

# **Making & Mending**

by

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## Abstract

This thesis examines how feminist ways of making and mending can be applied through a material investigation into postdisciplinary craft practices. Through practice-led research, material investigation and a conscious break from craft methods, I am embracing failure as a methodological framework. Some research motivations were guided by my own experience with influential women in my family. Through research and material investigations, craft practices were applied through a DIY method and were supported by sloppy craft theory. By embracing *deskilling* and *reskilling* within my work, I am investigating mending practices as a place for communal sharing and connection.

By embracing interdisciplinary approaches, craft and private practices are melded with sculptural and industrial metalworking, culminating in the form of plaster and bronze hands and tools. These solid, sculptural pieces of work are designed to capture gestures, the human form and the tools that created both embroidery and crochet pieces in this art practice. The exhibition was meant to be set in a recreated, imagined domestic space - to reflect women's work and the rise of feminist craft practices in contemporary art. This space was envisioned to break away from the white cube and invite the viewer to share their knowledge and memories through an interactive "mend-in" session.

# Dedication

To Marlow

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## Preface

I want to begin this thesis by giving context to the time that this thesis and exhibition were supposed to take place. At the end of March 2020, the University was closed to help stop the spread of COVID-19 within our community. Initially, there was much uncertainty about how this would affect our planned shows and exhibitions. As the global pandemic continued to change our society, it became clear that we could not carry out our plans. To keep everyone in our community safe, we had to stay apart. Physical and social distancing have been very difficult - especially as someone who has a practice that depends on the community. To give my thesis some context - the events and installation described in this paper did not happen. It is my hope that they will. I am thankful to have the support of my advisors, friends and family all around the world. I am thankful for our essential workers and front-line workers for keeping us safe and healthy. I look forward to our future mend-ins and for art to once again, bring us together.



**Vanessa Krause.** "This is Fine". 205 Richmond Street Studio, Toronto, March 2020.

# Introduction

## What is making and mending?

My initial investigation into making and mending was born out of a need to deal with material possessions and memory. After my residency in Florence, Italy in the spring/summer of 2019, I started working with photographs and second-hand clothing by creating fictional narratives around memory. I considered this method to be effective, but wondered about the implications of narrating strangers possessions. I realized that I also had material objects that belonged to my own family that I did not know very well. I decided to focus on using my own memories of places where I grew up in both Germany and Canada and people that had an impact on my life. Through my practice of collecting material possessions, writing field notes about the objects and memories ascribed to them; I am able to bring together material investigations with notions of postdisciplinary contemporary practices.

I am investigating the connection between various craft practices, such as postdisciplinary craft, sloppy craft, amateurism and mending alongside complex material investigations into bronze casting and mould making. I am exploring how postdisciplinary craft theory and contemporary feminist craft methods can help me develop connections to many important women in my life. I strive to use mending methodologies to create a space that will allow others to share their knowledge and practices of mending. Finally, I consider how notions of failure can be used to develop new approaches to materials and making within the context of textile, fiber and bronze.



# Chapter 1:

## The Wax

### Literature Review

Throughout the process of researching artists and writers for this section, it was challenging for me to narrow down exactly who I wanted to include in my literature review. I use this section to focus on the most important overall thematic literature concerning the body of work I have created for this final thesis exhibition. The writers included focus on feminist craft practices, employ alternative ways of making, and speak to failure as a method of gathering knowledge.

Faith Wilding's essay "Monstrous Domesticity" (2000) opened my eyes to the understanding of the history of feminist use of labour within domestic spaces, by using intentional material approaches such as crochet to subvert male-dominated standards of art in the 1970s. Her essay reflects on the challenges since that time, and how the meaning of her work "Womb Room" in *Womenhouse* is still applicable to contemporary scholars and artists. She speaks about the integral connection between the body, materiality and making through "thinking hands" (Wilding, 95). Likewise, by learning crocheting techniques throughout the past year (online and in-person), I have trained my hands to hold muscle memory of specific patterns of movement. 'Thinking Hands' speaks to another key component of my studio work, the laborious practice of casting in bronze and plaster. The bronze and plaster hands are at times static, and other times in motion. The casts of my moving hands capture the performative gestures used in the act of crocheting.

I also embed (embrace) articles of used clothing within my practice. Daily use, wear-and-tear speak of their materiality and in turn can remind us of our mortality. This has been deeply important to my work when dealing with clothing that has belonged to my grandmother. I spend time with each article of clothing by embroidering it with specific words I

have written during my daily commute. Wilding's writing acknowledges the issue of Western societies' continued benefit from "women's work" as it applies to the technology sector today; women and children producing many technological products that they themselves will never have access to (Wilding, 96). My interest in using open-source software and digital fabrication methods to create tools that are needed to crochet is an acknowledgment that the tools I have access to through this technology are also rooted in a deeply problematic system of privilege and access. Wilding's essay has been foundational in my pursuit of using "domestic" techniques to question what domesticity is and how it is still deeply tied to art and crafts of feminists in contemporary society.

Elaine Cheasley Paterson and Susan Surette's anthology *Sloppy Craft: Postdisciplinarity and the Crafts* (2015) was my first introduction into the study of craft. The text examines many ways in which craft can be changed, adapted and queered. Sloppy craft conceptually creates spaces for many bodies, and is used as a framework to reconsider our preconceived notions of skill and structure within larger contemporary craft-making communities of practice. I focused specifically on Gloria Hickey's essay "Why is sloppy and postdisciplinary craft significant and what are its historical precedents?" to give me the context I needed to understand the different applications of studio craft, DIY, sloppy craft and postdisciplinary craft. In her essay, Hickey argues that European standards of craft were based on both materiality and skills passed down through craftspeople (Hickey, 109). Although much time has passed since the Renaissance, universities and colleges still focus on specific disciplines within crafts (Hickey, 110). Postdisciplinary craft practices, however, focus on breaking with these traditions to form DIY (Do It Yourself) communities that do not "worship at the altar of the past" (Hickey, 110). They do not focus on mastering one material or technique and are often purposefully interdisciplinary. Interdisciplinary processes, in my own experience, involve the use of a multitude of materials and ways of making that are not necessarily connected in a more European traditional sense. Through the tool of the Internet, these groups also have ways of connecting globally to share

ideas, inspiration and conceptual notions of making (Hickey, 114). The type of DIY communities Hickey is speaking about, are not the ones shown in glossy magazines or on “Martha Stewart Living”. They position themselves as adjacent to the monetarily driven craft hobbyists. Her argument that sloppy craft could be considered as part of the DIY movement (since they both include a large group of amateur makers) is one that I am also dealing with in my own work.

I have used DIY methods in this body of work by investigating crochet tutorials and downloading “.stl.”(standard triangle language) files to 3D print crochet hooks in various shapes and sizes. These tutorials and files did not cost me monetary funds to access, and were created to share a specific skill/knowledge that I did not previously have. Using the Internet as a resource can also aid in the creation of a more democratic approach, in contrast to traditional studio crafts; making it accessible to a variety of people that might not have had the privilege to access traditional studio crafts previously. Accessibility is an important facet of both DIY and open source systems. I will explain more on this topic in Chapter 2.

When I first encountered Peter Stallybrass’ essay “Worn Worlds: Clothes, Mourning and the Life of Things” (1993) in *The Textile Reader* edited by Jessica Hemmings, I was trying to find a way to relate material culture (or, materials I had personally collected) to the social and ethical pressures which come with using previously worn clothing as part of my practice. Although I had made a few embroidered pieces at this point, I wanted to navigate using clothing that had a more personal connection to me. My mother gave me some of her mother’s shirts after she passed away and they had been sitting in a box for many years. Initially, I was apprehensive about using or altering them; although I did not have a close relationship with my grandmother before her passing, I had these shirts that were in a sense connected to her. Some shirts are clearly store-bought, as they contain tags while some are handmade and show signs of being hand-cut and sewn. The mark left by the scissors on the fabric show signs of being cut by hand, and the threads sometimes change throughout the garment. There are



Figure. 1 Vanessa Krause, "we were bad/made for each other"  
Getragen/Worn or Carried. Embroidery on worn bra. Toronto, 2020.



Figure. 2 Vanessa Krause, "another time/place" Getragen/Worn or Carried. Embroidery on worn bra. Toronto, 2020.

no tags in the hand-sewn garment. They all look remarkably similar and are made of synthetic materials.

Stallybrass writes about his connection to clothing: “cloth is a kind of memory” that is shaped by the wearer (70). Although I have no clear memories of my grandmother (before she was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s), I recall my mother and family visiting her often. The clothes that I have now (a remnant of material possessions) are a trace of my grandmother’s existence in this world. I am now using them to find and develop connections to her; to shape new memories with these material things and to accept that by knowing myself a bit better, I am also getting to know her. Stallybrass writes about the jacket that belonged to his close friend Allon (who had passed away) and how the acknowledgment of grief he was holding on to overcame him when wearing his jacket. All the shirts I have from my grandmother also *fit me*. I am displaying them openly for others to touch, wear and connect to. The shirts become activated and sites for new memories, shapes and smells. They live again.

*Material Matters* (Eds. Ingrid Bachmann & Ruth Scheuing, 1998) is a collection of essays about textile art and how it is produced, seen and discussed. For this review, I focus on Janis Jefferies’ essay “Autobiographical Patterns” I am employing autoethnographic/autobiographical approaches in my writing and embroidery and found Jefferies’ critical essay very useful. She differentiates “autobiography” from “autographics” by stating, “[autographics] is not necessarily concerned with the process or unfolding of life events as reflective self-presence, but rather makes the writing itself an aspect of self-hood that the writer experiences and brings into being the possibility of playful, even wicked, self-invention.” (Jefferies, 108). When working with clothing, I embroidered fragments of larger texts I had written throughout my MFA. These poems and short stories were usually written while commuting or waiting for the train or bus. They include observations, reflections, memories, imagined stories and do not follow a linear pattern of thinking.

Some of the texts are also written in German, as this is my first language. 'Autographics' has become a useful term in my research, and resonated with the type of work I have made - it does not fall into one specific category. "The question of who we are in terms of autobiography can be replaced by what "we" are as the self is understood as a moving line or thread that takes us toward becoming other than that which we may think "we" know." (116). It is my intention to challenge the notion of memory as something sentimental by purposefully disrupting the inherited material objects and placing them into a space where they themselves can be worn by the visitor. My embroidery and writing process is also one that has been performed in many locations - the pieces themselves do not reveal the whole story but become "pages" in a book of collected fragments. By pages, I mean the clothing I am embroidering becomes the pages of a larger story, written only in thread and collected in the thesis exhibition (a physical wooden wardrobe acts as bookends).

My sculptural work is made from life-casts of my own hands and the hands of my mother. They can be 'read' in the sense of materiality, weight and presence. They are situated within the larger framework of the imagined domestic space I have created for this exhibition. The sculptures capture the lifelike qualities of hands (I used dragon-skin silicone to capture them) and are a remnant of the hands making them. The bronze hands are solid and extremely heavy (more so, than these hands can be), they look almost too real. I can know that my mother and I are both represented in these hands, yet also very much absent and removed. The "we" has been altered and shifted through the use of metal and plaster - both industrial and sculptural materials. The context of the body shifts and is changed through their presence - a reminder of the hands it took to create any and all pieces within this exhibition.

Lisa Le Feuvre's curated collection *Failure* guided my understanding of failure as a methodological research framework. I am primarily looking at Le Feuvre's introduction to the collected volume as a guide to my own work as an artist operating with sloppy craft frameworks. I believe that failure and sloppy craft are closely related, and work together to break

through the established craft practices that still somewhat dominate contemporary craft purposes today - especially the requirement for craft artists to establish perfection within their work. Le Feuvre speaks about the most important aspects of failure: "In this uncertain and beguiling space, between the two subjective poles of success and failure, where paradox rules, where transgressive activities can refuse dogma and surety, it is here, surely, that failure can be celebrated." (19). Sloppy craft and postdisciplinary practices live within the space of success and failure. They can be made by people who are trained professionally and those using the medium in amateur ways.

With regard to bronze casting - there is an understanding that specific steps *must* happen, in order for a work to "succeed"; while also respecting that each piece is individually made and therefore its conception and lost wax can also break with a tradition of casting that sees many public works made of bronze showing monumental (read: male) figures of power. Bronze casting is still a largely male (dominated) field today, however, there are also many women working within the realm in new and relevant ways. When researching contemporary iron pouring further, (in preparation for attending the cast iron conference in Buffalo, N.Y) I found the American artist Katherine Rutecki (MFA from Southern Illinois University) who participated in the 2019 "Fierce: Women in Iron" conference. This event took place in Peoria, Illinois and featured the work of over 35 self-identified women (Rutecki). When I attended the cast iron conference in Buffalo, N.Y (also known as the "Turkey Pour") many of the artists were using alternative and experimental casting techniques; some used wood and other flammable materials as the basis for casting their experimental work. When writing this document, the same question followed me throughout - how can I better fail at my work? What steps can I purposely take that allow me to create work that is not bound to the same "dogma" that so many fine art and craft practices follow, even today?





