

As it Seams

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in Part Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Graduate Program in Visual Arts York University Toronto, Ontario

April 2024

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Abstract

Using personal stories, found shopping lists, and symbols of home, this paper examines the aesthetics of the everyday through textile recreations. The works produced for this thesis are informed by my cultural heritage as a settler on the island of Newfoundland, my desire to create a more inviting contemporary art space, and my love for the mundane. Using my collection of found shopping lists, to-do lists, and reminders, I am attempting to create an atmosphere that encourages slowing down, noticing, and enjoying the typically overlooked.

Dedication

This paper, and my entire art practice, is dedicated to my Mom, Kathy Reid. She has always had this attitude of, “anything is figure-out-able,” and picked up hobbies with ease. She was never the type to wait for a man to do something that she knew she was capable of doing. She recently told me that she bought new door knobs for the house and that my Dad was planning to install them over the weekend. My mom was home the following day and decided she was going to do it herself, and she did. Kathy also works with textiles, often making quilts and bags for friends and family; however, this is a more recent hobby that she has picked up, and I like to think that we inspired each other. She does not call herself an artist, but she could if she wanted to. It is my Mom’s “anything is figure-out-able” attitude that has gotten me through some of my biggest design challenges throughout my career as an Artist

I would also like to thank my best friend, and fellow artist Bethany MacKenzie for being my rock, my sounding board, and my editor. I would not have been able to do it without our hours of FaceTiming and brainstorming.

I would also like to thank my committee Brandon Vickerd, Holly Ward, and Gwen MacGregor, it is truly inspiring to have other artists on your side and willing to lend a hand and offer advice.

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Exhibition Plan

This paper supports my thesis exhibition presented in the Special Projects Gallery (SPG) from April 1st to 5th. When you walk into the SPG at York University, you will see a collection of large soft sculptures, including a fridge, a shopping cart, and a large Walmart bag. Straight ahead from the door, you will see a giant shopping bag suspended mid-gallery. The bag is made from organza, and as the viewer walks around it, the displacement of air will cause it to move and flow, drawing attention to the material that closely resembles plastic with a more delicate movement and feel. In the far-right corner, there is a life-sized soft sculpture of a refrigerator with the door slightly ajar and light seeping out. The fridge is sitting upon a grey and white checkered mat, mimicking a tiled kitchen floor. There is a smaller mat at the entrance of the gallery, welcoming visitors to encourage them to feel comfortable stepping on the mat under the fridge. The shopping cart is located between the bag and fridge, in the center of the gallery, narrating the movement of leaving home, going to the shops, and returning with bags of groceries. Scattered throughout the gallery, there are dozens of uniquely individual shopping lists, all hand-embroidered and sewn in fabric. To the right of the entrance will be five hand-embroidered life-sized shopping bags suspended much like the larger bag that you see upon entering. On the same wall as the fridge, there will be a didactic text persuading the audience to touch the work, pick up the lists, walk on the mat tiles, and be present within the space (Fig. 1).

