

MESHWORKS OF STORIED MATTER: BECOMING WITH DISCARDED OBJECTS  
THROUGH PARTICIPATORY PUBLIC ART INTERVENTIONS

by

KIRA SARAI HEGEMAN

(Under the Direction of Christina Hanawalt)

ABSTRACT

Intra-actions speak to movements and becomings that occur in relational encounters between varied matter as its join together in a given context (Barad, 2007). For this work, the contexts for intra-actions were a series of participatory public art interventions (Dawkins & Loftus, 2015; Pinder, 2008; Richardson, 2010) inviting participants to engage with found *trash* items through imagining and crafting their stories. The three installations were distinct but related, situated in public spaces and corridors as means of disrupting daily moments while encouraging moments of pause to be with material objects in playful and creative ways (de Certeau, 1984; Debord, 1956). In these spaces, the interventionist installations created openings for entering into new relationships with other-than human matter.

As the installations unfolded, the different materials, human and beyond, left marks and traces of their collaborative experiences. I explored these traces through overlaps between qualitative methods and visual art practices, employing making as a means to converse with non-

human matter and analyze research material through different modalities. In their marks, they also offered openings for new imaginative journeys, new ways of engaging with these materials, and new ways of being with other mattered bodies.

From these movements, I conceptualized the collection of installations as openings for pedagogical encounters (O’Sullivan, 2006; Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, & Kocher, 2017). Utilizing contemporary participatory art practices that seek to facilitate moving experiences (O’Donoghue, 2015), these installations initiated moments of care and attentiveness between human matter and object-matter that had been discarded. Through these encounters, relationships formed; stories were created; and discarded objects were brought into new configurations with human participants through creative acts aimed at challenging social and economic systems built on humancentric and oppressive hierarchies of value. In their place, the movements of these installations invited interconnected ways of being, honoring the value and influence of matter across bodied forms.

Through this work, I further found implications for participatory practices such as these to engage broad and varied audiences with contemporary arts practice while exploring compassionate and just ways of being with life’s varied matter.

INDEX WORDS: art education, social practice, interventionist art, feminist new materialism, visual arts research, public pedagogy, sustainability, intra-action, imagination, storytelling, making, discarded objects

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the participants, human and beyond, that brought this work to life and made it so fun to engage with.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
CHAPTER	
1 Introduction.....	1
The Athens Home for Discarded Objects .....	5
2 Designing Interventions in Public Space .....	14
Theoretical Foundations.....	15
Tactics of Subversion.....	19
Subverting Dominant Texts Through Participatory Practices .....	21
Dérive and Détournment.....	24
From Dérive to Contemporary Intervention .....	25
Interventions as Pedagogical Spaces .....	28
From Theory to Installation Design.....	30
3 Shifts in Perspective.....	43
Intra-action and Diffraction .....	44
4 Installations as Apparatuses.....	55
A Little More About the Three Installations.....	57
Conditions of Possibility.....	71
5 Traces, Imprints and Storied Matter .....	78

A Meshwork of Marks and Memories .....	80
Interlude: Invitations to Engage.....	84
Traces of Josephine.....	95
Traces Left Behind.....	97
What are the Traces of These Overlapping Installations? .....	98
Marks and Openings .....	117
6 Conversing and Collaborating Through Making .....	125
Hovering Between Process and Product.....	141
In Conversations with Mattered Bodies.....	161
7 What May Come of These Moments of Attentiveness.....	177
Artful Engagement.....	186
Addressing the Anthropocene.....	188
Moving Matter, Moving Pedagogy.....	192
Ongoing Movements.....	196
REFERENCES .....	198
APPENDICES	
A Stories from Dear Discarded Object What's Your Story? .....	206
B Stories from Athens Home for Discarded Objects 2 Stories .....	219

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Objects from First River Clean-Up .....	3
Figure 2: The Athens Home for Discarded Objects.....	5
Figure 3: Collection of Objects: Athens Home for Discarded Objects .....	5
Figure 4: Participants engaging with the Athens Home for Discarded Objects .....	6
Figure 5: Writing a Certificate.....	6
Figure 6: Participants Adopting Objects.....	6
Figure 7: Mr. Giggles.....	7
Figure 8: Objects on the Bookshelves .....	8
Figure 9: Participant with Object.....	10
Figure 10: Participant prepares to Take Adopted Object Home.....	11
Figure 11: Participants prepare to Take Adopted Object Home.....	12
Figure 12: Athens Home for Discarded Objects Detail of Materials.....	13
Figure 13: The Athens Home for Discarded Objects 2 Display Case, View 1.....	31
Figure 14: The Athens Home for Discarded Objects 2 Display Case, View 2.....	31
Figure 15: The Athens Home for Discarded Objects 2, Living Room .....	32
Figure 16: Athens Home for Discarded Objects 2, Adopting Objects .....	32
Figure 17: Detail of Display Case.....	33
Figure 18: Page from Athens Home for Discarded Objects Book.....	34
Figure 19: AHFDO 2 Information from Living Room Display .....	36

Figure 20: Dear Discarded Objects, What's Your Story?.....	39
Figure 21: Dear Discarded Objects, What's Your Story Installation View (R. Warriner, 2017) ..	41
Figure 22: Participants with Objects in Philadelphia (R. Warriner, 2017) .....	54
Figure 23: The Athens Home for Discarded Objects in Process .....	57
Figure 24: University of Georgia Science Library Display Case .....	61
Figure 25: Revolution Recovery, Philadelphia, PA.....	65
Figure 26: Searching in the Waste Stream, RAIR Philly.....	67
Figure 27: Dear Discarded Object What's Your Story Full View (R. Warriner, 2017) .....	69
Figure 28: Participants Engaging with the Site, Philadelphia, PA .....	70
Figure 29: Sign from Dear Discarded Objects What's Your Story? .....	71
Figure 30: Letter and Bill Holder Certificate.....	82
Figure 31: Participants with Objects Post Events .....	83
Figure 32: Participant Photograph of Ray in Their New Home (E. Irvine, 2018).....	88
Figure 33: Josephine .....	95
Figure 34: Popsicle's Menorah .....	100
Figure 35: Paint for Models .....	100
Figure 36: The Box of Tools of My Dreams .....	100
Figure 37: Mortimus McVent III .....	101
Figure 38: Freddy North .....	101
Figure 39: Laa Laa .....	102
Figure 40: Table.....	102
Figure 41: Pokey the Garden Tool.....	103
Figure 42: Raymond, Red Flashlight Model # 2.....	103



Figure 43: Jack's Suitcase.....	104
Figure 44: Book: Through Indian Eyes .....	104
Figure 45: I Don't Want Your Help.....	105
Figure 46: Orville's Gourmet Buttery Flavor Popping Oil.....	106
Figure 47: Maxwell.....	107
Figure 48: Distilled White Vinegar.....	107
Figure 49: Timothy the Chair .....	108
Figure 50: Daisy the D2 Founder Quiz.....	108
Figure 51: Clay the Pipe and Others .....	109
Figure 52: Jere's Pedestal and Poe.....	109
Figure 53: Matty .....	110
Figure 54: Patty the iPad.....	110
Figure 55: UGA Science Library Objects, Detail View .....	112
Figure 56: Writing with 65 .....	113
Figure 57: Jeep Tag.....	113
Figure 58: Jeep Bumper and Other Objects.....	114
Figure 59: Cabinet with Objects, UGA Science Library .....	116
Figure 60: Mossy Shoe .....	121
Figure 61: Traces of Josephine (Digital Book).....	125-138
Figure 62: Making Paper with Josephine.....	139
Figure 63: Traces of Josephine Artist Book .....	141
Figure 64: Research Journal #1 (Digital Book) .....	144-151
Figure 65: 1.12.18 5:15 PM .....	152

Figure 66: Zachary Stephens .....	153
Figure 67: Cyanotype Traces .....	154
Figure 68: Weaving Detail.....	155
Figure 69: Objects in Author's Studio .....	157
Figure 70: Traces of Josephine Artist Book and Box of Collected Items .....	159
Figure 71: Weaving and Matches Collaborate.....	163
Figure 72: Marks from Matches on Author's .....	163
Figure 73: Match Dances Across Woven .....	163
Figure 74: Improvisation Book Detail .....	166
Figure 75: Improvisation Book.....	166
Figure 76: Colleen the Creature Comforts Can Rubbing.....	169
Figure 77: Performing Inquiry Through Weaving (Digital Book) .....	171-174
Figure 78: Dox the Slated Spoon .....	177
Figure 78: Letter and Bill Holder and Pope at Dear Discarded Object's What's Your Story .....	178



## Introduction

Zachary Stephens sits on my desk, resting beneath his screen-printed portrait. Zachary Stephens is an active part of my surroundings, but not in the sense you might be imagining. Zach is a remote-control helicopter recovered from a river during an environmentally focused river clean-up. Quite unexpectedly, Zach and other discarded objects became intertwined in my life, fueling research, community engagement and creative practice.

In January 2017, I became the first artist in residence with the University of Georgia Office of Sustainability. In this role, I was invited to create a work of art using materials found in a local river clean-up. The hope was that a work of art would help raise awareness about the detrimental effects of things like plastic bottles in our local watersheds by putting these objects into view in ways that could not be avoided. The art piece was to live as part of a Zero Waste Extravaganza, a one-day event in conjunction with the Patagonia Worn Wear Tour, which mends clothing free of charge. The day's event was focused on offering alternative approaches to environmentally and socially destructive consumption practices.

A 'materialistic' way of life-insofar as it requires buying ever-increasing numbers of products purchased in ever shorter cycles-thus displays an anti-materiality bias. In other words, the sheer volume of products, and the necessity of junking them to make room for new ones, devalues the thing. It disables and obscures thing-power. After all, it is hard to discern, much less acknowledge, the material dignity of the thing when your nose is overwhelmed by the dozens of scents that 'have collected into strata in the department store air' or when your thoughts are scrambled by the miles of shelving at a superstore" (Bennett, 2004, pp.350-351).

Behind the University of Georgia Office of Sustainability, just east of downtown Athens, there is a cement shed for storing materials. On a chilly February day in 2017, I opened the shed to clean and sift through the collection of discarded objects gathered days before in a student-run river clean-up. The clean-up had been extended to include a section of road adopted by Bag the Bag, a student organization dedicated to limiting the use and improper disposal of single use plastics. This was the first time I was able to see the objects collected, as I had not been able to attend the clean-up myself.

The students in the clean-up had diligently packed what they found in black garbage bags, the type you find in dormitories, cafeterias, warehouses, sporting events, or other public gatherings where significant amounts of “trash” are produced. I have written “trash” in quotation marks because I believe trash is just one idea of what these materials are. The word “trash” implies that the included items had, but no longer have a designated purpose or function. Once this function has passed, the one serving it loses its worth. It becomes something unnecessary, meaningless, discardable. In this meaninglessness it develops other associations: dirty, foul, smelly, dangerous, icky, gross, wretched; something to be covered up, contained, and moved out of sight.

With the door of the cement shed propped open, I went to work sorting the materials. Inside the bags, I found human made objects intermingled with clumps of soil and leaves saturated by river water. Mud had filled the holes and crevices of bottles, cans, even a boombox; any spaces where it could find its way inside.

Before sifting through these bags, I had imagined the materials found would consist mostly of torn plastic bags and bottles, recognizing these as materials that are regularly consumed and often discarded. Teasing apart the entangled materials from the clean-up, I was surprised to find an array

of domestic treasures like a moss-covered leather shoe with the moss still green; a dirty but otherwise intact child's rocking chair; a remote-control car carrying two miniature plastic babies, the kind you find in a King Cake during Mardi Gras; a circuit board; an iPad missing its screen; a woven blanket with a floral design, and a military helicopter. A collection of “things” that had been lost or left behind—discarded— finding themselves along the banks of Tanyard Creek which runs through the University of Georgia Campus, or on the side of Barnett Shoals Road. In some ways, these objects could be described by the words above: smelly, dirty, broken. But in their presence, they carried other words—words like memory, nostalgia, texture, history, experience, and story.



Over the span of two years, beginning in February 2017, these “things” acted as the medium for a series of participatory installations focused on interrupting movements through public spaces, primarily on or near university campuses. Each of the sites were created in an artistic collaboration between myself and an undergraduate art student, Abigail, who also worked with the University Office of Sustainability. They were conceptualized as participatory (Finklepearl, 2013), public art interventions, carrying an underlying goal of inviting intimate and playful interactions with objects

deemed as “trash,” in-order-to challenge normative notions of material as devoid of value beyond the act of consumption.

In the *Social Life of Things*, Appadurai (1986, as cited in Rhymes, 2017), describes the “commodity phase” of an object as just one phase in its life or biography. It does not begin or end with this phase but continues to live on even after it has been discarded or left behind. Following this perspective, the objects we engage with carry a story, a history of movement and experiments. They continue to act upon the world even as their given or perceived functions have passed. Attending to objects, Stephen Jackson (2014) asks:

Is it possible to love, and love deeply, a world of things? Can we bear a substantive ethical, even moral, relationship to categories of objects long consigned to a realm of thin functionalism? What if we can build new and different forms of solidarity with our objects (and they with us)? (As cited in Rhymes, 2017, p.452).

The work of this study invites such a solidarity with objects. I began as a performative act aimed at drawing attention to issues of waste and consumption by asking participants to engage intimately with found “trash”. Interested in the pedagogical nature of artistic intervention in public space, I designed three related installations that sought to bring human beings and discarded objects together through creative play.

This first installation took place on the University of Georgia Campus, in an outdoor space between the bookstore and student union. Situated along the path to a central bus stop, adjacent to the Student Union, this setting invited a mix of people to engage, some who purposely attended the event and others who happened to walk by.



