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research paper

a dildo but for your soul



by
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statement

This volume is presented as a record of the work undertaken for the degree of
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Also thanks to my ex-boyfriend and my crush.

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summary

Since I've tried to be funny (sorry) my written dissertation is an extension of my joke-work/art-texts that follow the themes of smut and gross bodies (chapter one), common unhappiness (chapter two), reflexive impotence (chapter three), and self-exposure/desiring-machines (chapter four). Overarching is a lightly fictionalised version of myself partly because my miserable love life was a spectre hanging over my creative work but also in line with Cixous's belief that a dominant feature in women's writing is a tendency to insert the personal into the historical, with speech that 'even when "theoretical" or political, is never simple or linear or "objectified," generalised'.¹ Like Mark Fisher's *Ghosts of My Life* and Chris Kraus's *I Love Dick*, my paper emphasises the interaction between the personal and the academic and I've attempted to punctuate a study of my emotions with theoretical dropped pins.

Denim jackets [fig. 1] look and feel better over time as they mould to your body. If you're into the kind of fashion where you pin button badges onto a denim jacket, your badges might cover a range of topics from politics, to dumb humour, to pop culture and even if they seem unconnected at first, there'll usually be some aesthetic or political connection while also being connected by you/your gross body. The first artwork I made for this project was a series of badges featuring hand drawn, eclectic, joke-work text I'd originally posted online [fig. 2] and the practice of transforming text-jokes that cover diverse subject matter into art objects was the primary technique I employed for this project.

I've written the following dissertation in a colloquial and occasionally fragmented style to parallel my creative work. I wish I could have used comic sans as the font, but I guess I'll have to save that for my manifesto (I used Helvetica Neue

¹ Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', 881.

instead, but only because it's the Facebook font). Each chapter ends with a digital collage of images and Appendix A consists of original versions of the heavily edited images. I have indicated the figures that are in-text images where relevant.

fig. 1



fig. 2



list of works

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works presented for examination

Installation title: *common unhappiness*

Title: *anxiousness*

Year: 2017

Materials: organza, sequins, glass beads, cotton thread, chain, masking tape, timber, acrylic paint, neon sign, screen printed t-shirt, faux wool rug.

Duration/dimensions: variable

Title: *EMO JI*

Year: 2015-18

Materials: earthenware, gesso, high gloss house paint, timber, beanbag.

Duration/dimensions: variable

Title: *_(^▽^)_/*

Year: 2015

Materials: acrylic and high gloss house paint on canvas, Romi's bedroom lamp

Duration/dimensions: variable

Title: *heavy black heart emoji.jpeg*

Year: 2018

Materials: rug, scrolling LED sign

Duration/dimensions: 0:31 looped/variable

Title: *awooga!*

Year: 2017

Materials: organza, sequins, beads, cotton thread.

Duration/dimensions: 132.5 x 57.5cm

Title: *wetness & thiccness*

Year: 2017-18

Materials: dresser table, acrylic on canvas, LED tea light candles, citrus fragrance, looped soundtrack of relaxing and stressful sounds

Duration/dimensions: 15:00 looped/variable

Title: *past life regression and chill?*

Year: 2016

Materials: clothes rack, coat hanger, small Levis denim jacket, sequins, beads, cotton thread, fabric paint

Duration/dimensions: variable

Title: *dead//labour*

Year: 2016-18

Materials: condom, dymo sticker, masking tape, timber, size 12 Riders denim jacket, sequins, beads, cotton thread, fabric paint, printed coffee mugs, crystal organza.

Duration/dimensions: variable

Title: *common unhappiness (please send dick/clit pics)*

Year: 2018

Materials: glass organza, crystal organza, cotton and silk thread, sequins, beads, diamantes

Duration/dimensions: 85 x 136cm

Title: *cam girl... A/S/L?*
Year: 2018
Materials: webcam video
Duration/dimensions: 24:48 looped

Title: *protrusions ;)*
Year: 2016
Materials: earthenware, acrylic and high gloss house paint
Duration/dimensions: variable

works presented for examination
photography: silversalt



common unhappiness (installation view)



*awooga!, cam girl...A/S/L?, common unhappiness
(please send dick/clit pics), heavy black heart
emoji.jpeg and protrusions ;)
(installation view)*



awooga!



anxiousness



wetness & thiccness and protrusions ;)
(installation view)



\\(ツ)_/



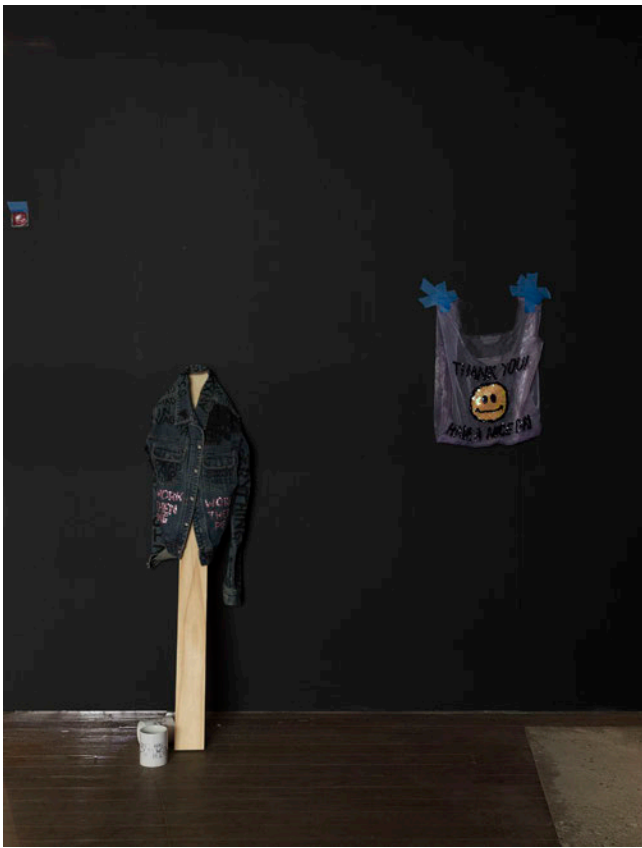
\\(ツ)_/ , awooga! and EMO JI (installation view)



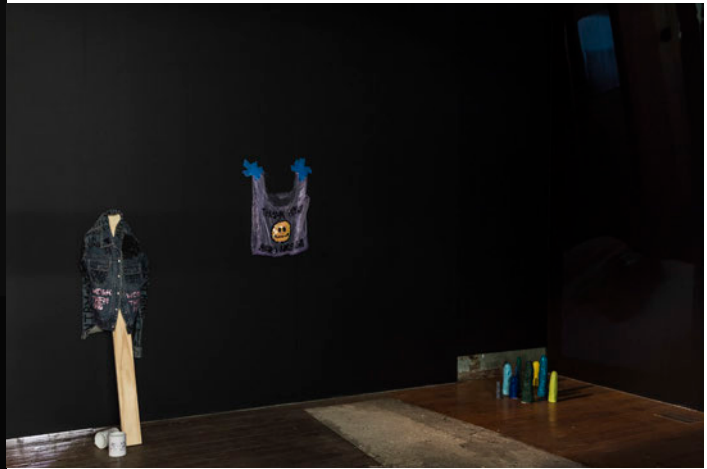
past life regression and chill? (detail)



past life regression and chill?



dead/labour



dead/labour and protrusions ;)
(installation view)



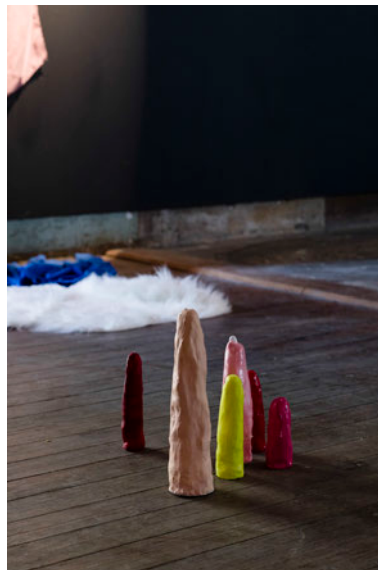
dead/labour (detail)



dead/labour (detail)



dead/labour (detail)



protrusions ;)



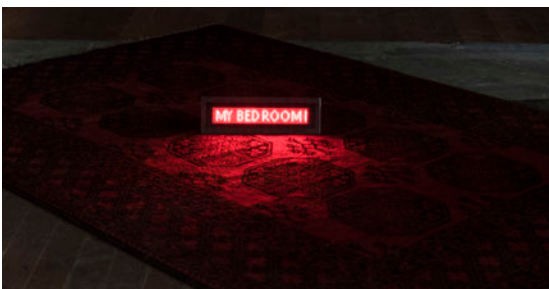
EMO JI





heavy black heart emoji.jpeg

(scrolling LED sign reads 'MY BEDROOM IS A DEN OF MISERY. TELL ANY CUTE BOYS YOU KNOW')





common unhappiness (please send dick/clit pics)



wetness & thiccness

introduction: men love telling me that britney spears doesn't write her own songs

'You fucked my Masters' is an approximation of one of the messages I sent to my ex-boyfriend when I was in the midst of working out how to keep going when all I could do was chain-smoke and cry. I thought I'd completely blown it until I started to incorporate my misery into this dissertation. In my peak sadness I was all obsessions, flip-outs and desperate pathetic crushes, really connecting to Deleuze & Guattari's *desiring-machine*¹ theory of dysfunctional functionality, as it validated my sense that being severely bummed out had somehow both hindered and facilitated this project.

There were plenty of warning signs that I was going to be dumped. When I was visiting my boyfriend in Osaka I kept finding myself secretly crying in the shower, not really knowing why (or not willing to admit I knew) and trying not to ruin things by talking about what I'd convinced myself was neurotic paranoia. When he did drop me I felt like I'd gone to sleep 23 and woken up 30. I was so angry, like, fuck that guy for breaking up with me in winter because how was I going to find some idiot to have sex with in such terrible weather? So I'd sit in my backyard in the rain getting drunk and listening to the same sad songs on repeat. Even my body started to dysfunction — I menstruated for two whole weeks and convinced myself I was dying. Life hack: Google every little weird thing about your body, let the information wash over you, accept that death is inevitable [fig. 3].

¹ Deleuze & Guattari's conception of desiring-machines is vast, at times contradictory and to me at least, a bit incomprehensible. In line with the scope of this dissertation I've sliced off a small slither of their concept as it applies to myself and my art practice. In *Anti-Oedipus* the schizophrenic is characterised as the ultimate desiring-machine but I'm applying the idea to my recent state of situational sadness.

Deleuze & Guattari wrote that artists turn dysfunctional objects into desiring-machines. Desiring-machines 'continually break down as they run, and in fact run only when they are not functioning properly',² so maybe by sending me into a spiral of dysfunction he did me a favour? That's if this dissertation is any good. If not, well, like I said, he fucked my Masters. Kraus wrote that writing allows you to 're-visit a ghost of your past self, as if at least the shell of who you were fifteen years ago can somehow be recalled'.³ An introduction to a paper puts you in a time loop: it's the first part you'll read, but the last part I wrote and with some distance, re-reading/writing how I tried to work through my heartache I *am* visiting a ghost of my past self, wondering if this was a good idea but knowing it would've been impossible for me to write any other way.

My most long-term and rational pathetic crush began with the distinctive ding of a Facebook private message. Up to that point my crushes had been erratic and the kind I'd look back on with disdain, recognising them as the result of pure desperation. But this one made sense, a legitimate dreamboat. Months after the message that started the crush, I'd find myself in a bar, standing behind him and his girlfriend, watching my ex-boyfriend's band through the gap between their heads, internally lamenting, *this is an analogy for my life right now*. But I didn't know that when I received the first messages from him, or that he had a girlfriend. I thought he liked me and I must have been in a rare state of minimal self-loathing to think there was a chance I'd be an object of desire and not simply a desiring-machine. I can't imagine what I was thinking since my online presence is goofy at best and off-putting at worst. At my most sexually frustrated I've tried to amend my online behaviour to be more attractive, but I inevitably slide back into a sad and unsexy online portrayal of myself. I guess you can't fight who you are. So he's unintentionally giving me false hope by

² Deleuze & Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 34.

³ Chris Kraus, *I Love Dick*, 121.

being in my direct messages and trust me, when you're super lonely you can develop an embarrassingly sexual, Pavlovian response to the sound of a Facebook message notification.



The first message from my crush was a response to some jokes I'd posted on Facebook. My Facebook joke-work ended up being the starting point for the creative work in this dissertation⁴ and I've woven some of those jokes into this paper. No-one knows why the human heart exists, [fig. 4] but according to Bergson, 'the comic demands something like a momentary anaesthesia of the heart. Its appeal is to intelligence, pure and simple'.⁵ His argument was that to laugh requires a lack of empathy for the subject of the joke, which may be true for the examples he used that involved laughing at people's bodies, but a lot of jokes in fact require empathy, with laughter providing relief from the painful feelings that accompany it. For *a dildo but for your soul* I've attempted personal and emotional jokes as art/art as jokes. Most of the joke-work in this project is depicted in written text, includes emojis (a type of text anyway), or is connected to the other text based works, like my recurring use of 'dildo' in text and object form as a prominent example.

It's weird to me that Joseph Kosuth argued that language can be a neutral art-making material,⁶ I mean according to Irigaray even scientific language isn't neutral.⁷ Rather than even attempt such an onerous task as neutrality my writing,

⁴ Richard Prince's joke paintings are a clear influence, however he appropriates jokes, whereas mine are all self-authored. In that sense, my practice has similarities to David Shrigley's comical drawings, though the artworks I have made for this dissertation are not aesthetically similar to his work.

⁵ Henri Bergson, *Laughter*, 5.

⁶ Joseph Kosuth, *Art After Philosophy and After*, 91.

⁷ Luce Irigaray, *To Speak is Never Neutral*, 2-5.

joke-work and text-work is super biased and aesthetically personalised.⁸ When I paint words I have none of the skill of a sign-writer — you'll always see the scaffolding for the text in the background of my paintings as letter-ghosts guiding me where to paint, the laziness of my hand (I'm nothing if not **not** a perfectionist), and drips of paint running down the wall/canvas/sheet of paper like that gross drip of coffee that runs down from the rim of a mug, a trickle of surprise menstrual blood running down a thigh, or Lynda Benglis's gloopy sculptures [fig. 5]. Don't worry though, I've made the drips un-gross: they're painted in glossy Millennial Pink.⁹ Or does that make them more gross?

Despite spending most of my time writing sex jokes and thinking about sex, I'm no good at the casual sex thing; I'm too busy trying (and failing) to be funny and the last time I had casual sex I was working so hard at the comedy you'd think the guy had committed to a two drink minimum. Plus sex makes me pretty nervous because I'm always worried I'm no good at it and about my body (what it looks like as well as what could happen to it). It's exhausting.

⁸ My text work bears similarities to Jenny Holzer's: conceptually, as she too grapples with gender and politics as well as tangibly, since like her, I have added my own text to every day objects. Where her work can be subtly comical mine is overt and my personalised tone is in direct contrast with her's. Her writing combines the impassioned or inflammatory tone of a manifesto with the impassive (supposed) neutrality of a scientific caption and never includes first person pronouns. She strives to empty her text of any personal identifiers (such as gender) because unlike myself, her work grapples with ideas of objective truth: 'I find it better to have no particular associations attached to the "voice" in order for it to be perceived as true'. David Joselit and Jenny Holzer, *Jenny Holzer*, 44-5.

⁹ "Millennial Pink: What's It All About?," <http://www.insideout.com.au/products/guides/millennial-pink-whats-it-all-about/news-story/18e667f3dd9e41a8cc5d6ab507919718> Accessed November 23, 2017.

