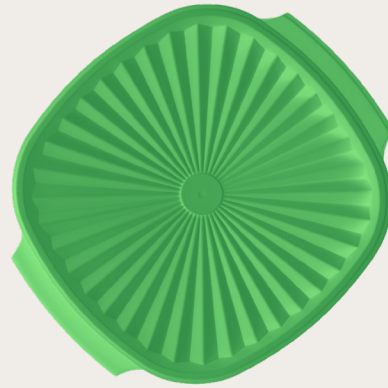


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Things We
Believe In



Odd Objects



Alberta Foundation for the Arts TREX Travelling Exhibition Program.
Featuring work by Mantis Mei, Teresa Tam, and Pamela Vickerson.
Curated by Levin Ifko for TREX Southwest.

**Things We
Believe In**

acknowledgements

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) and the Travelling Exhibition Program (TREX) acknowledge that the artistic activity we support takes place on the territories of Treaties 6, 7, and 8. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who have lived on and cared for these lands for generations, and we are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and those who have gone before us. We make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our relationships with Indigenous communities and growing our shared knowledge and understanding.

This publication was produced in conjunction with the TREX Southwest exhibition *Odd Objects: Things We Believe In*. This exhibition will tour throughout schools, libraries, community, and healthcare centres across Alberta from September 2025 to August 2027. For more information on the program and locations of each travelling exhibition, please visit <https://www.albertasocietyofartists.com/trex-home/>

Odd Objects: Things We Believe In

Featuring artwork by Mantis Mei, Teresa Tam, and Pamela Vickerson

Curated by Levin Ifko
TREX Southwest

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about

Travelling Exhibition Program (TREX)

Since 1980, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program. The TREX program strives to ensure every Albertan is provided with an opportunity to enjoy fully developed exhibitions in schools, libraries, healthcare centres, and smaller rural institutions and galleries throughout the province.

The TREX program assists in making both the AFA’s extensive art collection and the artwork of contemporary Alberta artists available to Albertans. Four regional organizations coordinate the program for the AFA:

REGION ONE — Northwest: The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie

REGION TWO — Northeast / North Central: The Art Gallery of Alberta

REGION THREE — Southwest: The Alberta Society of Artists

REGION FOUR — Southeast: The Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre

The Alberta Society of Artists (ASA)

The Alberta Society of Artists is a large part of Alberta’s visual arts history, through its members, its exhibitions, and other initiatives. The ASA was founded in 1931, making it the oldest society of juried professional artists in the province.

The ASA is an active membership of professional visual artists who strive for quality and distinction. Through exhibition, education, and communication the society increases public awareness of the visual arts.

The ASA is contracted by the AFA to develop and circulate TREX exhibitions to communities throughout southwestern Alberta.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA)

Beginning in 1972, the Alberta Art Collection was proposed as an opportunity to support and encourage Alberta artists by purchasing original works, as well as creating a legacy collection for the people of Alberta.

The AFA was established as a Crown agency of the Government of Alberta through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act in 1991, with a mandate to support the arts in Alberta. This mandate is accomplished by providing persons and organizations with the opportunity to participate in the arts in Alberta; fostering and promoting the enjoyment of works of art by Alberta artists; collecting, preserving, and displaying works of art by Albertan artists; and encouraging artists living in Alberta to continue their work.



IMAGE CREDIT (next page)

Pamela Vickerson, 2024
In light of Hazel, the view from here (detail)
Art print, 24x30"
Courtesy of the artist



artist biographies

Mantis Mei

Mantis is three oranges in a trenchcoat.

Mantis is also a Mohkinstsis/Calgary based artist working in sculpture, performance, and installation. Part of their practice revolves around the domestic object and our relationship with creating and maintaining them. What does that relationship look like and what could it look like instead? They are currently exploring the creation of breeds and variations in subjects such as dogs, fonts, fruit, and symbols.

They are very grateful to have shown in artist-run centres in the city such as Stride Gallery, The New Gallery, The Bows, and EMMEDIA. They are currently working towards a BFA in Sculpture at the Alberta University of the Arts.



Teresa Tam

Teresa Tam is an artist from and based in Calgary. She likes to alter spaces and experiences that are familiar, making them a bit foreign through re-interpreting and re-creating. Tam's projects are developed to emphasize audience interactions as integral components to her work, impelled by the possibility of people experiencing something intimately personal through action. Tam doesn't specialize in anything, but likes to work with digital processes, functional installations, all things shaped in paper, excessive labour, and collections of mildly niche objects. Recent work includes the Good Job Arcade project. She graduated from AUArts in 2014 and co-runs Yolkless Press with Areum Kim. She's currently interested in: how memories become embedded in mundane forms and the unexpected ways we remember or forget.



