

PROPAGATION STATION

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Abstract

Through *narrative inquiry* of care within a micro community of myself, baby blankets, text and aloe vera plants, my MFA thesis and support paper present a journey to better understand or come to know the complexities of care and place. My approach to *narrative inquiry* as a methodology for research in which I slowly and intimately interact with my micro community and present these relationships through text-based works and visual depictions of our material surfaces as both texture and tension. Surface, as an archive of touching, makes evident a troubling of exchange in acts of care. This paper questions what kind of temporality exists in the crevices of the surface and explores ways in which to participate in genuine temporal practices. My research will culminate in an exhibition in my home, which is presented as the work. I invite visitors to my intimate place, negotiating an opening up of the private to the public, hoping for a politely curious encounter.

Dedication

To those in my life who are patient with me while I'm searching and holding.

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Holding

Visiting is not an easy practice; it demands the ability to find others actively interesting, even or especially others most people already claim to know all too completely, to ask questions that one's interlocutors truly find interesting, to cultivate the wild virtue of curiosity, to retune one's ability to sense and respond—and to do all this politely.

– Donna Haraway *Staying With The Trouble*

My necessary aim is to come to know sensitively through careful attunement and to foster relationships of responsibility. My artistic practice is caring for my community and each member—the plants I keep, my baby blankets, text and the fragments that I hold onto. Dwelling and harbouring maintain my practice as a form of gestation. The relationships endure time because of the care that continuously cycles through our micro community, resulting in art pieces becoming forms that are not static or finished. I maintain the potential for all my art to be reworked as time presents new context, shifting my relationship to it. I hold onto things that would commonly be cast away, or considered as detritus. For over the last eight years I have been gathering threads that have fallen off my baby blankets. Both my self and the blankets participate in un/agendered nonreproductive mothering focused on regeneration, not birth/rebirth. The blankets heal my body as their skin touches my skin; for a moment their skin becomes my skin and my skin does not hurt so much. Our bodies slow together. Their body shows me how to bring my body as close to stillness as I can manage. Slowness is my practice. Our intimate and slow touching creates friction and a heat so dull that it is only perceptible in the fragments that accumulate. The friction is almost nothing but over time the friction is revealed through transformations.

The blanket fragments are precarious as their future depends on my actions and I collect them so that they are not alone, or perhaps, so that I am not alone. The precariousness that I refer to is outlined by Judith Butler and Lauren Berlant, who both create a distinction between ‘precariousness’, “a shared condition of uncertain experience”, and ‘precarity’, “a social-economic condition affect[ing] different individuals in radically unequal ways” (Dezeuze 23). The baby blanket threads are not made obsolete as I collaborate with them in my work. We share in our uncertain condition, enduring together. Thomas Hirschhorn describes the ‘beauty of precariousness’ as a “temporality and vulnerability to the other” (Dezeuze 261). I am dependent on the fallen pieces. The action of gathering soothes as I contemplate my relationship to the blankets and them inevitably coming to pass. Holding pieces vulnerable to being cast away because they are seen as useless, I offer an act of care to the blankets that care for me everyday. This action of maintenance and care appears unproductive in a capitalist context “that privileges novelty and growth over the cyclical and the regenerative. Our very idea of productivity is premised on the idea of producing something new” (Odell 25). The act of reciprocity allows for cyclical growth and the focus of my artwork is to make again, not new, acknowledging the agency of matter. The blanket threads are creation through decreation tangibly attached to time. The blankets have taken on many forms in my practice, becoming and unbecoming a womb chair (Figure 1), a companion joining me to be photographed for our portrait (Figure 2). They will continue to grow, break down and become in our relationship and in my art practice.



Figure 1: Jo Yetter, *Womb Chair*, 2018, baby blankets, wood, thread.



Figure 2: Jo Yetter, Portrait, 2017.

The relationships within my community embody slow time or what María Puig de la Bellacasa would call 'care time'. Bellacasa describes care for matter as “the fostering of the endurance of objects through time (maintenance against breakdown)” (171). In this way, I can see maintenance as “haptic care for the imperceptible politics of the everyday (rather than the irruption of events)” (171). I extend care past the breakdown of the blankets' bodies and to their pieces, to situate my self in the everyday, caring for time through slowness. I search within the harboured pieces in a temporality that does not agree with capitalism.



Figure 3: Jo Yetter and Baby Blankets, *All Your Collected Pieces*, 2015–, baby blanket threads, wood structure, installation view, detail.

Can I self soothe? Am I soothing my body or their body? Am I just my self if I soothe with their body? What will come of the passing of that body? Who is caring for whom? Whose body is the place where my self resides?



Figure 4: Jo Yetter and Baby Blankets, *All Your Collected Pieces*, 2015–, baby blanket threads, wood structure, installation view.

Through *narrative inquiry* of care within a micro community of myself, baby blankets, text and aloe vera plants, my MFA thesis and support paper present a journey to better understand or come to know the complexities of care and place. *Narrative inquiry*, defined by Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie drawing upon S. Elizabeth Bird, is reciprocal and “how humans come to know, understand, and make meaning in the social world, while also making ourselves known, understood, and meaningful in the world” (82). My approach to *narrative inquiry* is intimately interacting with my micro community and presenting these relationships through text-based works and visual depictions of our material surfaces as both texture and tension. Visual and physical contact is not enough for our intimacy, I desire a closeness that friction does not allow.

Is surface an archive of our touching? This project explores the ways in which the aforementioned members of the community can become together and when the boundaries of our bodies are transversed. This is why I study the surface. I think with and spend time with still life (inanimate matter), plants and text in order to consider connection and boundary, to better understand how care circulates and is thought. The project contemplates teachers of care in a 'more than human community'. As a visual artist using text, my project is guided by Tuck and Mckenzie's idea that "'geometric' understandings of space and place are reductive" (17). In Tuck and Mckenzie's book *Place in Research*, they are in conversation with Doreen Massey's text *For Space*, utilizing her work in the field of critical geography; however, writing from an indigenous decolonizing lens. Massey's "critique of those who see space as a 'surface' upon which human life takes place" is one I will also take up by visually depicting surface as a complex affecting and affected layer (17). I will also "press back against theorizations of space as given, as static, as passive, as backdrop" (17). My project attends to the act of care and the place wherein care takes place.

Words migrate, things shed, matter decays

I wait patiently.

Text transforms, material is offered, plants propagate

patiently Roots rot, poetry takes form, threads collect

patiently

Holding is all that matters.

I wait

I wait

My research will culminate in an exhibition in my home, which is presented as the work. I invite visitors to my intimate place, negotiating an opening up of the private to the public, hoping for a politely curious encounter. The place forms the work, they cannot be separate (Tuck) and while I am not directly undertaking *critical place research*¹ I am indirectly through *narrative inquiry*. Tuck and McKenzie's text *Place in Research* has helped me understand better the ways in which I can ethically approach my practice and my relationship with place. I choose to exhibit in my apartment so that place is not just mentioned or a 'given', an issue Tuck and McKenzie outline as occurring in social science research. The site of research/creation and exhibition are identical.

