanities" (2012: 12-13, *emphasis in original*).

Understanding that theory making can be a messy, fleshy practice and that bodily, messy practices can also be theory, refuses what Alfred Whitehead calls the “bifurcation of nature.” This bifurcation, rooted in the humanist Kantian tradition, is the splintering of an experience which separates “the concept of matter from its perception” (Whitehead in Manning, 2016: 28). The bifurcation of nature, which as Whitehead argues (via Manning) creates two systems “one within the mind and one without the mind” is a methodological posture Manning believes to be “very much alive in the critical apparatus of the disciplinary model” (2016: 29). This situates the human as being somewhat outside of an experience, able to objectively parse its meaning, fully capture it and make it reasonable. Whitehead’s “bifurcation of nature” is also reminiscent of what Alison Jaggar refers to as “normative dualism”: the idea that things of the mind are more highly valued than things of the body. Tong and Fernandes Botts outline Jaggar’s ideas in *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*, to explain why the neurotypical self or what they call the “the rational, free and autonomous self... is not neutral between the sexes but is, on the contrary a male self.” (15).

This assumed duality of body and mind was not a new idea to me. It was one I innately knew as a person who had studied art and craft, and for years had wrestled with the separation and distinction between the two. Craft is a practice often grounded in function, in life, and (for me) a deep love of making. The possible origin of or reason for the separation between art and craft first became clear to me while taking a Feminism and Postmodernism class in my final year at NSCAD. It was my first introduction to feminism and with it, Derrida’s concepts of deconstruction and binary oppositions. It completely changed the way I view the world.

Historically, from a craft perspective, the rise of industrialism deepened the separation between the “intellectual significance of fine art” and the “everyday normality of craft” and, as design historian Rafael Cardoso writes, handwork was debased “as merely mechanical” (in Adamson, 326). Rosika Parker writes, in her 1989 book *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, that craft became simultaneously connected to the feminine “work” of comfort and homemaking, which paid in “love” (Parker 154) and to the working class, to whom manual and often reproductive labour was still a necessary part of everyday life. This association devalued it “in the eyes of a society which equated great art with masculinity, the public sphere and professional practice” (39). Jaggar argues that “male” traits are associated with intellect such as reason, freedom, and autonomy while more bodily, care-based traits, are assumed female and morally deficient (in Tong and Fernandes Botts, 15). This embraces a Kantian understanding of humanity—placing reasoned autonomous action as a key signifier of being fully human (14) and assumes political solipsism. Political solipsism requires belief in abstract individualism, that “the abstract individual’s emotions, beliefs, abilities, and interest can supposedly be articulated and understood without any reference to social context” directly connecting to Kantian reason “a pure reason unaffected by either the empirical physiological ego of the empirical biological body” (Tong and Fernandes Botts, 32). Thus, art was associated with male traits, while craft became associated with the feminine.

FEMINIST MATERIALISM

Through my examination into craft, bodily knowledge, and research-creation most of my thinking has become indebted to Feminist Materialist thought. Some may call this Feminist New

Materialisms, but for simplicity and clarity I follow Sarah Truman in her 2021 book *Feminist Speculations and the Practice of Research-Creation: Writing Pedagogies and Intertextual Affect* and simply refer to it as Feminist Materialism. Feminist materialism has been important to my thinking because it moved my focus from considering the art/craft separation as simply a male/female, normative-dualistic concept of body/mind binary to a more intersectional approach. Feminist Materialism includes neurodiversity, race, and class and takes a critical look at the category of human and its relation to value and the material. Because of this, Feminist Materialism as I (and other research-creation scholars) utilize it, is concerned mainly with the unsettling of humanism (Truman, 2021: 3).

Humanism is the structuring and continuing operation of society around an exclusionary category of human, what novelist and philosopher Sylvia Wynter's calls "Man" (in Manning, 2019, 4). Feminist Materialisms recognize that "man" is not a natural or neutral category but a tool of colonial control. This human (Man) Truman argues—a white, cis-hetero, abled, male ideal (2021, 3)—shapes the accepted forms of knowledge and has made embodied and neurodiverse knowledges and processes suspect both outside and inside the university. In, "Towards a Politics of Immediation" Manning explores the category of "human" drawing on Sylvia Wynter's concept of the "more-than human." She outlines how the current concept of human "defined through difference with other categories such as the animal, or the plant or the mineral" is not a neutral definition (Manning, 2019: 4)

Wynter proposes the idea of human "genres," arguing that humans are hybrid beings of "bios and mythoi" shaped through story (in McKittrick, 16). She offers the idea of "homo-narrans" that

there are myriads of ways to be human and the current naturalized human— an invention of Euro western humanism—is only one such mode or story (in McKittrick, 25). Wynter dates the category of “Man” to 1492, when it was constructed as an epistemological category to justify colonial ideology (in Manning, 4). This naturalization led to a logic of dehumanization “where certain powers are granted the ability to assess and value life and include or exclude others from the realm of human” (Truman, 2021, 3). Truman notes how definitions of animacy and vitality based on “Man” have been built into Cartesian humanism to define what and who is human (2021: 3). In Cartesian humanist tradition, it is believed that humans have agency and can act, where the non-human is passive, inert, and acted upon. Man is seen as a distinct individual within the world, able to rationally assess, record and create through language and culture by acting upon matter which “is figured as passive and immutable” (Barad, 2003:801). The Euro western human has operated through an exclusionary and “universalizing” global order, through the naturalization of a human category which was “so white to be without race...so colonial to be without claim” (Manning: 2019:4). Manning argues that such stories require complex systems of subjection to be upheld (2019: 4) and that current scholarly conceptions of rigor, reason, method, and archive are part of these systems.

Sarah Ahmed notes that the removal of materiality from the creation of philosophy, the place and time and tools necessary for its creation reveals the masculinity (and whiteness) of philosophy (2006, 34). Feminist Materialism emerged from New Materialist thinking, which outlined how matter, agency and vitality exist in “the relations between things rather than bestowed from outside” (Truman, 2019: np.). This is even the case of things thought to be immaterial, like thoughts, theories, and relationships (Truman, 2019: np.). The addition of “feminist” to new

materialism, was to address that without an attunement to “intra-human” struggles, like race, class, gender, sex, and ability (Ibid.) new materialism can recenter whiteness and humanism through the erasing of the category of human in a world that still functions through/with/under humanist structures (Truman, 2021, 4).

In her article “Towards a Politics of Immediation” Manning describes the genre of the Euro-Western man as the “neurotypical” (2019, 4). Fred Moten also describes neurotypical as another word for anti-blackness (in Manning, 2016:4). Neurotypicality frames certain bodies and certain forms of life as less worthy (Manning, 2016, 4). Though originally much of Manning’s work on neurodiversity drew from autism studies, her current use of the term extends beyond this to include all forms of “insurgent life”: life that troubles a neurotypical order (2016, 5). In an interview with Natalie Loveless, Manning outlines her current approach to neurodiversity. She writes:

Designing different rhythms is necessary for bodies that struggle in the neurotypical (read: white) worlds in which we live. When I say neurotypical, I never mean a person. I mean a tendency in experience to conceive of certain forms of life to have more value than others. In an academic environment, everywhere we turn we come face to face with neurotypicality as the central pivot around which knowledge acquisition and dissemination turns. We are trained to recognize knowledge that expresses itself with the confidence of a frontality, and with a vocabulary poised for the criticality of debate. But what of other kinds of knowing? I think often of Indigeneity in this regard—what of those forms of knowing that are not primarily individualizing? What of those forms of knowing which privilege listening? What of those forms of knowing that are captivated by the detours of expression? (In Loveless, 2020, 218-219).

I mentioned above that Truman refers to Feminist New Materialisms simply as Feminist Materialism. On this subject she writes: “as I and plenty of others have pointed out...much of what is called ‘new’ materialism is not *new*” (2021, 1). This is a notion Julietta Singh also struggles with while in the process of creating an experimental “messy, embodied, illegitimate” archive of her body in her 2018 book *No Archive Will Restore You*. Singh writes:

There is something haunting to me about the fact that I lean on contemporary Feminist New Materialist discourse to account for the fact that the body is not and has never been singular. Something haunting about the fact that the non-singularity of the body, its vital entanglements with other bodies, was once so obvious across cultures, geographies, and histories that it didn’t need to be argued. Something changed, something *was* changed. A monumental worldview swept in and tried - with brute force, with discipline, with pedagogy - to make us each oneseif. But there is a prolific past that tells a different story of the body as an infinite collection of bodying. And the grand historical force of producing the singular self has made these past difficult to gather, difficult to archive. (31-32)

Although the “new” in new materialism, was meant to distinguish a shift from “old” materialism—related to a psychoanalytic and Marxist analysis which understood history, culture and politics as shaped by ongoing materialist struggles and the preoccupation with material gains, to a “new materialism” which centered the agency and materiality of the world, the objection to the word “new” emerge from how —as Zoe Todd states, “[w]hite scholars continue to celebrate other White Euro-Western thinkers for seemingly ‘discovering’ that there is agency

or vitality in matter –something indigenous epistemologies have affirmed for centuries” (in Truman, 2019: np).

My introduction to generative place-based knowledges and the animacy of more-than-human, which I would eventually connect to Feminist Materialism, began with Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and her 2017 book *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance*. In the chapter “Nishnaabeg Brilliance as Radical Resurgence Theory,” Simpson discusses how she re-learned about Nishnaabeg embodied thought, theory, methodology, story ethics and values and came to recognize praxis and theory as intertwined through her experiences working as a grad student with Elders at Long Lake #58. She writes that “[m]istakes produce knowledge. Failure produces knowledge... The only thing that doesn’t produce knowledge is thinking in and of itself, because it is data created in dislocation and isolation and without movement” (2017: 20). Simpson outlines that kinetics or the “act of doing, isn’t just praxis; it also generates and animates theory within Indigenous contexts, and it is the crucial intellectual mode for generating knowledge” (20). Simpson examines how making “is not seen as a material basis for experiencing and influencing the world” because of how colonized capitalist life is so intensely about consumption that “the idea of making is reserved for artists at best and hobbies at worst” (23). However, through kinetics, making is recognized as actively allowing and creating different futures through living place-based centered Indigenous presents.

Simpson’s kinetics is a straight to the heart, lived example of what physicist and feminist theorist Karen Barad calls “performative metaphysics.” In her 2003 article, “Posthumanist

Performativity: Towards an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter” Barad uses the concept of “performativity” to contest “the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real” (802). Barad’s performative metaphysics is a counter to representationalism, a form of mediation that assumes “language and culture” have agency “while matter is figured as passive and immutable” (801). A representative approach believes that words can mirror “pre-existing phenomena ” and that linguistic structures are what “shape or determine our understanding of the world” (802). Representationalism assumes there is an ontological reality of substance and attribute, a pre-existing subject and object. When Barad discusses representationalism, she describes how it operates as a “closed circuit of reflections” (803). Representationalism depends on the pre-existence of subject and object, where representations are thought to serve a mediating function between independently existing distinct entities. This creates what Barad calls a “taken-for-granted” ontological gap: the assumption that language can accurately represent what it references (804). Like structures that define agency and vitality, representationalism operates as a set power structure, informing how we “mediate” experience and create knowledge centered around the perceptions of humanist “Man.”

This idea of mediation does not fit within a Feminist Materialist approach because it assumes that “pre-existing subjects meet the world as a distinct, fully formed other” (Manning, 2019, 2) and organize experiences, standing above “not in ecological correlation to other forms of life” (4). In this project I privilege material-discursive practices as a non-humanist approach to discursive practices which do not assume discursive practices to be dependent on linguistics and the distinction between the human and non-human (Barad, 2003, 818). Material-discursive practices propose that “matter and meaning are mutually articulated” (822) and that “[m]eaning

is not a property of individual words or groups of words but an ongoing performance of the world” (823).

Much of this project developed through an assessment of my own relationship and reaction to working mainly in a written format during this project and my discomfort with it. In a final project for the first semester of this MA, I asked some of my other artistic friends to reflect on this feeling as well. I sent them a little package of index cards and asked them to respond—through whichever medium or method felt most effective—to the question “Why do you make? Why do you use art instead of/as a supplement to words?”

In a sentence that has stuck with me since I first read it, Erin Manning writes “[a]t it’s best, writing is an act, alive with the rhythms of uncertainty” (2016, 42). Here, in a discussion of research-creation, Manning encourages us to understand how research-creation or arts-based practices do not need new methods but “a reaccounting of what writing can do in the process of thinking- doing” (42) and an acknowledgement of how processes are already an ecology shaping and shaped, even writing. She writes: “[t]he painter-paint-canvas ecology is an ever-changing one, from sitting to standing to looking to feeling to touching to seeing. The writer-keyboard-book ecology also inventively alters its technique from the necessity to get another cup of tea to the rereading of the passage that gets things going to the habit of starting with a citation, to the terror and excitement of the writing itself.” (40)

Research-creation asks us to mediate experience outside of binaries, outside of a Kantian “reasonable methodology” and outside of the tendencies of neurotypical “man.” In “Against

Method,” the first chapter of *The Minor Gesture*. Manning outlines what she thinks research-creation can and should do: be a refusal of method, and a disavowal of method “as the generator of knowledge” (2016:12). Manning explores how method, and mediation of experience, which reorganize experience into already accepted categories, is used to stage “repetitive choreographies of oppression” that are always neurotypical (white), that frame what counts as knowledge, and that reject everything that doesn’t fit into systems we know (Manning 2019: 4)

ARCHIVAL LOGIC

In research, writing has operated as a tool of documentation and representation, following an “archival logic” where value is ascribed to the accurate (and assumably static) capturability of an event. Sarah Truman, following performance studies scholar Rebecca Schnieder, writes that “the cultural and scholarly concern over the uncapturability of artistic events is predetermined by an ongoing (Euro western) habitation to the logic of the archive” (2021:23). Barad refers to this as a representationalist Cartesian by-product of an “asymmetrical faith in word over world” (2003, 806). This faith carries the presumption that representations of the world are more accessible, accurate, and understandable than directly interacting in the world itself and the belief that words can mirror “pre-existing phenomena” and that linguistic structures are what “shape or determine our understanding of the world” (802).

Barad writes that a “performative shift” would have us move from “questions of correspondence between description and reality (e.g., do they mirror nature or culture?) to matters of practices/doings/actions” (2003, 802). In “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” anthropologist Ann Stoler examines the colonial archive of the Dutch West Indies, to reveal how

archives have operated as sites of imaginary, constructed time. Archives, as Foucault theorizes them, are not an institution, but the law of what can be said (in Stoler, 94). They are a system of political narrative control, fashioning history and concealing/revealing/reproducing the power of the state (97). Stoler asks that we start looking at archives ethnographically, rather than simply extractively and recognize the archive as a process, rather than a thing.

Archival logic as exercised in its colonial history assumes the necessity (and the possibility!) of a static, neutral, collection, capture, and preservation of data. This is what Loveless calls, (following from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) the "banking model" of knowledge. The banking model, Loveless writes, "understands knowledge as informational bits that are depositable, retrievable and usable at some moment completely separate from the original scene of learning" (2019, 48). Loveless argues that this model retains power because it protects us from the anxiety of ignorance, the possibility that what we find will make us "uninformed or incapable" or be unaccountable and impossible to capture.

Similarly, Truman draws on Eve Sedgwick's call to embrace "weak theory" looking at how the "paranoid stance" has become the stance of critical thought (2021, 21). The paranoid stance, or "strong theory" as Sedgwick theorizes, happens when we are asked to explain outcomes and benefits in an anticipatory and foreclosing way. This, Truman explains, is a capitalist risk-minimization practice—which "couched in the language of ethics and care" --is all about selling research in advance (21). Erin Manning also writes that "[t]he archive as it is mobilized in contemporary times cannot be detached from the neoliberal obsession with the capture of creativity" (2020, 83). She expresses frustration at how archival tendencies have been mobilized

within creative practices and research-creation projects as a neoliberal tool in its “obsession with the capture of creativity” (2020: 83), writing that “[a]rtists everywhere are being taught to document, document, document; the product emphasized, always over the force of the form...Increasingly, to make art is to know how to frame it” (83).

HOW THIS PROJECT USES THESE IDEAS

I describe this project as a research-creation project rooted in Fred Moten’s concept of “study” because as Manning writes, “many of us are now increasingly uneasy with the concept of research-creation” (in Loveless ed. 2019: 214). Manning has adopted this notion of study as a way of thinking and doing research-creation that doesn’t fall into “the debt economy and the normative tendencies of the academy in relation to what counts as knowledge” (215). Study, as a concept, highlights body, community and living as discursive and knowledge making practices. The uneasiness Manning feels about using the term research-creation comes from how the concept has been increasingly “colonized” as it is accepted institutionally: the conversation becoming mainly about what “‘counts’ as research-creation in terms of evaluation practices” (214). Loveless writes that the goal of research-creation was not to propose that “[l]ook! Now artists can be researchers too!” (2019:3) but rather, to acknowledge like Manning asks in the following questions: “[w]eren’t artists already involved in research? Wasn’t art practice always engaged in forms of inquiry? Wasn’t it a mode of knowledge in its own right?” (2016:26).

All these thinkers ask that we create knowledge and come to know differently, but what does this mean in practice? In the conclusion to another paper, written for my Feminist Theory class earlier in this Master’s, on Erin Manning approach to research-creation, I wrote:

“What the fuck does Erin Manning mean by research-creation??” – I scrawl this across the top of a gridded pad, two days before I am set to send in this paper. I’ve been reading her words for almost a year now and still can’t fully name it. All process is collaborative? All life is study? What does this really mean in practice?”

And so, I set out on this thesis: an attempt to put a research-creation practice into practice, to see what happens, without trying to pin down or presume what the project would do or could be. As an artist such practices of “not knowing” are not foreign to me. I know that the best ideas often come from getting messy and having space to play and that the final project rarely, if ever, looks the way you had initially imagined: evolving through material restrictions and techniques, often changing into something bigger and better than you could have planned. Even knowing this, I struggled to visualize how I could accomplish such a project within the structure and expectations (even if only self-imposed) of a Master’s thesis.

It was through Natalie Loveless’s work on research-creation that I was first introduced to Erin Manning, and her work on the subject. Manning’s approach to research creation made me realize that while, as Loveless mainly addresses, I was deeply interested in what the idea of what research-creation could do within the university, I was most intrigued by Manning’s questioning of “method and mediation” and how research-creation might serve to validate many truths and ways of knowing outside of those sanctioned by the academic institution. For this reason, this thesis examines how research-creation provides an opening not simply for art-based methods within the university, but a need to re-examine the archival logic and assumed naturalness in the

way we reason, mediate and parse and document knowledge from outside of materiality and experience. Following this, research-creation as I use the term, aligns with Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuck's "creation-as-research" (2015), Erin Manning's "artfulness" (2016) or "immediation" (2019), and Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's "study" (2013). This means, I undertake and understand research-creation not as a qualitative method by which artistic knowledge and practices are added and stirred into current research structures but as a transdisciplinary practice that upends current institutional research structures by recognizing the process of making as research and the bodily or material as knowledge making practices.

CHAPTER 3: SOME METHODS (?)

THE ANARCHIVE

Earlier in this document I quoted myself, asking “*What is panic when expressed--held--in stitches, in sweaters and socks?*” This line was a response to my own transition from being a committed journal keeper, writer, and drawer to an obsessive knitter, where memories—the archive of daily life, moments of reflection, heartbreak, and joy—were no longer easily accessible through words. When I first started considering handknitting a sweater as a sort of archive, I was thinking in terms of loss – about my inability to access these places, the conversations and the stories that were “embedded” in its stitches. I was conceptualizing documenting the project in terms of timed knitting sessions, the recording of conversations, and journaling in the aims of capturing this history. However, in researching archives and considering the sweater as a possible archive, this project instead became an exploration of the *anarchive* and how a hand-knit sweater might occupy and operate this space.

When Julietta Singh discusses archives, she examines the looseness around the term’s academic uses. In “it’s most obvious iteration,” she writes, “the archive might be a physical place where a collection of documents is housed” (2018: 22). But the word “archive” can also signal “a body of literature...a series of monuments, or a collection of images” (23). Singh writes that calling what you study an “archive,” “gives it heft [and] grants it the status of an intellectual pursuit” (23). However, when Singh attempts to create her own archive—an archive of her body—she discovers what she calls an “archival crisis”: that “the body’s surface is ultimately not stable ground upon which to build an archive” (30). Singh acknowledges that this is not only a material problem—following Karen Barad and Nancy Tuana—occurring because our bodies are porous and

spread out into and are made up of the world—but also an “affective” dilemma, where our bodies are permeated with and spill over with feelings. What is foreign and what is our own is not easily decipherable. The archival crisis here—if it can be considered a crisis at all—is that in a feminist materialist approach, no archive (or anything) is capable of occupying stable ground. This is not simply a bodily issue, but a characteristic found in the composition of the world.

The anarchival captures this “archival crisis” standing in contrast to traditional archives where the presumed innocence of selective “static, stable, and linear” practices, “continuously erase particular subjects” and experiences (897). Stephanie Springgay, Anise Truman, and Sara MacLean in “Socially Engaged Art, Experimental Pedagogies, and Anarchiving as Research-Creation,” describe the anarchival as a research creation practice that is “less of a thing, than a process or an action” (2020:898). An anarchival is not concerned with accurate capture of the past but instead attends to its uncapturability, through the “lived traces that are embodied in bodies and memories—and that cannot be contained or recorded in a text” (2020:899).

Following the anarchival, this project will recognize uncapturability and “loss” as a generative force. In Leen Katrib’s 2018 essay “On Archiving Rubble,” she “verbifies” the word ruin, using Ann Stoler’s term “ruination” to foreground how there are “continuing forces of destruction” disrupting the passivity of artifacts or monuments (33). Katrib echoes the call of the anarchival, asking us to attend to the generative life of the “rubble” which is seen as unworthy of being categorized, preserved, and documented within imperial archives (40). As an example, Katrib describes the excavation of the Temple of Bel in Syria by the French in 1929. Here, an over 800-year-old Muslim village that co-existed within a Greco-Roman ruin was expropriated and

dismantled to restore it to its “original form.” The rubble created in the destruction of a living village was removed and disposed of (34). Like ruination, anarchiving acknowledges the “transformation that happens over time to archival matter” and addresses the “precarity and loss of the archive” (Springgay, Truman, and MacLean, 897) as an active generative force, which is continuously creating rubble. By tending to and acknowledging rubble, we create “living archives” that allow for the potential of ruination: the recording of how things are continuously touched, built, examined, scanned, rearranged, reproduced, and destroyed (Katrib, 40). Katrib’s work outlines practical examples surrounding the complexities of the archive and the stories that they shape through assuming what has value and burying the “rubble”. In this project, I believed that knitting a sweater could create “rubble”: lively, ephemeral, maybe unexpected consequences, and opportunities which I would then attempt to recognize and give space.

In her book, *An Archive of Feeling*, Anne Cvetkovich uses the term “public culture” as an open acknowledgement of the forms of affective life (could I call it the rubble?) that have not “solidified into institutions, organizations, or identities” (2003:9). Cvetkovich uses gay and lesbian archives to explore how cultural texts (and objects, places, and gestures) operate as “archives of feeling” (2003:244) both material and immaterial repositories of feelings and emotions that are encoded into the practices surrounding their production and reception (7). These archives leave “ephemeral and unusual traces” as they are often intimate and sexual— with their invisibility sometimes as chosen as it is enforced (8). Cvetkovich argues that affects, as associated with nostalgia, personal memory, fantasy, and trauma, are enough to make a document significant (244), describing “the quest for history as a psychic need rather than a science” (268). The “queer archive of feeling” operates as an anarchiving. Anarchives, write

Springgay, Truman and MacLean, “seeks to share the affective tone of a process or event” (2020: 889) shifting the focus of the archive from “strict chronologies or typologies of identification” to that which outlives the event (900). This invokes what Manning writes when she describes art as “the memory not of what was, but what will be” ... a memory of the future (2016, 47).

KNITTING:

We don't need scientific research to explain what's going on; we need better ways of talking about ordinary life, including the dull feelings of just getting by. (Cvetkovich, 159)

The sophisticated ritualization of basic gestures has thus become more dear to me than the persistence of words and texts because body techniques seem better protected from the superficiality of fashion, and also, a more profound and heavier material faithfulness is at play there, a way of being-in-world and making it one's home. (Luce Girard in de Certeau, Giard, Mayol, 154)

I first learned to knit as a kid, not from my mother or grandmother (as is so often the case) but from a Klutz for Kids book. My mom did have a variety of her own craft projects around the house when I was growing up, but I learned many years later that she picked them up under the pressure of fitting in with the other wives and mothers at the Baptist church we were going to at the time. The women in this community made her feel guilty about going to university and she took up crafting to make up for having an MA and to feel like a better mother. As a kid, I was proud of my mother's master's degree and her crafting. Not many of my friends' moms had an MA, not many of my friends' moms crafted.

Sometime over the last couple years my mother started knitting again and last spring we picked out yarn together for her first sweater. She works at her sweater in spurts... sometimes dictated

by my trips back to Ontario when she gets stuck on a certain part of the pattern. We don't really have a close relationship, but we now talk about knitting, share patterns and plan future projects. Perhaps this story is a way of saying that craft is complicated. It is bigger than technique; there is not one experience of knitting. It can be dynamic, and connecting, and troubling. It is more than a pleasant hobby separate from the world we live in.

In the most basic sense, knitting is a technique of fabric creation where the fabric is built from a continuous strand of yarn interlaced and looped over itself. In handknitting, this fabric is created on a pair of needles and consists of stitches (each loop). The needles hold these "live" stitches or loops, and you work across the needles looping yarn through these active stitches and slipping them from one needle to another to create the fabric. The act of knitting across all the live stitches creates a "row" of knitting. In a conversation we recorded together sometime during this project, my friend Alia asked why we so often think of knitting as passive and if there is "something important in this passiveness?" In her 1978 essay art theorist Lucy Lippard discusses how the functional has often operated as an "excuse" for creativity. Lippard writes that when making functional objects "[t]here is no confusion about pretensions to Art and the woman is freed to make anything she can imagine " (1978: 133). On a similar theme, in chapter 3 of *Depression: A Public Feeling*, "The Utopia of Ordinary Habit - Crafting, Creativity and Spiritual Practice" Ann Cvetkovich writes: "crafting provides opportunities to make art that is usable... accessible to all, reproducible, and marketable" and that "the knitting store has now joined the feminist bookstore of the 1970's and the sex toy store of the 1990's as a public space for feminist thinking and activities" (171).

As I mentioned earlier, historically the value of knitting—as a functional craft—has been degraded through its association with women and the working classes. In other examinations of this topic at other times, I have expressed uneasiness around the contemporary use of the phrase “fine craft” in counter response to this degradation, as a simple elevation of processes or products with “specific material composition” (Adamson 2) or usefulness, instead of paying attention to the historic and very purposeful separation of craft and the role it played in measuring one's social or maybe even “human” capital. In *The Craft Reader*, editor Glenn Adamson writes that Lippard encourages a new approach to feminist art which “reframes [the] amateurism” often associated with craft and hobbies “not as an embarrassing condition which women artists need to transcend, but as a measure by which to judge the extent of gender and class prejudice” (483). Lippard sees craft and the amateurism associated with it as a powerful tool for feminists and those disenchanted with the art world to reflect on and use today. Knitting holds this history, and instead of trying to elevate it and absorb it into the status of “art,” (which seems similar to me as the attempt to make research-creation a qualitative research method) we can take advantage of its difference, its supposed passiveness, its rooting in the everyday, in bodily action, the practical and useful, and reject the idea that it has to be something bigger or different in order to be intellectually important.

Knitting can be thought to lack the “uniqueness” associated with art—if art is defined as the expressive visual form, as it often is within Western hierarchies of culture and value. Knitting is often mainly a practice of execution where, as Kate Daley writes, knitters usually “follow directions written to achieve a product envisioned and designed by another” (Daley, np). Daley, in her essay “Crafty Entanglements: Knitting and Hard Distinctions in Aesthetics and Political

Theory," thinks upon the distinction of creativity and creation and how the "process of knitting can show the instability of the category of art, particularly in relation to issues of creativity and performance" (np). Daley quotes knitting writer and humorist Stephanie Pearl-McPhee to show that "[k]nitting wasn't always about creativity, and neither was writing; it was about creation, bringing something into being" and asks "[w]here exactly could one say that creation stops and creativity starts?" (np). Cvetkovich writes that what interests her most about crafting "is the process itself, especially the form of repetition it requires – how knit, purl, knit, purl, over and over again, become a creative act" (189). She connects this to ritual and spirituality that resemble meditation "having something to do with your hands keeps the attention both focused and free, and you can remain on task in midst of other distractions" (189). The idea that creativity is distinct from creation is one this project refuses by highlighting the physical and repetitive act of knitting as a generative anarchival process.

In the conclusion to "Making Something from Nothing" Lippard proposes that "only in a feminist art world will there be a chance for the "fine" arts, the "minor "arts, "crafts" and hobby circuits to meet and develop an *art of making*" (1978:138). Then, Lippard writes, "our visions may be sufficiently cleared to see all the arts of making as equal products of a creative impulse that is as socially determined as it is personally necessary—before the idea is no longer to make nothings into somethings but to transform and give meaning to all things" (138).

Cvetkovich writes, "[c]rafting has long been a mode of socializing. As with other forms of manual labour, it's possible to talk or listen while the hands do the work. Thus, while a more self-conscious sense of the relation between crafting and politics has created new formations,

crafting's basis in collectivity and its connections to working-class culture have long been a part of its social power” (176). Today most of my close friends are crafters and we knit, sew, draw, embroidery and crochet our way through conversations about everyday life, techniques, politics, health, and wellness. In her 2013 book, *Homeward Bound: Why Women are Embracing New Domesticity*, author Emily Matchar associates the current fashionability of craft in the western world to the concept of New Domesticity. She explores how “the whole ‘there is value in the handmade line’ tends to come from people who only make handmade goods by choice or as a hobby” (247). However, Matchar reflects on how –in the process of writing her book —she didn’t run into many ultra-privileged people, but instead found this resurgence of handmade, homemade and craft, to be “at its heart a cry against a society that is not working” (248). Those seeking out traditionally domestic crafts and nostalgic “simpler” lifestyles tended to be “middle-class people struggling with modern life” who “are removed enough from the horrors of rural poverty to find canning charming yet still struggle to find genuinely fulfilling careers and decent ways to balance work and life (247). Knitting is no longer a truly functional, “effective” or affordable way to create one's clothing with materials being expensive and our time being monetized and limited. Matchar notes how “in the early twentieth century, a homemade quilt meant you couldn’t afford linens from the Sears, Roebuck, and Co. catalog. Today it means you have the time and money to indulge in an expensive hobby...Convenience has become deeply associated with poverty, lack of education and worse” (244).

Currently, knitting (and sewing) garments are also sometimes taken up as a political upper and middle class process of resisting “affordable” fast-fashion and mass-produced clothing: the fashion industry being one of the most wasteful, abusive, and polluting industries across the

world. There is also an expansive politically active online knitting community, which over the past few years has tackled issues surrounding racism, fiber snobbery, price, size-inclusivity, and labour issues. In 2019, the community knitting site Ravelry made the news when it banned support of Donald Trump from its forums, patterns, projects, and profiles. On the crafting podcast “Making Conversations” on September 9, 2022, Candice English founder of Farmers Daughter Fibres and Sister’s United, a non-profit that shares “aid, opportunity, and tools for healing with the Indigenous woman and children” in Montana discusses the knitting community, and how these sometimes-difficult conversations and the politics permeate knitting culture while in conversation with host Ashley Yousling. Afterwards, Candace adds:

Also, though, seeing the good, like the conversations that we have are incredible. I try to explain it to people who aren't in the knitting community or not on social media, and they're just like, What? Like, what is this? Like, what are you - you guys are talking about what? Like you guys are knitting, it doesn't even, like, pertain to anything. But it does, and I also think that, too, making and knitting are so connected to so many different things. I mean it's about the craft. It's about making, it's about touching something natural. It's about using your hands... And I think that these conversations and who we are as people is so important to all of us. Like, you can feel that. You can feel that energy. And I just think it's really important to keep in mind. [00:39:24]

In “A Fieldwork Story Told Through Knitting” Mahardhika Sjamsoe’oed Sadjad describes how— while working on her PHD—she discovered how crafting could open opportunities for conversations. Sadjad writes “[f]or people, mostly women, who shared an interest in fibre arts, my knitting created an opening into insightful conversations that were not limited and burdened by the structure and power dynamics of interviews” (261). Sadjad did not begin her knitting practice specifically for this reason but had taken up it during an emotional and stressful time in

her life and was encouraged to keep up the practice by her therapist. She writes “[m]y therapist advised me to use it as a means to practice mindfulness and to manage the anxieties and insecurities I was feeling...Using my hands for an activity other than typing and producing usable knitted goods at far greater a speed than my dissertation gave me a much-needed sense of accomplishment. To this day I still remember the strong feeling of satisfaction I felt when I finished knitting my first winter hat” (256).