**Figure. 3** *Vanessa Krause, Iron Shells.* Cast iron shells made from 3D prints and mould making processes, cast in wax and made into metal through lost-wax casting. These are pieces made at the Iron Pour in Buffalo, N.Y. 2019.

# Chapter 2

## Gating and Slurry

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks outlined within this document are focused on postdisciplinary craft and how it is relevant to my practice in dealing with postdisciplinary craft as an artist and *not* as a craftsman. By looking at an established text, *The Craftsman* I am focusing on realizing the long tradition of craft within the context of arts, and how feminists seek to dismantle the gendered, European hierarchy of craft practices. I am guided by their interest to purposefully break with tradition by inviting many ways of making in the realm of the craft-art purgatory.

### Postdisciplinary Craft

Guilds, Apprenticeship and Meister Lehre are all based on a system where knowledge and skills are passed down from one person to another. It involves the skill needed to use specific tools and machinery to create products or tools. These types of systems specifically certify an individual to work on that field, even today. In a European context, this was a system largely involving men - we can think of examples such as Michaelangelo's career (starting his sculptural apprenticeship as a child). There is a hierarchy and importance given to this system. By explaining the structure of these systems, I want to focus on how my practice differs from these modes of learning. I am breaking with the tradition of mastery in order to explore my personal interest in using soft media, such as worn clothing, embroidery and large-scale crocheting within the act of re-imagining, reconfiguring, and dealing with the burden of material possessions. My central focus is to work outside of and without the mastery of skill, and instead focus on how the materials I am using guide my hands. When working with embroidery

and sewing of second-hand and inherited items, the act of changing / altering and giving new meaning to the materials I have inherited (for example: my grandmother's shirts and scarves) I consciously apply amateurism within my works. Within craft, usually signs of handiwork are removed, I have chosen to reveal and embrace these traces within my creative process.

Postdisciplinary Craft is a large part of my theoretical investigation and driving force for my material approaches. It is the reason why I have enjoyed working with "soft materials" such as embroidery, crocheting and sewing skills in amateur ways.

## Guilds, Apprenticeships and Meister Lehre

The topic of postdisciplinary craft is widely accepted as the break from traditional methods such as the act of following a pattern, working within the confines of a loom, and needing specific certification such as the German "Meister Lehre". The reason I bring up the "Meister Lehre" is because it is something that my mother learned in the late 20th century, when she emigrated to Germany. It is part of a very prestigious and closed system that follows rules and certification strictly (Muthesius, 87). Traditionally, European craft practices and mastering these skills were also tied to a strict apprenticeship program. I purposefully do not apply the same material uses or processes that my mother learned in her studies. I am working with domestic materials such as clothing, sewing tools, and crochet. It is my theoretical approach to making, that goes against the rigid structure of the "Meister Lehre". I am not seeking a mastery of skill or knowledge, but a better understanding of where my work fits into a more interdisciplinary intersection between art and craft.

Reading Gloria Hickey's essay "Why is sloppy and postdisciplinary craft significant and what are its historical precedents?" in *Sloppy Craft*, I came to realize that my investigation into craft practices was without the intention to gain mastery of skills. Hickey writes, "postdisciplinary craft is a radical shift away from the past. It is time for academics and craft theorists to

wake up and notice.” (110-11). She explains that emerging craftspeople and artists are moving away from traditional models of classrooms, to focus instead on the material investigation and, I would argue, what we call practice-led research (110). Within my own body of work and creative writing, I am focusing on the physical repetition of techniques, on the limitations of my own skills in relation to my chosen materials. I am not intent on becoming a seamstress, embroidery master or the next crochet wizard. Martha Stewart ain’t calling me for a tutorial. By researching what a traditional craftsperson is, it is my full intention to purposefully focus on an interdisciplinary arts approach.

## The Craftsman

### *Making, materials & ethics*

“[...] knowledge [is] gained in the hand through touch and movement. The argument about imagination begins by exploring language that attempts to direct and guide bodily skill.” (Sennett, 21).

It might seem hilarious to place postdisciplinary craft and *The Craftsman* next to each other, to make the argument that I am not following traditional craftsmanship, but hear me out. In his book *The Craftsman*, Richard Sennett begins his prologue by speaking about the various versions of Pandora’s Box that we have unleashed upon ourselves. Starting with the specific example of the Cold War, and the invention of the atomic bomb - a man-made tool of ultimate destruction - that was created in secret, we have used scientific advancements to our peril. Although we have the innate ability to create methods of destroying ourselves (and our planet), we also have some control over creating positive actions. We can be both “*Animal laborans*” (how) and “*Homo faber*” (why) (17). The actions we complete can range dramatically, and *Animal laborans* can certainly reveal a more destructive side of humankind. To move beyond this primary setting, we can use skills such as art/ design/craft to question the state of

our world today. As Sennett states: “[...] people can learn about themselves through the things they make, that material culture matters.” (19). Through my own investigation into material culture, inherited possessions, memory and craft practices, I have found this statement to be true.

By navigating personal issues, such as the overconsumption of single-use plastics and witnessing the devastation of climate change and pollution, it has become clear to me that I need to be aware of the materials I choose to create my work with. This realization comes at an important juncture in my practice, and I have tried to work within a range of inherited objects (including textiles) and thread, cotton yarn, as well as new materials; hydrocal plaster, foundry wax, bronze, reusable silicone moulds, alginate (plant-based), and many more materials. Although many of these materials are naturally occurring, or have been through the cycle of consumption more than once (without being discarded), there is, sadly, material waste and byproduct for each of these processes. Making is often the process of unmaking (especially in mould making and bronze casting) [Figure 28]. I am aware of the hypocrisy of writing about single-use materials and the waste production of specific creative processes, however; I decided to work with as many renewable, non-toxic and reused materials as possible within the limitations of this thesis and current fabrication methods.

As part of this thesis journey, I have endeavored to learn new fabrication methods, that reach beyond the flat 2D plane that I had worked within for many years. I have previously studied drawing and painting, with a focus on oil painting. These three-dimensional (*new to me*) material practices are often time-consuming, laborious processes that require extensive physical work. When I began working with bronze-casting, I had never worked in such an industrial way - there are hundreds of steps to follow to get an/any end result - all of them involving hard work. I was also challenged with giving up control of my work and relying on others to create the final object during the bronze pouring process. Relinquishing this type of control was very challenging initially. I have since realized that this is an important step to break the narrow



**Figure. 4** Vanessa Krause, *High Five*. These silicone and plaster moulds were used to cast the wax hands needed to create the solid bronze pieces [Figure 18]. Because the silicone ripped after the first cast, I had to mend it in order to cast multiples. Toronto, 2019.

tradition of “mastery” of skill. I wanted to keep this feeling of anxiety and expectation alive in my exhibition. I have therefore decided that many pieces on “display” are also able to be engaged with through touch and tactility.

Throughout this experience of creating and experimenting with many media, including digital fabrication methods, craft practices and bronze casting; I have come to realize that the knowledge I have gained in these two years has been *through* making. I have kept an open mind when trying new materials. Sometimes these experiments ended quickly, other times they became my thesis work. I did not realize that through this process, my body would learn as much about making, as my mind has. Richard Sennett writes: “I make two contentious arguments: first, that all skills, even the most abstract, begin as bodily practices; second, that technical understanding develops through the powers of imagination” (21).

I have spent countless hours learning the art of bronze casting (a skill I learned in January of 2019). At first, I was pleased by my disregard for sculptural practices and aesthetics; however, I soon realized that bronze casting is an experimental, industrial project. Not far removed from other time and life-consuming practices, such as hand sewing and crochet work. It embodied what I was trying to achieve - a break from traditional practices, such as drawing and painting (if I have to read that painting is dead one more time...). I was trying to escape this rigid structure of fine art when I found metalwork. A process that requires: intense attention to detail, a soft touch, time, a lot of holding one's breath - hoping nothing breaks - and then intense destructive power as one devest the mould and start the metalworking process. At the very end, the one gets to paint with fire (add a patina). I could spend a whole lifetime on it, and still not know it. That is why bronze - casting, to me, embodies both physical knowledge and imagination. It is a physical manifestation of problem-solving. No two pieces are the same.

My initial attraction to bronze work is that it is a witness to time, since the production time is so long but it also transcends the time in which it is made: it can last for longer than

one lifetime. The anxiety that comes from the realization that the bronze piece you make can last longer than your physical human form is summarized by Sennett: "Objects do not inevitably decay from within like a human body. The histories of things follow a different course, in which metamorphosis and adaptation play a stronger role across human generations." (26). The pieces I have made in bronze have the potential to see other histories and generations than I ever will. These solid representations of hands I have made using body-double silicone and mould-making techniques, create a disturbingly real object [Figure 5 & 18]. The weight of these hands far exceeds the human hand; become anchors that want to connect to the ground through the pull of gravity. They are at once removed from the context of the body, but also a representation of the body captured in one moment.





**Figure. 5** *Vanessa Krause, Kraft-Women*. A studio shot of the finished work. Solid bronze hands made from silicone mould. Total bronze weight: 17.6lbs or 8kg. Toronto, 2020.

## *Repetition & Remnants*

When creating this body of work, I became very interested in the various invisible or temporal gestures required to complete many repetitive processes. Initially, I sought to capture these actions only through the remnants of my process (the finished product), and realized that the hands themselves held the ability to address gestures in my work. I worked with my own hands first (through silicone mould-making) to create a replica of my own hands (with the help of my friends in the mould making studio) [Figure 4]. Once I poured plaster into the mould, I was astounded by the life-like quality of the work. I repeated this process, this time capturing my mother's hands [Figure 5]. Her hands have worked through industrial processes in the past - and she currently works with computers on a daily basis.

Although the rhythm and movements of her hands have changed, the evidence of working with her hands is clear in both shape and scale. In Sennett's chapter "The Hand" he writes about the various aspects of practices that relate to the careful and strategic coordination of hands and specifically, the relationship between fingers, thumbs and our brains: "The hands thus establish a repertoire of learned gestures. The gestures can be further refined or revised within the rhythmic process that occurs in, and sustains practicing." (178).

Here, Sennett is referring to musicians, chefs and glass blowers, but the same can be said for craft practices and metalwork. I believe that this can also apply to artists, designers and crafts-people. I have used both high-quality silicone (to create moulds that can be used many times - for static gestures) as well as alginate ( a much more flexible once-use mould) to create hands in motion. I prefer working with the alginate, because it allows for very messy, motion-oriented plaster casting. The casts show the evidence of disruption in the mould-making process by creating parts of the mould that resemble white coral and other underwater life forms. I am breaking the alginate mould as it is trying to solidify. Sennett writes: "the probing craftsman does more than encounter mess; he or she creates it as a means of understanding

working procedures.” (161). The repetitive movement in the process of casting I am applying, is “prehension” or, the action in advance of data (154), required for crocheting and embroidery. The plaster hands I created are evidence of a specific gesture having happened. It leaves an uncanny trace of disruption, and it is this disruption I am interested in. I see the plaster casts as analogous to the mess described by Sennett. I am capturing the gesture of my hands - the knowledge that resides in them through the repetitive trained action, and displaying it as part of the evidence of having used these actions to create [Figure 16].

## Sloppy Craft

### *Conscious deskilling & expertise*

When I initially began the journey into craft and the fabricated object, I was interested in the application of sloppy craft as a method. At first I was convinced that skillful making (read: perfection) and sloppy craft were at complete opposite sides of the spectrum. In reading Anne Wilson’s forward in *Sloppy Craft*, I came to realize, that this was an incorrect way of interpreting the term and how it connects to postdisciplinarity. Wilson (who coined the term “sloppy craft” in 2007) writes: “I see no inherent value in either sloppiness or perfection in the way a thing is crafted. I advocate employing craft as appropriate to the content or to a particular conceptual structure of work” (Wilson, xxvi). When I initially started using craft approaches, such as crocheting - my movements were indecisive and unskilled. I would become frustrated at my lack of understanding (how to hold the tools, or create the right amount of tension) and simply focused on one type of technique: the single crochet.

The more time I spent practicing the single crochet, the more I was able to expand my practice and understand the physical motions required to continue my work. Now that I am more adept at using these tools for making, I have to constantly fight the urge to undo and redo sections of my crochet work [Figure 13]. I have to consciously let it breathe. I believe that

sloppy craft, in my application of it, lives between the two perceived binaries - unskillful making and perfection.

