

LEAVING THE CIRCLE OPEN

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April-May, 2023

Building a bridge between two mediums is hard. Anyone trying to translate a visual language into a written one will be challenged to a conversion of their work. In the past three years, I have focused on formulating a language that works with my hands. If I were to share that alphabet I would have a pile of stones, dyed rope, second-hand fabric, dried leaves, thread, and oil paint. But I can't deny that I need to be able to talk about my work and communicate my process. What I have found is that this doesn't mean I am defending my practice or correlating meaning to every material but instead creating a circle and leaving it partially open for others to enter and fill with themselves.

Through my artwork, I contemplate the intersection of the present and the forgotten past. It's an entanglement of found objects, raw substances, and the feminine hand stitch. I am constantly drawn to transformation and the potential in the things that are often overlooked or discarded. The hand stitch of secondhand fabric is a crucial element of my work, evoking a sense of history and tradition while also highlighting the importance of the feminine perspective. My work connects me to a timeline of women who have worked with their hand's sewing, building, and healing over centuries.

At the same time, it is an exploration of the creative process itself, of the constant interplay between the past and the present, the natural and the man-made—the individual and the collective. For me, the process of creation is akin to a ritual, and my aim is to remain centered and present throughout it. Frequently I show my work as an installation—the blurring between art and location transgressing into the space where it is shown. My intention is to create spiritually significant spaces where messages can be found, transforming forgotten items and memories into something fleeting and in flux. My art has one arm holding hands with the past, two feet in the present, and another arm reaching into the future: the installations and paintings part of a canon of feminine resilience and spiritual storytelling.

RUNNING WITH NO PARTICULAR DESTINATION BUT ENJOYING THAT

My hands are my head, used as the first point of connection. It always starts outside of the studio actively engaging with the local environment. I am walking down the street, I see a pile of random items next to used furniture, it's big and overflowing, and my instinct is to stop and look. I see many things, old clothes, one shoe, notebooks, broken drawers, a plastic wood. I pick up an old towel and a chess board that's grey and muted green, peeling and unusable for its original purpose. My instinct is to collect them, and from there, I bring them to my studio and let them rest in my own environment for a few days or maybe longer.

Instinct is the push that causes me to create. It is what leads me to my materials and the placement of them. My practice works in a constellation, with one action influencing the next, jumping back and forth between interventions and pieces. Of course, I can't really say my practice is all based on instinct. The hands move before the head but the head is what completes the work, imposing a greater meaning into a habitual rhythm. The head is mine, the instinct is nature's. It is between this connection where the bridge of creation lies. That connection is realized through practices that have been passed on for thousands of years, such as sewing and the construction of intentional spaces. I turn to the past to guide my practice forward in a way that relies on intuition. That intuition is labor and that labor has been within the human species for an untraceable amount of time.

HOTEL SEWING KIT

I collect textiles and fabric from pieces I've found, sourced second-hand, or that are my own clothing. I disassemble, tear, or cut them, and on occasion I'll naturally dye them, with wine, onion peels, or other natural substances. Textile acts as the skin of my sculptures and paintings, intended to hold the piece securely through stitching. Using a needle and thread I hand stitch the fabric in place, this action is a solidification.

I turn to the past while creating and what I find deeply roots me in my process is the hand stitch. Sewing is the meeting point of two parts, skin or fabric, it is the continuous moment of connection. Sewing is a slow burn into unification. If a body is torn past its point of self-healing, we turn to the thread as a technology that mends the biological. As explained in *Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*, there is a blurring through labor that is a "humanizing activity that makes man; labour is an ontological category permitting the knowledge of an experience are rudimentary" (Haraway, 1985). It is a fundamental action branching from necessity that points in and out of things that are ultimately grounded in being. Hand stitching is a skill that was not taught to me by my mother or grandmother or sister. Instead, it was taught to me by an accumulation of knowledge spread between the many women who influenced me, as well as an instinctual skill used in a moment of necessity. No one ever 'taught' me the skill, yet for practical reasons I was able to accomplish my own mending for the first time when in need of a practical solution with a small hotel sewing kit. At a later age, I learned how to sew pillowcases with a sewing machine at a class for girls at our local church, but later on, it felt natural to stay with the hand stitch for a few reasons. First, it is not about making a straight line, nor something perfect. The sentence that is displayed in the imperfections of the individual punctures tells a story of moments that have merged to create a larger