Mahardhika Sjamsoe’oed Sadjad began a practice of knitting every Friday afternoon while completing her PHD field work with refugees in Indonesia. She reflects on how “the knitting project became an outlet to manage the emotions that were partial to fieldwork but often excluded from its retelling” (257). Sadjad did not plan on sharing the scarf she created during this time in publications or in her dissertation but when her knitting concluded, she felt there was a “story to tell in the yarn [she] had knitted” (257). “Storytelling” she writes “is at the heart of feminist politics and methods, through which emotions that are often fleeting and abstract can be given centre stage (Harcoute et al, 2015:164)” and that “[f]eminist methodologies offer space to explore creative avenues to approach and understand knowledge beyond the rigidity of the academic voice many of us have been trained in” (257). I use knitting, like Sadjad does, as an activating practice for stories, both spoken and touched.

Natalie Loveless uses Thomas King’s story *The Truth About Stories* and Donna Haraway’s concept of “material-semiotics” to argue that as we are remade through stories –by all we speak and hear– we are also remade by all we touch and are touched by. Haraway’s work on material semiotics asks us to attend to “becoming through” the stories we inherit when ethically touching

and being in touch with the world around us (in Loveless, 2019, 22). I believe that knitting does not have to be actively involved in a visible political form of resistance, like sustainability, Craftivism, knit bombing, knit ins, etc. to be politically relevant or important but that knitting alone, or with a small group of others can be as effective and political an act. Crafting practices show us, as Cvetkovich writes, that “daily life in all its ordinariness can be a basis for the utopian project of building new worlds in response to both spiritual despair and political depression” (191). This project is concerned with touching and being in touch and explores how knitting is a material-discursive practice, a physical action and intervention in the world. In this project knitting exists as a form of study, operating in my life simultaneously as a private, public, and social activity—an insertion of body, life, and materiality and the ordinary into knowledge making as an important process and tool for creating and valuing the neurodiverse and decolonial knowledge and practices that happen outside of institutional settings or traditions.

CHAPTER 4: SOME PRAGMATICS

CONSTRUCTING A SWEATER

In this section I will outline some guiding techniques and theories that helped me consider, shape, and create the project. Michele points out to me in one of our chats, late in this project, that my thesis is not conceptually about knitting as a craft, but how knitting might be used as an data collection practice. In focusing on the anarchival qualities of knitting and the idea of a sweater as an anarchival, the data collection in this project became about the feelings and experiences that escape capture in the time spent knitting. In the spirit of the anarchival (attending to the uncapturability of events, and the lived traces left in bodies and memory) this project was not concerned with trying to carefully record these “losses” but with their generative potential: the artful future-building processes of affect and traces held in bodies, objects, and memories that feed-forward from the sweater’s knitting. It was important to me that the sweater as a physical object not be the final goal of this project. Instead, I aimed to have the knitting operate as the project’s timeline, a thread which came along as I eased back into sociality and travel and navigated love, mental health, gender, heartbreak, community, self, and place (really just life?) in a somehow ever uncertain landscape. To explore research-creation and the concept of the anarchival, this project used the process of knitting, auto theoretical writing and reflection, the collection of photos, video, and memes to examine what comes before the thought, what cannot be put into words, what is embedded in the body, stored in memory, in process, in objects and place. I hoped to activate and validate concepts like weak theory, emergence, the personal and subjective and the everyday, sidestepping a distinct “forness” in exchange for the understanding of a world (and project) in constant process.

Research-creation projects develop “weak theory” and –drawing on process philosophers Alfred North Whitehead and William James—are what Sarah Truman calls “response-able” practices (2021:10). Response-able practices embrace chance, complexities and not knowing through the continuing process of “affirming or affirmatively refusing” (21). Such a responsible affirmation practice, Loveless proposes, leaves room for emergence: the possibility that our outputs might “exceed what is demonstrably present in their constituent parts” (2019: 26). This embraces the complexity of lived histories, understanding that “complexity is not simply a failure that an adequate perspective—the capacity to somehow see better—might correct...complexity is the name of the game” (26). Emergent research-creation practices recognize that research is neither politically or affectively neutral and rather than letting discipline “tell us what questions are worthwhile and what methods are appropriate” (28) it is more ethical that we accept and be drawn in by our loves and our curiosities. Calling once again on Donna Haraway, Loveless notes that this love should be more of “eros” than “agape”, exchanging the idea of an unconditional love for one that is driven, conditional (situated) and unknown and unknowable (emergent) (26). This creates an ethic which “isn’t an essential ideal that is applied from the outside to a situation, but an ongoing endeavor co-emerging among knowledge and being” (Truman: 2021:20).

GUIDELINES:

I began this project under the expectation that the project would “become.” That is, I refused specific objectives at the outset and did not attempt to dictate in advance what the outcomes would be, opting for what I hoped to be a responsive process of creating and shaping the project

as it developed. In my proposal I outlined some thoughts and general guidelines or theories which informed and directed the project. They were as follows:

1. Following a **Feminist Materialist** research perspective this project understands that there is no “exteriority between what is observed and the observer of a research event” (Truman, 2021, 19) and that events “do” the enactment of boundaries in a continuous making process. This breaks down notions of subject and object and “queers traditional notions of research objectivity in that it conceptualizes the researcher as directly implicated (and co-produced!) in research events” (19).
2. In the end there will be a **sweater**. Maybe it will fit me perfectly. Maybe I’ll wear it all the time. Maybe I won’t like it. Maybe it will get gifted to a friend. Maybe I’ll unravel it and use the yarn for something else.
3. Stylistically, this project was informed by other **autotheoretical** works such as Julie Deporte’s *This Woman’s Work*, Maggie Nelson’s *Bluets*, Billy Ray Belcourt’s *A History of My Brief Body* and Julietta Singh’s *No Archive Will Restore You*. These could all be described as auto-theoretical practices which explore the theoretical experience of daily life, seamlessly blending and intertwining the personal and the theoretical and acknowledging that there is in the end no difference. In *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*, Lauren Fournier writes that “[a]utotheory reveals the tenuousness of maintaining illusory separations between art and life, theory and practice, work and the self, research and motivation...as feminist artist and scholars have long argued” (3). Fournier quotes Maggie Nelson and Anna Poletti, stating that autotheory is not autobiography because autotheory is not simply expressive “describing a life that

exists prior to the act of writing about it” but rather understands that life is created through the act of writing (Fournier, 16). I propose that these auto-theoretical life creating possibilities could be expanded to knitting, and all other artful practices. I will use auto-theory to explore life creation through knitting and writing, and as a technique for interacting with and inhabiting the world.

4. During the duration of this project, I proposed to organize at least one **social** activity a week where knitting occurs around others— though knitting may not always be foregrounded, it will at least be possible. This could look like going out for drinks with friends, music shows, trips to the lake, coffee dates, movie or craft nights, backyard visits. This would not require much planning or scheduling as most of my scheduled and unscheduled social time revolved around knitting.
5. In this project I would use knitting the sweater as an **anarchival** tool and a timeline. The beginning and ending of the sweater will mark the beginning and ending of the data collection. There are some things that may make knitting better situated in this regard for me personally than others. As I touched on above, I have been knitting for years now, and so it often doesn’t require much active concentration for me. I can knit many simpler projects without looking at my fingers, or paying close attention to the pattern, so I can knit while in conversation, in the dark or in class.
6. I proposed that I would slip a small loop of colored thread over the first stitch I knit each session. This was meant to **mark** in some small way the time spent knitting. I thought that sometimes these would mark multiple rows, sometimes they would mark a couple stitches and I hoped the distance between them might show the growth and time spent on

the knitting and might activate a memory of being deep in conversation, distracted by thought or disrupted by responsibilities.

7. The **collection** of data would be centered around a reflection on “studying” as an essential quality of life and on making as a practice that thinks. As touched on above, I intend to refuse an extensive archival documentation of the project. In thinking about the sweater less like a loss needing to be captured and more as the drive of an experience, my focus was on the affective traces that surround and are generated from the sweater. Undertaking a vagabond methodology informed by Jack Halberston my data collection will follow a queer methodological and auto-theoretical approach of collecting some of the traces that strike and stick in me during the time of the sweater’s making. These traces may not be directly related to the sweater. They may look like drawings, quotes from readings, clips from songs or shows, a written memory of a conversation with friends after knitting together, images of the sweater in progress or of knitting in place, or screenshots from social media. This concept was informed by a series of drawings and free writing I began before the pandemic in February 2020 based around conversations with friends, things read, overheard, and lived. These were not transcriptions or copies but reflections on the traces that stuck with me, the bits of conversation and the feelings that stayed in my body after the event. I propose to document the time spent around the making of this sweater in a similar fashion, an assemblage of auto-theoretical images, quotes and writings that stick with me for a time.
8. The **assemblage** of the things I collect over the period of creating the sweater will be stored physically in a notebook and documented digitally through my phone. I intend to organize these traces in a Google doc. I had planned on using a numbered system

formatted like a knitting pattern to present the collection (i.e., Row 1: knit, Row 2: purl – but instead “Row 1” may hold a quote from a reading and “Row 2” a sketch).

9. The sweater will be knit from a popular pre-existing **pattern** the: no frills sweater by petite knit and yarn bought from my local store, LK Yarns in Halifax’s North End. I made the decision to use a readily available pattern rather than design my own to keep the focus of the project on creation, not my individual creativity. This is also a decision based on ease of execution. I wanted this sweater, like most of my knitting projects, to be able to blend into my life, as the sweater or the knitting is not the focus of the project. The focus was instead on the traces (often uncapturable) such a process puts out, as I knit in relationship with the world: whether in classrooms, at movie theaters, waiting in lines, out for drinks with friends, at parks and beaches or at home in bed in front of the tv.

With these perspectives and guidelines outlined, I dove in.

CHAPTER 5: THE THESIS SWEATER: A KNITTING PROJECT



Figure 2

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

The process of the thesis and putting the following *Thesis Sweater* document together was circular. Over the duration of this thesis project, writing, formatting, coping data, knitting, reading, and making operated as a back-and-forth process: each process and step in the project informing and forming each other.

I presented my thesis proposal over Zoom while in Ontario visiting family early July 2022. After arriving home in Halifax, the following week, I bought the yarn for the sweater. Over the next three months (late July to late September) I struggled first to begin, and then to end the sweater. There are various anxieties at play, mostly surrounding concerns about the “worth” of the project and how it might unfold and then in the end, come together. From July to September, I knit the sweater as I went about my life, at work, with friends, at the beach, the movies, at home in bed, and simultaneously, I collected images and wrote down reflections based on conversations and interactions with friends, on the sweater's progress or on my mood and feelings in general.

I took down notes and reflections when they came to me, mainly in my day planner, a medium-sized Leuchtturm1917 bullet journal, surrounded by all sorts of other non-related writing, weekly plans, monthly calendars, and to-do lists. I did not date these reflections. I also bought a small vellum notebook for the project, because I thought it would be fun to play with the growth and layering of words, but I only used it once at the very start.

Otherwise, I document mostly with my phone. I created a hidden album and added pictures, movies, and screenshots to it. Most of these images end up being photos of the sweater being knit at various times and places, but some are also screenshots from social media, that made me think about or reminded me of the thesis project. Occasionally, when I took a photo, I captured a bit of a feeling or thought associated with the time of its capture. I used the photo editing app on my phone to overlay text over certain images when I had a certain thought or conversation related to the project while working on the sweater or reflecting after the fact on such interactions. Putting these images in the hidden album removed them from my phone's photo stream, separating them from other photos that I took while going about my day. I found I didn't like to have the photos related to the thesis easily visible or accessible. This was partially because I share my iCloud with my partner, so all our images are shared automatically, and I didn't like to have all my thoughts on display.

The auto theoretical process means that this project is very personal. I am not sure how happy I am about that but am not sure how I was expecting it to be otherwise. I had hoped there would be more traditionally theoretical reflecting and responding to texts in *The Thesis Sweater* document but my will to read stalls sometime over the summer and there are less reflections on readings, or quotes than I was expecting, or would have liked. My reading and note taking process consisted of mainly taking pictures or screenshots when I did read and when I came across sections I found interesting or useful. I did not give much consideration to making my future self's life easier, and often did not keep track of page numbers, or even books I was taking these photos from at the time. I have inserted these sections of texts into the project document, placing these text excerpts into the final project document in the same way I place the photos, as a basic rule

chronologically to when they were taken, but occasionally as I reference them, or they come up in my notes and reflections

I mentioned earlier that I experienced some anxiety around beginnings and endings with this project. When facing “beginnings” and “endings” of the sweater, I felt a pressure that these times and places should *mean* something, that they happen at or mark an important and interesting moment in my life. I underwent this mental struggle to both escape and experience some sort of meaningful beginning at the start of the project and then, in similar form I feel unable to “finish” the project and face the possible mediocrity of its results, a sort of failure to discover or create anything important.

I finished knitting the sweater the day after hurricane Fiona hit. But sometime before this, when coming up to the sweater’s conclusion and knitting the last sleeve of the sweater, my knitting slows. I begin worrying about what comes next: having to look back over the project, the things and ideas collected, and try to summarize, or make sense of, or give value to them. Even though the theory my project rejects the idea that a tangible impact or result is required, it was a hard notion to escape, and I struggled with it throughout the process of knitting, and then transcribing and collecting the data I had created. These thoughts of value and importance still hang over the project, even though my research-creation process and focus on “the ordinary” and the anarchival attempts to refuse or dismiss them. In the end, this anxiety, and my subsequent inability to face the pressure of claiming beginnings and endings created a project that was much broader and bigger than the physical sweater through the process of creative procrastination.

When I began transcribing the notes from the time spent knitting it became a reflective process of then and now, documented word, memory, past and current place.

Nearing the end of knitting the sweater, when I started copying the notes and reflections from my notebook into my computer I began –unplanned– a secondary reflection process based on the time and place I occupied when I was transcribing the notes. This created an interesting circular, back and forth, jumping in time, as the transcribing began when I was getting close to finishing, but not quite finished, the knitting of the sweater. In practice, this process looked something like this: when I sat down to copy each entry from my day planner into the google document, I would start each session with some free writing, a present reflection on the transcription that was ahead. This often included my current mental state, the where, and what I was and was thinking about in that moment. I put these transcriptions in italics and right aligned them on the page. The original notes were left aligned and non-italicized. In the final version of the project, I also used different fonts to tell them apart. When I had thoughts while in the middle of transcribing a section of notes, I would also insert these into the document (right aligned and italicized).

As I had proposed, I titled each of the original day planner entries using the knitting concept of rows: referencing the lines in a knitted pattern that give you the instruction on how to work the following series of stitches. I did not always transcribe the day planner entries perfectly. I fixed some grammar, changed some phrases. In some cases, I left things out altogether.

Another one of my anxieties around finishing the project was the personal nature of the project. I was brought back to Cvetkovich’s writing on the invisibility of queer archives– how their

“ephemeral and unusual traces” (often intimate and sexual) is an invisibility sometimes as chosen as it is enforced (2003:8). I wanted to remove some of the nervousness I felt around having this be a public document that anyone could read. Because of this, throughout the *The Thesis Sweater* document you will find redacted sections. On the first read through of the “finished” collection of notes, I blacked out all my friends' names, and then, on following reads, I continue to black out more and more information, anything that I felt was too personal, or I wouldn't be comfortable having just anyone read. This was difficult sometimes to judge because of the variety of communities I am or have been a part of and my different levels of comfort in each of these groups and the different people I am in these settings. In the end, these blacked out sections often ended up relating to queerness, although much of it was also because of the realness and rawness of feelings.

In a similar vein, I also reworked the original text and image collages I had created on my phone swapping out the original text overlay, from typed to handwritten in Procreate. This was to blur the content of these thoughts and captures – to make them a little less immediate--and make reading them a little more work for the viewer. For the final version of *The Thesis Sweater* document, I also chose to present the collection of pages as a large collage. When I was first creating the document, transcribing the written reflections, I was conflicted about how to present them. I didn't want them to be easily read. In the end I did include the pages in the document below, but I also had the collage printed out Canon Peel & Stick fabric to exhibit. In this printed copy the text is just large enough that it is readable but not easily so. It ended up being about 42 X 72 inches in size.

The early pages of the project capture the beginning of the back and forth/ past and present reflecting, as well as some of my concerns and my anxieties around readability, and beginning and wrapping up the sweater. This is seen specifically in the *The Thesis Sweater* “Introduction” (which was written the first time I sat down to look through the written portion of the project) and in ROW 2, where I reflect first on my position in the present moment, finally casting off the final sleeve of the sweater, immediately before turning to transcribe the notes from earlier in the summer where I was struggling to begin knitting it.

There is something about the repetitive nature of recording/reflecting and transcribing the project in this way that felt fitting. Beginning before I began and summing up before I physically finish the sweater. It operated as a cyclic practice with similar ideas coming and going, drawing back and forward into the present/past. Throughout the *Thesis Sweater* I repeatedly interact with and bring up similar topics or interactions at different times in the document as they come to mind over the course of writing and formatting. It takes me longer than perhaps it should have to recognize this as an anarchival quality, an echoing of events, feelings, and moments out from their initial time and space.

The complete document *The Thesis Sweater* is found below.

The Thesis Sweater
A knitting project

Tamsin Sloots



Figure 3



Figure 4 – “Throwing in a curveball”



Figure 5

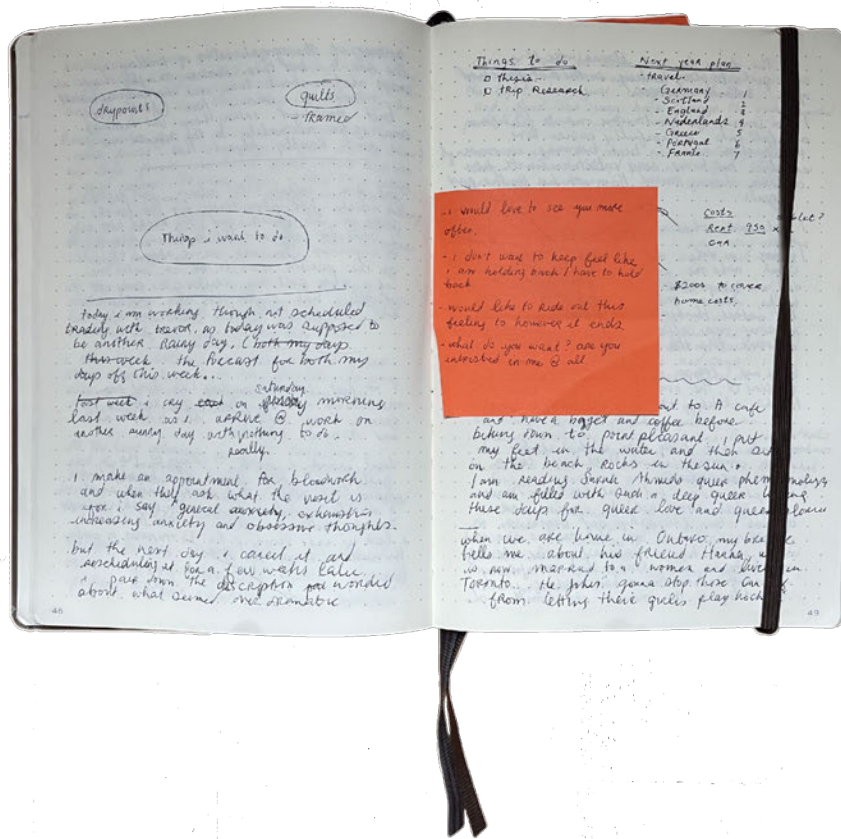


Figure 6

INTRODUCTION

I am sitting down to tackle this on a very wet day. The weather has turned (suddenly). Last week on my day off, it is 30 C with the humidex, and I take myself to a new lake. Today it is cold, rainy. Low teens. I put on my orange hunter toque and my brown fuzzy and rain jacket and head out to the cafe. Sitting here and pulling out my computer I feel a familiar fall nostalgia for newness, school, learning new projects. A comfort in the grey days ahead.

This summer has been full of desperate feelings. A feeling of grasping at the warm days, scant and passing so quickly, before the winter moves in on us again. I look down at the start of my notes for this project and it brings me back to late July (I have not kept track of exact dates and days) making margaritas and drinking them on the back deck. It feels like an age ago, blurry, and also like just a few weeks ago. I have already forgotten the details around the beginning of this project, in a precise way, the moments and places that surrounded its start.

These past few weeks my knitting of the sweater stalls. I am stressed, heartbroken and overwhelmed at work. I dread finishing it and having to begin this part of the journey. The compiling, looking back, the recording of all these intimate (and now feeling quite dumb) thoughts and captures. I am struggling with the what, and the who, and how to do it justice and also feeling self-conscious with the apparent arrogance and selfishness that comes along with a project so centered around oneself. Why did I think this would be important or interesting? My small stupid life, my (increasingly) erratic feelings paired with the actual luxury of my life, all while things feel so hard.

(Ann Cvetkovich writes about the texture of lived experience, and the complex combination of hope and despair. Depression, she notes, is ordinary and manifests itself not only in "catastrophic events but in the trauma of everyday life" 158)

The sweater isn't actually done yet, as I sit here beginning to wrap up the project. I text my friend earlier today about it saying, "doing things in the 'proper' order is not my way". I think it is ok. I begin writing in anticipation of the sweater before it starts and now, I begin weaving in its threads here before it is physically complete. It is a study in the continued growth and movement of the sweater's life, and of all things.

I sit looking over my notebook, realizing how chaotic my approach to this project has been. Multiple notebooks, photos, some saved in albums (some hidden from my camera roll), and I think about how to proceed with the transcription and the gathering in this phase. I know I will miss things, and things will slip through the grasp of this capture now. This also seems ok.

Maggie Nelson talks about her writing practice in The Argonauts ...

“My writing is riddled with such tics of uncertainty. I have no excuse or solution, save to allow myself the trembling’s, then go back in later and slash them out. In this way I edit myself into a boldness that is neither native nor foreign to me. At times I grow tired of this approach, and all its gendered baggage.” (98)

I think about that here as I begin this transcription, one that starts now but will be edited and rearranged, censored and changed out of respect for my friends, and respect for myself. In one of the first days of this Masters, an instructor tells us not to give too much of ourselves to the university. That it will try to take all of us. Her care here is more for my BIPOC classmates, but I think about that now and often as I dive into this personal situated work and this duplicating of words and images, created in a time: how bringing them forward, collecting and transcribing them here makes them less likely to disappear or be ignored, hardening this time in my mind, in a way that the weeks and months slipping past on their own wouldn’t . These words become a reflection, not always a bad thing, but not a more special thing than anything else.

I feel nervous to begin.



Figure 7



Figure 8: "It's SO bright"

ROW 1:

Some of my old JB colleagues - my closest friends these days - come and sit on my back porch last night. We make margaritas. I am trying not to drink but have two for the occasion. Two too many it feels now. Lime Juice, Triple Sec, Tequila, and jalapeno (from ██████'s Garden). My head aches a bit this morning. I can't handle much these days.

Two of my friends talk about how they are medicated for ADHD. ██████ for some time now, ██████ for only a short time, though it runs in the family. I have been coming to a turning point in my own life on the subject, to a head, wondering if it is time to get some diagnosis myself. Things that I could manage before through different strategies are no longer working.

██████ says they hadn't noticed anything off until they left the farm they had been raised on, no longer being able to move freely from thing to thing, into the structures of society, that -as ██████ adds- "none of us were made to function in". It makes me hesitate. Change the world or change myself to better fit. (Though it feels like it has become more than simply not fitting these days, but a struggle in my own skin) *Maybe I am old enough now to see the signs*

"Critiques of the connection between women and madness have thus been foundational for feminism, which has promoted the idea that feelings of unhappiness that get classified by categories such as depression are better served by social revolution than by medication."

Cvetkovich, 165

I have yet to cast on my sweater. I am finishing up another small project, but the yarn is bought, and the project is often on my mind.

The top I am working on is an open back tank. I tell them I am struggling in my job now with clothes prescribed in the vague category of “business casual” when every day I just want to dress like a little boy (oversized shirts, funny ball caps, loose jeans). I begin to knit this “open-backed top” on the drive back from Ontario. I have a spare ball of yarn and have finished up the other projects I had brought along (a ribbed tank top and a green and white gingham look colourwork sweater). I cast it on quickly as an occupier of time, realizing halfway through knitting the body, that I won’t wear it.

I knit it now with ██████ in mind. We sewed some performance outfits for them to play music in. One of these is an open back top...which makes me think maybe they would like this one too.¹

I am thinking now that this project may in the end make me comfortable with writing again. Embracing it as an active, shifting medium and encouraging me to take these things, these words less seriously.

Today ██████ writes to me that their new collection of:

“little markers/pens have been drawing quirky little cowboys , some have strange/ sad or sappy sayings on the side of them. It’s been simple, somehow cathartic drawing/ writing these days.”

¹ *(It is September now, this shirt still sits in a basket in my bedroom, cast off, but ends not woven in, and button and ties not attached. It may stay this way)*

I run into them on the street yesterday as they come back from Staples with these new markers/pens [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] *Though when another friend says last week that "queers are notoriously bad at drawing boundaries" it makes me pause.*

That night sitting at the bar, I tell [REDACTED] I have never knit the sweater around them.

They say this is a good thing, that their sad energy isn't imbued in it. I make a joke about how it's too late for that, that somewhere there is a row that is mainly a soggy mess of yarn and tears. You can't see it, but the previous week is a long and sad one, with them frequently on my mind.

I have been resisting writing, I resisted picking up this book and pen now, but the conversation of last night was flowing through my mind as I picked up stitches around the armhole of this tank-ADHD, binding and taping our chests, clothing, and as always, these days, the general instability we are all feeling now, as prices rise, and any movement forward seems impossible.

Reading this back now I am worried about how it will present itself. Can I put these notes straight into my thesis? This approach seems natural to me. Transcription and reflection mingling together, past, and present, memory and record, together. All though sometimes the record is of a memory and sometimes a present memory of a moment past. I am struggling with what to add and omit in the final presentation of this paper. Worried mainly already of those who will read it. Will my family? They do not [REDACTED]

I am out with [REDACTED], and reflecting on their own 5-year relationship, they say they are deeply embarrassed thinking of the multitudes of people they have been during that time.

I am too.

**This image was a
screenshot of
@alienboys "The
Beast" Ravelry
project page**

**In their notes on
the project they
write about how
they hope this
project cures
their depression.**

**REMOVED FOR
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Figure 9: "hopefully this will cure my depression"



Figure 10 "Like youre little spirit"

ROW 2:

Today is almost 48 hours after hurricane Fiona, "the cutest hurricane" my roommate dubs it, in tribute to my cat of the same name. We still don't have power and [REDACTED] and I head to the cafe to charge our devices. [REDACTED] is sick and I feel a little guilty about taking them out into the world. I find myself thinking about Julietta Singh's "No Archive Will Restore You" and how the book moves from an obvious straightforward examination of the archive and a theoretical consideration of body as archive into an auto-theoretical examination and recording of moments in her life. I am thinking about this change of structure.

Yesterday I cast off the last sleeve of my sweater. It seems anticlimactic and also perfectly okay. I realize I begin and end the sweater with [REDACTED]. Something not at all planned. Today I cast on a hat in the same yarn and look at these words I wrote months earlier, struggling to begin knitting it.

I have been procrastinating beginning the sweater. Yesterday I wind the yarn into a ball and take it up the north mountain with me. Visiting [REDACTED] and in some ways where this all began? That seems like an exaggeration, but meeting [REDACTED] grounded me in my body in ways I never had before and began to undo a lifetime of shame and guilt.

I wrote at the time. I wake up in a panic, but my mind is calm. How do you unweave trauma from muscle, from bone?

The ball of yarn comes back down the mountain with me untouched in a wicker basket that now also holds my sneakers, worn socks, and a pair of sweat drenched underwear. I spend part of the weekend painting a mural in the scorching sun and another part building a yurt. It is a heatwave. I drink it up.

Home now, I am procrastinating beginning the project again, worried still about the impact of the start, that the timing must somehow be right. I have a meeting with [REDACTED] tomorrow and wonder if the feeling of pressure now is so I can tell them I have begun something. But I have begun something...I do a drawing of

black currants I pick on [REDACTED] property while listening to a podcast² and am overwhelmed by the interconnectedness of everything and pushed by the call to practice better or practice purposefully....

Looking back, I am very aware of how much the time has blended and mixed in my mind. I could have sworn this drawing, listening to this podcast happened well into the knitting of the sweater. It is the only drawing I do in the little vellum book I buy just for that purpose. All my notes end up being recorded in what is supposed to be my work agenda or day planner. Mixing business, business, and pleasure.

[REDACTED] says they have been feeling lonely. [REDACTED]

I have a new idea for the route of the project just now but am not sure it will make sense. The layering of words and drawings, mine, and others.

I am still stuck on the idea of that things must be pure “capture”. I am realizing that I think because I started writing here in this notebook this must be the way these words are finally presented: in this hand, in this ink, but that goes against the point. I am not looking for purity but creative messiness, a sort of freedom.

[REDACTED] says they has been lonely, sitting in [REDACTED] their big wooden house.
– too much/too little/ I am struggling.

² <https://onbeing.org/programs/adrienne-maree-brown-we-are-in-a-time-of-new-suns/>

I am stuck on the idea of that things must be pure "capture". I am realizing that because I started writing here, this must be the way these words are finally presented. In this hand, this ink, but that goes against the point. I am not looking for purity but creative messiness. freedom.

Figure 11: "I am stuck on the idea of that things must be pure "capture""



Figure 12: "Yesterday I cast of the last sleeve of my sweater"



Figure 13: "The ball of yarn comes back down the mountain with me untouched.."

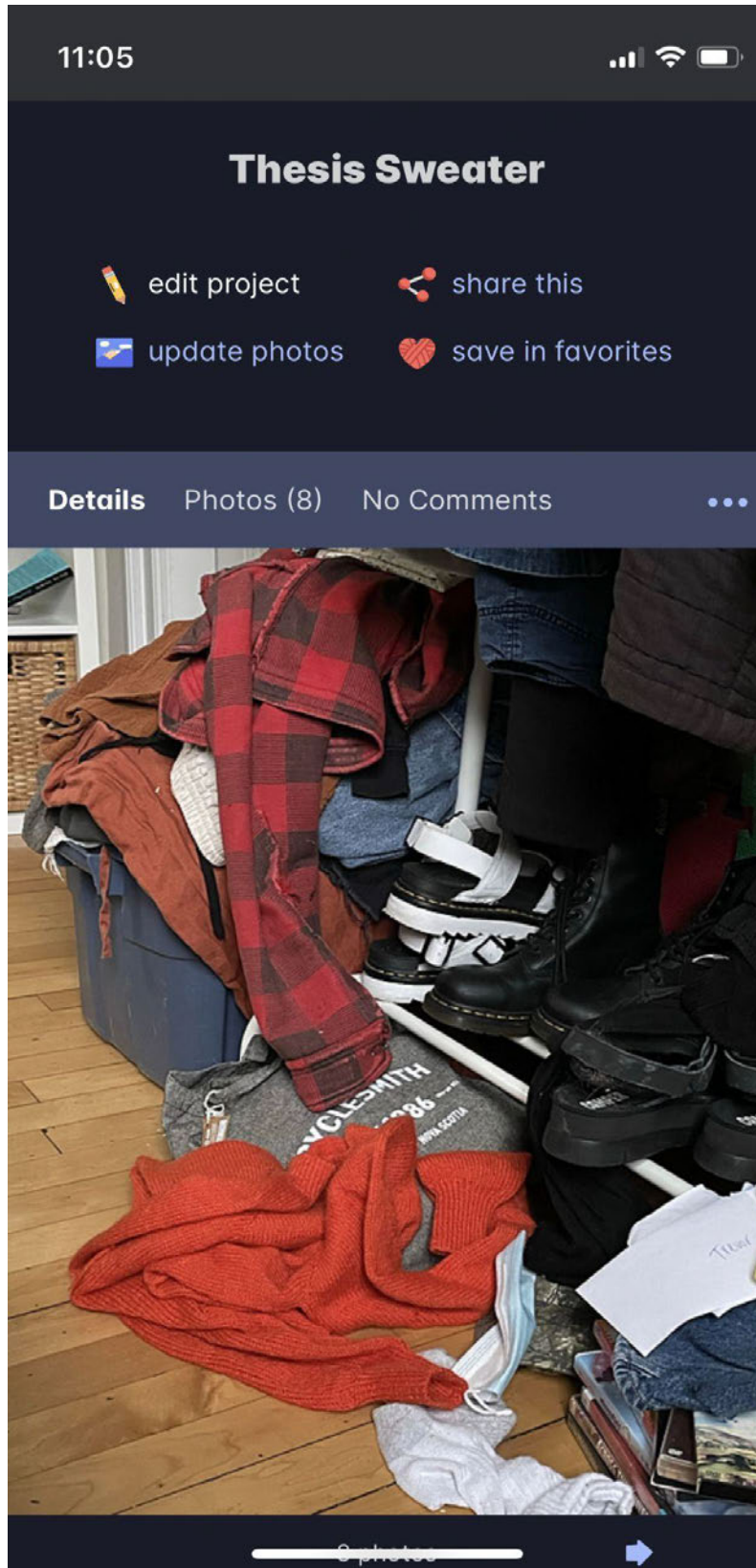


Figure 14: "The sweater, ends woven in and basically finished now"

ROW 3:

As I get into bed a couple nights ago, I snap a picture. The sweater, ends woven in and basically finished now, fallen off the bed into a pile of movies, old socks, clothing, and masks. It seems pertinent (at first, I write: potent –this word also seems accurate). I put it as the cover photo on my Ravelry “Thesis Sweater” project.