Pamela Vickerson

Pamela Vickerson is a multidisciplinary artist who grew up exploring Alberta, moving from the prairies, to the mountains, and then to the city as a teen. With a background in fashion and graphic design, she worked as an editorial and commercial illustrator for a number of years. A never-ending appetite for learning compels her into creative community as both an instructor and a student. Vickerson attended the Alberta University of the Arts for more than two decades, both informally and formally, graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with Distinction in 2024. Her nomadic and playful early years along with later experiences of loss, profoundly impact the vision and direction of her research and work. Vickerson gratefully creates and lives alongside her family and their cheeky whippet in Moh-kins-tsis/Calgary.



exhibition statement

Odd Objects: Things We Believe In, is a group exhibition that invites us to contemplate our human relationships with objects. Spanning painting, photography, and textiles, the artwork in this exhibition depicts an array of odd objects, from those that hold particular personal, familial, and cultural significance, to everyday objects such as tupperware lids and electric fans.

Featuring whimsical and introspective work from artists Mantis Mei, Teresa Tam, and Pamela Vickerson, this exhibition suggests that our “things” mean more to us than what meets the eye. Sometimes, our fascination with certain objects has to do with the memories attached to them. Maybe these objects remind us of a part of our lives and can be comforting through change and loss. Other times, we can feel magnetically drawn to an object for no apparent reason, perhaps because of its shape and colour, or even a comforting texture we observe by touching and feeling it.

Mantis Mei's work reflects a desire to playfully celebrate objects, such as in *Birthday Party for a Fan*, where photos on display recall memories from when Mei threw a birthday party for their cherished electric fan. Complete with cake and decorations, Mei invited friends and peers to celebrate alongside them. Party-goers were also encouraged to write notes in the fan's birthday card, which viewers can read as part of this travelling exhibition. Mei also chooses to honour objects through the use of playful and cheeky textiles, crocheting a portrait of their fan and adorning produce in small, hand-made undergarments. Threads of playful and cheeky humour are carefully sewn throughout Mei's work.

When Pamela Vickerson combines human forms with objects, she highlights her fondness of objects in a similarly playful way. Her bright and whimsical portraiture, which replaces human heads with those of tupperware lids, typewriters, photography equipment, and more, suggests a relationship with objects that is inseparable with people, our bodies, and our memories. An avid collector of “memory objects,” Vickerson describes how searching for and collecting objects has been how that she has responded to losses throughout her life, and particularly to the loss of her young adult son. Having playful relationships with these objects is something Vickerson feels is important when navigating such difficult experiences. The ways that objects hold memories, both comforting and complex, are reflected in the way that Vickerson lovingly renders both objects and people. By creating this work, Vickerson also reflects on the power of objects as a starting point for connecting with others. Using art to honour the



IMAGE CREDITS (Previous)

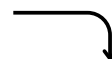
Pamela Vickerson, 2025
Portrait of Emma Contained
Oil on canvas, 24 x 30"
Courtesy of the artist

Mantis Mei, 2024
Portrait of an Electric Fan
Acrylic Yarn, 10x14"
Courtesy of the artist

IMAGE CREDIT (Left)

Teresa Tam, 2022
Seasons End Liquidation
Shop: opening incense ritual
Documentation of storefront
Photo by Danny Luong
Courtesy of the artist

continues on next page





universal experiences of grief and loss can establish a closeness that enables the sharing of stories and memories.

Teresa Tam chooses to memorialise and honour change over shared connections during her project *Season's End Liquidation Shop* (2022). *Season's End Liquidation Shop* was a store that Tam operated out of Esker Foundation's Project Space, which faces a busy street in the neighbourhood of Inglewood in Calgary, Alberta. As part of this project, Tam chose to part with a variety of items she had owned and used for over a decade in her previous artistic projects, marking an ending of one point in her artistic practice. Instead of selling these items however, Tam let visitors choose an object that resonated with them, and gave them this object in exchange for conversation and stories shared between them. These stories were then written on "receipts" of these connections, some of which can be seen as part of this travelling exhibition.

Additionally, Tam also invites viewers to contribute their own stories to this exhibition, by writing a letter to an object of their choosing. These letters will be deposited into a plexiglass comment box, and as the exhibition travels, this box will fill with hundreds of letters from people across the province, becoming a symbolic representation of the many relationships we have with the objects in our lives.