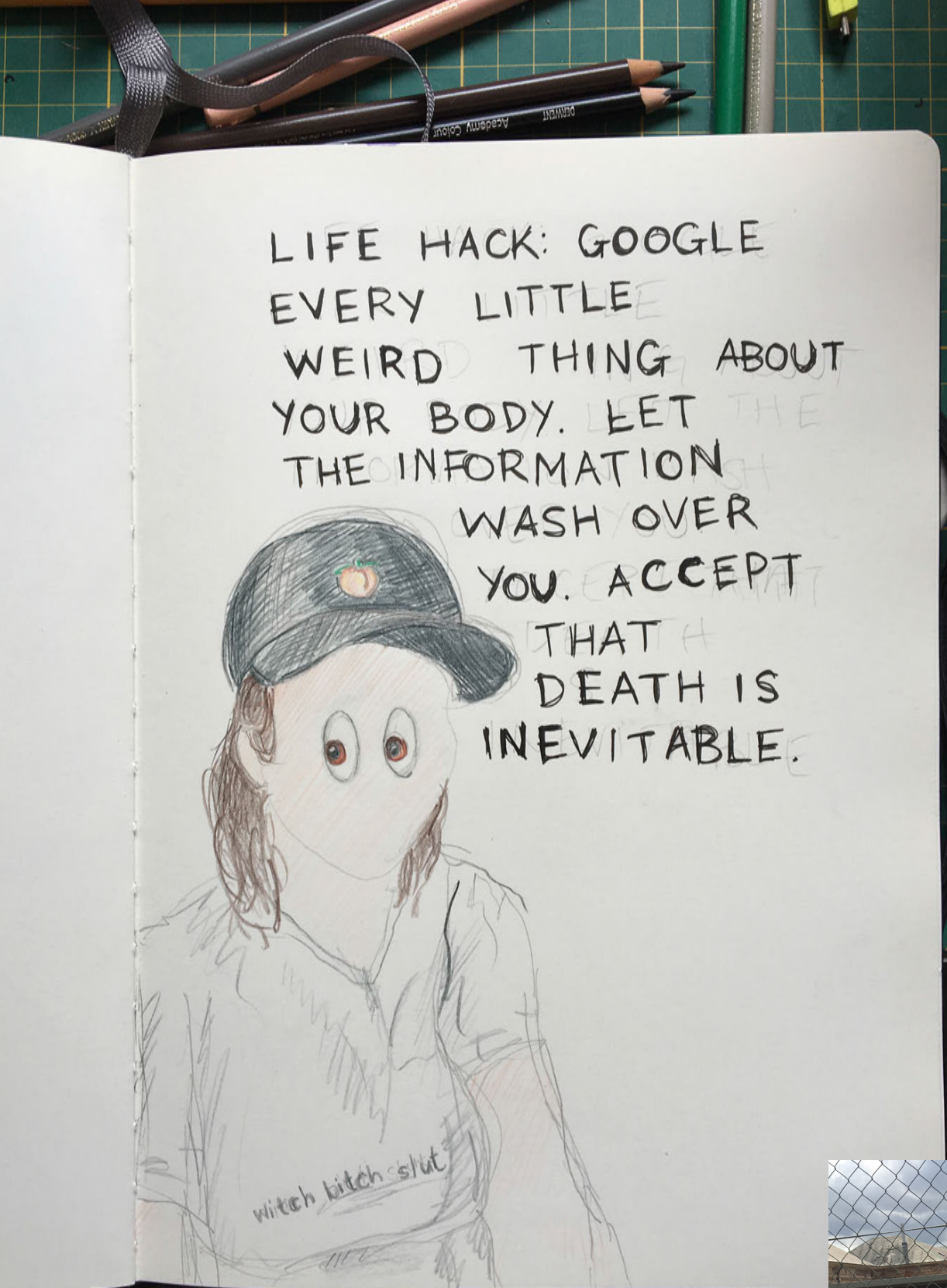


fig. 3a



fig. 3b



fig. 4a



fig. 4b



fig. 4c



fig. 5

Things that are hard work:

- i. Coping with having a crush
- ii. Coping with not having a crush

If you're in the habit of writing smutty jokes and putting them on Facebook and you're also in the habit of obsessing over hunks [fig. 6] because you're angry that your boyfriend dumped you over the phone from Japan and managed to snag a new girlfriend when you can't even remember what it's like to have sex, it can be very exciting when your dream boyfriend (who has a girlfriend) responds to the smutty jokes you put on the Internet. You might be inclined to read too much into it and text screen-grabs accompanied by 'what do you think this means??' to your friends. This is inadvisable. Instead, you should focus on writing your dissertation and finish reading *The History of Sexuality*, which is an (un?)surprisingly adequate distraction from actual sexual intercourse. Until you happen to reach the sentence, 'sex is worth dying for'¹ which, although framed within *critiques* of Western discourses on sexuality, throws a stark light on your own sexual frustration. That frustration is only heightened by your crush's insistence on posting selfies on Instagram which are complete torture and completely impossible to ignore.

This one time I was dreaming about kissing until I woke up with a headache and heavy sadness and/or sexual frustration and spent all day wishing I could push that dream out of my mind. In modern Western culture sex is how we access our own intelligibility, whole body, and identity — 'more important than our soul, more important almost than our own life',² wrote Foucault. To contend with my

¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*, 156.

² *Ibid*, 155-6.

very visceral understanding of this theory and on the advice of friends who'd never used tinder and didn't know it's a pit of despair, I created an account. Even though sometimes it does feel like sex is more important than the self, I'm terrified of being murdered and once after specifically thinking, *I really need to stop assuming everyone on tinder is a murderer*, I opened the application to a picture of a man pointing a gun directly down the lens. I immediately deleted tinder from my phone. Instead of trying to pick up, I shared my pick up line on Facebook: don't you think it's hypocritical that a huge penis is desirable and a huge vagina isn't? Feel free to use that one. Kraus wrote that reading was more satisfying than sex anyway, it 'delivers on the promise that sex raises but can hardly ever fulfil – getting larger 'cause you're entering another person's language, cadence, heart and mind'.³ Okay. Good. Because I need to focus on this dissertation anyway, stop thinking about sex and crushes, think about art and shit. Finish reading *The History of Sexuality*.

Speaking of pick up lines, Freud failed to identify the existence of any iteration of smut that fell outside the realm of a cis-gendered, heterosexual interaction, in which the man performs the joke-work as a pick up, and the woman is a passive object.⁴ There are two categories of smut: *coarse smut* and *smutty jokes*. He pinpointed the transition from obscene speech to coarse smut as occurring when the object of the obscene speech (aka a woman) erects a barrier, since if she were to succumb to the obscene comment the two parties would engage in sexual activity and smut would be unnecessary. The woman's resistance and aggression to the man's sexuality alters the nature of the obscene speech in the

³ Kraus, *I Love Dick*, 191.

⁴ He can't totally be blamed since we're all victims of our historical context. He did speak to instances of heterosexual men telling smutty jokes amongst themselves. In that scenario, social inhibitions prevent the men from directing smut towards a woman, so they settle for a simulation of the man-to-woman interaction: 'a person who laughs at smut that he hears is laughing as though he were the spectator of an act of sexual aggression'. Although a woman is not a passive listener in that case, Woman is still assumed to be the object of all smutty jokes. *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, 140-1.

same way that any obstacles alter libidinal impulses. Woman-as-libidinal-obstacle is therefore the genesis of smut, which acts as a workaround to her intolerance.⁵ Women are placed in the role of gatekeepers and killjoys, which isn't necessarily an anathema to comedy — I wear my sexual inhibitions as badges of honour — but it is limiting. A smutty joke is simply coarse smut disguised under the formal qualities of joke-work, a disguise employed when it's assumed in advance that the object will be unresponsive to coarse smut due to sexual repression.⁶ In Freud's analysis, women are always secretly up for it but sometimes too repressed to reciprocate,⁷ which doesn't reflect the more complicated reality of women's interactions with men. Freud pigeonholed both women and men in his study, but if Woman-as-libidinal-obstacle is replaced with object-of-desire-as-libidinal-obstacle, and if we remove the part about the object of the smutty joke always secretly being down to bone, the definition still works. His two categories could be simplified as hopefulness versus defeatism: people engage in coarse smut when they think they'll get laid and tell smutty jokes when they know they won't.⁸

There are times in your life when the libidinal obstacle isn't a specific person, really, but life itself. You've spent hours left-swiping your way through tinder until you clock it. You're swiping so far left so aggressively you're practically in the Black Bloc. You have no sexual prospects and not even a crush (that will come later) but for now you only have all-consuming sexual and romantic frustration.

⁵ Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, 142-4.

⁶ *Ibid*, 144-5.

⁷ *Ibid*, 140.

⁸ My simplification doesn't address the impact of class on joke-telling as noted by Freud. Essentially he observed that men (regardless of their class) are more comfortable performing coarse smut in the presence of poor and working class women than bourgeois women. Though contemporary class and gender interactions have changed since Freud wrote *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* the impact of class — along with gender and race — continues to play a role in the performance and reception of sexual humour. Unfortunately it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to dissect this in more detail.

You angrily muse on the early days of your previous relationship, when things were disgustingly rosy, and as you and your hangover march down King Street for a morning coffee, the strolling couples holding hands and taking up the entire width of the street are worse than Pol Pot. On the plus side, the jokes you put on Facebook are getting more *likes* recently which probably means you're getting funnier. Through joke-work, the ego affirms its imperviousness to suffering: 'humour is not resigned: it is rebellious. It signifies the triumph not only of the ego, but also of the pleasure-principle, which is strong enough to assert itself here in the face of the adverse real circumstances'.⁹ The language there is pretty dramatic for the type of *suffering* that triggers smutty jokes — Freud was talking about actual suffering not the melodrama of heartbreak and horniness — but the basic concept applies both to sexual frustration and to the other subject of smutty humour: gross bodies. Joking about the gross bodies of other people makes you a jerk (like Bergson with his anaesthesia of the heart), but joking about your own gross body proves that you don't even care. That'll show them.

Everyone has a gross body but people like each other's gross bodies anyway so I guess that's sweet. The *grotesque body* (which is all orifices) has no boundary between itself, the earth and the cosmic.¹⁰ Its unsealed character allows it to act as a comic device for grappling with what Bakhtin called *cosmic terror*. Cosmic terror is the human awareness of the dangers of natural disasters, the vastness of the universe and fear of the natural world's imposing and dangerous landscape (mountains, deserts, glaciers, etc.), beyond human comprehension or control [fig. 7 & 8]. For Bakhtin, grotesque comedy emphasises the potentials and limitations of the corporeal within the cosmic, allowing us to relieve our terror through laughter.¹¹ Bergson also noted that the catharsis of laughter

⁹ Freud, *Humour*, 2-3.

¹⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 318.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 335-6.

allows us to suppress/surpass body anxiety (a less dubious way to anaesthetise the heart than laughing at things like physical disabilities).¹²

So the gross (or grotesque) body is all orifices but the most terrifying orifice is the vagina since its capabilities and/or perceived capabilities include stretching open to eject babies, phallus castration (simultaneously being the end result of a castrated phallus), bleeding but with no wound, and providing sexual pleasure. My vagina is like a sensory deprivation tank: scary and confusing, or maybe warm and relaxing? [fig. 9 & 10] Despite the tendency to use them for penetration, phalluses are perceived as less terrifying and more comical than vaginas and Yoko Ono joked that any seriousness in men was confusing:

I wonder why men can get serious at all. They have this delicate long thing hanging outside their bodies, which goes up and down by its own will. First of all having it outside your body is terribly dangerous. If I were a man I would have a fantastic castration complex to the point that I wouldn't be able to do a thing. Second, the inconsistency of it, like carrying a chance alarm or something. If I were a man I would always be laughing at myself. Humour is probably something the male of the species discovered through their own anatomy. But men are so serious. Why? Why violence?¹³

Due to their unpredictability and externality, dicks are more obviously and immediately comic than vulvas, plus they're simpler to depict [fig. 11]. Orifices may be more conceptually scary than protrusions, since they lead to the inside of our bodies — reminding us that we're not discrete and independent of the cosmic — and vaginas are the ultimate orifice since whole new people can potentially come out of them [fig. 12]. 'The partial openness of [women's] bodies,

¹² Bergson, *Laughter*, 55.

¹³ Yoko Ono, *Grapefruit*.

of their flesh, of their sex', wrote Irigaray, 'makes the question of boundaries difficult'.¹⁴ The phallus is central to the grotesque,¹⁵ but as the ultimate orifice the comic vulva is the ideal representation of the grotesque body and cosmic terror.

In my gross bodies joke-work, the vulva joke alludes to cosmic terror and the cock joke to body anxiety. Just as real life genitalia can't be separated into such discrete categories as protrusion versus orifice, neither can grotesque joke-work. Life hack: if you make a phallus out of clay and put a condom on it, it

might begin to resemble a long breast with a large nipple [fig. 13]. If

you use flavoured condoms your hands will stink [fig. 14 — in-text, p12]. Dildos made out of clay have to be hollow to prevent kiln

explosions, so they're not only breasts, they're also orifices that combine emptiness with fullness, negativity with positivity, and masculinity with femininity, like Hannah Wilke's chewing-gum

vulvas... unless they're not vulvas? Are they the heads of cocks?¹⁶

[fig. 15] [fig. 16 — in-text, p13] Even though I feel the urge to argue

against my own categorisations, when I analyse my cock jokes I see

them as more grounded in naff and obvious corporeal humour than my vulva jokes, which tend to betray existential anxieties about a gross, scary, boundary-less body. It's not internalised misogyny, it's more along the lines of Freud's gallows humour, where you make self-deprecating jokes to prove you're not hurt by the complex coding of your feminine body, confusingly characterised as desirable/objectifiable and repulsive/scary. For me, Lynda Benglis's 1974 *Artforum* advertisement comically exemplifies that complexity, since greased-up and with visible tan lines, she's both sexy and gross [fig. 17]. Sexiness and



fig. 14

¹⁴ Irigaray, *To Speak is Never Neutral*, 243.

¹⁵ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 317.

¹⁶ Joanna Frueh, *Hannah Wilke: A Retrospective*, 23.

grossness are so subjective though, right? Maybe you totally disagree.



A condom, like a t-shirt, is a barrier. An old, threadbare t-shirt is on the floor alongside a freshly torn condom wrapper. Both items are commercially manufactured and though they're empty they refer to gross bodies. The t-shirt was purchased from an op shop, so it had a history with a different gross body before it was given to a boyfriend, sort of as a gift, but not really since when you live with someone you just buy

them useful things every now and then. It was plain and not special so the boyfriend left it behind when he went to Japan, and the girlfriend found it comfortable so she kept it, usually wearing it to bed. The relationship ended and the t-shirt became a remnant of

intimacy with that person but not really warranting disposal because after all the (ex-)girlfriend's entire bedroom had begun to feel like a mausoleum of their relationship and at least this t-shirt has been worn down by *her* gross body more than by his. It didn't have any holes in it when he left but was now riddled with them, those permanent sweat marks in the armpits are hers, and it was she that cut the sleeves shorter. She can't even remember the last time it smelled like him [fig. 18].



fig. 16

A third thing that's hard work is coping with somehow having and not having a crush at the same time. The absurdity and displacement involved in joke-work

(as in dream-work)¹⁷ enables the disclosure of complicated emotions that are otherwise difficult to articulate and in a joke or a dream contradictions often exist side by side in ways that are inexplicable. In my kissing dream, I was kissing my crush and I felt guilty about it (you know, the girlfriend and all). I can't even have an enjoyable sex/love life in my dreams at the moment so it feels upsettingly appropriate that Freud uses the word 'work' for jokes and dreams since everything is hard work right now, even labours of love that are meant to be pleasurable or a relief or unconscious. Even joking and even dreaming.

¹⁷ Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, 130-1.