Yesterday, I finish the hat I began earlier this week, during a play at the Bus Stop Theatre sitting with my arms around [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. The play is called Crypthand. It is queer and sad; the set is beautiful. I hold out hopes for a happy ending. Plays have never really been my thing and there is a blast of cold air blowing out of the heat pump directly over us. [REDACTED] and I both put our jackets back on. I think about putting the hat on too. When I finish the hat mid play, I hold it in my hands for a moment and then immediately cast on another.

The play is set in 1790 something but hits close to my heart.

I begin knitting the gauge swatch tonight alone on the back porch. I pace around the house before I sit down to start it. Size 4mm needles, the bright orange yarn. I don’t always do gauge swatches. Maybe I like to knit dangerously? Maybe I am not overly concerned with the actual fitting of the garment? Maybe I am just anxious to begin.

[REDACTED] comes and sits with me on the back deck as I am writing this. We talk about many things. [REDACTED]

Earlier today talking with my supervisor they mention “not doing” or the idea of productive absence when I mention my struggles beginning this sweater/the refusing of validation/of outside validation or busyness. They think about this, mulling over how fun this project could be if the sweater is never started and I instead document the struggle of finding a good enough moment

that doesn't feel too rehearsed, or planned/contrived in its meaning and that moment never comes.

This feeling haunts many stages of the project even after it begins, at many moments of stops and starts, and now at the ending. The idea of "significance" hangs over it. Right now, it feels like (although the sweater is finished) this project will never end, the hat I knit out of the extra yarn has become a part of it. This writing, transcribing, looking back and placing the past in the here and now continues it on into the future, and becomes part of it too.

Knitting the hat feels different. But it may also be the seasons changing. I knit it quickly, most of it over a rainy Monday spent almost completely in bed. I am not worried about starting and finishing, moments invisibly captured. I am enjoying the simultaneous speed and slowness. The fabric growing between my fingers.

But today I start the ~~sweater~~ gauge test. I can tell after a few rows the needle size is too big, the stitches too loose.

I debate finishing this swatch that I know is wrong (the stitches feel off on my needles) for some sort of sense of due process or ripping it out and beginning again...as I usually would.



Figure 15: "I can tell after a few rows the needles size is too big, the stitches too loose."

ROW 4:

Back at Seven Bays. Two days off work and I am being blessed by two warm sunny new October days... then my last week working at the gallery. Now to tackle this again. It is my mom's and one of my best pals' birthdays. They are both in Ontario. I call them up, trying to get better at calling and get voice mails for both but leave messages just telling them I love them.

I get my haircut this morning. A new bi-yearly routine for me. Next week I start a new job. I need to set up a meeting with my supervisor as well.

Done.

I feel like I haven't been doing enough or moving fast enough. They mention wanting me to have this mostly done by December, so I don't have to pay for another semester.

I cast on some stitches on [REDACTED]'s back deck, before realizing I have brought the wrong sized needle. I grabbed one quickly before I left the house, but it is a ¼ size too big.

I will undo...it is okay. I am also thinking now of doing a tubular cast on.

[REDACTED] makes mojitos, the mint unstrained floats around the edges of the glass, catching on our teeth. A bunch of the JB crew are there, and [REDACTED] comes too but leaves early, sending me a text after saying [REDACTED]

Now pulling out this cast on and starting again.

I have a couple memories of this night, sitting next to [REDACTED] on the back deck, they pull out a small mason jar with scotch they brought from home. [REDACTED] has made rhubarb cake. Later we lie on the floor of [REDACTED]'s living room. [REDACTED] and I share a small glass of tequila over ice—which still feels strange after covid—and we eat from a large bag of slightly stale goldfish crackers I pull from my bag. [REDACTED]

I also remember [redacted] drawing attention to the knitting, that I am starting "the sweater". I sssh them, not wanting to talk about it. This feeling changes throughout the time spent knitting it. I begin to actively bring the project up, finding a lot of interest comes through conversations about the sweater with others and hearing about their own relationship to making, to body, to knitting.

I have now worn my finished sweater twice. The first time is [redacted] and the second is to work the next day. It feels surprisingly good, and the colour is amazing and surprisingly complimentary. The fit is tighter than I expected but still good [redacted]

[redacted] As they walk up to give me a hug outside the bar, I compliment their shirt and they return the compliment for my sweater. The ribbing along the waist and sleeves is tight, which makes the sweater sit well on the waist of my jeans. (Yesterday at work [redacted] wears a giant orange sweater dress in the exact same shade as my sweater, and glows too. I tell them orange is the colour of the year. I snap a photo of a bright orange house on down the road from Sourwood and driving down the far north end of Agricola I see a similarly fluorescent orange house. I think about pulling over to take a picture. When I take the sweater off the second day after work, I notice the traces of deodorant and the already light felting in the underarms.



Figure 16: "I snap a photo of a bright orange house"



Figure 17: "I have now worn my finished sweater twice"

Pub



12:45

Tuesday, October 4

This was a drawing from Bowser Tattoos, It was my phone screen background over the summer featuring cats lounging on a floral outdoor patio set. I have forgotten how to answer messages except yours is handwritten under the drawing.

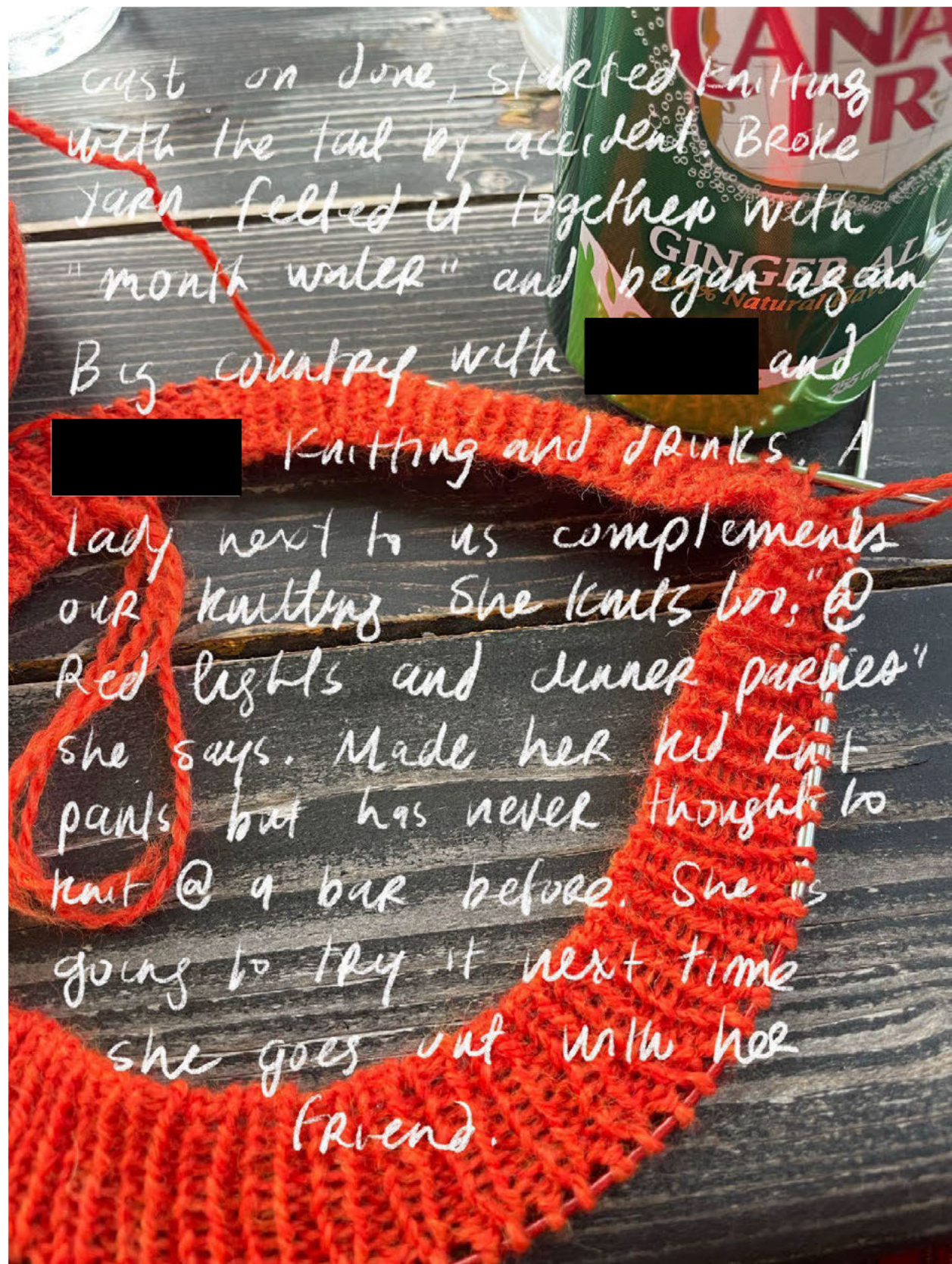
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Figure 18: I have forgotten how to answer messages (except yours)



Figure 19: "I tell them orange is the colour of the year."



cast on done, started knitting
with the tail by accident. Broke
yarn felted it together with
"mouth water" and began again.
Big country with [redacted] and

[redacted] knitting and drinks. A
lady next to us complements
our knitting. She knits too, "@
Red lights and dinner parties"
she says. Made her kid knit
pants but has never thought to
knit @ a bar before. She is
going to try it next time
she goes out with her
friend.

Figure 20: "She knits too. @ red lights and dinner parties"



Figure 21: "I start the short rows listening to Horsebath"

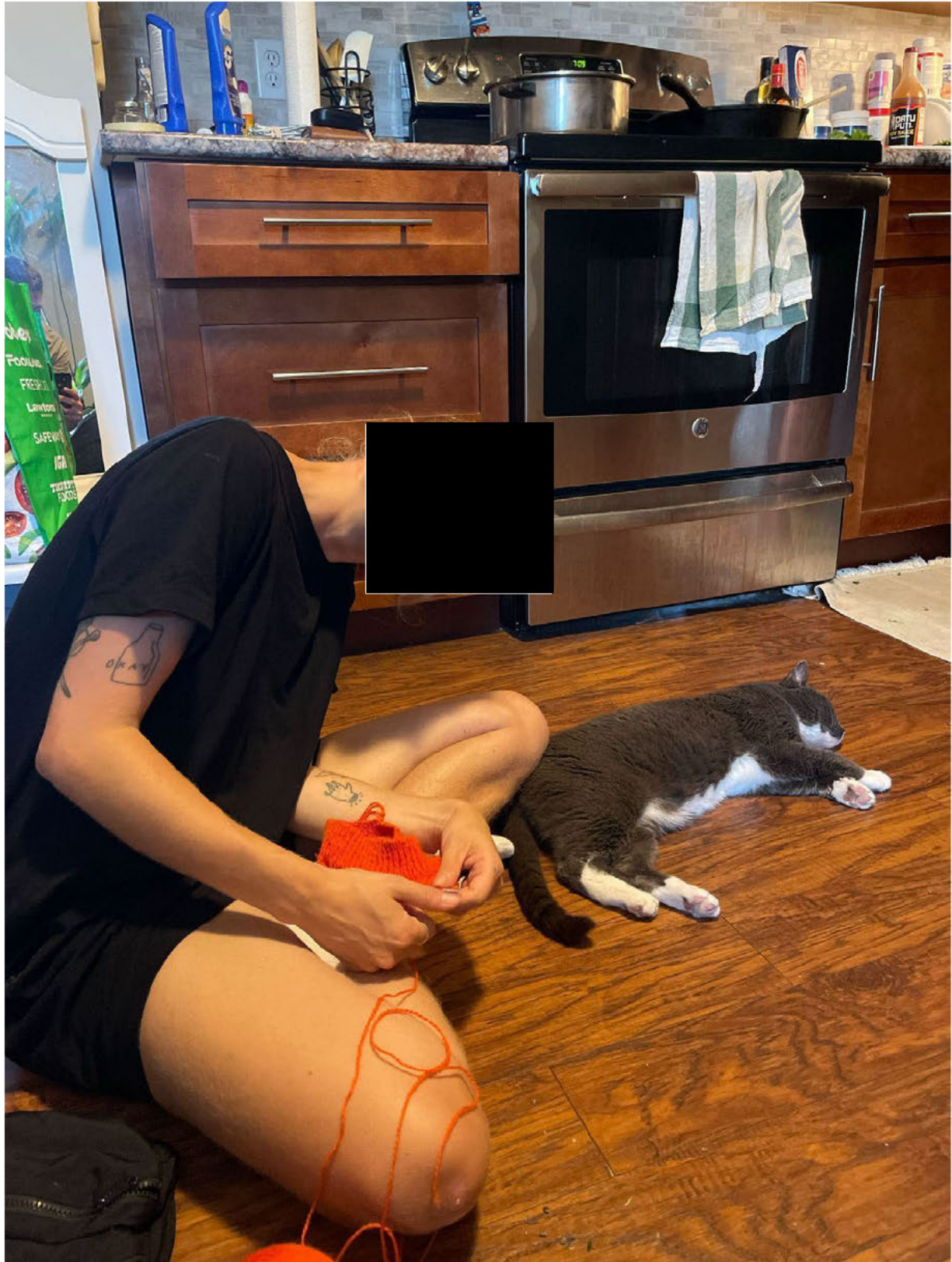


Figure 22: Knitting with Mackerel



Figure 23: 1 1/2 inches



Figure 24: Lawrencetown Beach Provincial Park



Figure 25

ROW 5:

I bring the sweater to go watch Nope in theatres with [REDACTED]. I need a knitting project for movie watching time. The sweater is not ideal. It is at a bit of a complicated part in the pattern for knitting in the dark with increases every other row, and I know I will probably screw it up and will have to resist the urge to turn on my phone flashlight in the dark theatre to sort it out. (Subtly of course? If you can do that sort of thing subtly.)

I make it through to almost the end of the movie before making a visible mistake. I will try to rip the area back, unpick it and see if it is fixable.

I should count the stitches too and make sure it is still on track.

It is time to switch to a longer circular needle. The stitches having increased to a point where they are squeezed onto the needle and pop off the tips of the needles when I put it in my bag, creating a bit of a rescue mission every time I pick it up to knit again.

I biked down to SMU today to pick up two more books- The Practice of Everyday Life Vol. 2 and Depression - A Public Feeling.

I have been struggling with the idea of capture still, what is too much and what is too little. I keep the ticket stub for Nope and am going to tackle the ripping back now.

I have some photos and video from this ripping back attempt, unpicking stitches around one of the increases and pulling the loops out about 6 or so rows down to fix the mistake and then looping them back up correctly. I am not sure if they succeed in capturing the experience. I will have to find them and insert them here.

To prepare for movie knitting, I carefully place markers at the increases, and add 3 knots to the yarn marker I am using for the start of the row so I will be able to tell it apart by feel.



Figure 26: "I make it through to almost the end of the movie before making a visible mistake."



Figure 27: "I will try to rip the area back..."

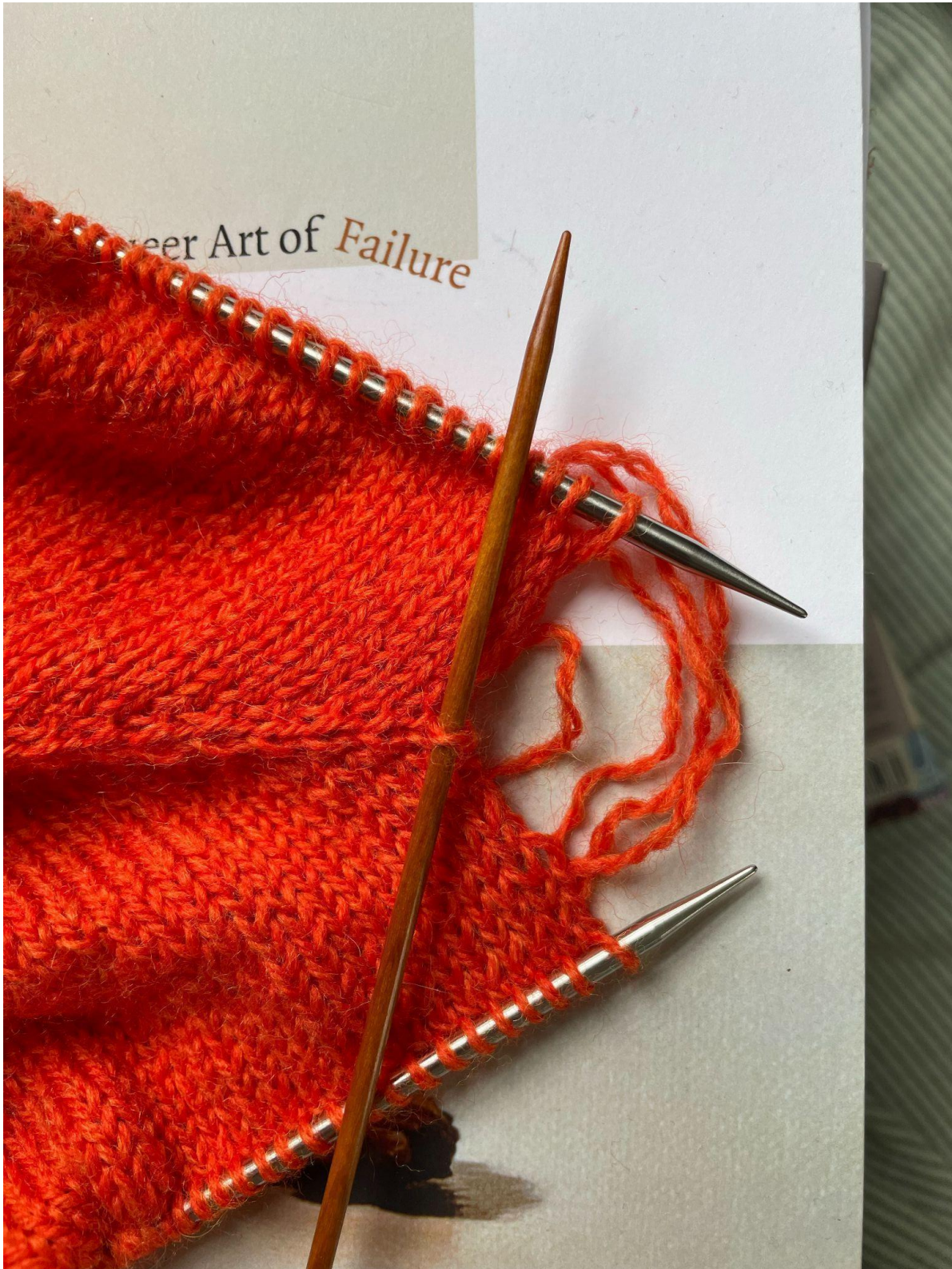


Figure 28; "...unpick it"



Figure 29: "...and see if it is fixable."

policing, and small businesses in north end Halifax. They are doing interviews with employees and owners of businesses.

■ says to me that the conversations are EVERYTHING. They are not “the data”, they do not need to be interpreted or translated, they are the research. They are the knowledge. They are collaboration. You and another human talking and coming together to new conclusions and experiences together in the moment.

Before ■ says this, they add the caveat that “this may be off topic” but it isn’t. It’s spot on. But now I am left wondering, and ■ asks it out loud to me as well “What is the sweater? Is it the conduit? Or is it the object/person you are coming to realizations with?”

Maybe both.

This morning I think that maybe simply thinking about the sweater as “the research” may help. But now I write it here and can’t remember why.

■ *feels like a collaborator in this story, this project. For a moment I think this project should be dedicated to them.*



Figure 30: "I had bleached my eyebrows with leftover bleach"

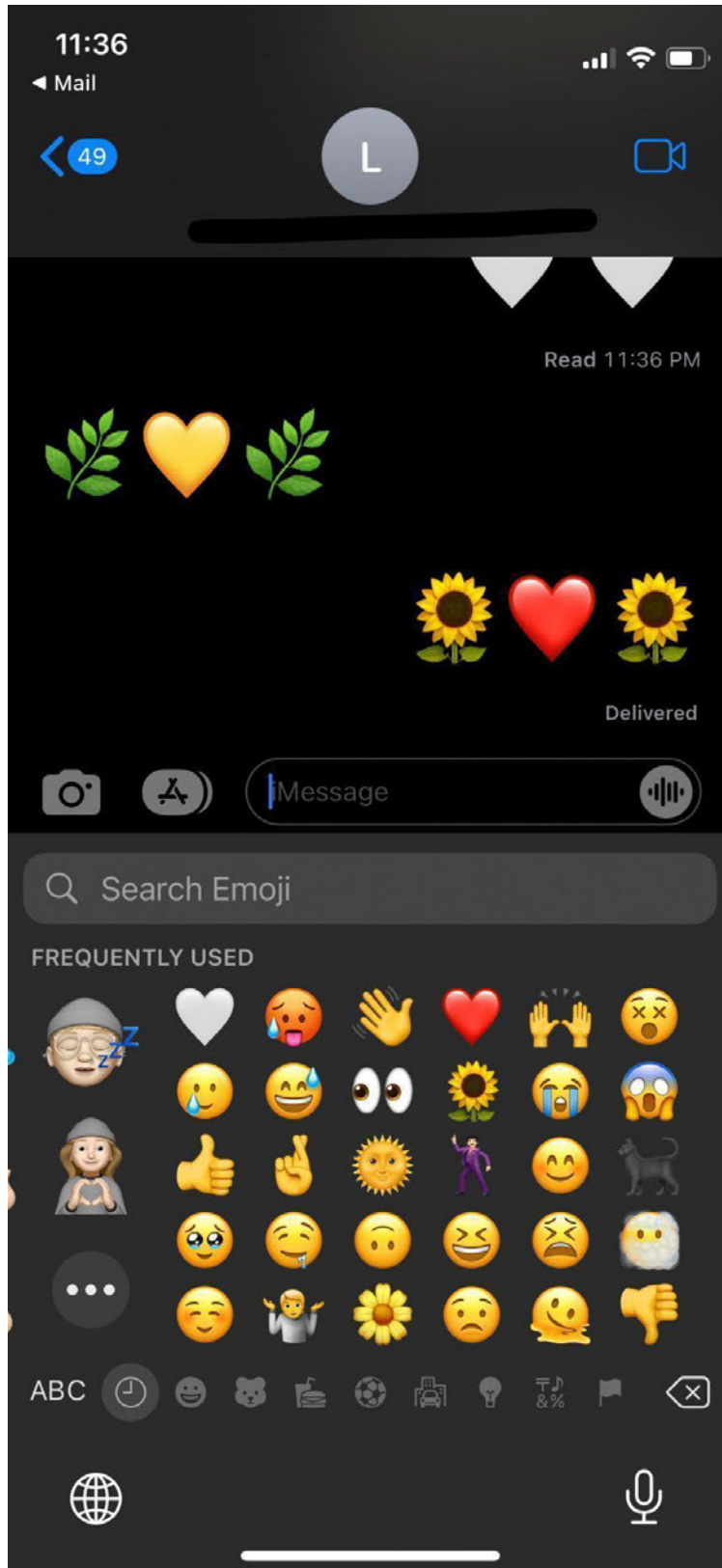
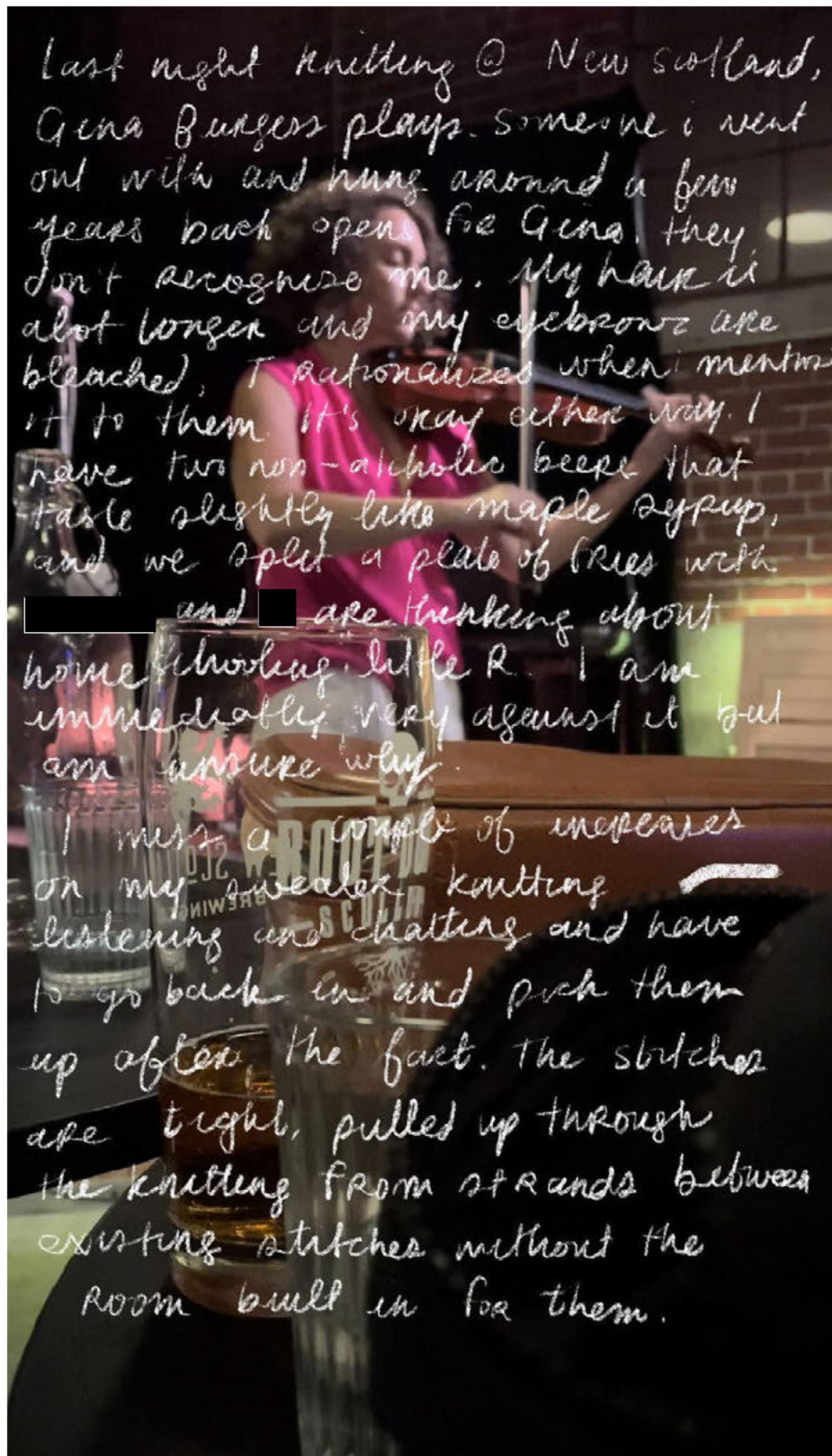


Figure 31: Sunflower, red heart, sunflower

A photograph of a person with long hair, wearing a pink shirt, sitting at a bar and knitting. In the foreground, there are several glasses of beer on the bar counter. The background is slightly blurred, showing the interior of the bar.

Last night knitting @ New Scotland,
Gina Burgers plays. Someone I went
out with and hung around a few
years back opens for Gina, they
don't recognize me. My hair is
alot longer and my eyebrows are
bleached, I rationalizes when I mention
it to them. It's okay either way. I
have two non-alcoholic beers that
taste slightly like maple syrup,
and we split a plate of fries with
[redacted] and [redacted] are thinking about
home schooling little R. I am
immediately very against it but
am unsure why.

I miss a couple of increases
on my sweater knitting —
listening and chatting and have
to go back in and pick them
up after the fact. The stitches
are tight, pulled up through
the knitting from strands between
existing stitches without the
Room built in for them.

Figure 32: "I miss a round of increases on my sweater knitting, listening and chatting and have to go back in and pick them up"



Figure 33; "The stitches are tight, pulled up through the knitting from strands between existing stitches, without the room built in for them"



Figure 34: "They would start out this big...and end up this big"

ROW 7:

Sitting in my new office at [REDACTED]. This week (my second week on the job) I am making up hours after spending the first few days of the week in Cape Breton, my parents came to see the fall colours. This morning: a meeting with my supervisor I wear my orange hat. They ask for the pattern so their mom can knit them one. I have been getting a lot of compliments on it over the week. My [REDACTED] says "Nice hat" as soon as they log into our first teams meeting together, and [REDACTED] last evening tells me the same. It is a nice hat. I am thinking about making more. I have worn it almost every day this week [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Yesterday I go out with a bunch of ex JB crew to see [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] play music. I bring the sweater and knit it as [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] talk about their crushes [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

11:18



Edit Info

Done

Edit

Preview

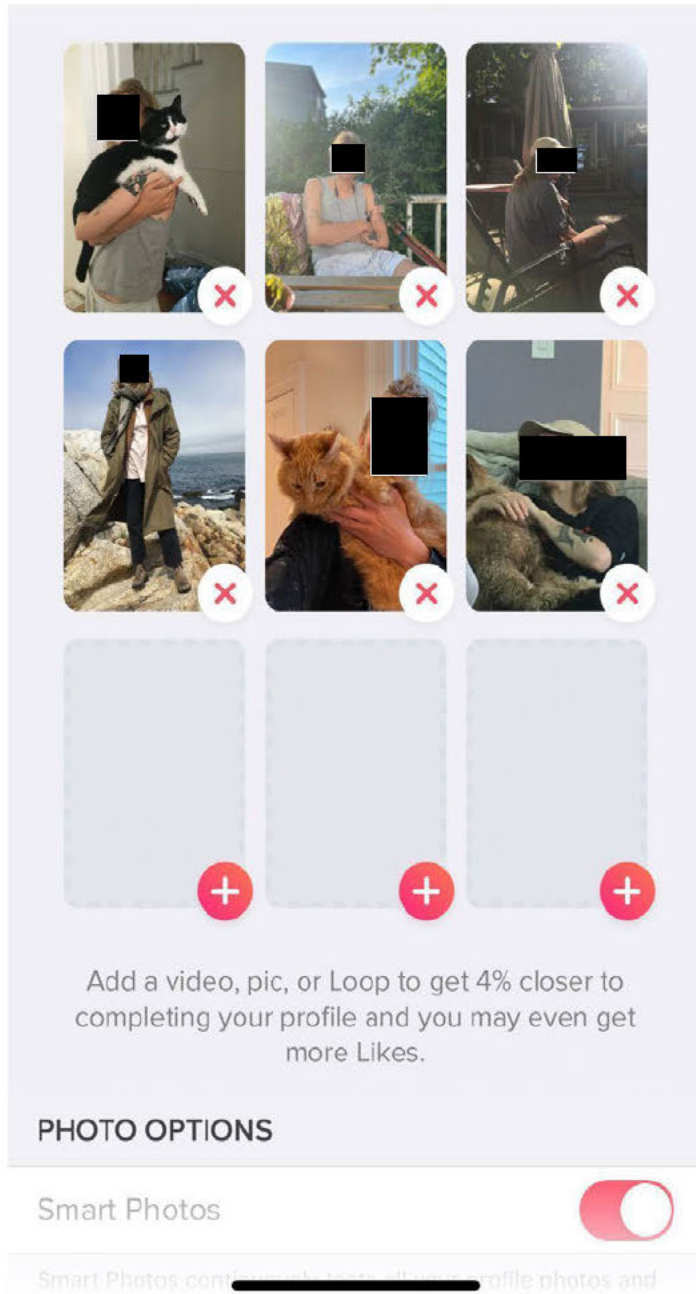


Figure 35: [REDACTED]



Figure 36: "...and sometimes find what I want and sometimes don't"



Post



This was a screenshot from @aredotna's Instagram sharing a series of images on creation by @hotemogf. It talks about there being no new ideas but just different ways of giving old ideas new life.