Each artist in this exhibition makes work that is both sentimental and playful, and that encourages us to connect with others by sharing our own stories and memories. Take a closer look at the things that surround you, and consider how and why we collect, use, and care for these objects. Can our relationships with objects tell us anything about the ways we express love in our broader world? All in all, *Odd Objects: Things We Believe In*, highlights the objects we find meaning in are vessels of comfort, humour, and connection.

– Levin Ifko
Curator, *Odd Objects: Things We Believe In*

IMAGE CREDIT (Left)

Pamela Vickerson, 2025
Portrait of Alexander as a Brother
Oil on Canvas, 24 x 30"
Courtesy of the artist

IMAGE CREDIT (Next)

Mantis Mei, 2023/2024
Birthday Party for a Fan
Documentation of performance
(photos + birthday card notes),
Courtesy of the artist



Happy Birthday

Hope you had a
FANTASTIC
B-day &
-Kai;



so much
in you.
Birthday!
B

You blow
me
away ...
XxX



Happy Birthday!
Thanks for keeping
us comfortable &
cool!! You Rock!
-Manderz

HAPPY BIRTHDAY FAN!!!
YOU'RE THE STAR OF
THE SHOW. LOVE YOU!
-ANDY

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!
- FROM SAM AND THE
1983 SHARP SOLAR CELL CALCULATOR.

Happy Birthday
ima big fan
-Kai = ^ ^ =

list of artworks



Mantis Mei, 2024
Portrait of an Electric Fan
Acrylic Yarn, 10x14"
Courtesy of the artist



Mantis Mei, 2023/2024
Birthday Party for a Fan
Documentation of performance (photos + birthday card notes), 14x22"
Courtesy of the artist



Mantis Mei, 2025
Underwear for fruits #1
Fabric on fruits, 17x17"
First shown in collaboration with Molly JF Caldwell
Courtesy of the artist



Mantis Mei, 2025
Underwear for fruits #2
Fabric on fruits, 17x17"
First shown in collaboration with Molly JF Caldwell
Courtesy of the artist



Mantis Mei, 2025
Underwear for fruits #3
Fabric on fruits, 17x17"
First shown in collaboration with Molly JF Caldwell
Courtesy of the artist



Mantis Mei, 2025
Underwear for fruits #4
 Fabric on fruits, 17x30"
 First shown in collaboration
 with Molly JF Caldwell
 Courtesy of the artist

Teresa Tam, 2022
Seasons End Liquidation Shop:
opening incense ritual
 Documentation of storefront, 13x19"
 Photos by Danny Luong
 Courtesy of the artist



Teresa Tam, 2022
Seasons End Liquidation Shop:
object transfer ritual
 Documentation of storefront,
 13x19" Photos by Danny Luong
 Courtesy of the artist



Teresa Tam, 2022
Seasons End Liquidation Shop:
installation overview
 Documentation of the storefront, 13x19"
 Photos by John Dean (above)
 and Danny Luong (below)
 Courtesy of the artist



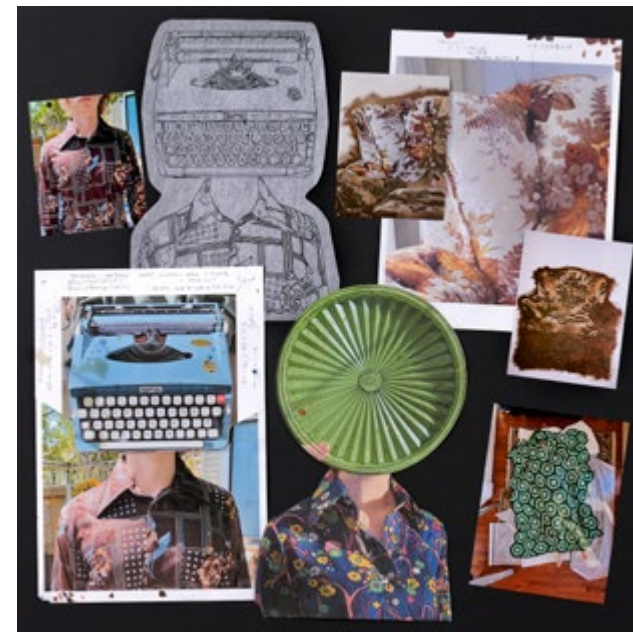
Teresa Tam, 2025
What we leave behind
 Found objects in display case, 30x16x3"
 Courtesy of the artist



