

Fleeting Euphoria

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Abstract

I am researching material and aesthetic strategies from the Arte Povera movement and feminist art of the 1960s to address contemporary issues of ubiquitous waste and language. One of Arte Povera's most prominent artists was a woman named Marisa Merz. Merz was the sole female artist in this influential movement, introducing the traditionally domestic and feminine craft of knitting to the genre. Arte Povera is often associated with commonplace materials such as dirt, paper and clothing. At the time, this work was a strong reaction against earlier abstract painting and minimalist practices, while questioning society's modernization. My work is a representation of throwaway culture. The work represents craft and the futility in the challenge I have laid out for myself. My work is the process of composting life's waste and transforming it into a conversation for the next generation. This transformation invites the audience to consider a new relationship with the materials as they shift category through intention. Deconstruction and reconstruction of object material, shifting it from utilitarian and then disposed of to artwork renegotiates the value through aesthetics and moral questions that the artwork imposes. The quilt and smaller sculptural forms have a pleasant tactile quality. The pieces on the floor interrupt the autonomous space of the gallery. The audience is forced to interact physically with the work, whether they choose to avoid it by carefully stepping around the work or walk across it, potentially leaving traces of themselves on the surface. The quilt will grow and become overwhelming in size, creating a speculative fiction solution to the world's plastic problem. Ambiguity is something I embrace in the work, there is no exact or single solution.

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Introduction

As a Master's student of Visual Arts at York University, I am researching material and aesthetic strategies from the Arte Povera movement and feminist art of the 1960s to address contemporary issues of ubiquitous waste and language. One of Arte Povera's most prominent artists was a woman named Marisa Merz. Merz was the sole female artist in this influential movement, introducing the traditionally domestic and feminine craft of knitting to the genre. Arte Povera is often associated with commonplace materials such as dirt, paper and clothing. At the time, this work was a strong reaction against earlier abstract painting and minimalist practices, while questioning society's modernization. Before contextualizing my work within the scope of these historical influences, along with some theoretical sources which inform my work, I will discuss the processes underlying my recent art practice.

My Work and Creative Process

I collect and reuse found material creating pieces from what is essentially considered garbage. I am inspired by the thorough and skillful work of craftspeople and artists like Marisa Merz who use found material to create intimate and delicate works. I aim to confront the viewer with complex topics such as our obsession with the consumption of objects, pollutant waste and planned obsolescence. I set out to think critically about the material that I use and the relationship viewers have with them. Objects that have been left at the side of the road, unique objects and clothing found in second-hand stores are what intrigue me the most. These objects

have a history; someone once cared for them, spent time and money on them, yet now they have been devalued and discarded. I want to discuss what role these objects play in my current practice and how I salvage material.

My work sets out to transform the everyday, utilitarian object into works that inspire self-reflection and the conservation of materials. My work embraces the transitory quality of damaged, used objects. Each piece continues to shift even when being installed based on their relationship to each other and the space. Although the idea of reusing material in art making is not a new idea, I aim to approach it from a contemporary position. There is a nuance of naivety in respect to the futility of the work. There are social and historical theories of meaning implicit in such objects. These theories include language that constructs identity via the material goods around us. I am interested in how people relate to one another through language and how people perceive themselves through inanimate objects such as clothing. The sociology of language is a tool for self-reflection and is used to define identity within a community. The objects I find and use are a relics of the place and cultures from which they originate; economic standing and value, consumption and waste are some elements that may be reflected by my materials.

Some of the pieces are large collage works made up of found material. The collage work will be hung on the walls of the gallery. Some are tightly stretched, some are casually pinned to the wall while others lay loose on the ground acting as an interruption in the space. These works vary in size due to the manner in which they are made. It is impossible to determine the origin of each material used to make up these collage pieces, but some have a longer history than others. One of the collages, titled 'Frill,' contains a photo that was taken of the space in which it is being

shown. I salvaged this photo from my partner's place of work, a printing shop, which produces an extraordinary amount of waste. He can utilize the equipment to create some of his work, and I enjoy this resourcefulness. The photo that I mentioned is a discarded piece of material left over from him experimenting while making his work. Some of the other materials used to make up these collages are also discarded pieces from him. He is a very important part of my life and therefore it makes sense to me that he should creep into my work. The history of each piece of material is something that might not be apparent at first glance but is important to my process of making. These works are a record of time and history, labour and decision. The works have limitations imposed by the human hand. I will further discuss decisions made that lead to my circumstance and how this affects the overall outcome of my practice.