## The Athens Home for Discarded Objects

February 21, 2017





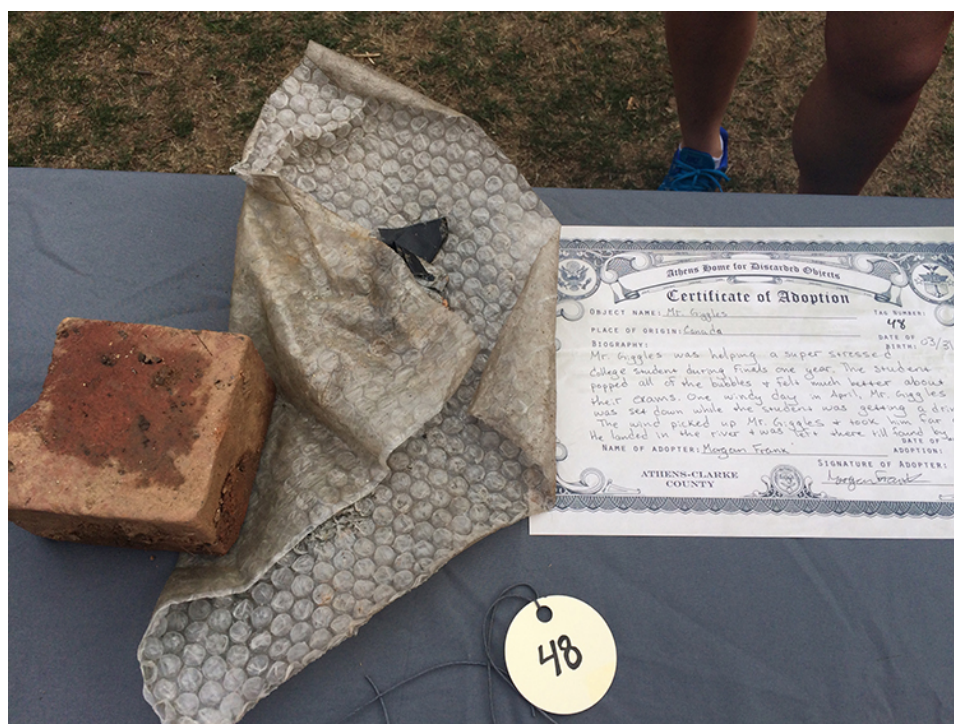


The objects were curated and laid out on 4 moving blankets, slightly overlapping one another to reference a carpeted space. Behind them stood three tall—roughly eight foot—bookshelves that began the day with nothing on them. Throughout the day, participants were invited to move around the space and touch, explore or connect with the objects. They were invited to adopt an object by filling out a certificate that asked them to imagine its name, date of birth, place of birth and write its story; thinking about what its life had been like and how it ended up in the river or roadway.





The stories were recorded on certificates that were collected in a central place for other participants and visitors to read. Once the objects were “adopted” they were moved to one of the bookshelves. These bookshelves were intended to serve as visual markers for “new homes” as adopted objects were lifted from the ground and placed on empty shelves. Over the course of the day’s events, many of the objects were taken by participants to live in their homes instead. I facilitated the engagement throughout the day, explaining the project and inviting participants to take part as much or as little as they liked. The event took place from 10am to 2pm.



Adjacent to the bookshelves, bordering another side of the central square of objects, were a sofa and two end tables. These furniture elements were incorporated to further reference domestic space and invite individuals to stop, sit, and “hang out” for a moment, encouraging a moment of pause from the daily routine of moving between classes, events and obligations.



I initially imagined this installation would be a one-time project. It would live in the space of the Zero Waste Extravaganza and be finished. As the first event unfolded—and before, as I worked with the material objects—I found I was surprised by the relationships that formed in these relatively short moments of engaging with materials.

Amidst the process, I learned of feminist new materialism and Jane Bennett's (2010) vitality of matter. With these ideas, I was able to put words to both the feelings that had surfaced in the shed as I shared space with the objects, and in the configurations of the Athens Home for Discarded Objects. I found a framework for conceptualizing the relationships I witnessed and the interwoven influences of both the human and object participants on the unfolding of experiences.

I then shifted course, honoring the uncertainties and explorations of a new materialist, moving world. I maintained my interest in the pedagogical potential of public artistic interventions

but expanded my inquiry to explore the interconnected becomings produced in encounters between mattered bodies within these installations.

Following the first installation, two more opportunities came to fruition. There were three interrelated installations in total, each developed in its own unique context with a unique set of materials and engagements. In these works, I found potential for empathetic, multisensory engagement with the materials of our lives. These empathetic engagements grow from an awareness of the interconnections between life-matter and the agency of all matter to affect and be affected by encounters with other matter.

In the pages that follow I will share the stories from this work, beginning with its theoretical underpinnings. The stories are grounded in the idea of intra-actions, which may be conceptualized as movements produced in relational engagements of matter brought together through contextual configurations (Barad, 2007). Regularly reconfiguring, these intra-actions leave traces of the encounters or becomings that occurred. For this work, the marks present themselves through narratives written by participants; visual works of art I made in the process of inquiry; conversations; notes and materials gathered. In their marks, they also present openings for additional wandering and exploration. Read together, the different elements of this study suggest the ways in which artful engagement with materials of discard—through participatory interventions and experiments in making—become spaces for arts-based pedagogical encounters. Such pedagogical encounters invite sensory and embodied ways of being with life's varied matter. These encounters are open, curious and imaginative—embracing uncertainty, discovery and transformation. In their attentiveness to discarded objects, they invite compassionate ways of being with this matter that may extend to other

forms of life matter, in pursuit of more sustainable and socially just practices of being (and becoming).













### Introduction: List of Figures

Figure 1: Objects from First River Clean-Up .....	3
Figure 2: The Athens Home for Discarded Objects.....	5
Figure 3: Collection of Objects: Athens Home for Discarded Objects.....	5
Figure 4: Participants engaging with the Athens Home for Discarded Objects .....	6
Figure 5: Writing a Certificate .....	6
Figure 6: Participants Adopting Objects.....	6
Figure 7: Mr. Giggles .....	7
Figure 8: Objects on the Bookshelves .....	8
Figure 9: Participant with Object .....	10
Figure 10: Participant prepares to Take Adopted Object Home .....	11
Figure 11: Participants prepare to Take Adopted Object Home .....	12
Figure 12: Athens Home for Discarded Objects Detail of Materials .....	13



## Designing Interventions in Public Space

When I began the research, I was focused primarily on the ways in which people engaged with temporary works of participatory art embedded in public spaces. I wondered how these practices might serve as informal sites of learning. More specifically, I was interested in how urban art interventions may foster avenues for play, creativity, critique and conversation.

I approached this research as a form of both public pedagogy and artistic intervention, seeking to question belief systems that perpetuate socially and environmentally destructive perceptions of value and matter. The environments of the installations were chosen as a means to reach wide audiences and open space for unexpected connections. I grounded the work in urban interventionist theory, drawing particularly on DeCerteau's (1984) philosophy of tactics, which subvert dominant ways of being in the world through creative appropriations of space and behavior and Debord's discussions of the Society of the Spectacle. I was further inspired by interventionist art practices that confront notions of art and artist/participant relationships, as theorized by Richardson and scholars in urban geography including Pinder, Dawkins and Loftus.

In the following pages, I will take you through the overlapping theoretical concepts that have shaped this work. Following the course of my own journey, I begin with creative appropriations of public space and move into relational, new materialist considerations of objects and experiences.



### *Theoretical Foundations*

In order to understand the context of this study, it is important to first look at the ways in which urban centers may simultaneously assert and subvert ideologies that devalue both human and non-human material. I begin the discussion with public space, which often carries multiple functions or identities. For this work “public” may describe spaces that are open to the uses of a wide range of individuals, free from barriers to access such as entrance fees or border demarcations, offering a sense of ownership over shared, community spaces. Ostensibly, a resident or visitor to a given locale is afforded the freedom to stand on the street corner unadulterated; to take a nap in a park, or picnic by a river. On the flip side, these same spaces wear the badges of systematic designs that control them (Lefebvre, 2009). They are often closely guarded by market-driven systems of production and consumption and increasingly prominent codes of civic conduct (Hirsch, 2009), such as surveillance, policing, and designated activities. Architects design spaces to fit into an urban plan that is often guided by parameters meant to reinforce particular ways of living. For many urban theorists, there is a direct correlation between a focus on the productivity of citizens and public spaces that contribute to their participation in production-based activities, such as the consumption of manufactured goods. Activities are sanctioned, so long as they fall into the required ideologies. Individuals pass through space as they move between activities, travelling to work and back, fulfilling their roles as producers and consumers.

In *Writings on Cities*, Lefebvre (1996) charts the evolution of urban centers from ancient to modern. The growth of Medieval cities, which saw a shift in status and power from land and title to accrual of monetary capital, saw an influx of diverse classes in urban settings. As centers of commerce and trade, cities offered advancement opportunities beyond agriculture and fostered

avenues for merchants to network and manage resources. As people and capital moved from feudal districts to centralized cities, so too did the civic and political structures that govern them. In this way, the city became more than an economic center. It became the social and political center of society where not only wealth was accumulated but also knowledge, skills and “*oeuvres* (works of art, monuments)” (Lefebvre, 1996, p.66). With these unique “*oeuvres*” and configurations of individuals and opportunities, cities carried unique identities. Such cities would vie for power from other cities and work to develop and assert this individual identity. For Lefebvre (1996), urban life was made up of “confrontation of differences, reciprocal knowledge and acknowledgement (including ideological and political confrontation), ways of living...” (p.75). In such a definition, cities manifest as places of heterogeneity, where difference can come together, but only if there is an equal right given to all inhabitants to live and express themselves (Mitchell, 2003).

With their critiques of capitalism, urban theorists such as Debord (1983) and Lefebvre (1996; 2009), associated a loss of urban identity to stale, ideological urban planning derived from a merging of state and economics (Reilly, 2012). As cities became increasingly more associated with capital, they developed into what Lefebvre (2009) described as *capitalistic space*, “characterized by the space of state control [contrôle étatique], which is simultaneously a space of exchange” (p.234). Industrialized cities replaced recesses, corners and alcoves with landscapes designed to increase control of and productivity by residents. Many cities, such as Paris, underwent a systematic widening of avenues to ensure a flow of traffic and open, unshrouded views of civic conduct (Lefebvre, 1996). This widening witnessed a loss of many of the medieval nooks, alleyways and avenues that fueled debates, romantic rendezvouses, artistic inspiration and moments of anonymity. As Lefebvre saw it,

the development of the “economic” city tempered or even squelched the love and passion once associated with individual cities.

For Lefebvre (1996), the “planner” with economics in mind creates the “fairy tale” life that will bring happiness: drop your kids off at daycare and go to the mall, have a drink with friends, buy into this lifestyle and it will make you happy (p.85). The system is presented to citizens as follows: “here is the context, the setting, the means of your happiness. If you do not know how to grasp the happiness offered so as to make it your own—don’t insist!” (Lefebvre, 1996, p.85). While such a system is predicated on a model of the “good life,” Lefebvre (1996) suggested that such a system, where economics drives all aspects of life, may prove detrimental to social well-being. For Lefebvre (1996):

One only has to open one’s eyes to understand the daily life of the one who runs from his dwelling to the station, near or far away, to the packed underground train, the office or the factory, to return the same way in the evening and come home to recuperate enough to start again the next day. The pictures of this generalized misery would not go without a picture of ‘satisfactions’ which hides it and becomes the means to elude it and break free from it.

(p.159)

In these scenarios, individuals are the byproducts of production and consumption. They passively fill these roles, acting in accordance to the prescribed system, which is controlled by those who own both the means of production (Reilly, 2012). The city reflects the system, replacing authentic communities with false ones built on “commodity fetishism” and emphasis on individual labor and specialization (Debord, 1983; Reilly, 2012).

For Debord (1983), capitalist ideologies based on such notions of labor and consumption colonize every aspect of human life. The dominant ideology manufactures a system where individuals are overworked in pursuit of outcomes that may not sufficiently benefit them. They are subsequently rewarded through the ideology of leisure, sold back to them by the dominant system. The goods produced in such a state are also the tools by which the dominant ideology maintains a sense of control and reinforces social isolation, promoting the pursuit of goods as a key to happiness. Debord coined this system, controlled by economic pursuits, the “Society of the Spectacle”, where commodity overshadows all aspects of life. In such a society, “What hides under the spectacular oppositions is a *unity of misery*. Behind the masks of total choice, different forms of the same alienation confront each other, all of them built on real contradictions which are repressed” (p. 63.)

The way of life fostered in the Society of the Spectacle is in stark contrast to Lefebvre’s (1996) notion of the social needs of human beings, which included:

...the need to accumulate energies and to spend them, even waste them in play. He [the consumer] has a need to see, to hear, to touch, to taste and the need to gather these perceptions in a ‘world’. To these anthropological needs which are socially elaborated (that is, sometimes separated, sometimes joined together, here compressed and there hypertrophied), can be added specific needs which are not satisfied by those commercial and cultural infrastructures which are somewhat parsimoniously taken into account by planners. This refers to the need for creative activity, for the *oeuvre* (not only of products and consumable material goods), of the need for information, symbolism, the imaginary and play. (p.147)

Such a view may translate to contemporary cities as well, offering what Reilly (2012) calls “an increasingly accurate depiction of the impact of the globalized and integrated spectacle upon the public sphere, which continues to alter the meaning of public space in urban centres” (P.83). In these concepts of urban life, spaces are created for residents rather than by residents and citizens are distracted from the potential ills of social life by the glamour of leisure, products and consumption (Mitchell, 2003).

As these practices may lead to isolation, loneliness, and dissatisfaction, they also contribute to environmental degradation. The propagation of materials for economic benefits funnel out to affect beyond human matter. In such a setting, materials lose their worth and value beyond their ability to be modified and consumed. A system that “cheapens” nature can only last so long as it depletes, drains, poisons and exhausts the Earth’s reserves (Haraway, 2015).