Standing on Dundas Street West in front of my apartment, one will see the windows making inside into outside and light traversing these boundaries. The eye transverses these boundaries through windows making walls visually porous. If the eye touches the inside from the outside does it break the binary of inside and outside? A viewer can see my installation and into my apartment from the street. The storefront window makes visible a room filled with plants, a space I call the *Propagation Station*. With a willingness to pause, one might notice a small window within the front room that reveals another room and a plant hanging from macramé. The art installation is entangled with life; creating conditions for a merging of inside and outside, public and private. In *The Poetics of Space* Gaston Bachelard writes of a more that reciprocal

¹ Tuck and McKenzie define critical place research as "research that takes up critical questions and develops corresponding methodological approaches that are informed by the embeddedness of social life in and with places, and that seeks to be a form of action in responding to critical place issues such as those of globalization and neoliberalism, settler colonialism, and environmental degradation" (2).

relationship between inside and outside stating, “by omitting geometrical references when we speak of the first expressions of being, by choosing more concrete, more phenomenologically exact inceptions, we shall come to realize the dialectics of inside and outside multiply with countless diversified nuances” (231). Is this asking how much we can see through, around or between space? This idea informs the way I understand containers and makes me question what else is happening when I hold something or am held by something in my relationships of care. Considering only one pathway of exchange negates all the other elements (place specifically) of the holding/ being held, I need time to come to know the nuances. Does light break down the boundary between inside and outside as it “strikes the wall” in my apartment (Bachelard)? Is this light suggesting that regardless of whether I choose to open my private space up to the public, light will still enter?



Figure 5: Jo Yetter and The Sun, *Place of (de)Creation*, 2022–, screenprint, the sun.

From the street you can view a screenprint that I am creating in collaboration with the sun (Figure 5). Plants bathe in light, pieces of my baby blanket rest on a wee shelf made of cherry and maple and text works crawl along the walls. Urgently slow, the works are in a constant transformative state in turn becoming and making-with. My role as a sole maker is problematized by relationships of making with my micro community dependent on place and a willingness to turn objects into subjects and makers.

Quantum entanglements complicate subjectivity, presenting the questions "Who/ what is object? Who/ what is subject?" (Bellacasa 114). If we view in extreme closeness then our eyes become entangled with matter. Artworks exploring the details of things create close proximity as screenprinted surfaces are abstracted as macro perspectives. I must care for and be responsible for how I choose to represent the relationships of care, in order to not claim I present these narratives as parts and abstractions. Karen Barad provides a means to consider and hold a more responsible or caring objectivity, she writes:

Objectivity cannot be about producing undistorted representations from afar; rather, objectivity is about being accountable to the specific materializations of which we are a part. And this requires a methodology that is attentive to, and responsive/responsible to, the specificity of material entanglements in their agential becoming (Barad 91).

Presenting macro views works against the hierarchical order of looking because the eye cannot claim what it is viewing due to the abstraction of the subject or object. In the small room of my apartment, screenprinted abstract surfaces become textures in which I embed text, entangled or floating with(in) crevices. Texture makes visible already and not-yet. The revealing of textures on the walls of the space is achieved by its proximity to the artworks (Figure 6). This accordion fold book has been installed close to various

textures since its printing in 2021. The book becomes a new artwork every time it is situated in a different place.



Figure 6: Jo Yetter and Place, still with still life, 2021, screenprint, wall texture.

What kind of temporality exists in the crevices of the surface? Is time a point of connection and a barrier?

Mother aloe lives through children.

Something else is going on in the vegetative world, perhaps something that should be called art.

– Donna Haraway *Staying With The Trouble*

Aloe vera is my poetry. The denseness of the leaves affirm time and space as full cells push back on my fingers as I squeeze their plump juicy arms. An aloe form is seductive, smooth, curvaceous, holds weight and even though every propagation of the mother plant is in fact a clone of the source, propagations become varied because their growth is shaped by place. The cells house medicinal liquid waiting to be applied to my surface to repair, and require my hand to feed them. Healing the surface is the beginning, skins' porosity allows for seepage through, and then gel sinks in for reparation. Visitors to the *Propagation Station* are invited to experience this with me and begin their own relationship with an aloe propagation to take with them. The plants allow me to create an entry point into my art through the familiarity of the subject, because essentially the other works are abstractions. The plants beckon the viewers, guiding and encouraging the participant to look around expectation.

An aloe is many things all at once—growth, connection, stillness, healing, care, keeper of time. This is why I choose to collaborate with aloe in my art practice. It confounds me as to why plants are included in still life arrangements. Everything is always vibrating, stillness is not so still. Is stillness misinterpreted by the eye because it cannot perceive the vibrations of stillness and cannot feel the heat from those vibrations? Perhaps stillness is not so still if we consider how much growth and change

is occurring in the vegetative world. Are plants showing us how to be still and how much potential exists within stillness? A novel that inspires me is *Ordinary Affects* by Kathleen Stewart. The form of the book is narrative inquiry and in the text there is a small passage that speaks on still life (inanimate matter). She writes that a still life is “quivering in the stability of a category or a trajectory, it gives the ordinary the charge of an unfolding” (19). Thus, a still life always has potential and is future-oriented, entangling with the past/present/yet to come. I posit that still life (titled as still forms) is speculative and can be included in Donna Haraway’s SF category alongside string figures, a game that consists of making forms out of a circular string and passing those forms between sets of hands, speculative feminism and science fiction. Still forms have a lot to offer this category because they spend as much time looking around as they do looking ahead. The aloes display that I can actively engage in time and space by being still. My body is the place where my self is still, my body (place) forms my self. I search for a closeness with my self in an understanding that the pieces and parts are of the whole and that whole is a hole needing to be filled by a ‘more than human world’.

Slowness and holding is the way I ‘make-with’, being pieces and parts, and whole simultaneously with my micro community. Haraway’s idea of ‘making-with’ is another way to consider sympoiesis, the term coined by Beth Dempster to mean “collectively-producing systems that do not have self-defined spatial or temporal boundaries. Information and control are distributed among components. The systems are evolutionary and have the potential for surprising change” (Haraway 61). Haraway notes ‘making-with’ requires focused presence and stillness, which I find allows me to

be present. How small can my vibrations become? The smallest vibration is the most extreme and just as urgent as the biggest vibration. The fifth state of matter (Bose-Einstein condensate) is where motion is almost at a stopping point and no kinetic energy is being transferred, so atoms begin to clump together as one. Matter has no friction in this state and comes the closest to truly touching, to living in a place where 'making-with' is the only option. What conditions do my community and I need so that our space/place can foster 'making-with'?