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20 hours ago



Figure 37: "There are no new ideas"

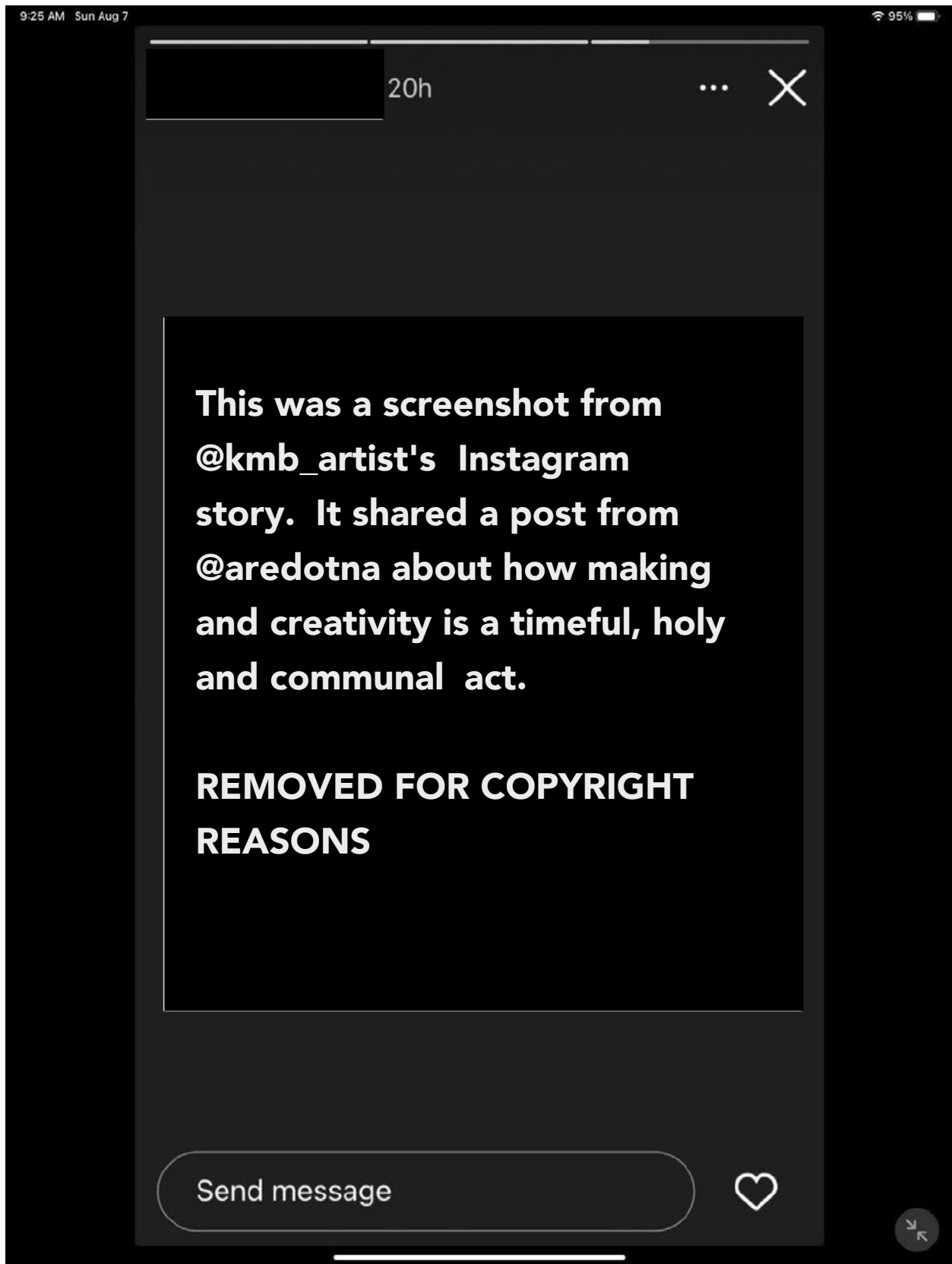


Figure 38: "...creation is a holy act."

ROW 8:

Today: a stormy November day, [REDACTED] takes me out to seven bays to do some work. My supervisor messages me three days back saying it has been three weeks since we last met and I said I would send them what I have been working on. I have been hoping to pull this all together somehow before I send it over. I mention this to [REDACTED] and they say that they sent [REDACTED] so many terrible drafts. I am not used to showing people my work in an unfinished state.

We are a week out from music week. [REDACTED] and I went up to Cape Breton with a bunch of our other pals. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were there too. It was an intense week and a magical sort of mixing of worlds my Halifax loves meeting some of my Cape Breton loves. I see [REDACTED] for the first time in what must be a year or more, [REDACTED] with their new girlfriend (a piercer who pierces me and [REDACTED] septum's the next day). Still coming down from this trip I look over at the notes I am about to transcribe today and see they are from another Cape Breton trip late-summer. This feels like a special and strange coincidence.

When [REDACTED] and I cross the causeway home there is some sort of feeding frenzy happening. It has been the talk of the town over the weekend and people from Sydney are making plans to head down to Port Hasting to watch. We get some A&W and sit (first on the wrong side of the road, where-- even here-- you can hear the schools of fish surfacing as they pass through the canal in a weird whispering) and see a humpback, dolphins and what I believe is a sea turtle, though [REDACTED] thinks it might just be a buoy.

A surprise beautiful weekend. Cape Breton and not solely for business. [REDACTED] drops off some of their sculptures at Boutique Margarite and we spend the night camping in Cheticamp, and a couple hours on the beach watching the sun set and seals surfacing over and over on their journey up the coast.

Last night we share some dear friends with some other dear friends. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] stay with us @ [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s in Louisbourg.

[REDACTED] is a knitter- textile maker extraordinaire and they and [REDACTED] talk knitting and patterns. [REDACTED] has just finished

their first pair of socks and [REDACTED] is wearing their own handknit sweater from My Favourite Knitwear in Briggs and Little.

At one time I come back into the living room with a fresh cup of coffee and [REDACTED] is knitting my sweater. I love it. They look up and say, "I think our tension is very different" and I assure them I don't mind. [REDACTED] knows about the project, and they knit themselves into it in a tangible sense. I am struck by wanting to mark the stitches they have touched but lose track of them almost instantly. [REDACTED] sits in the window seat reading Octavia Butler and snaps pictures with a film Leica camera they found earlier this year, cleaning out of their grandmother's house. Everyone is jealous. I haven't heard of the brand before.

This night on the porch is also when [REDACTED] tells me about the job opening [REDACTED] I send an email to [REDACTED] right then and then dread and regret the possibility of embracing such a change continuously for the next month. When [REDACTED] finally calls me, I am working at the gallery. I see the caller ID and say "FUCK!" and toss the phone down on the table. Letting it go to voicemail, I settle on the idea though I might do the interview, I won't take the job.

Today we catch up with [REDACTED] @ Eltuek. I miss them so much; they have begun treatment for rectal cancer the day before and they are disappointed and surprised with how bad they feel already. Radiation and Oral chemo. They text me in the morning "fair warning, I am feeling very fragile today" and I am, as always, in awe of their out rightness, their simpleness and kindness.

I have been putting off my school and writing time in exchange for crafting. With the new job I have three sometimes, four days off a week and have been reinvigorated to start and finish some projects. This week I finish a commissioned quilt and begin thinking again about some curtains I promised [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

█ looks thinner and more delicate already. I wonder if it is my imagination, but I remember summer with them on the farm and walks with them in the winter with their █ and my Mabel before we gave her away.

I tell them about the sweater. I don't knit it with them, but it is in my bag, and they ask me a bit about it. In honesty, I can't wait for this time in my life to be finished and maybe somehow, I can be here again with them permanently.

Everyone is commenting on my hair. An old friend, █, stares at me as I sit with █ in the fourth-floor lounge at Eltuek for some time, before they say, "Do I know you?"

I host a little craft night at the house and █ asks about my masters and the sweater: "Are you finished?". I say I haven't worn the sweater since right after I finished it months ago now. Since then, it has been hanging on my clothes rack with the other clothes. They ask if this is because it feels precious...I am not sure. I say "maybe" in the moment. But the answer is actually no. I don't wear most of what I knit. This new job has given me the opportunity to not have to worry about clothes and every day I put on basically the same thing. Black jeans and an oversized button up. (I feel like maybe I should be trying a bit more, going to work every day as █). A month or so ago I put away all my summer clothes, and all my "dressy clothes" from the gallery. Mostly actual dresses but some other things too. It feels wonderful. Last week I wear the same pair of jeans all week.



Figure 39: "A surprise beautiful weekend"



Figure 40: "...a couple hours on the beach watching the sun set and seals surfacing over and over on their journey up the coast."



Figure 41; "do I have a screenshot?"



Figure 42: "I often get asked why do I do my illustrations this way"

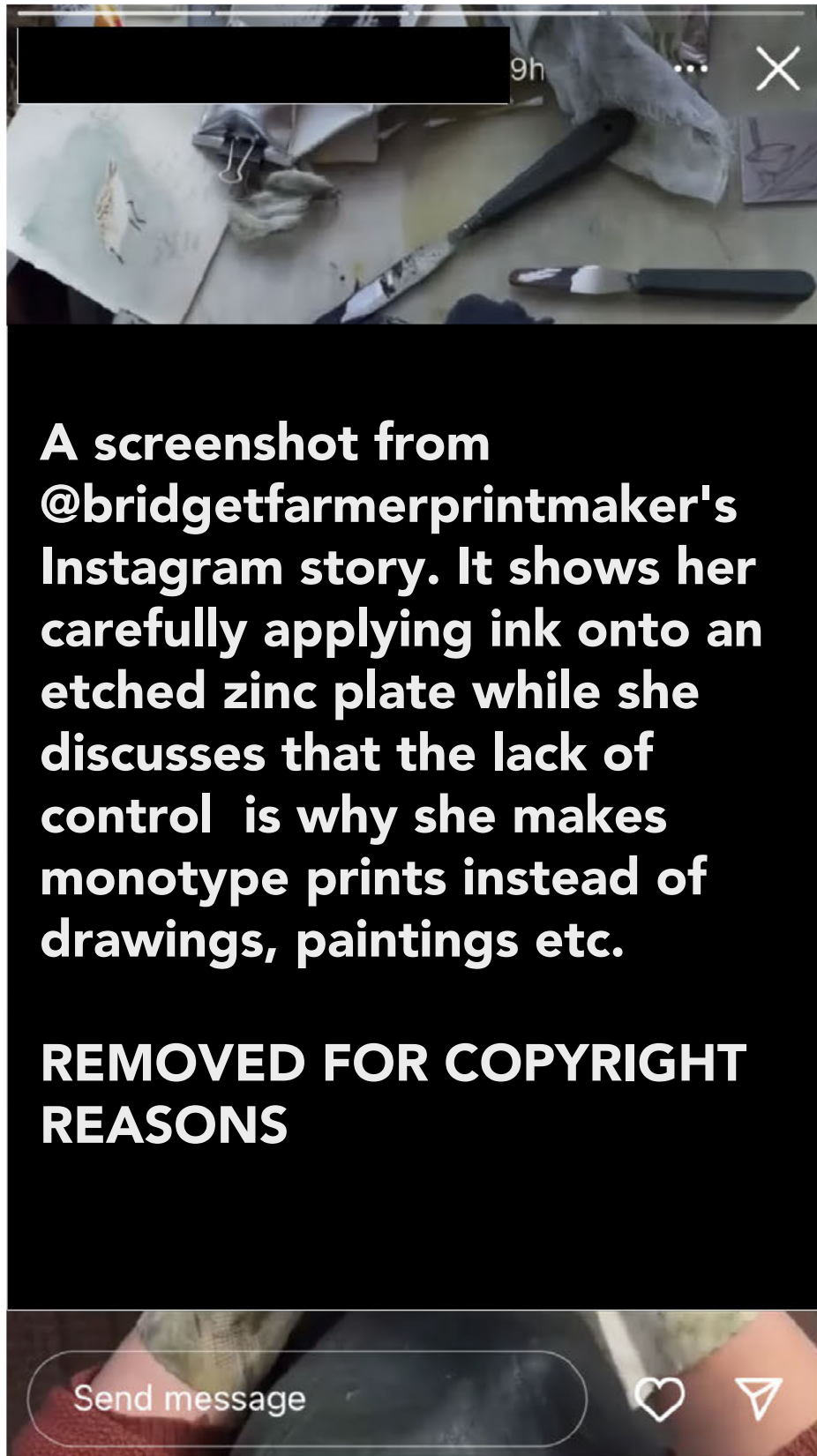


Figure 43: "not just with pen and ink and paints and such..."



Figure 44: "..."

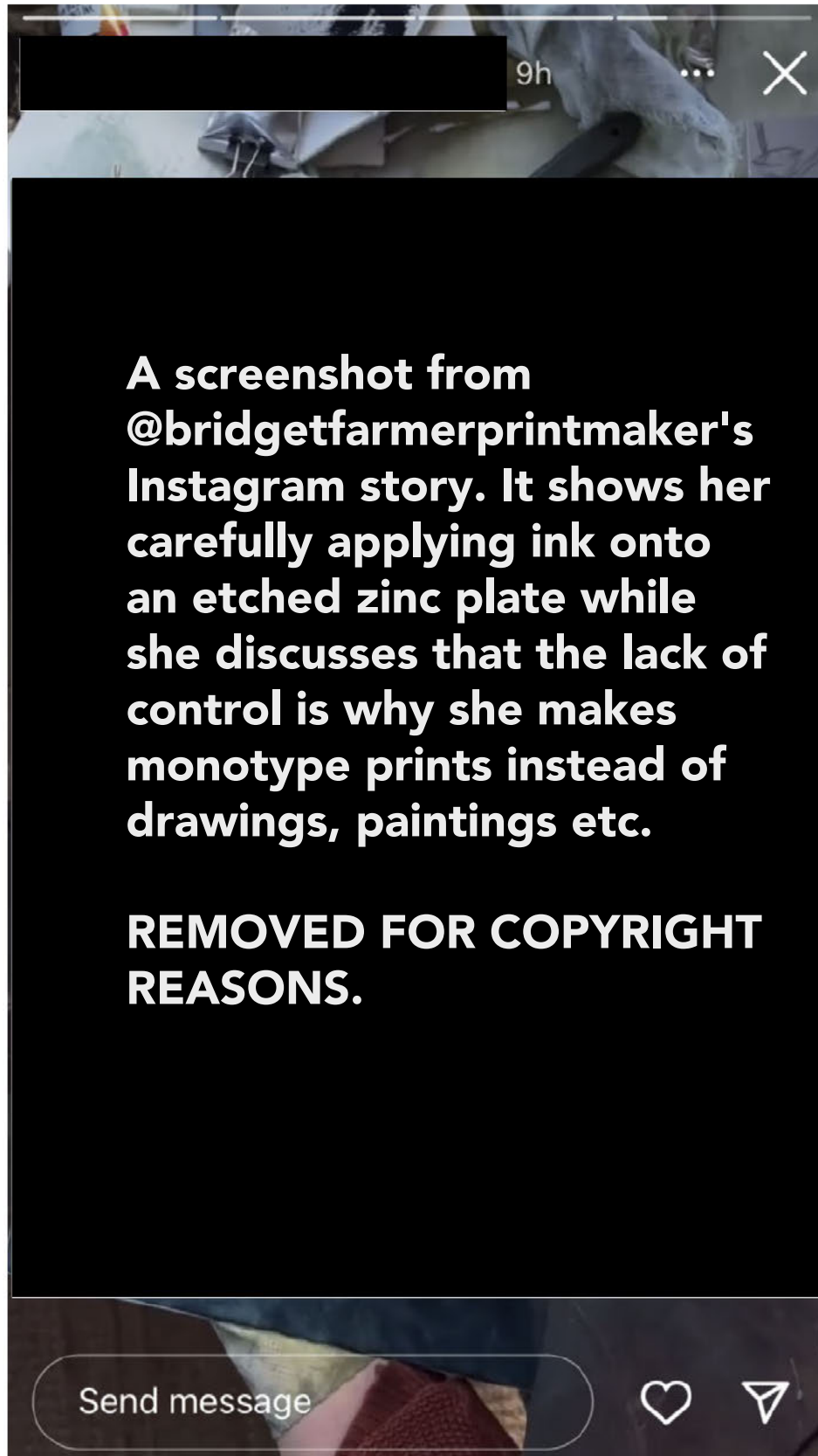


Figure 45: "like I haven't fully worked out an answer to that..."

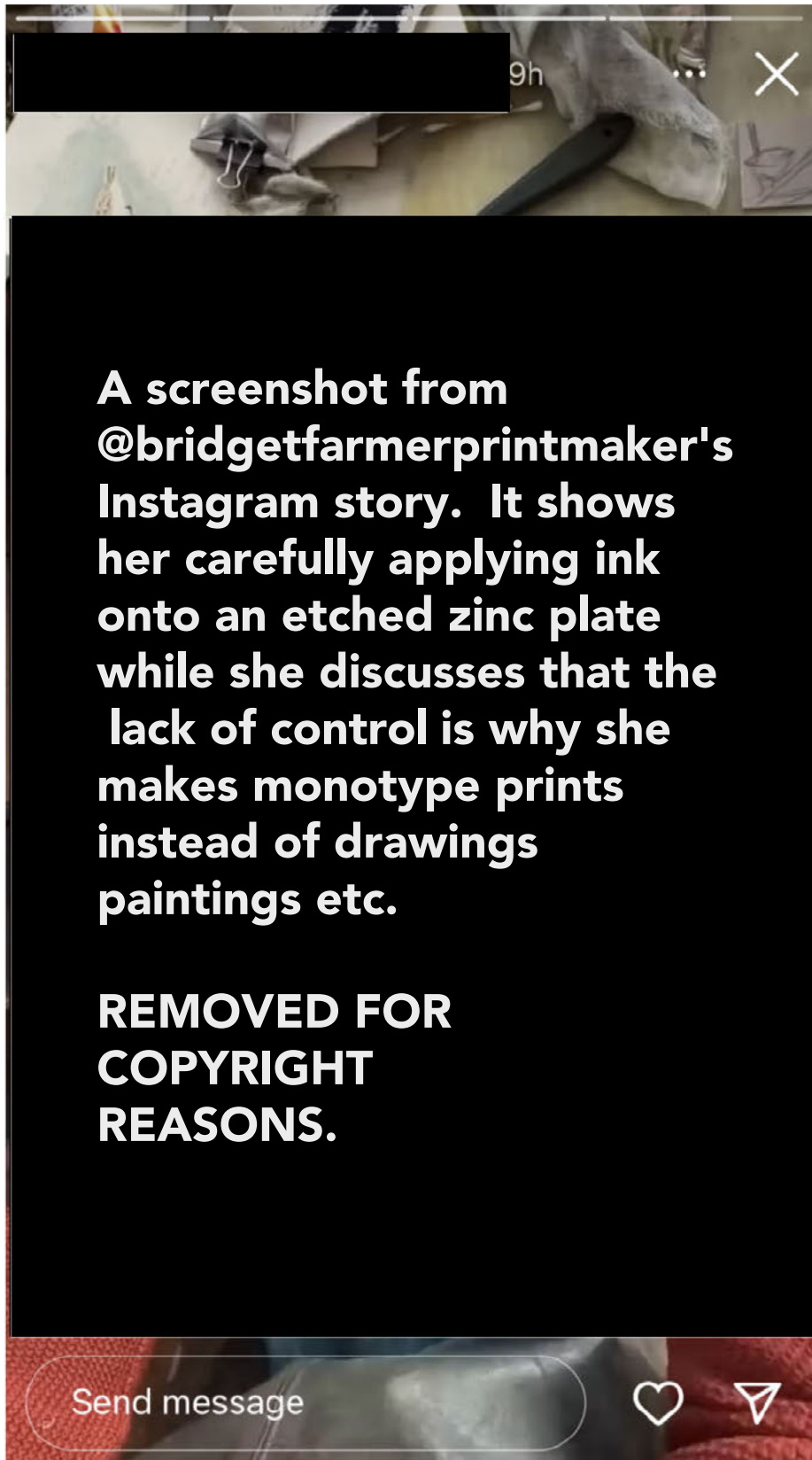


Figure 46: "...but I think I like not being fully in control..."

“I’m interested in how, for many of us (an “us” that includes a range of social positions and identities in need of specification), everyday life produces feelings of despair and anxiety, sometimes extreme, sometimes throbbing along at a low level, and hence barely discernible from *just the way things are*. Feelings that get internalized and named, for better or for worse, as depression.”
(Depression: A Public Feeling, p 14)

“My emphasis on depression as ordinary represents an effort to describe the present through attention to the felt experience of everyday life, including moments that might seem utterly banal in comparison with the moments of shock or ordinary extraordinariness...”
(Depression: A Public Feeling, p.12)

“Phenomenology can offer a resource for queer studies insofar as it emphasizes the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready-to-hand, and the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds.”

(Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 2)

“...we experience disorientation, we might notice orientation as something we do not have. After all, concepts often reveal themselves as things to think “with” when they fail to be translated into being or action. It is in this mode of disorientation that one might begin to wonder: What does it mean to be orientated? How do we begin to know or to feel where we are, or even where we are going, by lining ourselves up with the features of the ground we inhabit, the sky that surrounds us or the imaginary lines that cut through maps? How do we know which way to turn to reach our destination?”

(Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 6)

“Phenomenology reminds us that spaces are not exterior to bodies; instead, spaces are like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body.”

(Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 9)

Someone somewhere has made a similar observation...that tools are not something you notice if they work well. But I think of ceramic artists who add "lip" or "finger" interest to their mugs...and then of my favourite mug that Mabel broke with her tail, and I tried to fix with glue and gold powder, but then after, though "fixed" or functional again it had lost the joy I associated with it.

I am also thinking about a professor I had in craft school, who had recently arrived from a more conceptual art school in New York and told me I should consider dipping my hand-spun yarn and garments in latex. I remember being deeply offended by this suggestion, that making the yarn suddenly not useful, in the traditional sense, would give it more value. But maybe there is something to be said for "disorientating" or queering something in that way. Surprising our assumptions. But does one way have more or less value?

ROW 9:

I see a post talking about anti-methods (on the academia Instagram page? Do I have a screen shot?). It states how we should have sections in papers documenting things we tried that didn't work.

Time is going by so fast. I have a meeting coming up with my supervisor. 3 weeks since the last one and it feels like I have not got much done.

In *Depression: A Public Feeling*, Cvetkovich says their work is indebted to Kathleen Stewart who writes about "following the textures and surfaces of everyday life rather than exposing the punitive realities of underlying structures" (5).

She is writing in regard to critique and how we might find alternative modes to make change. I make a note to read more from Kathleen Stewart and her "ordinary affects."

I have not done this yet.

I have been lugging *Queer Phenomenology* by Sara Ahmed around with me for a couple days now. Reading has not been coming easy to me. I have signed into social media on my phone again-- Instagram, Twitter, everything--and I spend the morning over coffee reading about "Bennifer" recently married, after getting back together more than 20 years after they first dated.

Last night I knit a bit out with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] over dinner at the Narrows. [REDACTED] is giving [REDACTED] advice on animation and 3D design education options. They ask me to come with them after to a "strange happy musical" at the Bus Stop Theatre. At first, I agree and then I look up the event. It costs \$50 and it is interactive. No seating. Faced with the idea of not being able to

knit through it I decline.

They propose we meet up after instead. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I know that after the event it will be +10:00PM and I will not be going anywhere. But I play with the idea until about 9:30, cleaning the bedroom and watching Midsomer Murders—knowing also that I have no energy [REDACTED] and instead tuck into bed after sending them text asking for forgiveness.

They reply, “It’s no worry and no need to ask forgiveness, so important to do what feels right for you.”

Which I struggle with, knowing how many good experiences have come from pushing through anxiety and getting into the world. This feels like it might have been one of those evenings, but I can’t bring myself to leave my comfort. 2 cats, [REDACTED] tv and sleep.



Figure 47: "on body"



Figure 48: "...and feeling so luck to share this craft with others." I hope you find moments of joy, stillness, and wonderment in your day today."

ROW 10:

I keep buying books, but I don't read them. I have good intentions. The love of words is one I have lost somewhere, and still hope to get back somehow. So, I buy new, beautiful books, unconsciously hoping they will be the spark. I get Billy Ray Belcourt's newest novel, A Minor Chorus and Cole Arthur Riley's This Here Flesh, the title of the latter I find left in a note on my phone, under a scan of the receipt from purchasing the sweater's yarn. I don't know when or why or where I made it. Who told me about it or where I saw it? It looks maybe a little too spiritual for me, and I buy it thinking of my friend [REDACTED], that I will read it and give it to them, though I can't be sure it wasn't [REDACTED] who told me about it in the first place.

IT WAS (lol)

[REDACTED] sends me a pdf filled with links and notes to and about their favourite fan-fics, mostly Harry Potter themed, love stories between Harry and Draco (a Drarry) and Sirius and Lupin (a Wolfstar?) some set in alternate universes (AU). I learn some new terms. In bed that night I am torn by the desire to start reading one or to knit. I end up knitting but not for long. The time change and dark November days have me exhausted.

Yesterday morning I finally go to the doctor. I cancel two appointments in September. As an excuse, there are some regular things, [REDACTED] but really, I want to get some bloodwork done and open up a door to talk about my ongoing depression and fatigue. She asks me about my family history. Cancer, yes, depression, yes. She looks at me and says, "we can do the blood work, but iron pills aren't going to solve everything," and she lists the symptoms of depression: anxiety, fatigue, tearfulness, low pleasure...etc., as my eyes well up a bit, face still half hidden by a mask.

[REDACTED] and I talk about a similar thing later that night at the bar. How the last five years have broken us, our hope, memory, moods, both leaving bad jobs, the pandemic, [REDACTED]'s relationship ending. They are hoping to pass the blame onto an old concussion, and I too on some underlying condition: low iron, ADHD, some sort of low spectrum autism maybe? The doctor asks me when I started feeling this way, and I say I was here in this office 3 years ago and asked to have blood work done too...but never went to have it collected. I remember the young male doctor—not much older than me—wore Blundstones and when he asks me how my lack of appetite and inability

to get out of bed is connected to a bad job experience I had 2 years ago, I start to cry again. I remember the way he looked at me, kindly and it made me not want to come back.

The doctor yesterday looks at me and says, "bloodwork is a good place to start".

The email from my supervisor is in my inbox, and I still haven't responded to it. Yesterday I organize the photos I have put aside on my phone and load them into Google Drive. Today I am decided on finishing these transcriptions.

My supervisor suggests that I don't think much about writing or reading at this point. This morning we drink coffee on their back deck with Carl the dog, who I always want to call Gary, after my friend [REDACTED]'s dog who is the same colour and temperament.

[REDACTED] is very excited about the sweater. I wish I was too.

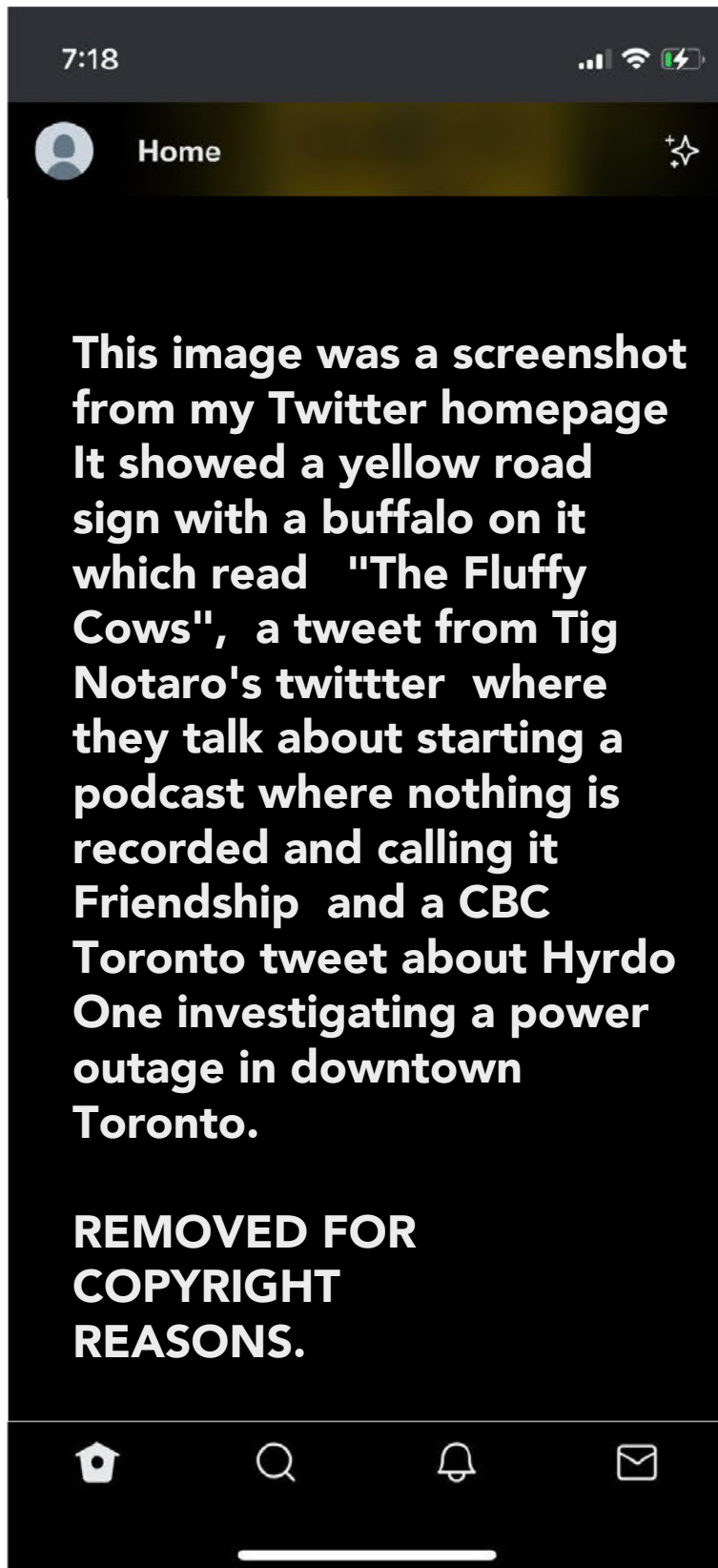


Figure 49: "I'm starting a new podcast where my guest comes over, we hang out, and then we don't record or document any of it. It's called Friendship..."

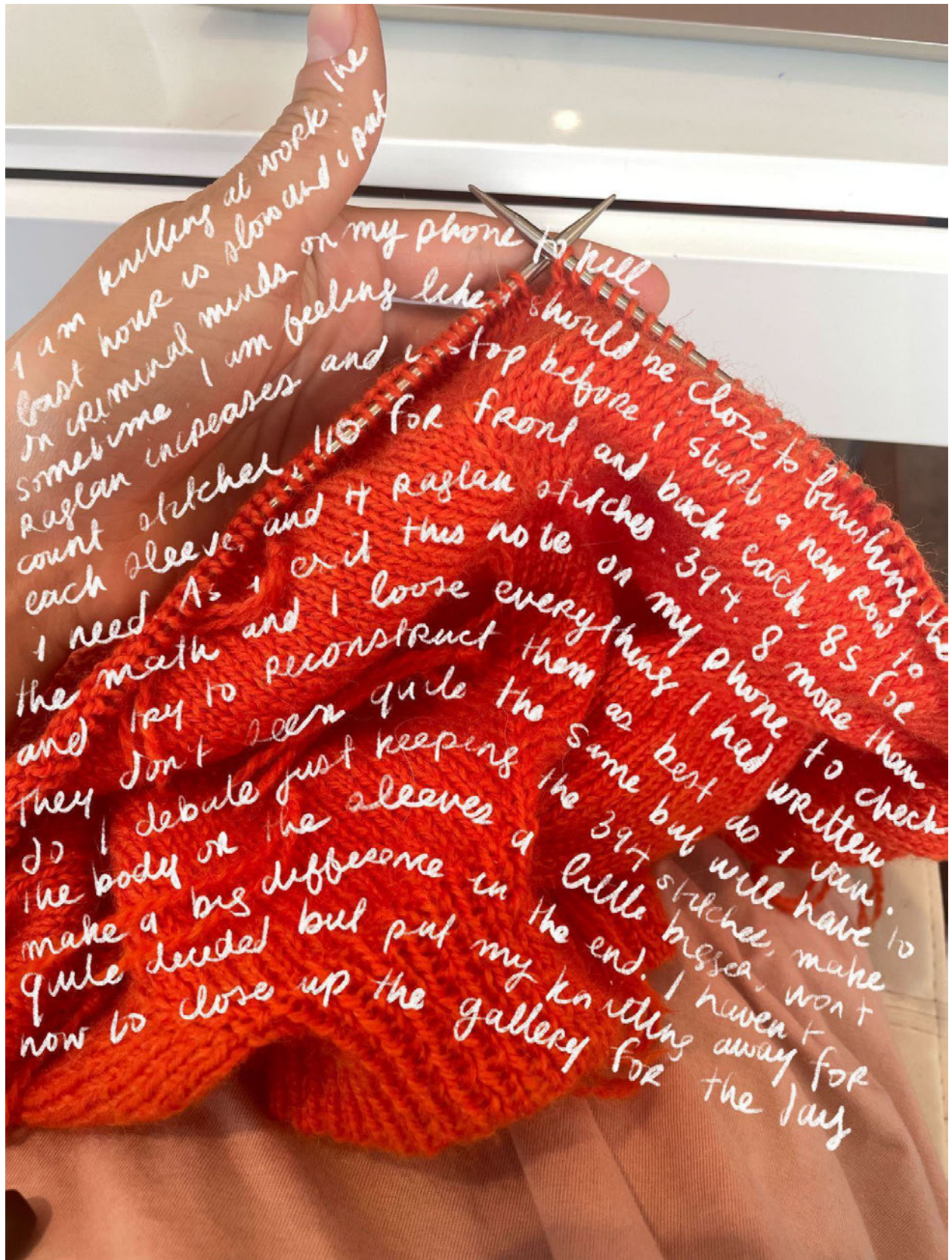


Figure 50: "I lose everything I had written..."