### *Tactics of Subversion*

In *The Practices of Everyday Life*, de Certeau (1984) argued that individuals may assert their agency through subversive acts that toy with elements of these civic structures. In his view, individuals, particularly in urban settings, regularly alter and adapt systematic influences to their own ends. Unlike, Debord, de Certeau (1984) viewed consumption as a mode of production, imbuing consumption with the potential to add a level of resistance and play to the imposed order. In this sense, citizens/individuals do not always passively accept dominant “texts,” but often actively produce secondary texts from the material of these primary texts. Such acts could be described as follows: “users (such as ourselves) ‘insinuate’ jarring or unpredictable elements into the cultural systems they negotiate (workplace directives, television schedules, literary canons, sundry recipes and

manuals), thereby over determining those systems and filling them with microscopic fissures and rifts” (Ahearne, 2010, p.2).

De Certeau (1984) defined such acts as “tactics,” which may be further interpreted as interventions into public space through which the populace may communicate and postulate a new urban order. *Tactics* exist in opposition to *strategies*, which are methods engineered by dominant power structures to guide and mediate civic conduct (Highmore, 2006). Strategies are produced by institutions and systems of power to be consumed by the general populace, maintaining a power dynamic by which the populace is relegated to passive acceptance of external “goods” (ideas, experiences, spaces).

While strategies seek to maintain systems, tactics exert the power of the individual to play with the system. Tactics offer alternatives. For de Certeau (1984), a tactic is a way of playing and foiling an opponent’s game, manifest in a “...pleasure of getting around the rules of constraining space” (de Certeau, 1984, p.18). Tactics arise from a position of powerlessness; they are a “tool of the weak” (de Certeau, 1984, p.37). “The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus, it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it, organized by the law of a foreign power” (de Certeau, 1984, p.37). Tactics utilize opportunities as they arise, playing with and pushing against the strategies asserted on them. Existing in fissures and interstitial spaces, they “...vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers” (de Certeau, 1984, p.37). They take advantage of momentary breaks or unanticipated spaces for inserting something original and/ or unexpected.

Thinking about everyday acts of resistance, de Certeau suggested that the spatial practices of a place govern the social behavior within it, and subsequently influence acts of resistance. These acts

of resistance are born from and exist within this context. For these tactics, the environment of their creation both informs and responds to their creation. Lefebvre (1996) and Debord (1983; 1957) also found tactical resistance from within to be integral to developing a new order of things. As Lefebvre (1996) stated: “It is from these social and political forces that the renewed city will become the *oeuvre*. The first thing to do is to defeat currently dominant strategies and ideologies” (p.154).

### *Subverting Dominant Texts Through Participatory Practices*

In the overlap between contemporary art and urban theory of subversions or “tactics,” live artistic interventions. Artistic interventions appropriate both public space and contemporary art practice to offer alternative visions of lived experiences (Richardson, 2010; Pinder, 2005; 2008; Loftus, 2009). As tactics, these interventions gain power from their position of accepted marginality. They manipulate existing spaces and social prescriptions in a playful way that fits into legal uses of public space but present behaviors or activities outside of normative, quotidian uses of these spaces. Such playful manipulations assert a sense of ownership, individuality, and possibility in governed spaces.

Contemporary participatory and interventionist practices follow the lineage of movements such as Fluxus, Happenings, and Situationist International, which played with art practice as means of engaging pluralistic ways of relating to space, materials and people. These movements operated from a view that art practice should be accessible to all, connected to daily life, and designed to offer alternative ways of being in the world. In conceptualizing the Athens Home for Discarded Objects, I found overlaps between the practices of artists such as Allan Kaprow and my own views on interventionist practice-views that honored these works as spaces for potential, for community and for playing with ideas of how to be in the world.

In the late 1950s, Allan Kaprow became an advocate for a de-separation of art from everyday life, working to critique the pervasive quality of Modernism and its dedication to the formal elements of artistic representation over concept or narrative. Interested in quotidian life practices, Kaprow was instrumental in developing Happenings as creative interventions into everyday movements. The development of Happenings directly opposed ideas of art as a commodity, serving as a means to re-ignite a public appreciation of artistic practice, which had been relegated to museums and a special circle of followers who possessed the knowledge and persona to “understand” it (Kelley, 1992).

Utilizing participation, chance and everyday materials like tires or cardboard, these Happenings elicited unexpected results, connections, conversations, and experiences. Happenings were temporary and performative, often occurring in non-traditional venues such as street corners, fields, or warehouses. Works were often designed by artists to move as participants physically manipulated or reconfigured materials.

An underlying aspect of the Happenings movement was a concerted effort to evade the marketing of art as a commodity. Happenings sought to exist as temporary experiences, rather than objects to be displayed and sold. Through the experiential component of the work they invited the audience to actively participate in the realization of the work by moving, touching, climbing over, or reconfiguring materials. For Kaprow, though, it was crucial that the artist still design and facilitate the experience (Kaprow, 1993). Happenings worked to obfuscate the role of producer and consumer, promoting instead a sense of collaboration (Erickson, 1992). With this focus on aesthetic experience rather than consumption, Happenings offered a model of everyday resistance against such strategies or systems outlined by Lefebvre, Debord, and de Certeau. Like de Certeau’s tactics,



Happenings utilized a sense of play and trickery as a means for engaging the populace. According to Erickson (1992), this playful element sought to “stimulate people into producing their own lives and meanings in opposition to consumption of ready-made meanings and enjoyments provided by the culture industry, sensitizing them to the life that is already before them in the streets rather than pursuing an ever out-of-reach commodified utopia.” (pp.43-44). Happenings further challenged a hyper-emphasis on individualism and specialization associated with modern industrial societies, by inspiring community, even temporarily, through the inclusion of participation and collaboration.

In France, Debord and the Situationist International sought a similar rekindling of art and social engagement, specifically with an aim to reclaim public space from the “spectacle” of consumerist politics—where the state and economy had merged into one (Reilly, 2012). They viewed life in the consumerist state as a mundane repetition of consumption and production, replacing communal gathering, festival, and other creative, playful outlets with stale, ideological urban planning. Like Kaprow, the Situationists saw power in the everyday, asserting that art and the everyday had to become one for revolution to occur. When situated in galleries or specialized locales beyond the realm of the everyday, Debord (1961) felt artistic endeavors lacked the power to transform daily life (Reilly, 2012).

Discussing the framework of situations Debord (1957) stated: “First of all, we think the world must be changed. We want the most liberating change of the society and life in which we find ourselves confined. We know this change is possible through appropriate actions” (p.17). The Situationists hoped to dissolve binaries such as work/play or public/private to open up the city as a site for exploration, play, ideas, contradiction and desire; to infuse it with life and counter the monotony of the travel-work-travel-home-sleep-repeat routine of production-based society. (Reilly,

2012). The Situationists sought to develop a methodology for appropriating and transforming the environment at hand, seeking to create “momentary ambiances of life” that focused on experiences rather than physical forms (Debord, 1957, p.23). They invented games to turn the system on its ends, if only temporarily. These games were non-competitive, aimed instead at reducing the “empty moments of life as much as possible” (Debord, p.24).

### *Dérive and Détournement*

In line with Kaprow and American Happenings, the Situationists utilized everyday actions as a basis for re-contextualizing local contexts. Their work was built from two basic concepts: détournement and dérive. Acts of détournement involved diverting the “regular” path or stream by appropriating and altering aspects of art and expression to make new expressive forms—often revealing ideological subtexts in the process (Debord, 1956). Dérive invited individuals to drift or wander through urban spaces with critical attitudes towards “urban formations” as means to reconsider their form and function (Erickson, 1992). As Erickson (1992) describes, “the dérive is to contribute to a knowledge of the city in order to continuously alter its shape for the sake of its inhabitants” (p.47). The dérive was meant to challenge urban residents to consider and reconsider the structure of urban life and geography. With the derive, Situationists asked residents to contemplate the purpose and function of these urban structures. Participating in a derive, one was meant to relinquish control and allow their movements to be guided by momentary attractions and experiences (Debord, 1956, p.50). For Reilly (2012), “part of the revolutionary quality of the dérive becomes the individual confrontation with the alienation and imprisonment of daily routines...” (p.88).

The principals of *dérive* and *détournement* serve as inspiration for contemporary creative interventions into public space, highlighting the potential of these spaces as overlooked arenas for power dynamics. Like *dérive* and *détournement*, interventionist practices challenge consumer-based prescriptions of space by encouraging collaboration, eradicating hierarchies and fostering creative participation. They invite individuals to actively play with space and ideas, utilizing everyday actions such as speaking, walking or consuming as creative fodder. By reworking the form and function of these spaces, groups may invoke conversation about values, relationships, politics, public space and practices of being which may subsequently inspire political or social transformation.

### *From Dérive to Contemporary Intervention*

In the development of participatory art from the early 1960s demarcations between “artist” and “patron” and “material” and “medium” have grown increasingly less defined. In 1998, Bourriaud coined the term Relational Aesthetics, to describe works of art that utilized conversation and social relations as a primary creative medium. Bringing a variety of people with a variety of experiences together in conversation and relational engagement Bourriaud (1998) posited that these works held power to produce new attitudes or potential shifts in ways of understanding and interacting with mainstream society.

In 2006, City Mine(d), a Belgian based artist collective, created the Ping Pong project, which began with plastic tubes installed throughout Brent, a North London suburban borough. These tubes enabled residents to shoot ping pong balls carrying thoughts, protests, and other musings. Transcending objecthood or even physical site, the project opened a space for conversation through the sending and receiving of ping pong balls. It also fostered the development of a network of relations as the City Mine(d) collective worked with different individuals and institutions through

the process of bringing the project to life. Their goal was to create a free and open space where anyone could engage in art and the art was malleable, taking on new forms and explorations as different elements participated (Loftus, 2009). A project such as this may accentuate collaboration and moments of pause rather than acts of production, movement and individuality. Further, it may transcend physical and implied boundaries, navigating through diverse open spaces. With regards to the Ping Pong project specifically, Loftus (2009) suggests:

Here, artistic production permeates the local pub; it enters into the libraries, the post office and the bowling club. Mundane environments are opened up to creative production and political debate in a way that rarely occurs in either ‘public art’ or its establishment counterpart. The relationships which make them mundane and which prevent communication are brought to the fore. With Izhar’s and City Mine(d)’s work, we come much closer to the avant-garde hope that the separation between art and life might be radically dissolved (p.332).

Such interventions may be viewed as experiments in public space that bring to light new possibilities. They do not serve as utopias or ideal models but explorations in possible alternatives (Dawkins & Loftus, 2015). One of the ways such practices challenge the “society of the spectacle” is by hi-jacking the roles of producer and consumer. Projects such as *Construction Site*—a vacant LA lot that was transformed into a temporary open-air exhibition and neighborhood gathering site by the Chicago based collective, Temporary Space—break down the barriers between audience and artist, empowering audience members to be producers. For *Construction Site*, neighborhood participants were invited to work with the artists in bringing the site to life. Through the process they were given authorship to curate and display artwork and direct the sensory experience of this urban space. In

addition, participants were invited to explore the space without pressure to purchase or consume (Dawkins and Loftus, 2015). Artistic interventions democratize the process of producing art, utilizing experience as both a medium and a catalyst for transformation (Loftus, 2009).

Momentary shifts in perspective may have lasting effects (Pinder, 2005). While Debord (1983), Lefebvre (1966) and de Certeau's (1984) theories were geographically tied to France's urban culture, their notions transcend spatial distinctions and carry weight in current urban life. According to Hirsch (2009):

the works [street art interventions] are united by a common vision of the street as a crucial site for the free expression of divergent perspectives and practices, and a willingness to engage in direct action to defend this vision against the forces of fear and domination. (p.23)

Artistic interventions act both as a means of making sense of contemporary lived experiences, and space for critiquing them (Dawkins & Loftus, 2015). They may be sources for an "immanent critique," which looks for contradictions in society's systems and rules, illuminating them in an effort to bring about social change (Dawkins & Loftus, 2015; Loftus, 2009; Pinder, 2005). Even more specifically, an immanent critique seeks to highlight the gaps between something's perceived purpose or value and what it does in real life. Such a critique may highlight, for example, the abundance of items that are discarded and stored out of sight to perpetuate an economic system fueled by consumption. They may open spaces for play and creative thinking, focusing on process over product. Or they may invite gathering and collaboration, offering moments of pause in the course of daily movements.

With his discussion of "interventionist art" Richardson (2010) furthers the concept that socially engaged works of public art may challenge the systems that mediate our civic conduct and

open up unexpected sites for learning. Such acts serve both to ignite the imaginative capacity of individuals by engaging them in playful acts of subversion, and to critique the uses and structures of public space (Dawkins & Loftus, 2015; Pinder, 2008). Artistic interventions seek to engage the senses in ways that are not readily available in consumption driven urban spaces that are often viewed as stale, monotonous and centered on economic pursuits (Debord, 1983; de Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1996; Dawkins & Loftus, 2015; Pinder, 2005, 2008).

### *Interventions as Pedagogical Spaces*

Interventions engage participants in acts that question and re-contextualize perceived norms. Seeking to counter de-humanizing, production-based capitalist models, interventionist practices invite individuals to share elements of their own stories, relate with unfamiliar practices or ideas, and engage with environments in new ways, encouraging a pluralistic view of lived experience. From this perspective, they may serve as *anomalous places of learning* (Ellsworth, 2005), where learning unfolds through engagement with unexpected experiences and diverse sensations.

Ellsworth (2005) further defines learning as the confluence of internal imagination and external influence. Learning is always connected both to personal histories and external sensations. In her discourse on pedagogy, she advocates for experiences that awaken the senses and promote discovery; where the learning is undefined at the outset, to be revealed through interaction with the learning space. Such a site may exist in unexpected environments, transcending the walls of traditional educational spaces to include public, neighborhood, digital or interstitial sites. These spaces become pedagogical through their invitation to explore, sense, communicate and collaborate. They challenge pedagogical concepts of knowledge and compliance, seeking instead to invoke disruptions in normative environments that encourage discovery and transformative experiences. In

such spaces, learning emerges through interaction with the “other”—with entities that are new, unknown or out of context. Social art practices, such as the Athens Home for Discarded Objects serve dual roles as works of art and anomalous sites of learning, reconfiguring public environments to encourage encounters with the unknown. They may then be viewed as “pedagogical interruptions into public space” (Ellsworth, 2005, p.40).