The aloe and I touch intimately, their skins have healed my skins—are they now our skins? Through touching our porous container walls dissolve body borders, becoming inside and outside simultaneously. Porosity is what brings us together by touching in the deepest possible way as we cross our own barriers. Is this the only way to truly touch, to become a whole? Aloe teaches me how to receive, passivity is not inaction and in our stillness I learn presence. Robin Wall Kimmerer unpacks the notion of receiving stating, "listening, standing witness, creates an openness to the world in which the boundaries between us can dissolve in raindrops" (300). Receiving fosters my sensitivity to place and allows me to understand the utility of these relationships of care. I experience and value the utility and hold it alongside our intimate and tender interactions. Heat is the byproduct of this intimacy of matter—of touching, of care. If the Bose-Einstein condensate could exist outside of a controlled apparatus then we would be able to experience touch without heat, without friction. My apartment (place) creates the conditions for friction. Is friction a barrier to touching or a necessary emergent material in matter coming into contact? The emergence of heat from touch is a call to

action. Sometimes this heat can be so subtle we forget our responsibility in touching, in caring. Friction is a necessary reminder.

The aloe acts within my work to teach participants ways to be with, care for and be cared by, guided by a responsibility of need, “reciprocal, rather than sacrificial” taking on a dialogical aesthetic of intersubjectivity and “collaborative interaction produc[ing] new forms of subjectivity” (Kester 122). If care is an act of intersubjectivity (‘making-with’) does giving and receiving become blurry? Is care collaboration? How does care operate within the economy/ as an economy? If care produces a new subjectivity does that help acknowledge that care is not simply a gift to be received? Kimmerer discusses at length gift economy and that “in Western thinking, private land is understood to be a ‘bundle of rights,’ whereas in a gift economy property has a ‘bundle of responsibilities’ attached” (28). Will the people who come to visit my installation feel a responsibility to the propagation or the screenprinted book that is being offered to them? Giving a plant implicates a relationship of reciprocity and it is the receiver's responsibility to care for the plant. The plant comes with an obligation and a need for maintenance. While this relationship requires labour, if that labour is not seen as a giving up of something, that labour will become reciprocal instead of sacrificial. The aloe is not just a gift, it is also an opportunity to learn ways of knowing each other, ways of being with each other.

I care for these plants, committing to a relationship of reciprocity, individual survival becoming collective *thrival*. *Thrival* is a word that I have been holding that I am

not sure about yet. *Thrival* requires collectivity and a web of interrelations. Bellacasa believes that reciprocity does not occur between only two. She writes “thinking the webs of care through sensorial materiality, as chains of touch that link and remake worlds, troubles not only longings for closeness but also the reduction of relations of reciprocity to logics of exchange between individuals” (120). A web of reciprocity troubles a dualistic viewpoint of exchange, opening up how care operates complicating a solely sacrificial standpoint. Does surface affect the touching that occurs? Does surface trouble exchange? Roots are pathways for nourishment, containers for nutrients and anchor points to hold. Do roots hold the plant? Do plants self soothe? Roots are an understanding of need from another, a tangible and visible representation of a necessity to nourish.

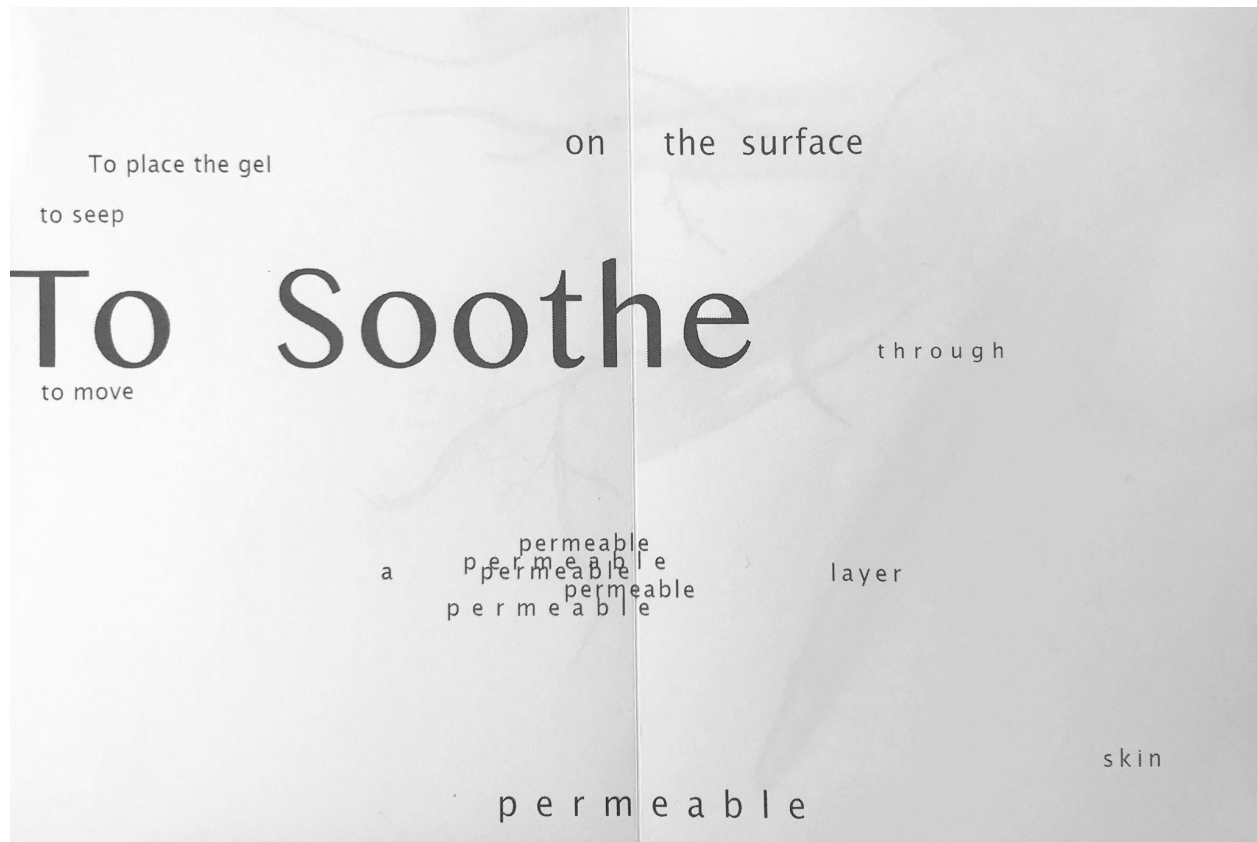


Figure 7: Jo Yetter, *Permeations*, 2023, screenprinted book.

When I moved out of my familial home as a young adult my mother gifted me an aloe plant (Figure 8). The aloe cares for me in the absence of my mother, being with me when she is not. I have been entangled with this aloe for twelve years, I have been in a relationship with this aloe for twelve years. The aloe and I are both together and other, best described in Haraway's words as a joint kinship "not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints" (3). I piece together parts remaking my-self in relation to things that know me better than I know myself. We participate in queer reproduction (propagation) as two un/agendered species. Mother aloe's babies are regenerations of the mother plant, both self and other simultaneously as cloned bodies grow off the host plant. These propagations are urgently formed when the plant fears that it will not be able to survive any longer in its current conditions. Mother aloe lives through children. Mother aloe regenerates in pups² that remember and hold the past, as an intergenerational self. The offset clone pups take on different forms despite their identical genetic material, making visible difference within sameness. In a way, the aloe propagations can be seen as a material that embodies both individual and collective. Can they reveal ways to communicate and connect symbiotically or in sympoiesis in a 'more than human' world?