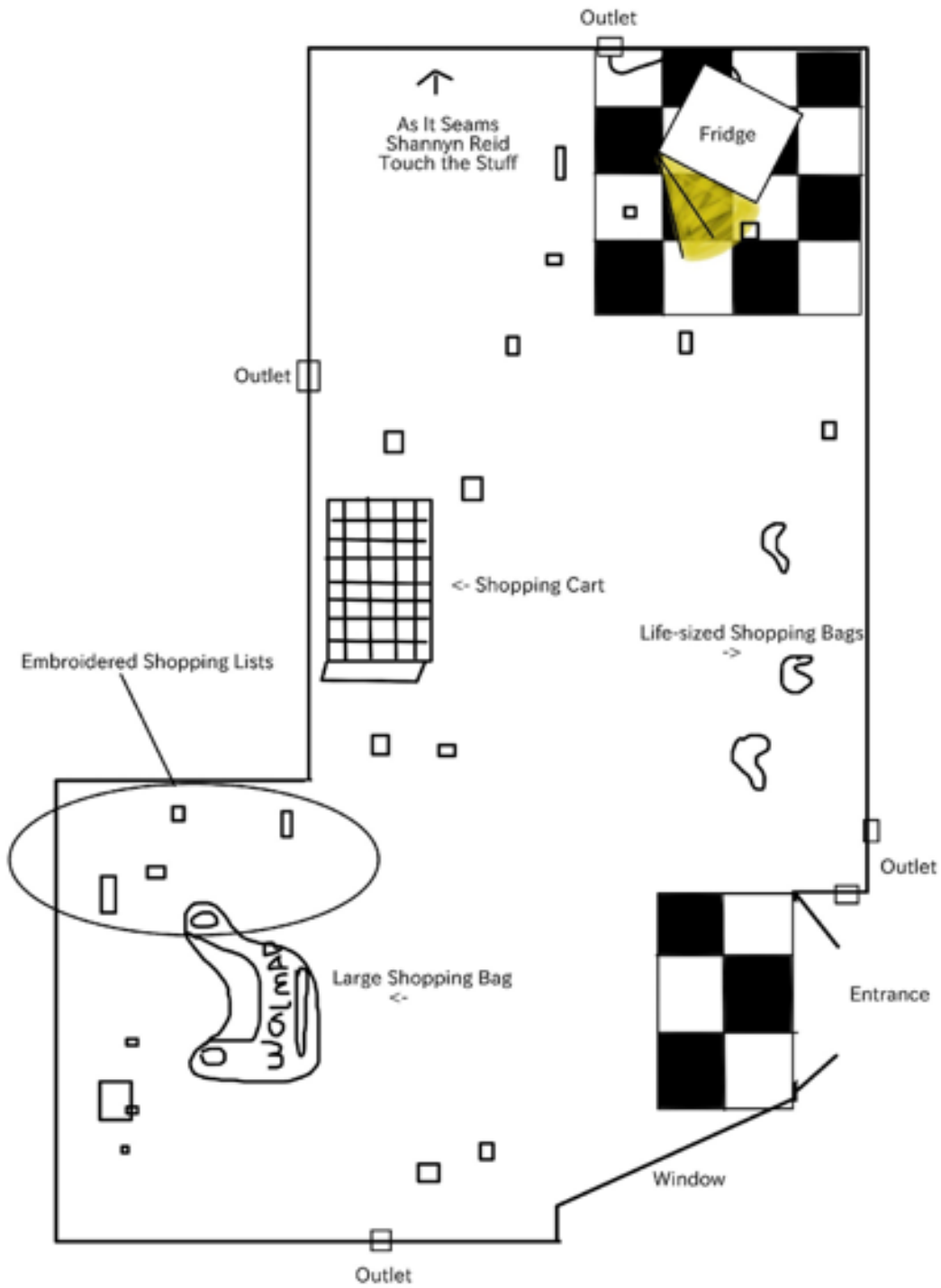


Fig. 1, *Exhibition Plan*, 2024

Introduction

I am interested in the aesthetics of the everyday; the things we see or do in our day-to-day life that are so common they become forgotten. I am interested in what is lost and found: the discarded remnants and belongings of strangers that sit upon the precipice of what can be both important and unimportant. Yuriko Saito is a prominent philosopher known for her work in aesthetics, environmental philosophy, and the study of the everyday. Saito writes,

If 'everyday' is characterised as the familiar, ordinary, commonplace, and routine, regardless of the specific content that varies from people to people depending upon their lifestyle, occupation, living environment, and other factors, what makes its aesthetic appreciation possible? The following response dominates everyday aesthetics discourse: the aesthetic appreciation of everyday life requires defamiliarization, making strange, or casting an aura. (Saito 3)

Taking inspiration from my collection of found objects, shopping lists, to-do lists, reminders, plastic and reusable bags; I create new objects that are both familiar and unfamiliar. I use textiles to create these forgotten treasures, which speak to the themes of the mundane, the forgotten, the found, and the collected. I am interested in how the mundane is ignored and how to call attention to these moments of noticing. "What is new about everyday aesthetics is its illumination of those aspects of our lives that are normally neglected or ignored because they are eclipsed by standout aesthetic experiences..." (Saito 3). On this note, I am investigating how my recreation through textiles encourages the slowing down and noticing of mundane objects.

Since the beginning of my collection, I have asked friends and family to keep an eye out for shopping lists while they are at the store. I have been told many times since then that my

encouragement to slow down and look has been ingrained in their minds. My Grandmother now saves each of her lists for me in an envelope on top of her fridge. She has recently told me how hyper-aware she has become about what she is writing, the neatness of her words, and the condition of the note once she is finished. I have also been told by friends that they found themselves doing curious things such as following someone around a store to see if they would drop their list or looking under isles. These are all things that I have done and become aware of as a result of my collection process.

After reading Kristie MacDonald's thesis on her *Doppelgänger* project, I have discovered that we share many views on our fondness for found materials. When she says, "I am particularly fascinated by paper, and brief documents of fleeting consequence. Paper catches my eye. It is familiar, it is meant to be touched, held, and carried. It is capable of being both precious and disposable"(Macdonald 4), it directly correlates to my project and how I think about the shopping lists I find in the store. When I recreate my shopping lists, I want to preserve that moment of 'fleeting consequence.' I also use the familiarity of shopping lists to create a new, yet unfamiliar object. Kristie MacDonald uses found paper items and attempts to replicate them as closely as possible, making copies that are almost indistinguishable from the originals. The main difference between MacDonald's practice and mine is the change in medium. When MacDonald copies a found object, she uses paper, pens, and mediums identical to that of which she is copying. It is important to her that each copy is a near replication of its original. In *As It Seems* it is very clear which is the copy, and which is the original due to the use of textiles, rather than drawing or print. I do this because I enjoy creating something new in my art, and it is not a priority to deceive my viewers. While MacDonald plays with the idea of being misled, her work is more about how closely something can be replicated rather than creating something new.

The everyday is ingrained in my practice in many ways. The everyday in itself is repetitive; something becomes everyday or mundane through consistent exposure. Theorist Henri Lefebvre believed that traditional philosophy often overlooked the mundane aspects of daily existence in favour of abstract concepts. By focusing on everyday aesthetics, Lefebvre sought to uncover the richness and complexity of ordinary life. I share this belief with Lefebvre, however, Lefebvre believed that exploring the everyday and the mundane was a stepping stone to solving larger socio-political issues where my work attempts to solve no major issues and critiques little if anything. I was once told my art is 'toxically optimistic' and I believe this statement to be true about my work as well as myself.

According to Lefebvre, "In the study of the everyday we discover the great problem of repetition, one of the most difficult problems facing us" (Lefebvre 10). However, I do not see repetition as an issue but a benefit. It is through repetition and routine I find peace and solace. There are multiple points of repetition within my practice such as the repetition of the lists and bags I recreate, as well as the repetition of text within these items. Perhaps most importantly, the repetition of the everyday mimics the repetition of embroidery.

For the Love of Labour

Labour is an important theme in my work. My Sister once texted me after I told her I was working on a 1000pc jigsaw puzzle, “Are there any meticulous things with your hands you DON’T like doing?”. This rhetorical question is key to who I am as an artist. The more labour-intensive the project is, the more I enjoy creating it. The question of labour is one that I am often asked when showing my work. Viewers are interested to know “How long did that take?” and I usually have an estimate based on what television show I was watching, or how many podcasts I had listened to. One list can take anywhere from 6 to 30 hours depending on how many items it contains, while a shopping bag could take upwards of 100 hours. Being interested in time and labour, I have recently been attempting to time myself while I work. Starting a stopwatch when I pick it up and pause the timer when I finish.