This becomes challenging to apply to material methods that require a certain level of attention to detail. It was difficult (if not impossible) to ignore the fact that my hands started to remember how to use material methods, especially in the foundry. In the book *On Weaving* the artist Anni Albers writes about tactility and touch in relation to textile work (weaving) in Chapter Eight "Tactile Sensibility". She writes: "our materials come to us already ground and chipped [...] and sliced, so that only the finale in the long sequence of operations from matter to product is left to us: we merely toast the bread" (59). I have toasted a lot of bread in this thesis. What kind of prehension is left when the whole physical process is already done? This is the case with the clothing that I am using as my "living pages" within my exhibition. The clothing I am using is in some cases mass-produced by anonymous factory workers - for large corporations who profit from their low wages. On the other hand, I am also using hand-made clothing. These two pieces living together - in contrast to one another - create a dialogue (or argument) about the importance of interacting with these tactile and forgettable objects. I have to confess that I am a person who does not pay a lot of attention to fashion, and usually buys very basic, functional clothing instead. However, I am taking time to sit with these objects as I embroider them by hand, with basic, rough embroidery techniques. I find the comparison between fine art considerations, such as line and colour fascinating - as they are very similar to working with sewing processes. Albers continues: "we will learn to use grain and gloss, smoothness, roughness, the relief-quality of combined heavy and fine materials - those elements of form that belong to the aesthetic side of tactile experiences - and will find them equally as important as areal divisions and colour." (61-62). Although, again, Albers is referring to material processes in relation to weaving, I believe that the consideration for roughness, smoothness and weight, are all applicable when working with clothing and embroidery. The weight of the words in contrast to the weight of the fabric all up against the weight of

material possession (obsession) and consumption are addressed in my work. The viewer/participant is invited to feel, touch, smell, and wear the clothing and the words on them [Figure 1, 2, 6, 7, 19, 20, 21].



**Figure. 6** Vanessa Krause, "du bist nicht allein" from *Getragen/Worn or carried*. Work in progress shot from studio collection of embroidered shirts. Toronto, 2020.



Figure. 7 Vanessa Krause, "Things left unsaid" from *Getragen/ Worn or carried*. Hand embroidered worn bra. Toronto, 2020.

## *Domesticity as mutable*

Finally, when considering the implications of sloppy craft in relation to women's work and the early feminist movement in crafts, I explore domesticity and specifically in relationship to spaces, as an encompassing and joining aspect to my body of work (work of the body).

I have to give some personal context here, to give weight to the use of the term domesticity. I am a very privileged person, and have known many great and strong women in my family. Growing up in both Germany and Canada, my home life was often very unstable. I have been evicted by family members, and have lived in women's shelters. I have lived in social housing. I have packed and unpacked more boxes of belongings than I care to think about. At one point, I counted how many schools I attended before grade 9. It was upwards of 7. I am very lucky, because throughout all of this, I had my siblings and my mother as well as other family members who deeply cared. Because of these traumas and testing situations, my relationship with my mother and my family has never been easy. We have mended it many times over again. I want to emphasize with this context that domesticity and the domestic space are something new to me. The stability of living somewhere for more than four years as an adult is something that I am still testing. The type of domesticity I am displaying in my work is not something that I have experienced myself, but something I have imagined experiencing. I am not trying to be nostalgic or to perpetuate an ideal way of living. The closest thing to this space is the only stable place I remember growing up in - my Oma and Opa's house in Germany. Stability is something I have difficulty committing to. Even in my work and creative writing, I want to create a temporary space that can serve as an invitation to others to also experience this type of feeling (rather than aesthetic) along with me.

## Material Culture

*New stuff, old stuff, more stuff, less stuff*

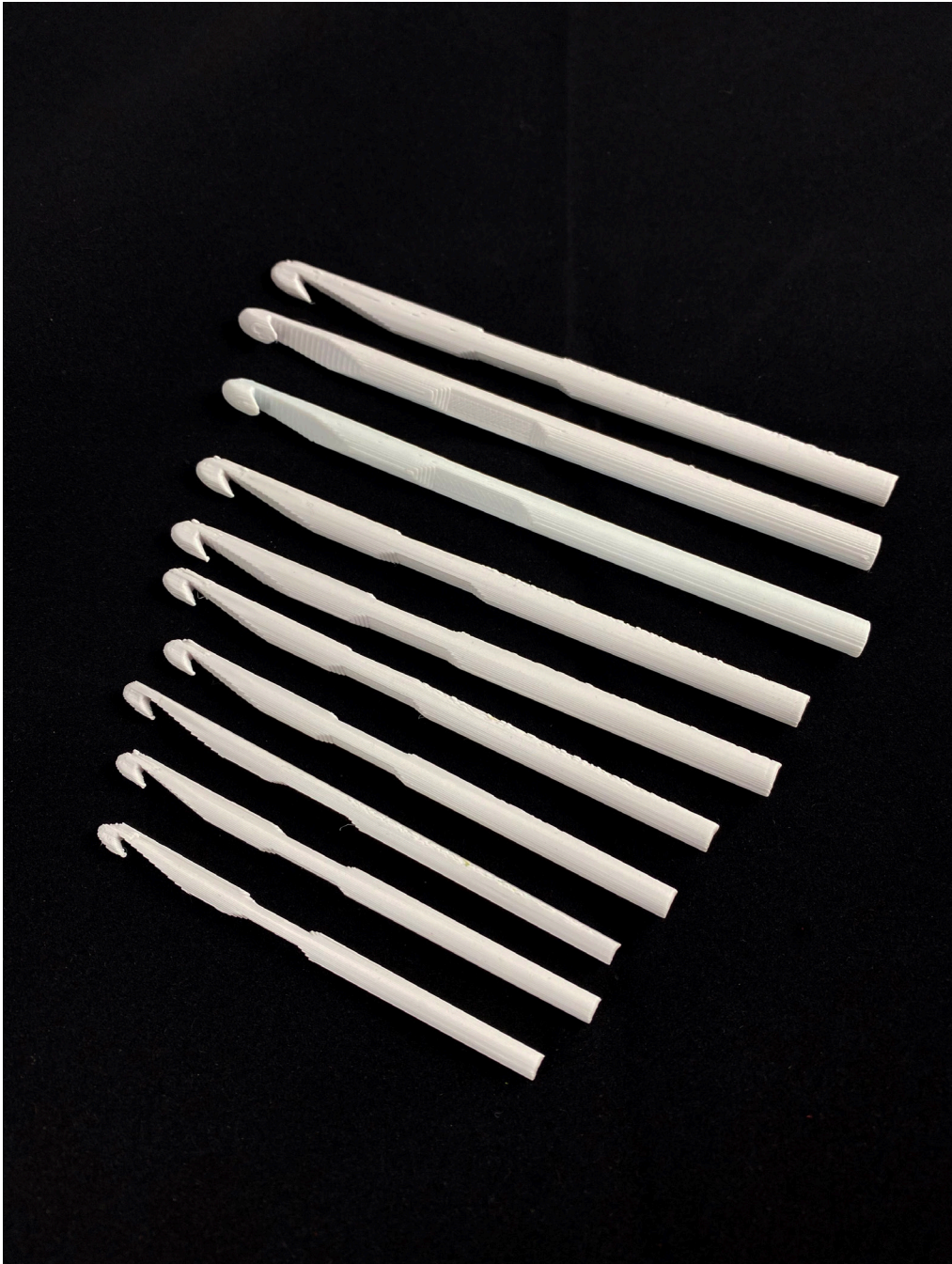
This will be a very brief look at one material culture theorist. Although there are plenty of sources to reference when talking about inherited and second-hand materials, the main thrust of this thesis is to use material possessions as a backdrop to broader conversations about postdisciplinary and theoretical ways of thinking about making. One of my electives in the first year of Master's studies, was a course focused on material culture. I had always used objects as a source for my artistic practice, but found that through this course I was able to better contextualize my material investigations. One writer that stood out to me when I was scouring through my "Living with Things" course reader is contemporary Dutch theorist Louise Schouwemberg, who wrote "For the Love of Things" (2003); which discusses our relationship to material objects with regards to fabrication, use, design and our current obsessions with "new" things. Although this was written in 2003, many of the topics she touches upon have only been greatly enhanced with smart-devices and our unquenchable thirst for the latest update. She references Maurice Merleau-Ponty in relation to our self-perception and connection to the world around us through material objects:

We accord purpose and meaning to the world around us through our bodies. Before we can give a name at a conscious level to what we see, to our perceptions, we have already accumulated by purely somatic means knowledge about space, about the objects in it, and about our relation to those objects. This implies that we may expect things to have properties that make it both possible and worthwhile for us to attach experiences and meaning to them. (199).

I have to agree that this assessment is particularly poignant when discussing material objects and technological devices that we rely on everyday. We, in western countries have (collectively) decided that the value of an object is more important when it is new. This value model drives our economies. We no longer place our worth on character, but instead on material objects (Schouwenberg, 200). I am using some digital fabrication methods to create



copies of tools that I own - which are also mass-produced. By using sites such as Thingiverse and downloading crochet hooks (with open-source software), I was able to replicate them at various scales using the software Cura Lulzbot [Figure 8]. Although I am only focusing on 3D printing crochet hooks and scissors, there is no real limitation to the types of tools I could print with this system (only scale and time are a constraint). I am mass-producing small, somewhat fragile tools out of PLA filament that could be used by myself or others to crochet. I was initially interested in replicating the crochet hook, because I was unable to find specific information online about the producer of the hooks that I had purchased through Amazon.ca.



**Figure. 8** Vanessa Krause, Detail of 3D printed crochet hook part of *Fragile Tools*. Work in progress shot at the 205 Richmond Street Studio. Toronto, 2020.

## *A personal supply-chain*

I tried tracing the company through which I purchased my crochet hooks. The company RioRand which supplies the tools to Amazon.ca is very vague in its company description, and did not specify where or how these tools were made. As a way to articulate the issue I have, with regards to the disconnection between the tools I use, and the production cycle they are created by; I have chosen to create a mould of my most-used crochet and sewing tools for this thesis. I used rebound silicone to create the two-part mould over the span of two days [Figure 9]. This process requires rigorous mixing and planning on where the objects are embedded into clay. The two-part silicone needs to be mixed precisely to avoid disastrous consequences (if the parts are not equal - they do not set - leaving a slimy trail). Once this was completed, I created moulds of the objects using foundry wax (it's a lot more forgiving than plaster). Ironically, some of the crochet hooks I made in wax would be far too small to cast in bronze - at least through a lost-wax method. The two-part mould also proved difficult to use, as I did not create any specific holes for the wax, plaster and resin to flow into. Instead, I had to fill each side separately, and crush them together while the material was still malleable. This often led to miscasts. I suppose in a way, that is the best way to discuss the issue of material objects in relation to their production cycle. I am not producing tools to use necessarily - as many of them would be far too fragile in a new medium such as plaster [Figure 17].

However, I do think they are relevant when taking them out of their intended function as part of the hobby-craft market, and making them into art objects: "Only where contemporary utilitarian objects are bold enough to cross the boundary between usefulness and relative artistic autonomy do they have the potential to simultaneously deny and prove themselves." (Schouwenberg, 204). By re-casting the crochet hooks, scissors and needle, they have the ability to become something else. They are at the boundary of useful and useless. The tools have become sloppy.



**Figure. 9** Vanessa Krause, Detail of mould used for *Fragile Tools*.  
Toronto, 2020.

# Chapter 3

## Burnout and Patch

### Methodological Frameworks

My focus for methodology is centered around material investigations in order to establish connections to postdisciplinary craft processes, mending and foundry work. These physical processes, although vastly different, are all centered around material investigation and how the body is connected to the process of thinking. The process of creating intensive works, such as mould making and bronze casting feature the same repetitive and physically demanding process that embroidery and crocheting require.

#### *Practice-Led Research*

The act of learning from and through materials is something I am showing in my thesis by intentionally working within three main media and projects. Although I do not want to spend a lot of time making connections to anthropology, ethnography or social - science in general, I do need to explain my use of *practice - led* research. This concept is not new, but explained very well by Kris Rutten, "the aim is to further critical work on ethnography in relation to contemporary art by specifically looking at art practices and processes, and to offer a bottom-up perspective from artists, critics and theorists to explore if, why and how an ethnographic perspective is at work" (297). By engaging with social-science techniques as a theoretical framework, it becomes easier to demonstrate material exploration as a way to explain the *why* of this thesis investigation. By using domestic materials such as clothing (text embroidery), crocheting (body-scale) and borrowed furniture, I want to create a pseudo-domestic space. This space is based on an imaginary space, not one that I have inhabited before. Therefore, I intend to actively create a space that offers an invitation to stay and linger with the work. I want to use domestic furniture, such as a couch, rug, chairs, side tables, as a tool

for individuals to sit within the gallery space, and will be consciously providing snacks and light refreshments throughout the week for visits to the gallery. I will also be building a wardrobe out of wood (to literally become “bookends” to be embroidered clothing pieces) that is open and accessible for the visitor to peruse. I will provide sewing, crochet and embroidery tools for mending and making at the gallery space, and invite anyone visiting to use these tools for their own pleasure.