² The name referring to the propagations.



Figure 8: Jo Yetter, *Mother Aloe*, 2023, installation view.

The aloe vera that I have propagated to give to visitors of the installation are all connected by the mother plant. There is an invisible web between the plants and people who choose to take one. The artwork is caring for the plant and in turn caring for the connection. The individuals will need to invest time and labour if they too want to experience a connection with the plant, if they want the plant to thrive. I wonder what will become of the connection when the pups leave my home? Will physically touching the plant allow participants to feel connected to the other aloe receivers? Bellacasa proposes that touching can blur the line between self and other, thus, "understanding contact as touch intensifies a sense of the co-transformative, in the flesh effects of connection between begins" (96). Is touch the pathway between here and there? Does touch allow me to live in a transitional time, in-between, accessing a relationship to space? Byung-Chul Han writes, "the *path* which separates the place of departure from the place of arrival is also an interval" (37) a place of transitional time. The web of individuals caring for the gifted aloe creates a 'Here' and 'There' threshold that Han suggests can "provide life with a direction, hence with meaning" (39). Do we take for granted a pathway of connection (community/collectivity) when communication takes very little effort? I feel connected to people through the propagated plants in my apartment and know who gave me each plant. I come into contact with them when I water them or carefully look at them or when I brush the foliage with my fingers.

Harbouring the mother plant, I cultivate pups for gifting. I desire to recede into a plant life form that is as close to perfection as I can conceive. The healing gift of this plant is almost impossible to reciprocate and the only way I know how is to propagate to provide others with what I have been offered.

Steps For Transplanting An Aloe Vera Plant

This poem is a response to an email I received from my mother while I was living in Philadelphia containing instructions on how to transplant aloe vera. When I moved across the border to the United States my aloe could not come with me and she cared for my aloe in my absence, being with them when I could not.

1. *crowded pots grasping gasping to stay*
Hold the base of the tiny pup and work your fingers down into the soil to separate the roots from the mother plant.
2. *laid horizontally in my hands*
Untangle the roots and remove soil caught up in the mass.
3. *receiving pots like snug little homes*
Transfer the pup to a pot that has a volume that is not much bigger than the root system, so as to not shock the plant.
4. *broken pieces settled*
Fill the pot with fresh soil.
5. *longing for womb*
For the first watering, saturate the soil, and then only again when the soil has completely dried out.
6. *unwelcomed chrysalis*
The plant will stall in growth for a while as it adjusts to its new home.
7. *gently holding its place*
Every once in a while give the plant a little tug to see if the roots have established in the soil.

A Strange Intimacy, An Estranged Intimacy

What is special about place is not some romance of a pre-given collective identity or of the eternity of the hills. Rather, what is special about place is precisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres); and a negotiation which must take place within and between both human and nonhuman. This in no way denies a sense of wonder: what could be more stirring than walking the high fells in the knowledge of the history and the geography that has made them here today. This is the event of place.

– Doreen Massey *For Space*

Things are not exactly as they seem. A storefront, not actually a store, an apartment, perhaps not an apartment, a smooth surface, not quite so smooth, stillness, with an urgent intent. This inbetween space is where this project dwells, between exposure and retreat, construction and repair. Abstract pieces coming together, connected by proximity. My installation's visual subtlety allows the viewer space to place themselves in the work. The threads and the text linger in liminality, future-oriented, while the past is presented as a series of moments converging in the present. The text passes through time while existing in a moment in time similar to “string figures holding still in order to receive and pass on” (Haraway 10), awaiting transformation. The installation requires the viewer to become a participatory member in the not quite so public, not quite so private space. The work is a place-specific installation because its context is coded in the personal, inviting the public into an intimate identity.

The work considers and ‘makes-with’ what I have been afforded. I acknowledge that ultimately the place in which my thesis is being conducted and shaped on is the colonized land ancestral to the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabe, the Wendake-Nionwentsio, the Haudenosaunee and the Chippewa. As a white second

generation Canadian I understand that my project does nothing to repair the mistreatment, erasure, violence, continued displacement and dispossession of the peoples native to this land. I sit with what my relationship to the land is, and while I do intimately interact with the land, this interaction is quite specific and sometimes even estranged because I am from an urban city. I find the large number of people in this city creates an energy that makes it difficult for me to be with the land and so I search for quiet and still moments to truly engage with place. My poetic disposition in my initial attempts at acknowledging the land resulted in a nostalgic and metaphoric tone that I have learned is unhelpful and from a colonial settler lens. As an individual who rents their apartment I am afforded the privilege to call the apartment my home, temporarily my property. Thus, I am participating in the system of land being held as property and capital. This project is an offering of my private place to the public as public spaces shrink or disappear in Tkaronto. It is a gesture of what I have, to care for that which is in proximity to me.

At this time my land acknowledgment is that I still have work, learning and being with to do, in order to responsibly and meaningfully choose words. Perhaps I need to speak with texture in the macro views that I screenprint in order to acknowledge the land because in the crevices time lies holding the past, present and future of the peoples that are with the land.

Lingering in/on Time

The human being can linger on things because things make the world relations linger. The transitive lingering of the world makes possible the intransitive lingering on things.

– Byung-Chul Han *The Scent of Time*

The text, alone, material, myself and place are ‘making-together’ collaboratively, resulting in a community, produced through art practice. Emma Cocker’s text on “Performing Stillness: Community in Waiting” has provided me with a context for understanding the ways in which my project, *Propagation Station*, can function during the visitation of my home and the interactions that may come about. My apartment installation allows for the potential to pause and re-orient oneself within the space because of the blurring of public and private. The artworks engage the affective quality of subjectivity brought about by a moment of pause. Often people stop on the street to view the plants in the window, pointing things out to companions, taking photos or offering me a ‘thumbs up’ if I happen to be near the window. Some people become uncomfortable when they realize that they have entered my apartment with their eyes, originally thinking that it was a storefront. I try to encourage them and wave as to communicate that their perceived intrusion is welcomed, invited. I wonder if strangers will choose to enter and engage when I open the door to them during the exhibition? Opening up my private place to the public is an act to create a collective moment, even if only between myself/place and a single participant. Is an invitation enough to convince or encourage a crossing of borders, from the outside in, from the public to the private? Or is a muddying of inside/outside (a window), public/private (a small room in an

apartment), stopping/journey (a *Propagation Station*) a means to entice a viewer to commit a moment to/with my work?