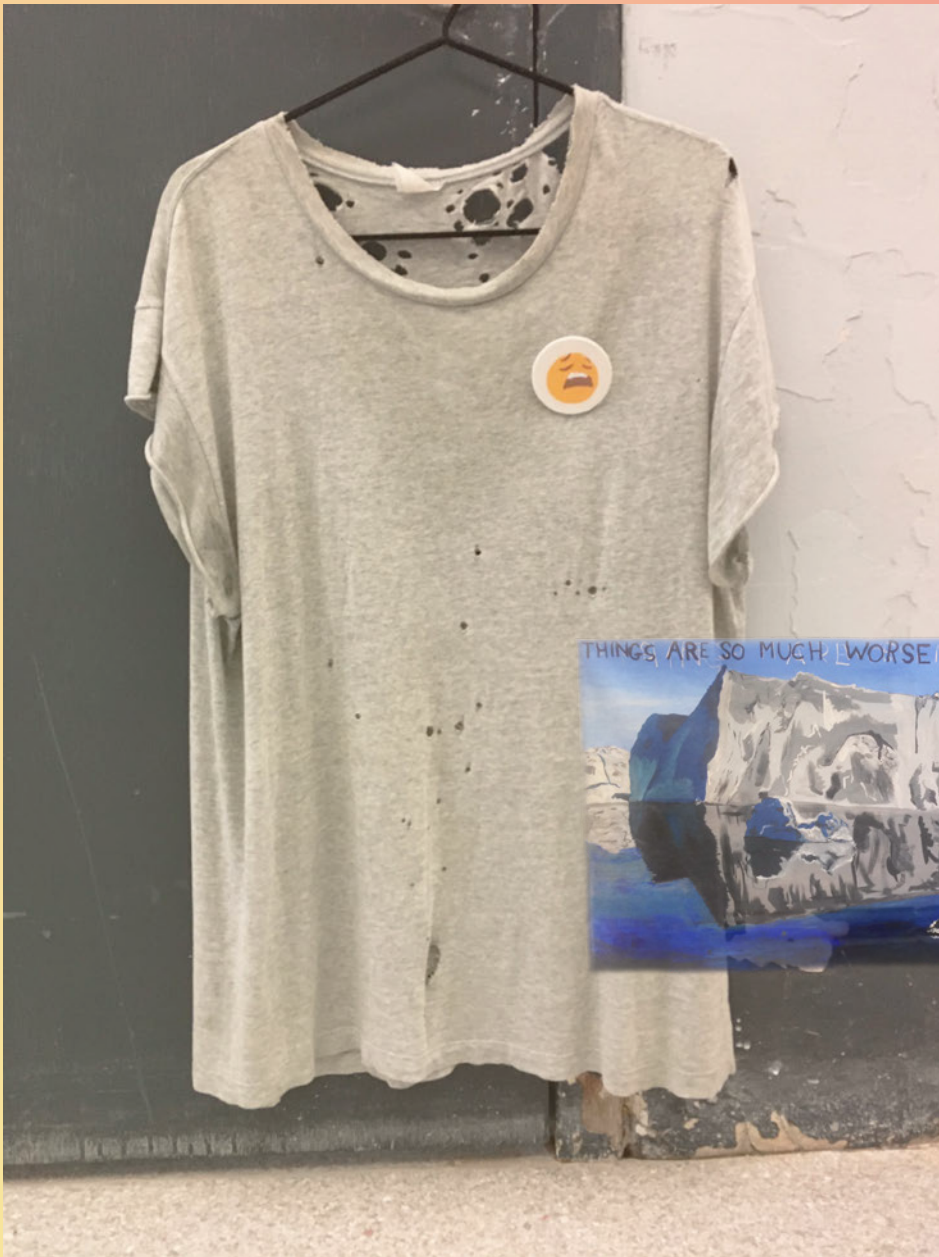


fig. 18

fig. 8

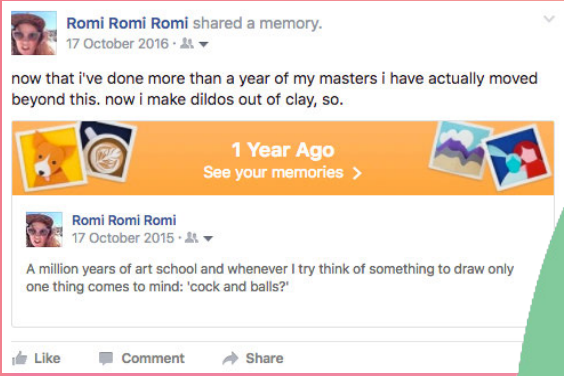


fig. 11



fig. 7



LOOKING
FOR
HUNKS

(badge text)



fig. 6

fig. 10



fig. 17





fig. 9



fig. 15



fig. 13



fig. 12

MADE IN VAGINA

(badge text)

Did I mention earlier that my boyfriend dumped me via phone from Japan? We'd been together for seven years so it was a bit of a shock but on the other hand I'm complete garbage so it was bound to happen. Heartache isn't really what *common unhappiness*¹ is, since when a relationship ends at first it sort of feels like an actual death which is like, so melodramatic, but still true. You have to listen to some sad sack song on repeat until the words have no meaning, followed by like, Beyoncé or whatever, because *maybe you're better off alone*. Once you stop feeling like an angst-ridden 17 year old, you do slip back into that more adult unhappiness but now you have an extra thing which is single life and the hope for the pleasure of new love couched in the *ultimate knowledge* that you will never experience it again. Of course people in relationships can feel the pangs of common unhappiness too, for example my housemates (who are in a relationship) were washing the dishes on a Saturday and one said something like, 'we should be living our lives more, instead of cleaning!' to which the other replied, 'THIS IS WHAT PEOPLE DO ON A SATURDAY'.

What common unhappiness *is*, is the feeling you get when you're eating a medium Big Mac meal at Marrickville Metro, something you initially did as a treat, but then the realisation of the pathos of such a treat sets in. Of course, as always, the Big Mac meal does taste really good, the sugar and salt improves your mood and you spotted a low-grade Australian celebrity eating there as well. The small suburban shopping centre is the architectural embodiment of common unhappiness. It contains all the things you need for survival and basic comfort,

¹ Freud and Josef Breuer wrote, 'I have often been faced by this objection: "Why, you tell me yourself that my illness is probably connected with my circumstances and the events of my life. You cannot alter these in any way. How do you propose to help me, then?" And I have been able to make this reply: "No doubt fate would find it easier than I do to relieve you of your illness. But you will be able to convince yourself that much will be gained if we succeed in transforming your hysterical misery into common unhappiness"', *Studies on Hysteria*, 392-3.

nothing aspirational. There's no sunshine or windows, but that's okay because the unnecessarily bright fluorescent light ensures there isn't a single dark corner. The toilets are usually clean but never pristine, smell like the cheapest grade of floral scented disinfectant, and have the kind of lighting and mirrors you most likely wouldn't notice in your early 20s but then suddenly, on your 29th birthday, they become a brutal reminder of Western beauty standards and the inevitability of death. But there's comfort in the suburban shopping centre. You can go to the supermarket, the chemist, the bottle shop and get a food court lunch all in one hit. You can do so in your worst tracksuit pants and ratty Ugg boots and it's completely okay: everyone there is dressed like you. There is neither bliss nor absolute despair to be found, only the pathos and comfort of normality.



A woman walks into a bar, says, 'ouch that hurt!' then orders a white wine spritzer, asking, 'urrrrrrg when will I be cured of my hysteria?' The bartender shrugs and says, 'psychoanalysis is only capable of bringing a person from dysfunctional neurosis to the level of common unhappiness'. That wailing emoji [fig. 19] looks like common unhappiness to me since even though it's possible it's experiencing abject misery, I'm more likely to use it ironically like in a text message about how I accidentally dropped all my loose tobacco on the ground and that's hardly a large scale tragedy. Is it possible that when Bas Jan Ader gave his crying work the title *I'm too sad to tell you* he was dealing with the guilt and articulation problems of common unhappiness? [fig. 20] For me, part of it is the unhappiness and anxiousness that comes with my comforts and advantages butting against political frustrations. Common unhappiness, mental health and politics are fundamentally influenced by each other because, as Fisher noted, the social system of capitalism is heavily dependant on the emotional

dispositions of the population.² In that cycle of influence William Davies identified a fixation on happiness particular to late capitalist corporations, for whom sadness is an anathema to the ideal worker/consumer: cheerful and motivated in the workplace and desirous in the shopping mall.³ The suburban shopping centre is mainly utilitarian but it's counterpart, the shopping mall, nefariously promises to quench or at least numb dissatisfaction and sadness.⁴ All I want is an infinite supply of material possessions so I can finally be happy.



My friend and I were drunk and miserable but joking about it, mostly talking about his dating failures with a woman he liked and I don't need to tell you this situation is a massive aphrodisiac so we had sex.⁵ Sex isn't something I do very often these days, so I like to make sure that when I do it's under depressing circumstances and either terrible or at least has the potential to make my social life awkward. The next day I knew that if I were a cool, chill and sexy person this would be no big deal but instead I'm a nervous wreck who overanalyses any social interaction, let alone one that involves nudity. Hungover, the fear set in and the internal dialogue about making a terrible, earth shattering mistake for ever having one beer, versus, *calm the shit down girl everything's fine you weirdo*, commenced. When I got home from work the discovery that I'd locked myself out and would have to wait hours for my housemates to come home cemented my theory that I'm completely useless. My only option was to take my

² Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, 35.

³ William Davies, *The Happiness Industry*, 178.

⁴ In Australian colloquialism 'shopping centre' would be used to describe both upmarket and suburban shopping complexes, so to differentiate the two for the purposes of this paper, 'shopping centre' refers to inexpensive, suburban complexes (e.g. Marrickville Metro) and I've used the American term 'shopping mall' for their upmarket counterparts (e.g. the Westfield in Sydney CBD).

⁵ But hey, what has aphrodisiac got to do with it? As Kraus said, 'if seduction is a highball unhappiness has got to be the booze', *I Love Dick*, 142.

credit card to a shopping mall and buy things that could fix all this. According to Deleuze & Guattari capitalism both liberates and limits desiring-production⁶ and I found myself caught in that feedback loop as I wandered aimlessly through the shopping mall. The cleanliness, air conditioning and smell of perfume samples soothed my anxiousness. The shop assistants are so nice and helpful, they'll convince you that you can get rid of those damn sebaceous filaments for good, compliment you on literally anything ('12C is *such* a great bra size') and reassure you that you've made good choices, that this lipstick colour really does suit your skin tone, that everything you think and do is Good and Okay. But when the Aēsop guy asks if there's anything in particular you're concerned about, be mindful of the scope of his expertise and resist the urge to start with 'I look a thousand years old' and work up to 'all the glaciers in the world are melting'.

I first saw a glacier in real life with my ex-boyfriend and I've been worried about them ever since [fig. 21]. Postcards of old paintings contrasted with the comparatively small glacier before me: ice no longer stretched all the way to the viewing deck and the boundary between the ice and the dirt was far in the distance. Lawrence Weiner painted the words, 'A GLACIER VANDALISED' onto a wall as a conceptual sculpture that doesn't exist, except that it does exist, since all the glaciers in the world are vandalised [fig. 22]. John Berger contemplated the possibility of nature itself as a text containing 'messages — it goes without saying — which can never be verbalised and are not particularly addressed to us. Is it possible to "read" natural appearances as texts?'⁷ I wonder if Weiner would see a glacier as a text, or a text as a glacier? I wonder if Weiner would mind me making a dick joke about his name? I wonder if he was thinking about climate change when he wrote the words 'SLOWLY RAISED

⁶ Deleuze & Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 153.

⁷ John Berger, *Confabulations*, 136.

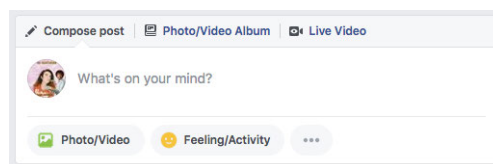
WATER'⁸? Probably not, but I do.

A short list of things I've been thinking about regarding glaciers:

- i. Fairly regularly people try to get close to one and are crushed by a chunk of falling ice.
- ii. When a glacier melts you drink the water, but it can't melt too much and it has to re-freeze. A lot of people (animals, plants, maybe other things?) depend on that cycle.
- iii. It's our fault that they're vandalised but it feels like the trajectory we've set on is now beyond our control and the glaciers themselves don't even care because they're inanimate and can't care about things (as far as we know).
- iv. Thinking about this induces a mixture of cosmic terror, common unhappiness and reflexive impotence.

Facebook: 'What's on your mind?'

Romi: 'Things are so much worse when they happen to me'



I made some work in Japan while on that visit to my (ex-)boyfriend by putting the text 'my body is a blunderland', into Google Translate. When I re-translated the Japanese translation back into English, 'my body is a fiasco of the land'⁹ was the result. This enactment of Lawrence Weiner's text piece, 'A TRANSLATION FROM ONE LANGUAGE TO ANOTHER'¹⁰ is like, *totally* a metaphor for the

⁸ Lawrence Weiner, *Works*, 167.

⁹ Unfortunately since then the Google translation has been updated to the less poetic 'my body is clumsy'.

¹⁰ Weiner, *Works*, 071.

direction of my relationship. At the time I felt weird about the way my (ex-)boyfriend was interacting with me but blindly believed that any weirdness wasn't us but the situation. Re-reading and re-writing that relationship and trying to understand both him and myself has been like a translation from one (emotional, spoken and textual [facebook messages/text messages]) language to another. I painted the Japanese text from Google Translate onto a t-shirt which I wore while taking self-portraits in Purikura booths; Japanese photo-booths found in many shopping centres. The Purikura changed my gross body into a 'beautiful' body by stretching out my body, smoothing my skin and widening my eyes. But the result was usually a bad translation, leaving me with photos of myself that are more uncanny valley than kawaii [fig. 23].



That period of time in between getting out of bed and getting back into bed is the worst part of the day [fig. 24]. In the nihilism of heartbreak misery you don't care about anything and it's kind of great and even Marx knew it, like Deleuze & Guattari noted, 'even suffering, as Marx says, is a form of self-enjoyment'.¹¹ You wake up at midday, get McDonalds for breakfast at Marrickville Metro and take it to Victoria Park, where you add gin to your Sprite and your day continues in that vein until your body is finally ready to sleep again. It's the opposite of the anxiousness about every single thing that will come later.

Un/fortunately you can't go on like this forever. Eventually you're still sad but not that sad. Getting out of bed is still really hard but now you feel guilty if you don't force yourself up. You start Googling things like 'when will I feel normal again after a breakup' and 'how to get out of bed in the morning'. WikiHow tells you to get out of bed at the same time every day and make your bed immediately [fig.

¹¹ Deleuze & Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 17.

25]. You try this and it doesn't fix you but you keep doing it anyway so maybe it is sort of working. You buy a plant for your desk, you improve your skin care routine, you get your hair and nails done. You have the same level of neuroticism anyway. Now you're unhappy rather than sad, which is fine I guess, since if you were happy *all the time* it would mean at best you were oblivious to the bad things in the world and at worst you were completely psychotic. Freud's implication that common unhappiness is the most a person can hope for is kind of reassuring and anyway, if we're always blissing out we won't do anything about those glaciers.

Fresh love is one of the few reliefs from common unhappiness. Another is MDMA but that can make you feel worse in the long term. Hey, so can love though am I right? Not to mention too much loving can give you urinary tract infections. Other than that honeymoon period you're stuck with an inappropriate crush on someone who doesn't like you or the totally appropriate love that ends up at the kitchen sink. These are just examples. I mean, a lot of things contribute to common unhappiness and capitalism is probably the main thing – I'm so fixated on love and sex right now but when I started this project it was work and capitalism. A break-up really shifts you back into your own head/body, doesn't it? It's okay though, Fran Lebowitz wrote that 'There is no such thing as inner peace. There is only nervousness or death. Any attempt to prove otherwise constitutes unacceptable behaviour'¹² [fig. 26]. Like the unacceptable behaviour of those couples on King Street I told you about before. Seriously, why aren't they hurrying home to nervously mutter about hangover anxiety to a body pillow? Anyway, are you ever obsessing over your crush and then you realise even if you had them you'd still be miserable because the only thing that would really make you happy is the abolition of private property?

¹² Fran Lebowitz, *The Fran Lebowitz Reader*, 12.