On Saturday, April 11th there was meant to be a “mend-in” workshop taking place within the gallery that is open to visitors. I have provided the materials necessary for members of the public to bring their used clothing and garments to be repaired by themselves, by me, or by anyone else willing. The purpose of the mend-in workshop is to create an invitation, a purposeful meeting (for the benefit of the visitor) and a connection that goes beyond the viewer as a passive spectator to the work.

I am relying on borrowed furniture, using recycled wood to build my wardrobe, sharing sewing supplies and crochet techniques - I am relying on the visitor, participant and collaborators to activate this body of work. Through the process of inviting others to participate in this exhibition, I am also honouring all the people that helped get me to this point - even if they are unable to attend this physical space.

Most of these skills have been taught to me by skilled women. Individuals who have worked very hard to learn these skills throughout their lifetime and have been kind enough to share them with me. These skills were often taught to me directly and in person. I want to explore the personal connections and relationships I have to these women, by honouring their knowledge in my work. When it comes to the foundry and sculptural work, I have learned many of these skills from very patient and knowledgeable people -there is no one way in which to correctly create, gate and vent or cast a piece of bronze. There are, at times, notions that contemporary foundry work is a patriarchal industrial field, I have not found this to be the case at OCAD U’s foundry. I believe that to work in a foundry, the only requirement is passion for

the mode of making, respect for the materials and a very hot furnace that melts metal.

When it comes to materiality, I like to reflect on Tim Ingold's writings:

In the turn from spinning a thread to stretching it from point to point lies the 'hinge' between bodily movement and abstract reason, between the textile and the architectural, between the haptic and the optical, between improvisation and abduction, and between becoming and being. Perhaps the key to the ontology of making is to be found in a length of twine. (100).

Foundry work is as much about the in-between of making, as it is about the finished piece.

The piece of bronze is always becoming something - even when a piece is finished, the patina and wax need updating every few years, to ensure that erosion does not make the piece disappear. In the end, bronze pieces can be melted down to create new ones. This material, although solid, is very temporal.

Furthermore, I believe that by opening up the exhibition to hold contemporary installation pieces, soft sculpture and the invitation to participate in the mend-in workshop, I am attempting to engage with tactility and purpose. By sharing the space with others and inviting them into the make and mending process, I aim to create the connection between the work and the process. I would not describe myself as a process-based artist, but I appreciate the process of making something that involves other people. By using borrowed furniture, and focusing on integrating my sculptural pieces into the "domestic" space - I want to create a seamless experience for the visitor, so that they too can become a part of the exhibition. The viewer/visitor becomes a conductive piece for the work. They can touch and interact with the body size crochet piece (which is made to be the scale of my body, not theirs). They can touch and wear the book made of embroidered clothes. They can sit on the couch or chairs and be in the space for as long as they wish. The domestic layout and potentially familiar arrangement of furniture (in a very Western sense) should allow the viewer to experience the desire to sit and stay for a while (as opposed to saying "please stay" on a placard).

Through practice-led research, the "mend-in" can become an invitation for learning, making and sharing. My range of practice includes not only fiber work, but also sculptural and

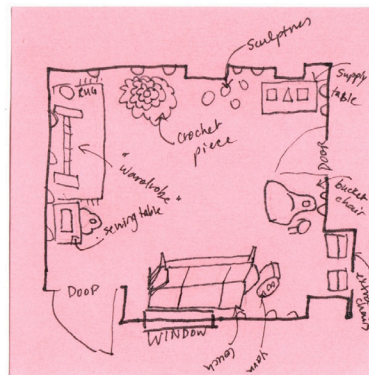
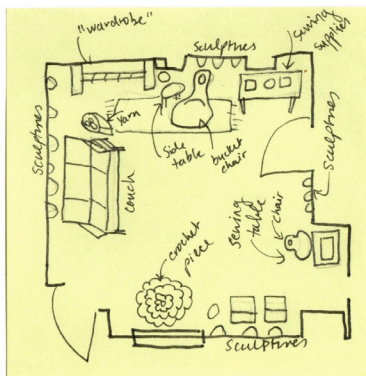
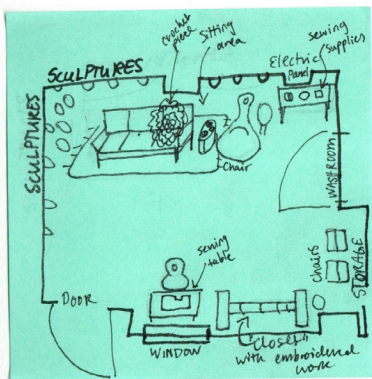


Figure. 10 Vanessa Krause, *Exhibition Layout Planning*, a drawing of Akin Remote Gallery floor plan and exhibition details with furniture. Pen on sticky-notes. Toronto, 2020.



industrial materials; such as mould making and bronze casting. The use of sculptural and industrial materials, such as plaster and bronze is also a part of practice-led research. They are the result of learning processes and techniques that took me over a year to understand and apply. By intentionally linking my alginate moulds to the gestural action of crocheting and sewing, I am capturing the time and repetitive movement my hands undertake when doing textile work. They are evidence of labour that has become muscle memory. The act of capturing gestures as part of the sculptural element of my work also took the collaboration of several people to create. By capturing my own hands in both static and moving gestures, I want to pay tribute to the hands that taught me mending, sewing, crocheting, bronze casting, mouldmaking, metal-working and many other skills I use in my own creative practice today. Though I cannot physically capture their hands, I can capture mine performing the movements I have been taught.

### *Material Investigations*

I have previously stated that I am not a craftsperson, although I have to admit that I have been influenced by writers who focus on craft, such as Glenn Adamson. When reading “Craft to the Second Power” (2018) in *Metalsmith*, I was struck by the relationship that Adamson points out between craft and metal casting processes. Until this point, I had thought of my two main practices as somehow siloed and disconnected - working in opposition in fact. Adamson writes about foundry work:

Like photography (though with far greater effort), casting destabilizes the relationship between the artist’s touch and the work. For this reason, foundry casting, with its delegation of labour, fits awkwardly into the narratives of craft that are strongly associated with uniqueness. (31)

When going through the bronze casting process in this past year, I have been extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to witness many pours at OCAD University (through my class and the Foundry Club) and also at the State University of Buffalo, NY - for their annual iron pour.

The process of pouring is extremely labour intensive, requires rigorous safety procedures and skilled hands. It is chaotic teamwork - each member participating in a pour is essential - but must remain quick on their feet. During one of the first pours I witnessed at OCAD U, one of the ceramic shells started to crack and leak hot molten metal into the bed of small nickel alloy slag. The person who was in charge of holding the "pancake" (picture a piece of aluminum foil the size of a hand filled with soft heat-resistant cement) frantically ran over to the piece and started covering what they could. Unfazed, the technicians had to keep the pour going, and later went back and tried to fill up the broken ceramic shell with more liquid metal. In the end, most of the piece was salvageable. I do not like to use the word "unique" to describe anything related to creative making (it's been overused), but in this case, it is fully applicable. Each pour is in fact, unique, unpredictable and filled with many people problem-solving together. The piece is out of the "artist's" hands.



**Figure. 11** Vanessa Krause, *Heavy Metal*, 35mm colour film photograph from the Iron Pour in Buffalo NY, 2019.

When I moved to Canada in early 2000, I was very fortunate that my Oma and Opa would pay for my flight back to Germany during the summer months (until their passing). My Oma would spend the summer with me at their house - getting me to do a large range of domestic tasks. She taught me how to make cake, by getting me to grind down almonds and clean spatulas. She would help me to sew tattered jeans (they were cool in the mid 2000's), because she didn't think they were fashionable. Although we did not agree on fashion elements, she was always patient with me. I used to look forward to these times of quiet, contemplation and calmness each year. Although my teenage self was not interested in anything domestic, these are the skills I am building on now - and in the art practice after this thesis. These skills have been given to me, and I intend to use them.

I only recently became interested in using crocheting as a technique for installation and "soft" sculpture. I was accustomed to seeing crochet pieces as decorative domestic elements in my Oma's house. Initially, I wanted to learn crocheting techniques to create a literal web of yarn for my first studio course in the IAMD program. I made connections to Louise Bourgeois' *Maman* sculpture. It was very successful, and I got hooked (pun fully intended). Through further investigation into the history of feminist ways of making, I found Faith Wilding's crochet work to be my first real introduction to the idea that crochet work could also be site-specific installation. I had never thought of "crafts" as existing in the same realm as "installation art". When I saw her work "Crocheted Environment" within the larger installation of *Womanhouse* (1972), I was mesmerized by her ability to take up space with something as simple as thread.

Through the process of learning how to crochet, I realized that most crochet learning had previously taken place when people were working together. I was primarily learning through DIY books and YouTube tutorials. These resources taught me how to start a crochet chain, complete a circle, single crochet stitches, double and triple crochet. I learned how to hold the needle. Some of these not-so-personal processes were difficult and frustrating. Upon further exploration, I realized that I could have learned these skills much faster from another

human. Part of my frustration with DIY internet culture is that you are simply a spectator, not a participant. It makes me long for human learning (which, I realize is more difficult to come by these days, and in some ways less accessible to some).

There was also a type of flexibility when working with crochet that was unlike any other medium I had ever used before. I could make pieces while commuting. I could use a variety of thread and tools. In a way, I was becoming a spider spinning a web of yarn. There is a type of temporality and timeliness to the crochet piece that I would not have been able to anticipate before making. Faith Wilding's work (as well as her writing) have greatly influenced my crochet piece "Monstrous Making" - it is scaled to my body - although I had initially envisioned it being twice, or three times the size it is today [Figure 13]. I decided that the limitation of scale was not only due to time, but also because of all the other works in the exhibition deal with the body. Wilding's installation "Womb Room" is larger than life, it brings the scale of the viewer into question - making them feel profoundly enveloped. This is something I would like to consider further in the near future, but not something feasible for this specific project.

## *Mending*

The act of mending has become central to my work through the slow process of material exploration, discussion and research. Mending as a methodology and as a way to process human relationships, loss and material memory. The psychological weight of loss is translated into the physical weight of fabric, crochet and sculptural materials such as plaster and bronze. All are fragile in their own way.

When thinking about the class division outlined in Anna König's writing on mending (which will be covered in detail within the influences of my work), I was reminded that historically in western culture, the need for mending is often related to socio-economic factors. The wealthier classes can afford to pay someone to mend, whilst the poor rely on gaining these skills to keep valuable possessions, such as clothing, longer. With the rise of cheap mass-pro-

duced clothing and fast-fashion, mending has been systematically forgotten. Another important factor that is related to my methodological framework is the idea of mending as an *invisible* action. By invisible, I mean women's labour that is under-appreciated, unpaid, undervalued or unseen; and also the invisibility of mending - making the tear go away. The intentionality is to consider women's work (especially that of the women that I am personally connected to - not only through family) and bring the skills I have learned from women I know (and through the internet -that I don't know personally) and explore how to honour their knowledge in the creation of my body of work; and using my own body to make the work and become a part of it. I am creating an exhibition through the purposeful action of bringing mending as a participatory activity to make it visible and social.

By including both hand-held mending tools (such as needles and thread, crochet hooks, knitting needles) and a sewing machine (a technological device) I want to expand upon the conception of time it takes to mend something. By inviting people to participate in a "mend-in" the action of mending together becomes a visible participatory realization of my intention with this thesis. Creating a space to create visible mends. König writes: "[...] multiple possibilities for intentions in mending, and in each instance the repairer makes a choice: to return the commodity to its original identity, or to rework it in a way that changes its meaning" (578-79). Mending becomes a mark-making tool in my work. Not only through the action of mending in clothing and soft materials, but also by hosting a "mend-in" as part of my thesis show.

Mindy Yan Miller's *Mending Booth* (1994) was an interactive installation piece set up in large shopping malls like the Toronto Eaton Centre, as part of Nuit Blanche. The location of the booth was in a space that signifies massive consumption and an example of an epicenter of capitalism. By locating this exhibition in a shopping mall, Miller challenged the expectation and experience each visitor would have. The act of mending "on-site" while visitors could shop, would create a very interesting relationship between participant and artist; specifically,

the expectation to have something mended while a potential replacement was being considered in the context of the mall. I am drawn to this piece, as it still relevant within today's context (especially with the recent focus on how our addiction to cheap and single-use materials is irreparably harming our planet).

It would be interesting to see if this piece would work without the pretext of being in Nuit Blanche. How would the general public react? Based on this piece, I planned to include a "mend-in" workshop in my exhibition. It is an invitation to come, participate and learn from one another in a communal space. It will consist of simple supplies for sewing, and temporary mending. It is up to the participants if they want to hide or accentuate the repairs they are making. *Mending Booth* is an important reference point for my workshop and the realization that it can take place anywhere.