narrative. Secondly, I want the work to take my time from me. I want the repetition that lasts hours as I enter a meditative state and can focus more intention on what I am framing or creating. This is an aspect of the labor that relates to being. I reject the sewing machine and lean on the hand-assembled. It is important to me that hand stitching has been used for centuries as a meditative practice and as a medical procedure. In fact, its origins can be traced back to ancient times. Suturing, or the practice of using stitches to close wounds, has been used for thousands of years. The exact origin of suturing is difficult to pinpoint, but evidence of early surgical techniques involving the use of sutures has been found in ancient civilizations. In many cultures, sewing, embroidery, and other forms of needlework were considered not only practical skills but also spiritual practices that were used for healing, prayer, and meditation. In a study published in the December issue of the Journal of Human Evolution, a team of researchers pieced together what we know about ancient garment-making using needle artifacts collected around the world. This included sewing needles from a site by the Inya River. Sewing, the analysis reveals, can offer a portal into human technology and cognition in the Upper Paleolithic period, an epoch stretching from 50,000 to 10,000 years ago. "Many of the needles we discovered were not simply used to manufacture clothes but for embroidery and ornaments. There was an aesthetic role," says Francesco d'Errico, an anthropologist at the University of Bordeaux in France and a co-author of the study. This reveals that the clothing that was stitched was not only used for practical reasons but also as a form of communication, relaying messages of social identity and tribal affiliations. I align with the truth that my work lands on a timeline of other needlework created for centuries, and is a reflection of human growth, rather than a result of my personal upbringing and location. There is a narrative element that connects with a needle and thread, and I create my own through the process of solidifying a piece. A stitch is a multipurpose tool that connects me to the past and to breath, mending and to healing, making it one of the most insightful actions I can use to hold my work.

CUPS, STONES, STICKS, SWORDS

When I am painting I am translating thought and feeling. It usually comes deep from my center, and I feel a vision of some sort trying to come out of me. I don't see it until I can feel it, and when I do it is more quiet than I thought it would be. Sometimes I sketch the imagery first, sometimes I don't. Mixing colors and finding the right consistency is vital. I use sand for texture and reference my textiles for color. Painting is a journey and I am never fixed on the outcome.

In the timeline of my own practice, sewing and the collection of materials came much later than painting. Painting is what pushed me to consistent artistic production and fueled what felt necessary to create. I am drawn to esoteric symbols that have been used by a multitude of different cultures and religions. By both incredible artists and also simplistic pictorial drawings. An example is the tarot, an accumulation of many different iconographies with two major roots in Egyptian hieroglyphics and a northern Italian card game "tarocchini" played in the 14th century. Throughout its history, the tarot deck has been enriched and expanded upon by various cultures, religions, and philosophical traditions, resulting in a diverse array of images that are linked to multiple worlds while also seeking to convey universal themes. Some of these worlds include Christian symbolism, the Kabbalah, Astrology, Eastern philosophy, and occultism. The tarot inspires me deeply on a visual level, providing me with ideas for how I want my paintings to be interpreted. Simultaneously, the iconic elements of the tarot also have an emotional resonance with me. In the 19th century tarot cards became increasingly popular among occultists and spiritualists in Europe and the United States, who use them for divination and spiritual guidance. The first commercially produced tarot decks were created, including the famous Rider-Waite-Smith deck, which I own and reference. The 78-card deck has numerous meanings compiled from a system of symbolic language and imagery, the four suits being cups, wands, swords, and pentacles. Cups for the element water represent emotions, intuition, and the subconscious. Wands for the element air represent creativity, inspiration, and ambition. Swords as the element of air represent thoughts, ideas, and intellectual pursuits. Pentacles as the element earth represent material wealth, practicality, and the physical world. The cards draw on the symbolism from the natural world, tapping into the collective unconscious, and providing insight and guidance. This symbolic language inspired me to create work that was easy to grasp, with the necessary room for the viewer to lay their own meaning on top. The key to tarot and the link to my paintings in the final stage is the openness for the viewer to associate their own meanings to its imagery. This allows for the depersonalization of a process that feels deeply personal and an allowance for the creation of something that is shared.

I started to experiment sculpturally while painting in 2021. It felt just as satisfying to use found objects and materials such as sticks, leaves, plants, and textiles as an extension of the painting. Not only did these materials have the texture and qualities that I was visually satisfied with but their history gave the piece a cyclical quality. Instead of building visual imagery from tubes of paint and white canvas I am working off of something that has a story, and contributing to the continuation of that. The moment one thing is touched it has made its own small history. This touch multiplies and merges, transforms into a new object, breaks, and then turns into something different. We are living with these remnants in our daily lives, and for me, they are a compelling tool to use in my artistic practice. The object is a complexification of what came before and I

am interested to continue its complexity by altering it or positioning it in a way that removes it from its original use. Nature works through me, through instinct, to reshape and reform what already exists. After looking to the past to find my tools and methods, I create in the present world of hybrids and dissolved boundaries. There are cultural and social forces that shape my artistic production, and this is often dependent on my current surroundings, Donna Haraway explains in *A Cyborg Manifesto* that "The opposition between nature and culture, between organism and machine, and between the material and the symbolic, is systematically blurred in the postmodern world, and it is this potent mix of hybridization and purism that marks the cyborg." Haraway emphasizes the blurring of boundaries between different categories that were traditionally seen as separate or oppositional, as mentioned: the natural and the artificial; the organic and the technological; the material and the symbolic.