My partner and I move often and as we discard many personal items while we pack up each time, we also tend to keep a lot of "material" that one might consider garbage. It is hard to tell the exact history of each piece of material included in my work, but it is interesting to me that each piece has had many lives. If it is a piece of bedding or velvet included in a collage it has been used by us for some time and is deemed no longer suitable for everyday use. It is impossible to determine the origin of each material used to make up these collage pieces, but some have a longer history than others. The stretchers that I use for some of the work hung on the walls were collected after an art exhibition. The artists traveled internationally for the exhibition and were not able to take the stretcher bars with them once the show was done. I was lucky enough to get my hands on the stretcher bars after their show ended and the work was taken down. Surrounding myself with creative people such as these has its benefits and their influence makes its way into my work.

I choose to buy only used items to fill our home which gives these materials a little more time to live out their lives. They have a deeper history and an unknown past. Someone else may have loved them or hated them at one point. These materials are carefully sewn together to make these collages, still using a low-tech sewing machine I received as a gift when I was eleven. I wanted a sewing machine so badly and went on to make many terrible outfits that I proudly wore to school. From a young age I have had a strong interest in textiles and the act of making. I was never able to have any lessons and I was not naturally gifted but I adapted my skill to reflect my style in the clothing and now the collages I make. Over the years I have taken care of this sewing machine, having it serviced regularly and prolonging its life. By treating my belongings this way I am making an ethical choice and not giving in to consumer culture by buying a new sewing machine. I am still able to use this same sewing machine to make the collages in my practice. The collages are quite large in scale and therefore I sit on the ground of my studio or apartment and slowly feed the material through the sewing machine. The colour of thread is chosen by what I was able to find at the second-hand store or whatever I can find at my mother's house. She does not sew and is not handy in any way, the thread I find there is most likely from my past attempts to sew my clothes. As is demonstrated in the making of the work, my sewing skills have not much improved. I am too impatient with my incapable sewing machine as I try to feed a variety of material through it and get frustrated when it doesn't like one of them.

On top of these collages, there is white paint and ink transferred from logos on single-use plastic bags. In some cases, there are different colours of paint used depending on what I find. Most of the white paint is from a bucket of house paint that was leftover from us painting our apartment when we first moved in. The single-use plastic shopping bag seems unavoidable, they

come into our lives if we want them or not. I have now started to collect single-use plastic bags from others in a determinedly futile attempt to stop them all from ending up in the ocean. The lettering from the single-use plastic bags will come off and transfer onto the desired surface with just a little of the house paint. I press the single-use plastic bags into the paint on the surface of the collage. I can feel the cold paint squish between my fingers through the plastic. The process of waiting for these to dry can be tedious as I am fairly impatient and often try to lift them too early and have to restart the process. As the paint is somewhat sealed between the plastic and the surface of the collage it can take over a week to dry sometimes. Once the paint has finally dried, I have the satisfying task of carefully removing the single-use plastic bags. They are peeled back to reveal the lettering from the single-use plastic bag now on the surface of the collage. Again, creating a new life for each object and material, I keep these single-use plastic bags. The scale and sense of chaos in my collage work is an implication and residue of the human body. The materials used and sewn together in an abstract and gestural manner maintain a kinetic quality without the insertion of a physical body. The collage pinned to the wall allows for reinvention and expansion; the work is an ongoing exploration of these ideas rather than a statement. Although there is no actual performance in the final work, the work retains a performative nature.