### *Do It Yourself - Fix it Yourself*

I appreciate the ability to access DIY tools, such as YouTube tutorials anytime, anywhere - to know that so many people can access knowledge, information and tutorials on how to make and mend is important. The barriers set up by the powers-that-be, colonialism, institutions and capitalist ideology (that keeps knowledge and skills away from people because of race, class, socio-economic status and forces them to give up their knowledge skills and tradition to gain natural resources, land, etc.) are broken down to some degree (not everyone has access to computers, the world-wide-web, tools and materials needed). I am prescribing to a very specific approach to DIY that is outlined by Gloria Hickey in *Sloppy Craft*: "One of the most distinguishing markers of the DIY movement is its largely amateur community of crafters. That's the whole point of the DIY movement: it is a craft you make yourself - vernacular craft, if you will, or craft made by the people for the people" (117).

DIY is a return to learning that is an open invitation to the people who are fortunate enough to have the time and resources. What I am applying from DIY is the sense that I am



Figure. 12 Vanessa Krause, *Monstrous Making in a bag*. Toronto, 2020.



making work using material tools accessible to the people around me, without focusing on mastering a specific skill through institutional learning. What I am doing through the act of mending, is utilizing the skills taught to me by my mother, my Oma, friends, family and the world-wide-web of people who upload tutorials about creating sewn, embroidered and crocheted items. The repetitive act of crocheting while speaking, observing or watching people in different settings is one reason why I think a DIY method is so important. I can repeat a tutorial over and over to perfect a skill, or skip ahead to ignore it. There is autonomy in making DIY work, and also in how one chooses to mend something. The mend can restore the item, or change it forever. I will also say I am using the term DIY, however, I am never truly completing this process alone - I rely on an extensive network of people and knowledges to be able to realize my own work. While speaking with my secondary advisor, Michelle Gay pointed out to me that there is a more helpful term than DIY, it's "DIWO" (Do It With Others). This term comes from Marc Garrett and Ruth Catlow (2012), and refers explicitly to online communities, which are able to come together to work through issues such as coding, hardware, hacking and social and legal issues in the digital world (Garrett & Catlow, 2012). They describe a community that strives to work with each other by using a DIWO method. I think DIWO applies to my body of work in every regard, because I could not have completed any of the processes outlined in this paper by myself.

While researching mending collectives within Toronto, Michelle Gay also recommended that I look at Kathryn Walter and Janna Hiemstra's curation of *The Mending Lounge* (2016) as a great example of what a mending sessions could look like. The curators invited various artists, designers and craft makers to participate in this workshop to focus on mending, re-making and valuing material items by repairing and often, enhancing them. This community event took place in 2016 on Queen West, and is a positive example of what can be achieved when creative people work together to challenge once-use rules of consumption. The participatory approach is vital to my work, as mending becomes action through engagement and collective

interest. This event is a hands-on community building exercise that I would like to model in my work moving forward. I am deeply interested in the connections we can form through actions such as mending and working collectively.

## Domesticity & Feminist Making

When working with fiber work, such as crocheting, knitting and embroidery - the domestic space is an unavoidable subject. At first, I resisted the idea of these private spaces as a part of my investigation into craft making (and at one point digital fabrication - a rabbit hole). I have never thought of myself as a very settled person to begin with (although my strong female role-models growing up were all women who, in one sense or another, were masters of their domestic spaces). Domesticity is deeply connected to my final exhibition because of my research into craft theory, postdisciplinary craft and feminist fiber work. While researching feminist fiber work, as previously mentioned, I came across Faith Wilding's crochet work from 1972.

Initially, I was thrilled by work that seemed to be a loud whisper – taking up so much space, yet made of very simple yarn. A web to be simultaneously safe and trapped in - much like my idea of what the domestic space can be. As Wilding's essay "Monstrous Domesticity" in *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* journal from 2000, centralized some of my conflict and interest in the domestic space as a situational setting for my work:

'Domestic' handwork produces useful objects—which are usually as beautiful as the producer can make them—objects which adorn and comfort the body, objects that make life possible. Yet these objects, like bodies, wear out in daily use—they are not immortal or transcendent. Thus they remind us of mortality, and they are regarded as lesser (less human) than art objects. (95).

The domestic space I am creating in my work through the inclusion of borrowed furniture, the act of inviting attendees to participate in the Mend-In workshop on Saturday, April

11th, and the fact that most of my pieces, (except for the bronze casts) are fragile and in some case, temporal; play into the fact that the domestic space in my own life, has always been somewhat *imagined/ transient*.

I am also reminded in Wilding's essay of the reality of loss. The loss of the object and the body, to time. She speaks about the drive for some of her students to pursue domesticity and traditional "women's work" because it is something they have not witnessed in their own lives (Wilding, 91). I am using the domestic space, within a gallery setting to create and position my own interpretation of what a domestic space could be, and how women's work needs to be out in the public sphere to become visible. By reading through Faith Wilding's essay, I was reminded of the physical bodily effort that I have undertaken in making this thing a reality. Bronze casting and mould making aside - learning how to crochet from the "impersonal" space that is the world - wide - web, is part of the loss of learning from other skilled women in my life (97). She is referring to *The Subversive Stitch* when she writes: "there is a loss of the context and culture, the history and content, the feeling of the skill—part of which, as Rozsika Parker has demonstrated, is how skills have been used by women as secret weapons against their enforced domestic roles." (97). By creating an invitation through the "mend-in" I want to acknowledge women's work outside of the traditional domestic space (or private space) and encourage participants to be open to the idea of learning skills from one another.

When I first told my mother-in-law that I wanted to learn how to crochet, she went upstairs, came back to me and handed me a crochet hook and a hank of yarn. She said, "start with this". She showed me how to start with a slip-knot, and how to pass the needle through it, the seeming simplicity had me 'hooked'. Afterwards, I turned to the Internet, the place of DIY practices and learning from tutorials started early on in my MFA schooling. I learned how to start crocheting (including how to start with the first knot, how to hold the needle, etc.) from the YouTuber *simplydaisy*.



Figure. 13 Vanessa Krause, *Monstrous Making*. Approximately 10 balls of unbleached cotton yarn. Toronto, 2020.

Once I grasped the basics (I only used a single crochet for the first year), I decided that I wanted to create a larger crochet form. I found Joanna Martinez's channel and began my pattern with her "German Shell Blanket Tutorial" (a pattern that can be purchased on Ravelry.com). I have to admit that I only ever made it to round 8 or so, and started to repeat random patterns of crochet chains as I worked with the cotton thread on-and-off over the span of four months. I was interested in starting the project, but realized that it was not the end result I was working towards. I did not want to create *this* blanket. I wanted to learn a technique that I could change. The project became *amateur*, messy and unruly. It was transported all around the GTA and Niagara in various bags. It became larger, heavier and more difficult to stuff into my already overstuffed bag. The material weight became lighter than the burden of "finishing" it. It started consuming many skeins of yarn and I had to spend time making balls of yarn to avoid untangling (or cutting) knots. I spent a lot of time with this pile of yarn. I spent a lot of time fretting over it. It became a physical manifestation of the frustration I was carrying in my head when finishing this thesis.

## *Failure as Method*

“The greatest teacher, failure is” - Yoda (Star Wars: The Last Jedi, 2017)

“To be an artist is to fail as no other dare fail” - Samuel Beckett (Le Feuvre, 12).

As part of a self-reflective theoretical framework, embracing failure as a material and philosophical approach was essential. Often viewed as a negative experience, failure has become very fruitful in the labour of making and writing this thesis project. Failure in my approach is not necessarily about finding all limitations within my skills (writing very much included), but also about going down several rabbit holes before finding anything that sticks to this endeavour. The type of failure I am talking about is more about ruminating, lingering, questioning, mending, rebuilding, rethinking, struggling with and accepting type of thing.

The trouble with *failure* as we see it so often in academia, is that it is something to be avoided at all costs. It has negative consequences; embarrassment, punitive measures attached to it. Through the experience of attending this program, I have faced failure in many ways - and I have embraced it. To be specific: I have faced failure in the mould making studio - when trying to dislodge a plaster cast from my life-cast hands (the silicone tore in many places and left scars on all casts after it), I was able to apply mending as a technique to sew the silicone together before casting again. I have faced failure in the Foundry - one of my wax pieces smashed into tiny pieces after dipping it for the third time (days before the iron pour in Buffalo, NY). I have faced failure when crocheting by not following a pattern and ending up taking out multiple rows, until finally accepting them and keeping them from this point forward. I have faced failure when writing - mainly by not giving this creative process the time it needs to become something, to let it out into the world without editing it first. I need to quote Jessica Wyman (my primary advisor) here: “Many people have written a thesis and survived” - and I didn’t believe it until now. There are many things that you won’t see in this document, or in the exhibition that made this final thesis possible - they are all part of the failure - they got me here.

The writer Joel Fisher (also writing in *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*) writes all about the correlation between success and failure in his essay "The Success of Failure" (2000) and is related to his "failure shows" of the 1970s (Fisher, 162). He writes:

Since failure only exists in contrast to success, it too, mirrors this contradiction: it can be considered a kind of incompleteness, or as existence without grace. Paying attention to the way we seem to hold two opinions simultaneously, and to the resultant judgments we make, gives us an opportunity to explore some general attitudes towards human achievement. (156).

His essay focuses a lot on artists' inability to finish work (think Michelangelo) and their fear of how a work could be perceived by their peers. He also mentions artists who have to abandon their work, although they have completed many steps of the process. I believe that for this thesis to be what it is you are reading, many things have also been left out. When it comes to my studio practice, particularly in sculpture, there is a high degree of failure that takes place for every chosen piece shown. Fisher writes about failure being part of a genuine process:

Failure has a curious birth. It comes indirectly, without a trace of cynicism, almost as if it created itself. Failure is never planned for or organized. It comes from outside intention, and always implies the existence of another separate, more vital concern. A genuine failure cannot be intentional. An intentional failure is no such thing, but an unwholesome, nihilistic form of success." (158).

When I initially read Joel Fisher's essay in *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*, I was struck by the specificity in the examples he gave on what constitutes genuine failure. I agree somewhat with this quote, that failure cannot be intended upon - yet in a way, by completing this document, I have also succeeded in some personal way. My entanglement with failure is to welcome those unintentional cracks and limitations in my own skills - especially within my application of crocheting, moulding and casting.

When working in mould making to create life casts from hands (and other small objects), the requirement of perfection is high. The materials are costly and immensely time-consuming to use. The measure of a good silicone mould is the lack of imperfection; air bubbles, slippages and incorrect keying will all become problematic later on.



**Figure. 14** Vanessa Krause, *Key to a City*, work in progress shot of repaired wax piece covered in 2 layers of slurry and silica sand in preparation for the Iron Pour. Toronto, 2019.





Figure. 15 Vanessa Krause, *Key to a City*, Cast iron. Toronto, 2019.

Since I was using the most expensive silicone materials, I paid attention to perfecting them. When translating these empty moulds into wax casts (for bronze casting) attention was given to follow proper temperature protocols to avoid bubbles on the surface of the cast. Throughout the wax working process, I wanted nothing but perfection (especially when attaching the gating system). Bronze requires perfection, it's more work not to try.

However, when it comes to the soft sculptures I am working with the goal to ignore perfection. In *Failure*, Lisa Le Feuvre curates texts about artists' close relationship to failure. She writes:

Artists have long turned their attention to the unrealizability of the quest for perfection, or the open-endedness of experiment, using both dissatisfaction and error as a means to rethink how we understand our place in the world. The inevitable gap between the intention and realization of an artwork makes failure impossible to avoid. (12)

I am trying to fully embrace failure as a method by intentionally applying amateur aesthetics to my soft sculptures. Throughout this process, open-endedness has been a continuing factor throughout the creative process. It has led me to explore sculptural media, digital fabrication and writing as some of the mediums that are seen in this final iteration.

Although perfection (or the wishful attainment of it) are key to mould making and foundry work (we can't help but judge other people's moulds - especially when they appear flawless), it is inevitable that flaws are a part of the work. The entire process cannot be controlled or tamed by the artist. I have always had to make decisions on how to "fix" my work throughout the post-pour finishing process. One very redeeming factor for metalwork is that, if it's completely unsatisfactory, it can be melted down to create something new.

# Chapter 4

## The Pour

### Studio Work

#### *Making solid stuff*

Throughout my material investigation into bronze casting, I also utilized mould making as a key component to creating my sculptural work. I realized that I wanted to use my own hands, and those of my mother - to recreate them in both plaster and bronze. I used body-double silicone and asked my colleague and friend Joshua to help me make a mould of my own hands [Figure 4]. I needed to understand the process of using silicone. Once that was done, I invited my mom to come to the mould making studio to make a mould of her hands. For anyone that has done this process, they will know how much physical strength and endurance it takes to mix the silicone and apply it in a very limited amount of time. My mom was very patient. Once the moulds set and I removed them from my mother's hands, I used foundry wax to fill them. The initial casts were very detailed and showed little evidence of miscasting. I noticed later, that one of the thumbs was being crushed by the plaster mother mould (the mother mould holds the silicone in place, and protects it from miscasting).