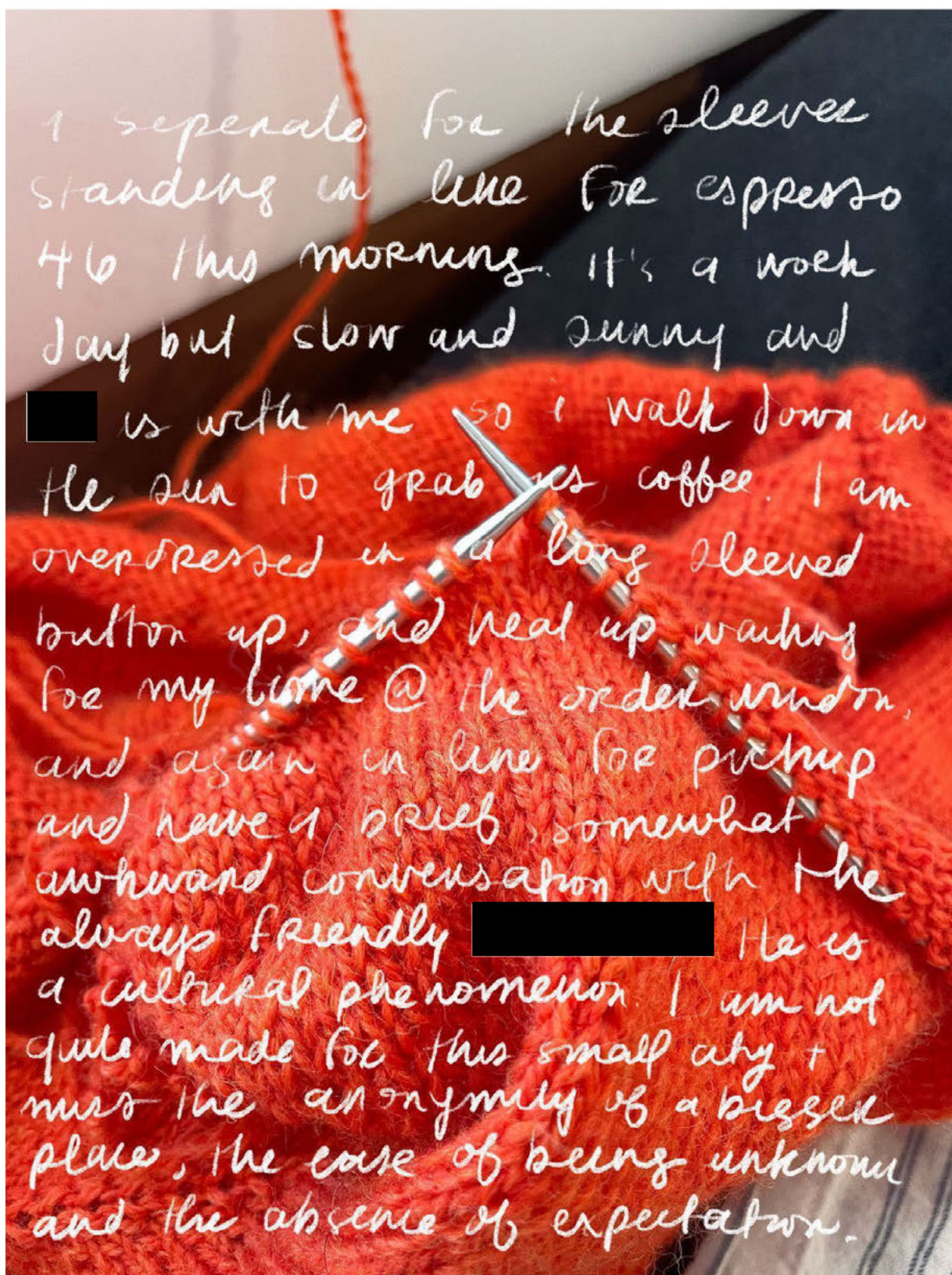
Figure 51: "I should be close to finishing up the raglan increases."



Figure 52: End of the first ball of yarn



Figure 53: Fiona

A photograph of a red knitted fabric with a silver pen resting on it. The pen is positioned diagonally across the fabric. Handwritten text in white ink is overlaid on the image, following the curve of the fabric. The text is a personal narrative about a morning routine at a coffee shop. There are two black rectangular redaction marks: one at the beginning of the second line and another in the middle of the eighth line.

I separate for the sleeves
standing in line for espresso
46 this morning. It's a work
day but slow and sunny and
[redacted] is with me so I walk down in
the sun to grab my coffee. I am
overdressed in a long sleeved
button up, and heat up waiting
for my turn @ the order window,
and again in line for pickup
and have a brief, somewhat
awkward conversation with the
always friendly [redacted]. He is
a cultural phenomenon. I am not
quite made for this small city +
miss the anonymity of a bigger
place, the ease of being unknown
and the absence of expectation.

Figure 54: "I separate for the sleeves standing in line for espresso 46 this morning"

I meet [redacted] at the Kings Library after a meeting with [redacted] to do some reading and work. I read two articles but don't absorb much + I'm around to find we are sitting in the arts section and I skim through a book on William Morris my first textile love. [redacted] asks me if they could interview me about the sweater next week. [redacted] is working on her own masters and has been interviewing local businesses about their experiences with police. [redacted] asks to read my proposal and I am hesitant to share it with her. I feel so awkward about having her read it. I'm still so self-conscious when it comes to writing. Later in the week I send it to [redacted]. Today I am @ work, another slow day. I have been up dating my website in my down time and looking through my work both fills me with a sort of satisfaction and a need to make more again. I wonder about this joy I find in that archive, and what this sort of pride means.

Figure 55: "...still so self-conscious when it comes to writing."

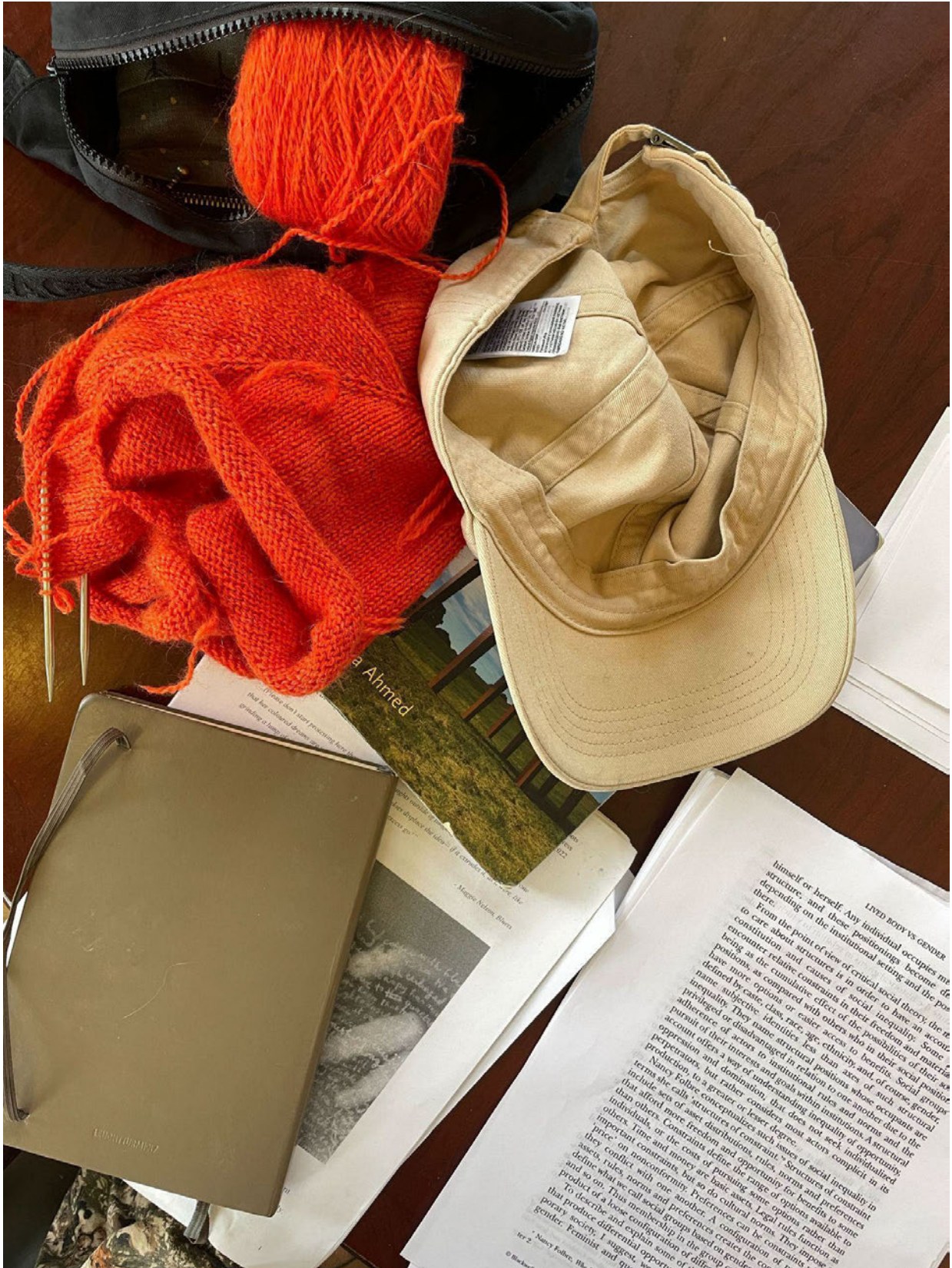


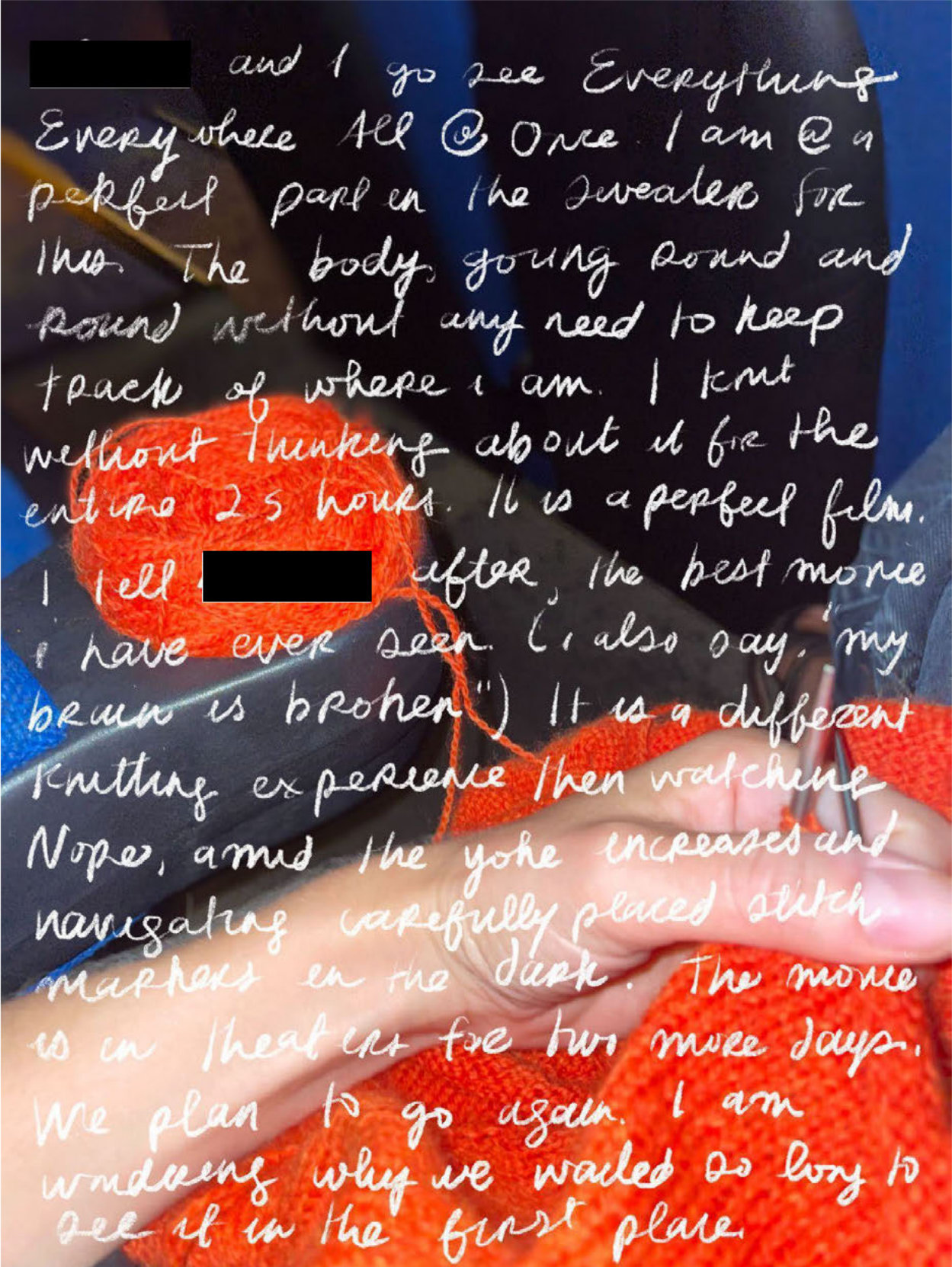
Figure 56: "I read two articles but don't absorb much"

“What passes through history is not only the work done by generations, but the “sedimentation” of that work is the condition of arrival for future generations. Objects take the shape of this history; objects ‘have value’ and they take the shape through labour. They are formed out of labor, but they also “take the form” of that labour...History cannot simply be perceived on the surface of the object, even if how objects surface or take shape is an effect of such histories. In other words, history cannot simply be turned into something that is given in its sensuous certainty, as if it could be a property of an object.”

(Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 41)



Figure 57: Halifax – Sambro Creek



and I go see Everything
Everywhere All @ Once. I am @ a
perfect part in the sweater for
this. The body, going round and
round without any need to keep
track of where I am. I knit
without thinking about it for the
entire 25 hours. It is a perfect film.
I tell [redacted] after, the best movie
I have ever seen. (I also say, "my
brain is broken") It is a different
knitting experience than watching
Nope, around the yoke increases and
navigating carefully placed stitch
markers in the dark. The movie
is in theaters for two more days.
We plan to go again. I am
wondering why we waited so long to
see it in the first place.

Figure 58: "...going round and round without any need to keep track of where I am"



Figure 59: "I want to remember the feeling this movie gave me as I left the theater. It inspires me to be kinder and better in all my relationships"

And yet, ... Heidegger differentiates between using something and perceiving something, which he describes in terms of grasping that something thematically (98). The example he uses is the hammer. When the hammer hammers, then it is "ready-to-hand." The nearness of the hammer, the fact that it is available to me, is linked to its usefulness; it is near as it enables me to perform a specific kind of work. Such "ready-to-hand-ness" is interesting to Heidegger, insofar as it is something to do with what the hammer "is." Indeed, Heidegger suggests that the object as practice, as something we do something with, involves "its own kind of sight" (99) which is a different sight than looking at the hammer as if it were not something that simply hammered. Heidegger thus suggests that when the ready-to-hand is not "handy," we see it differently; it becomes "present-to-hand." So the hammer breaks, and it is not that I no longer see what the object really is (for it "is" a hammer), but that I see it in a different way, as something that does not move toward something: "When equipment cannot be used, this implies the constitutive assignment of the 'in-order-to' to a 'toward-this' has been disturbed . . . But when an assignment has been disturbed—when something is unusable for some purpose—then the assignment becomes explicit" (105). What difference does this "making explicit" make? Heidegger moves on to

Thinking of sweater as a tool.

The entity which is held in our fore-having—for instance, the hammer—is proximally ready-to-hand as equipment. If this entity becomes the "object" of an assertion, then as soon as we begin this assertion, there is already a change over in the fore-having. Something *ready-to-hand with which* we have to do or perform something, turns into something "*about which*" the assertion that points it out is made. Our fore-sight is aimed at something present-to-hand in what is ready-to-hand. Both *by* and *for* this way of looking at it [*Hin-sicht*], the ready-to-hand becomes veiled as ready-to-hand. Within this discovering of presence-at-hand, which is at the same time a covering up of readiness-to-hand, something present-at-hand which we encounter is given a definite character in its Being-present-at-hand-in-such-and-such-a-manner. Only now are we given any access to *properties* or the like. (200)

Figure 60: "when something is unusable for some purpose—then the assignment become explicit"



Figure 61: Halifax Boardwalk

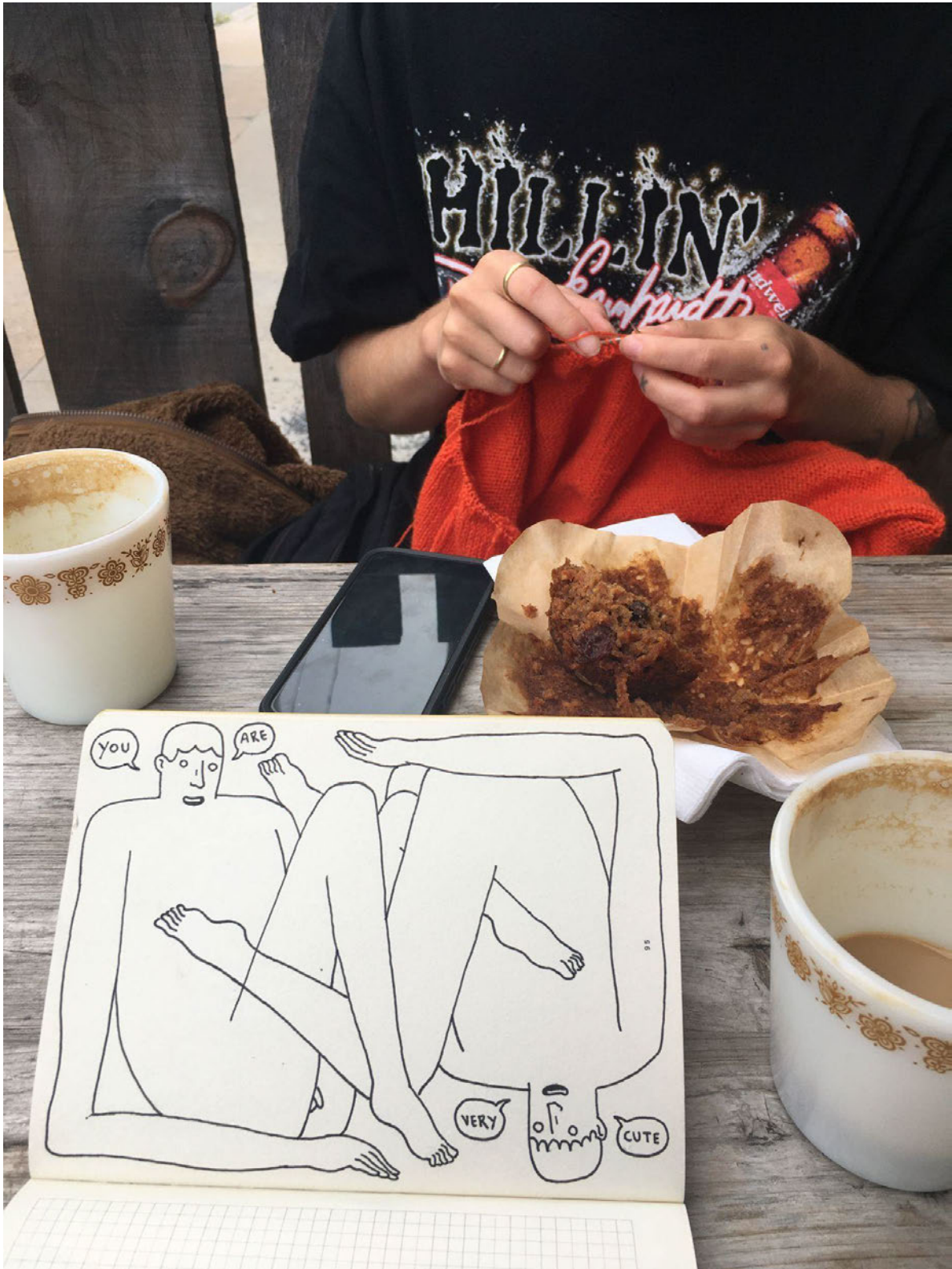


Figure 62: Ramblers

Not too much sweater progress this week. I have a video date with [redacted] in Scotland. [redacted] is so loved. [redacted] is working on mending + collection of upcycled cashmere hats and has recently got a job on Outlander. It was [redacted] birthday last Friday. [redacted] is coming to learn with how much [redacted] loves birthdays and how to unabashable love the things [redacted] loves. My closest friends are Leo's. I don't know how much stock I put in that but she is a star in my life. I also have fear around liking things too publicly. We are @ a little park picnic down the block and I find out [redacted] + [redacted] have seen everything everywhere all @ once and are not totally won over by it. It taints my own feelings towards it in a way and I wonder why did I like it so much. [redacted] wants to learn more about my sweaters talking about how much [redacted] struggled writing [redacted] own thesis. [redacted] says [redacted] was not good @ writing it, and everyone knew it was no good but they still bought it and put it on a shelf in some library. [redacted] interviews me earlier this week about my proposal and the sweater too. [redacted] leaves for Montreal next week, we are headed to Ontario for the weekend. Will get back just in time to see her off. [redacted] is one I will miss deeply. [redacted] presence such a pure joy.

Figure 63: "That was fine! It was fine!"



Figure 64: Still



Figure 65: Still II



Figure 66: Still III



Figure 67: Airport



Figure 68: "perfect.everything.feels.much.better"



Figure 69: Brantford



Figure 70: Hamilton

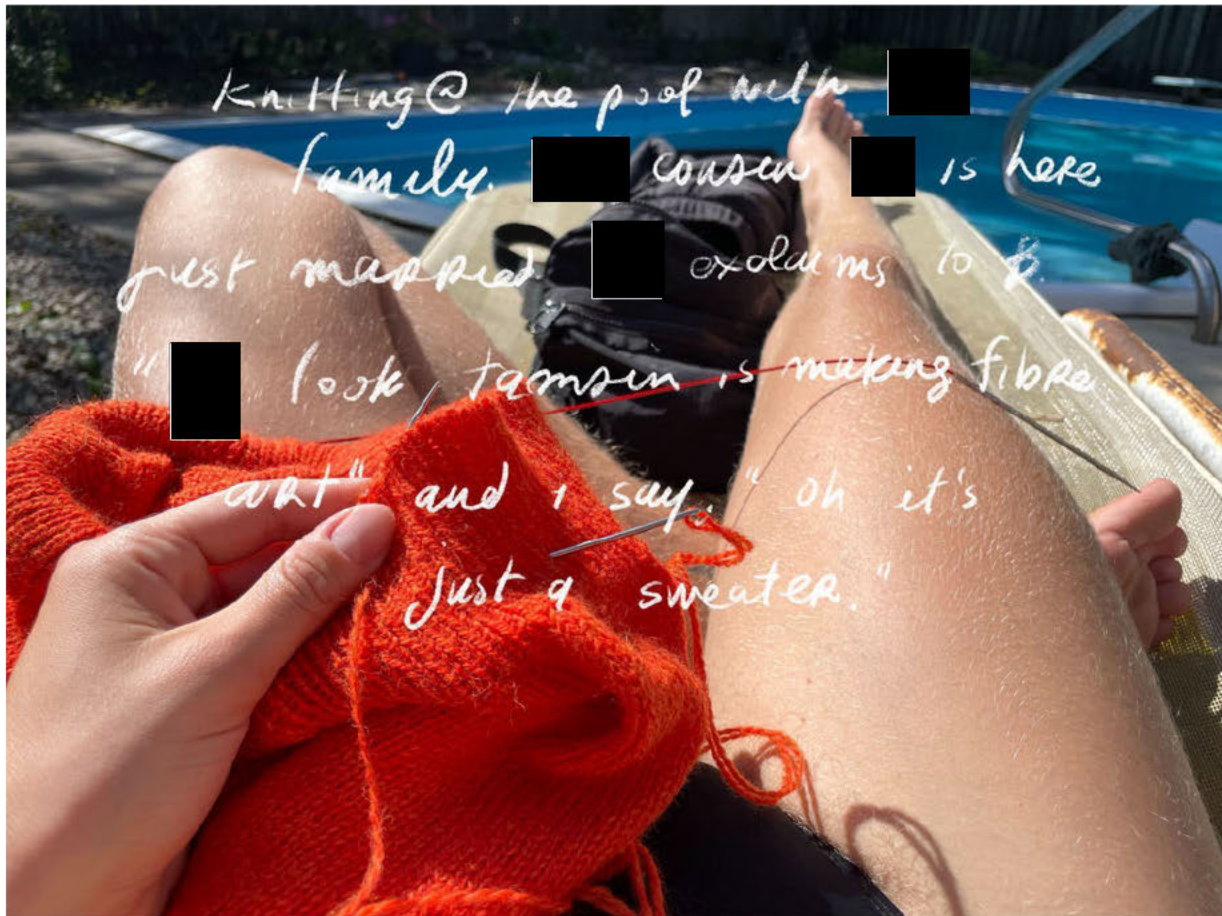


Figure 71: "...it's just a sweater."

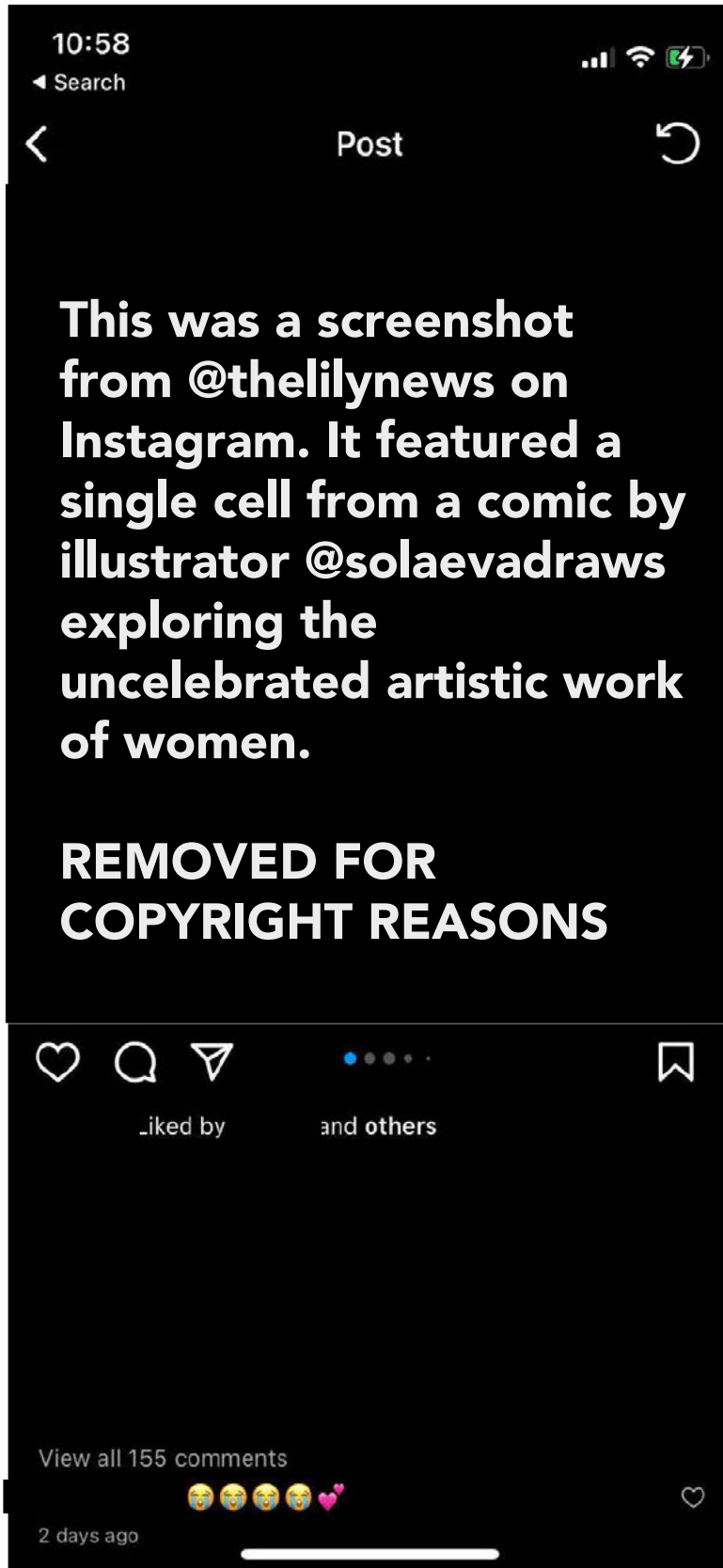


Figure 72: "...how much talent has gone uncelebrated because we feel entitled to women's work?"



Figure 73: "...garments she'd knitted me throughout the years.."



Figure 74; "art hiding in plain sight."



Figure 75: "Yet she told me:..."



Figure 76: "I will never, ever, ever take Craft Slander sitting down!!"



Figure 77: "'fibre art' is a new term..."



Figure 78: "it doesn't matter what language we use to describe ourselves..."