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fig. 19a

fig. 19c

fig. 19b



fig. 21



fig. 22

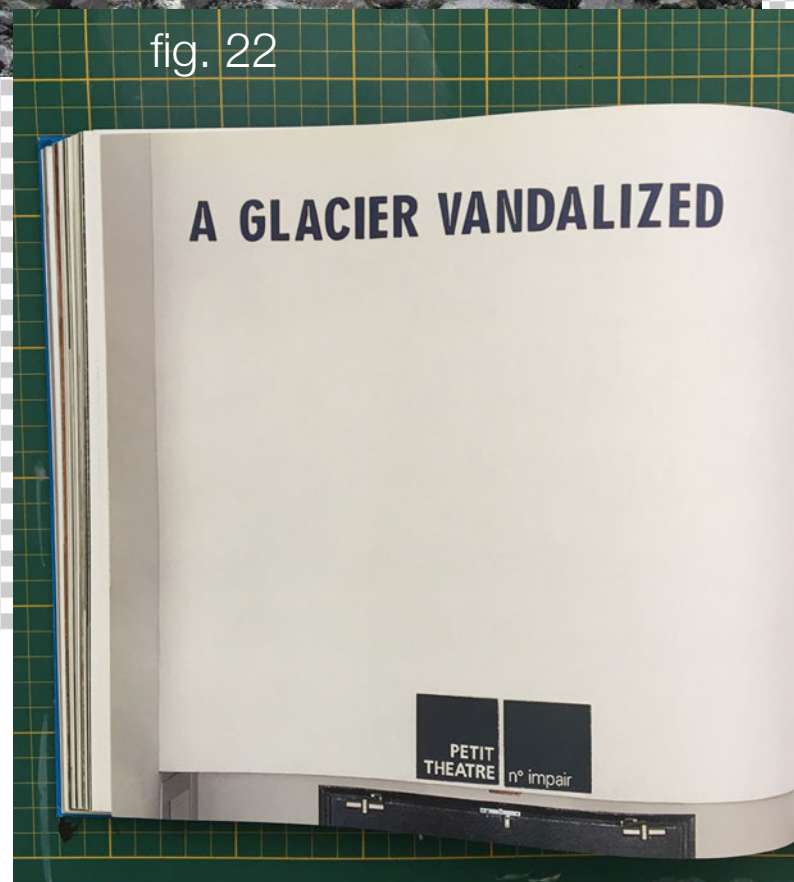
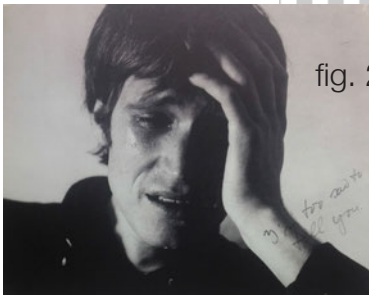


fig. 20



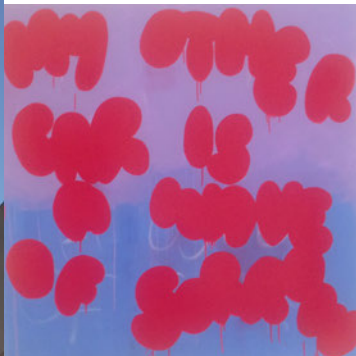


fig. 26a



fig. 26c



fig. 26b





wiki:How to Get out of Bed when You Really Can't

5 Keep your sleep patterns consistent on weekends. Resist the urge to sleep in on the weekends, as it disrupts your body's natural cycle and makes it much harder to



romi_online



romi_online



Liked by [redacted] and 17 others

romi_online Mood

2 APRIL



fig. 24



Liked by [redacted] and 17 others

romi_online Mood

2 APRIL

chapter three: my right to live comfortably is determined by my productivity within capitalism and all i got was this lousy t-shirt

What's the deal with aeroplane peanuts and late capitalism? We all know they're not working but we just keep doing it anyway. Yeah I know they don't even serve aeroplane peanuts anymore [fig. 27]. It would be cool to not have to justify your existence through work, but the feeling that comes at the end of Friday is something sort of special, where I can almost physically feel the malaise of the working week lifting out of my body, leaving behind a very start-of-the-weekend specific surge of energy. The start of the weekend makes it feel like anything is possible — maybe I'll see one of my crushes out somewhere, maybe I'll meet a new crush, maybe I'll even get laid? The first sip of Resch's as the weekend starts is so different to during the week because it's the taste of freedom. Sunday evening is the excruciating yin to Friday's yang: nothing exceptional happened after all, I'll be doing unfulfilling work until the day I die, I'll probably never have sex again, I spend too much money. I don't think it has to feel this way, for example I actually like using Excel spreadsheets, I just wish my life didn't depend on it, I wish Capital didn't follow me into my dreams.¹

A Personal Political Journey in Six Parts (to be continued)

Infancy:

Bliss, I assume. It should be noted that as a baby I strongly resembled Chairman Mao, so maybe I was doomed from the start.

Childhood:

As the daughter of baby boomer hippies, I'm indoctrinated with the virtues of vegetarianism from a young age and make no bones about making those virtues

¹ 'Capital follows you when you dream', Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, 34.

clear to my peers. Needless to say, I have few friends.

Pre-teens:

Having learned the importance of human interaction, I shun my lecturing in favour of sucking up to the pretty girls and slut shaming anyone who happened to develop breasts before me. This awful behaviour occurs surreptitiously of course.

Teens:

The discovery of revolutionary politics after participating in a student strike against U.S./Australian military interventions in Iraq. Interest in this area is primarily due to a proclivity for the type of boys I guess you would categorise as 'not-mainstream' but maybe simply, *not the boys I go to school with*. Arbitrary unkempt white-girl dreadlocks are created and soon (mercifully) shaven off. Vegetarianism evolves into insufferable veganism.

Early twenties:

Having flaked out on high school due to a potent combination of hating everything about it, hormones and marijuana consumption, I'm adrift, apathetic and introduced to the pleasures of meat consumption. Kevin '07 didn't change much and the socialist groups in Adelaide annoy me. In the end I decide to go to art school and focus on postmodern feminism. As a young, white woman my opinions are Very Important.

Late twenties to present (early thirties):

I feel like a socialist-nihilist: obnoxiously opinionated/idealistic on the one hand, and obnoxiously apathetic on the other. Like, I don't really believe ethical shopping is a particularly effective protest strategy but you also won't see me

agitating on the streets.² I'll annoy the shit out of my friends and anyone else who basically shares my opinions already.

What I actually feel though is what Fisher called *reflexive impotence* — the knowledge that late capitalism is a failure, coupled with the crippling belief that nothing can be done about it.³ Berger, too, noted a pervading sense of dissatisfaction, political entropy and helplessness, which he believed stems from a lack of clarity rather than a lack of desire to organise. Though it's frustrating, he was resigned to the inevitability of waiting for the stars to align in a way that facilitates social change.⁴ Making stuff is one thing you can do while you wait⁵ — besides, seizing the means of production is pretty important [fig. 28] but so are the nuanced parts of politics, like the emotional and changeable stuff that's hard to articulate. Kosuth argued that through engaging in self-aware (art)work we're able to move beyond what he described as 'capitalist cultural consciousness', identifying in creative labour particular potential for interlacing hope for radical change within work practices.⁶ Before I'd read Mark Fisher or had a name for it, I started putting my reflexive impotence onto hand-painted t-shirts that I asked friends to document wearing [fig. 29]. The t-shirts were then (usually) returned to me and the cycle continued. I tracked the status of each in a spreadsheet because like I said, I actually do enjoy using spreadsheets [fig. 30]. The title of the work, [*heavy black heart emoji*], is after the old name for the iPhone's regular

² I'm referring to the type of ethical shopping that involves Keep Cups etc., not targeted boycotts with specific, defined, goals, which I think can be very effective.

³ Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, 21.

⁴ Berger, *Confabulations*, 140-1.

⁵ The earliest works I made for this dissertation were primarily text-based and influenced by Aleks Danko's hand-painted, political text work.

⁶ Kosuth, *Art After Philosophy and After*, 148.

red heart emoji.⁷ In Unicode, the original, pre-colour heart was solid black ('heavy' refers to a symbol being thick or bold) and it seems the naming was simply transferred to the generic red heart.⁸ Despite the logic behind the name, there's an unintentional pathos about a standard heart symbol being 'heavy' and 'black' even though it's literally red.

Those t-shirts are part of a shitty one woman production line that's totally inefficient and the items produced are riddled with failures. My dysfunctional Midas touch achieved what a technical machine never could by transmuting functional objects into desiring-machines like me. My technique of combining commercially manufactured objects with those made by hand exemplifies that mutation, as practicable items became articulations of my emotional state⁹ [fig. 31]. My collapsed coffee mugs, kind of vaginal and glacier-like, are the most distilled example of the function-to-dysfunction element of my practice [fig. 32].

Soon after my break up, while I was still on that diet where you lose all your water weight by crying every day, [fig. 33] I visited Adelaide for a group exhibition where I installed a shop selling multiples¹⁰ [fig. 34]. Every item was clean and new: there were no t-shirts full of holes and the condom wrappers were sealed and safe. There was messiness like the bleeding/smudging of paint or the imperfect cut of a key shank, [fig. 35] but it was the kind of messiness that verified the artist made *authenticity*, not the messiness of a t-shirt or condom wrapper destroyed by my gross body. I didn't move much stock but after all I have a day job and in my artistic practice I have control over my labour and an

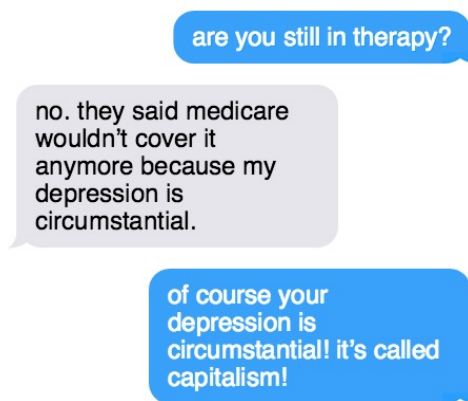
⁷ Since I titled this work, there's been a system update which included a black heart and the name has changed to 'red heart'.

⁸ <https://emojipedia.org/heavy-black-heart/> and <https://emojipedia.org/glossary#heavy> Accessed July 8, 2017.

⁹ Deleuze & Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 34.

¹⁰ This exhibition was "Vote For Me" at FELTSpace in Adelaide, 2016.

intimate connection with my objects which is what Ben Davis argued makes artistic labour a middle class pursuit.¹¹ Kosuth asked, ‘if I like neither the way nor the meaning of my work, why is this and what can I do about it?’ He proposed that all work (artistic and otherwise) is part of the core reality for each individual, therefore inherently connected to political issues.¹² It’s significant that he posed this question in the context of creative labour, desegregating it from wage labour. I agree with Davis on the middle class nature of artistic labour but when an artist has a day job, slipping between categories is inevitable¹³ [fig. 36].



Fisher identified affective disorders (the most prevalent mental illnesses in Australia¹⁴), as a political battleground when he argued that the categorisation of depression as purely and always neurological excludes social causes, stymying questions about the socio-economic factors that contribute.¹⁵ These disorders are a problem for bosses since though many unions have been rendered toothless, they now have to contend with unmotivated and frequently absent

¹¹ Ben Davis, *9.5 Theses on Art and Class*, 19.

¹² Kosuth, *Art After Philosophy and After*, 150.

¹³ This slippage is acknowledged and unpacked further by Davies in *9.5 Theses on Art and Class*, 21.

¹⁴ Beyond Blue, <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/about-us/research-projects/statistics-and-references?sec=sec-anx> Accessed July 28, 2017.

¹⁵ Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, 21.

employees who have constant, simmering, mental health issues.¹⁶ 'The misery of working people', Davies wrote, 'is a serious political issue'.¹⁷ That — mainly functional — misery might be Freud's common unhappiness since it's not an impassable and intense mental health barrier that permanently keeps someone out of work but a percolating sadness. So could socialism cure common unhappiness? Probably not, but if done well it couldn't hurt, right? If you find yourself secretly crying in a toilet cubicle because you feel like a pointless person your ennui could be an opportunity rather than a symptom of defeat. Fisher saw affective disorders as 'forms of captured discontent'.¹⁸ Late capitalism might breed reflexive impotence but Fisher argued that it also represents an historical moment fertile for change:

The long, dark night of the end of history has to be grasped as an enormous opportunity. The very oppressive pervasiveness of capitalist realism means that even glimmers of alternative political and economic possibilities can have disproportionately great effect. The tiniest event can tear a hole in the grey curtain of reaction which has marked the horizons of possibility under capitalist realism. From a situation in which nothing can happen, suddenly anything is possible again.¹⁹

The feeling that anything is possible can slip away so easily but if I don't force myself to hold onto it, I'll spiral into sadness and apathy. My life hack is to keep the bar pretty low on what makes you hopeful, for example when Jeremy Corbyn *almost* won the British election that was enough to make me cry with happiness [fig. 37]. That is until I started to worry about glaciers again and they turned into

¹⁶ Davies, *The Happiness Industry*, 106.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 115.

¹⁸ Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, 80.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 80-1.

sad tears.

Because he has a girlfriend, I'm incapable of letting myself daydream about my crush unless my dream is set in the distant future. It has to be far enough in the future that they've broken up and he has to have grieved as much as I've grieved over my last breakup. I.e. a lot and for a long time. But thinking about the future makes me nervous about climate change so I started to incorporate that into my daydreams: society has collapsed, the earth is a barren wasteland, a few of us have survived and by some incredible coincidence he and I have ended up in the same small group of survivors and it's our night to keep watch over the fire.²⁰ We're talking about the things we miss, like Resch's and ten step South Korean beauty routines. We'll fantasise about going to a bar, describe our favourite outfits to each other, pretend to bump into each other at the bar, he'd pretend to flirt with me which is thinly veiled real flirting, we'd make out, we'd have gross post-apocalypse sex. Of course when climate change actually starts to affect me I'll never see him again and if I find other survivors it'll go more like this:

'So what did you do before the climate apocalypse?'

'I used to impersonate Britney Spears²¹ and do paintings of jokes I made up about my vagina.'

[is shunned from small community of survivors]

[dies of exposure five minutes later]

Then again, from what I've been reading the world will actually just be

²⁰ Deleuze & Guattari wrote that '[all] fantasies are group fantasies. It is the collective investment of the organs that plugs desire into the socius and assembles social production and desiring production into a whole on the earth' *Anti-Oedipus*, 157. I'm no climate change denier but this manifestation of desire and the future is a personalised branch of a current group fantasy about an impending end to human civilisation and what that might look and feel like.

²¹ This is a reference to previous artworks in which I performed as Britney Spears.

completely uninhabitable. So, whatever.²²

²² David Wallace-Wells. "The Uninhabitable Earth" http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/07/climate-change-earth-too-hot-for-humans.html?utm_source=fb&utm_medium=s3&utm_campaign=sharebutton-b Accessed July 11, 2017.

MY RIGHT TO LIVE COMFORTABLY IS DETERMINED BY MY PRODUCTIVITY WITHIN CAPITALISM AND ALL I GOT WAS THIS LOUSY TSHIRT

(t-shirt text)



fig. 27



fig. 29

17th October 2016.xlsx

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
1	Tshirt	Name	Date given	Photographer	Name	Date given	Photographer	Name	Date given	Photographer	Name	Date given	Photographer	Name	Date given
2	THE NSA HAS ALL MY DICK PICS ON FILE	Debbie Pryor	BEFORE MARCH	Jessica Lawlor	Tom Christophersen	13/11	Zac Svendsen	Emily Wilton	26/11	Conrad Richters	Jan Peden	15/12/15	Random man in toilet	Klara Ewart	given
3	I DRANK INSTANT COFFEE	Patii Andrews	given	Jake Andrews	Louis Lee Andrews	n/a	Patii Andrews	Sarah Klarnet	posted	Bronwen Williams	Jenny Joyce	given	All Joyce	Josee Were	given
4	I'VE NEVER SHANKED A SEXIST MAN	Rani Rose	14/3/16	Stacy Wilson	Elena Gomez	given	Rory Dufficy	Annelise Constable (1)	Posted on 10/12	Garden: Emily Spencer	Sarah Fern	2/05/16	Ellie K	Almea Bergamann	18/3/16
5	MY RIGHT TO LIVE COMFORTABLY IS DETERMINED BY MY PRODUCTIVITY WITHIN CAPITALISM	Sophia Bowie	given	Prudence Murphy	Craig Lyons	26/12/15	Jessie Hunter	Vivian Cooper	posted	Colin Trebilcock	Matea Gluscevic	given	Benjamin Adams	Richard Cartwright	18/3/16
6	I'VE BEEN A WAGE SLAVE MY WHOLE ADULT LIFE	Amy Robinson	14/11	Matt Banham	Shaun Byrne	25/12/15	Christopher Criamari	Kelly Trebilcock	posted	Daniel Nychus	Gem Beale	given	Christina Ward	Richard Cartwright	18/3/16
7	DESPITE ALL EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY I BELIEVED THAT ENGAGING WITH PARTY POLITICS WOULD HELP MY COMMUNITY	Romi Graham	n/a	Karen Paris	Matt Banham	n/a	Romi Graham	Sev Evans	posted	Daniel Nychus	Gem Beale	given	Benjamin Adams	Richard Cartwright	18/3/16
8	DEVELOPERS AND LANDLORDS DESTROYED MY NEIGHBOURHOOD AND ALL I GOT WAS THIS LOUSY TSHIRT	Marcus Whale	n/a	Romi Graham	Romi Graham	n/a	Jayde Kissane	Karl Melvin	14/3/16						
9	THE ART WORLD IS A WHITE BOYS CLUB	Romi Graham	n/a	Romi Graham	Romi Graham	n/a									