Another body of my work starts with the gesture of carefully flattening the bags, folding them, cutting them into strips which I then crochet into sculptural forms. These cut plastic strips are known as ‘plarn’-plastic yarn-which is used by a wide variety of people for many reasons that could be environmental, out of necessity, or both. Some make multi-use tote bags, while there are even homeless shelters that make sleeping pads for the unsheltered to take with them

and use as a waterproof cushioned surface to sleep on. In my case, I am using plarn to make art objects. Some single-use plastic bags are identifiable even when transformed into plarn, their logos can be found on the surface of my collages and reappear in the works' titles. Each sculpture is made up of anywhere from 50-100 single-use plastic bags. I stopped keeping track. I sit on my living room floor at my coffee table and carefully flatten out each plastic bag, I make sure to align all of its original creases before folding them and carefully cutting them into strips. I wind them around a core that I made to keep the strands of plarn tidy until I use them. This process can take up an entire afternoon. I enjoy the repetitive process and like to keep my hands busy while watching a TV show or movie. This is part of the reason I don't keep track of how many single-use plastic bags I am using; I get distracted very easily and simply lose track. Once I feel that I cannot fit any more single-use plastic bags onto the core, or my back aches from sitting on the floor, I will begin to crochet.

I have tried knitting with plarn but crocheting is a much faster and more efficient way to work. I don't like to measure or make any plans; I usually crochet while watching something, so my mind is usually elsewhere and my hands are kept busy. I make smaller crocheted pieces and find a place and shape for them once they have a space to be shown. I will find an unusual architectural aspect of the space and add my plarn piece as an accent or highlight. These pieces are more soft-spoken than the collage work and normally sit in higher or lower areas in the space. They are not always totally apparent, but they are lurking in the corners and crevices.

Crocheting is a method of making textiles that has been around for centuries. It is known to reduce stress, relieve depression and anxiety and it has also been known to reduce or postpone

dementia. Serotonin is released with repetitive motions which can help calm you and eventually lower blood pressure. Crocheting is done using a crochet hook to interlock stitches or loops of material to create textiles. While crocheting, each stitch is completed before you begin the next one. This is what differentiates crocheting from knitting; while knitting, you have multiple stitches open. The crocheted plarn quilt that will be a lifelong project of mine, is a repetitive action that is a visual representation of mortality, abundance and absurdity.

I will often crochet or knit for its anxiety relieving benefits as I tend to overthink and stress unnecessarily which, in my case, can manifest itself in negative physical ways. A quilt is traditionally made of fabric, sometimes scraps of fabric that already have a meaningful history. The plarn commercializes the quilt that is characteristically thought of as wholesome and sentimental. The plarn quilt is a conglomerate of squares that represent a large capitalist system. Although the crocheted plarn quilt is a visually playful and a quirky object, its record of history and its future emits a somber reality.

The way I consume media is another way I have learned to self soothe my anxiety. I passively rewatch television shows or movies that I own on DVD. This allows me to direct half my attention to crocheting and the other half on what I am watching. Over the past few months my DVD collection has grown as I have limited internet that I need to preserve for school and work. This is a byproduct of the way I chose to live. My partner and I saved and bought a house in the country where we are only able to receive satellite internet that includes 100 gigabytes at 10 megabytes per second download speed and 1 megabytes per second upload speed. It is significantly less and slower than what we were used to in the city. I prefer to live this way, as

opposed to the unlimited internet and resources we enjoyed in the city. Here, I am more conscious of what we consume. The house is heated as long as we make a fire. The power is on as long as the sun is shining. We found a store about 30 minutes away where we can buy DVD's for 99 cents, and when we get tired of them we can sell them back and pick new ones. We often watch DIY home renovation videos which use little internet as they are usually short clips. The comfort I find in re-watching a television series or movie is much like what I experience when crocheting. Knowing the fate of the characters I become invested in relieves tension and stress. The materials I use in my art also have this familiarity: I have used them for a different purpose before they are relegated to art materials, and are thus 'known' and familiar to me even while I renegotiate their meaning. There are parallels in the way media and products are consumed. We use media as an outlet and an escape from real life. Much like the euphoria we feel when purchasing an object, entertainment can cause an array of emotion allowing us to free our minds from the everyday. The ease in which we are able to flip through channels and stream content with a click of a button is akin to the way we shop online or buy products at a store. We are drawn in by witty, attractive labels and are often unaware of how something was manufactured, but its convenience is undeniable. Although there are an overwhelming number of small entrepreneurial companies that ground themselves in handcrafted, locally made, and sometimes eco-friendly mandates, the price point, convenience and comfort of mass-produced products is easy to fall back on.