The installation makes space for collective stillness, creating “the conditions for an ever-emergent community that is always in progress, or still yet-to-come” (Cocker 104). A collectivity between person, place, time and attention forms with participation in the work. ‘More than human’ communities or collectivities emerge through interactions between self, self-other and self-aloe. Community in this context is not static, thus it is not only a noun, it is also a verb, it is in a process of constantly coming together and being worked on. Miwon Kwon writes on place-specific work, positing that “the ‘work’ no longer seeks to be a noun/object but a verb/process, provoking the viewers’ critical (not just physical) acuity regarding the ideological conditions of their viewing” (Kwon 24). My dwelling is also the place in which I do my dwelling. Constant maintenance and an investment of labour is a means to sustain community; its strength comes from a constant need for ‘others’, allowing it to endure. The participants become a part of the process, thus they are required to do more work in regard to conditions of viewing, that work being the formation of a relationship to the place of viewing.

The transformed/edited text to be presented in the installation makes evident the elasticity and porosity of thoughts and subjectivity. The potential participatory interaction with the text works act as ‘an intervention to behavioural patterns transforming and reinventing participation’ by inviting the viewer to touch and engage in an apartment that will be, for most, not familiar (Cocker 90). The viewer can flip sheets of paper attached

to the walls in an intimate space, invited to engage in an action that is usually not easy or comfortable for the viewer (touching art). Text can encourage imagination, with this installation creating space for that, however, the text also calls the viewer to look around, to uncover the abundant subtlety that is present. Perhaps to 'imagine-with', in a place of layers of thoughts organized in a non-linear environment, intended to slow the process of looking. A moment of stillness for the participant is necessary to operate as "a stop or block—a break with the already existing or with the events of the past—and also a moment of attentive pause, a future-oriented zone of 'pure potentiality'" (Cocker 96). Is stillness a container for action, holding, ready? If the outcome is inaction in the viewer, the intention of the work has not failed because there is still 'the potential for'.

The aesthetic of impermanence of the project is imbued with process and potential, while requiring lingering and careful looking. Painters' tape and pencil drawings on the wall alongside large paper works with screenprinted text make visible multiple temporalities in order to argue along with Bellacasa that care time needs to exist with and not take over all participations of time. The baby blanket threads represent a long duration and commitment to harbouring the fragments, whereas a screenprinted image of the baby blanket (Figure 9) acts as an imprint of the blanket at a moment in time when it was exposed on the light table. The wear from our touching is translated by the light moving at an extremely high speed through interstices. These timelines of different speeds give duration to an accelerated temporality, helping ground it while shifting away from a sole temporality. In Han's book *The Scent of Time* he makes mention of practices that are genuinely temporal, "promising, commitment and

fidelity” (6), and caring for the threads of my baby blankets are all those things. Thus, my action of harbouring the threads “bind the future by continuing the present into the future and linking the two, thus creating a temporal continuity that has a stabilizing effect. This continuity protects the future against the violence of non-time” (Han 7). Time is not my mother tongue, it is a slippery language that my mouth cannot make into form. I speak time through touch as my hands translate gestures and gather threads. Can the body slow time? Time is my language of touch evident on the surface of things. My work is contingent on time. To care for time is to not rush it. I create space for time to participate in what I make, responsibly negotiating our relationship.

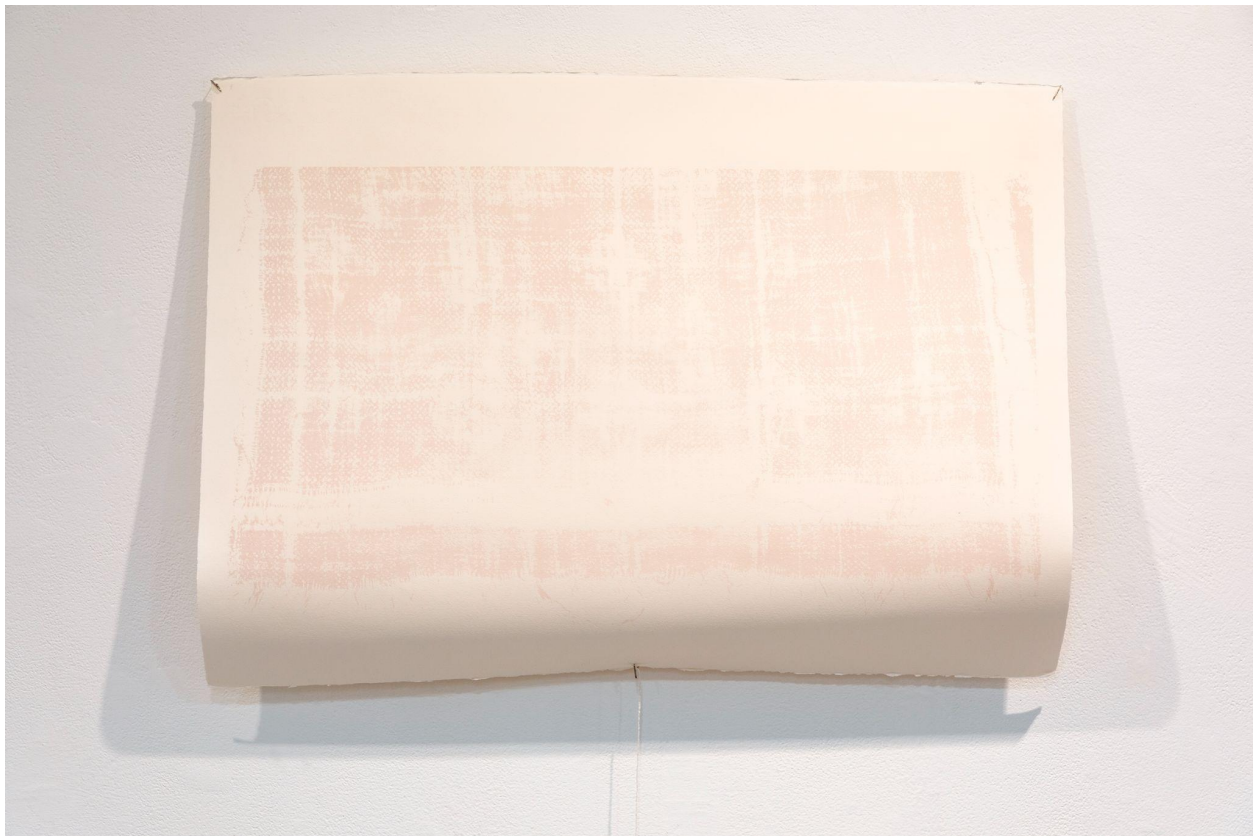


Figure 9: Jo Yetter, *You as a Moment*, 2022, screenprint.

Intimacy with time is a strange sort of intimacy because time is in constant motion. Does the sun move time? Does time move the sun? Perhaps they are simultaneously moving each other, always in progress and still yet-to-come. Han explains that dialectical movements link “temporal horizons, i.e. on a *not-yet* of the *already*” and are necessary to experience time with direction and space, noting “the present within a dialectical process is rich in tension, while today’s present lacks all tension” (6). Are the sun and time dialectical? The sun gives time a duration; I work with the sun to give time a direction. The still body becomes the keeper of a moment both subject and object to/of time.



Figure 10: Jo Yetter, *Tracing Your Body, Learning Your Shape*, 2023, pencil, light.