Teresa Tam, 2022
Fragments of things that moved on
 3D printed objects, carbon paper receipts, 18x16x3"
 Courtesy of the artist



Teresa Tam, 2025
A memorial of what we remember and forget
 Comment box, 30x24x3"
 Courtesy of the artist



Pamela Vickerson, 2024
In light of Hazel, the view from here (detail)
 Art print, 24x30"
 Courtesy of the artist

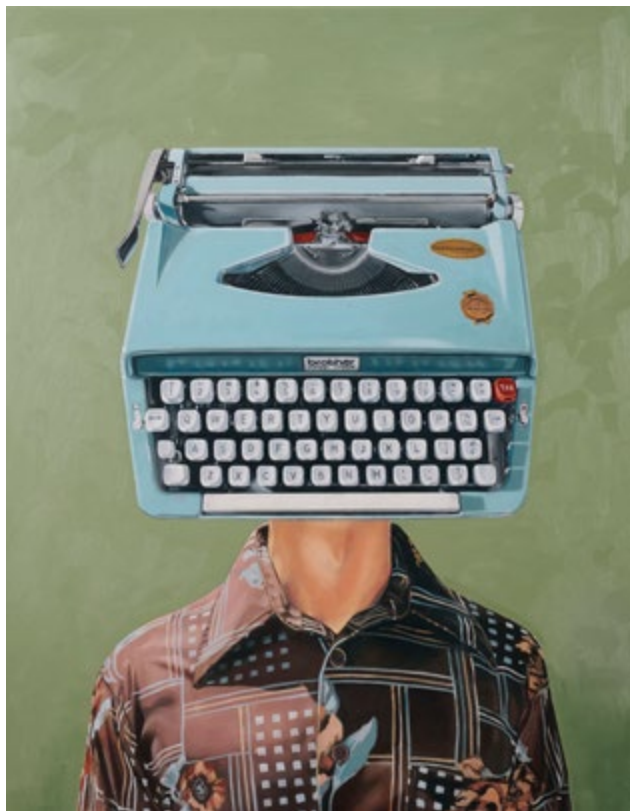
Pamela Vickerson, 2025
Planning & Process
 Paper, photos, 24 x 24"
 Courtesy of the artist



Pamela Vickerson, 2025
Portrait of Emma Contained
 Art print, 24 x 30"
 Courtesy of the artist



Pamela Vickerson, 2025
Portrait of Alexander as a Redhead
 Oil on Canvas, 24 x 30"
 Courtesy of the artist



Pamela Vickerson, 2025
Portrait of Alexander as a Brother
 Oil on Canvas, 24 x 30"
 Courtesy of the artist



Pamela Vickerson, 2025
Alice's Chair II
 Art print, 24x30"
 Courtesy of the artist

interactive artwork

As part of this travelling exhibition, artist Teresa Tam invites you to participate in her interactive artwork, *A memorial of what we remember and forget*.

A comment box will be on display up part of this exhibition, and your venue will be mailed a notepad. Use this notepad to write a letter to an object, and drop it in the comment box when you're finished!

As this exhibition continues travelling, this box will fill with notes, and become a symbolic representation of the multitude of relationships we have with the objects in our lives.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Using the notepad provided, write a letter to an object of your choice. This can be a thank you note, a goodbye to an object you lost, or whatever else you'd like to say to it.
2. After writing on the card, turn it over and fold along the dotted lines.
3. Using the handle, open the comment box. Drop your letter inside, and then close. (Your note will stay inside this comment box, and will be burned in a ceremony by the artist after this exhibiton has ended.)