Contemporary Art and Its Influences on My Work

In *Plastic Capitalism: Contemporary Art and the Drive to Waste* (2019), Amanda Boetzkes discusses ecological conditions making their way into contemporary art, where waste and consumption are now visualized. Discussing work by Thomas Hirschhorn, Francis Alÿs, Song Dong, Agnès Varda, Gabriel Orozco, Mel Chin, and Tara Donovan, among others, Boetzkes argues that contemporary art is not just a representation of the political or ecological climate but it is integral to our ecological awareness.

Tara Donovan creates biological, minimalist forms with banal material, using rule-based systems and a single material. Donovan's minimalist structures are similar to my plarn sculptures; we have both chosen to work with mass-produced, single-use objects. As well, Donovan's approach to art-making is similar to my own as she refrains from planning or sketching out an idea and thinks of the work itself as a kind of drawing. Our works may also expand or contract depending on the specific architecture of the space where it is shown. However, Donovan's commentary on waste and consumption through the use of plastic straws, styrofoam cups, elastic bands and pencils is not in alignment with my own. Donovan states:

“It's not that there is specifically anything special about everyday materials, but I was initially drawn to them because they were easily accessible, inexpensive and mass-produced.” “I am not trying to make comments on mass-produced items or the environment or nature per se.” (Donovan 00:33, 03:18)

The purpose of only reusing material to make my work is to acknowledge and effect the perpetuation of the consumption of these materials, throwing a wrench in the consumer system. Donovan is using everyday material as they are easily accessible and affordable and is not concerned about issues of mass production and the impact these materials have on nature. Although our approaches to art-making are fairly similar, as well as our choice of material, our thinking is very different. Donovan's work seems to be placed in this box of environmentally conscious, I would argue the opposite. It is hard to stray from the topic when viewing her work as she often makes a spectacle of mass-produced, environmentally damaging objects. It is evident that she is more interested in the physicality of the objects she works with, rather than their context in the world.

Ryan Foerester, a New York-based artist, also uses ready-made materials to create photographs, sculptures and installations. Foerester collects garbage from Brighton Beach where he lives, and around the streets of New York City. Foerester is known for his photographic work, made by leaving photosensitive paper outdoors, allowing the surface to interact with dirt, rocks, and the elements. Although Foerester is not directly commenting on climate change, his practice and style are similar to mine. His work made of plastic, fishing line and other garbage found on Brighton Beach have the same futile feeling of my plastic bag collecting. It is a small gesture that may not have a measurable impact on the beach and its visitors but the transformation from garbage to art object may have an impact on Foerester's audience, which is a fantasy of the outcome I desire. The objects in the work shift from utilitarian, to waste to artwork through intention, value and philosophical stance. The natural elements included in Foerester's work continue to change the aesthetic appearance of the work even after it has been installed or owned

by a gallery. Much like my own ideology of utilizing undervalued objects, Foerster embraces the imperfection in reused material, which gives his work a comparable aesthetic of decay. Foerster similarly chooses to live with a particular set of values that guide the decisions made in his art practice. There are some occurrences that he has afforded in his work, which are a byproduct of the living choices he has made. I would argue that although we choose our lifestyle and are not passive in our art making, there are elements in both of our work that occur because of circumstances which we then adapt to our practice.

“Instead of academic credit, Foerster devoted himself to earning artistic credibility. He was nearly broke all the time and was in a constant state of confusion about his decision to make art in New York. But the scarcity of his lifestyle led directly to his sense that everything matters, both in survival and in art.”

“After setting a cup of water down on a sheet of photo paper he noticed the way the water altered the color and texture of the paper and started experimenting with that process in his work. After Hurricane Sandy flooded his basement and moistened many of his photos, he was thus already prepared to embrace the aesthetic potential of water-damaged emulsion, and was able to salvage those damaged prints and redirect them into aesthetic phenomena that surpassed their original intent.”(Barcio)

My work is a Dystopian perspective on the condition of the world. The messy and untethered aesthetic of the work acknowledges this chaos, it makes the work more approachable and allows a way in for the viewer. There is nothing seamless about the work, there is no secret about how it was made. The viewer can see every stitch and flyaway thread. The act of elevating

harmful disposable abject things, a symbol of western capitalist society, shifts the category of the object. Rudimentary things enter into a speculative zone which radically shifts the category of these objects through intention. Retrieving them from a toxic system and generating a conversation is why it is important to have this work shown within the institutions they are challenging. The single use plastic bags that make up my sculptures transition from one of the most unvalued, debased and environmentally damaging objects to arguably, the most valuable category of object: the Art Object.