Workbook2

	A	B	C
1	Tshirts	Code	Notes
2	DESPITE ALL EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY I BELIEVED THAT ENGAGING WITH PARTY POLITICS WOULD HELP MY COMMUNITY	1	Richard Cartwright
3	I'VE NEVER SHANKED A SEXIST MAN #2	2	Kate Emailed
4	I'VE BEEN A WAGE SLAVE MY WHOLE ADULT LIFE	3	Cic Cook
5	MY RIGHT TO LIVE COMFORTABLY IS DETERMINED BY MY PRODUCTIVITY WITHIN CAPITALISM #2	4	Almea Bergamann
6	DEVELOPERS AND LANDLORDS DESTROYED MY NEIGHBOURHOOD AND ALL I GOT WAS THIS LOUSY TSHIRT #2	5	Kate Cartwright
7	THE NSA HAS ALL MY DICK PICS ON FILE #2	6	Ragelle
8	I DRANK INSTANT COFFEE	7	Josee emailed
9	I'VE BEEN A WAGE SLAVE MY WHOLE ADULT LIFE #2	8	Ben Standing
10	THE ART WORLD IS A WHITE BOYS CLUB	9	LOST
11	THE NSA HAS ALL MY DICK PICS ON FILE	10	Ryan Star
12	DEVELOPERS AND LANDLORDS DESTROYED MY NEIGHBOURHOOD AND ALL I GOT WAS THIS LOUSY TSHIRT	11	Karl Melvin
13	I'VE NEVER SHANKED A SEXIST MAN	12	Sarah Fern
14	MY RIGHT TO LIVE COMFORTABLY IS DETERMINED BY MY PRODUCTIVITY WITHIN CAPITALISM	13	LOST

fig. 30

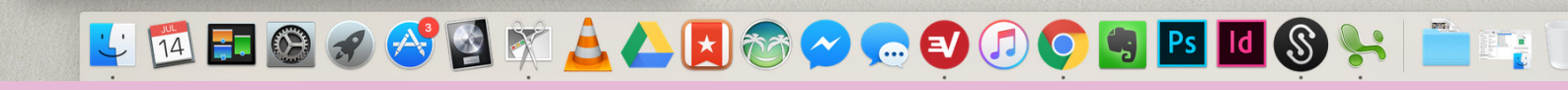


fig. 32

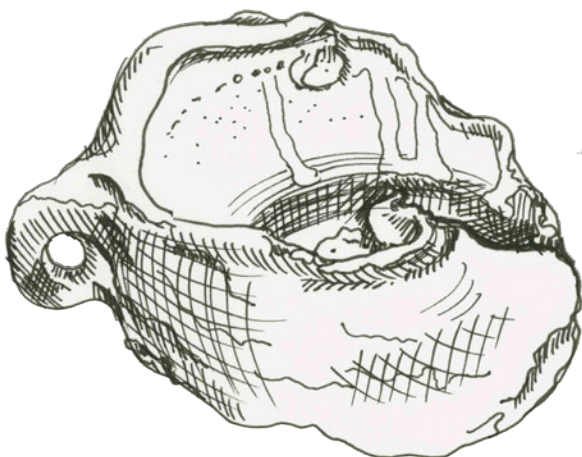
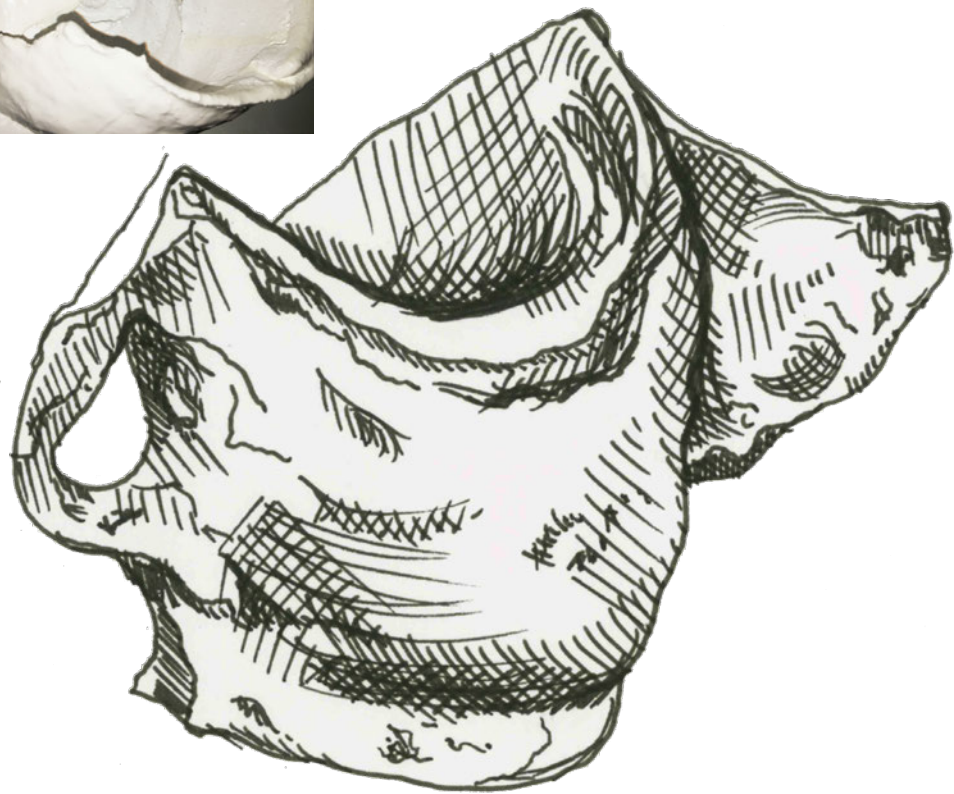
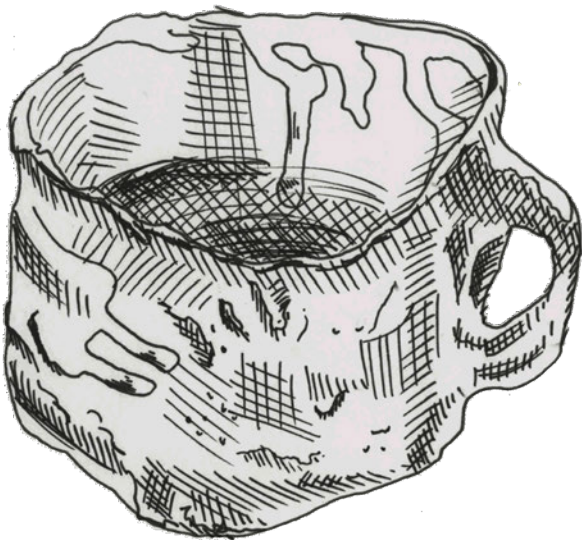
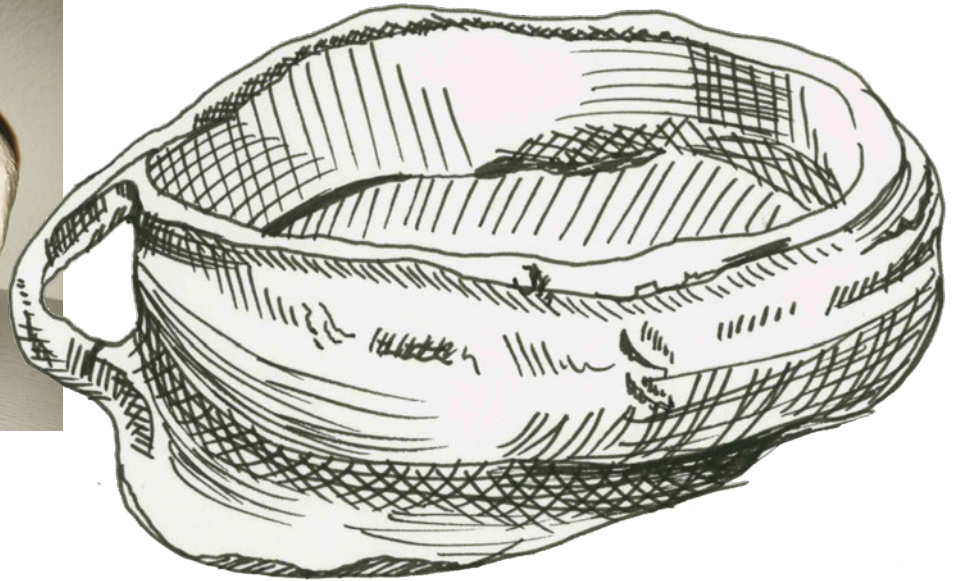






fig. 28



fig. 34



YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE
CRAZY TO WORK...
BUT IT HELPS!



fig. 31

I'VE BEEN A WAGE
SLAVE MY WHOLE
LIFE AND ALL I GOT
WAS THIS LOUSY
TSHIRT

(t-shirt text)



fig. 36

fig. 33a

I'M ON THAT DIET
WHERE YOU LOSE ALL
YOUR WATER WEIGHT
BY CRYING EVERY DAY

I'M ON THAT

I M
I M
D O O



fig. 33b



fig. 33c

fig. 37



pick up line:
jeremy
corbyn will
run again
soon

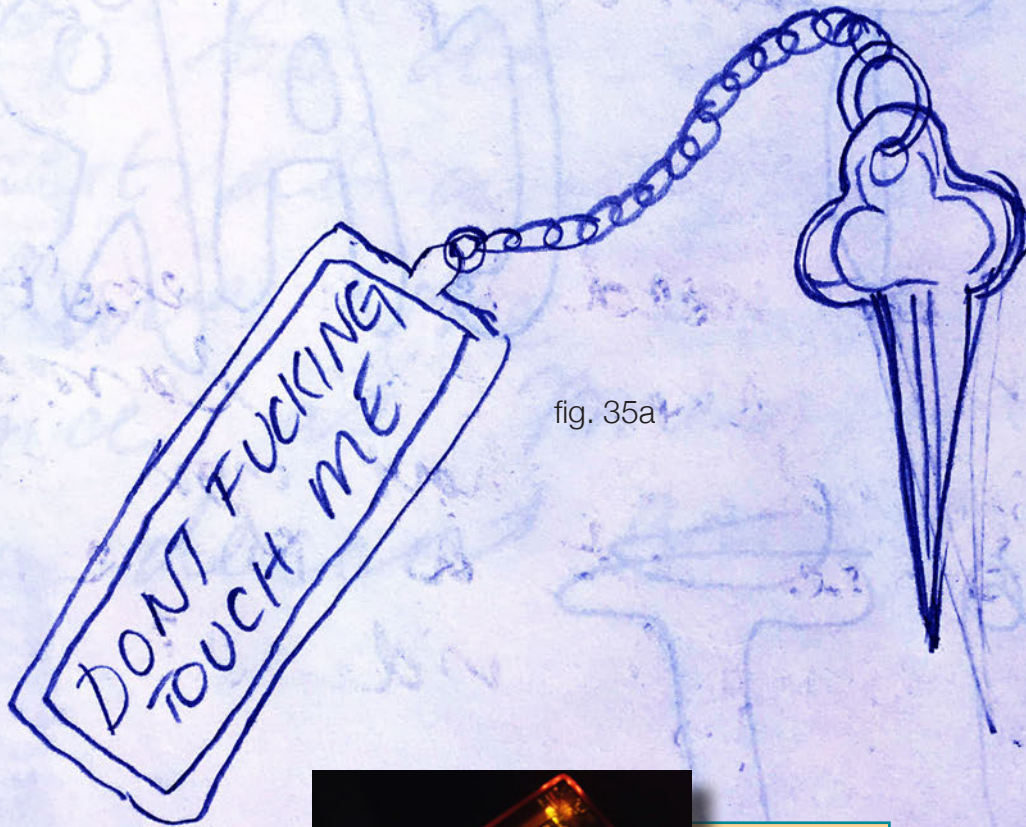


fig. 35a

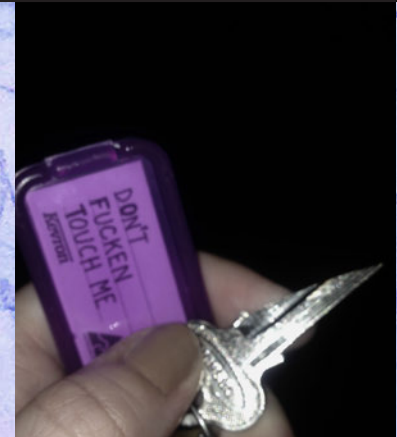


fig. 35b

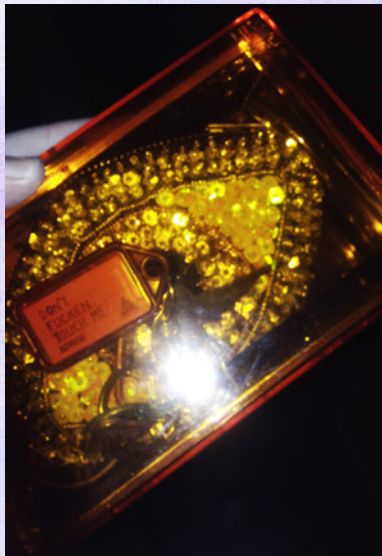


fig. 35c

The soundtrack of a bickering couple and slammed doors has me feeling pretty smug about being single for a change. I'm at home watching that scene in the TV version of *I Love Dick* where Chris fantasises about Dick shearing a lamb while shirtless, lovingly mocking an archetypal weird, nurturing genre of hetero-female fantasy¹ [fig. 38]. I can relate to that fantasy but from a distance, partly because of my housemates audible arguing (a dampener to arousal) and partly because for once (even before the arguing started) I don't feel like I'm literally dying of sexual frustration. Until giant words flash on the screen reminding me of a too-familiar feeling and shattering my smugness: 'I think desire isn't a lack, it's surplus energy — a claustrophobia inside your skin'.²

Desire and self-exposure are connected in Freud's thesis that smutty jokes are a socially acceptable strategy for displaying sexual desire. Other kinds of joking exposure, like joke-work about sadness or vulnerability, were left mostly unaddressed in his writing other than to note that gallows humour — a type of self-exposure/deprecation — is the ego's affirmation against suffering. His dissection of the pleasure that comes from hearing a joke articulated the pathos of comedy:

[The listener] sees this other person in a situation which leads him to anticipate that the victim will show signs of some affect; he will get angry, complain, manifest pain, fear, horror, possibly even despair. The person who is watching or listening is prepared to follow his lead, and to call up the same emotions. But his anticipations are deceived; the other man does not display any affect—he makes a joke. It is from the

¹ "Cowboys and Nomads", *I Love Dick* directed by Jill Soloway.

² Kraus, *I Love Dick*, 223 and "Cowboys and Nomads" directed by Soloway.

saving of expenditure in feeling that the hearer derives the humorous satisfaction.³

Because the listener can draw this satisfaction, jokes that expose sadness are more palatable than sadness plainly expressed and are an acceptable medium for self-exposure of emotion (or obscenity). I have this sick compulsion toward embarrassing self-exposure which I always regret but then keep doing anyway, even in this dissertation. Joanna Frueh wrote that Hannah Wilke understood 'physical, psychic, and emotional self-exposure as [an] aesthetic and spiritual process'.⁴ I guess I could say I see it similarly though I'd say it's more like a burbling painful gas in your stomach you can hold in for a while but eventually it forces itself out. Maybe it's always spiritual to make yourself vulnerable to people, even if you're not exactly a spiritual person.



Self-exposure and/or standup

Version one: house party, three 5 minute sets

A hot summer afternoon and I tell some dumb jokes in between bands (one of them was my (ex-)boyfriend's band); nothing deeply personal. I guess I was basically fairly happy or at least content at the time and this was long before I was dropped. People are pretty drunk and laugh [fig. 39].

Version two: Mikala's office, 10 minutes (a practice run for version three)

Autumn, a year or two later. I'm thinner, because break ups either make you gain or lose weight, and I'm more anxious than last time. I've always been somewhat neurotic but recently I'm worse though that might work in my favour since Freud

³ Freud, *Humour*, 2.