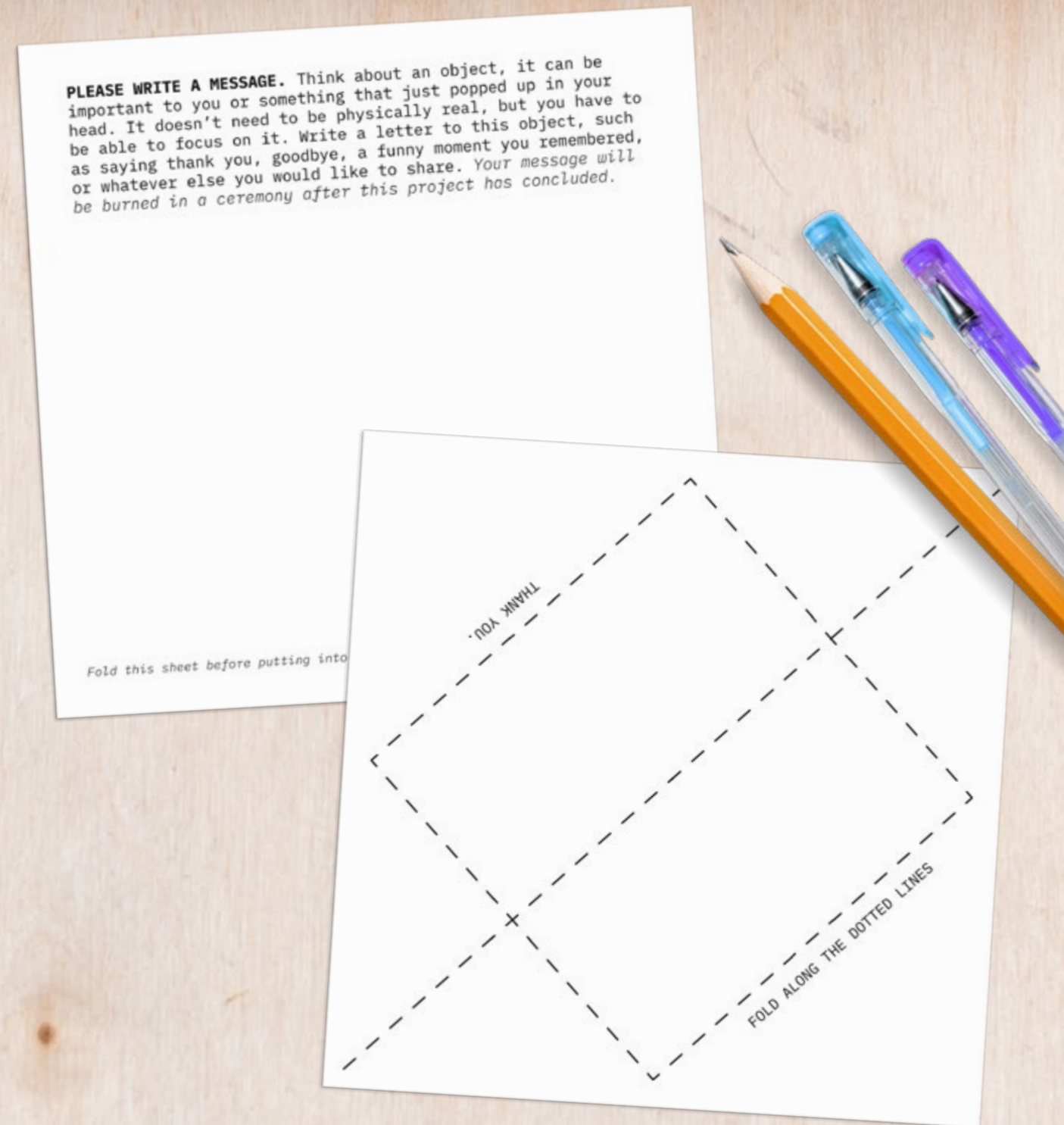


IMAGE CREDIT (Left)

Teresa Tam, 2025
A memorial of what we remember and forget
(3D rendering)
Comment box, 30x24x3"
Courtesy of the artist

education guide

This Education Guide consists of activities to move audiences through the various themes presented in *Odd Objects: Things We Believe In*. The content of the exhibition and the following lesson plans have been developed and designed to enhance the educational curriculum set by Alberta Education.

The guide includes questions for discussion, engagement activities, and art lessons designed for different levels of ability, understanding, and complexity of the participants. Each of the activities and art lesson plans can be altered to suit the interests and skillsets of the participants.

discussion questions



Think of an object that is special to you. Why is this object so important to you? Is it because of the colour, texture, or shape? Or is it because it brings up a memory? Or something else?

Do you collect anything? If so, what makes you want to collect this item?



Think of an object you use or see every day. (Examples: water bottle, toothbrush, sunglasses, utensils, hairbrush) If you could tell this object anything, what would you say?

Can you think of an object that has ever made you laugh, smile, or even cry? What about the object made you feel this emotion?

Look around the room and find an object you're interested in. How do you think this item was made? Do you think it was produced by a person, a machine, something in nature, or all of the above? What kinds of work may have went into producing this item?

Have you ever given away an object that you loved? Why? Talk about this experience.



If you could invent an object, what would it be? What does this object do? What can't it do?