Does time paint with light? Am I translating time as I trace around the edges of light's shapes on the wall of my apartment, following their pathway through my room (Figure 10)? The marks I make with pencil are quiet and urgent as they attempt to stay with time as it *whizzes*³ across the wall. Do these drawings give time a direction? These pencil tracings can be easily undone, yet at the same time as they are made of an enduring archival material. A glance is not rewarded by all the artworks, as many of the pieces ask for slowness or lingering in order to see the details, allowing for an intimacy with time and space. These works consider and guide active looking in a time where concentration requires effort and commitment to receive anything from that which one is engaging with (Kimmerer 110). Slow looking is looking with care as the eye attunes. Our micro community's narrative works against acceleration by requiring slowness to reveal connections and transformations. The viewer must piece together what is being presented, requiring a slow body and slow looking. Textures and marks can easily be missed by those in a rush.

³ The word Han uses to describe our experience of time due to Dyschronicity, causing a temporal crisis, which he explains as time without direction and often duration.



Figure 11: Jo Yetter, *Harbouring You Into Now*, 2023, screenprint, found black paint, installation view.

a subject and an author

The sun is a material and painter in this project as it slowly fades a screenprint in the window of my apartment and moves light across the walls of the space. Light is always a participant in the making/viewing of any work and by choosing to 'work-with' instead of 'working it', the lights' creativity guides the outcome. Light is a subject and a maker in the installation. The light is operating in space where place creates the conditions for how the light interacts with matter in the space. The aloe pups and the screenprint in the window are dependent on the sun, due to many of the transformations of matter only made possible by place.

The sun and I participate in collaborative creativity, a way of creating that Claire Bishop would note acts in two ways, "both to emerge from, and to produce, a more positive and non-hierarchical social model" (12). Am I learning a social order in relation to light in the making of my thesis? How much does place affect and shape my research? Place is also a biased agent coding the work as much as I am. Who are the authors/artists involved in my thesis? The colours in the screenprint in the window will fade to greys that are barely visible, making space, or not, for another layer to be printed onto the sheet of paper. Is the sun undoing or showing me how to make space for potential additional collaboration within the picture plane? Quiet colours approach stillness. Variations of grey are always in relation to the colours directly beside them. Grey does not know how to be alone, only ever beside, under, above, around, encompassed. Desaturated colours approach grey. Is grey a silent colour, the most still colour, with the most potential? Does grey hold the most knowledge? In a sea of grey

there lies difference in sameness. Desaturating colours to the point of greyness results in those greys physically containing the maximum vibrancy of two hues—intensity converging becoming stillness, quietness. Did an artist making grey embody the knowledge of quantum physics before the mind could conceptualize it? Does grey embody the Bose-Einstein condensate? Is grey a container for convergence? Grey appears passive, however, grey knows how to be with every other colour. Grey is never other and never others. I mix vibrant colours into stillness. The sun fades vibrant colours into stillness.

Words as matter, Text as Space

Writing is an act of reciprocity with the world; it is what I can give back in return for everything that has been given to me. And now there's another layer of responsibility, writing on a thin sheet of tree and hoping the words are worth it. Such a thought could make a person set down her pen.

– Robin Wall Kimmerer *Braiding Sweetgrass*

Small fragments of text are manageable moments for my participants as a means to care for my viewer as they commit a labour of looking in my apartment. Works on tracing paper reveal transformations of text or ideas through layering edits on top of my past thoughts. Past text converges with present textual edits as I extend my care for them past their obsolescence (Figure 12). This process is identical to collecting and holding onto my baby blanket threads and gives space to time. The space of time exists between sheets of text in a shallow depth. Han uses the *hsiang yin*, a Chinese incense clock, as an example of time gaining space, noting that the wood has engraved script and “although the glow permanently transforms the incense into ash, the ash does not disintegrate into dust. Rather, it retains the shape of the writing. The incense seal therefore loses none of its meaning even after having turned to ash” (Han 57). The words and threads in my work do not turn to dust. My caring and harbouring them creates conditions for them to remain as ash and keepers of time. Our touching and holding is what transforms time into space.

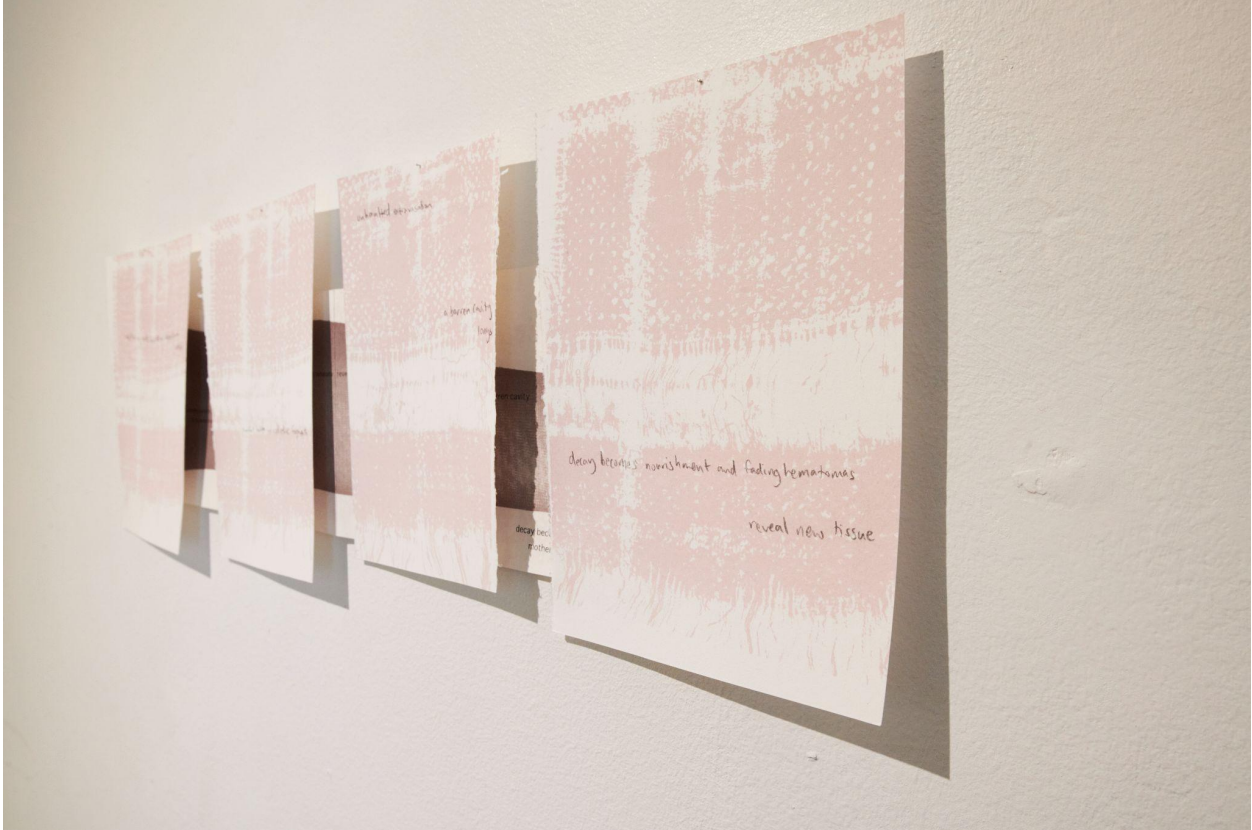


Figure 12: Jo Yetter, *Revisiting*, 2020, 2022, screenprint, pencil, painters tape.