In conjunction with Ellsworth (2005), and other critical and transformational scholars such as Freire (1970) and Dewey (1938), Greene (1988) asserts that educating individuals to conform to the system denies agency and decreases opportunities for experiencing the complexities of life. In such pedagogical systems individuals are often unaware of their lack of agency, requiring a confrontation with possibility to bring awareness. For Greene (1995), imagination provides the catalyst to bring such awareness. Imagining “moves us to get in quest, to journey where we’ve never been before” (p.23). Sites and activities that encourage imaginative wandering may then open-up spaces to question, reflect, and critique experiences, especially those taken for granted norms ingrained through media, education and civic controls.

*From Theory to Installation Design*

Three installations form the basis of this dissertation. In creating these installations, I wanted to engage with the imaginative potential promoted by Greene (1995). In the different settings, I sought purposeful juxtapositions, where objects and materials normally found in contained spaces such as homes or offices were released into the wild of outdoor space or reconfigured in the scope of a university library. I hoped the meeting of material and venue might be strange enough to invite someone to stop and look, wonder, and maybe enter into the configuration.

These juxtapositions of materials were designed to invite encounters and relations with objects and environments that strayed from what might be viewed as “normal.” By asking individuals to write stories for the objects, we (Abigail and I) invited human participants to step into the lives of objects, to shift perspectives and imagine how they may relate with the world. We invited them to imagine the types of activities the objects might have engaged in. We encouraged them to contemplate the life events that may have led a rocking chair or boombox to be found in a river. Through inviting individuals to create stories for the objects, we further sought to create space for participants to be creative and play. While designing these experiences, I further envisioned a space where participants might have fun engaging in the act of crafting a story while also attending to the type of objects present and their relationship to larger civic systems of consuming and discarding.









Building off the first site, the second site was an installation created from the objects and stories produced in the first installation. A hybrid between an exhibition and an intervention, we aimed to reach wider audiences, sharing the work of the first site, and producing additional space for participants to pause from daily moments and intra-act with objects recovered in local cleanups. We displayed stories and adopted objects from the first event in a glass case given to us by the library for the four-month duration. Playing off the idea of a “room” we interspersed the objects with their etched “portraits” and framed screen prints of selected stories. These objects sat on shelves with patterned backdrops to give a sense of domesticity. The case “room” was designed as a visual whole, with specific attention to the background and layout of the space.



27

*Harold the Wheel*

b. Detroit, Michigan

Harold the wheel was born on an assembly line in Detroit, MI. Until 15 years ago, he spent his life as the spare wheel on a Buick. The car's owner, who was ironically named Harold, had a flat one day and put Harold (the wheel) to use. He lived a long, fulfilling life until one day his owner jumped the curb and bent him.



28

*Tom the Tin Can*

b. 09.09.99; Grocery store in GA

Tom the tin can was one of many until one day he was picked up by a lovely lady. This lady used him until all he had was gone, and then simply tossed him into a dump. After a journey down the river, he's finally been adopted.



Page from Athens Home for Discarded Objects Book

For the exhibition, I created a handmade book that catalogued each of the stories with their corresponding objects, gave a description of the event, offered contextual information on the location where the objects were found and shared photographs from the first installation. It rested on a podium beside the case so visitors could leaf through it at their own pace.

Worried that we were not drawing enough attention to the recovery of these objects in rivers and roadways, we placed a small sign on the front of the display case that stated:

**These objects are a small sample of an abundance of trash and items pulled from the streams and roadsides of Athens-Clarke County**

In addition to the display, we installed another “room” which lived in the entry corridor of the library, across from the circulation desk. This room was made to resemble an eclectic living room. In the center was a woven rag rug that actually came from my own kitchen. The rug was surrounded by selected furniture: an orange rocking chair, a wooden desk chair, a small wooden desk with a cabinet that folded down to form the writing portion of the desk, and 5-foot-tall wooden display case with three glass doors. Inside the case we placed newly found objects gathered in one of Bag the Bag’s road clean-ups from September 2017. We placed a book of blank certificates on the folded-out table of the small desk with hand-written instructions for adopting objects. Installed from September 2017 to January 2018, this site was an experiment to explore what types of encounters would occur in a more long-term installation that did not have a human facilitator. This setting shifted ideas of public space from the first installation, removing the outdoor corridor element, but maintaining the goal of unexpected interactions in a non-traditional arts environment.



Welcome to the Athens Home for Discarded Objects. Make yourself comfortable! All the tagged objects you see are up for adoption. They were found as part of several community river and road cleanups, abandoned and without a home. You are invited to take a look at these objects and adopt one by filling out a birth certificate for it. Use your imagination to give it a name, date of birth, and life story. We hope to be able to share these stories with the objects in the future.

In the glass display case and drawers around the corner behind you, you will find objects that were previously found and adopted at an event in February 2017. Some of the stories and objects are on display, and others can be found in the handmade book by Kira Hegeman. The etchings and screen prints in the case are by Abigail West.

*Student reflections from ENGL 1101, Fall 2017, Professor Holly Fling:*

**Win:**

After walking across campus on a day when the sun was beating down, I finally made it to the Science Library where the exhibit, "Athens' Home for Discarded Objects" was located. My initial intention was to go in to the library, take a few quick and efficient photographs due to a busy week then be on my way to study for a test. The only thing is that it did not quite go that way, I strolled in through the metal detectors (always subconsciously thinking I will be the one that triggers them to beep for some unknown reason) and noticed two chairs that looked out of place due to their antique appearance surrounded by the more modern accessories that come along with a 21st century library. I soon realized that this is the exhibit that I am here for due to the signage. One of the first things that the sign says to me is that I need to make myself comfortable, and for some reason that spoke to me and with a sort of why not attitude I sat myself down in a chair and began to look at the display case in front of me. I noticed lots of stuff, stuff that I could have considered trash or clutter if it was on the side of the road or behind a run-down ware house, but it was not, it was actually put in a display case which immediately triggered significance. It made me ponder upon the "lives" of these abstract objects. Asking questions to myself, such as, "How long since this object was made?", "Did the creator ever think it would end up in a display case?", and many more. I think what this exhibit is attempting to convey is the beauty in the materiality of objects, no matter what the condition of these objects may be.

**Megan:**

When I went to go view the "Athens Home for Discarded Objects" display, I was a little hesitant as to what I would find. The title hinted that it would most likely be a display of random, unwanted things yet it was actually so much more. There is a living room like setting set up in the middle of the science library made up of various objects found around Athens. There is a table with a notebook sitting over to the side where viewers can select an object they like and "adopt it". This means that they can claim the object, name it, and if they really want to, keep it. These objects consisted of broken car mirrors, old bicycle wheels, basketballs, bats, a clump of hair and so much more. People who choose to adopt these things are allowed to come up with a story to attach to the object which eventually ends up being written or added into a hand-made book that logs all the lost and found objects. Being able to see all the items that were found in the rivers and on the roads of Athens was very eye-opening. While some of the things were just dumpy old car parts or miscellaneous chains, there were actually a few very interesting things that were found. One of the objects that stood out to be was an old boom box. It was covered in mud and dented all over, yet it still had the classic, old timey look with two circular speakers at the ends of the oval shape with a handle that popped up in the middle. The CD port was even still intact as well! Because it looked so old, I assumed that where ever

the people found it, it must have been there for a while. It was very interesting getting to see what objects people chose to adopt and what stories they came up with to accompany their choice. Overall, the entire display was very cool and an interesting project. I really enjoyed looking and "getting to know" the objects.

#### **Maddie:**

The exhibit of the Athens home for discarded objects was so interesting to me. On a bookshelf in the middle of the library they had discarded objects that could be adopted, and then on the other side of the room in a glass bookcase was adopted objects. The exhibit was so cool because each object had its own unique story. Some were hilarious, and some were serious and realistic. My most favorite story was the mossy shoe. It is humorous as it talks about the shoes dreams of being an air Jordan of its life. But his dreams were crushed when he was thrown into the stream. The shoes biggest accomplishment in life is it has become [home] for moss. The exhibit made me think a little deeper than just a funny, unique exhibit. It made me think about how everything has a purpose and every object has a story behind it. Each object is unique in its own way, just as each object has its own story. These objects are just like humans. Every person has a different life story, and every person looks different. Also, it made me think about how every person has a purpose. Everyone's purpose in life is different, just as every object had a different purpose before it was thrown into the stream. For example, someone may be called to be a doctor and save lives, while another person may be beautician and cut people's hair. The mossy shoe was a protection for someone's foot at one point. It was super cool to see what objects people had adopted versus the objects that hadn't been adopted yet. Maybe people found a connection with the object that they had adopted.





### **Dear Discarded Object, What's Your Story?**

Philadelphia, PA  
November 2-3, 2017

The third installation took place in conjunction with an annual PLAN conference in Philadelphia, PA. PLAN refers to the Post Landfill Action Network, which works with students and campuses around the nation to promote zero waste activities and sustainable initiatives (PLAN, N.D.) As a part of the PLAN conference we were invited to create a site-specific variation of the Athens Home installation in Philadelphia, PA. The space we used was a brick pedestrian street that runs through the Temple University Campus and beside North Broad Street, a heavily trafficked and major road in Philadelphia. While many of the buildings along this road belonged to Temple University, it was a public pedestrian mall used by non-affiliated residents as well as Temple staff and students.

This installation expanded the collaboration beyond Abigail and me to include the staff of the Revolution Recovery Artist in Residence Program (RAIR), which offers residency opportunities and creative/material support at a waste management facility in the Philadelphia area. A private waste management site, Revolution Recovery strives to divert as much material from the landfill as possible. Plastics, metals, housing materials are processed and re-sold to applicable markets, or bound and stored until market prices rise to a suitable amount. In addition to construction and demolition waste, much of the material that cycles through the site comes from homes or residential facilities. Often times these domestic objects cannot be sold to recycling markets in the way that aluminum, plastic or other products are recycled. As a result, they head to the landfill.

The RAIR staff were integral in sourcing materials for the installation. After a series of skype meetings where we relayed our ideas and visions for the installation, the staff from RAIR pulled aside objects and materials they thought would fit with our ideas. Guiding factors for this material included highlighting the breadth of materials that move through the dump, connecting to local cultures and objects, and attending to the vibrations given off by certain materials—those energies that spoke to the staff and posed invitations for further connections with the items. We arrived in Philadelphia late on Thursday, November 2. The installation was loosely planned before travelling to Philadelphia but functioned primarily as a site-specific installation. We were not able to view any of the objects or supporting materials before arriving in Philadelphia.

*The set-up of the installation unfolded more as a flea market* (Note from the author's journal)



We laid the objects along a scrap of patterned carpet that I pulled from the Revolutionary Recovery yard. The carpet was long, but rather narrow (roughly 3 feet) and the objects exploded off the rug in multiple directions. The shape of the rug stretched the formation lengthwise, creating a strange layout for a “room”.

The objects were grouped loosely by category, with tools and more utilitarian objects placed on the brick and items more associated with inside spaces settled on the rug. The furniture was organized both by look and function. We hoped to create some space for participants to comfortably write, while also maintaining the aesthetic allusion to a living room or home environment incorporated in the other two installations. It proved harder to create the dynamic and cohesive look of the first two installations without shelving. In prior iterations, the shelving both grounded the set-up, creating a type of wall to demarcate the space, and served as literal shelving to hold objects throughout the adoption process. This furniture was smaller and more eclectic, removing some of the feel of a cohesive room and replacing it with the sense of market or display of personal wares.

Many participants remarked that it resembled a “flea market,” inquiring if these items were for sale.

The installation ran from 10am to 4pm. Abigail and I facilitated engagement throughout the day.

## Chapter 2: List of Figures (In Order of Appearance)

Figure 13: The Athens Home for Discarded Objects 2 Display Case, View 1.....	31
Figure 14: The Athens Home for Discarded Objects 2 Display Case, View 2.....	31
Figure 15: The Athens Home for Discarded Objects 2, Living Room .....	32
Figure 16: Athens Home for Discarded Objects 2, Adopting Objects .....	32
Figure 17: Detail of Display Case.....	33
Figure 18: Page from Athens Home for Discarded Objects Book.....	34
Figure 19: AHFDO 2 Information from Living Room Display.....	36
Figure 20: Dear Discarded Objects, What’s Your Story? .....	39
Figure 21: Dear Discarded Objects, What’s Your Story? Installation View (R. Warriner, 2017 .....	4



### Shifts in Perspective Designing Inquiry

As the installations unfolded, I found I was surprised by the relationships formed with the objects. At the outset, I never anticipated that participants would want to keep their “adopted” objects, “things” mostly covered in dirt, broken, carrying a faint musk or caked in detritus. When the nearly black piece of used bubble wrap went home with a student, and the CD cracked and painted in dirt left with another, I wondered what was happening in this moment and what was forming through these interactions? I found myself interested both by the experiences of individuals interacting with the installation and with the objects themselves. Observing people engage with the objects, I wondered what energy they may be bringing to the experience?

My interest in the objects themselves brought me to feminist new materialism and the work of political philosopher Jane Bennett and physicist/philosopher Karen Barad. I found particular connection with Jane Bennett’s (2010) concept of “thing-power” which describes a vital energy or force that flows through all material and Karen Barad’s (2007) “intra-actions” which describe encounters of matter in a world made up of relational configurations of material rather than fixed, predefined bodies and environments.

Looking beyond just the human experiences of public interventions, I turned my questions towards exploring what was produced in these contextual configurations and what becomes through them. My inquiry focused on the many stories and experiences produced, seeking to be open to questions and shifts as they arise, while attending to both human and non-human matter.