⁴ Frueh, *Hannah Wilke: A Retrospective*, 15.

hypothesised that those predisposed to neuroticism might be better at joke-work than others.⁵ I read somewhere that women tend to be more neurotic than men (whatever that means and however that's measured), so why is comedy usually perceived as a masculine thing? Anyway, it's a pretty intimate space and there's no alcohol to loosen people up, plus this time the jokes are more emotional and sexual, there's a lot about unfulfilled desire and sadness. My outfit has me physically more exposed and I'm wearing that worn out grey t-shirt I was telling you about in chapter one [fig. 40]. The performance made viewers uncomfortable and they felt my embarrassment and then were embarrassed on my behalf.

Version three: Nooky Performance Space at Trocadero Gallery, 2.5 hours

It's cold and I'm on this weird platform on the stairs so people see me from below as soon as they enter the gallery, which is uncomfortable and they usually seem surprised and confused. Once they reach the top, there's an atrium type of thing so they're at eye-line with me, but there's a big void separating us. It's hard to describe, but basically it's impossible for the viewer to get too physically close. I'm telling the same ten minutes of jokes from version two on a loop and I get bored and sometimes the enthusiasm of my delivery changes and I sit down, lean against the wall or take my shoes off. When it's all over I'm wired, agitated and can't hold a conversation [fig. 41].

In versions two and three, I had ceramic dildos at my feet — sort of like protective talismans or something — and some were sheathed with condoms. The performances ended when I removed the condoms with a snap and as I remove them — items that stop reproduction (and production by proxy, since they can stop the reproduction of labour) — I'm thinking about Silvia Federici's position on primitive accumulation, that the European witch trials were part of a

⁵ Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, 193-4.

strategy to remove reproductive power from women, which aided the transition from feudalism to capitalism.⁶ I wonder what it means to put a condom on an impotent representation of a cock, barely a representation even. I mean, you know what it is, yet it has none of the details of a real cock (veins, hair, fluids, texture, and most of them aren't even in flesh tones). They're as impotent as their vessel counterpart, the collapsed coffee mugs from chapter three, because they couldn't even be safely used as dildos. The dildos and the mugs are unproductive and unconsumable like a body without organs.⁷ The reoccurring cartoon eyes in this project are phallic-shaped too, which visually connects them to the dildos, something I did unconsciously that was pointed out to me by Mikala. I wonder what Freud would have to say about that? Like the dildos, they don't have many of the qualities of real eyes but still read as eyes. There's like, a political element to my stand-up performances I can't articulate really, but isn't that part of why you put it in an artwork rather than an essay? Am I allowed to acknowledge the line you tread between overanalysing and under-analysing your own work? I was drawn to Federici because I'm interested in witches not so much as mystical or spiritual but as political prisoners and casualties of capitalist patriarchy. Women were tortured for having witches teats, which could be anything from a mole to a clitoris. Is that a witches teat or are you happy to see me? [fig. 42] So I was thinking about this stuff when I was packing up. Except I wasn't really, I'm thinking about it now and pretending I was thinking about it then, because in reality, I was thinking about the babe in the crowd (was he a babe though? I wasn't wearing my glasses) and feeling awkward and exposed once the protection of performance was lifted, knowing I'd soon need to interact with people in a normal way but be incapable of doing so.

⁶ This is the central thesis of Federici's book, *Caliban and the Witch*.

⁷ Deleuze & Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 12.

*Version four: The Bearded Tit, 10 minutes every Tuesday night for six weeks*⁸

I wonder if you know that you're my crush? I sort of hope so, but I also hope not. I performed my jokes on Tuesdays because apparently that's the tinder date night and you came to every single performance which was confusing and exciting. After the first one, we hung out one on one for the first time and I'm embarrassed to say that the next day I couldn't resist looking up your horoscope for that day. I literally had a heart attack and died when I read the sentence: 'You might be very attracted to someone on a romantic level now. This person will be the type you like, with a very strong personality'. I have a strong personality! Do you know that?! [fig. 43]

The day after my first performance at the Bearded Tit, despite being hungover, for the first time in ages I didn't feel like I was on the verge of doing something ridiculous like selling all my possessions, taking out a personal loan and going to L.A. to try to do it with Jon Hamm. How can such a little thing like the way you scoffed and rolled your eyes at the behaviour of the men I'd dated recently feel so life changing for me? It's pretty dismal if you think about it so I'm trying not to. How do you do that thing where you maintain eye contact even through conversational silences? I bet that helps you get laid. I really hope you didn't notice me squirming every time you did. When I got home that night I deleted tinder for the millionth time, not because I thought I had a chance with you but because you made me think it was possible to meet people offline (even though we really became friends through Facebook). I'm such a sucker.



Marina Abramović's *The Onion* is about the exhaustion of desire and the way

⁸ These performances were part of an artist residency and exhibition titled "Fall Girls" in Sydney, 2017.

common unhappiness persists even when you find some success or comfort. She is, I think, complaining half ironically, half sincerely when she says:

I am tired of changing planes so often.

Waiting in the waiting rooms, bus stations, train stations, airports.

I am tired of waiting for endless passport controls.

Fast shopping in shopping malls.

I am tired of more career decisions, museum and gallery openings, endless receptions, standing around with a glass of plain water, pretending that I am interested in conversation.

I am tired of my migraine attacks.

Lonely hotel rooms, room service, long distance telephone calls, bad TV movies.

I am tired of always falling in love with the wrong man.

I am tired of being ashamed of my nose being too big, of my ass being too large, ashamed about the war in Yugoslavia.

I want to go away, somewhere so far away that I am unreachable by fax or telephone.

I want to get old, really old so that nothing matters any more.

I want to understand and see clearly what is behind all of this.

I want to not want anymore.⁹

Even though she still wants things (like wanting to *not* want), Abramović plays the role of Fisher's depressive, for whom satiation and loss are two sides of the same coin. He wrote that the appeal of the depressive view of desire is due to the partial truth that getting what you want is never really satisfying. From a depressive standpoint desire is no more than a 'filthy vitalist trick to keep the show on the road',¹⁰ an attractive (if joy-sapping) view, since even though it's not

⁹ Nicholas Baume (ed.), *Getting Emotional*, 74.

¹⁰ Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life*, 61.

always true, when it is it *feels* like it's always true. As my number one complaining-about-life-buddy constantly says, 'all fresh Hells start when we get what we want, Romi'. *The Onion* articulates the concerns of my project (heartache, capitalism, class and gross bodies) from the perspective of mostly-satiated desire, whereas I'm stuck wanting:

- i. My crush.
- ii. The opportunity to make my ex-boyfriend truly miserable.
- iii. The downfall of capitalism (if I wanted to look good I'd have made this number one but I'm willing to admit one of my many flaws is that I'm very self-involved. After writing about myself so much it would be ridiculous not to).

When you know you'll never get what you want the depressive view can be a comfort because who needs that mess, right? So instead of grappling with the existential angst of satiation I'm wallowing in unfulfilled and unfulfillable desires. In Freud's view desire is a lack, but for Deleuze & Guattari it's a complete, functional machine. Kraus goes further — it's not only generative, but also excessive: the total opposite of lack. When I was extremely in love with my crush I felt all of the desire-things at once, which makes me think Deleuze, Guattari and Kraus were right, but also wrong in their criticism of Freud. Maybe desire can be any or all of those things? That night (when my housemates were arguing), I realised I didn't feel much for my crush anymore but six months earlier the claustrophobia was real, so was the feeling of lack and so was the sense that desire-energy was the only fuel that got me out of bed, let alone making things. That night I missed the all-encompassing, contradictory desire because even though it's painful and you feel like you're *crawling out of your fucking skin*, life without it is kind of boring. I remembered the first time he sent me an emoji in our Facebook private messages and how it was so exciting — almost sexually exciting — and I mean, that's a real excess of emotion. *Whatever — it's over now*, I thought and idly opened Facebook to find that I had a *like* for my post:

Pick up line: I don't have any children but I ~do~ have a nursing bra ;)

The *like* was from the crush.

My stomach churned.

Fuck.



fig. 38



fig. 39



fig. 40

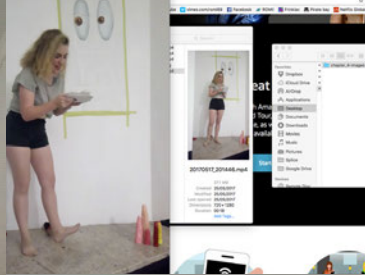
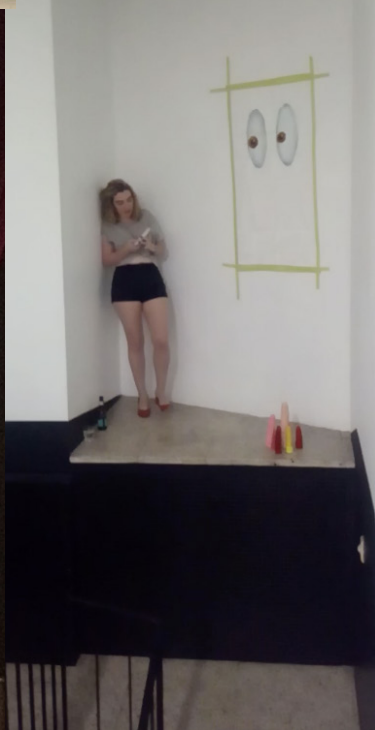


fig. 41



fig. 43



♥ witch ♥ bitch ♥ slut ♥



fig. 42



conclusion: i know you're not supposed to laugh at your own jokes but i have dad issues

When I think I'm over my ex-boyfriend I'm really not. I mean, when I think I'm over my meaningless(ful) crush it turns out I'm not. What a desperate situation. As painful as it is, the hardest part of a breakup isn't really that first phase of misery, I think it might be six months or a year or more later, when you feel like you should be over it and you really *really* want to be over it, but you're not. You want your ex back but you also know that even if you got them, it would be weird and you wouldn't be happy.¹

So okay, you concede that you have to re-install tinder after all, you organise a date, you even actually *attend* the date, you go to a bar, you drink, eventually you need to piss, and when you come back from the bathroom, your date has fallen asleep. At the table. In the bar. And then pathetically you console yourself with the thought, 'well, this might be a good thing to put in the conclusion of my paper'. It's actually a sweet release, I have to admit. I did my homework by putting myself out there and it confirmed that I was right, *there is nothing out there*. It's a relief to go home alone, put on a well worn t-shirt, get into bed and watch *The Simpsons* while drifting off into a drunken sleep [fig. 44].

What I totally love is that moment when you wake up — and it only lasts for less than a second — where you're a completely blank slate. For a brief moment you don't feel any emotion and you're a fresh person. Then all your baggage comes flooding back. You remember you're not a disembodied entity, you have a gross body with matted hair, coated teeth and a splitting headache. You're so terrible

¹ I guess it's the difference between mourning and melancholia, both stem from loss, 'but whereas mourning is the slow, painful withdrawal of libido from the lost object, in melancholia, libido remains attached to what has disappeared', Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life*, 22.

people who've been with you for seven years think it's okay to dump you by phone call, people fall asleep when you're on dates with them, and now that you think about it, 12C *isn't* such a great bra size and maybe that shop assistant was lying. After my date fiasco I had to flip out a little bit, I mean, I probably just used it as an excuse to act like the female monster I already am,² I overcompensated for my misery by being obnoxious to my friends, making too many self deprecating jokes, getting angry, looking for hunks, insisting I was going to find someone to make out with, and inevitably not. So all the embarrassment and shame comes flooding back after that moment of emptiness, the fear sets in but with the help of coffee, hydralite, and a ten step South Korean skincare routine, it fades back into common unhappiness. Dread of a loveless/sexless future mutates into dread that Monday is coming and maybe don't read that article about the Teflon in drinking water, let's just try to get through this day.



I'm drawing close to my submission date and experiencing nervousness about my future since in the last two years I've seen my main long term plans go to shit and I can't help reflecting on regrets, failings and worry about whether time was wasted. I have so many doubts about writing about my emotions and vulnerability and being too much of a character in this dissertation, but I'm in too deep now! I can't help thinking of Fran Lebowitz again:

Very few people possess true artistic ability. It is therefore both unseemly and unproductive to irritate the situation by making an effort. If you have a burning, restless urge to write or paint, simply eat something sweet and the feeling will pass. Your life story would not

² Kraus categorised herself and Hannah Wilkie as female monsters and wrote, 'Female monsters take things as personally as they really are. They study facts. Even if rejection makes them feel like the girl who's not invited to the party, they have to understand the reason why', *I Love Dick*, 202.

make a good book. Do not even try.³

In her smug way I think Lebowitz is exposing her own vulnerability and self-doubt, directing at *you* the chastising I would wager she's given herself. Maybe it's narcissistic to study yourself and your own emotions, but Freud compared narcissistic women to criminals and big cats,⁴ which kind of makes it seem like a cool thing to be. To be self-deprecating and to dissect your own vulnerability dispassionately as Kraus attempted⁵ requires foolhardiness and in this process I've cringed so hard I felt like my face was going to fall right off but ultimately it was the only way I could analyse this body of work. Anyway, the White Woman is already (and probably fairly⁶) the archetypal neurotic narcissist, so I may as well lean into it [fig. 45]. My anxieties about my personal life are connected to my anxieties about the world and politics, when self-pity turns into self-flagellation which turns into entitlement (*everyone* should have what I have plus more). My art work/joke-work about body anxiety, reflexive impotence and common unhappiness is (hopefully) funny and aesthetically cute because I'm still hopeful for social change. Or at least that I might find some hunk to make out with. *a dildo but for your soul* communicates hopefulness in spite of feeling totally hopeless. Well that's what I tried to do anyway.

It really is time for me to actually get over my crush and my ex-boyfriend. People say you should love yourself and be happy alone and junk but that's not going to happen so I'm working on my new love interest instead. I don't know who they

³ Lebowitz, *The Fran Lebowitz Reader*, 12.

⁴ Freud, *On Narcissism*, 19.

⁵ Kraus, *I Love Dick*, 191-2.

⁶ This might sound misogynistic, but I'm playing on the stereotype because Western social structures put (especially heterosexual appearing) white women within a social hierarchy that makes neurotic narcissism a predictable response, kind of like how Fisher links capital and depression, with the latter being a reasonable response to the former.

are yet but I do know they have a real tattoo of Lawrence Weiner's temporary tattoo artwork that says 'HEAD OVER HEELS AFTER MARX & ANGELS' [fig. 46] but they're not an artist (yuck). I think they might encourage me to get out of bed and be a better activist. I don't think they're on tinder.