Words have as much agency as the writer, they shape the trajectory of the sentence and affect the ways in which the sentence will be received. Words are not just 'given' to be acted with as the writer decides. Words find ways to speak as loudly as the cultivated sentence. Despite structure and definitions, receiving will be varied. I write-with words, understanding that we are making together, understanding that writing is not separate from receiving. I receive words and form sentences to be received. Yi Fu Tuan posits that language holds emotions (107). Thus, if it holds emotions, language is a container or space for emotions. Language makes the inside outside, taking shape in the mouth, coming to form by the lips and tongue. Words exist in every state of matter, they are transmutable. I attempt to make a container for time by writing dense and thick

with as few words as possible. Han unpacks that which endures and is slow, writing forms “which are only open to a long contemplative gaze, but remain hidden to the working gaze; things that are subtle, fleeting, inconspicuous things, minor things [*das Geringe*]; things that hover or retreat, which evade any violent efforts at their capture” (76). Pencil written text retreats into screenprinted textures in some of the wall works (Figure 13). They whisper intimately, intended for a sensitive contemplative gaze—requiring a patient encounter. The text in the installation is tiny and quietness draws one in, fostering a sensitivity of looking. Slow movements and pauses create conditions to see and experience that which requires time spent to reveal. The text gathered into the installation is a response to and a ‘making-with’ my baby blankets, aloe and the space. All hold me, all caress me and in them I nest. The poetry helps me understand my relationship with these things and I choose this form of writing because I am not interested in drawing definitive conclusions. In this paper many conclusions are considered as questions instead of written as statements. I wonder how many ways I can say the same thing with the most subtle difference to open up the statement.

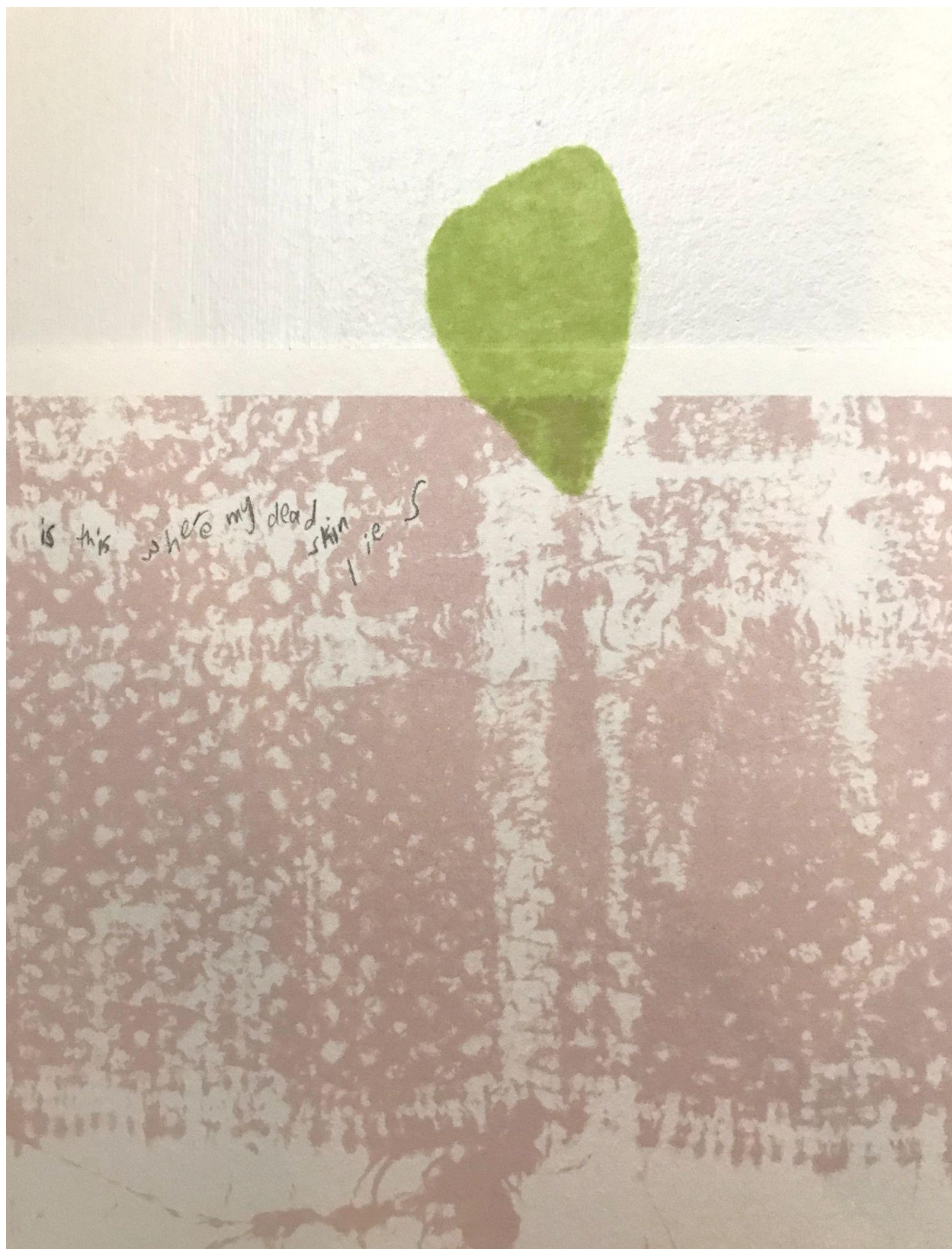


Figure 13: Jo Yetter, *Clinging*, 2022, screenprint, pencil.

The comma is my favourite mark because it denotes a pause, a breath, a lingering or a connection between things. It creates conditions for clauses to 'make-with' other clauses, words becoming in relation to one another, until 'bit by bit' the sentence establishes itself. Is the comma a sensitive relation grounded in dependency (responsible collaboration), opposed to a connection point? The comma is a place, a placeholder and something that makes place. By thinking with the comma I am closer to understanding place. The comma encourages me to allow for the reductive qualities of grammar to dissipate in a "poetic distillation [that] frees language from strict syntax" (Drucker, 'The Line Bends'). The comma opens the material of language to sensitivity. Sentences could remain unfinished, full of potential, without bindings. Is this unfinished where the "line bends and does not break... and if the line doesn't break but bends, curves, returns on itself so that the words pile back, literally, upon each other and then merge their referential planes with their expression—who can tell the difference in the pile-up between the first word and the last" (Drucker, 'The Line Bends')? If words become jumbled and contaminated by other words, prefixes and suffixes, definitions expand and become flexible, while also becoming more exact, in their ambiguity they can be read in many ways (Figure 14). Are these words, bound to others or prefixes/suffixes, existing in the fifth state of matter (Bose-Einstein Condensate)? In my practice I use both images and language, relying on abstracting language to have a conversation through words and texture.