### *Intra-action and Diffraction*

In contrast to a hierarchical picture of the world, with human beings at the top, a new materialist ontology aims to “horizontalize the relations between human, biota, and abiota” (Bennett, 2010, p.112), drawing humans toward a greater appreciation of the way human and non-human matter mutually affect one another. Matter is “vibrant, energetic, lively, quivering, evanescent and effluentscent” (Bennett, 2010, p.112). It is always moving, configuring and re-configuring; in its energy, it produces something. Bennett (2010) describes the power of matter to shape movements as follows:

in a world of lively matter, we see that biochemical and biochemical-social systems can sometimes unexpectedly bifurcate or choose developmental paths that could not have been foreseen, for they are governed by an emergent rather than a linear or deterministic causality. (p.112)

Bennett (2004) attributes this force or vibrancy to “thing power,” which acknowledges that an object may be vital or “alive in its own right” (p.350) and carries the ability to cause an effect or shift in relation to other matter. Thing-power materialism encourages a more awakened sense of the connectivity of all matter, of “the extent to which all things are spun together in a dense web” (Bennett, 2004, p.354), and the dangers of a human sensibility that disregards this web. Thing power emphasizes the kinship of all things, contending that we all share the same “*élan vital*” or vital force, though it may be distributed in varying amounts across bodies. With this, Bennett honors the power and life force present in all things, recognizing the relational-contextual nature of lived experience or phenomena, rather than placing human or other at the top of the pyramid.



Both Bennett (2004; 2010) and Barad (2003; 2007) present a relational picture of life phenomena. In Bennett's (2004) "thing-power" or vital materialism, we as human beings exist not as one body but as an "array of bodies". In each human ecosystem, for example, lie a multitude of other biota/abiotia, such as bacteria, dust, or vitamin D captured from the sun. Like the configurations of our human ecosystems, all material gains identity and agency through its relations with other things. In this sense, matter does not present itself in the form of specific "things" but exists instead in a series of configurations or "assemblages" (Bennett, 2010). For Bennett (2004), "thing-power is a function of that grouping. A thing has power by virtue of its operating in conjunction with other things" (p.354).

Barad (2007) describes these assemblages as "entangled states of agency" or entanglements, where material configurations relate with one another and boundaries are defined through causal effects. The relational-contextual nature of material and phenomenon enables multiple "identities" to exist in the life of matter. A famous example of this is the "two-slit" electron experiment (Barad, 2014). The two-slit test was touted as a means to unambiguously sort waves and particles, understanding that waves could pass through multiple slits simultaneously while particles could not. For the experiment, electrons were offered varying slits in a device to travel through. As the experiment unfolded, electrons displayed their versatility, adapting form to engage with a given set of conditions. In one context they operated as waves, and in another as particles, exhibiting dual identities once deemed theoretically impossible. The evidence of their dualistic nature laid ground for a new ontology that challenges the Cartesian duality of subject and object. In this new ontology, identity is not pre-determined or fixed but instead defined by a set of overlapping contingencies. The electron may be a wave or a particle depending on its engagements with the apparatus and materials

of the experiment. The apparatus is the context by which the body or phenomena are produced and “is an inseparable part of the observed phenomenon” (Barad, 2014, p.180).

Barad’s theory challenged the idea that entities exist in and of themselves. Building from the work of physicist Niels Bohr who questioned the inherently determinate boundaries of things, Barad posited that things as we perceive them are produced through specific relational configurations of matter distributed in varying forms. The movements and relations that happen in these configurations may be called “intra-actions” (Barad, 2007). With the term intra-action, Barad opened up theoretical space for relations between moving and shifting matter. With moving matter, the term “interaction” becomes too narrow or restrictive as it pre-supposes bodies with defined boundaries, where-as, intra-action attends to amorphous quality of phenomena, which come into being through specific configurations or entanglements (Barad, 2003, 815).

Intra-actions describe the varied movements that occur as the matter is entangled for a time, both the visible and the invisible. These intra-actions may be imagined as the space between matter as they move together. The intra-actions continually move and shape as the matter continually moves and shapes, responsive to the flows and influences of different bodies as they act. In such space, bodies mutually affect one another. Karin Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) add, “human and non-human bodies can thus be thought upon as forces that overlap and relate to each other. In doing so, they can be understood to borrow or exchange properties with each other” (p. 529).

Barad (2007) further posits that boundaries are formed through these relational intra-actions. The entanglement of matter in a given configuration produces the “cuts” that define a given body at a given time. Much like baking. In the act of baking, flour may become bread, cookie, or pizza, merging and intra-acting with other matter such as sugar, eggs, and milk. Through their



relationship, these matter variations will configure into a new mattered body. It may then cycle through a course of different material forms as it intertwines with other matter, follows the process of digestion, decomposition and re-composition. At each iteration, the flour matter does not disappear, but morphs and shifts as it reconfigures into new or different matter. Matter exists in a complex and active network of relations rather than a “property of things.” From this perspective, the world, objects, plants, animals and our own human identities within it, may be viewed as continuously forming or “mattering.”

Barad’s intra-actions further acknowledge that separations between bodies do exist, but these separations are not fixed or inherent. Rather, they are relational. They configure and re-configure in relation to contexts and encounters with other material. While boundaries may be visually apparent, as in the edges of a mug, they are not as fixed as they may seem. For much of human perception, the “seemingly self-evidentiary nature of bodily boundaries” is a result of repetition of culturally and historically grounded “bodily performance” rather than inherent borders (Barad, 2007, p.155). Many of the movements or configurations repeat, with small or subtle changes. Some of these shifts and movements may be so minute or rapid that they escape conscious perception, allowing for a sense of inherent form or presence in the world. Identity is not fixed: “It is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the ‘components’ of phenomena become determinate and that particular embodied concepts become meaningful” (Barad, 2003, p.815).

Bodies then are assemblages that continue to shape and differentiate with new encounters (Hultman & Taguchi, 2010, p. 532). The intra-actions produce the cuts that define a given material configuration for a time. They are also the result of relational encounters. Intra-activity is the movement and relations with and between material bodies as they come into contact in a given

context, regularly affecting and being affected by other matter. The world is in an ongoing process of “mattering.”

In this mattering, ideas of agency too are dynamic. Agency is a “doing/being”, rather than a static attribute afforded to given matter (Barad, 2003). As a dynamic entity, agency may shift as matter shifts, honoring the ability for matter to carry different levels of agency in different configurations, beyond boundaries determined by human language, such as human, non-human, object or “thing”. From this perspective, the matter of the world is mutually affecting one another, even if the movement or life force of the matter may not be readily visible to the human eye, as may be the case with matter deemed as “object” or “trash”. Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) add, “Thus, in a relational materialist understanding, the sand can be understood as ‘active’ and ‘playing with the girl’ just as much as the girl plays with the sand. They come into play. The girl is in a state of becoming with the sand, and the sand is in a state of becoming with the girl” (p.530).

“In another way of understanding this, the sand offers certain possibilities in its relations with the girl. In the intra-action between the girl and the sand, new problems to be solved emerge as an effect of their mutual engagement” (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p.530).

“Thing-power” and “intra-action” open space for a research study that explores the relations and becomings between matter—human and beyond. Such a study focuses on exploring understanding from a perspective of abundance, acknowledging that there are diverse ways of being in the world and each understanding is both relational and personal (Jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013; Sullivan, 2005). Inquiry, in this space, shifts from a goal of knowing or finding distilled truths to a place of recognizing and sharing the diverse stories that become in a world regularly changing and becoming through relational encounters, or intra-actions (Jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013). Research

then may be geared towards “openings,” questions, and “reverberations,” that offer pathways for conversation, and dynamic movements to shift understandings (Irwin & Springgay, 2008b).

This study focused on the relationships between matter, human and beyond, that came together through public, pedagogical, artistic acts aimed at drawing attention specifically to matter consumed and discarded by human bodies. I conceptualized the project both as a work of socially engaged art and as an act of research. The three installations acted as experiments, with the installation itself serving as an apparatus by which to determine and study the intra-actions within (Barad, 2007). As apparatuses, the installations worked to configure the space and material of the event for a time, producing a context by which to study their associated intra-actions. Within these configurations there were many points of interest: the human participants as they entangled with the objects, the objects as they entangled with the human participants, the creative act as it unfolded between human and object matter, the space as it was defined through the installation, and myself as I engaged with the data. While the matter involved in these configurations extended beyond the human and object participants (including things like grass, sun, sidewalk, air, or bacteria), this study focuses primarily on the spaces shared between the objects and humans that entered into these three temporary configurations.

Beginning in Spring 2017, and continuing now as I write, these three installations have generated a variety of materials, including observations and field notes from the three events/sites, photographs, videos, conversations with human participants, the stories written on certificates, the objects themselves, responses to email questionnaires sent to participants post adoption, written reflections from students in courses that visited the Science Library exhibition, and other ephemera left behind. As part of the research process, I worked to maintain a regular studio engagement,

exploring these materials through writing as well as visual practices that included drawing, printmaking, papermaking, book arts, and weaving. Through these acts, I aimed to be-with the material in different modalities, imagining visual processes as a means to “converse” with non-human matter and give it a voice in the research process. I employed a fluid methodological approach (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016), which is responsive and remains open to methodological changes that meet the needs of the moment or context.

A methodology that remains open to detours and questioning provides space for the undefined nature of the phenomenon to be explored and avenues to share experiences and contextual understandings of lived experiences for others to engage with as they navigate their own moving, mattered worlds. Such a process invites contemplation from those who encounter it, which may bring the imperceptible or unexpected into spaces of thought.

“the researcher is trying to say something about the intertwined relationship and mutual transformations in this flow of encounters taking place, rather than trying to reveal and incarnate a specific phenomenon or quality of ‘being-in-the-world’.”  
(Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 538)

As I conceptualized analysis for a study focused on questioning and contextual “becomings,” I thought of Melissa Freeman’s (2017) “diagrammatical thinking”, which aims not to look for commonalities, synthesized view points, or to fit experiences into existing representations, but to acknowledge ways in which human and non-human material co-constitute the world, creating new becomings, configurations, and experiences of the world for all such material. (p.108)

Notions of diffractive methodology, drawn particularly from Barad and Lenz Taguchi (Barad, 2014; 2007; Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Lenz Taguchi, 2012) also informed my analytical approach. With an expansion of agential entities and an erosion of inherent boundaries or

identities, a new materialist approach invites a shift in relating to data. Barad (2007; 2014) suggests a “diffractive methodology” which promotes engaging with research from within rather than as an external observer or inquirer. Diffraction calls on us to be a part of the configuration, to recognize our places within it and our roles both as actants and recipients of influence. A diffractive methodology operates from a relational ontology. For Barad (2003; 2007), Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010), diffraction differs from traditional applications of reflection or representation in that reflection implies both a separation from that which is being studied and suggests a level of mirroring or representing of phenomenon as it appears. Barad (2007) contends,

reflexivity takes for granted the idea that representations reflect (social or natural) reality.

That is, reflexivity is based on the belief that practices of representing have no effect on the objects of investigation and that we have a kind of access to representations that we don’t have to the objects themselves. (p.87)

In physics, diffraction describes the “bending or spreading of waves upon encountering an obstacle” (Barad, 2007, p.74). In a research setting, this imagery may transfer to consider the way experiences, events and data bend and spread in relation to different causal intra-actions. Diffraction draws on the idea of a world in process, where knowledge is in the making, material is in the making, and identity is in the making. Such an ontology does not take boundaries of objects or subjects for granted, but rather investigates the material-discursive practices that produce “objects” and “subjects” in changing relational contexts (Barad, 2007, p.93). Describing their own practice, Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) express diffractive analysis as follows, “when reading diffractively, seeing with data, we look for events of activities and encounters, evoking transformation and change in the performative agents involved” (P. 535). In contrast to reflection,

which alludes to mirroring, representation, and sameness, diffraction attends to the overlaps between matter, honoring differences and unique paths of movement.

Lenz Taguchi (2012) further defines diffractive analysis as “an embodied engagement with the materiality of research data, a *becoming-with* the data as a researcher” (p.265). An embodied engagement recognizes our presence within the entanglement of the experience and the possibility for attending to research material in multiple modes that extend beyond traditional discursive practices.

Similarly, Bennett (2010) asks: what if we loosened the borders to encounter “the world as a swarm of vibrant materials entering and leaving agentic assemblages” (p.107)? In doing this, she argues, we may open-up avenues to new and unexpected questions, such as “do sand storms make a difference to the spread of so called sectarian violence?” (p.107). Diffraction loosens the boundaries created by “reflection.” Where reflection implies a sense of permanency or understanding from without, diffraction invites a relational and contextual understanding of phenomenon, acknowledging that such understandings may reconfigure in future intra-actions, as matter reconfigures.

Diffraction then advocates for thinking of phenomena as a process of entanglements that work together to produce effects rather than a network of separate bodies that may be extracted or separated. With this idea, diffractive analysis may be applied as an alternative to interpretivist practices that search for themes or identities, potentially reinforcing ontologies of separateness in the process. For Lenz Taguchi (2012), “research methodologies that rely on these hidden and naturalized assumptions deny the possibility of understanding reality as a processing of differences with various material effects” (p.270). Though each assemblage or configuration may produce

something different, there is a sense that what is produced through these entanglements matters as does what is absent or left out. (Barad, 2007). From each experience and movement, we may learn something or gain insight about the “becomings” of the world.

Rather than finite words or things, Barad (2003) views both the material and discursive as specific configurations of place which are defined through the apparatus by which they are viewed (the context, environment, or experiment). For Barad (2007), “practices of knowing [too] are specific material engagements that participate in (re)configuring the world” (p.91). Barad (2007) further posits that knowledge may be conceptualized as one part of the world making itself intelligible to another part of the world through intra-actions. She proposes an “onto-epistemology” where knowing and being are always interconnected and mutually agential. With this in mind, knowledge becomes a specific material configuration that works to reconfigure the world. When thinking about how to study a phenomenon such as the Athens Home for Discarded Objects—an art intervention in public space that invites creative and playful encounters between people and objects—new materialist concepts offer an ontological opportunity to consider all components of the experience as equally powerful and active. A new materialist study acknowledges the diffractive or emergent quality of the phenomena, recognizing that the study may flow in unexpected channels and twists. Diffraction further suggests that our practices matter, that the world is materialized differently through different practices and that the practices we choose to engage in may transform or shape the world (Barad, 2007, 89).