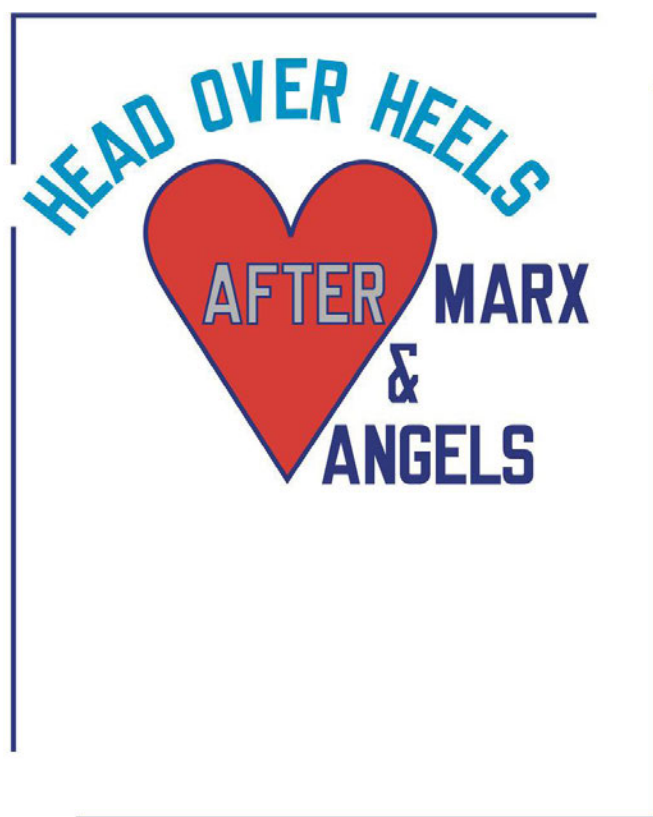
fig. 47



fig. 44



fig. 45



reference list

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fig. 6

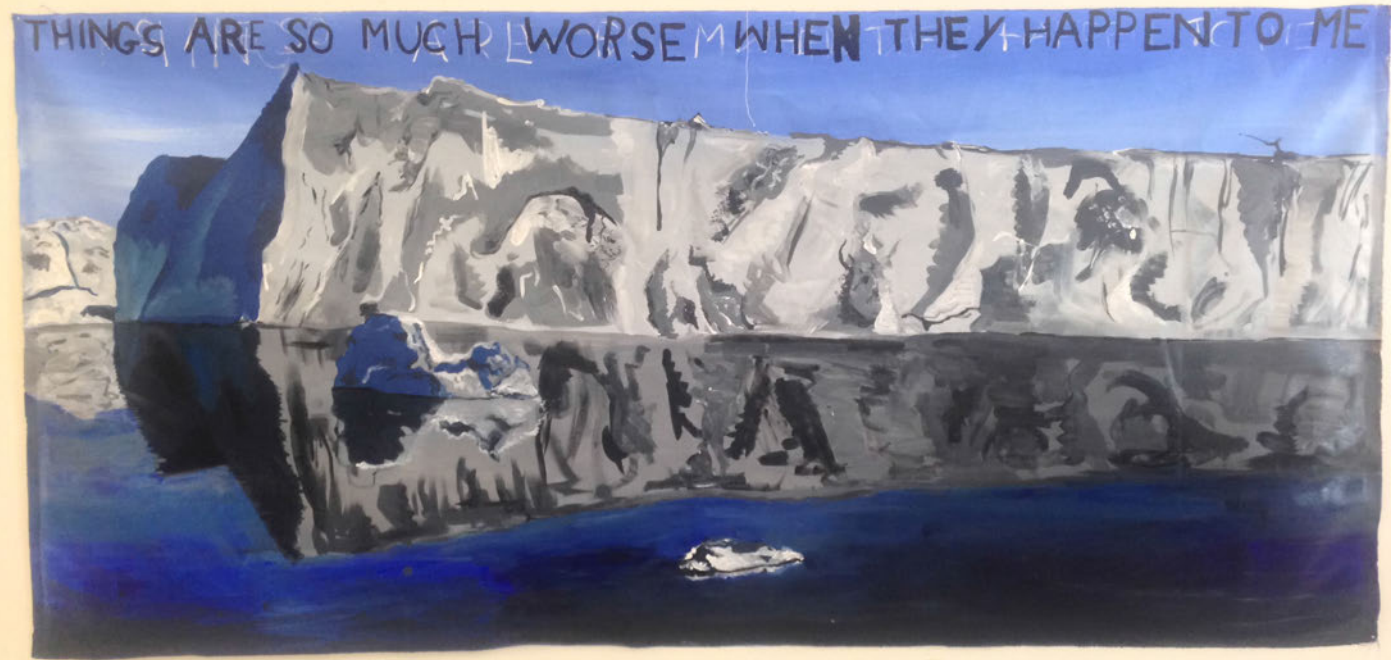


fig. 8



fig. 12



fig. 13



fig. 15



FIG. 17



fig. 18



fig. 27

appendix b: additional artworks



[racially neutral person frowning emoji]. Ink and pencil on post-it notes left in public places, 7.6 x 7.6cm



barriers. Dymo labels on condom wrappers, each 6 x 6cm



LET SCA STAY (protest banner). Organza; velveteen; fabric paint; sequins; glass beads, dimensions unknown



LET SCA STAY (detail)

Untitled (work in progress, detail). Organza; sequins; glass beads; found image of Keanu Reeves, 132.5 x 57.5cm textile with 10.5 x 7.5 cm found image



anxious. Organza; glass beads; sequins; gold chain; masking tape, 80 x 42cm with pick-up line. Acrylic and pencil on paper, 38 x 38cm framed



DON'T LEAVE. Acrylic and pencil on paper, 49.8 x 29.6cm



someone please restore me to factory settings. Ink and pencil on paper, 20.3 x 13.9cm



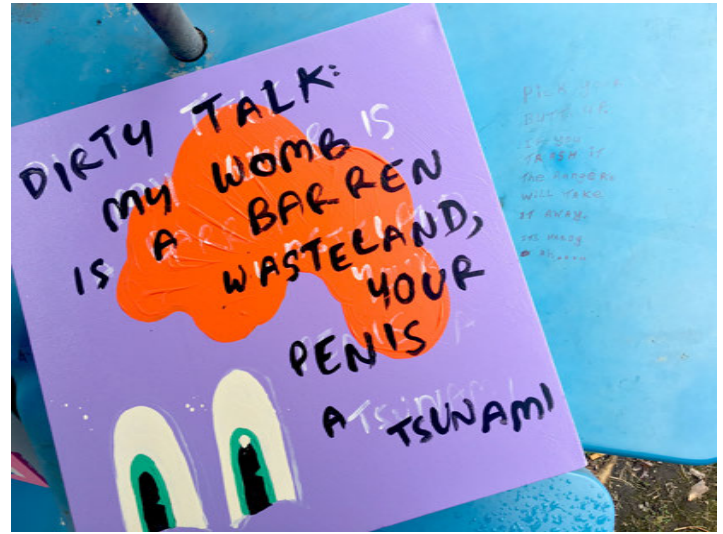
cocktalk. Earthenware; acrylic; high gloss house paint; dymo labels; condom wrappers; latex party condoms, variable.



my vagina is like a sensory deprivation tank (detail of installation view). Earthenware; acrylic; high gloss house paint; latex condoms, variable.



dirty talk #1 & #2. Acrylic and housepaint on canvas, 45.5 x 45.5cm



dirty talk #2. Acrylic and housepaint on canvas, 45.5 x 45.5cm



my other car is a wave of sorrow. Snapchat collage of the artist in large screenprinted AS Colour t-shirt, 1920 x 1080px

pick-up line. Limited edition of printed coasters used at the Bearded Tit, 9.6 x 9.6 cm



a dildo but for your soul (right and below: installation view of window from 'Fall Girls' exhibition and artist residency). Acrylic; screen printed AS Colour t-shirts; handsewn textiles; wood; Instax Fujifilm prints; earthenware; high glass house-paint; latex condoms; LED sign, variable.





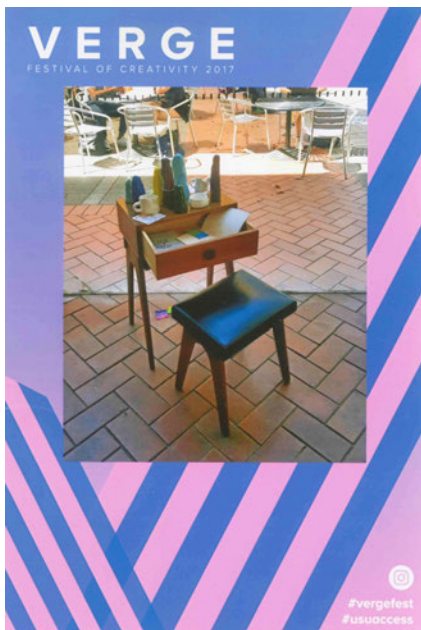
*luxe plastic bag. Glass organza;
glass beads; sequins, variable*



*selfie with luxe plastic bag. Glass organza;
glass beads; sequins, variable*



*luxe plastic bag. Glass organza;
glass beads; sequins, Instax
Fujifilm print 8.5 x 4.5cm*



clockwise (left to right): *Verge Festival* Sydney University, *Vote For Me* FELTSpace Adelaide, *Fall Girls* The Bearded Tit Sydney.

following two pages: *Fall Girls* catalogue



The Bearded Tit

A SENSUAL SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

SHOW #28
25 SEPTEMBER - 4 NOVEMBER 2017

FALL GIRLS

FEATURING ROMI GRAHAM & CELINA JAYNE IRWIN

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STREETSPACE

Features an installation by ROMI GRAHAM. She invites you in: "You're welcome to use my pick up line (it's printed on the coasters). So all the bees are dying... we're pretty doomed hey? But full disclosure, I did try using it on Tinder with very little success. And by 'very little', I mean zero. But I have zero success on Tinder anyway, so maybe it's not the pick up line's fault (and the guy who framed the original painting was pretty taken with it and promised me he'd try it, which surely counts for something)? Anyway if you have any luck please let me know (my Instagram is @romi_online). A dildo but for your soul is about, like, anxiousness, guilt, trying to get laid, and trying to get by in late capitalism and trying really hard (probably too hard) to be funny. I know, it's a lot. My goal for 2017 is to graduate from 'mess' to 'hot mess.'

a dildo but for your soul, 2017. Dimensions variable. Items individually priced - POA.

[individual works, from left to right]

T-shirt: "a dildo but for your soul", 2017. Custom T-shirt. \$100.

T-shirt: "witch bitch slut", 2017. Custom T-shirt. \$100.

T-shirt: "my other car is a wave of sorrow", 2017. Custom T-shirt. \$100.

T-shirt: "my body is a blunderland", 2017. Custom T-shirt. \$100.

T-shirt: "anxiousness", 2017. Custom T-shirt. \$100.

Polaroids, 2017. 30 Polaroids. \$300.

Open, 2017. Found sign. NFS.

Anxious, 2017. Hand-beaded textile with timber prop, H160cm x W40cm. \$450.

Oogling Emoji, 2017. Hand-beaded textile, H130cm x H45cm. \$800.

Dildos, 2017. Plaster, paint. Small \$10; Large \$30.

Shop Sign, 2017. 130cm x 100cm. \$500.

CURIOSITY CABINET

Features a mash-up mix of bits 'NO GEMINIS' by ROMI GRAHAM and CJ IRWIN.

ROMI & CJ. Chaffing jacket, 2017. Wearable collab. NFS.

[BOTTOM SHELF, from left to right]

ROMI GRAHAM. Dildos, 2017. Plaster, paint. Small \$10; Large \$30.

ROMI GRAHAM. Shiv Key, 2017. Key and tag. \$40.

ROMI GRAHAM. Squishy Cups, 2017. Dimensions variable. NFS.

CELINA JAYNE IRWIN. Sad Gal Books, 2017. Dimensions variable. NFS.

Follow your heart, girls...
Ugh... if only it were that simple!!

This month The Tit looks closely (not too close!) at the spectre of social anxiety as it manifests across our media-frenzied lives. FALL GIRLS bears witness to those unexpected emotional exposures, the social media slip-ups, crushingly unfulfilled crushes, Tinder fails... because we're all drowning in a sea of luke warm tears. Artists Romi Graham and Celina Jayne Irwin are your fall girls for the evening... falling over themselves, that is.

In our STREETSPACE, Romi has set up a sweatshop of wearable and not-so-wearable merch that acts as a kind of shrine to life's unmentionable fails. Inside, our CURIOSITY CABINET continues the tender Tinder theme with a mash-up of works by both artists: shelves of hand-pulled dildos (they're the wurst), piles of hand-printed propohylactics, maybe a bible or two. Around the corner, our TAXIDERM T.V. features documentation of several shameful past performances, and THE SALON becomes a let-it-all-hangout with CJ's new suite of meme-girl embroideries and plush cushions.

C'mon... it'll be a hot mess but you're still going to swipe right.

The Bearded Tit acknowledges that this exhibition takes place on Aboriginal land which was never ceded. We would like to acknowledge the Gadigal of the Euro Nation, the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

TAXIDERM T.V.

Features a video by ROMI GRAHAM. See STREETSPACE for more information.

a/s/l?, 2017. Selfie video compilation, 5:00. POA.

THE SALON

Features new embroideries and soft furnishings by CELINA JAYNE IRWIN. This series of works were all lovingly hand-sewn by Celina Jayne while she sat upon her couch with her cat and binge watched Seinfeld and RuPaul's Drag Race. Each piece was inspired by overhearing conversations, or just general thoughts and feelings that popped into her brain after a couple of glasses of vino. This collection is ever-expanding, as she constantly finds herself overhearing stupid things - so keep an eye out for later works to see if you've made the cut.

MAIN WALL, left to right:

To Forget That Yours Are Missing, 2017. Cotton thread on calico tote, \$80.

You Always Pocket My Lighter, 2017. Cotton thread on calico with plastic hoop, \$80.

We Are All Sentient Meat Sacks, 2017. Cotton thread on calico with plastic hoop, \$80.

Bon Jovi's Acting Career is Severely Underrated, 2017. Cotton thread on calico tote, \$80.

Oh, Can I Scab a Dart?, 2017. Cotton thread on calico with plastic hoop. NFS.

Sounds Like Questionable Logic, But OK, 2017. Cotton thread on calico with plastic hoop, \$80.

Literally No One, 2017. Cotton thread on calico tote, \$80.

My Google Searches Are Questionable, 2017. Cotton thread on calico with plastic hoop, \$80.

Great Australian Tragedy, 2017. Cotton thread on calico tote, \$80.

Disco Pillow (You Never Loved Me), 2017. Synthetic material with cotton thread and pillow stuffing, \$50.

IN THE LOO

Features a custom soundtrack by ROMI GRAHAM. See STREETSPACE for more information.

Wetness, 2017. Custom soundtrack 15:00, looping. POA.

IN THE HOUSE

Fun stuff by ROMI GRAHAM dotted around the place. Go-a-huntin'!

Pick-up lines, 2017. Coasters. Free.

Pick-up Line, 2017. Original coaster artwork, watercolour and pencil on paper, H41cm x W38cm. \$400.

Barriers, 2017. Custom texts printed on condoms. \$2 each.

Fleur do loose, 2017. Fake flowers with texts. \$10 each.

Common Unhappiness, 2017. Hand-stencilled badges. \$5 each.

THE LANEWAY

Features a dildo mural by ROMI GRAHAM. Speaks for itself, really. See STREETSACE for more information.

About the artists.

"So what did you do before the climate apocalypse?"

"I used to impersonate Britney Spears and do paintings of jokes I made up about my vagina"

"is shunned by a small community of survivors"

"dies of exposure 5 mins later"

ROMI GRAHAM doesn't impersonate Britney that often anymore but she does still make artworks where she's mostly trying to be funny. Originally from Adelaide, Graham moved to Sydney to do a Master of Fine Arts and also because she liked the idea of really struggling to make rent. She's a multidisciplinary artist, mainly working in performance, painting, and textiles. Past exhibitions include Nooky Performance Space (Trocadero Gallery), Fontanelle Gallery, Firstdraft, The Australian Experimental Art Foundation, Sawtooth and FELTSpace. Find her on Tinder.

CELINA JAYNE IRWIN is trying her hardest. Just in general, really, but mostly at trying to get out of bed in the mornings. When she does make it out, she makes shit (shit meaning stuff, but also meaning that it sucks). She dabbles in many mediums but has found herself drawn mostly to performance, video, textiles and installations. She's exhibited at little galleries around Sydney (such as Goodspace, 107 projects and Airspace) as well as at Manning Regional Gallery and some random events put on by friends in Newcastle and Wollongong. Her favourite colour is yellow, she's a Taurus & her spirit animal is probably that naked hedgehog from that video she saw on Facebook. Hit her up on Instagram because she's sad & lonely. @celinajayne

**HEY!
LIVE PERFORMANCES AS PART OF FALL GIRLS:
'YOUR DATE RUINED' BY ROMI GRAHAM
EVERY TUESDAY AT #TUESLOVE, 8PM**

ABOUT US.

The Bearded Tit is a bar, a creative space and a clubhouse that combines the expressive, the social, the political and the celebratory. It offers a relaxed and engaging place for a cleansing tippie and a catalyst for conversation and creative musing. We value diversity, the open minded and the open hearted.

GOT AN IDEA FOR A SHOW?

Apply any time. We are thinking outside the box, outside the white cube and outside the everyday. So if you have an amazing idea for an exhibition or performance piece, or you just want the world to see your art in a different kind of space, send us your proposal and show us what you can do! You can download all the info and an application form at www.thebeardedtit.com

IT'S FREE!

That's right, totally free. And if you sell your work, there's NO COMMISSION either. We act as your agents and cheerleaders, promoting and selling the work you show on your behalf, and then we pay you what we've collected at the end.

STILL GOT QUESTIONS?

Email us at gallery@thebeardedtit.com

Thanks to our supporters:

PHILTER
Seductively Beer.