Have you ever repaired a broken object? Or mended an article of clothing? What may repairing something we love teach us about how we express care? What might repairing objects teach us about environmental sustainability?



activity:

Object Self Portrait

INTRODUCTION

When we think of self-portraits, one might imagine a painting of a historical figure, a drawing of yourself made while looking in the mirror, or perhaps even a selfie. However, self-portraits can depict so much more than just what you look like! This activity encourages participants to create a self-portrait using only objects they have chosen to represent different aspects of their interests, personality, or identity. Participants will then bring these objects together, arrange, and photograph them to create a visually engaging artwork.

MATERIALS

- 10-12 objects, chosen by participants
- Camera, tablet, or cell phone that participants can use to take photos

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Collect 10-12 objects that you feel represent you. Gather objects from your backpack or classroom, or you can look for objects in your bedroom, home, or backyard.

What does it mean to find an object that represents you? Maybe it's your favourite hoodie, a cherished gift, a book that inspires you, an item from your family or culture, or something else. You get to decide!

2. Practise arranging these objects in front of you. Rearrange these objects until you find a setup that you like. Take into consideration the setting, depth, perspectives, lighting, and colours present in your composition.

3. When you find a composition you like, take a photo! (Optional: Activity can also be modified for participants who would like to paint, draw, or use other mediums to depict their objects).

REFLECTION

Ask participants to create a list of objects they included, and why they chose to include them. This could be shared in discussion with other participants, or as an individual written response.

ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER



SETTING: Where will you choose to photograph your objects? Are they inside or outside? Is there a backdrop, such as a blanket or wall behind them?

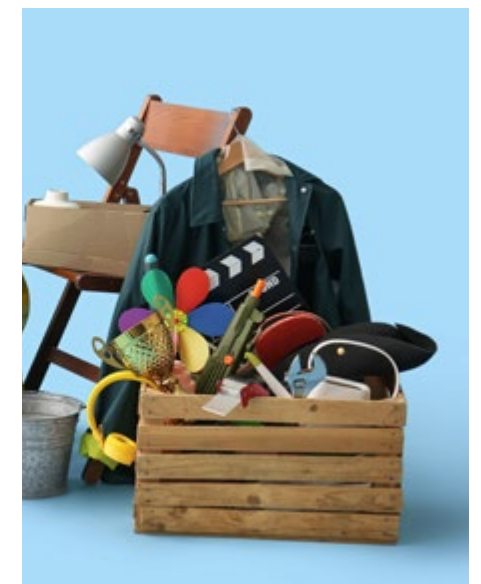
DEPTH: Which objects are above or below each other in your composition? Can some objects be closer to the camera, or farther away? Practise layering and overlapping your objects to create levels and depth.



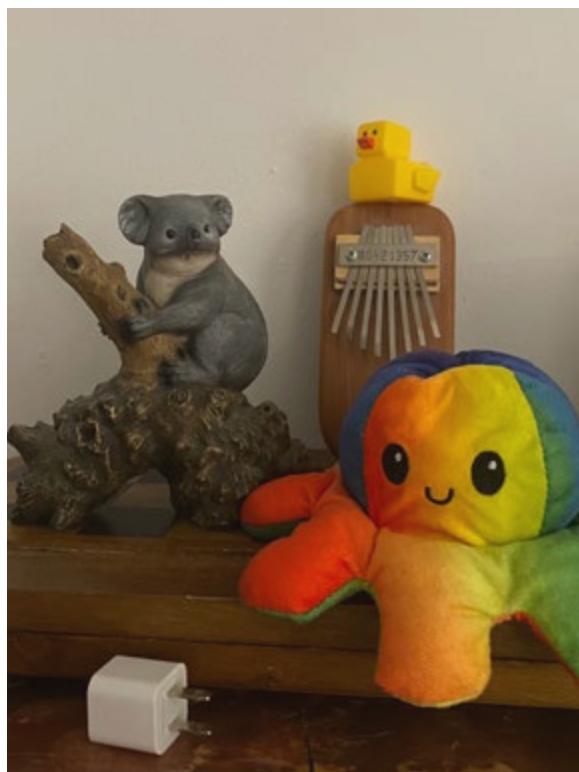
LIGHTING: Where are your objects placed? Are they in natural lighting outside, close to a window or lamps? Do they make shadows? Try taking a photo with and without flash. How does this change the lighting on your objects?



PERSPECTIVE: What angle will you photograph your objects from? Are they close up, or far away? Try photographing them from bird's eye view, bug's eye view, horizontally (landscape), or vertically (portrait).