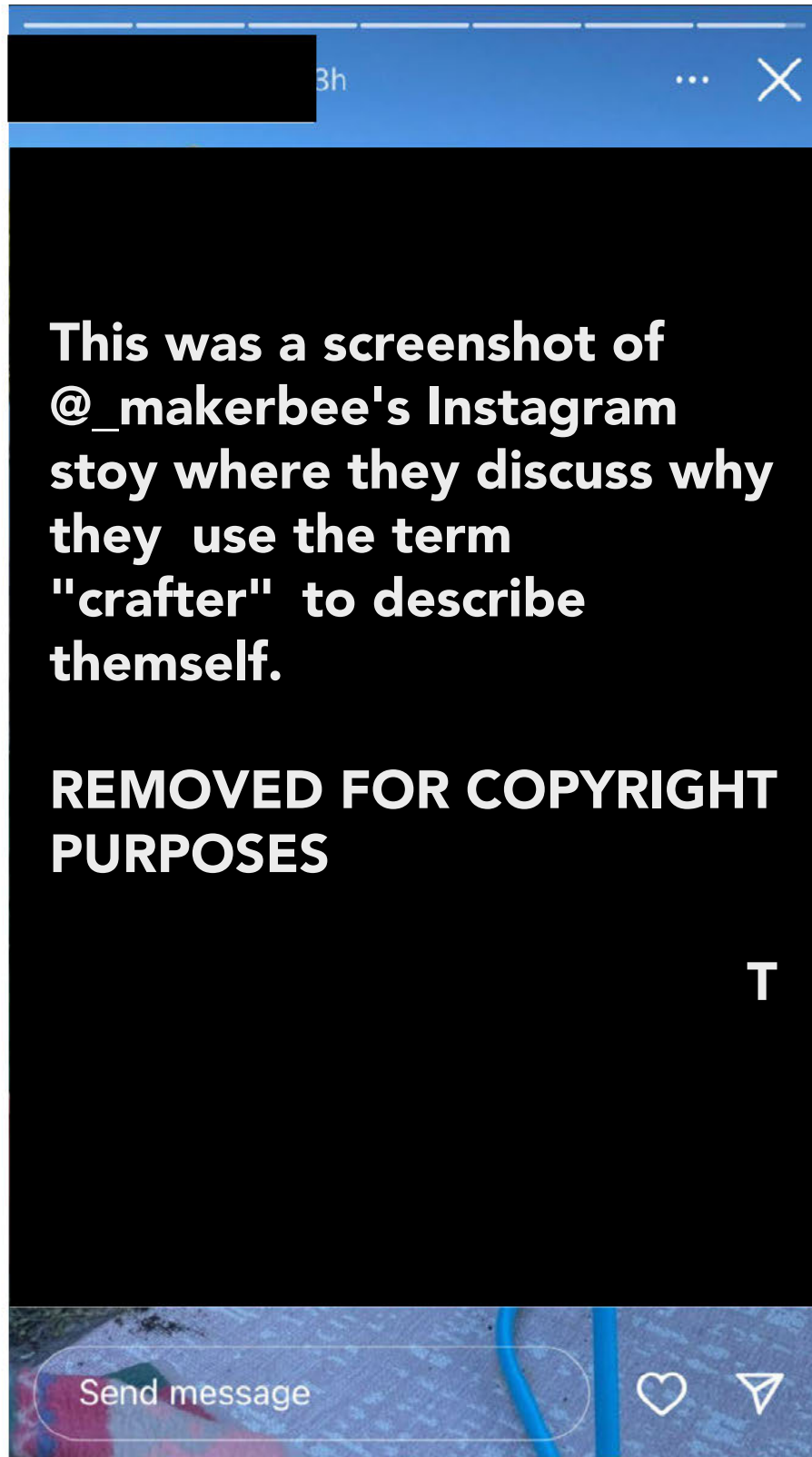
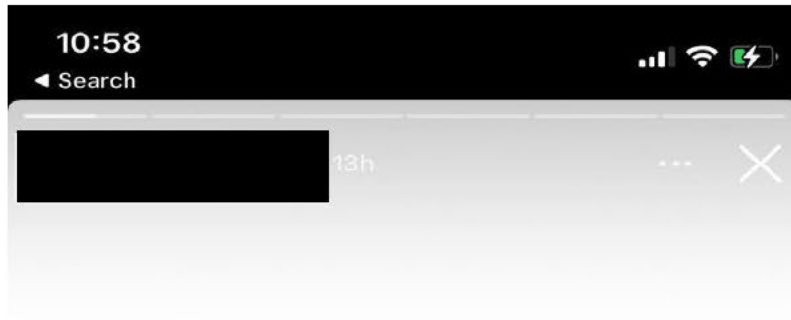


Figure 79: "pretending to be more important, more creative or more interesting..."



Figure 80: "You think oh this isn't art but in reality it is."



This was an Instagram story by @camerynmattie sharing a text post from @for.the.wild about forgetting the responsibility of checking and responding to emails.

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Figure 81: "I hope you've escaped..."



Figure 82: Hamilton



Figure 83: Cleo

ROW 11:

Sweater is almost finishing up. Well, that is a bit of a premature statement. Last night at a bar I miss some decreases going round and round on the first sleeve, chatting with [REDACTED] We go on a deep dive about dropjes. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are thinking about opening a cafe together. They are thinking about calling it “Dutchboy”, as it’s what their group of friends call [REDACTED] because of their propensity for having mainly lesbian friends.

I joke that if they are worried about having the name of their queer cafe centered around the only straight male in the group, they can make the name also be a reference to me. Fully Dutch, somewhat boy?

Yesterday I see [REDACTED] @ Espresso 46. They reach out and hold my hands through the window and the same day [REDACTED] back to Montreal leaving a lil voice memo on my phone. The weather has been beautiful this week and I am inside for most of it. It hurts me.

The back porch no longer gets sun between 8 and 9 in the morning and I sit in the shade waiting for it to stick up over the mass of grey building beside our house. The sun is lower and lower in the skies these days.

When I am trying to convince [REDACTED] I tell [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] This is maybe true, but barely. Coincidence. I am playing my last card.

The smoky air from Brothers blows over to our house every day. I love the smell.

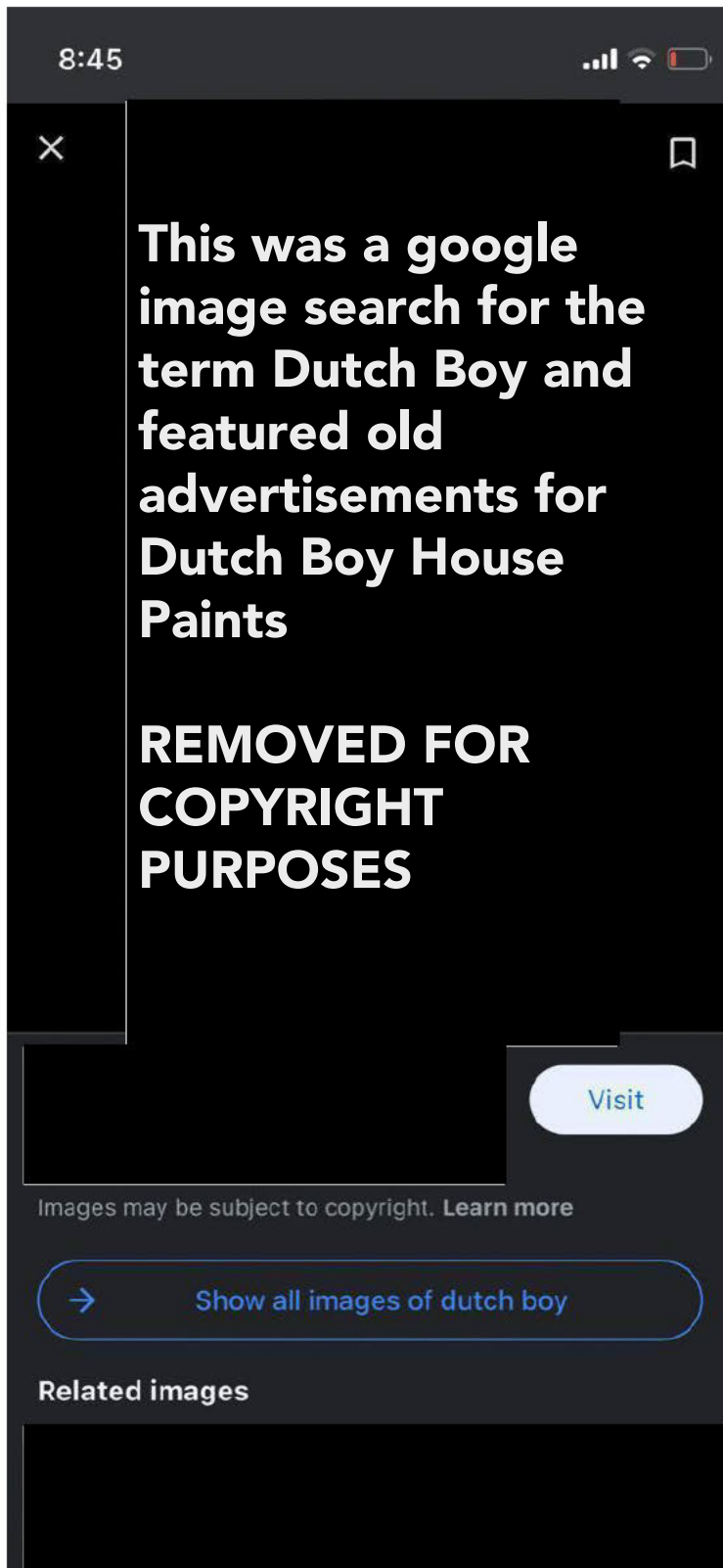


Figure 84: "Fully Dutch, somewhat boy?"

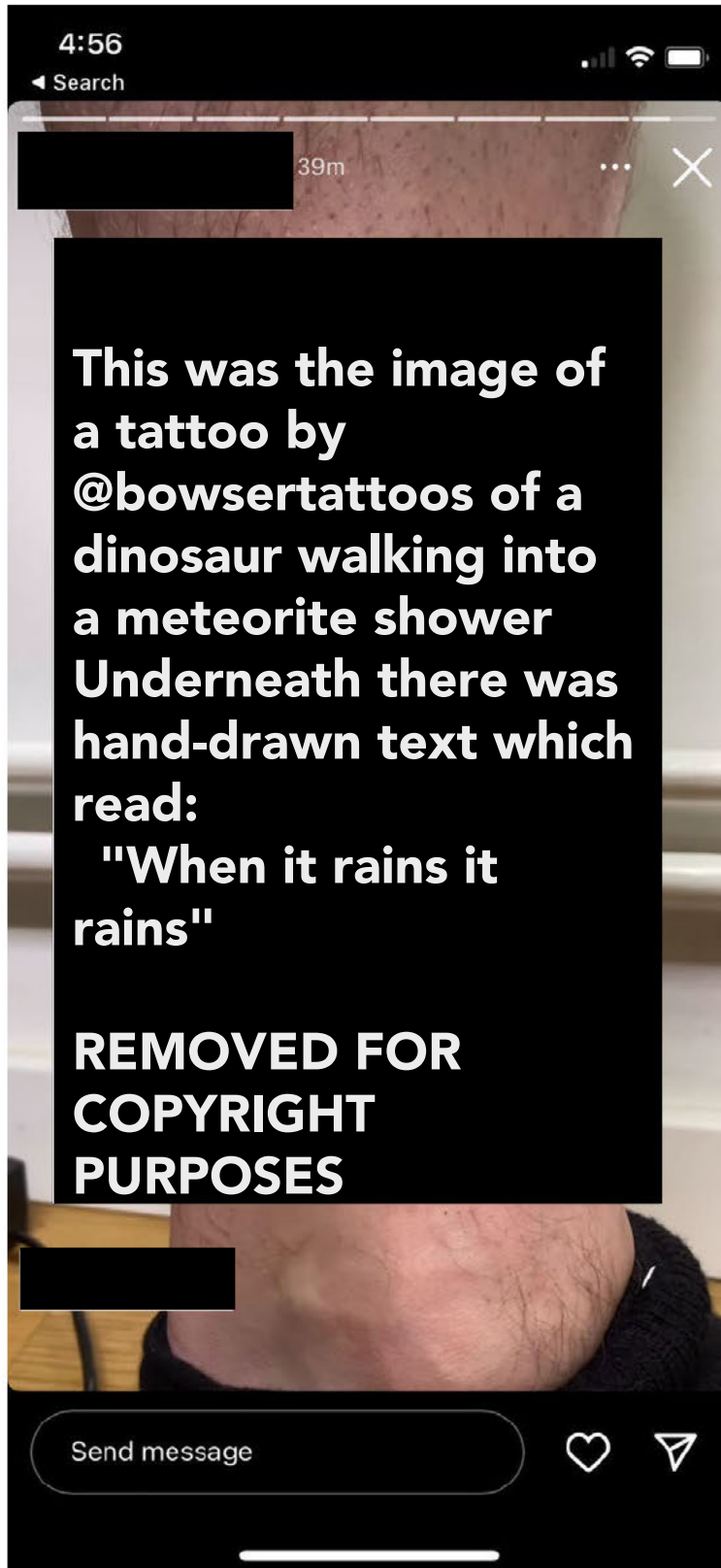


Figure 85; "When it rains it rains"

Anxiety

Article [Talk](#)



For other uses, see [Anxiety \(disambiguation\)](#).

Anxiety is an [emotion](#) which is characterized by an unpleasant state of inner [turmoil](#) and includes feelings of dread over [anticipated](#) events.^{[1][2]} It is often accompanied by nervous behavior such as pacing back and forth, [somatic complaints](#), and [rumination](#).^[3]



A job applicant exhibiting a facial configuration that in certain cultures is an expression of worry.

Figure 86: "...that in certain cultures is an expression of worry."

ROW 12:

I have not written much about the sweater this week and there have been some progressions. Knitting has been everywhere in my life. ██████'s brother and their wife are having a new baby and when I say that I will have to knit it a sweater, his brother ██████ "you don't have to" and I reply, "It's more for me".

██████ asks for her Christmas sweater this year, first to be orange (after seeing me knitting mine) and then pink. She loves pink. I tell her it's a good colour. The same thing I said to another little girl who came into the gallery last month. Her mother says to me "we dressed her as a boy for the first year of her life" and gestures to her pink tutu wearing child. There is a strange weight in her statement.

At the beer garden the other night I am looking ██████ ██████ and they stop talking animatedly and laugh as they exclaim "why are you smiling like that!?"

I have been talking about my project a lot more these days with my friends. It has been nice to get their thoughts and inputs on my various uncertainties. On the last morning home in Hamilton, I cut out the markers I had been placing onto the first stitch I knit each time I pick up the sweater to begin knitting again. I save them in a little bundle in my bag, but my luggage gets deep searched at the airport after I forget to drink the last of water out of my water bottle and the little loops of orange yarn are scattered throughout my backpack.

I am still finding them on the floor around the house.

Talking to ██████ about cutting out these markers, I say "they just didn't mean anything. They didn't visually portray anything

readable about time and distance spent knitting” as I had hoped because of the circular or spiral nature of knitting in the round. But saying this I realize maybe that says a lot about time and distance after all. I wonder if I should have left them in place but clipping them out returns some normality to the sweater and I don't really regret that.

“What” they were, had become a frequent conversation starter.



Figure 87: "I cut out the markers.."



Figure 88: Apple crisp



Figure 89: Lawrencetown Beach Provincial Park



Figure 90: "... multiple effects: intended & unintended"



Figure 91: Lawrencetown Beach

Feminist philosophers have shown us how the masculinity of philosophy is evidenced in the disappearance of the subject under the sign of the universal (Bordo 1987, Irigaray 1974, Braidotti 1991). The masculinity might also be evident in the disappearance of the materiality of the objects, in the bracketing of the materials out of which, as well as upon which, philosophy writes itself, as a way of apprehending the world. We would call this the fantasy of a “paperless” philosophy, a philosophy that is not dependent on the materials upon which it is written. As Audre Lorde reflects, “A room of one’s own may be a necessity for writing prose, but so are reams of paper, a typewriter and plenty of time” (1984:116). The fantasy of a paperless philosophy can be understood as crucial not only to the gendered nature of the occupation of philosophy but also to the disappearance of political economy, of the “materials of philosophy as well as its dependence on forms of labor, both domestic and otherwise. In other words, the labor of writing might disappear along with the paper.

Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p.34

ROW 13:

I got my blood drawn for the first time this morning. After I text [REDACTED] "gross" and they reply, "real gross". After I go and sit at the Glitter Bean, first time here too. My friend [REDACTED] works here, I have been neglecting our hangouts, but they are not working today.

I am uploading a recording [REDACTED] and I made in the summer, where they asked me questions about the project as we knit together. [REDACTED] came prepared with a printed off sheet of notes they made after they read my proposal. It was a day in late August. Shortly before they were set to leave. We struggle to get the microphone working. I start listening to it now before I load it up into the drive. We are talking about the paradox of documenting in a project which is in some ways refusing documentation and I outline for her how I am thinking about presenting the data once it is done: at this point in little essays and vignettes about moments and times, not using the actual recording or notes as "data" but inspiration. (Is there a difference?)

Something I say in the recording strikes me. I mention not wanting to carefully document before, or after and during crafting sessions. And it strikes me as sort of what I am doing now with the transcription of these notes, in a way. With these blips of the current time intermixing with the transcription of these notes.

Out for coffee with [REDACTED] Last night we watch them play tennis competitively for the first time in 23 years and they kick ass - I show them my sweater sitting outside @ Espresso 46 and as we stand to go the person next to us asks me if I ever sell my knitting, and I say "not really" but I give them my Instagram and they say they will be in touch.

At the time I awkwardly try to explain to them how difficult it is to sell and price knitting, just with the time and cost and labour involved. That I can never be paid enough to make it financially viable. I am pretty sure I frighten them off, but I check my Instagram for the next couple days for any new followers in case they reach out.
They don't.

ROW 14:

I feel like my knitting has lost some momentum recently. Two of my knitting friends have left town. [REDACTED] to Montreal and [REDACTED] to Labrador.

Last week I work 5 days at [REDACTED] and each day is beautiful, warm, and sunny. There are not enough people to double up days anymore, so I can't take outside breaks. But when [REDACTED] comes to visit, I lock up and leave for 45 minutes putting the "back in 15" on the door.

ROW 15:

Today I am working though not scheduled. Trading with [REDACTED] as it was supposed to be another rainy day. The forecast for both my days off this week.

I cry on Saturday morning last week as I arrive at work on another sunny day with really nothing to do to keep my brain occupied.

I make an appointment at the doctor for bloodwork and when they ask what the visit is for, I say “general exhaustion, increasing anxiety and obsessive thoughts” but the next day I cancel it and schedule it for a few weeks later. I pare down the appointment description, worried it seemed over dramatic.

I cancel this appointment too.

Yesterday I meet [REDACTED] from the [REDACTED] for coffee and a chat. This project comes up when they ask me when and why it was I left Cape Breton. We wait in a tiny shop crammed with preserves in the Historic Properties as the grey-haired woman working there, slowly wires a single orange Echinacea for [REDACTED]. Their friend has a gallery opening tonight and as [REDACTED] says, “she loves orange”. I tell them that the yarn for my sweater was orange. They say something about how cool it is that the sweater is the same material as the yarn, physically the same but changed into a new form. When I first met [REDACTED], they said their favourite colour was bright orange, and I told them it was a terrible colour. Those days I worked mainly in tertiaries, muddy colours, natural dyes. [REDACTED] also brought this up when I brought the yarn home.

Last week I send a picture of my latest quilt commission to my friend [REDACTED]. It resembles a sunburst, bright yellow, deep orange, and a brighter orange called “mac and cheese”. They say, “so vibrant, is your palette changing or was this the ask?”



Figure 92: "...we are all moved and shaped by different forces..."

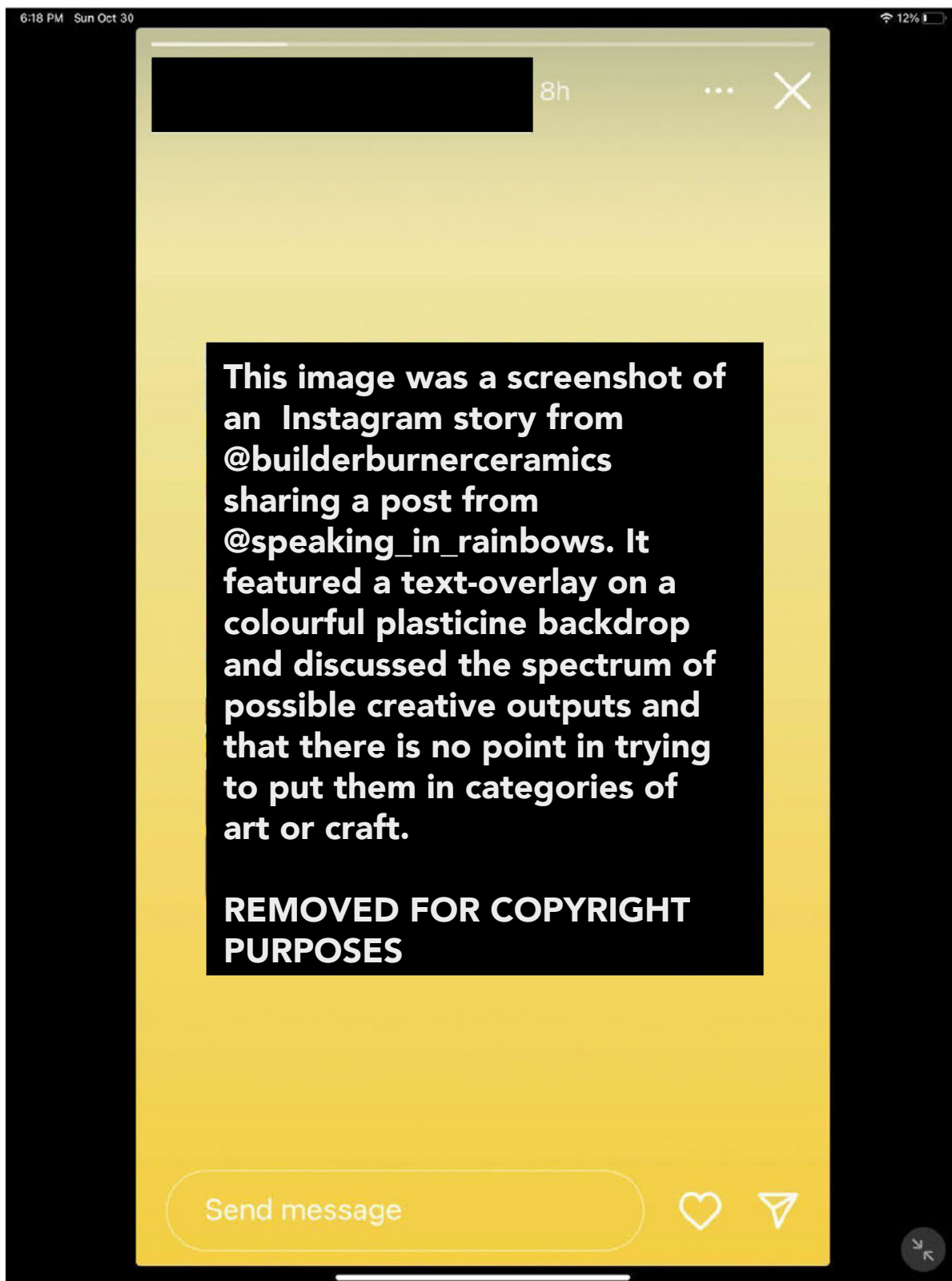


Figure 93: "The making is enough."

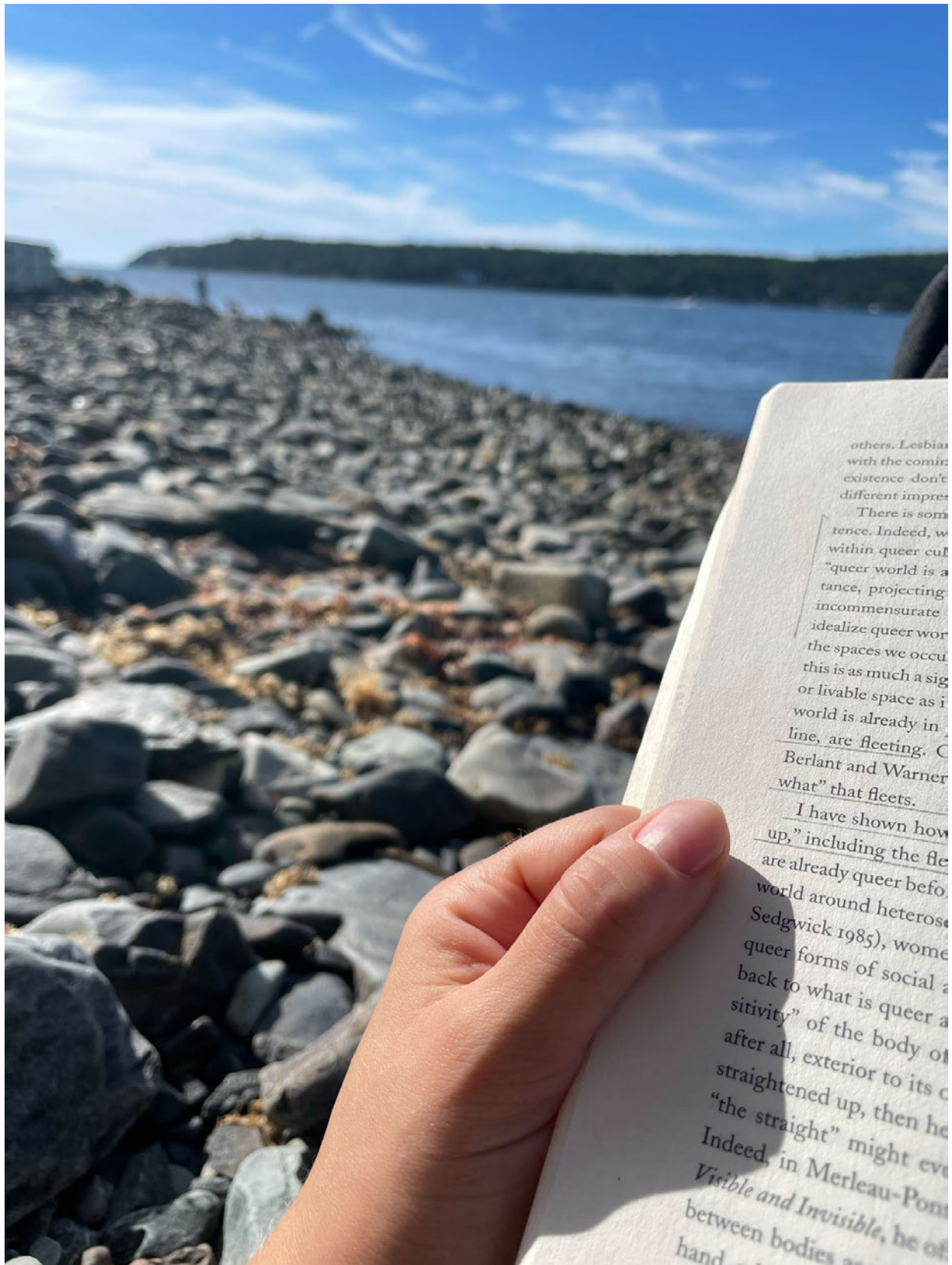


Figure 94: "I am reading Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology*..."

line," then it is not just that thing that appears oblique but the world itself might appear on a slant, which disorientates the picture and even unseats the body. If we consider how space appears along the lines of the vertical axis, then we can begin to see how orientations of the body shape not just what objects are reachable, but also the "angle" on which they are reached. Things look right when they approach us from the right angle.

Of course, when Merleau-Ponty discusses queer effects he is not considering "queer" as a sexual orientation—but we can. We can turn to the etymology of the word "queer," which comes from the Indo-European word "twist." Queer is, after all, a spatial term, which then gets translated into a sexual term, a term for a twisted sexuality that does not follow a "straight line," a sexuality that is bent and crooked (Cleto 2002: 13). The spatiality of this term is not incidental. Sexuality itself can be considered a spatial formation not only in the sense that bodies inhabit sexual spaces (Bell and Valentine 1995), but also in the sense that bodies are sexualized through how they inhabit space. The body orientates itself in space, for instance, by differentiating between "left" and "right," "up" and "down," and "near" and "far," *and this orientation is crucial to*

Figure 95: queer phenomenology - p.67

“It is at this point of fumbling that things can happen. IT is at the point when Freud himself ‘fumbles’ and loses his way that we can begin to see that the ‘straight line’ *is what shapes the very tendency to go astray*. What is astray does not lead us back to the straight line but shows us what is lost by following that line.”

Sarah Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 79

ROW 16:

Sunday, I take my bike out to a cafe and have a bagel and coffee before biking down to point pleasant. I put my feet in the water and then sit on the beach, rocks in the sun.

I am reading Sarah Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* and am filled



“The work of the anarchic is not to hold forms or values of experience in place, but to “germinate seeds for new processes, processes that will likely unmoor the shape of experience, including the shape of what was” (Manning, 2020, p. 94). The anarchic leaves the event open to the anarchic field of experience that creatively conditions it, even (and especially) when those conditions fall outside the limited registers and categories of normative human perception and consciousness. The remains of the termite-eaten books provide critical examples of how the anarchic confounds artificial separations of the human from the nonhuman, and affirms destruction, degradation, and perishing as indissociable elements of creative production. They demonstrate how something new comes into the world through the radical deformation of “what was,” a force that breaches and recalibrates the field of experience, and with it, any preconceived criteria for what might matter and why.”

(From “Accidental Creatures: Whitehead’s Creativity and the Clashing Intensities of More than Human Life, David Rousell, p. 6)

“Maybe we could begin approaching institutions as anarchives in the making (Manning, 2020), where the aim is to disinhibit the more-than-human intensity carried by events and affirm the discordant beauty that arises in the absence of adjudication, authority, or control. This could entail a radical deformatization of education and social life allied in many ways with contemporary activist movements committed to an anarchic rewilding of the social field (Rousell & Chan, 2021), or what Harney and Moten (2013) call a "general antagonism" of social life. If all events are creative accidents of togetherness anyway, why not just let them run wild? Why not just affirm life's voracious appetite for difference, and see what happens?

One of the ethical and pragmatic challenges of such an approach, as raised throughout this article, is that consciousness can never fully account for the conditions under which creativity comes to expression. Our powers of perception and consciousness are highly limited simplifications of far more complex and massified fields of experience (Meyer, 2005).”

(From “Accidental Creatures: Whitehead’s Creativity and the Clashing Intensities of More than Human Life, David Rousell, p. 10)



Figure 96: Frank



Figure 97: Sewn-Ribbed Bind Off



Figure 98: "...the things we do and say that are invisible to us."



"creates public space
for the small anxieties
that keep us preoccupied..."
(cvet kovich, 1st)

Figure 99: "...the small anxieties..."



Figure 100: First sleeve cast off.



Figure 101: Test wear

ROW 17:

Out with [REDACTED] a few days back, we discuss [REDACTED] both of our [REDACTED] [REDACTED] when they ask me if I have been [REDACTED]. They say they have come to terms with [REDACTED], that it is okay, that it should be [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. I say that I usually feel the same, but then aloud tell them that I wonder if part of it could from being raised so [REDACTED] from being more [REDACTED] than I was allowed to embrace, or depression.

I say to [REDACTED] the other day "remember when you were young and things were beautiful, and you would get struck with joy by a sunset or a song or a string of words or a combination of colours? Is not feeling this anymore growing up?" and [REDACTED] says simply, "that's depression".

When we are home in Ontario my sibling tells me about their friend [REDACTED] who is now married to a woman and living in Toronto. They joke that this is going to really stop Can. Ref people from ever letting girls play hockey. At the time [REDACTED] and my sibling were the only girls to play hockey in their high school. Now both queer.

I am longing for this sibling to come to Halifax [REDACTED]

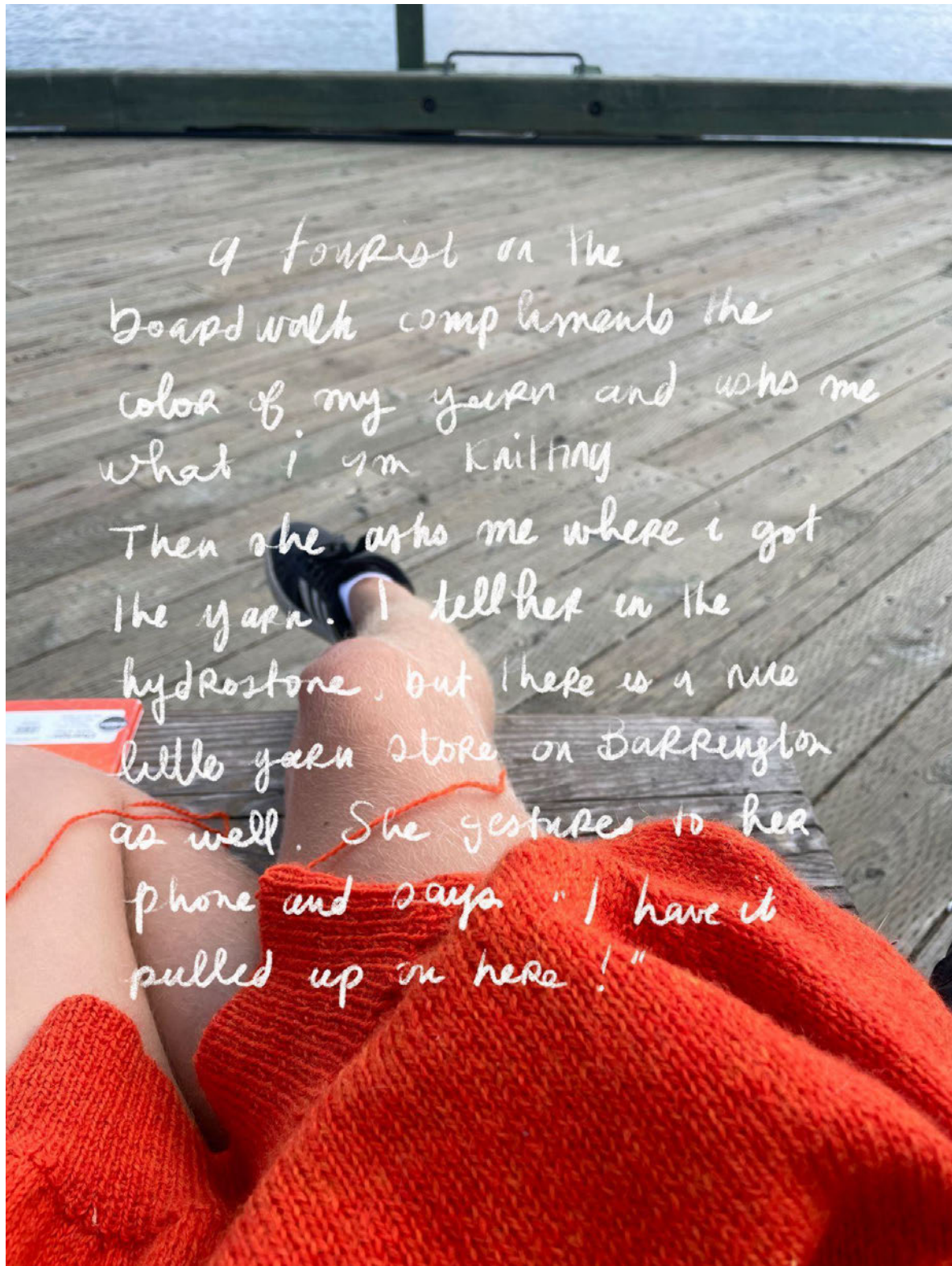
I just want things to be easy for them.