I replicate each found list as a soft sculpture equivalent as I attempt to preserve the aura, importance and relevance of these once-lost objects. When time, labour and effort are invested in an object, it inherently adds value and gives the new object a higher importance. I enjoy thinking about the value of a lost shopping list or a discarded plastic bag in comparison to their recreated textile counterparts. One has been discarded and deemed no longer useful or of value to an individual, while the other has been meticulously and deliberately made for its aesthetic pleasure, and enjoyment for both myself and external viewers. Fellow textile Artist Karen Reimer says, “Manual work can change the value and meaning of things that it gets invested in. Embroidery works well for exploring this because it’s pointless work, so to speak” (Magliaro 122). Reimer talks about exploring the notion of labour within her work as she also uses embroidery methods to recreate found and refused objects such as “book pages, trash pieces, newspapers, or note paper” (Magliaro 122). However, when Reimer recreates these objects, she willfully omits pieces

of information; causing the recreations to be originals rather than direct replicas. Omitting sections of text can encourage viewers to engage more actively with the work, filling in the gaps with their own interpretations and meanings. This can create a more interactive and participatory experience for the audience. In my work, there is no need to omit information as the copied objects are not known to the viewer. For example, when Reimer leaves out a portion of text in a newspaper, the blank space is obvious, whereas if I leave out ‘onions’ on a shopping list, it would be unnoticed and without purpose.

British artist Lucy Sparrow draws from similar methods and themes in her practice. Sparrow has greatly influenced my textile work through her use of collecting and recreating textiles. *CornerShop* is one of her more well-known works where she hand-created 31,000 felted soft sculpture grocery items to fill an empty corner store. From start to finish, these sculptures took her and her studio assistants exactly one year and included everything from toilet paper to cigarettes, to chocolate bars. Sparrow often says her artwork is a “slice of life” (Perraudin). In the *CornerShop*, Sparrow mentions how often people would wander in and take a moment before discovering that the *CornerShop* is not a typical store. Both Sparrow’s art and mine play with the idea of an unfamiliar familiar object. Within my work, I use the familiarity of a shopping list and plastic bag with the unfamiliarity of a textile object. The item in question may look as if it is something you have encountered many times, however, it is through tactile exploration that the object becomes strange and new. Acknowledging that both of our works can be seen as absurd, Sparrow tends to take the bizarreness a step further, often including faces on her food items. In contrast to McDonald's work, Sparrow makes an obvious distinction between what is real and what is felt. I believe my work may sit in between these two artists on the scale of recreation, as my work neither deceives nor alters outside of the change of the medium.

Like Sparrow, my aim in this project is to allow the everyday viewer to experience art in a way that is approachable and relatable. I use textiles as my medium of choice due to its ability to draw in viewers and encourage play. The fabric holds a similarity to the paper objects I am replicating. Both paper and textiles have the ability to hold a mark, fold, tear or wrinkle, however working in textiles is much more durable, lending its ability to preserve. Textiles also influences and informs the ideas of home and my cultural identity as a Newfoundlander, repetitive labour and domesticity within my practice.

I also explore notions of gender roles in my work through the use of textiles as well as the domestic act of shopping inferred through the shopping lists I have recreated. Textiles, and more specifically needlework has historically been a gendered hobby even more so than other artist mediums like painting and drawing. In the novel *The Subversive Stitch* by Roxsika Parker it is said that,

The situation of embroidery is more exclusive. When women paint, their work is categorised as homogeneously feminine - but it is acknowledged to be art. When women embroider, it is seen not as art, but entirely as the expression of femininity. And crucially, it is categorised as craft. (Parker 4)

When examining my work an obvious connection often made is to Claes Oldenburg's large soft sculpture food from *The Store*. Although I can understand why this connection is often made linking my soft sculpture fridge with very famous soft sculpture food, I do not have much interest in Oldenburg's work. I believe this to be a lazy connection as he is overly associated with soft sculpture within art history. I also believe the context in his work differs from mine as his larger-than-life, food-related works are simple, comedic and theatric.

Understanding that there are many aesthetic similarities, I believe the themes of our work are quite different. Oldenburg's *The Store* is an obvious comment on consumerism, capitalist politics and the pop-art movement, whereas my works tend to focus more on the mundane, the home and the day-to-day domestic lives. I also recognize that these themes are seen in other works of Oldenburg such as his Toilet, Typewriter and Telephone recreations. I do however have an interest in the theory that his wife Patty Mucha may have been involved in the sewing of his soft sculptures. Recognizing that this is not a scholarly source, *Artland Magazine* says, "The majority of these garments [Oldenburg's soft sculptures] were sewn by his then-wife Patty Mucha, using her husband's designs as a guide" (Hencz). If this is true, it affirms that the gender roles often given to textiles may have been carried out in Oldenburg's *The Store*. This fact also demonstrates the erasure of women's creative inputs into contemporary art at the time. Not unlike many other artists the credit may not have been given where it was due.

Story Time

I have always had an affinity for the little things; tags on new clothing, small scraps of paper or fabric, packaging, tickets, and anything remotely ephemeral. In my grade 10 art class, I was given an art journal project where I was told to use ephemeral things to make collages about my day-to-day life. I have been collecting and journaling with found objects since doing that project in high school. The art journal turned into a ‘junk’ journal which turned into a scrapbook, which was more of a mixture of all three. When I graduated high school I still did not know what I wanted to do. I knew I liked to craft, but I did not see anything I did as ‘real art.’ When I got into my BFA I thought I was going to need to learn how to paint or sculpt because I did not see my skills as valuable.