The materials of this study do not cease moving or acting once the dissertation is submitted. As I write, they continue to contribute to and affect my world, and other worlds with which they come in contact. Some parts of this project are still in process. Materials I’ve made with and in

connection to the objects or research matter have yet to be resolved. New ideas germinate, waiting for space to grow. Designing this study, I imagined working with the materials of the project for a bracketed amount of time (3 to 4 months), hoping that defining a time-line for inquiry would provide some sense of form to an open and fluid study. While I worked in that time frame, I also found that the practice or materials of this research could not be contained in such a way. They continue to invite, influence, move, and question. In the space of this dissertation, I share some of the stories produced. I share elements of the creation of these installations. I describe traces and stories produced in their configurations and my own experiences of being and becoming with object-matter through practices of visual art making. The writing of this dissertation has been approached diffractively. With this, I bring different elements together in visual and verbal ways. Materials are purposefully presented in a woven format, where visual renderings, participant words, journal entries and my own written analysis flow between one another. This format invites materials to be read together and new courses or connections to be discovered by readers. Echoing Barad's sentiment above, I engage in these practices with recognition that my actions produced affects as much as they receive.



Fig. 22.





### Installations as Apparatuses

The term apparatus holds many connotations. On first thought, it may conjure the image of a tool, perhaps a device or compound structure of multiple devices used to measure a given entity. Often these devices are pictured within a laboratory, perhaps in the physical or natural sciences. In this study, the idea of an apparatus extends beyond the laboratory to become a set of open-ended practices. Practices that create the context and configuration by which to observe phenomena, as they are produced through intra-actions within a material entanglement (Barad, 2007). This “apparatus” is the context by which agential boundaries are produced, or as Barad (2007) describes, “specific material reconfigurations of the world that do not merely emerge in time but iteratively reconfigure space-time matter as part of the ongoing dynamism of becoming” (p.142).

Apparatuses are dynamic and open-ended, perhaps akin to jagodinski and Wallin’s (2013) Aion, a virtual time of continuous becoming. The apparatus of the experiment provides the conditions by which agents may be separated and boundaries defined as different “agential cuts” produce different phenomena. Phenomena represent the elements of the world available to be studied; they are the “smallest material units” (Barad, 2007, 151). These phenomena are produced through specific agential intra-actions, or “material enactments” which may or may not involve humans. In their intra-actions, material configurations produce the “cuts” or “differential patterns of matter” that make material boundaries observable.

These cuts or “differential patterns of matter” translate to the boundaries we experience between individuals, animals, objects, and other entities. With the concept of “agential-realism,”

Barad acknowledges the “reality” that matter does appear in separate forms. In this sense, a human being does exist independently from a table or a measuring device in the confines of an entanglement but is not inherently separate from the fabric that makes up any of the other entities within the entanglement. The boundaries are permeable and enable a relational engagement where human matter and non-human matter both affect one another and produce movements or becomings. In contrast to an assemblage of bodies conjoined in a space, these entanglements imply a world that is co-produced through these intra-actions. For Barad, “The reconfiguring of the world continues without end” (170)—bodies don’t take their place in environments; rather environments and bodies are shaped through intra-actions in an existence that continually folds and unfolds on itself as it reconfigures.

In an experiment such as the Athens Home for Discarded Objects, the material bodies present are marked and re-shaped through the entanglement. They carry the marks and “cuts” of previous experiences, which help to give them form in these contexts. A bottle is found in the river. It appears as a bottle. When it is placed in the installation, which in this case consists of the entanglement of non-human matter, human matter, geographical location, handmade certificate, tag number, date, and time (as it manifests in the scope of the experience), it carries the name “bottle” and various connotations formed through previous entanglements such as socio-cultural perceptions of form and function; its history as a container for holding liquid; its characteristic narrow neck often used for drinking or consuming a liquid substance. Within the apparatus, it may present as a bottle while also taking on the form of “Hope Returned,” forgotten and abandoned in the river to be discovered “hopeful of new life, acceptance, joy”; or, “Old Coke Bottle”, “Its contents consumed long ago by an unknown but powerful being” (story excerpts from Athens Home for Discarded

Objects, February 2017). It may be re-shaped, even slightly through the relational intra-actions that occur in these moments of entanglement.

*A Little More About the Three Installations*



The overall collection of installation events and their subsequent material gatherings, makings and recordings may be viewed as an apparatus for this experiment. Yet, within them, each individual installation also becomes an apparatus. There is the first installation on the Tate lawn in February 2017. There is the re-configuration of materials in the Science Library in Fall of 2017, and the new installation of materials in Philadelphia, that was geographically and materially distinct from the previous installations though conceptually linked. In between these given moments were

relations with materials and conversations with participants that extended beyond the temporal apparatuses.

The first Athens Home for Discarded Objects emerged from a specific set of materials that configured the experience— three bookshelves, one floral sleeper couch, two retired wooden laboratory file cabinets missing their black slab tops, 4 blue moving blankets, sixty plus objects found in river and road clean-ups, a gray rolling table often found in campus classrooms, a green 3-ring binder with recorded certificates, a pile of blank certificates waiting to be filled, a sequential set of circular tags with handwritten numbers, a grass surface underfoot, cement pathways that circled the grassy pad, myself, volunteers that helped throughout the day, and participants who engaged with the site. The bookshelves, couch and gray table helped to define a sense of perimeter around the selected objects. These objects were culled and curated from the total collection that had been culled and curated at the time of the clean-ups by volunteers participating at the various sites.

The materials were assembled in a loose configuration, imagining a living room or library space with a central rug, a series of book shelves, and comfortable seating. Striving for an open, inviting atmosphere we designed the area with space to walk around these various elements. Beyond conceptual functions, the furniture also acted as a framing device for the objects in the center, alluding to a sense of containment despite the outdoor environment. As it temporarily lived on the lawn, the furniture performed overlapping roles. Practically, it worked in ways aligned with common conceptions: the chairs and shelves held people and material objects. Visually, the furniture helped to re-contextualize these items in non-traditional spaces—to purposefully place large furniture in a configuration outdoors on a lawn so that people may see it and wonder what the heck it was doing there.

After a four-hour duration, the installation was “finished.” Weeks of planning, moving materials, finding and collecting matter, and building campus relationships were folded, bagged, stuffed, loaded and rolled away to various points across campus. Their bodies connected through this relational experience even as their proximity in this specific configuration had run its course. As material and moments leave imprints on the surfaces of materials or in the fabric of human memories and configurations, the apparatuses attend to time in overlapping and dynamic ways (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, & Kocher, 2017). These installations exist as temporary acts. Each is defined by the environment created through the material configuration and the relationships formed as participants, human and beyond, engage and imagine.

The installation apparatuses shift and respond to the movements created by participants as they bring their own experiences and ideas to the moment. Objects are unexpectedly taken from the original site to be cared for and loved beyond the scope imagined by myself as facilitator. Participants add new pathways; they move and reconfigure objects to invite new relationships. They build off of one another’s stories or create additional stories with previously adopted objects. They ask questions and provide comments that send thoughts and imaginings in new directions. Relationships form between materials in unforeseen ways and they carry each of their storied experiences with them as they cascade in multiple directions from the configuration of the installation itself.

*Reflecting on her experience with the Science Library Installation Ashley wrote:*

When I walked into the library and looked for the "Athens Home for Discarded Objects" exhibit, I was expecting a boring collection of typical objects a scavenger may come across. Perhaps a few scrunched, Sprite soda cans or a silver, metallic pop tart wrapper. Maybe some abandoned baseballs, basketballs, and tennis balls slipped through someone's hands, rolled through lush lawns, tumbled downhill, and plopped into the river's current. I did meet a few of these anticipated objects on display at their new "home." I was introduced to a tennis ball named Tucker, a frisbee named Oscar, and a baseball named Kevin. Each individual was given a creative twist to their suspected

story and origin. My favorite was the hopeful story of Oscar who set out to "travel the winds" to find the young boy he belonged to. The boy who put wind to his sails. Unfortunately, the little frisbee is still searching for the boy who once gave him a fulfilled life. Although, I also met several peculiar individuals, who managed to land themselves oddly in the river's stream. I was acquainted with Timothy the chair and Frank the mailbox. This case breathed life into an array of abandoned, everyday objects. Each object and its origin demanded creativity and imagination. I loved reading the glamorous lifestyle an object once had, until it sunk beneath the water's surface. Something about it sparked familiarity. Oddly enough, it gave me a giddy child-like feeling. I was unaware of why this stirred in me, but as I'm writing it suddenly clicked. The Brave Little Toaster! A childhood favorite of mine! Similar everyday objects who are lonely, seek to reunite with their beloved owner, just like the ones presented.

(Student reflections from ENGL 1101, Fall 2017, Professor Holly Fling).

The matter of one of these installations enters into the configuration in a form with a perceived boundary or identity—a boombox, shoe, college student or remote-control car. Elements or traces of these identities remain as new configurations and entanglements unfold, and while the mattered bodies shape and morph to include new configurations. The changes may be minute or imperceptible to the eye, but they carry the imprints and shifts of each new configuration. The “boombox” and “Frisbee” of the first Athens Home for Discarded Objects were reconfigured in the second iteration. They were installed together with prints made from drawings made in their presence, as well as their newly given names, stories, and geographical experiences. In this space they span identities, becoming both their former self and something new through the intra-actions from the first installation and the intra-actions not yet determined by the second. A something that is always becoming (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind and Kocher, 2017).

The Athens Home for Discarded Objects 2 differed from the other iterations in a number of ways. Unlike the initial location, which was outside on the grass and in the open air, this second installation took form within the walls of the Science Library. Though still public, this space had several additional barriers, including its physical walls and function as a resource for science related work, which self-selected a given population.



The objects from the first installation were re-configured in relation to a large glass case that was a permanent fixture in the library. The case was about 6 feet high and 15 feet long, with three drawers beneath it and a depth of about 2 feet. Though visible, the objects were now set behind glass, removing the possibility for human matter and object matter to physically intermingle.



The look and shape of the case itself influenced many of our design decisions. It was too narrow for most furniture and the shelves were quite large, taking up most of the width on the sections of panel in which they sat. These constraints pushed us to consider “domesticity” in other forms, considering the materials and objects associated with home decor, such as wallpaper, textiles, framed photos, art, and collections of objects from various life experiences. On a scouting trip to the Athens Re-Store, a local second-hand store, we discovered floral and striped sheets that both alluded to patterned wallpaper and implied comforts of home or domestic space. In this same thrift journey, I found a roll of patterned wallpaper, which became the floor of the case, tying the “room” together

and resembling tile floors I had seen in Thailand and Europe. These aesthetic choices were responsive, merging my and Abigail's aesthetic views, material relationships, memories, and associations, with materials available, the physical constraints of the display case, the collection of objects, and encounters with library staff and patrons throughout the installations process.

In conjunction with the display case we created another small room for adopting new objects. There were limited spots suitable for the installation itself, if it were to be visible when you walked in and in relative proximity to the objects in the display case. The space we found was on the ground floor of the library in an open area between the circulation desk and a series of computer stations. If you were to continue walking straight past this point you would find that the library expands to a rectangular room with more seating, computers, reading rooms, portable white boards, and books. If you were to retreat in the other direction back towards the entrance, you would find a turn leading to elevators to take you to the upper floors with the bulk of the library's reading materials. On the way to the elevators you would pass the display case, just to the left of the main library entrance.

The library personnel supported the placement of a living room component beside the circulation desk, in a direct line of sight if entering the library from the main entrance. This location was chosen in part because it afforded the space to install the furniture we had selected, and in part because it reconfigured the space and function of this portion of the library for a time. Our installation divided the space between the circulation desk and a pillar with a TV screen that circulated updates and library information. If one were asking a question or requesting a book, they would be nearly standing in the installation.



I hoped a participatory element would invite individuals to playfully engage with the objects and offer an alternative experience to the typical functions of the library space, such as studying, researching and working on group projects. I envisioned patrons taking time from work to sit in the rocking chair and converse with a friend or spend time with an object imagining its story. I visited the installation sporadically during its four-month duration, though recognized towards the end that I missed an opportunity to watch potential intra-actions as they might unfold. Outside of the opening, where Abigail and I facilitated engagement with the space, only two people actually adopted an object. I am not sure how many other engagements and intra-actions took place.

In part, this configuration was an experiment in questioning what engagements might happen in a longer-term installation, without the presence of a human facilitator. It further questioned what might inspire participation or a desire to break from one's trajectory to attend to these materials for a moment. Curious about intra-actions, this second sight was designed to both share the work of past encounters and explore what new relations might come about. Though, without a facilitator the marks of encounters are harder to find. There are stories written, and reflections given by students, as well as conversations I have had post event where people have revealed that they visited the site or came across it without knowing I was involved. There are notes and photographs from my few visits to the space, but I wonder what else occurred and what might reveal itself in the future.

Though linked in many ways to the first Athens Home for Discarded Objects, I found this second installation differed from the first in four distinct ways:

*1. It existed inside*

While it may be uncommon to see a living room in a library—particularly an orange rocking chair or a woven area rug—the presence of shelves, chairs desks, a rug, and even old or weathered objects is not uncommon to find in such a space. This configuration was not subject to the sunshine, wind, grass underfoot, or other elements at play in an outdoor configuration. One would not experience the strange sensation of sitting with objects typically found within walls while feeling the breeze brush across one’s face or the heat of sun as it beats off your arm, initiating the red of an impending burn.

*2. It was not facilitated by a human individual*

In lieu of this human matter, we placed signs on the furniture with a title for the project and an invitation to adopt an object. We wrote out an explanation of the project concept and detailed instructions for adopting an object. Missing were the spoken invitations to come closer. The glances, words, or movements that might entice an otherwise wary participant to enter into the experience rather than walking by. Missing was the mediator bringing awareness to the possible overlaps between these objects and humans in the library.