By repurposing objects that have been discarded or abandoned, I give them new life and meaning—this results in artworks that hybridize these categories, challenging traditional notions of what is "natural" or "artificial," and questioning the boundaries between them. Found material, by its very nature, is already a hybrid form that combines different elements and contexts. By repurposing and recontextualizing these materials, I create new meanings and associations that entangle nature and culture, material and symbolic. Haraway has helped to confirm and acknowledge the role of cultural and social contexts in shaping my artistic creation. While also challenging the idea of the artist as a solitary genius, highlighting instead the collaborative and interconnected nature of artistic production. I understand art as not just a reflection of reality, but an active intervention in it and I hope to contribute to a broader cultural shift towards a more fluid and inclusive understanding of what it means to be human in our world.

THE HOUSE UPSTAIRS

I frame my work on different levels and through different methods. The painting is framed, the object is framed, and the piece itself is framed within the space. I question my location, where, and how the piece can exist in a way that reflects its intention. There is a point of entrance. There is makeshift scaffolding. The body exists within a structure. The body can be the house.

The bridge to installation was an easy one to cross. I have always felt a natural desire to create within a space and not for a space. The diverse practices of artists such as Paul Thek, Sarah Sze, and Ana Mendieta resonated with me; from Thek's evocative sculptures and structures to Sze's intricate installations and Mendieta's powerful use of the body in performances. These inspirations led me to translate my own work into an

installation format. My art explores the concept of the domestic home as a reflection of introspection and communal living. The house serves as a framework for this exploration, interacting with its surroundings and positioning. To invite viewers into this unconventional space, I've incorporated materials like string, rocks, sediment mixture, and now metal bars. The body, whether it is the viewer's or my own, becomes an integral part of the work, as it interacts with the space and the objects within it. Although functionality isn't the focus, the transparency of the materials evokes a sense of presence. The house itself serves as a metaphorical framework for this exploration, interacting with its surroundings and the positioning of the work within it.

I have a recurring dream that is very vivid. I am living in the house I am living in now, we live on the ground level and the light comes from above. Everything in the dream is the same except for the house upstairs. The house upstairs is connected by a staircase and a door, it has wide open space and lots of sunlight that pours in through large windows. There is a kitchen, and the angles of the walls are nontraditional, making geometric rooms with blocky corners. The house is ours, it's included in the one we live in. But it's vacant and mostly empty. We forget about the house upstairs, we are occupied with what's below. Occasionally I remember the house upstairs, I go up and feel light on my skin, I look at the rooms and consider which one I would take as my own. I want to move into the house upstairs. I want the light. I'll take the small room. There is so much vacancy I feel like it can't be true. How could this space go unused? I get the feeling it's not, there is a lack of dust and the air smells warm in a way that's alive. There is an internal space outside of my window downstairs. When I look out and up I can see the windows that lead into the upstairs kitchen. One night I look out the window and see a family of four climbing from outside into the window of the upstairs house. They have been using the house as their living space, and I feel untrust, I should have moved up there sooner. The next day I walk up the stairs with a pot in my hand, ready to defend myself and my space. I can sense someone's presence. There is a man sitting at the desk in the room I want as my own. He turns and looks at me with complete calmness. I acknowledge to him that he's been living in my house, pot in hand. He tells me that I forgot about the house, so that's why. He tells me that multiple people live here, including a family. I would hit him in the head but I do not want to, he is nice and he has a point about my absence in the space. The dream continues in many ways, of me going up and down the stairs, talking with the man, and eventually accepting the space as one that should be shared. I cook dinner for the children living in the upstairs house and they show me how they climb into the window. It's nice to know that I can find sunlight in the morning and hear the rain at night. It's nice to know that I can be within each space, all the rooms upstairs and downstairs. The house is within. I am the entire house, every wall, pipe, corner, and brick. I have access to it all, and I can always find a way inside.

My practice is a manifestation of nature working through me, using instinct to reimagine the world around us. I lean on the unseen and the unknown, as these are the tools that turn our attention within. Through absence, there is presence, a space emerges of what is with us now. There is also the reconnection with our shared history, through which we can gain a deeper appreciation for the beauty and complexity of the world we live in, finding new ways to engage with the challenges and opportunities facing us today. By highlighting the intersection of the present and the forgotten past, I challenge the viewer to think about the ways in which things can be reshaped and re-configured to influence our world. My artistic process is a day-to-day task that requires repetition, underscoring the commitment required to effect real change. It is a call to action, reminding us that we already possess the tools necessary to shape the future. After all, this is our home, and we can always find our way back in.

SOURCES

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