I liked painting and I was skilled for the most part. I would paint mostly landscapes inspired by Bob Ross and underwater scapes in my free time, but I could never come up with a ‘valid’ concept. During critiques we were asked to discuss the meaning behind our projects and why we chose to paint what we painted or sculpt what we had sculpted. I felt I never had a reason beyond, “I felt like it,” or, “because it looks pretty” and this never seemed to be good enough. I was told to dig deeper, but the bottoms of lily pads do not represent our society's economic state, or represent my cultural background. They are just interesting to look at and I did not know how to properly defend that, so I dropped painting. I do not consider myself a conceptual artist and as I progressed through my undergraduate degree, I realised that I needed to at least be able to ‘bullshit’ a meaning out of art. ‘Bullshit’ is a word I used to use too much and maybe still do as a way to combat my imposter syndrome. I never thought I was smart enough to be conceptual, so I would ‘Bullshit’ a concept so when someone told me it was stupid or not good enough, I was already disconnected from it and I avoided the rejection. Throughout my

master's degree, I have come to realise how smart I have become, and how my 'bullshit' is no longer 'bullshit' but maybe it is an actual informed concept. I started to feel this way recently when I was reading through *Playing at Home: The House in Contemporary Art* by Gill Perry and I was skipping, and skipping, and skipping, because I already recognized every artist mentioned. I was looking for something new and I could not find it. This moment of realisation carried through to a studio visit I had with a fellow textile artist and every reference she made, I already knew. I was no longer nodding my head and 'bullshiting' my knowledge. Through my interest in textiles, I was able to grow as a conceptual thinker in a way that painting would not allow me.

I discovered that I could use my craft skills as 'real' art when I enrolled in a textiles class in my third year of undergrad. I embroidered my first list and although I did not know what it meant yet, I enjoyed embroidering text and it came very naturally to me. By exploring the recreation of this found scrap of paper I recognized that I was calling attention to its ephemerality and mundanity in a way I really enjoyed. Unlike my paintings I felt like leaning into the 'basic-ness' as something to be explored; once I gave this 'garbage' object some attention, others began to see it in a new light. A grocery list where someone had misspelt 'Coffee-mate' and wrote what looks like "Ooffmate" could now be appreciated and admired in a way it would not have been otherwise (Fig. 2).

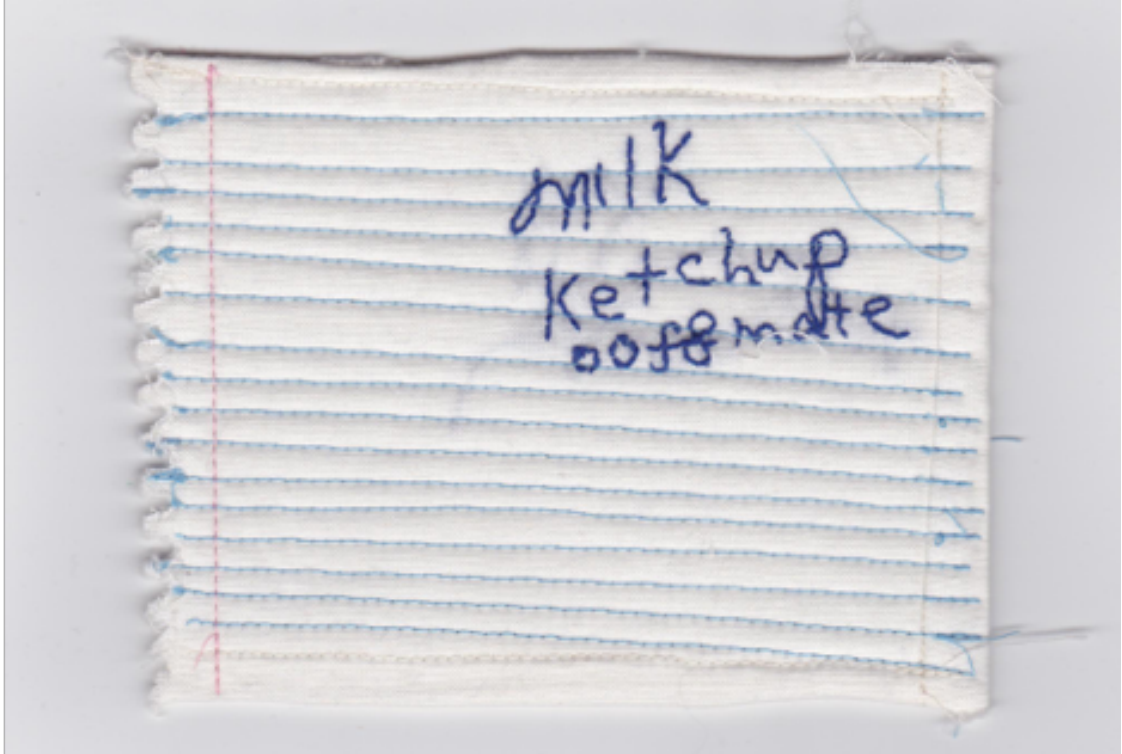


Fig. 2, *List: 001*, embroidery on cotton, 2019

My Great-Nanny and Her Nan's Nan

One of my first memories with textile crafts is being taught how to knit by my Great-Grandmother Osborne. I was only about five or six years old, during an annual visit to Newfoundland. I was born and lived my childhood in Alberta but we visited 'home' nearly every year. I think this is my only memory of Nanny Osborne, and may have been the last time I had seen her. I sat in front of her lazy boy on the floor as she gave me knitting needles and wool. The needles were metallic pink (I still have them), and she showed me how to do a basic stitch. I made a whole dishcloth that day. The sides were wonky and not very straight because I had not counted my stitches, and had probably dropped a few along the way. Knitting was once a skill all Newfoundland women possessed. It was more than a hobby, it was a necessity and a skill taught and passed down from generation to generation. Historically, "the women 'ed wash, card, and spin wool and knit their men sweaters and mitts and even wool underwear... it was cold out on the sea, you'd need all that or you'd freeze to death" (Dale 19). I am lucky enough to have three sets of grandparents and all three of them knit. Textiles can be found everywhere in my family and where I am from, and this is perhaps another reason I am so drawn to it. My family has lived in Newfoundland as far back as the mid-1800s. Textiles hold a comforting familiarity to me and those I am closest with; it makes me believe my work will come across as more accessible to them.