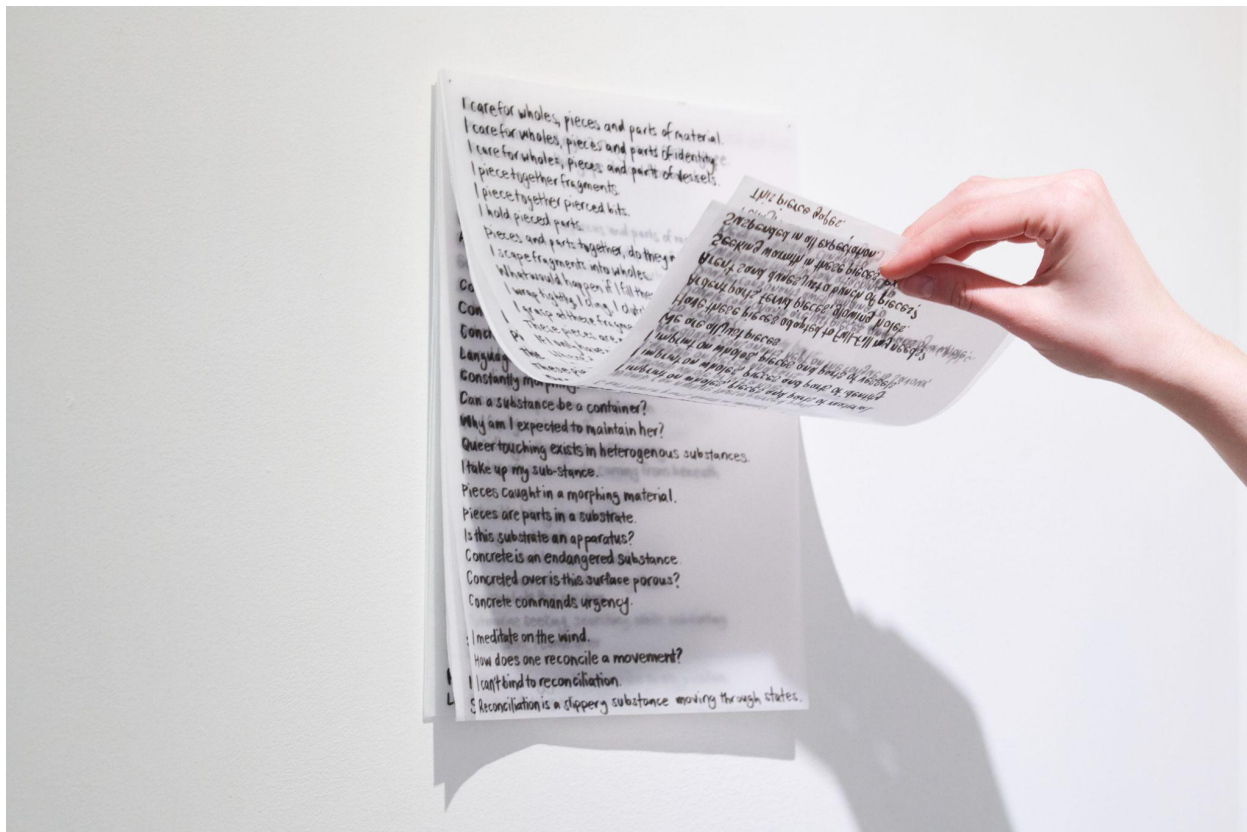


Figure 14: Jo Yetter, *whole holes and pieced parts, sub-positions, translations*, 2023, indian ink on mylar

These hands transform my mouth
Tongue tasting labour
Can a tongue grasp a letter?
How does the tongue hold the letter?
tongue caressing
holding for
caring them
Carrying them
Outpour

*Consonants slipping off the tongue,
 double consonants lingering on the tongue
 mouth forming letters into wholes
 my mouth is a hole
 transformed into a container to hold
 The tongue collapses letters— folds
 Tongue moving through time
 Tongue talking transitive
 Time is not my mother tongue
 Slip, slips, slip, slip
 Slip, slips, slip, slip
 Slipping, slip, slips, slip
 A slip is a movement in an unknown direction
 A slip of the tongue needs no correction
 Transparent labour made visible by slow time
 Stillness is slow time, I care for the meter*

*The comma cares for holes, pieces and parts
 The comma dissipates holes, pieces and parts
 The comma transits holes, pieces and parts
 The comma is my teacher
 Transfiguring wholes, pieces and parts
 Transfiguring holes, pieces and parts
 Transfiguring until pieces and parts are wholes
 A comma is a station
 Perhaps a specific type of transportation?
 Sort of like a terminal
 Definitely not terminal
 The comma transcends the line that text lays on
 It's a lot of pressure to be a comma
 Maybe not as much as the comma
 the place where something is situated
 But that place is just a pause,
 not actually read, just a pause
 just a place—holder
 The comma holds*

Propagation Station

Without hold, the human being is adrift [haltlos] and without protection. Only a hold also comports [verhält] time, brings out what is durable [das Haltbare]. Without hold what occurs is the tearing away of time [Fortriß der Zeit], the bursting of the temporal dam.

– Byung-Chul Han *The Scent of Time*

My practice is to care for the pieces, connecting all the parts and existing on a very small scale because that is my capacity. Repeating small gestures I hope that the accumulation of them results in something much bigger. Bellacasa writes about permaculture and care on the micro level while discussing the alienation of self care. She writes that care is:

embedded in the practices that maintain webs of relationality and always happening in between... inseparable entanglements between what is “personal”—how one is individual is affectively engaged in attachments—and what is “collective”—a web of compelling relations, with humans and nonhumans, included in a community of practice in situations. (166)

Is care a porous substance connecting inside to outside? Is it both a connection point and a vehicle? I consider the pieces in the installation to be parts of a web while care grows their connections, seen through my outward gesture of giving away aloe vera plants. The gift is a call for participants to develop a relationship of care and partake in a genuine temporal practice. If they take up this durational practice perhaps they will experience the scent of time.

The storefront-like space of my installation is a station, a terminal of sorts that is both a stopping point and a brief destination along a pathway. This station is a dwelling for the aloe plants and a harbour ready to see them off on their journey to a new place. All the plants in the propagation station are gifts of propagation from others. The

space/place acts as a termination of the plant's journey from another to myself, while also holding the potential for further propagations leaving. A station is a place to pass through. It can be a point of connection between place and people or a meeting point for two or more. A station is an ordinary kind of place, concurrently with an individual and collective identity. The *Propagation Station* becomes a connection point for 'more than human' collectivity. A convergence and a divergence point, an anchor for a network, a private made into public. I invite you to stop by my *Propagation Station*, to linger there with me and my micro community.



Figure 15: Jo Yetter, *Pieces and Parts of a Web*, 2023, aloe plants, shoes, pine, installation view.

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