COLOUR: What colours are your objects? Consider collecting items with a similar colour scheme, or arranging them based on what colours you think look good together.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why did you choose each object in your composition?
- What makes an object special to us? Is it the memories we have with them, or something else entirely?
- Look around the room at the portraits of other participants, did you choose similar objects? How are your compositions different? Can you guess whose self-portrait is whose?
- What can looking at these objects tell us about somebody, and what can't it tell us? Can an object fully represent us, or just one part of us?

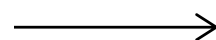
VARIATIONS

If desired, you can encourage participants to dress their objects up, using Mantis Mei's series *Underwear for Fruits* as inspiration.

This activity can also be altered to Portraits With Objects, where participants take a photo of themselves with a one object that they love. Participants can play with the ways they interact with the object, such as holding it, wearing it, or even stepping on it! You may encourage participants to paint these portraits, or to leave them as photographs.



This is the reference photo for Pamela Vickerson's *In light of Hazel, the view from here*. Vickerson photographed her daughter from above while laying underneath a crochet blanket. She then used this photo as a reference for her painting!



activity: Visible Mending

INTRODUCTION

There is a far-reaching history of repairing textiles and clothing that spans many cultures and communities across time. A process that was born out of being resourceful during conditions of poverty, repairing our belongings can save us money, while reducing waste and overconsumption. Visible mending is meant to highlight and draw attention to this process of repair by fixing holes, stains, and other damage with expressive designs, colours, and patterns. In this activity, participants are invited to repair a clothing item, blanket, stuffed animal, or other textile using the process of visible mending.

MATERIALS

- Chosen item of clothing, blanket, or other textile to repair*
- Embroidery thread and/or yarn
- Assorted fabric, sewing needles
- Fabric markers, paint, or fabric dye
- (Optional) Any other materials you would like to work with

*If participants don't have clothing with stains or holes to mend, prepare a selection of fabric that participants can use to learn these techniques.

INSTRUCTIONS

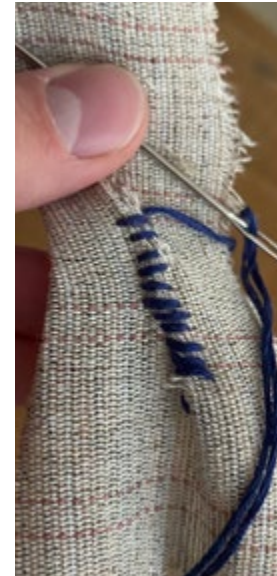
1. Choose an article of clothing, or select a piece of fabric for practise.
2. Select a technique you would like to try repairing your object with. There are a number of online articles and video tutorials that go into far more depth about each technique introduced in this catalogue.
3. Gather your materials, and begin mending! Set aside a larger block of time for this ex, and encourage participants to take this process slowly.

Participants may try out multiple techniques, and even blend them together! While this activity is focused on repair, you can also use the methods introduced here to play with creative self-expression.

REFLECTION

While you are mending, or shortly afterwards, have a conversation with participants about why this might be a useful and important skill to know. How can mending and repairing objects change our relationships to "stuff"? What would you do with this object if you were not repairing or repurposing it? How is repair and mending related to themes such as identity, industrialisation, and globalisation?

BASIC TECHNIQUES



HAND STITCHING:

Hand stitching only requires a needle and thread, and can be really useful skill to learn. By crossing thread back and forth to opposite edges of a tear, you can quickly close holes in clothing, blankets, stuffed animals, and other fabrics!

Hand stitching is a staple in visible mending, and is an element of several of the techniques introduced in this catalogue.



Ladder Stitch: This is an "invisible" stitch. It's used so that you can't see the thread when in the finished product.