I have a quilt that came from the same house my Nanny Osbourne lived in, it was made by my great-aunt but had belonged to my Pop. The quilt became my 'blanky' and over the years started to rip and tear. When I was a child I would take the scraps that fell off my 'blanky' and

make things out of them. I remember sewing a tank top out of a larger scrap when I was about seven years old. I also made a blanket for my doll with my mom's help on the sewing machine and when long thin strips would tear off, I would braid them together and make bracelets. Eventually, my mom replaced that side of the quilt and she wanted to replace the other but I never let her because if both sides of the quilt are replaced, is it even the same quilt? I still have my 'blanky', the replaced side is starting to wear and the un-replaced side is almost completely gone. This is maybe my first ephemeral textile belonging (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3, *Blankie*, Handmade Quilt

I am interested in the fridge as a symbol in relation to my shopping lists because when I was young, my mom would keep our lists on the fridge until we were ready to go to the store. Personally, the fridge is also a symbol of home because in Newfoundland the kitchen is historically the most important room in the house. In traditional saltbox homes, it is where you enter the home, as well as where the stove would be located, providing heat.

To economize on fuel people usually heated only one room: the kitchen, which had to be heated since all the food preparation was done there. This meant that all other daily work activities and family socializing was also carried out in the kitchen (Dale 20).

The kitchen is historically, and to this day, a common gathering place for Newfoundlanders. The term 'kitchen party' is often used when a Newfoundlander is hosting an event in their home. When attending a 'kitchen party' or a Newfoundland gathering it is common for the host to say, "Help yourself," referring to the fridge. In other words saying, "make yourself at home".

As mentioned, the kitchen was historically used for doing all types of work. This work included textiles.

Only the well-to-do could afford to purchase decorative objects for their homes, and most women were obliged to make such objects as curtains, tablecloths, embroidery work, cushions, floor mats, and quilts. The women reserved time in the evening for this type of handwork or got together in someone's kitchen during the afternoons in winter (Dale 20).

Due to this history, the use of the fridge in my exhibition has a double meaning. Using the fridge as a main icon of the kitchen is referencing my cultural heritage, as well as linking back to these ideas of the mundane, the everyday, and the home, within my shopping list.

Thoughts + Making + Mistakes: Notes on Process

Some artists have a daily drawing practice or a daily photography practice, but I have a daily embroidery practice. For me, the process of making is just as important or maybe even more important than the work itself. Making is my happy place, it is my identity and it is meditative. As such this paper has a very in-depth description of each art object made for the final exhibition.

Lists:

I found my first list in a shopping cart at 'Colman's' where I put it in my pocket to throw into the garbage but forgot about it. A few days later I found it and did not want to throw it out anymore. It seemed strange to have someone else's list that was oddly dainty and precious. The first time I used a list in an art project was quite different than how I am inspired by them now. At that point in my collection, I had found five, and I framed them all with a written paragraph telling a fictional story about who wrote each list. It later evolved into a printmaking project before settling on textiles as my medium of choice.

I am interested in lists specifically for a few reasons. A grocery list, shopping list or to-do list is written down to be recalled but once its use is fulfilled it is deemed as trash. This is where I find it, admire the personality of the handwriting, and show it care by embroidering it as closely as possible; both archiving and replicating it. This new list is still technically useless but now holds value as an art object.

Many people no longer write physical grocery lists with the rise of technology, people are more inclined to write their lists digitally. Digital lists are less interesting to me and much harder to come across. You are less likely to lose a digital list as most of the population has a phone on

them at all times and some people will keep the same list on their phones and rework it as needed. I rarely go to the store since moving to Toronto, for me it is easier to pay a small delivery fee, rather than a transit fee and hours of my time to go get groceries.

Although I collect both lists, notes, and various scraps of paper with writing, the lists are different in that they do not have a narrative. We can maybe create one by imagining who wrote them, and what they intended on using the items on the list for, but in reality, it's just a list of items (Fig.4).



Fig. 4, Scanned Lists, 2020

I am aware that artists have been using lists in contemporary art for many decades. Artists like Sol LeWitt, Agnes Denes and Yoko Ono use lists as an instruction-based tool for their art-making process. Other artists like On Kawara, Hanne Darboven and Sophie Calle use lists as a documentation of their artwork. There are also artists like John Baldessari who use lists more aesthetically, but even in Baldessari's work there is an element of instruction. It is with Baldessari's work I would place mine. The items on the list do not dictate what is being made (outside the fact that they are all shopping lists) but are instructions on what is to be bought. I like to think that I am not necessarily using lists as a practice rather than holding a place for them as an object.

List Process:

There are 3 main types of lists I recreate,

- Lined (lined note paper or loose leaf)
- Coloured (Sticky notes, or craft paper)
- Notepad (anything with a pattern, or logo)

The first attempts at my soft lists were recreations on lined paper. Using white cotton, and a thread close to the colour of the pen-ink, I would trace and embroider the list. I would then stack three layers of felt in between the embroidered cotton and a blank piece of cotton, then attempt to hem the edges and sew blue and red lines to imitate loose leaf paper, effectively quilting the layers together.