Theoretical Influences on my Work: Affect Theory Introduction

Affect is normally a verb that means to impact to change, it is often discussed in relation to emotion. Teresa Brennan's theorization of "the transmission of affect" touches on the idea of self-contained judgment of each other. Thoughts are proof of affect and are not our own. How do we go about controlling positive and negative thoughts that impact us daily? We meditate affect with emotion and try to become aware of other's feelings and how that affects us. Some tools help us control affect, we can read a moment, slow down and feel the atmosphere. Transmission of affect is entrainment which is our nervous and hormonal systems in alignment with one another. We can go beyond our natural hormones, we can feel ourselves.

The Affect of Consumption and Plastic Pollution

In my work, I am examining the affect of consumption and plastic pollution and how we tether them to inanimate objects that we may treasure for a short time. The affect of purchasing an item online or the feeling of having a fully stocked fridge and pantry. These affects and emotions have become so normalized in our first-world culture and we often take them for granted. We are so removed from where our food and clothing comes from and our emotions become displaced. We no longer feel empathy or gratitude to the animals that gave their lives to nourish us. We purchase groceries that are pre-packaged in a store that replenishes itself for our convenience. To further remove the consumers and disassociate us from what we are eating, meat products are renamed; pig is pork, cow is beef, a baby calf is veal, etc. The grocery bags that I use as material to crochet my work are a representation of this industry and the culture they derive from. Plastic bags are not only one of the number one pollutants in our oceans and landfills; they are used to carry many other examples of waste and pollution.

An Introduction to Feminist Research

It is important to me to situate my work within the canon of feminist artwork when working with textiles and domestic methods such as knitting, sewing and crochet. Looking back at some of the most revolutionary feminist artwork can help contextualize my work within a larger scope. Although not all of the material I am using is necessarily domestic, most of my work and background is grounded in a more domestic nature. I need to acknowledge these qualities in my work and explore what that might convey to my audience.

Helen Molesworth is an American curator of contemporary art. In Molesworth's 2000 essay, 'House Work and Art Work', she focuses on the 1970's feminist practice through the reconsideration of four female artists: Judy Chicago, Mary Kelly, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, and Martha Rosler. Through each of their works, Molesworth looks at the progression of the "essentialist" through to the "theory-based" modes of feminist practice. Simultaneously, Molesworth frames this progression within the context of the movement's divide between the 1970s and 1980s.

Public and the Private

At the core of the essay, Molesworth explores two significant, overlapping territories: the public and the private. Through the four different works discussed throughout Molesworth's text, the notion of woman as "object" and "caretaker" from the perspective of the male gaze is discussed through the lens of Marxist and Feminist critique. By these means, Molesworth concludes that house-making, child-rearing and other domestic responsibilities are not to be thought of as private obligations cast onto women, but that this idea is directly related to broader forms of oppression and therefore can intimately involve the public. The rejection of the male language has become a source of Feminist Critique. Molesworth goes on to say:

"... the public sphere is dependent upon and developed around a male subject who acts in the public sphere but is maintained in the private sphere, traditionally by women. This is to say that liberal society assumes that its citizens continue to be what they were historically,

namely male heads of households who have at their disposal the services of an unpaid domestic worker/mother/wife.” (Molesworth, 12)

Language is ever-evolving and changing, as we learn more about one another and private becomes public, we open the door for further discussion. Private obligations cast onto women are discussed in public settings through feminine visual language by using materials and methods of making such as yarn and knitting. The women’s liberation movement in the 1960s and 1970s brought to light the privilege that men hold over women based on gender. The only way we can start to understand how and why our language needs to be adjusted is to continue and broaden the conversation. Creating work that explores the oppression of women throughout our history by using those very methods of domestic responsibilities is an intriguing juxtaposition. These responsibilities are woven into my work and may not always be in the foreground but are important details.