I ended up making several versions of these wax casts, and at one point completed the final version (you see as bronze here) by taking one thumb from one cast, and adding it to the one I decided to take on the casting adventure. There is a lot of attention to detail that goes into the wax process - it takes a lot of time, because it is also a preview of the finished metal piece.

Bronze casting is very labour intensive and often a very expensive process. It requires certain steps that cannot be avoided or changed (it's physics, science and chemistry). My instructor, Kip Jones (who is himself an artist and bronze casting expert) never set limitations on

what our pieces could be (except for those related to the ability to cast). This open approach was very helpful to me, as a first-time learner. The technicians - Olenka, Rebecca, George and Parker were all major contributors to my first casts made at OCAD University - their knowledge made these pieces possible. For the sake of this thesis, I have made a list detailing all the steps I took when casting bronze pieces, and you can see it in the Appendix. These steps are by no means a specific guide, but should be seen as a part of the documentation of my work in process.

When creating these bronze and plaster hands, I was researching other artists who also used hand-casting as a process. Through my research process, I was recommended to look into the sculptural work of Andrea Chung, an American-based artist. Her work in the 2017 Jamaican Biennale included casts of hands made out of black soap and tea, to represent the midwives whose hands helped to give birth to many children. Chung's artwork "Pure" came out of her research into archival midwifery practices in Jamaica in relationship to colonization. The hands are present in correlation with domestic furniture and tools used during birth - they are paired with sinks, bowls and side tables; and at times come out of the wall. The hands are uncanny in the realistic quality of the casts. As part of the research process, Chung also "[...] documented local plants and traditions significant to midwifery. I noted that some of these plants and birthing practices were retentions brought to Jamaica by enslaved Africans." (2017). Although the thematics and research around my work are vastly different, I was strongly influenced by the attention to detail and methods for installation that Andrea Chung has applied to her site-specific artwork.

My bronze casts would not be possible without the magic of mould making and body-double silicone. The process of mould making can be very time consuming, and I saved that work for the pieces I wanted to cast in bronze. The rest of my mould - making journey is based on a very *sloppy* and messy approach.



**Figure. 16** Vanessa Krause, *Kraft-Women*. Plaster casts from alginate and body-double silicone moulds. Toronto, 2019.

I have used alginate as a substitute for the expensive body-double - which also allows for the very experimental movement based casting method you see in this specific installation. The movement and ripping of the mould, as it sets, creates the visual detritus seen in the plaster casts. By using repetitive motions at I would apply to crocheting and sewing, it is possible to see these captured in time. I want to honour the labour and time that other hands have taught me through these movements.

By thoroughly documenting the creative process of the making and unmaking (literally digging the plaster out of the alginate mould to reveal it), it is always fascinating to see what the end result is. There is a lot of potential in an alginate mould, but unlike silicone, it is very fragile and will only withstand 1 - 2 uses. The time it takes to make an alginate mould is negligible compared to silicone - it takes about 5 minutes to mix, and about 5 to start setting. Just as the hand motions take moments to complete and become automatic at some point, so is capturing these movements in alginate. What is left behind by the sturdier silicone mould is a potential for more replications - what is left behind by alginate is bits and pieces of the process.

## *Fragile tools*

While working with mould making to create life - casts of the hands in the exhibition, I was also reading Michael Simon's thesis *Tool-things: the Making of an Apprentice* as a part of my thesis class. Fascinated by Simon's work - especially his series of hammers made of wood and bronze - I decided to use my tools as a part of my project. Simon's tools are playful, whimsical, and alluring - they go beyond their intended purpose. I too had tools that I regularly used (all mass-produced) to create my crochet piece. I felt that they too, wanted to become something else [Figure 17]. Simon writes about his hammers: "As I searched for the perfect hammer [I realized] the power of nostalgia and its relation to materials. Is it easier to forge a long term memory of something made of a material more readily recognizable as natural, such as wood, rather than say carbon fiber or metal alloy?" (30). The scissors, needle and crochet hooks I was using were all made of various types of metal. Some are clearly stamped out of a mould - probably mass producing millions daily. I wanted the tools to slow down to my own pace. I created the mould over two days. As I spent time arranging the tools to make the most effective use of space, I wondered how attached I was to these tools? Some of these were purchased when I lived in Hong Kong, some were from Michael's Craft store. I had spent so much time using them, holding them - they have been the tools to create this thesis work.

I used rebound silicone to create a two-part mould that contained my most used tools: scissors, three crochet hooks, a seam ripper and a needle. I made the mould without considering how I would pour wax or plaster into them, so they are two solid pieces - a failure for the intended ease of a two-part mould [Figure 9]. I decided that I would still try to make tools out of this mould - I started with wax, as it is soft and forgiving. I brushed the wax into each side carefully, and tried to connect them after they set. It didn't work. Finally, growing frustrated, I filled both sides with wax and slammed the two silicone moulds together. Surprisingly, this worked much better. This experiment continued into plaster, and the result left me with few



Figure. 17 Vanessa Krause, *Fragile Tools*. Plaster cast from silicone mould. Toronto, 2020.



“tools” intact.

The tools are mass-producible once again, but without their intended use. The number of tools you see was dependent on my own time and energy to continue to use the two-part mould. Hypothetically, they can be used, however, they might also break. They have become precarious tools.

### *Monstrous Making*

“Work which emerges from the desiring body (and affirms the body); which spins out from the labouring (female) body in crocheting, lacemaking, knitting, weaving --- like a spider spinning webs out of her own body --- seems always to have aroused great anxiety in men.” (Wilding, 95).

The practice of learning how to crochet has been long and ongoing. I have learned both in-person from women in my family, but also from the world-wide-web and DIY tutorials. I am interested in using crocheting as a tool to remember the women who taught me these techniques, but also as a way to measure time and the repetitive physical actions required to make anything out of yarn. When doing this research, my advisor Michelle recommended the artist Doug Guildford - his raw silk crocheted piece “Heirloom” is spectacular, large scale and ongoing. The more time I spent with the crochet piece I was making, the more it changed and evolved. I initially thought of it as a small scale work, and as time passed, I wanted it to become large and encompassing. Then I questioned my intention of making it at all - and it sat and waited for me. I began to realize that the only scale I could ever conceive of it being was the scale of my own body. All the pieces I am showing here, in a way, are just about my body. The doily is the most unfinished piece, it can be continued exponentially by anyone willing to contribute. I picked the least expensive cotton yarn, which makes it challenging to keep still. It is an invitation to continue what I can't. I've run out of time. When I initially started to use crochet as a part of my work, I was also inspired by fellow IAMD graduate Omar Badrin, and

his work in the show *WILD* which is currently at the Textile Museum of Canada (*WILD*, 2019-2020). Badrin's pieces are made of paracord and crocheted to a human scale (they can be worn). I researched his work further and found "In my Skin" (2017), where performance artist Sarah Stoker animates Badrin's work through performative dance on a stony beach. Although the research driving my work is again vastly different - his use of crocheting with one type of crochet loop, the scale of the work, and the human body in relationship to his work (inhabited or not) are all incredibly powerful. Since I have had the pleasure to see Badrin's work at the TMC I am deeply influenced by his technique and material mastery; his pieces are haunting, confrontational and take up space, even if uninhabited.

When researching possible secondary advisors (a very challenging task!) I remember researching faculty members and their practices. I came across the work of Shannon Gerard - specifically her large scale crochet piece "Dan Graham's Big Fat Shadow" (Gerard, 2014). The scale of the piece was seriously impressive. Gerard's ability to map out something as fleeting as a shadow - and then materialize (and realize) it through the very physical action of crocheting was profoundly inspiring to my pursuit of large-scale crocheting. I decided to take that inspiration to focus on creating one large-scale crochet piece.

Finally, I chose to crochet, because I was researching Faith Wilding's "Womb Room" or "Crocheted Environment" (1972/1995) and realized that the use of a domestic medium could complement both the sculptural work as well as the embroidered clothing. The crochet piece has been literally carried with me throughout the entire process. It was made in many places, and is not ever complete. It is weighty and awkward and unruly (I have ironed it many times). Wilding writes:

An epistemology of making develops, which brings into play knowledge lodged deeply in the interaction of hand and material: making fabric, making substance, transforming, linking stitch to stitch, loop to loop, fragment to fragment, forming a web, connecting strand to strand, node to node, repeating, patterning, alternating, repeating - the magic of form coming into being through the "thinking hands" acting with material. (95)

I was able to carry this piece around, and my hands became accustomed to working with the crochet hook half-hidden inside my bag on the subway. Occasionally, other people would look over, curious about what was being made. No one on the subway ever asked. As it outgrew the bag it lived in, I stopped carrying it around as much, and it was mostly confined to the private space, where I currently live. I have held onto this piece many times, and it has not yet felt like it has become anything specific. When deciding on how to “display” this piece, I asked Michelle Gay for a lot of advice. After this exhibition, it will once again return to living in various bags and containers, and one day, will become resolved enough to find a permanent home. Maybe I will too. I called it “Monstrous Making” as it continues to grow and take up space. The viewer is welcome to touch, interact with and continue making this piece.



**Figure. 18** Vanessa Krause, *Kraft-Women*. A work-in-progress image of my solid bronze hands. Total bronze weight: 16lbs or 7.2kg. Toronto, 2020.

## *“Getragen/ Worn or Carried”*

I don't actively remember a time in my life where I did not embroider. I recall becoming better at controlling the type of stitch, but sewing has always been a fascination since I was allowed to use needle and thread. I can sew a button on a coat and use a sewing machine for simple functions (I can follow a pattern). The words and sentences embroidered on various pieces of clothing come from my writing. The time it takes to embroider the words is far longer than the time I spend on crafting my writing skills. The type of embroidery stitch is intentionally simplistic. I am trying to mimic my handwriting in thread [Figure 1 & 2]. Wilding writes in her essay:

The subject of work (labor) itself is central in much “domestic” artwork. This is often expressed in the charged, obsessional quality given to objects or installations which have been personally worked by the artist. This obsessional quality speaks about the body in time (a lifetime) and ceaseless effort. The repetition of bodily gestures and motions produces sameness with slight variations (a mimicry of the conditions of everyday life), and a hypnoid state (altered consciousness) in the maker. (95)

My embroidery work follows a similar pattern of gesture, repetition and chaotic effort seen in my embroidery piece. The text is not one cohesive piece, but a combination and collection of several varied pieces of writing. I have to admit that I prefer reading over writing. I want the visitor to be able to “read” these pieces in many different ways. I want the viewer to rely on their own sensory touch to read the lines of thread. There is an intense repetitive quality to embroidery - different from metalwork or crocheting. I am mimicking the act of writing through sewing - the text does not become more legible in this medium - it becomes more abstract. I am not giving the full context of each piece of writing (with, say another form of writing) purposefully. The articles of clothing can be changed, rearranged and worn by the visitor. They are living pages in my garment book. There is something domestic and everyday about these pages, and that too is my intention. These are not profound words or sentences - they are daily thoughts for me.

Through my research into artists who use embroidery, I found the installation work of Lynne Yamamoto, who created the piece titled "Markings (2011)" out of christening gowns and embroidery. Her work deals with the relationship between New England and Hawai'i in the 18th and 19th century - namely trade, whaling and colonialism. The marks are of traditional Hawai'ian tattoos embroidered carefully in christening gowns from that period. Both the embroidery line and back of the embroidery is visible. My area of research is vastly different from Yamamoto's, however, I am interested in her technique which shows both the "finished" and "unfinished" side of embroidery on clothing. Her work often involves repetitive text, personal and familial narratives.

My embroidery focuses on using both of the languages I have grown up with. The texts can be rearranged and interchanged by simply moving a "page" (clothes) from the hanger it resides on. Although there is no overarching narrative to the words, the context and ability for this piece to become rearranged, reconfigured and re-worn is what I am interested in. If no one decides to move, try on or wear the text, it stays as a static "book" (wardrobe). There is a potential for visitors to create a performative piece with my installation - and that is something I would need to research and commit to in the next iteration of this workout outside of the institutional setting.



Figure. 19 Vanessa Krause, "To Be Determined" from *Getragen / Worn or Carried* displayed with *Monstrous Making*. Toronto, 2020.



**Figure. 20** Vanessa Krause, "unruhig" from *Getragen / Worn or Carried* embroidered words: "unruhig wandern" from poem *Herbsttag/ Autumn Day* by Rainer Maria Rilke (Greenberg, 35). Toronto, 2020.