*3. It lived in the space for fourth months*

In one of my journal entries, I wondered if the “room” had become to integrated into the space. Towards the end of the Fall semester it had been in place for three months. As I observed people walk by without paying it much attention, I thought that perhaps it had lost its interventionist quality. While the audience of the space is fluid, many parties return to the library on multiple occasions. After three months, perhaps they were no longer curious about the site, recognizing it as an element of the library configuration. I then wondered what would happen if

elements were to change periodically? If we had changed objects out, moved them around, or staged performative acts in the “room” itself, could we have invited continued, active engagements from library patrons?

*4. The objects were behind glass doors*

In order to hold, inspect, feel, smell, or hear one of these objects, one would need to open the case and take it out. Sensing the energy or vibration of the object may be inhibited by the presence of doors. While an encounter between object matter and person matter may still engender movements or connections, the physical separation prevented the transfer of textures, smells, subtle shapes, colors, or details from revealing themselves through closer contact. In this space, the glass walls may have barricaded the objects from the intra-actions we strived for.



Revolution Recovery, Philadelphia, PA, November 2017

*Philadelphia, PA. November 2-3, 2017*

Friday morning, November 2: we travelled to the Revolution Recovery Artist in Residence (RAIR Philly) site to meet the staff and work with the materials.

Companies and people pay to bring materials here = cheaper than the landfill—the materials get sorted. A lot are re-sold to other industries -> e.g. Plastics, wire, dry wall are reprocessed, wood and burnable plastics turned into biofuel— stuff that can't be sold or processed goes to the landfill.

(Excerpt from my personal journal, November 2017)

The site was loud, urban, and impeccably choreographed. The yard itself was dotted with mounds of various materials. If playing a game of eye spy, one might pick out a door, sections of plaster dry wall, wood, carpet and other interior/building materials. Circling around these piles were mountains of items that ranged between construction and demolition left-overs to household objects such as suitcases, toys, tools, and bottled goods. Trucks moved in and out like a dance. They backed in, maneuvered to a given pile, dropped their goods and drove away. Reminiscent of ants or bees at work, the materials were sifted and sorted within minutes. If you wanted something, Lucia (one of the managers of RAIR) told us, you needed to grab it quickly, or it would soon be gone, folded into a pile or en route to a new location.

A truck pulled up and dropped a bunch of stuff on the ground. We dug through the pile -> Lucia seemed to be able to zone right in on cool things— a lot of brooms, garden tools (still in good use), a working tool box with wrenches, doors, a Philly cheesesteak sandwich hat, a weird ceramic doll thing. The materials moved so quickly. They were dumped, we looked, then they were moved into a pile.

(Excerpt from my personal journal, November 2017)

*We spent a couple of hours sifting through the waste stream.*



I was struck by the condition of the objects we found. Most could easily be taken home and used in their intended, designed function. They were relatively clean, albeit a little dusty, and often times fully intact. At one point, we found an un-opened bottle of white vinegar. It was later adopted for practical uses. In contrast to the objects found in the Athens clean-ups, these objects all carried a stronger sense of practicality and purpose. They seemed to have come directly from homes and could easily return to homes. Lucia and Bobby of RAIR remarked that resident artists generally go through a predictable evolution at the site. In the beginning, they are excited by the options and tirelessly save cool objects, thinking of ways they might work with them. As the materials continue to flow on a regular basis, day in and day out, they experience sadness or anxiety at the amount of material, soon realizing that they cannot divert it all.

We dug through another pile. Initially It was gross. It smelled and looked like a lot of pieces of things, but then so many treasures emerged. Abigail sighted and pulled a cigar box with all these drawer pulls in it; I found old butter popcorn oil, wrenches and rusty tools; a cool old box. All things that seemed to emerge from the pile as I zoomed in and focused. They were just there—some, I dug a little and they appeared.

As another site-specific installation, the creation of this configuration was also responsive and relational. The materials incorporated came from the movements of Lucia and Bobby, who set aside materials at RAIR; Abigail, Adina (one of the PLAN staff members), and myself as we sifted and pulled through the incoming streams that rapidly swept through the site; the materials as they called forth to join in our endeavor; the size of the truck that could transport materials to the installation site; and the design of the space determined by PLAN as our set-up point. The brick corridor of the street in Philadelphia also contributed to the configuration, guiding the placement of materials. The site in which we were situated was part pedestrian corridor, part quadrangle. In the area where we set-up, the pedestrian pathway opened into a larger square shape with entry points from various directions. It had the sense of a courtyard, though without seating or gathering points. This square was not a bounded shape, just a widening in the path. It continued to flow directionally like a river as it widens and narrows at different points. The College of Education created a border on one side of the corridor.





Personal Journal Notes; November 3, 2017, Philadelphia, PA:

Damn, I was so cold I forgot to sketch the environment of the space. A large courtyard area between several Temple buildings (College of Ed.). Also, an urban crossroads, mostly Temple students but also local residents passing through—A corridor in an urban area. Many people reacted visibly to the installations as they walked by, took photos or made an explanation about the “adoption” idea. Many also didn’t stop. Several were keen to tell a verbal story but didn’t want to stop and write or had somewhere they needed to go. Some said they would come back with friends. It was a very cold day, particularly mid-afternoon. Several people asked, “who’s idea was this?” or said it was a neat idea, or responded with “yeah, totally” when I said we wanted to highlight the objects with a story and history/life beyond consumption. This seemed acceptable or made sense to most people. It didn’t seem to shock anyone. I didn’t see looks of confusion or discord and didn’t receive any questions or critiques of this idea. Maybe a factor of recycling?

I remember a lot of people being on board with the idea of objects having stories to tell and/or finding the adoption process compelling. Though I think it is really important to have someone there to tell the story idea. I wonder what the people thought who we weren’t able to talk to. A lot of people that I talked to stopped because they needed an item or were curious about the objects (duh) or drawn by the aesthetics of the space, highlighting the visual/art element of the intervention. The couch was a big draw and the 3-legged chair, but most people noticed that as they came up close.

I think the installation for me was more about cool objects and less about the diverse and abundant nature of trash. We definitely curated the objects and chose things that were weird or compelling. For this iteration I kept wondering why they were thrown away in the first place?





The morning of the installation, we walked around the site in search of the best point. We chose an area beside a short cement wall in front of a series of glass windows that demarcated the Rad Dish Café at Ritter Hall. The wall provided a natural anchor point, creating physical structure from which to build out. Rather than situating the configuration in the middle of the path, we placed it off to the side, close to this building structure. In many ways, this decision came from the existence of the wall and the ability to create a condensed configuration along the edge of the square. At the time, the center felt too open, as though perhaps the materials would not be visually compelling enough to call people forth. Off to the side, the configuration further offered a sense of discovery, remaining mostly out of site until walking past the edges of buildings that lined the narrower portion of the path. Then it would reveal itself.



### *Conditions of Possibility*

As apparatuses, these installations brought different bodies into proximity with one another through each iteration. Each site was configured in relation to the specific environment where it was situated. The material configurations were responsive. They arose from the push and pull of the human and object matter present, as it related to the environmental matter of a given site, both natural and human made. Human Participants intra-acted with object participants recovered from various waste streams, moving around the space as it was defined by furniture, human bodies, natural landscapes, and manmade partitions. The space was fluid.

The stages of this experiment were interconnected and iterative. The matter found in the river, road, or landfill guided the development of the project. The layout and structures of the three public spaces informed the design and placement of these materials, influencing decisions around aesthetics, flow, and placement. The different matter mutually influenced decisions throughout the

process. Objects guiding installation; installation producing new pathways for object-human intra-actions and configurations. The boundaries of these configurations may be defined by the matter that made itself known to us. While the connections between living matter do not stop at the edges of our “rooms,” these apparatuses were limited by the matter and materials we selected for the specific installation: the objects we chose to carry to the site, the furniture selected from surplus or second-hand stores, and the materials created to facilitate connection, like the certificates and number tags. These are the materials that made up the apparatuses of this experiment. Each site functioned as its own apparatus, creating the conditions of possibility for the object matter to intra-act with human matter within the given material configuration.

For Kind, Kocher and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2017), material is in movement. When we encounter matter, it is not a static form to be related to, but rather moving and reconfiguring as we too are reconfiguring. In their words: “Whenever we encounter a material, it is a material in movement” (p.29). Matter exists in a complex and active network of relations.

How might one visualize such a world—one of moving, relational matter? I envision matter bodies as bundles of lines, building from the work of Tim Ingold (2011; 2015), who expands on Delueze and Guattari’s *lines of flight*. The line bundles are loosely configured like a stand of yarn wound around thumb and pinky finger, then pulled off and squished into a ball. Though the yarn is gathered into a form, strands escape and branch out. The same could be said for bodies. As they move through the world, they gather new lines that connect to varied experiences and configurations. Lines bundle as they overlap and build-up giving the sense of “coherent, continuous” forms. While the lines of a given entity (human, animal, bottle) may be bundled into a configuration, their boundaries remain open and permeable. Lines reach from the bundle out into

the world. As they do so, they overlap, intersect, intertwine or run-beside other lines, forming a meshwork. In the meshwork the lines of varied matter are interconnected, bringing moments and stories into proximity with one another. The “body,” in this sense does not exist as bounded form distinct from its environment, but as an entanglement of lines, forming and re-forming, adding lines and extending lines as it weaves in, around, and through other entanglements.

This web of life is not a series of connected points but a “meshwork of interwoven lines,...real lines of life—of movement and growth” (Ingold, 2011, p.63). Ingold’s (2015) lines are what activate relationships between other bodies or line-bundles. They counter the idea of a world full of individual “blobs” characterized by physical boundaries that prevent them from crossing-over one another. Blobs have mass, volume, density, and form. Lines have movement: “flexion,” “torsion,” and “vivacity” (Ingold, 2015, p.4). Blobs give us form, while lines give us life. Lines are what activate the space and relations between blobs; they represent the social network, which for Ingold (2015) is essential for life, “since there is no life that is *not* social” (p.4). With this idea, we might imagine material configurations as combinations of blobs and lines. Blobs form as matter entangles for a time in a given configuration, but lines reach out and flow in multiple directions, touching, wrapping or tangling with other lines; inviting new configurations.

Lines do not connect individual points but rather pass through the middle, implying neither beginning nor end, but a regular flow of movement and change. Through this movement, the world manifests as a “tissue of interlaced threads” that move and morph as they flow through and around (Ingold, 2011, p.92). As the meshwork holds the moving lines of matter, it creates avenues for connections and encounters with other lines. The lines of the meshwork do not necessarily pre-determine encounters but create an opening or bridge for communion to occur (Ingold, 2011). Like

a spider's web: a fly may land somewhere along the web, sending out a vibration felt by the spider along the lines of the web. The spider has the choice to pursue an engagement with the fly or to merely acknowledge its collision with the spider's world.

I envision each iteration of The Athens Home for Discarded Object like the spider's web. Through its temporary configuration it produces the "conditions of possibility" for the stories of human matter, object matter, natural and human made environments to intertwine or run beside one another. As these varying life threads overlap or intersect, they produce the possibility for intra-actions to occur as different entanglements give off vibrations, creating a reverberation that can be felt by other bodies across the meshwork of lines.

#### Chapter 4: List of Figures (in order of appearance)

Figure 23: The Athens Home for Discarded Objects in Process .....	56
Figure 24: University of Georgia Science Library Display Case .....	60
Figure 25: Revolution Recovery, Philadelphia, PA .....	64
Figure 26: Searching in the Waste Stream, RAIR Philly .....	65
Figure 27: Dear Discarded Object What's Your Story Full View.....	68
Figure 28: Participants Engaging with the Site, Philadelphia, PA .....	69
Figure 29: Sign from Dear Discarded Objects What's Your Story?.....	70

They told me when they did a second river clean-up, on the day of the 2017 SEC Championship Football game, that alongside Barnett Shoals Road someone picked up a DVD. The DVD was from the last time the Dawgs won the championship, 2005. I thought that was pretty amazing. Did the DVD make itself known on this particular day or was it just coincidence? How long had it been in that place? Had it been lying in wait, dormant? Did it somehow connect to the day and history of the moment?

4 lines of string cross the page. Undulating as they wave horizontally from the middle of the page out to the side. Embossed in the paper, they depress the surface of the paper, indicating the presence of the string that helped to form them. One glows a mellow pink, perhaps close to Pantone 2337C. In this mark glows the residue of bright red dye embedded in a strand of string, pulled from a red and white sewing basket, found in the dusty refuse yard of Revolution Recovery in Philadelphia, PA. The pink from this string lingers on a trench formed as the paper dried and the string was pulled away, curled up and returned to the cloth covered basket, nestled amidst the array of threads, yarns, buttons, needles, clasps, patches, and other pieces stored there.



The marks left by these lines of string echo river ways carved in the landscape of the earth, cattle tracks laid out across the fields of pastoral country sides, or the marks of thousands of years of footsteps upon streaks of sediment piled from materials past.

In England, pedestrian paths criss-cross the country, undulating through backyards, farms and fields. Cascading down slopes to find purchase along the Thames river, or skirting back up to follow the curves of hillside monuments once home to iron age ruins. They are designated on maps, cutting through and across territories “owned” by human beings, permitting access on land that may otherwise be off-limits. As the foot paths weave through fields, the grasses bend and flatten under the pressure of bodies, leaving a trace of regular movement and transformation. I walked a number of these paths during my summer in Oxford.

A mixture of dirt, grass and weeds, these paths often visibly carry the trace of movements and entanglements. The foot prints of human matter and animal matter, the scattered shapes of a lost ring, an empty snack packet, or a flower picked for a friend and later dropped to the ground. As matter continues to move, these tracks and traces fold on top of one another, sedimenting and emerging. Footprints are flattened by new feet, or swept away by the wind, resurfacing later in the displacement of soil or the emergence of stones dislodged in the process of walking. Thinking of these buried materials I’m reminded of Ingold’s (2011) belief that, “the lives of inhabitants, however, are not inscribed upon the surface of the world but woven into its very fabric. As they meet up with one another and go their various ways, their paths converge and diverge to form an ever-extending, reticulate meshwork. This is the meshwork of storied knowledge” (168).