Now, I use a broadcloth instead of cotton because it is more cost-effective, does not affect the outcome and comes in various colours. I only use one layer of felt instead of three, and

I no longer hem my edges and I have embraced the unravelling beauty of the raw edge (Fig. 5). I find the materiality of the loose threads lends to the messiness of a grocery list; calling attention to the item as a recreation, and the labour of love that has gone into it. For the other variations of the lists, the process is mostly the same but with an extra step or two.

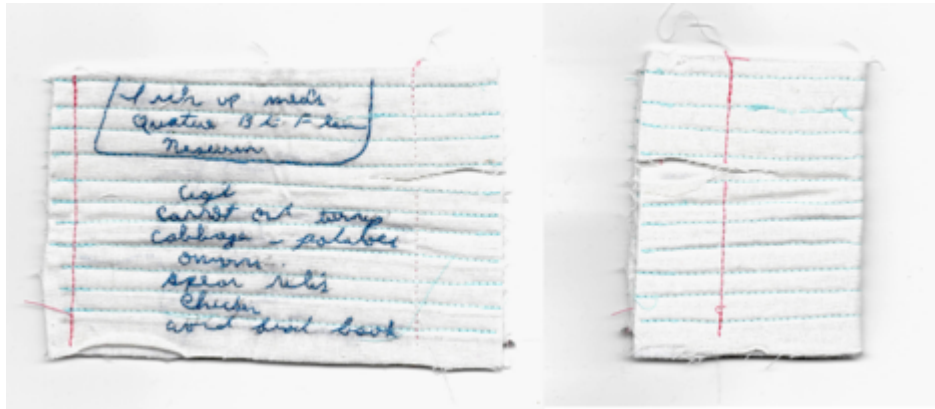


Fig. 5, List: 039, embroidery on cotton, 2021

With the coloured list, I simply choose a fabric that matches the colour and instead of lines, follow the edge of the list with my sewing machine in a similar thread colour. I also create a line wherever a fold or wrinkle can be seen on the original. This adds detail and helps to hold it all together (Fig 6).



Fig. 6, List: 021, embroidery on cotton, 2021

The note-pad paper lists are slightly more difficult. These types of lists include anything with a logo or graphic image on them. Before I start embroidering I scan the original list to my computer. Next, I erase the writing in Photoshop, flip the image and print it on a sheet of fabric transfer paper. The image then gets ironed onto the fabric where I can embroider the words back overtop and use my sewing machine to add in the lines, folds and wrinkles (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7, *List: 032*, embroidery on cotton, 2021

Bags:

A few years ago I drew this in a notebook in the middle of the night (Fig. 8). The idea was to sew fabric to look like a plastic bag. The idea came from my nan who referred to a plastic bag as a ‘Sobey’s’ bag as most Newfoundlanders do; the same way someone might call a tissue a ‘Kleenex’. But at the time – Newfoundland had

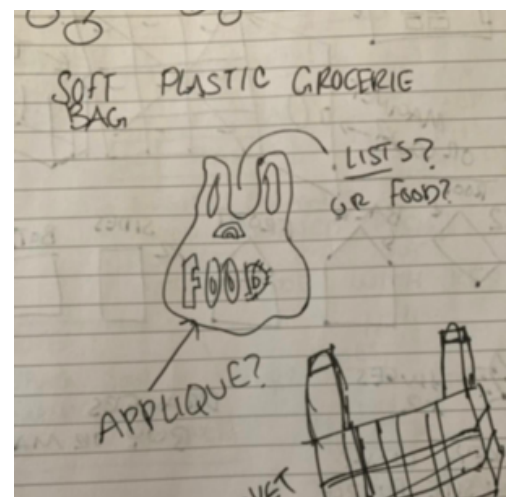


Fig. 8, *Untitled*, Fabric-plastic bag concept sketch, 2021

banned plastic bags in the province, and while most people had a stash left under their sink – my family did not. It was peak COVID and I could not go door-to-door knocking. So I settled for a reusable one.

Reusable Bags and Failure:

I used cotton fabric in a similar shade to that of the original bag, then embroidered or appliquéd the logos and writing. Then sewed the bag together. I used two layers of fabric to hide the back of the embroidery inside the bags.

I chose to recreate ‘Sobey’s’ and ‘Colmans’(Local Newfoundland Grocery Store) reusable bags so that they are both culturally connected to Newfoundland. But as time has passed – I do not like them. The bags are too ‘good’ or too similar to the originals. I enjoy the double take my art is given once the viewer realizes that they’re looking at something handmade and that doesn’t happen with these. Viewers rarely notice that they are not the original bag unless I mention it. I think this is because the originals are already made out of fabric, they are too similar to their recreations which makes them harder to distinguish from each other. Reusable bags also do not have the same life span as plastic bags or shopping lists, therefore preserving them is a lost cause. This project is the first I would consider a failure, and it was with the failure of this project I recognized why the others are successful (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9, *Reusable*, appliqué and embroidery on cotton, 2021

Plastic Bags:

Since moving to Toronto, I have seen plastic bags everywhere and have developed a little collection. The intrigue of a plastic bag to me is similar to that of a shopping list.

Plastic bags also have a limited 'usefulness' lifespan but a much longer useless one. As paper lists would melt away to nothing shortly after being dropped, a plastic bag will last years tied up in a bush. When creating plastic bags I am intrigued by the idea of recreating these objects that are useful but valueless. Hand embroidering these delicate bags into valuable art objects calls attention to this mundane item that many have forgotten about.