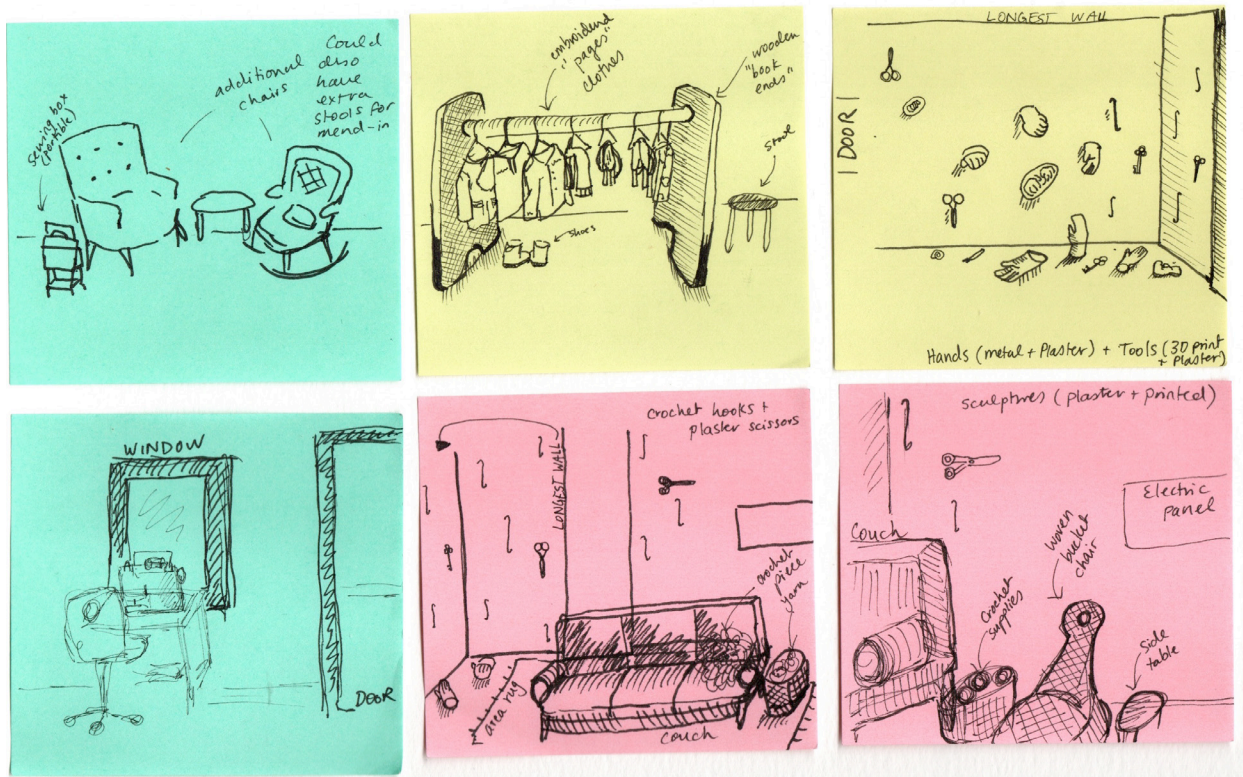
Figure. 21 Vanessa Krause, "I forgive you" & "but not" from *Getragen / Worn or Carried* a close up of embroidered words on inherited shirts. The text is meant for tactile engagement. Toronto 2020.

## *Mend-In Workshop*

An essential aspect to all of my work, is my ability to share it with others. I have worked as a professional teacher in my past life, and am drawn to the idea of learning from and with others. Knowledge, like mending, should be shared. I looked for guidance on how to create a mending workshop (something I have never done), and researched local artists who have done this. Both of my advisors suggested looking into dittybag's "The Mending Lounge" (2016) curated by Kathryn Walter and Janna Hiemstra. Based on my research, the project involved many local artists, craftspeople and makers - and was a collaborative event. Each maker brought a different set of skills and knowledge to the space and it became a collaborative environment. The "mend-in" workshop I will be hosting will also be an invitation for visitors and participants to share in their knowledge and communicate with one another. Participants who have not mended or embellished anything before are welcome to use the tools provided (sewing needles, thread, buttons, all the basics). If someone cannot mend their own piece, anyone else (including myself) is invited to share in the mending together. This workshop is also a way for others to see what they themselves carry as possessions, and what kind of value they attribute to their own worn *things*. *Are they worth the time to be mended?*

When reading about the "The Mending Lounge", I came across this quote from the official press release: "Mending was once a part of everyday life before unfettered economic growth moved the textile industry offshore and pushed prices down while at the same time intensifying abuse of labour and degrading the environment." (Gindin, 2016). The "Mending Lounge" is such a successful way of going about mending, because it takes place as a communal event. It is political and poetic. It's important to me, not only because I have always mended my clothing, but also because I am overwhelmed by the amount of material (specifically clothing) possessions, I myself have accrued. By taking the time to mend, and physically sit with each item, the personal relationships that I have formed when embroidering and mending

have become stronger. I believe that mending should be a part of our everyday, and in more ways than just repairing clothing. I would like to further consider how mending practices can be applied by conducting further research and participating in more mending workshops after graduation.



**Figure. 22** Vanessa Krause, *Exhibition Installation Plans*. Details of possible installation set-up. Furniture is movable for the "mend-in" workshop. Toronto, 2020.

# Chapter 5

## Devesting

## Conclusion

It is my conclusion, that after completing this body of work, that this was the most insane idea I ever had to see through until the end; in the words of my primary advisor “nothing can prepare you for this experience” (Wyman, 2018). It’s true. Through my investigation into postdisciplinary craft methods, learning new and alternative practices such as mould making and bronze casting, I have broadened my appreciation for practice-led research. I have focused on materials that were both familiar and new - specifically bronze casting and extensive mould making. By using both domestic and industrial materials, I was able to forge connections between postdisciplinary craft practices and my amateur artistic practice. I intended to use repetitive and labour intensive processes, across all mediums, to celebrate the many hands that have taught me these skills. I am situating the visitor in an imagined domestic space, with the intention that they will feel comfortable to linger in the environment I have created. Women’s work can be brought out of the private sphere and shared in the public space. The clothing “book” is an invitation to experience text through tactile engagement. With the exception of the cast plaster and bronze - every piece can be held.

By learning how to use new tools - such as the foundry - I have been able to embrace new modes of making that all deal with the body and time. My body-sized crochet piece became an investigation into making work in any space - outside of the studio. As part of this process, I openly embraced failure as a method - anticipating that it would happen throughout each process. Failure in time, in my own ability to make, and even in my ability to communicate these ideas in an accessible way. These slippages in my work are a welcome part of my open embrace of new material ways of making and mending. Women’s work is an integral part of my thesis research and methodology, and I could not have made this thesis without all the

strong women, professors, family and friends - who were very patient and diligent with me.

This body of work is a way to celebrate all the bodies that helped me make the work I envisioned possible. The body of the visitor becomes a way to interact with the exhibition in a meaningful way - you could say it's the best interface. It is my conclusion that interdisciplinary modes of making open up dialogue and conversation between many different makers in contemporary creative spaces.

Recently, there has been a very devastating and challenging development that might change the course of this entire thesis and body of work. As I (finally) finish this document, my school is being shut down due to the recent global pandemic of Covid-19. This means that all in-person academic activities, facilities, studios, defenses and installations are shut down until well after my planned exhibition. Will there be an exhibition? A mend-in? I am not sure. This is an unprecedented circumstance that will affect me well beyond this paper and research. I believe that no matter what the outcome of this thesis will be, it is as important as ever to be kind, to listen and hear and care for each other. All of this work has had a lot of time, sweat, tears and kindness embroidered into it. Without the human connections I have made in this two-year journey, I would not be who I am today. I am keeping my ear to the ground. I am thinking of all of my colleagues who are now directly affected by this global situation; my former colleagues who are working in Hong Kong, my former students who are studying globally and have family that are directly affected by this pandemic - I am thinking of you. To my family in Germany - I am thinking of you. We will get through this, somehow. We will continue to make work, share our passion and spread kindness through art, design, craft and making. I am not a scientist, doctor, nurse, healthcare worker, caretaker, parent, social worker, healer - or anyone who is dealing with this situation directly. I need to thank them for their dedication and help at this time.

Lastly, I want to say that no matter how this turns out, I am so privileged to have been a part of this graduating cohort. I am forever changed.

# Appendix<sup>1</sup>

## The Patina (cold or hot?)

### Lost Wax Casting

You must wear Nitrile gloves when working with hot wax - it will burn you.

Foundry wax is made of a special composition. It can be heated in various melting pots to become liquid. The freshly melted wax is best applied in layers (and brushed into a mould, if possible). When pouring wax into a mould - remember:

Layer 1: 200 degrees F (cover all areas, tap and rotate solid moulds)

Layer 2: 185 degrees F (measure with candy thermometer)

Layer 3: 165 degrees F (tap for bubbles, if pouring in wax)

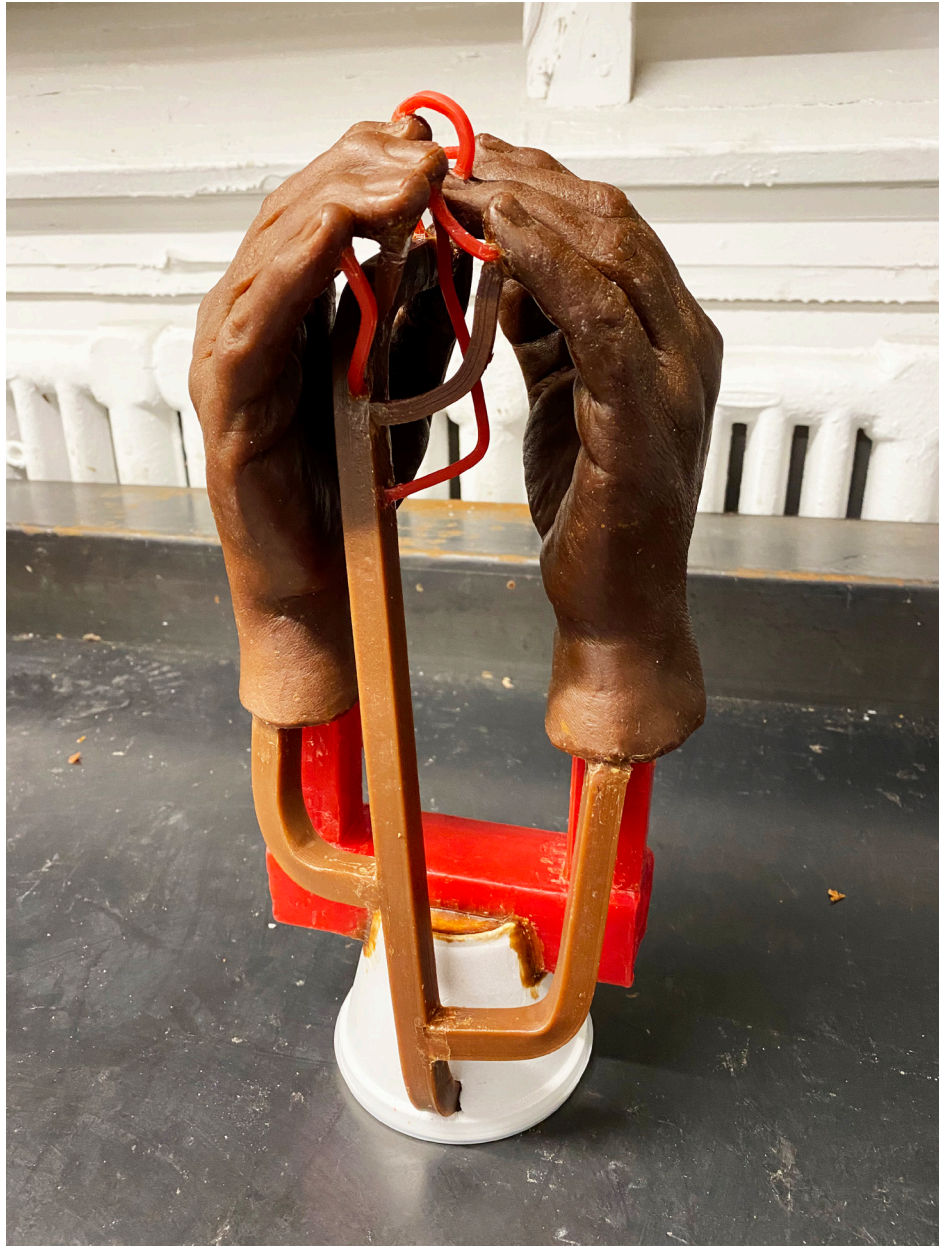
Wait while the wax cools down before opening your mould. Once it has cooled (this depends on the size of the piece) the hands were about 45 minutes each. Take a coffee or lunch break. Carefully open the mould, be cautious with fragile sections, such as fingers. The wax may still be malleable, and the heat of your hands will also cause distortion/scratches on the surface of the fresh wax. Carefully detach any foundry wax that may have attached itself to your plaster mother mould.