Feminist Artists and Their Influences on My Work Maria Merz’s Rejection of Male Dominated Art World

I have found connections in my work with the work of Marisa Merz. Merz created mobiles in her kitchen that she called “Living Sculptures” made from thinly sliced aluminum sheeting in 1975. Merz’s work was intimate and fragile in its scale; it references the human body and femininity through its materiality and form. Merz’s use of everyday and organic material shifted ideologies already set in place concerning the artistic process. Merz was a stay at home

mother who was not taken seriously as an artist until she was in her forties; her work contributed to the discourse of domestic labour which set her apart from her male counterparts. Many of Merz's pieces were made and installed in her home and inspired by her daughter Beatrice.

In the article "The Irony of Marisa Merz," (2008) Deiter Schwarz gives examples of how Merz's work was under-appreciated and undervalued since 1966. Merz had solo exhibitions but her work was shown mainly in group exhibitions after 1980. The few photographs that were taken of her work did not adequately represent their presence or context in a space. Merz's works abide by existing boundaries within the space and attests to the realities of the architecture of the space they are shown. The same could be said for my plarn sculptures that expand and contract, changing shape when placed according to the architecture of the space where they are shown. The works are meant to be physically viewed by the audience moving around within the space rather than through the lens of a camera. The way Merz's work is displayed with such preciousness and intention compliments the ephemeral nature of the work itself. Merz creates moments plucked from an ongoing process of making which coexist with the architecture of the space that reveals something particular to the audience. These moments are integral to Merz's work: how they are presented in the gallery space transforms it, solidifying its status as an art object.

"What was previously only a changing mix of objects surfacing from and sinking back into the flux of life has suddenly been defined and become fixed. Everything that had floated in some cerebral space remote from ultimate decisions has been transposed into a state of finality. It is not that the quotidian and ephemeral have been negated. On the contrary, it is

only here that they become dialectically operative as qualities within the work.” (Schwarz, 160)

Merz had a distrust for the male-dominated art world and typical conventions of art history. Her protest was reflected by leaving her work untitled and undated.

“I do not respect the masters,” she wrote in “Come to una dichiarazione,”. It was extremely rare to find her voice in any public outlet. “I’m not available anymore because I want to start from scratch. I could still be available to a child, but not to a man, no. If a man asks me to do something, I do it the way I want to.”

This text can be found in Italy’s *Bit* magazine in 1968. The rejection of the male language has become a source of feminist critique; Merz’s untitled work is an example of her rejection of patriarchal ideology. This is another connection I have found within our methods, as I leave most of my own work untitled. Within this, language is reflected in the male-centric ideals of women, which furthers the struggles women face when “finding one’s own words.” Nor did the female artist thrive in the realm of body language due to its imposed male fantasy.

Martha Rosler: Semiotics and unpaid domestic labour

Martha Rosler’s *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) is another form of feminist work which I find is useful to compare with my practice. This is a six-minute video work, which offers a critique of the commodified role of women that our culture and history have created. Throughout the piece, the artist parodies the suburban housewife as she goes through the objects in an

everyday kitchen semiotically. With a dry, cynical tone, Rosler draws our attention to the use of language to stress that this is a symbolic use of the kitchen to expose the oppression women face as objects of harnessed subjectivity and a means to the production of food. This use of body and language allows for the artist to be free of self-affirmation and in turn, clearly and directly self create. To be free of self-affirmation and able to self create as an artist is an attractive ideology but one that seems far out of reach for most. Through the use of found imagery and text, I attempt to capture the affect that Rosler's deadpan performance creates. I want to look at the plastic bags, text and clothing in my work through a semiotic lens. The ever evolving plarn quilt emphasizes our consumer culture and extraordinary plastic waste, exacerbated by perpetuated displays of utopian life achievable by the consumption of goods displayed through media. The quilt-like appearance and act of crocheting draws our attention to women as labourers within the home and brings the private into public domain. Through her video work, Rosler brings the private kitchen out into the public to further the discourse surrounding women as unpaid labour workers, as in the case of Mierle Laderman Ukeles' work.