I have a "date" with [REDACTED] tonight. [REDACTED] asks me what we are going to do, and I say "probably one of our usual things, walks, drinks, maybe a cozy sit. But I start thinking maybe I should [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] throw out date ideas. Bowling, roller-skating at the oval, [REDACTED] watching the sunset on the citadel.

We walk down the trail
you hold my
heart to mine & I don't have any
words for you. My arms are around her
hands & hands together. Today my
heart teaches to think about the
possibilities / ways of
having just know each other.
seriously mad about you and
be happy to be your pal. I
also need to be able to hug & kiss
you and have been wanting to for
some time now, given you to for
appearances. Thank you for how we
navigate this thing as friends but
I am up to give it a try.
Whatever it looks like. Don't be
hard on yourself.

Figure 102: "Don't be hard on yourself."



a tourist on the
boardwalk compliments the
color of my yarn and asks me
what i am knitting
Then she asks me where i got
the yarn. I tell her in the
hydrostone, but there is a nice
little yarn store on Barrington
as well. She gestures to her
phone and says "I have it
pulled up on here!"

Figure 103

I head up to the loop as well and buy some yarn to make a "hot summer polo". I am proud of myself for choosing a project before the yarn... and am happy to have found yarn in a store that so often seems to disappoint. It's my retail therapy. I tell [redacted] it was one stitch in the process of holding my gaping wound of a heart together. I am being dramatic, but [redacted] gives me a hug, and I say "oh there is another stitch" and [redacted] says and when fabric is bunched inside your sweater and she fits in your arms. Another stitch. I am restless to start knitting something new. This is normal for me but I am also feeling anxious @ finishing the sweater and put off knitting it occasionally in my down time to keep the thread of this time running on...

Figure 104



Figure 105: Frank

ROW 18:

I have left work for the day and am waiting for [REDACTED] to join me at Stillwell. We have plans downtown later tonight. [REDACTED] is maybe going to join us. [REDACTED] + their [REDACTED] too.

The notes that remain are a heartbreak I am not sure I am ready to share.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] asks me how I am feeling as we walk and I tell them, I don't have any words. They have never felt more pointless, useless, or feeble then in this moment.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I am imagining us out for coffee or drinks @ a future date, where maybe I will have the words, and I can finally tell them [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Just now an idea leaves me before I can jot it down.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

“For it doesn’t feed or exalt any angst one may feel about the incapacity to express, in words, that which eludes them. It does not punish what can be said for what, by definition, it cannot be. Nor does it ham it up by miming a constricted throat: *Lo, what I would say, were words good enough.* Words are good enough.

It is idle to fault a net for having holes, my encyclopedia notes.”

-Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*, p.3

“Rather than a philosopher or a pluralizer, I may be more of an empiricist, insofar as my aim is not to rediscover the eternal or the universal, but to find the conditions under which something new is produced (creativity). I have never really thought of myself as a "creative person" writing is my only talent, and writing has always felt more clarifying than creative to me. But in contemplating this definition, I wonder if one might be creative (or queer, or happy, or held) in spite of oneself.”

-Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*. p. 102-103

ROW 19:

I have been feeling stressed out about finishing the sweater and on finishing it finding out that this whole project has been a failure.

I still feel this way.

I am feeling vulnerable in sharing intimacies. I am feeling ashamed of my small useless concerns, obsessions, and life.

As I black out some of the words above, I feel a little of this still, but I also feel a sense of having claimed something for myself. Something still too raw to share. Less (or more) words don't make something any less true or real.

I am still uncertain above what it will look like

I am still uncertain of this too. I near the end of these written notes and they stop abruptly, with no mention of the sweater's end.

Yesterday at the lake and later on the porch, I read in the sun Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts* (I hope [REDACTED]). At one point she writes about how she edits out her anxieties, toning down emotions and definitive statements.

She also says that writing is a clarifier, I feel this although I do not want too completely. Maybe this shows how much of a too it is.

Yesterday at a craft night [REDACTED] says that morning pages have never worked for them, that they make them dwell in their problems and sadness. [REDACTED] replies that it is the opposite for them, they pour out the words and fears and it helps them forget them.

This week with the cold weather arriving I have multiple knit dates. Monday with [REDACTED] in Labrador over Facetime. Wednesday [REDACTED] and I get together for the first time just on our own, [REDACTED] knitting in their new apartment

with their roommate and [REDACTED]'s new romantic interest, [REDACTED]. There are only so many letters in the alphabet. Thursday, I go out again, to the new little yarn store down the street, Fia Fia and knit with a bunch of NSCAD textile grads. On the way I see [REDACTED] closing up shop through the doors at JB and they unlock them, give me a hug, and ask if I want anything. I say I am okay, that I am going to knitting and they respond "two nights in a row! You really like to knit."

“My writing is riddled with such tics of uncertainty. I have no excuse or solution, save to allow myself the trembling’s, then go back in later and slash them out. In this way I edit myself into a boldness that is neither native nor foreign to me. At times I grow tired of this approach, and all its gendered baggage.”
Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* p. 98

“Crafting practices inhabit the epidemic of feeling bad that is one form of insidious slow death spawned by neoliberal capitalism, especially among the middle classes who, despite fewer material obstacles to thriving, are still bogged down by worry and - to invoke a concept that is both psychic and somatic-stress. Unlike forms of self-sovereignty that depend on a rational self, crafting is a form of body politics where agency takes a different form than application of the will. It fosters ways of being in the world in which the body moves the mind rather than the other way around, or in which, echoing neurobiological views in another register, body and mind are deeply enmeshed or holistically connected. It produces forms of felt sovereignty that consist not of exercising more control over the body and senses but instead of "recovering" them from the mind or integrating them with it.”

Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression a Public Feeling*, p. 168.

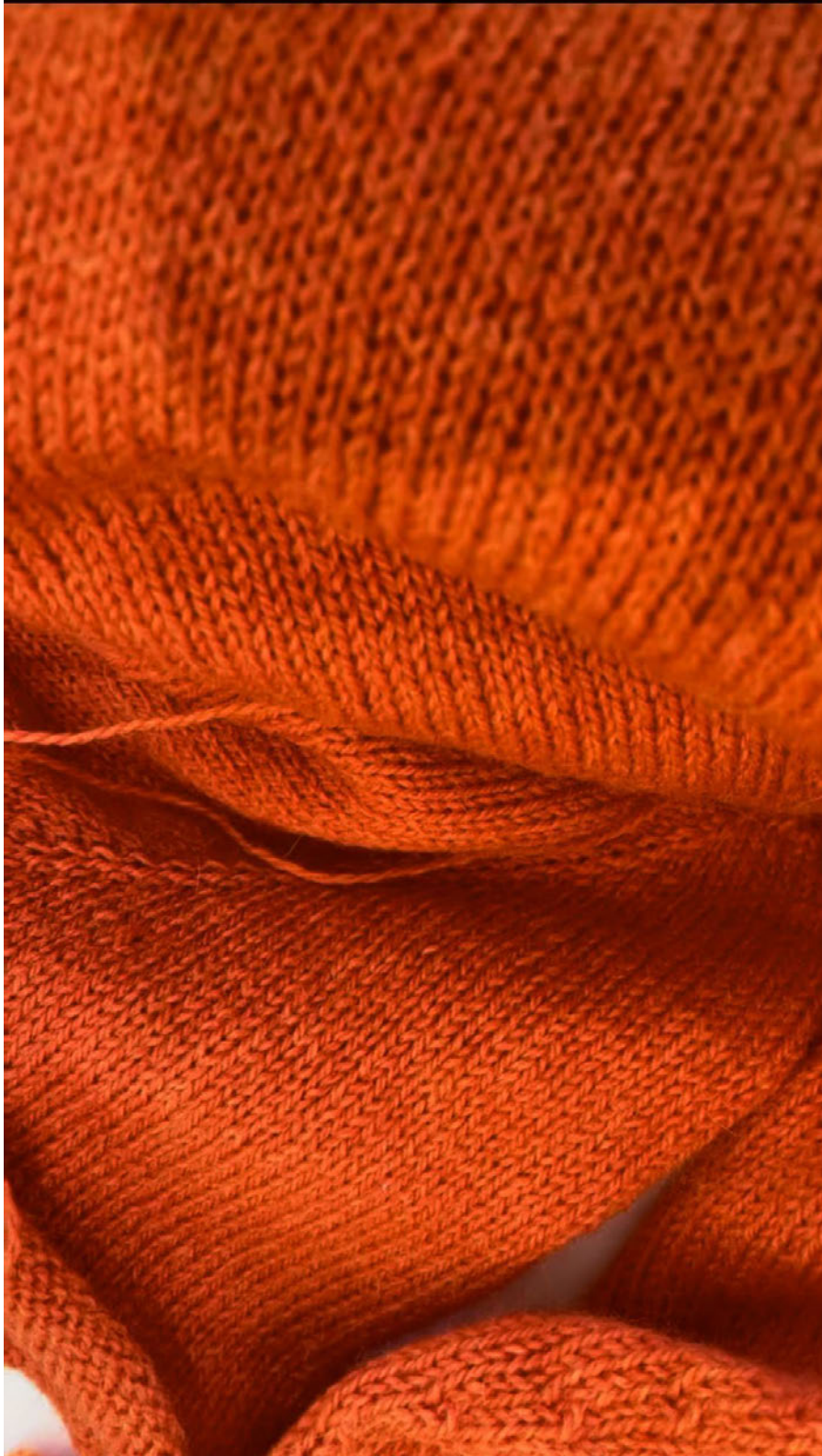


Figure 106: "...that maybe things could irrecoverably break– or change."

ROW 20:

Early December.

Sunday, I walk with [REDACTED]. I have realised that the last remaining page of my sweater notes have little to do with my sweater and everything to do with my feelings about [REDACTED]. I think about stopping this process of recording/reflecting on these notes now (My supervisor mentions something called "data saturation") but when I mention it to [REDACTED], they say "no, keep it all in".

Putting the words down here doesn't make them static. permanent.

I try hold off texting [REDACTED] after Tuesday night but [REDACTED] though not the case in most other areas of my life, I do not see the benefit of playing it cool [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and we begin to text back and forth again as we usually do.

Yesterday I imagine [REDACTED]

I also feel the need to spread this sadness around but haven't told anyone yet except for [REDACTED] (partially because they are the only person, I had told that maybe things had changed). [REDACTED] doesn't ask me anymore about it since I give them the low down on the night, I get home [REDACTED] and I resent them a little for that because I am too stubborn to bring it up when I feel that they should care enough to ask me.

So, instead I sulk around, feeling almost empty, and now today is better.

I do not know if time heals or having their words again across the silence has returned the normality and lifted the anxiety that maybe things could irrecoverably break– or change.

But change is what I hoped for...I think.



Figure 107: "...and wonder if this yarn will always be tinged with the heart sickness of the day I bought it."

ROW 21:

I cast on a gauge swatch yesterday with a newly bought yarn for a new shirt and wonder if this yarn will always be tinged with the heart sickness of the day I bought it.

Maybe. This yarn still sits in a crinkled and ripped paper shopping bag, the gauge swatch knitted and ripped out twice, unable to get the simple lace pattern to come out right.

Up early today I wake up alert and check my phone, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Yesterday out with [REDACTED] eating ramen, they ask how things with [REDACTED] are going and I can only say "yeah...yeah...it's fine...yeah...yeah" not having the words to really get into it and holding back.

How has this become such a whole thing? The number one occupier of my thoughts, this notebook.

Yesterday [REDACTED] tells me they are mourning the summer already. It is only September 9th, and I am full of dread as well, feeling dramatic and sad about not holding on to each of these days, not being able to.

Coffee is probably ready.

At least these feelings make me want to move and make and ache again, for everything but the sweater in a sort of restless anxiety that I can't shake.

Yesterday [REDACTED] calls and I don't pick up but yell "fuck" and drop my phone down on the desk like it shocked me.

As soon as the voicemail is left, I listen but don't call back. That's a job I have left for today.

Going to meet with my supervisor today I remember walking down to visit them around the time of the above words. I had [REDACTED] picked up a bagel from Dilly Dally but just put it in my bag.

I had a dream last night where [REDACTED] wants to make a breakfast of pancakes and bacon for me but am now realizing they can't eat these things anymore.

I think about trying to get myself knitting again but how? I don't have many knitting friends left in town.

The water in the cat's fountain is getting low and it trickles in a way that I can't not hear.

I write most when I have lots of feelings.



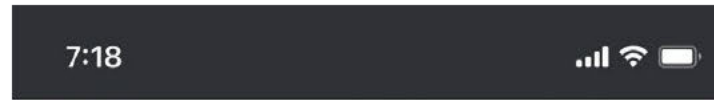
Figure 108: "...they are mourning the summer already."

ROW 22:

I try to do a gauge swatch for the “Hot Summer Polo” but keep messing up the simple lace pattern. I might fuck it and dive in. I have dropped from 16 to 14 stitches over my swatch, and I can't quite see where these mistakes happened.



Figure 109: "Today you feel stuck."



This was a screenshot from a CBC article which was discussing why crushing inflation couldn't be easy...like crushing a car is.

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[114 comments](#)

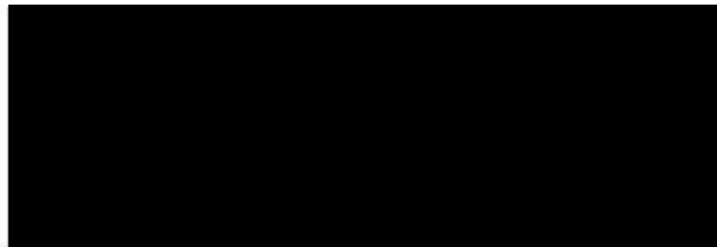


Figure 110: "Crushing a car is easy..."

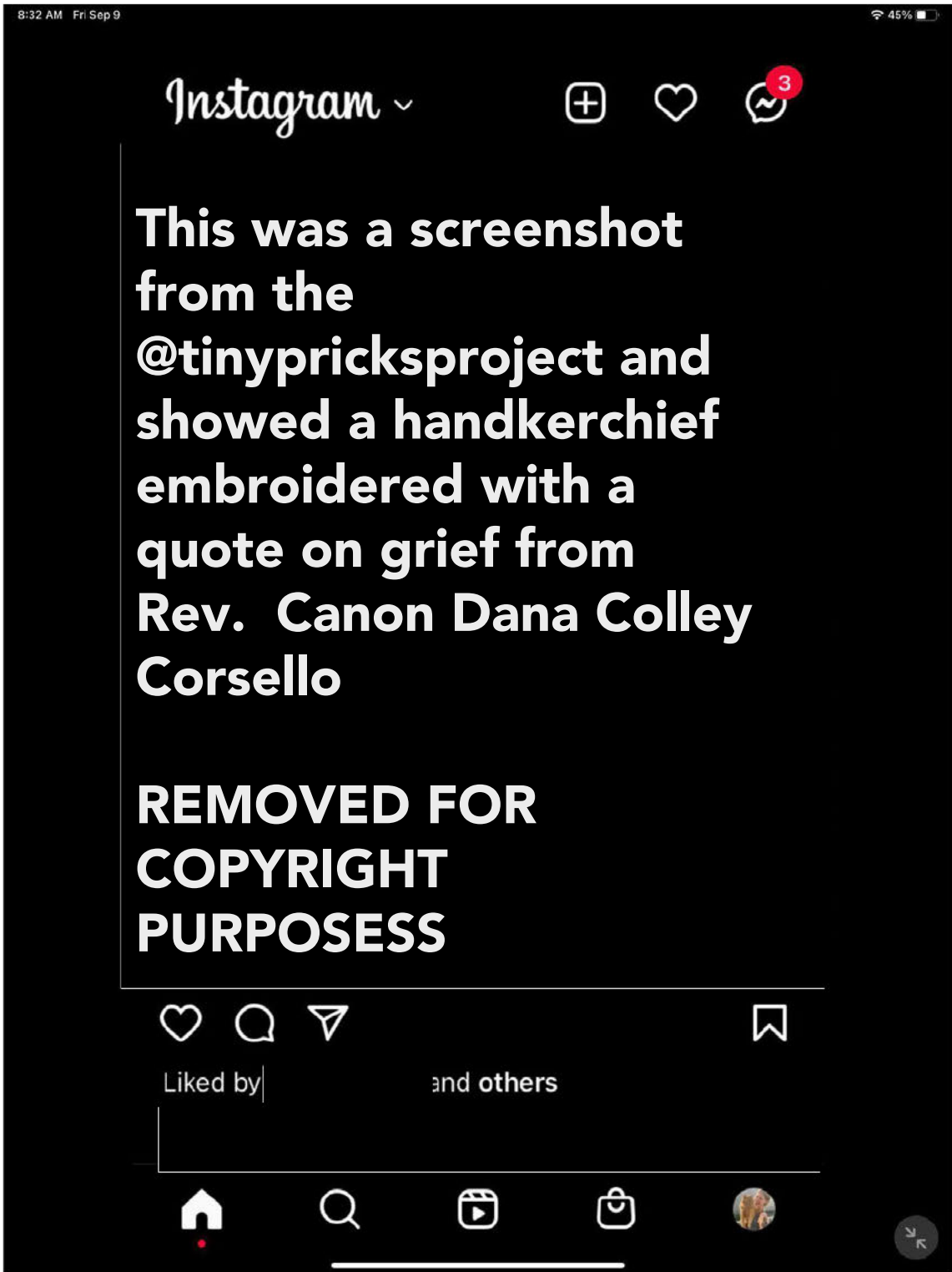
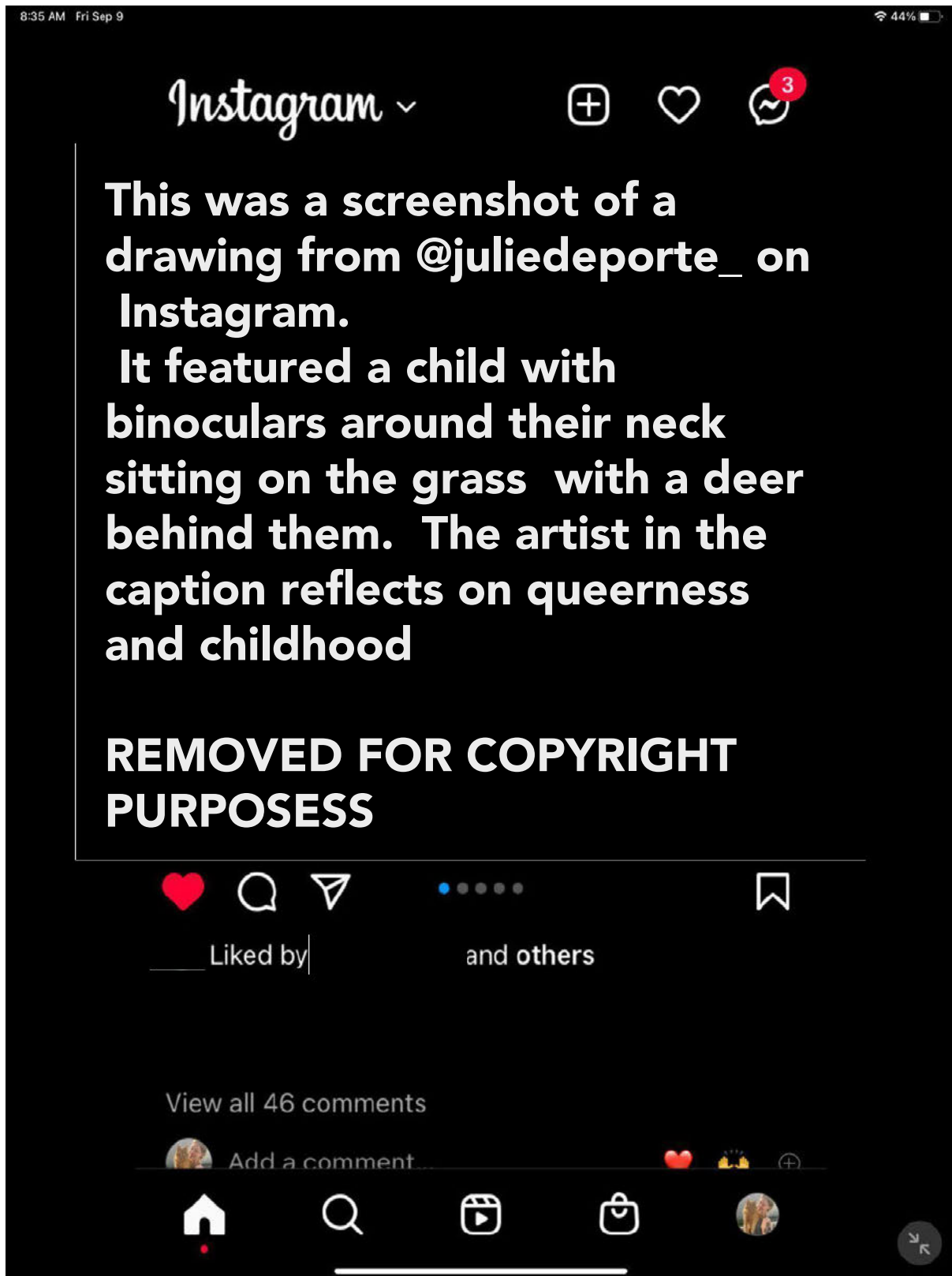


Figure 111: *grief is apparently the price of love.*"



This was a screenshot of a drawing from @juliedeporte_ on Instagram.

It featured a child with binoculars around their neck sitting on the grass with a deer behind them. The artist in the caption reflects on queerness and childhood

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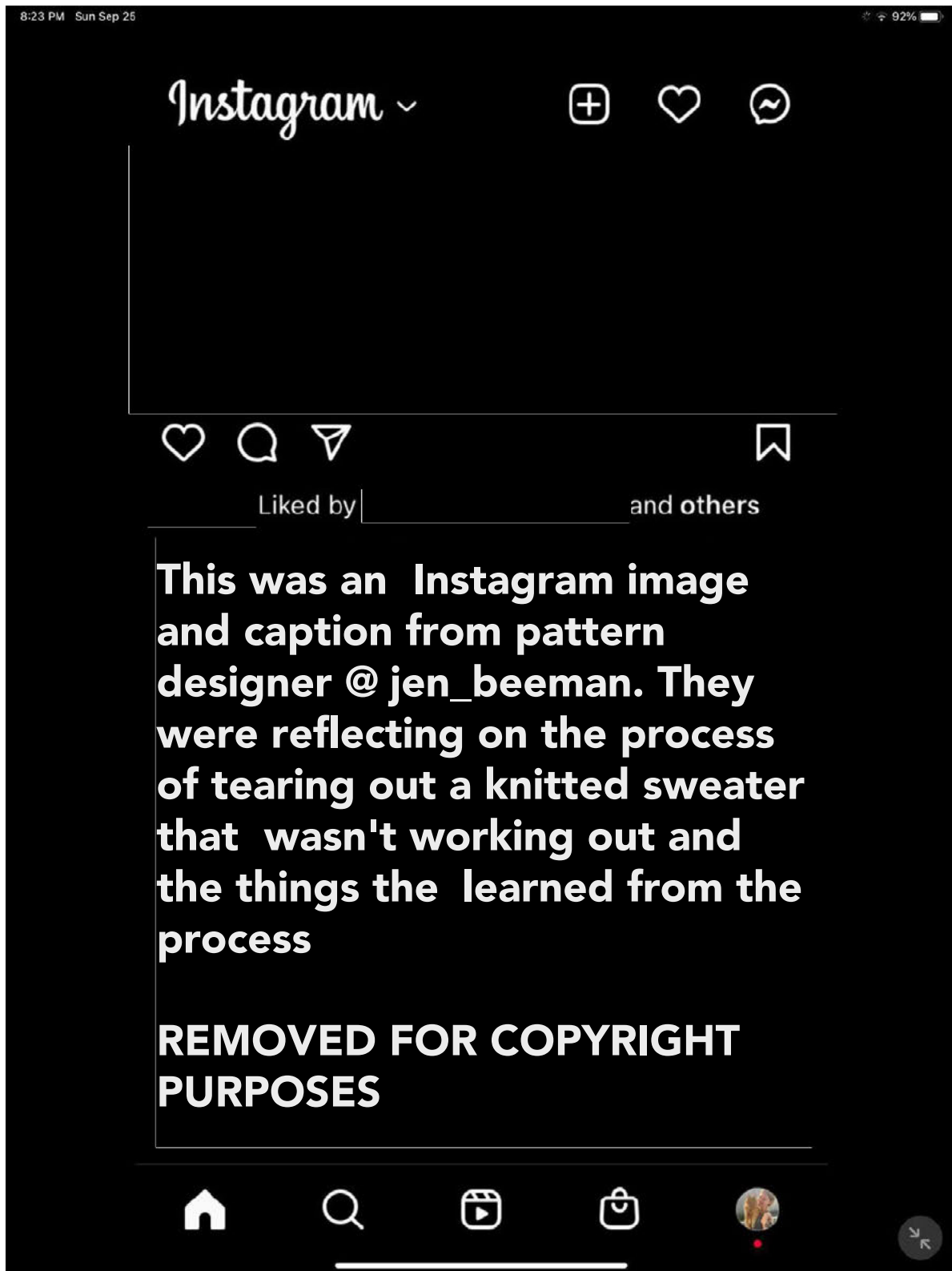
Figure 112: "Was that child me, wat that child queer?"

Jameela [00:50:09] I love that. And I can't think of a better way to end than that. I just have to ask you before you go, Sam Sanders, what do you weigh?

Sam [00:50:18] What do I weigh? You know, I weigh the small, tiny parts of my routine now more than ever. And there are these little moments in my day that I used to never get excited about that mean more than anything now. So, I've been working at home primarily and really only for the last three years. So, my, my, my workday is mostly in the house. And in that routine, there are just little bits of the day that bring me so much joy. The process of making the coffee in the morning and the stillness while you wait for that cup to be ready. That is joy. Walking the dog in the morning, around the same route, seeing the same houses. That's joy. So, for instance, today, this morning on my walk with the dog, my boyfriend, he rarely comes with me. He works in an office, and he had knee surgery about a month ago, but he's ready to walk again. And we had our little dog walk together and it was so cute. And we walked by the houses and saw all the things and saw some other dogs. That is better than the best date. That is better than the best vacation. It will power me through my day, through my week. And it's like really what I'm saying, I guess, is the small stuff is always more important than the big stuff. And what we really are seeking and what we need to give our lives fullness are the small moments of joy and reflection and connection. And so, as shitty as the pandemic was, it taught me more than ever to honor those moments and seek those moments and, like, write them on the walls of your mind and hold on to them because they are so, so special. The little bitty things.

Jameela [00:51:56] Well, I adore you⁴

⁴ <https://www.earwolf.com/episode/sam-sanders/>



This was an Instagram image and caption from pattern designer @jen_beeman. They were reflecting on the process of tearing out a knitted sweater that wasn't working out and the things they learned from the process

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Figure 113: "I definitely don't consider this to be a waste..."



Figure 114: Frank

ROW 23:

Moments like this, full of feelings, make me feel like I used to feel a lot more. I am wondering / thinking about how it is sometimes easier to feel alive when full of feeling, even sad ones.

And copying out these notes I am rediscovering these feelings again. Ouch.

There is a well-known queer Toronto bartender who committed suicide recently, leaving a final note in their stories. I stumble upon it on Instagram and think about screenshotting it but don't. Someone's last trace. I am struck with their face and aura and google them multiple times over the next few days, looking at their Instagram page full of photos of a recent trip to Morocco.

Earlier today my dad sends me a link to an article in the Hamilton Spectator,⁵ about a queer student at the Christian university in Hamilton who took their life after years of trying to advocate for themselves and other trans and queer students in that space.

My dad's email is full of anger and grief. I can't help but think about how my trans sibling was the straw that broke the church's transgenerational hold on my parents.

At one time I considered going to that school. I have friends and many extended family members who did or still do.

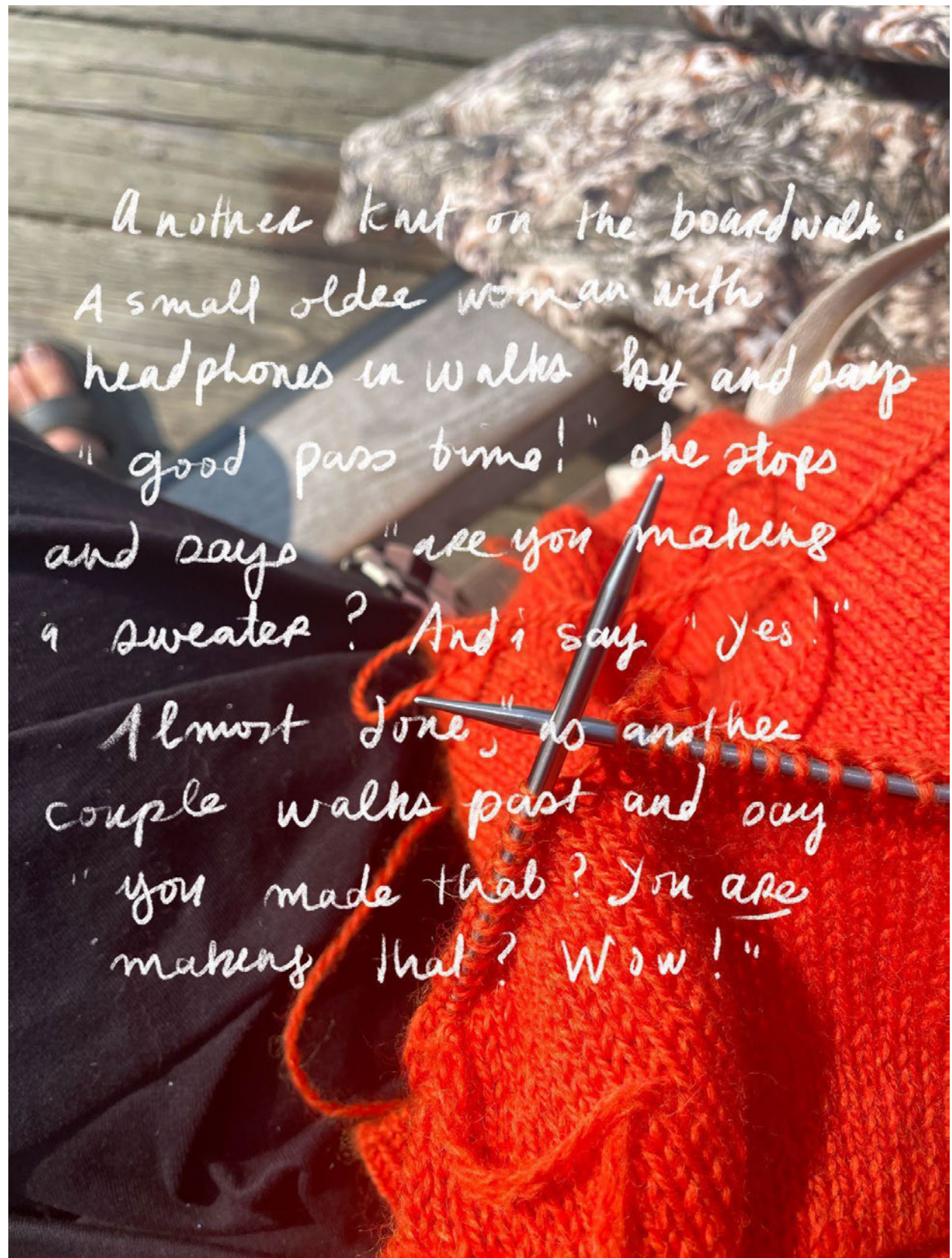
Julietta Singh writes that being immersed in queer theory created in her a deep longing for queer love.