Perhaps an interesting tangent is that recently I have been finding fewer plastic bags with logos, and more and more generic bags with phrases like "Thank You" and "See you Again". It leads me to wonder if stores are using these to not be called out by activists when their logos show up in ditches and landfills. Are more stores hiding behind the anonymity of "Thank You"? (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10, *Thank You: 01*, embroidery on organza, 2024

Bag Process:

The process for making this plastic bag is simple.

1. I trace out all the text onto a stabiliser, then use an embroidery hoop to embroider the words onto the organza.
2. Once the embroidery is completed I run it under warm water and melt the stabiliser away.
3. I then follow the pattern of the plastic bag to sew it together.

This version of the shopping bag is more successful to me as the difference in materiality is more obvious, yet not at first glance. Unlike the re-made reusable bags, this bag is not useful due to the organza being delicate, and would not hold much before ripping.

I often try different ways of using the same object. For the lists I have tried printmaking as well as presenting them as art objects on their own; for the plastic bags, I decided to play with scale. I got this idea while embroidering “danger of suffocation” on the smaller bag which led me to think, “I cannot suffocate in organza” which snowballed into “What if I take photos with my head inside the organza bag...” to “What if I could fit into an organza bag!” and this idea was born. Within 24hrs I had gone to the store and spent as much as I could justify on this plastic-y grey organza (\$600 in total). Within the day I had it put together. The bag is roughly five by seven feet. I wanted it larger but, as usual, my math was off. It was a blessing in disguise because I had to move all of the furniture in my room to lay it flat and if it were any bigger it would not have fit (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11, *Woolie Wallie*, embroidery with wool on organza, 2024

Sculptures: Creating an Environment

When deciding what to create for my larger soft sculptures, I often think about where the smaller ones could be found as I enjoy the idea of recreating the moment of noticing. When I first exhibited my lists, I had them scattered throughout the gallery floor. I enjoyed how viewers would walk through the gallery and the lists would go unnoticed at first, then suddenly they may have stepped on one and there is a small moment of panic and realization. They notice.

To reproduce the act of noticing I wanted to recreate that moment I found my first list in the cart; I did not know how I would build a whole cart at this point, so I made a Shopping basket prototype. The first one was awful. I attempted to make a wired basket but the wires were way too bulky and it ended up looking like a laundry basket. The second one I made to resemble a plastic shopping basket turned out much better. I am tempted to make a third because I know my skills have improved even further, but I am learning to move forward rather than constantly recreating. Eventually, I made a shopping cart.

Flopping Cart:

The soft sculpture shopping cart is the second large sculpture I have made. When making this cart I was primarily thinking about where I find my lists — but you can also see my cart in a similar way to the plastic bags as they are often discarded in ditches once their use has been fulfilled. Unlike plastic bags and lists the lifespan of a cart is much longer than both the list and bags. I am interested in the cart as this transitional space between writing the list and fulfilling its obligation. It is also a place where a used list may end up, and the first place I check when I am looking to add to my collection (Fig. 12). The cart is created using wooden dowels, PVC pipe and cardboard covered in felt and fabric.



Fig. 12, *Flopping Cart*, soft sculpture, 2022

Fridge Building 1.0:

I have made two soft fridges, the first of the two was made by roughly referencing the fridge in my Nan's house. It is a plain white fridge with exterior door handles. I used this design of refrigerator for several reasons, the first is I wanted the fridge to have a personal attachment. I did not want to use my own fridge, as my family has a large, two-door, stainless steel fridge and I was concerned this may comment on a higher class than what would be considered the everyday fridge. The second reason for this particular fridge is I wanted a fridge that everyone would recognize. Using a fridge that is conducive to everyday aesthetics is integral to my practice and allows the viewers to feel enticed and welcomed into the gallery space.

A key feature of the classic white fridge is the magnetic doors which housed my childhood shopping lists. To replicate this, I made a phone call to a local metal worker who

happened to have some extra sheet metal and was kind enough to cut it to the proper measurements. An advantage of working as an artist in Newfoundland is that everyone is kind and genuinely intrigued to help. For the magnets themselves, I knew I was going to need something strong enough to hold the list while keeping in mind it would also have several layers of fabric and batting between the magnet and the sheet metal. After some tests, I discovered that one-inch rare earth magnets worked the best. I encased the shiny silver magnets in black fabric so that they blended in with the atmosphere of the soft fridge.

Making mistakes is a valued part of my artmaking because it is with mistakes I learn. When buying the wood for the interior structure, I spent too much money and learned that maple wood is hard and heavy, and when ordering the fabric for the exterior of the fridge, I made another integral mistake. I intended on ordering 30 feet of fabric, but instead, I ordered 30 yards. The extra material was put to use on lots of lists and eventually a second fridge, and as useful as the extra fabric was I will not make that mistake again. To install the fabric I upholstered the front and back of the box, sewed a runner to cover the middle section and screwed the pieces together.

Transporting it to the gallery was another story because now that it was screwed together it did not fit through my door and did not fit in my car; and because it was upholstered, I had to cut little holes in the fabric to get the screws out enough to take it apart and reassemble it in the gallery. Then putting the screws back in required serious fidgeting so that the screws would not hook on the fabric and rip even more (Fig. 13).



Fig. 13, *Fridge 1.0*, soft sculpture, 2021

Fridge 2.0

During the installation of my first fridge, a large number of viewers attempted to open the fridge door by pulling on the handle which was magnetised to the door. When the handle pops off the viewer would panic as if they broke the artwork. However funny this was to watch, it led me to wonder how neat it would be if the fridge could be opened. I am an ambitious artist and I was told many times in my BFA that a full fridge would not be ‘doable’ in the given time frame. I was told I should “try a mini-fridge” or maybe “just the door” so a small part of me is making the interior next as a way to feed my ambitious ego.