Mierle Ukeles and Her Critique of the Art Institution

Mierle Laderman Ukeles's *Hartford Wash: Washing Tracks, Maintenance* (1973) work alludes to the concept of women as unpaid labour workers. Bringing the unpaid domestic labour within the private sphere into the realm of public institutional spaces. In *Transfer* (1973), Ukeles chose a mummy encased in glass displayed in the Wadsworth collection. This institution of the museum, it is known that it is the paid job of the janitorial staff to clean and maintain the casing

of the mummy. Ukeles took the janitor's position as a cleaner and created a "dust painting" by cleaning the case herself and deemed the cleaning to be the art itself. This meant that the cleaning would now be done by the conservator as it is his job to maintain the artwork. This work not only focuses on the relation of the public and private spheres but is also a critique of the institutional hierarchies of the art gallery. Ukeles manages to critique a misstep within a larger institution but through more controversial means. What draws me to this work is that Ukeles so effectively highlights unpaid labour, male or female, within an institution as well as in the home. She is able to bring the private into public while utilizing the museum space and not her own kitchen. I believe it is important to have these conversations within the capitalist institutions and communities I am critiquing.

My goal is to create large collage works that will hang on the wall and splay on the floor, consisting of recycled plastic, ink transfers and clothing. Along with the collages' counterparts, the plarn sculptural forms and the plarn quilt, my work creates a dialogue surrounding the existence of these materials: how they came to be and their qualitative conversion into works of art. The works draw the audience in through their material familiarity: they are not necessarily 'warm' objects, being made of an abject material, but they are familiar, but then made 'strange' through their unexpected transformation from waste to high art. Through my research of tendencies such as Arte Povera, feminism of the 1960s and 70s, affect theory and social movements surrounding climate change, I can better understand the language of such materials and the methodology in which I choose to work. Through the exploration of these theories and continuing to blur the line between the public and private realms, I can attempt to contribute to

this greater dialogue. Inanimate objects in my work represent the semiotics of language and the fleeting euphoria we feel for a moment once we finally obtain what we have desired. The juxtaposition between materials reflects labour and value, time and residue. I set out to make my work with certain parameters; to recycle material and to create no waste. My task is to collect as many discarded plastic bags as I can and use them as material in an effort to reduce the plastic in the ocean. This seems and feels like a futile task almost all of the time, however, this approach has value as an artistic process because it embraces chance and flaws that the work reflects in the world. In essence, my practice consists of both collecting, and transforming discarded material. The irony of this task is, while I aim to collect and salvage this material, my gesture will never solve this larger issue. This feels daunting and overwhelming at times; how can one person prevent all the plastic bags from going into the ocean by making plarn? How can you as an individual make an impact? I try to ask myself these questions often when making purchases and in the way I choose to live my life. Although there is an earnest aspect to my work, the obvious futility, highlights the irony in the gestures I make. I have deliberately imposed myself with an impossible futile task that is legible in the work itself.

I think as a society we have started to be more mindful of how things are made and what products we choose to buy. I think more people are choosing to shop locally and in most cases choose an eco-friendly version of everyday items. I believe that small choices we make everyday can have a greater impact and although we have started to turn a corner, our impact on the world has been detrimental. Canada uses 4.6 million metric tonnes of plastics every year; this equals nearly 125 kilograms per person. This number is predicted to grow to more than six million metric tonnes by 2030. Although this is my main concern, these works are not strictly didactic.

These works do not exist solely to tell people about consumer waste. The audience will not always respond logically to information they are presented with: the message I am portraying is not new, rather it takes a new form which will create a different way for the audience to negotiate their relationship with this material.

My plarn quilt, which will be growing as long as I am here to make it, is a small representation of throwaway culture and comments on the mundane and banality of everyday objects and methods of making. The work represents craft and the futility in the challenge I have laid out for myself and the process of composting life's waste and transforming it into a conversation for the next generation. This transformation invites the audience to consider a new relationship with the materials as they shift category through intention. Deconstruction and reconstruction of object material, shifting it from utilitarian and then disposed of to artwork renegotiates the value through aesthetics and moral questions that the artwork imposes. The quilt and smaller sculptural forms have a pleasant tactile quality. The pieces on the floor interrupt the autonomous space of the gallery. The audience is forced to interact physically with the work, whether they choose to avoid it by carefully stepping around the work or walk across it, potentially leaving traces of themselves on the surface. The quilt will grow and become overwhelming in size, creating a speculative fiction solution to the world's plastic problem. Ambiguity is something I embrace in the work, there is no exact or single solution.

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