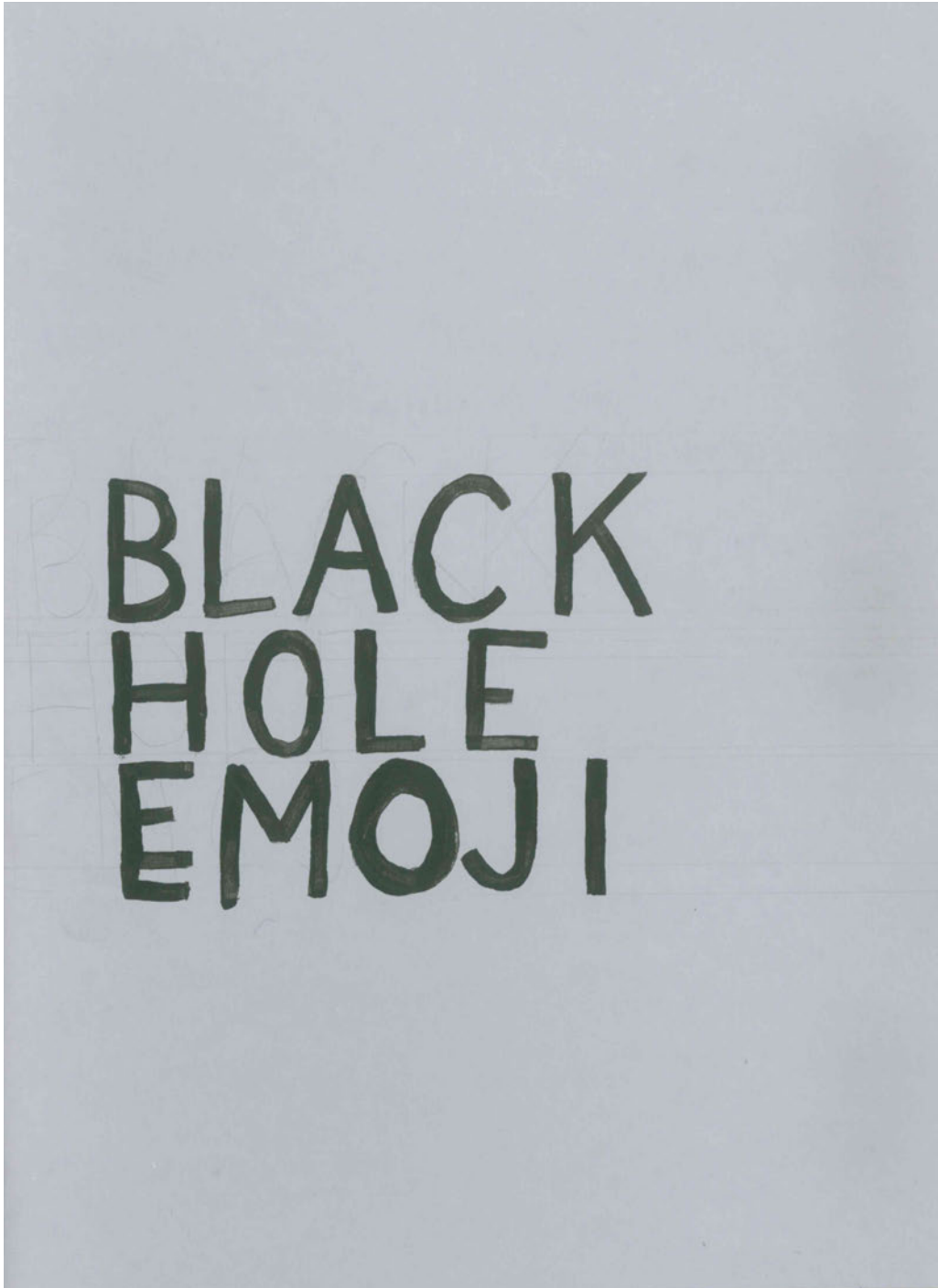
**The
Bearded Tit**
A SENSUAL SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

153 Regent Street, Redfern, NSW 2016. Phone: (02) 8283 4082 www.thebeardedtit.com
Instagram @thebeardedtit Facebook @TheBeardedTitBar

**Want a
show?
It's free,
you know.**

All you have to do is fill out a one page form and show-and-tell us about yourself. You can find one at thebeardedtit.com under "ART".

**APPLY
NOW!**



'9/11 WAS AN
INSIDE JOB!' SHE
SCREAMED AT THE
MOMENT OF CLIMAX

THIGH RASH
PROBLEM

DO YOU THINK
IT'S A
MOMENT OF CLIMAX

THINGS ARE SO
MUCH WORSE WHEN
THEY HAPPEN TO ME

REPORTING
ON THE NEGATIVE
AS A
MOMENT OF CLIMAX

A DILDO ISN'T A
PHALLUS - IT'S A

REPRESENTATION
OF THE NEGATIVE
SPACE IN A

REPRESENTATION
OF THE NEGATIVE
SPACE IN A
VAGINA

CAN SWIMMING IN
AN OCEAN OF

DESPAIR GIVE YOU
SWIMMERS EAR?

WETNESS

CHAFFING

CAN SWIMMING IN
AN OCEAN OF
DESPAIR GIVE YOU
SWIMMERS EAR?
A DILDO ISN'T A
PHALLUS - IT'S A

REPRESENTATION
OF THE NEGATIVE
SPACE IN A
CHAFFING

REPRESENTATION
OF THE NEGATIVE
SPACE IN A
VAGINA

WETNESS

CHAFFING

COMMON
UNHAPPINESS

DEAD LABOUR

DEAD LABOUR
DAD PROBLEMS
UNHAPPINESS

FATHER FIGURES
ARE ALL THE
SAME: THEY ONLY
EXIST ON TV

FATHER FIGURES
ARE ALL THE
SAME: THEY ONLY
EXIST ON TV

DOES ANYONE KNOW
ANY GOOD SPELLS
YOU CAN CAST
WITH NIPPLE
HAIRS?

DOES ANYONE KNOW
ANY GOOD SPELLS
YOU CAN CAST
WITH NIPPLE
HAIRS?

DOES ANYONE KNOW
ANY GOOD SPELLS
YOU CAN CAST
WITH NIPPLE
HAIRS?

DOES ANYONE KNOW
ANY GOOD SPELLS
YOU CAN CAST
WITH NIPPLE
HAIRS?
ENTRY LEVEL
DREAM
DON'T TORTURE
OTHERS WITH YOUR
HAPPINESS

DOES ANYONE KNOW
ANY GOOD SPELLS
YOU CAN CAST
WITH NIPPLE
HAIRS?
DON'T TORTURE
OTHERS WITH YOUR
HAPPINESS

DON'T TORTURE
OTHERS WITH YOUR
HAPPINESS

DOES ANYONE KNOW
ANY GOOD SPELLS
YOU CAN CAST
WITH NIPPLE
HAIRS?

HOW ANNOYING IS
LISTENING TO
YOUR OWN
STUPID THOUGHTS
24/7?

DOES ANYONE KNOW
ANY GOOD SPELLS
YOU CAN CAST
WITH NIPPLE
HAIRS?

21 SNITCHKA VON
01 011231211
AND BUSY
STROUCHT 11111212
HAPPINESS

EVERYTHING IS
ANNOYING

CAN'T TORTURE
OTHERS WITH YOUR
HAPPINESS

I HAVE THE TYPE
OF BODY THAT
LOOKS MOST AT
EVERYTHING'S
BORING EXCEPT
SMARTPHONES

I CAN'T GO TO
JAIL: I HAVE
RESTING SNITCH
FACE.

I HAVE THE TYPE
OF BODY THAT
LOOKS MOST AT
HOME ON THE
BEACH. LIKE A SAD
WHALE.

I KNOW YOU'RE NOT
SUPPOSED TO
LAUGH AT YOUR OWN
JOKES BUT I HAVE
DAD ISSUES

I WISH MY
CLITORIS LOOKED
LESS LIKE WOODY
ALLEN):

I THINK I SPILLED
BEER ON MYSELF
THEN YELLED AT A
DUDE FOR
THROWING BEER ON
ME

I'M A HORRIBLE
PERSON BUT I
THINK I'M SLOWLY
IMPROVING
THINK I'M SLOWLY
IMPROVING

I'M GETTING AN
ABORTION!
•AIRHORN•

I'M NOT HERE TO
MAKE FRIENDS --
I'M HERE TO
HATE MYSELF AND
PASSIONATELY

DEFEND BRITNEY
SPEARS. AND I
ALREADY HATED
MYSELF...

I'M ON THAT
DIET WHERE YOU
LOSE ALL YOUR
WATER WEIGHT BY
CRYING EVERYDAY

SORRY NOT SORRY
BUT ACTUALLY
NO I AM SORRY

IF I HAD
BEAUTIFUL FEET
I'D MAKE A
GREAT FOOT
MODEL

IS THAT A
WITCHES TEAT QR
ARE YOU HAPPY
TO SEE ME?

IT'S A LABOUR
OF HATE

LET ME OUT OF
THE BOYS CLUB!

JUST LET YOUR
DOUBTS GET THE
BEST OF YOU

NO ONE KNOWS WHY
THE HUMAN HEART
EXISTS

LIFE HACK: GO
TO YOUR CRUSHES
FACEBOOK PAGE
AND USE THE
ANGRY REACTION
ON ALL THEIR
POSTS.
EVENTUALLY
THEY'LL
MESSAGE YOU
LIKE 'WHATS UP?'

LIFE HACK: SWEAT
THE SMALL STUFF.
IT'S THE BEST
WAY TO FORGET
YOUR MORTALITY
AND
INSIGNIFICANCE
IN A VAST AND
UNFORGIVING
UNIVERSE

MY NICKNAME FOR
MY CLITORIS IS
HIDDEN IMMUNITY
HIDDEN IMMUNITY
IDOL

MY VAGINA
BILLOWS IN THE
BREEZE LIKE A
MAJESTIC FLAG

MY VAGINA IS LIKE
A FLOWER. YOU
KNOW THE ONE:
IT'S 6 METRES
LONG. CAN
DIGEST SMALL
MAMMALS AND
SMELLS LIKE A
CORPSE.

MY VAGINA IS
LIKE AN OPEN
BOOK

MY VAGINA IS LIKE
A FLOWER. YOU
KNOW THE ONE
IT NUTELLA? BUT I
ONLY JUST MET
HER!
SHELLS AND
CORPSE.

MY BIOLOGICAL
CLOCK IS
TICKING. IT
QUOTE THE
SIMPSONS UNTIL
THE PAIN GOES
AWAY

OTHER PEOPLE ARE
THE WORST

MY BIOLOGICAL
CLOCK IS
TICKING. IT
WANTS HOT CHIPS.

NY BIOLOGICAL
CLOCK IS
TICKING IT
WANTS TO STAY
OTHER PEOPLE ARE
THE WORST
PAP SCHWEAR

PEOPLE HATE ME
BECAUSE I'M
BEAUTIFUL. OR
MAYBE IT'S
BECAUSE I'M
ALWAYS QUOTING
MEIN KAMPF.
POSH WANK

PEOPLE HATE ME
BECAUSE I'M
BEAUTIFUL. OR
MAYBE IT'S
BECAUSE I'M
ALWAYS QUOTING
MEIN KAMPF.

PIMPLES ARE JUST
SASSY BEAUTY
SPOTS

PEOPLE HATE ME
I'M THE ONLY ONE
WHO'S NOT
A LIAR
I'M THE ONLY
ONE WHO'S
NOT A LIAR
I'M THE ONLY
ONE WHO'S
NOT A LIAR

PENISBUTTER

WHAT'S SEXIER:
THIGH GAP OR A
CRIPPLING FEAR
THAT YOU'RE
WASTING YOUR
LIFE?

VAGINAMITE

SHARING GOSSIP
IS THE ONLY
POWER WE HAVE
UNDER CAPITALISM

WHAT'S SEXIER:
THIGH GAP OR A
CRIPPLING FEAR
THAT YOU'RE
WASTING YOUR
LIFE?

IT INTO YOUR
VAGINA VIA
TARPO

WHAT'S SEXIER
A HIGH GAF OR
TAKE EVERYTHING
PERSONALLY

THE ONLY WAY TO
TRULY ENJOY WINE
IS TO SMELL IT,

OF BED. GET A
30 PARTIAL...
THE ONLY WAY TO
TRULY ENJOY WINE
IS TO SMELL IT,
SWIRL IT, INSERT.

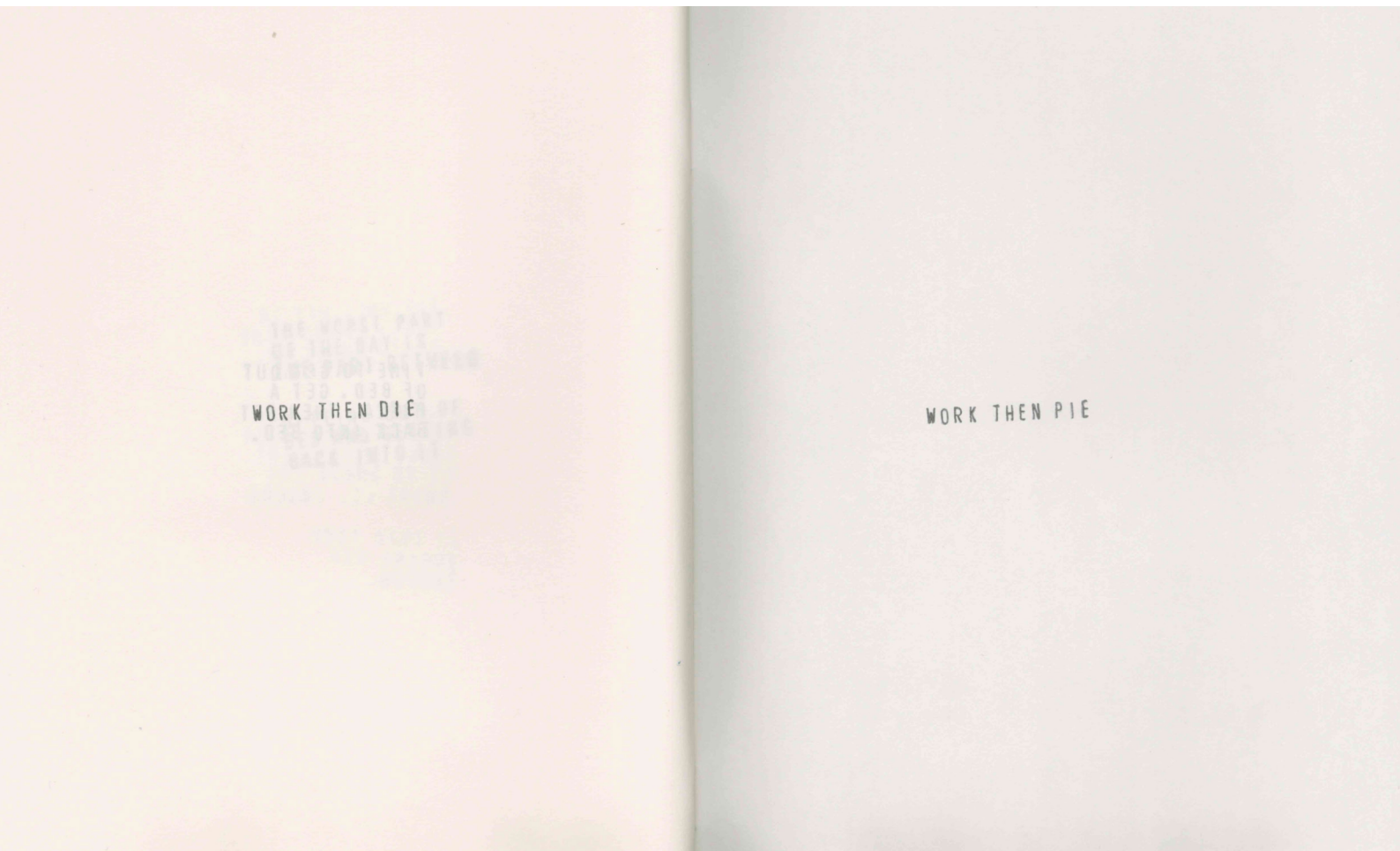
IT INTO YOUR
VAGINA VIA
TAMPON.

THE WORST PART
OF THE DAY IS
THE PART BETWEEN

GETTING OUT OF
BED AND GETTING
BACK INTO IT

IT INTO YOUR
VAGINA VIA
TAMPON.

TIME TO GET OUT
OF BED, GET A
PIZZA, THEN GET
BACK INTO BED.



black hole emoji, artist made book (edition of 5) with hand-painted cover and stamped pages, 19 x 14.5cm