Start by using small metal sculpting tools and heat them with the Bunsen burner to heat the tools to take away any seam lines or fill in any air bubbles. You will most likely create more than one wax piece before making the one you want to use. Look at this first one and see if you need to make any adjustments in the mould. The wax must be an *even thickness* throughout. Hold it up to the light and see if there are any noticeable irregularities (these will cause issues in the casting process). Is the lost wax cast solid or hollow? You need to decide this now.

***Remember: Everything that is wax will be bronze!***

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<sup>1</sup> Please Note: This appendix is intended to give context to the various stages of bronze casting. It is not a "how-to-guide". All of these processes cannot be completed *alone*, or in isolation. These steps require a solid understanding of science, chemistry and physics - please *don't* try this at home!



**Figure. 23 Vanessa Krause**, a work-in-progress shot with gating system and vents attached. The hands are solid wax and the sprue bars alternate between solid and hollow. OCAD University Foundry. Toronto, 2019.

## Sprue bars, gating & vents - oh my!

Now that you've made your sculpture out of wax, you need to add a gating system. This system will dictate where the hot metal will flow, and how it will move out of the sculpture once the metal is being poured. The vents are designed to trap air bubbles (otherwise these will end up in your final piece). This will make more sense once you work with the ceramic shell and dipping process (we'll get to that in a moment).

Decide where the gating system (thickest bars) and vents ("spaghetti wax") will connect to your sculpture. Start with a Styrofoam cup and decide where it will be located to best accommodate your sculpture (keeping in mind that the cup becomes the entry point for the liquid metal, so you are designing this system upside down). The gating system and vents attach to the cup, which also helps to place your sculpture on the drying rack after dipping later (you hold onto the cup when dipping smaller work). This is probably the *most difficult step* in the process of lost wax casting. Be patient. Ask for help!

To ensure that no ceramic slurry ends up in the cup, or within the vents, you must use hot wax tools and liquid wax/sticky wax to "weld" together the wax pieces. Keep all attachments as neat as possible to avoid creating turbulence within the cup during a pour. The cup is made of Styrofoam, cut it gently (as not to crack it). Attach vents in various locations where the air will become trapped. Keep in mind, the metal starts cooling immediately (and air bubbles can create a miscast). Lastly, seal the cup with liquid wax (make sure it's fully sealed) and any wax bars with large holes. Clean up the tools you used, and the work area too! Get someone else to weigh your sculpture and add it to the project book. At this point, you can calculate how much the wax and bronze will weigh/ cost. (Wax Weight x 8 = Bronze Weight ...*approximately*).

**Now you're ready to dip!**





**Figure. 24** Vanessa Krause, a work-in-progress shot of solid hands after the first dip in ceramic slurry and primary (fine) silica sand. OCAD University Foundry. Toronto, 2020.

## Ceramic Slurry

Get geared up! You will need:

- A dust mask
- Apron (cover your shoes with plastic bags)
- Specialized long yellow gloves
- Safety glasses (tie all hair back and wear a cap)
- A ventilated room that is dust proof

*Ceramic slurry & silica sand is **highly toxic** and can cause **silicosis and respiratory cancer**.*

Take your wax sculpture and CAREFULLY dip in the primary ceramic slurry. Hold by the cup or any sturdy section without making contact with fragile vents. Make sure you use a brush to pop bubbles. Use a brush for the first few layers, as bubbles will create metal protrusions in your piece. Let the ceramic slurry run off the sculpture and ensure all parts are covered evenly (especially the hard to see places!) Primary dips require VERY careful attention to detail. You must use extra precaution to avoid bubbles in the initial layers, as these will be very obvious in metal. Use very fine sand for the primary slurry, as it helps to capture details in the wax work. Bring your sculpture to the primary sand. Place your sculpture carefully onto the sand bed, and cover the whole thing with sand evenly. Check all crevices of your piece - missing spots will create weak points in your shell, that might cause it to crack

*Don't forget to turn the slurry vat on again after you're finished.*

Carefully transport your freshly dipped piece to the designated shelves and place under air vent/fan to increase drying speed. The drying speed depends on the size of your work, the number of dips and the slurry too.

Clean out the sand box after washing your gloves in a sediment bucket. Be sure to use the fine grate to get all pieces of ceramic slurry out of the sand bed. Be sure to track your dips on the logbook page. Do this after each dip.



**Figure. 25** Vanessa Krause, an image compilation of ceramic shell after a few dips and with reinforcement (in the center of the image). OCAD University Foundry. Toronto, 2020.

## Secondary Dips

After using the primary slurry and sand for the first two layers, you will move on to the much coarser secondary slurry and sand. These dips generally require more drying time, so plan accordingly. There are nine dips in total (and reinforcements to complete). Continue to dip carefully, and place your sculpture into the secondary sand carefully. The sculpture will become much heavier, but it's still fragile!

## Reinforcement

Reinforcements are designed to help support the ceramic shell once the pour has happened. It is meant to protect your work from cracking and breaking. Styles of reinforcement vary. Chicken wire, fiberglass fabric dipped in the slurry is also effective to protect vulnerable sections such as your gating system.

## Final Dip

The final dip is called a "seal coat" it means you don't add any sand to the slurry. It leaves a smooth surface, which makes it easier to handle for the pour.

## Break the cup!

Now that the shell has had time to dry, you need to crack open the bottom of the cup and remove it. Use needle-nose pliers and be very vigilant not to crack the shell inside the cup. The inside of the cup should not have any ceramic shell - as this would stop the whole process (so you must seal the bottom of the cup carefully!

If you have a medium or large wax sculpture, it is imperative that you drill holes into the thickest wax areas to ensure that it melts during the burnout. ONLY drill into thick areas that are not detailed pieces of your work.



**Figure. 26 Vanessa Krause**, ceramic shells after the final dip - the bottom of the cup is broken and taken out. This will be where the metal is poured into. OCAD University Foundry. Toronto, 2020.



Figure. 27 Vanessa Krause, *Getting Geared Up*. OCAD University Foundry. Toronto, 2020.

## Burnout & Patch

The freshly drilled sculptures are loaded into a kiln and baked. If they survive, you get to patch any places you drilled into (outside of the cup) with soft cement and fiberglass fabric. As this is the final step before the pour, it means that all holes in the shell must be filled. If they are not, the hot molten metal will pour out. The holes (and cracks) are all sealed using soft cement and fiberglass fabric. Use gloves and complete this in the shell (ceramic slurry) room. Be very careful when handling the shell - it is *extremely fragile* at this point!

## The Pour

All ceramic shells are placed back into the furnace and preheated. They are taken out one-by-one and covered with aluminum foil to keep any metal slag out of the cup when it is placed in the trough. Each piece is placed into the trough and covered with metal slag. The cup is then uncovered in preparation for the pour. One person is a standby and is ready to patch any shells that crack during the pour. They hold onto a small "pie" made of soft cement (Refractory Cement) and wrapped in aluminum foil. In an emergency, this can be slapped onto a ceramic shell to prevent the loss of metal into the trough. This job is nerve-wracking and I have completed it twice (I never had to do an emergency patch!).

The foundry team (usually 3-4 people) will get completely geared up for a pour. At this university, we have a very small furnace and crucible - each pour is carefully planned. The furnace is heated above 2000 degrees Fahrenheit to melt the solid bronze ingots and leftover cups from previous pours.

***Water must be kept away from the furnace at all costs!***



**Figure. 28 Vanessa Krause**, ceramic shells after being baked in the kiln - the metal has just been poured, and the hot brick is applied to help with gradual cooling to avoid cracking and shrinkage in the metal. The whole piece is in a trough filled with nickel alloy slag. OCAD University Foundry. Toronto, 2020.



When the furnace is heating up the crucible, and the bronze or iron is melting, there is no heat like it in the world. When the team of foundry experts starts to lift the crucible out of the furnace, the sight of it glowing creates goosebumps. Through various pulley systems, the full crucible is lifted and then placed on the ground. Handheld holders are applied (also made of metal and wood pieces for handles). The top of the full crucible is scraped carefully to get any imperfect pieces of metal out before the pouring begins.

The crucible is lifted (with the assistance of the automatic lift operated by a third person). The pour starts closest to the furnace. Each shell is filled until the cup is full. This varies for each pour. Once the pour is complete, the crucible is lowered onto the ground. Any leftover metal is poured out, and the person in charge of emergency patching scraped out any residue (without hitting the inside of the crucible. It is extremely hot!

The furnace is loaded with a sheet of cardboard and the crucible is carefully placed back into the furnace. A roaring beam of fire shoots up, and the process is complete. Hot bricks are placed on top of each cooling pieces. Crackling sounds are heard from pieces that are setting. They cool in the trough.

## Devesting

After waiting for the freshly poured sculpture to cool down (depending on size, it takes several hours) the shells are brought back into the foundry. If you're clever, you can place the piece into a soaking water bath. Ideally, submerge the sculpture completely (after it has cooled - as not to warp the metal) and let it sit for several hours. This will help the shell become fragile and will also prevent the ceramic dust from spreading as much, when you use a chisel to devest your sculpture. Devesting means that you take the vest (ceramic shell) off of the sculpture to reveal the metal underneath. Clean up all ceramic shell debris and replace all tools you used in the process.

***Your sculpture will be A LOT heavier! Be careful when lifting!***



**Figure. 29** Vanessa Krause, a compilation image of post-pour metal work. Left hand side - the final metal sculpture is unveiled through devesting. Right hand side - after being sandblasted in the "Empire" machine, the true metal is revealed. OCAD University Foundry. Toronto, 2020.

## Metal Work

The final steps require you to use the sandblaster to eliminate any leftover ceramic shell from your sculpture. You need to do this so that the plasma torch can cut the solid cup, sprue bars and gating system off (unless you intend to keep it). Our sandblaster is called the 'Empire' - it strikes back with static electricity!

The plasma torch requires special welding equipment, such as a welding helmet with heat/light-sensitive visor, leather clothes for sparks, gloves and dust mask. It's a special set up best left for the foundry team!

After your sculpture is cut off from the gating system, you can use an angle grinder to cut and grind down the metal piece. You must wear:

- Safety glasses
- Ear covers
- Full face shield (small metal pieces can fly fast)
- Solid shoes & apron and long-sleeved shirt
- Head cap or hat
- Dust mask
- Working gloves

When using the metal cutting and grinding tools, it is important to clamp all work down with a vice. Your sculpture can become loose through the intense vibrations from cutting and grinding. Check this often.

Metal is hot after being cut and ground - never touch this with bare hands.

Use angle grinders for large areas that need to be ground. Use a Dremel tool with various attachments for detail work. Be patient and take breaks. Don't use the tools if you're too tired. When using tools, remember to clean and replace them in the shelves accordingly. Clean the work stations and recycle the metal pieces. It's a good idea to sandblast one last time!

Once the piece has been cleaned to your level of satisfaction, use a Brillo pad, abrasive

metal wool or polishing attachment (for the Dremel tool) to polish the metal before patina. You should polish your sculpture so that the patina can make proper contact with the metal. Patina is a controlled rust that protects your work from oxidization and eventual decay.

***Metal is fragile!***



Figure. 30 Vanessa Krause, *Kraft-Women* after metal work and before patina. OCAD University Foundry, Toronto, 2020.

## The Patina

Now that all the metalwork is complete, it is important to decide on a patina. A patina is a chemical composition that varies depending on the type of finish, colour and luster desired. Some patinas are applied hot (with a torch) and some are applied cold (with cold water). The colours available for each type vary! To be honest, I have only used two different patinas. For my final thesis work, I have used "Antique Black" a cold patina made by Birchwood Casey (M20). It is made of Ferric Nitrate and distilled water (in equal parts). I have applied it with a clean brush, and rinsed the sculpture in cold water afterwards, to make the patina set. Once the patina is applied, you can use metal wool to buff the sculpture. This will push the colours back, and bring out more of the metal colour. The more the sculpture is polished before the patina, the more the shiny quality can be regained through buffing. Play around with the patina! If you don't love it, sandblast your sculpture and start again.

When you find the perfect balance, it's time to seal it with Renaissance Wax!

## From Wax to Wax

Some say "ashes to ashes", but in this case, it's "wax to wax". The final step is to apply Renaissance Wax to seal the patina and protect the bronze sculpture. Use a heat gun to warm up the sculpture so that the wax melts slightly upon contact. This is much easier with a hot patina, where the metal has been heated for the patina. Use a clean brush and carefully apply the wax. Once you've covered the whole sculpture, buff the wax with a clean cloth.

***The sculpture is ready for installation!  
and this appendix is complete :)***

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