For this fridge, I decided to use my current York University dorm room fridge for similar reasons to the first. It was a small, crappy white fridge and it felt like nearly everyone had had this old fridge at some point and many would recognize it.

The process of Fridge 2.0 is much more in-depth.

Main components of Fridge 2.0

- Structure
- Jacket
- Structural Panels
- Wire Shelves
- Glass Shelves
- Produce drawer
- Lighting Fixture

- Doors/Door Jackets
- Door Shelves
- Back of Fridge Squiggly Bits

Structure & Jacket:

I learned from my previous mistake and used regular two-by-fours for the structure and made the exterior removable instead of upholstered for this version of my fridge sculpture (Fig. 14). The exterior of the fridge is made of that same fabric I bought too much of the first time; while the inside is made of a felt-textured quilt batting. It is all sewn together in shape and wrapped around the wooden structure. Then a series of zippers on the hinge side of the fridge keeps everything in place.

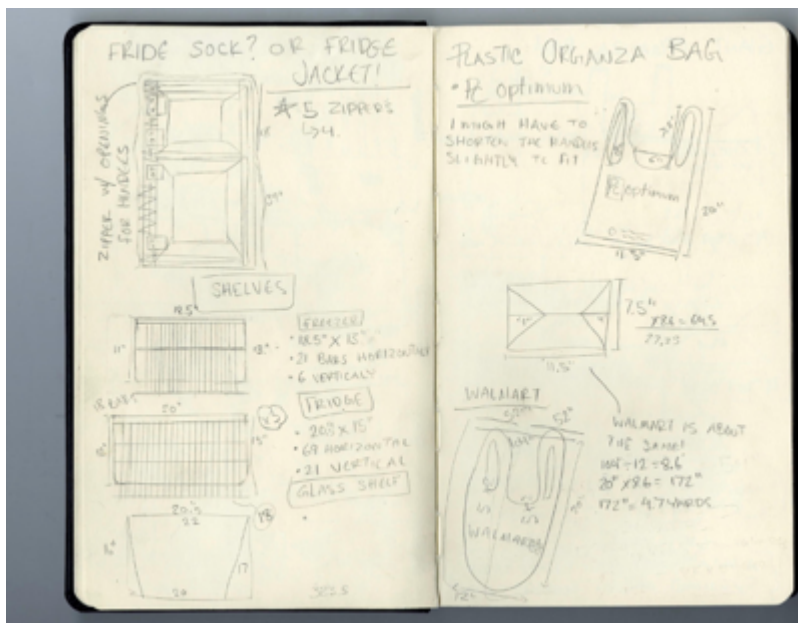


Fig. 14, Sketchbook 1/3, blueprint drawings, 2023

Structural Panels:

Once I had the Jacket together, I realized the interior pieces didn't have any structure. So I came up with these interior panels that could slide in place and hold everything up while also providing detail (Fig. 15). The panels are made with felt and or batting and cardboard or foam-board inside. The foam board worked better for more structural elements as the cardboard tends to bend over time. It is on these panels I include the slots for shelving.

Shelving:

The wired shelves are created with wooden dowels, fabric and felt, similar to the flopping cart. For the glass shelf, I used two layers of clear vinyl. On my sewing machine, I stitched a confetti pattern to simulate the pattern on my real glass shelf. I then use the same fabric-covered dowels around the edge to give it its shape.

Produce Drawer:

The produce drawer is also made out of vinyl. However instead of wooden dowels I used clear acrylic cake rods for structure. I was able to use a heat gun to melt the acrylic into the curves I needed and connected them using clear electrical shrink wrap. The Produce drawer is almost entirely hand-sewn.

Lighting Fixture:

The light in the fridge is made out of foam board, cardboard, acrylic rods, vinyl, felt and for the lightbulb, I used an LED light made for Christmas decorations (Fig. 15).

Lack of Conclusion - Future Introductions

Introductions and conclusions have always been the bane of my existence because my art never has a clear beginning or end. Instead, the ideas merely shape, flow, evolve or unravel — therefore I will end with where I plan to sew next.

For this past Christmas, my younger sister and I rewrote all of my mother's recipes and had them printed in a book. Organising her recipe cards is something my mother has mentioned nearly every time she flips through them, but it is one of those non-essential tasks that is immediately forgotten once the card in question is found. The recipe cards share a similar intrigue to me as I compare them to my found shopping lists. They are dirty — full of baking 'shmutz' and misspelt words. Some of them are half-typed-half-written and have multiple measurements on them for different-sized batches and I thought it was a shame that these too are to be digitised. For my future project, I would like to hand-embroider all of my mother's recipe cards, with all the stains and spelling mistakes from 'baking power' to 'mouse' (instead of moose) to preserve their charm and to memorialise the mess that is my beautiful Mom.

I believe this project would go hand-in-hand with the one I am currently working on due to its ties to my home, my cultural home and its life as a limited useful object. It differs however by becoming more personal and more archival, rather than the words of a stranger I will be replicating the words of my mother.

When beginning my Master's Degree, I felt like I was taking the easy way out by continuing with my Bachelor's Degree Project. Most of my Cohort took this opportunity to try something new and I had no desire to do that — I still do not and I wonder if I ever will. There

are still many related ideas I am excited to explore and I do not see myself deserting this project anytime soon.

It is important to note that this paper came to me much easier than I had expected. I am dyslexic, making reading and writing a daunting task for me and throughout my entire education I have become a professional at avoiding it. I have always been confident in my skills to make but never to explain. Therefore, I have been mentally preparing myself to write this paper for years — but when I started I could not stop. When I was told my paper was getting ‘on the long side’ I was dumbfounded; my papers are never ‘on the long side’. I can confidently say I rarely meet the minimum. This is all to say that I have gained confidence in myself and in my art, which I would have never thought possible.

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