I am ashamed to feel this too...like I should have known/learned in some other way. I wonder what it would have been like to grow up in some other way where this felt like an option.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

⁵ <https://www.thespec.com/local-ancaster/news/2022/12/05/ancaster-redeemer-university-student-calls-for-change-on-how-education-institution-addresses-lgbtq-students.html>



Another knit on the boardwalk.
A small older woman with
headphones in walks by and says
"good pass time!" she stops
and says "are you making
a sweater? And i say "yes!"
Almost done," so another
couple walks past and say
"you made that? You are
making that? Wow!"

Figure 115: "good pass time!"



Figure 116: Beer Garden



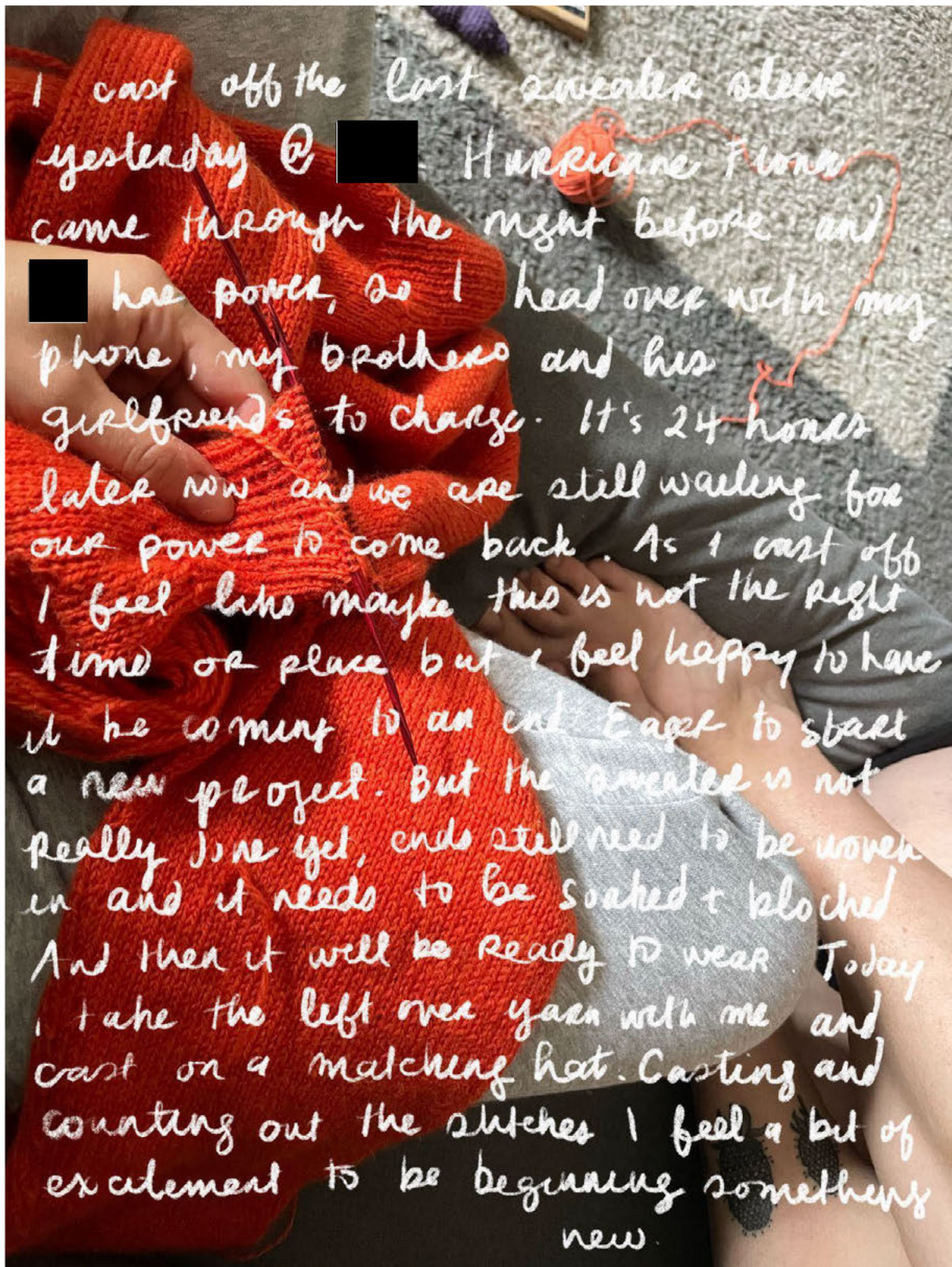
Figure 117: How To with John Wilson

ROW 24:

■■■ does an interview with me a few weeks back but can't get their microphone to work. We go ahead and chat anyway, unsure if anything is being captured.

I like this as a thread, a story.

I finish copying these notes down in ■■■'s apartment, where I cast off the final sleeve a couple months before. Things come in circles.



I cast off the last sweater sleeve yesterday @ [redacted] Hurricane Fiona came through the night before and [redacted] has power, so I head over with my phone, my brother and his girlfriends to charge. It's 24 hours later now and we are still waiting for our power to come back. As I cast off I feel like maybe this is not the right time or place but I feel happy to have it be coming to an end. Eager to start a new project. But the sweater is not really done yet, ends still need to be woven in and it needs to be soaked + blocked. And then it will be ready to wear. Today I take the left over yarn with me and cast on a matching hat. Casting and counting out the stitches I feel a bit of excitement to be beginning something new.

Figure 118: "I feel a bit of excitement to be beginning something new."



Figure 119: Weaving in the ends



Figure 120

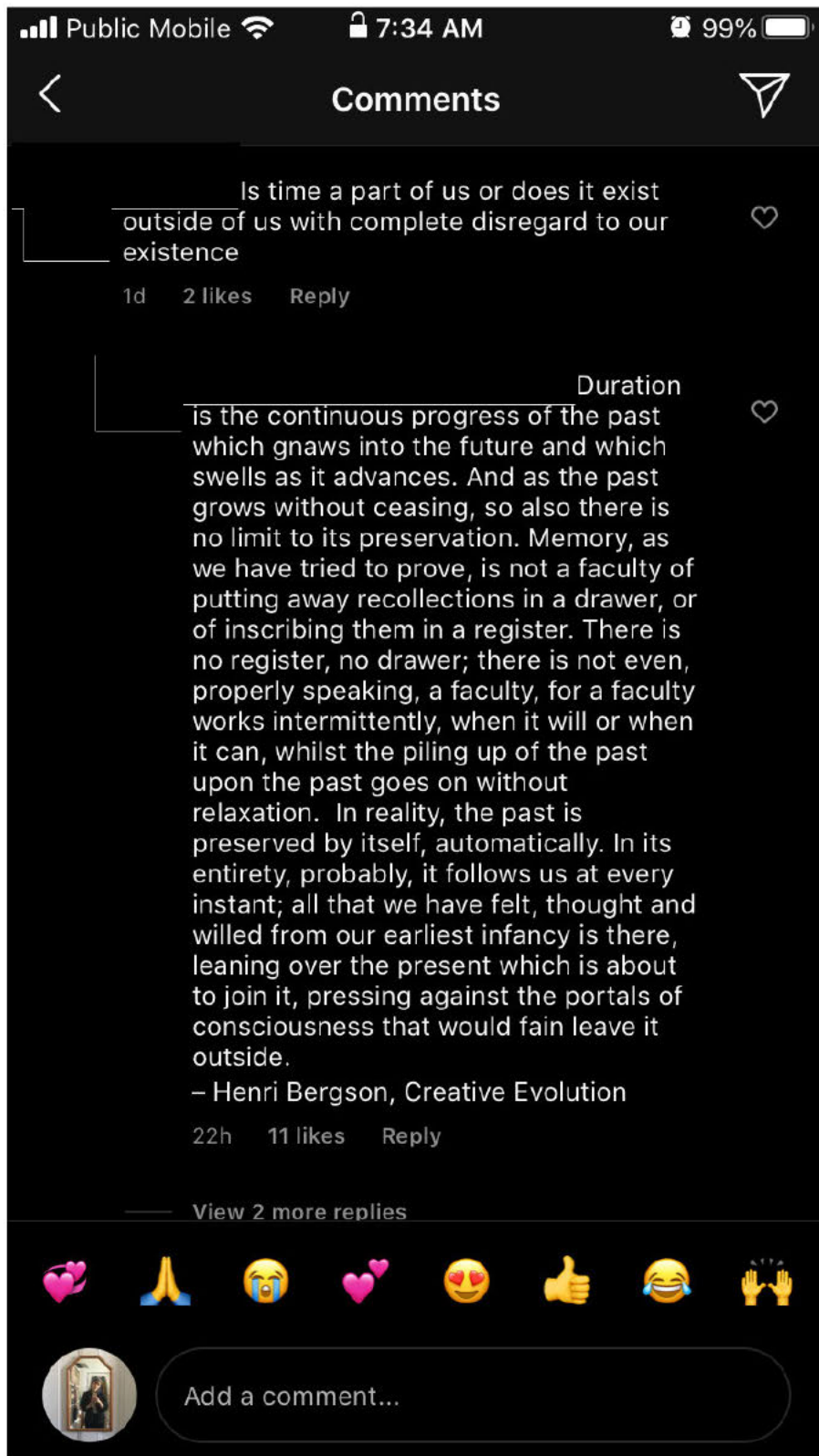


Figure 121: "...the past is preserved by itself, automatically. In its entirety, probably, it follows us at every instant;"

END

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

I am attempting to keep this section as brief as possible and to not return or reflect too much on The *Thesis Sweater* project as I believe it stands well on its own and speaks better for itself than I could ever in re-analyzing it. However, to conclude I will offer some reflections on this project, the ideas it made me consider and the attributes of this project that spoke to research-creation, the anarchic and non-traditional research practices.

KNITTING ALONE

Unlike forms of self-sovereignty that depend on a rational self, crafting is a form of body politics where agency takes a different form than application of the will. It fosters ways of being in the world in which the body moves the mind rather than the other way around, or in which...body and mind are deeply enmeshed or holistically connected. It produces forms of felt sovereignty that consist not of exercising more control over the body and senses but instead of “recovering” them from the mind or integrating them with it (Cvetkovich, 2012:168)

I chose to use knitting in this project because of the way my knitting practice has created connections and opened space for conversation and community. Knitting is a craft practice, grounded in the ordinary, in body, in repetition, in practice. Cvetkovich explains that craft belongs to a new queer and disability culture, for those who are looking at different ways of being more “in the body” and “less in the head” and that it shouldn't be taken up out of past nostalgia (168).

I had proposed— that throughout the summer I spent knitting the thesis sweater—I would organize at least one social activity or outing a week where I would be knitting with others. I did not, as I

had expected, actively have to try for this to happen. Knitting has operated as a strategic tool for me for years now, and most of my social gatherings already revolve around knitting or crafting of some sort. Being social is not easy or natural for me but knitting and craft based social time give me stability and predictability to enter community and conversation.

Knitting is the center of most of my social gatherings, but it is also something I often do alone. During the process of working on this thesis – knitting the sweater and collecting and composing the resulting data – this project without me intending or realizing it became an exploration of my mental health. As a restless, foot tapping, previously nail-biting individual, who spent a lot of their youth having to sit still and being generally well-dressed, well-behaved, and acting “like a lady” (twice in church every Sunday, Christian school, catechism classes) I started doodling and eventually knitting as a practice to keep still and keep focus. As such, my making practices have never been simply creative or abstract for me but have been focused on day-to-day comfort and survival. I don’t think this is unique. As the years progress, I become more and more fully obsessed with knitting and more and more depressed. Cvetkovich might argue that this is not a coincidence. As she writes, crafting is one of the “[i]nsurgent and experimental genres of queer culture...that attempt to make things, to be creative, to do something” -- a way to claim agency when depressed, struggling or when "feeling bad" (161). My mental health often makes each little task seem insurmountable. Knitting gives me a physically tangible way to interact with my community and the world, research-creation, a bodily practice, woven into everyday life that “literally includes texture, colour and sensory pleasure” (Cvetkovich, 168), creativity and conclusions.

MAKING A RESEARCH CREATION PROJECT *OR* WHAT THE FUCK IS RESEARCH CREATION?

So, what is a research-creation project and what do we really mean by research-creation? I set out on this project in one sense hoping to clarify these questions. I thought that in using my knitting practice to undertake a research-creation project, I might better understand how research-creation operates and how one might go about tackling such a project in a straightforward manner. This project hasn't been completely clarifying in that regard, but I think that is mainly because research-creation projects aren't definable. They don't really make "sense," they aren't simple to evaluate, my data isn't easily translatable into benefits and contributions.

Erin Manning argues that research-creation cannot be mapped in advance, that it has "no method to follow, and no ready-made modes of evaluation" (2016:11). In the conclusion to the chapter "Against Method," Manning provides a quote from French philosopher Henri Bergson to explain why, as she writes, "making and thinking, art and philosophy, will never resolve their differences" (45). Bergson writes that "[t]housands and thousands of variations on the theme of walking will never yield a rule for swimming: come, enter the water, and when you know how to swim, you will understand how the mechanism of swimming is connected with that of walking" (Bergson 1998: 193 in Manning 2016:45). Practice and experience inform knowledge, and growth often requires, not a reasonable approach, but a leap of faith.

Throughout the process of completing this thesis I struggled with what the different pieces of the project were and meant and would say and *The Thesis Sweater* document emerged unplanned from this struggle. I wondered: was making the physical sweater the "research" part of this research-creation project and the formation of *The Thesis Sweater* the actual "creation"? What

was the sweater? What was the “Thesis Sweater” document? Where do all these pieces fit? I guess, in the end, the simple answer is that there is no simple answer. They are both research and creation and, at its heart isn’t that what research-creation is about? A recognition that you can’t separate doing and knowing. All the pieces of this project continue to occupy this easy/uneasy space.

I have different feelings about each piece of this project. The physical product of knitting, in this case the sweater, is not something I feel I have to do something more with or that needs to “become” something bigger than it is. The sweater feels close-ended in a reassuring way. I can put it aside, it feels finished. *The Thesis Sweater* document on the other hand feels like it has multiple lives still to unfold. I format and reformat it over the course of this project hoping to find its ideal form (I am still doing this). My knitting practice also still rages on and I finish multiple hats, a pair of socks, a baby cardigan, and another sweater since the thesis sweater’s ending.

The physical thesis sweater created appears now more or less static, unreadable as an object. The sweater is practical, it has a body and two sleeves. It hangs in my bedroom. I haven’t been wearing it, though it does still live on in a quiet way, partially through use, partially through my slight anxiety about not wearing it, and partially through this document and the traces and affects it’s knitting helped create. Though it’s connection to this thesis definitely changes the way I view it, making it feel more complicated than other garments I have knit. It still holds the memory of this thesis a little too heavily. At one point in the project, I am asked if I believe the sweater will imbue memories of the time spent making it when I touch it and I don’t believe it does, at least

not in a tangible way. Though I don't think this is impossible, but in focusing on the concept of the anarchival, I am not overly concerned in "retrieving" anything specific from the sweater.

Beginning this project, I had hoped to show that knitting a sweater could operate as a cultural document and space, like Cvetkovich's archive of feeling: a material and immaterial repository of feelings and emotions encoded not into the garment, but into the *practice* that surrounded its production and reception (7). Following Andrew Jones (2007) in his work on objects and memory, I also believed that like memory, the knitting of the sweater would not operate as a mute receptacle or storehouse but as a relational, creative, and situational event (13).

Manning writes that the paradox of research-creation is that "we are excited by the openings research-creation provides and yet remain largely unwilling to take them on their own terms and experiment with them as new modes of existence and new forms of knowledge" (2016:42). Late in the project, I considered for the first time truly claiming the activating process of the sweater's knitting as a method, but—as always— it is not that simple. When I am titling sections, earlier in this paper I call one describing the anarchival and knitting "Some Methods (?)". My supervisor Michele, notes this question mark and asks, "[w]hy unsure?". At the time I don't know specifically, but I feel uneasy about calling the concepts, describing these actions, as my methods. This is more likely than not an impact of reading Erin Manning's chapter "Against Method," a treatise on research-creation practices that deeply informed my project's direction. Here she argues—as you can probably guess— "against method". In this chapter, Manning proposes we use "techniques" instead of methods. Techniques, she explains, are more dynamic than method, "open to the shift caused by repetition, engaged by the ways in which bodies change, environments are modulated and modulating, and ecologies are composed" (2016:40).

The problem with methods, Springgay and Truman argue, in “On the Need for Methods Beyond Proceduralism: Speculative Middles, (In) Tensions, and Response-Ability in Research” is that it is assumed they can be “pre-given and known in advance” (204), and this suggests that “data is an already pre-supposed entity waiting to be captured, extracted and mined” (204). The idea of mining pre-existing data, continues a humanist tradition that humans are “superior to and separate from the material” (Lather and St. Pierre in Springgay and Truman, 204) and can expertly collect and uncover information through precise enough methods.

Manning writes that within research-creation, each step of the process “will be a renewal of how this event, this time, this problem, proposes this mode of inquiry, in this voice, in these materials, this way” and that “[a]t times, in retrospect, the process developed might seem like a method. But repeating it will never bring the process back. For techniques must be reinvented at every turn and thought must always leap.” (Manning 2016:45). Research done in this way “against method” emphasizes “doing” rather than meaning making (Truman and Springgay: 206).

Truman and Springgay describe this process as being involved with the speculative middle, where “immanent modes of thinking-making-doing come from within the processes themselves, not from outside them” (206). Working from the event of a speculative middle “shifts methods from a reporting on the world to a way of being in the world that is open to experimentation and is (in)tension” (206).

As I touched on earlier, the paranoid stance, or “strong theory” as Sedgwick theorizes, happens when we are asked to explain outcomes and benefits in an anticipatory and foreclosing way. I

was resistant to fall into this mindset while working on the thesis, as research-creation projects refuse this stance in favour of a responsive and intuitive process. But a plan is a helpful thing to have, and I have come to realize that conclusive research statements, methodology and having a plan aren't the same thing. Springgay and Truman argue that methods are actually “necessary for thinking-making-doing” if “method” is understood as “an ecology of practices that are generated in a research event” (211) and is not restricted only to data collection “in the field”. Method can be something alive that moves and changes “frictionally across all aspects of a research event, from its inception, its execution, and its dissemination” (211).

I have been thinking about how a good way to approach and try to understand research-creation practices when starting out might be to think about them like a knitting pattern. Usually, my knitting practice follows a path and there is an expected final shape laid out before I start. I find a pattern, maybe even a picture of what the project will look like—and I choose my yarn and needles hoping to get something similar—but my goals don't often work out. There is no guarantee that I will wear the garment, that it will fit, or that I will even finish it. Often my projects sit unfinished in a basket before I unravel them back into yarn or remake them into something else.

Petra Houch writes that the work of an artist and a researcher “is the work of finding a balance between the formless terror of the blank page or canvas and the form-filled rigidity of previous work, future expectations and external definitions and demands. The challenge is to create just enough structure to promote flow, to find a method that constrains just enough to enable and to

develop ways of working that allow for trial and error, fits and starts, ebbs and flows, learning from failure and perhaps production of the unexpected” (Houch in Loveless, ed: 2020:30)

With knitting, although you may start with a plan, a pattern, the option is always open to leave the pattern behind; to rethink and adjust, maybe even give up, stop, and try something new. You may choose to do this because of the way the yarn feels in your hand, the way the garment sits on your body, distraction or a change in style or interest. With research-creation as with knitting, you can choose or create a plan for action– it can be detailed, it can be tackled row by row–but you won’t know if it will work until you try it. And once you do, it is very likely the pattern will need to be altered and adjusted to better fit your life, your body. Research-creation as a research practice gives me the flexibility to embrace this sort of change and to occupy these speculative spaces of not knowing and even of failure.

The freedom to fail, start again, or rework is necessary, but it is also necessary to realize that failures have value; trying different things has value. In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Jack Halberstam writes that failure allows us to escape “the punishing norms that discipline behaviour” (3). They write that “under certain circumstances, failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world” (2). When knitting, if you struggle to follow a pattern that isn’t working you will still get a sweater (perhaps an ill-fitting, unfunctional sweater?) but these sorts of failures aren’t useless if they are accepted, if you have learned new techniques through the process. The work can be unravelled, its’ material re-knit, or re-used in a new project.

In *The Thesis Sweater* project, I include an Instagram screenshot from fashion designer Jen Beeman where she describes coming to terms with unravelling a complicated colourwork sweater. She writes: “I definitely don’t consider this to be a waste and I’m not sad it got ripped out. I learned a lot about colourwork, perfected my gauge, and entertained myself during the pandemic with a project and that’s good enough for me.” (jen_beeman, 2023)

If I have learned anything from making, even when trying to replicate a project, it rarely does work out as planned, and this is also rarely a bad thing if I am willing to be flexible and to embrace these changes. Oddly, this thesis sweater knit up more or less exactly to pattern, but after finishing the thesis sweater in the fall, I started a new sweater with a colourwork yoke. I did everything “right”. I choose the proper weight of yarn; I did multiple gauge tests to determine my needle size and made sure my stitch counts were like that suggested in the pattern. Having done all this, and confident in my choices, I started knitting. On finishing the colourwork yoke, I separated the body, putting the sleeve stitches on hold, and tried on the in- progress sweater only to find that it is very tight under my armpits and loose in the chest and back. I did various troubleshooting attempts. I blocked it to see if it would relax once washed and I considered improvising some colourwork to make the yoke longer, but finally I put this sweater aside and began a different sweater with my remaining balls of yarn. I know I will probably tear out the first attempt to finish the current one but leave it half-finished, in a basket in my bedroom for now.

Why did I write all this? I think because even with our best attempts we need room to adjust, start again or even just leave something unfinished. And leaving something unfinished doesn’t

mean that it won't still add to or become something else in the future. And that sometimes the feeling that something isn't working out will just be that a feeling...not yet followed up by any real data or physical evidence, and we can take these feelings seriously. With practice and a growing understanding of the process and language you are using, these adjustments become more natural.

One of the adjustments I made to this project was in how I had planned to slip a loop of thread around the first stitch from every session I knit. I had proposed to do this originally as I thought it might be visually interesting and offer a sense of time passing and growth during the sweater's knitting. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through the sweater, I cut the markers out. This was for several reasons. I found them to be a distraction. They were the most frequently commented on or asked about features of the sweater. They were also far from accurate as I rarely remembered to place them and— although they were meant to somehow show time spent knitting— they visually portrayed nothing, given the circular spiralling process of knitting 3D in the round, with rows growing upon rows. I also found I often started and stopped in the same place, the “beginning of the round” of the “BOR” where the instructions would change, and so the markers would often be directly under or over each other. In honesty, something felt wrong about this proposition from the beginning. It was a process I proposed partially out of a fear that I would have, in the end, nothing to show. These markers were connected initially to my early conceptualizing of the sweater as an archive and were at that time supposed to directly correspond to notes about the where and when that section was knit, connecting notes to moments in the sweater like labels on a scientific diagram. I abandoned this idea of precise markings before the project began but left the idea of placing the markers as I thought they might be visually interesting. Instead, this

practice often took me out of the simple making process, they garnered a lot of attention requiring me to frequently stop to explain the why and what they were to people outside the project (when I wasn't exactly sure myself). They were a remnant of a fear and a time where I was attempting to display the time-consuming nature of knitting through marking or proving its many starts and stops— as if that is where the value in the project might be shown.

I reflect on cutting them out in ROW 12 of *The Thesis Sweater*:

I have been talking about my project a lot more these days with my friends. It has been nice to get their thoughts and inputs on my various uncertainties. On the last morning home in Hamilton, I cut out the markers I had been placing onto the first stitch I knit each time I pick up the sweater to begin knitting again. I save them in a little bundle in my bag, but my luggage gets deep searched at the airport after I forget to drink the last of water out of my water bottle and the little loops of orange yarn are scattered throughout my backpack.

I am still finding them on the floor around the house.

Talking to [REDACTED] about cutting out these markers, I say “they just didn't mean anything. They didn't visually portray anything readable about time and distance spent knitting” as I had hoped because of the circular or spiral nature of knitting in the round. But saying this I realize maybe that says a lot about time and distance after all. I wonder if I should have left them in place but clipping them out returns some normality to the sweater and I don't really regret that.

“What” they were, had become a frequent conversation starter.

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Figure 122

Cutting out the markers led me to reflect on the reason why these markers didn't accurately show anything about the time spent knitting might be because time and distance are not an accurate description or summary of something's worth. I read a quote in an article about time and space that says: “Albert Einstein taught us that space and time could warp and bend like a piece of fabric” (Strogatz, 2022). I am not sure if this is true (quantum theory is a little out of my comfort

zone) but I think this idea and imagery – in relation to the physicality of sweater's dimensional form and it's porous malleable fabric combined with and the back and forth, past and present reflecting discovered in the process of putting *The Thesis Sweater* document project together – is a poetic and beautiful one.

ANARCHIVES- ESCAPES AND EXCESSES

The project did, on examination now, clearly capture for me the feeling of the anarchiv.

A few years back now, in another paper, I reflected on meeting up with my high school boyfriend ten years after we broke up. I wrote then:

“We talk about our relationship. We talk about sex. He remembers the apple tree. I don't, at first.

The next day before Christmas festivities, hungover, I pull out a box of my old journals out of the crawlspace and read through our year-long relationship. I find it strange how many of the memories I never put down in words. I search for them in the pages, but they fall in between dates and lines.”

When looking back over the *Thesis Sweater's* notes and images, I had a similar feeling. There were many things that were meaningful to me during the sweater knitting that I expected to see that were “missing” from these records. This made me question my feeling, my assumption that the recording words or inscribing past events hardens moments down into memory. Memory emerges through reading these words, but they aren't these words exactly. Through the reflection process, that shaped the *Thesis Sweater* I had added some of these missing moments back in, but I realized reading through the entire document in the early hours of yesterday morning that I make reference often to collecting or keeping things that don't appear in the project notes: the ticket stub from Nope (very much lost), the initial –and only– drawing I created before the start of the project (this exists somewhere, and I could find and add it, but probably won't), my

interview with my friend Alia, (I have it, but it hasn't been transcribed or made available) and the markers I cut out of the sweater (scattered, I have no images of them in place on the sweater and now they have all disappeared).

The below excerpt touches on another fact: how much happened outside of the constraints of the capture of this project but still deeply affected its tone. Much of the time spent knitting this project was occupied around the sadness of a shifting relationship between me and a close friend, but as I mention in the section included below (ROW 1), I never actually knit the sweater around them. This doesn't mean that their presence is absent from this project. The opposite really; it is full of them (sometimes still a little unbearably, the redacting helps with this too).

██████████ *Though when another friend says last week that "queers are notoriously bad at drawing boundaries" it makes me pause. That night sitting at the bar, I tell ██████████ I have never knit the sweater around them. They say this is a good thing, that their sad energy isn't imbued in it. I make a joke about how it's too late for that, that somewhere there is a row that*

¹ *(It is September now, this shirt still sits in a basket in my bedroom, cast off, but ends not woven in, and button and ties not attached. It may stay this way)*

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is mainly a soggy mess of yarn and tears. You can't see it but the previous week is a long and sad one, with them frequently on my mind

The reflection process found in the project of transcribing and reflecting is also obviously anarchival, though it is not something I planned. Returning to a moment in time and supplementing memories attached to those images and words, shows how much escapes capture, and the many things that are sparked or grow forth from these moments: the trains of thought I was led down when reflecting on a topic, or moment, or conversation.

I think it is also important to note here that most (all?) of these reflections are one-sided. They come from my memory, or my experience and they are by no means either an objectively “accurate” or “true” capture of a moment (whatever that means). This also speaks to the anarchival, as reality is something we will all capture, experience or understand differently. In Leanne Simpson’s *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back*, she defines the word “truth” using the Anishinaabemowin word “(o)debwewin” literally meaning “the sound that my heart makes” (2011:17). This phrase has stayed with me.

CONCLUSION

“No doubt one of crafting’s appeals for those who do primarily mental labour is the return to more concrete forms of manual activity. Moreover, it also conveys a DIY conviction that creativity, and even art, is available for everyone and that the results need not be special to be meaningful, and hence it challenges the perfectionism and hierarchies demanded and fostered by academic work” (Cvetkovich, 190).

I chose knitting as the medium for this thesis, as a long-time avid and obsessive knitter to examine the role this traditional craft practice has played in my artistic practice and life in

general. Knitting has operated as a strategic social tool and a coping mechanism for me, centering me, keeping me present, helping me concentrate, relax, and interact with the world whether in church as a youth, university classes, or social gatherings. The concept that I kept coming back to while working on this thesis was how making in this way has value, as *study*, as a material and an intellectual theory building, world shaping practices, and how such practices might also reveal more traditional theorizing, like the written and spoken word, as equally creative, material and making practice themselves.

The project is informed and shaped around my deep appreciation and need to make things and my experience, growth and struggles within this Masters. It was an attempt to comprehend and dig into my discomfort with words and verbalizing, my dislike of both reading or writing descriptions of artistic projects (while loving the reading of theory more generally?) and my resistance in having to explain or justify my making. The question I asked with this research-creation thesis was “how might handknitting a sweater be a feminist materialist and anarchival practice?”. This thesis follows the concept of the anarchival, struggles with ideas surrounding capture and how making, in this case knitting a sweater, operates as a practice that lets me think through what cannot, or maybe *should not* be captured.

When thinking about the concept of language, Maggie Nelson writes “...it doesn’t feed or exalt any angst one may feel about the incapacity to express, in words, that which eludes them. It does not punish what can be said for what, by definition, it cannot be. Nor does it ham it up by miming a constricted throat: *Lo, what I would say, were words good enough*. Words are good enough. *It is idle to fault a net for having holes*, my encyclopedia notes” (Nelson, 3, *emphasis in the original*). Knitting is full of holes, but so is writing, these holes are a part of the process, a

necessary characteristic of a fabric made by looping together strands of yarn or thought. (Occasionally some of these holes may also be the result of mistakes: dropped or duplicated stitches). Such holes are openings for future life. This project became a process of embracing, exploring and in some cases expanding these holes.

Petra Houch writes that “as anyone who has sought to know anything knows, the more you know, the more you realize you don’t” (in Loveless ed. 31). She describes this as *unknowing*: “knowing’s most generative and desirable result.” (31) During the duration of this project I frequently reflected on, and my supervisor Michele and I frequently talked about unstarted or unfinished work. Finishing things is not my strength. Even now with the data collecting, recording, and formatting of this thesis behind me and the writing mostly completed, I have, as I have mentioned before, multiple ideas on how to shape the work, how it could move and grow further, be more interesting or better. This project doesn’t feel finished, and it doesn’t quite feel like I accomplished what I was hoping for (what was I hoping? Not to have to justify why making is important and why body is theory? Can these things really be proved?) It has been a personal and painful process. At this point I have copied all my work down, I have formatted it and reformatted it, rearranged it and edited it: it could be done but I am still having ideas daily on how it might be formatted better, other ways I could use and present the constantly emerging data or finding new readings that make me consider things differently. A few days ago, after an evening of going down new rabbit holes (could I print text on ribbon? Should I make a digital booklet? A physical booklet? Could I reknit the sweater out of paper or raffia? Why am I so terrible at tenses? What did I learn about authorship and ownership and voice? Should I also follow the sweater’s future life? What about a knitting installation?) I decide this is new work for

a future project, that the document I have here is enough for this iteration of the project. Yesterday I submitted a grant application to continue this work, but for now I will put this document aside, knowing that this project, this journey, won't end here; that these ideas are going to stick to me and will push me forward into new projects, new communities, new life.



Figure 124: "I am sitting down to tackle this on a very wet day..."

POSTSCRIPT:

Just before I was to defend the thesis, in consulting with SMU library copyright support, I learned that I was not legally allowed to keep most of the screenshots I included in *The Thesis Sweater* document in the thesis without seeking permissions from the creators of the content I had screenshotted. This is a uniquely Canadian concern (we don't have well established Fair Use laws here like they do in the United States) and the issue comes mainly from unavoidable requirement of having the finished thesis submitted to Library and Archives Canada. This was an interesting problem to encounter so late in the thesis process, and not one I was expecting to encounter coming from my Fine Arts background and understanding as I did that *The Thesis Document* was an "artwork". I was not prepared to seek permissions for all the images, firstly, because of how many of them there are, and secondly, because in some cases this seemed impossible (how do I seek permission for a screenshot of an Instagram story, sharing another Instagram post of an image of someone else's tweet?). Because of this you will find the screenshots throughout the document blacked out and substituted with a written description of the image. I feel like facing this issue continues the thesis work in thinking about the non-traditional ways we absorb and create content, create and spread knowledge and how this is restrained, restricted and shaped through concerns of capital or intellectual control. Because I am not thought to actively interact with the images extensively enough in the thesis to claim Fair Dealing, and because I do not want to put in the hours of work it would take to seek permission and properly source them all, these images and screenshots and the knowledge and feelings attached to them are considered invalid to be shared in future distributions of this thesis. I include the unaltered list of figures below.

June 2023

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