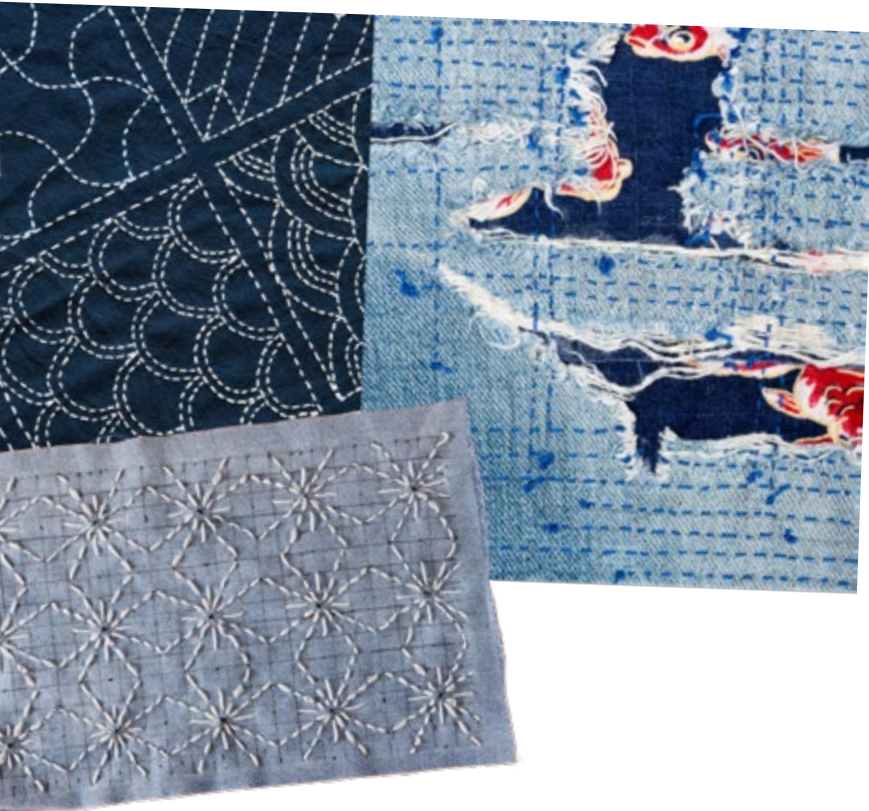
PATCHES:

Adding a patch to an article of clothing is often done to cover a hole or a stain. Patches can also be decorative, and are a staple in punk and diy (do-it-yourself) subcultures, where you may see someone wearing a jacket covered in patches and pins of their choosing.



PAINTING:

Another creative way to creatively mend your clothing or textiles is through painting or drawing on them! This can be a method of covering stains, creating patches that you can sew on later, or it can just be a method of making an article of clothing your own.



SASHIKO:

Sashiko is a Japanese stitching technique that is used to repair clothing and other textiles. It is done by hand stitching lines, shapes, and patterns through layers of fabric.

ADVANCED TECHNIQUES



DARNING:

Darning is a process that is often used to mend knitted fabrics and garments such as wool sweaters or socks. Instead of throwing these items away when they start to get holes, you can mend them by darning with embroidery floss or yarn. You can darn by hand, or if you fall in love with the process, there are small and inexpensive darning looms you can purchase online or from a local business.

The process of darning can be challenging at first, and it's recommended to learn from a friend or follow a video tutorial. Sometimes cities even have local mending meetups where you can learn with others!

To learn more about darning, or any of the other techniques introduced in this catalogue, please see the step-by-step tutorials referenced in the resources section in this catalogue.

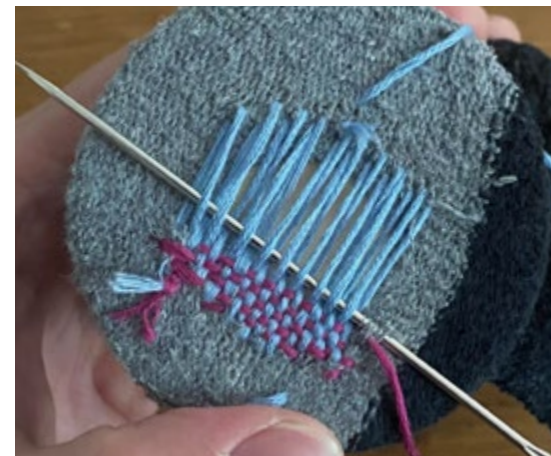




IMAGE CREDIT (Left)

Teresa Tam, 2022
Season's End Liquidation Shop:
installation overview
 Documentation of storefront
 Photo by Danny Luong
 Courtesy of the artist

To learn more about Teresa Tam's *Season's End Liquidation Shop*, and to see a catalogue of the objects that Tam exchanged as part of this project, please visit <https://teresatam.net/project/seasons-end-liquidation-shop/>



resources

The following resources were either referenced in this catalogue, or influenced the development of art activities and discussion questions. Host venues of this travelling exhibition are encouraged to review any of the materials listed that might aid in educating viewers about the artwork.

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IMAGE CREDITS (Previous)

Teresa Tam, 2022
Seasons End Liquidation Shop: object transfer ritual
Documentation of storefront
Photos by Danny Luong
Courtesy of the artist

IMAGE CREDIT (Below)

Mantis Mei, 2025,
Underwear for fruits #2
Fabric on fruits, 17x17,"
First shown in collaboration
with Molly JF Caldwell
Courtesy of the artist



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thank you

credits

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