### Traces, Imprints, and Storied Matter

I imagine the meshwork operates similarly to the “collective unconscious” cataloging experiences, memories and stories of relational encounters. The residue of these encounters may be accessed or reverberate, even partially, as lines brush one another or intertwine. Material carried by the lines may emerge in conscious life as clear memories or in a less complete form, manifesting as a sense, feeling or coincidence. At times, the material of the meshwork may emerge in ways we do not understand, representative of collisions and material connecting across the meshwork.

According to Ingold (2011), in the Ojibwa spiritual cosmology, they too speak to these felt and unspoken questions. As he describes,

In this quest for knowledge through experience, the powerful more-than-human beings that inhabit the Ojibwa cosmos, including Thunder Birds, are not analogical resources but vital interlocutors. This cosmos is polyglot, a medley of voices by which different beings, in their several tongues, announce their presence, make themselves felt, and have effects. To carry on your life as an Ojibwa person you have to tune into these voices, and to listen and respond to what they are telling you.” (P.6)

As a vessel for stories and memories, that meshwork grounds matter and connects it to past encounters and transformations. Many scholars present a world that is not fixed, but rather in constant motion. Speaking to concepts of “time,” physicist Carlo Rovelli (2018) remarks that time is not a static, inherent entity but a measure of change. The only marker of the world is the knowledge that change will happen through relations, encounters and material movements. Referencing social

anthropologist Mauss, Ingold (2015) posits that real-life humans inhabit a fluid reality where nothing is the same from moment to moment and nothing ever repeats (p.11).

For this experiment, the stories that occur in the intra-actions between objects and participants (matter of varying configurations), may be imagined as forming knots in the meshwork as they wind around one another. In a world that is perpetually moving and becoming, knots are the elements that hold things together and create some sense of form, rather than an incoherent and chaotic flux (Ingold, 2015). Contrary to a network, where lines connect points, these lines move between, bringing lines into proximity to one another through regular movements and flows. In this movement they may touch, vibrate, overlap, or intersect with one another (Ingold, 2011), carrying stories, images, moments and memories as they travel between.

*I was mildly curious in several of the objects, at first for practical reasons (there was a really nice basket that turned out to be a claimed sewing kit), but eventually I set eyes on a broken menorah, which reminded me of some of my ill-practiced traditions at home.*

*I had broken a menorah when I was a kid, and so it made me laugh to think I wasn't the only one. I then started to think about my family, especially my grandfather who always pushed me towards Judaism.*

*I started to think about the symbolism of a broken menorah, and how common it is to have fractured faith or practices during and especially after childhood, which is something that I resonate with. I had a bit more of a respect for the menorah as compared to my general indifference usually.*

*I think about the experience quite often now, especially as we enter Hanukkah. I have not returned to faith, but I have had intentional conversations with my (varying degrees of) Jewish friends. I returned the object partly because I choose not to hold onto sentimental objects and it was logistically hard to carry home (participant reflection).*

*A Meshwork of Marks and Memories*

Barad (2007) describes intra-action as marks left on bodies; the only observable factors of the intra-actions that take place in a given entanglement may be the marks left on bodies. The stories recorded on the certificates may provide windows into marks made through the varied intra-actions of these relational encounters. They are the product of the relationship between a given object, story writer, and their respective histories as they come together in this given place and configuration. Many of the stories written for the objects carry traces of the human participants' own histories and experiences. The non-human matter may conjure memories or experiences through its look, feel, texture, wear or social connotations.

One participant adopted a wheel, which she named "Clyde":

37. "Clyde"  
Philadelphia, PA  
November 4, 1992

Clyde pushed the peddles forward of his brand-new bike, wobbling as he struggled to balance. Gaining momentum as he pushed through the resistance of the pavement beneath him. His heart racing with excitement as he rushed down the other side of the big hill on his street. He was doing it! He was riding a bike for the first time! And even if he fell off and skinned his knees or the palms of his hands, he would get back up and try again, because today he was 7 years old. Clyde represents the perseverance through the opposition we face, youthful idealism, and the "cycles: that give us the momentum to move forward.

In a brief conversation during the Philadelphia event, I asked her to tell me about adopting the object. She responded:

So, I chose the bike wheel for a couple different reasons. The first was that it's circular and represents like the close-knit cycle that we have to have in waste. The second is that the circle is like the symbol of universal unity and the third reason is, um, because it's a bike wheel and I kind of based the story I wrote about it off my [undistinguishable] as a six or seven-year-old and getting my first bike and the excitement of biking and like falling off and getting back up and keep going. I just really think the bike is like kind of for me a testament to perseverance when we meet challenges and during my year of City Year AmeriCorps Service I would bike to and from work every day. It would be like 45 minutes. And sometimes it would be like 20 degrees outside and I would be like, uh, I hate this. It sucks. This is really hard. Or, you know, I would be really excited, like I'm almost home I just gotta

get up this one big hill. And I had this like a-ha moment when I was going up this huge hill home one day and it just clicked that like the resistance that I met going up that hill was what gave me the power and momentum to move forward and that I could not push forward without resistance and without challenge. So, it really made me look at not only biking home from work different every day but um the journey that I was on you know that required a lot of perseverance and the hardships that I had experienced in life and how my sense of internal power and strength came from pushing through those. And gave me the momentum to move forward and I think that's something that is needed and is happening in zero waste. There are gonna be challenges, there's gonna be obstacles, there's going to be a need for youthful idealism and unity and commitment and persistence to moving forward.

[transcription from recorded conversation]

In the act of “adopting,” the human and object matter may physically join for a time through touch, sight, smell, and sound. As their lines loop around one another, they carry the trace of the experience in their memories or sense of connection to the object. In this story, Clyde's and Hannah's experiences intertwine. Clyde's adventure takes on elements of Hannah's own, learning to ride a bike. I imagine that as Hannah holds Clyde, the words of their respective stories pass through one another. In this intra-action the wheel invites thoughts of symbolism, memories of perseverance and recognition of the work inspired by the particular conference we were a part of and the broader needs for action, hope and resilience. The wheel becomes both a unique entity, “Clyde,” but also the boy who rode the bike that carried this wheel on his seventh birthday, and also many other wheels, young cyclists and moments of perseverance in the tapestry of life experience.

Just as the human story is imprinted on the object, the object's experiences are imprinted on the person. The residue of this experience may lead to new connections to other materials in encounters with objects that look similar or call forth these memories.

*I chose the Jeep sign, particularly because I LOVE Jeeps. I also come from a military family, so this sign has a connection with me. The sign itself is very capturing of the Jeep spirit and I was very happy when I saw it. It made me feel great, probably because of my past experiences and family history with Jeeps (Participant Response).*

Certificate of Adoption	
Name of Object: <u>Letter + Bill Holder</u>	Tag Number: <u>21</u>
Place of Origin: <u>Ridge Spring, South Carolina</u>	Date of birth: <u>4/7/1947</u>
Biography:	
<p>After a long day of housekeeping, Mae was eager to collect letters from her loved ones who migrated north due to increase lynchings. She saved up all her money and purchased this <del>one</del> holder to keep track of her cards. This holder has seen many stories, many stressors (bills), and the family legacy Mae left behind.</p>	
Name of Adopter: _____	Date of Adoption: <u>11/4/17</u>
Signature: _____	
<p>One of our goals with this project is to continue to engage with new audiences, share our stories, and explore ways to creatively address issues of waste</p> <p>Is it okay to use your story and name in potential articles, publications or art shows about this project? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Is it okay to use photographs of you from today's event in potential articles, publications, or art shows about this project? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	

21. Letter and Bill Holder  
 Ridge Spring, South Carolina  
 4.7.1947

After a long day of housekeeping, Mae was eager to collect letters from her loved ones who migrated north due to increase lynching. She saved up all the money and purchased this holder to keep track of her cards. This holder has seen many stories, many stressors (bills), and the family legacy Mae left behind.

(Story text from the above certificate)

In a conversation after the event, the participant mentioned that Letter and Bill Holder reminded them of their grandmother, who had a similar holder in her home. The likeness of the object to one in the grandmother's home might have inspired elements of the story. In the relationship, the holder becomes a recipient for the participant's experiences; for thoughts and ideas to come into being. It is unclear how autobiographical this story is for the participant or how

biographical it may be for Letter and Bill Holder, but it carries reference to the separate life streams. The vibration of the letter holder invites attention and awareness to the presence of similar material in the human participants' journeys. It may call forth certain images or memories that connect to the broader network of lived experiences at play in the world.

As the holder conjures thoughts and stories for participants, it also receives these stories, adding them to the repertoire of stories carried within its fibers. In the exchange, the object listens to the stories of the participant. The residue of these stories may be left on the object, or accounted for in the twist of the lines together for a brief moment. As it moves forward it is imprinted with these words. This particular holder may reside in the participant's home who mentioned wanting to paint it and display it. Or, it may have had only a temporary residence there and may now be in another place but may bring this story to bare in future intra-actions. As their movements continue in the world, the stories may morph and grow, intertwining with other stories, gathering snippets here and there to create new stories. As creative acts, these stories both mark past encounters and produce new material. The net is additive, each knot presents an opportunity for transformations, shifts, and growth.





A participant reflects on adopting an object at the Science Library Exhibition opening

I remember the objects in the display case at the Science Library feeling very nostalgic. The reclaimed toys and electronics also felt elevated and celebrated in their presentation. The framed prints were lovely and gave the objects a personal-homey feel.

I was a bit bewildered by how these objects felt so important after having lived in a body of water for a time.

I adopted a cassette tape (I think) and felt some pressure in writing a witty and fun origin story 😊. I really enjoyed reading everyone else's story, but did feel self-conscious writing mine. I think I even took the certificate home with me.

In writing the cassette tape's history, I considered my own tapes and the relationship I've had with them over time: from listening to tapes, recording bits on the radio, and eventually disregarding them--they now live under my bed, untouched. Remembering my tapes made me sad to think of this one having been trashed. But through the display in the science library and "home for discarded objects project", I felt more hope for objects and the care/sentiment they can bring through people's stories.

*Interlude: Invitations to engage*

Facilitating these different installations, I wondered what compelled some to engage and spurred others to look the other way, drop their heads, and scurry away in avoidance. In some instances, individuals came over, only to quickly leave when asked to write or imagine a story for an object.

On the first occasion, around 60 objects were adopted as individuals engaged with the site. Around the installation was a constellation of Zero Waste Extravaganza activities. Beyond a group of trees, on the other side of a brick partition, were tables for organizations and vendors offering goods and ideas for more sustainable living practices, such as urban gardening, community service, and recycled and compostable products. Behind us, on a cement courtyard area, Patagonia operated a free clothes repair service out of a re-furbished trailer. Our grassy patch cum installation was an island in an archipelago, separate but connected to the other events around. The nature of the event likely called a like-minded individual to our configuration—one who already maybe have felt connected to the non-human material of everyday objects. Though, its position on a central part of campus opened up the possibility for non-affiliated participants to join the configuration.

In the beginning, the participants were friends and fellow students. Those we had told about the project, or those who helped with set-up. Not so gradually, it opened up to those with whom we had not yet met.

Two PhD students stopped by. One adopted the zebra slipper and gave her a story based on that of F. Scott Fitzgerald's wife Zelda. Her friend adopted the Crown Royale bottle. They joked a lot about the two items. Her friend planned to keep the Crown Royale bottle and so we took a picture of her with the bottle. We talked of the materials and soon learned through the conversation

that we shared a mutual friend, an unexpected connection. Much of the conversation has faded from my memory. The details have blurred, and the content feels to just scratch the surface. The words have dissolved but images of standing, talking and laughing with these participants stand out. With these images, a sense that these objects, particularly the Crown Royale bottle were a part of a meaningful encounter.

With the first two installation events, I can rely only on memory and materials gathered. For those first two experiments, I have few notes or journal entries. I remember moments, such as a man excitedly calling his friends on the telephone to come adopt objects and get “free things.” I remember a participant who was so excited about Timothy the Chair and told me how she was going to clean and paint him and integrate him in to her home. Another participant who wanted to take a cloth tape measure home, having drawn a connection between the Tape Measure and his childhood home in Connecticut. Or the participant who adopted “Balli” the basketball, later returning from the Tate Center to show off the face he had drawn on Balli and request a series of photographs in different poses.

As these installations have continued to unfold, these memories overlap. They sit beside other materials: the photographs I have taken, conversations from other installations, recordings, stories written, the objects themselves, and new objects made in the studio. As I think about the gentleman who adopted the tape measure, I am reminded of the gentleman in Philadelphia who adopted the nutcracker and the connections he made to New England via references to Maine and lobster. I am reminded of how he was drawn to several objects but didn’t feel like he could create a compelling story for them. Perhaps their vibrations were not as strong for him as they were for others?

Hello,

I stopped at the installation because I was curious as to what a collection of random objects was doing in front of Ritter Annex.

Creating the story behind the object was fun because I like writing, and because it caused me to look at the object more closely. Looking at the objects and deciding which one to choose was also fun, because all of the objects seemed to carry some sort of history.

Ray (the flashlight) was not my first choice of object, originally. However, the objects I were drawn to first were already adopted. I ended up choosing Ray, however, because I had never seen a flashlight like it before. It intrigued me.

The intervention caused me to think more deeply about the history and design of flashlights. Adopting Ray also gave me a connection to them, even though I had just encountered the flashlight for the first time a few minutes before. It was also interesting having the installation in front of Ritter, which is a place I go four out of seven days of the week. While various festivals and pop-up stores happen there frequently, the installation was somehow different. It asked the participant to think, rather than to spend money. It was an invitation rather than a temptation. The array of objects was suitably eclectic. The objects could have been from anywhere. Any one of them could have been magic, or haunted, or used by a famous serial killer. It was a most interesting interruption of daily life, and it brought a bit of magic into the world.

Ray now has an honored place at the foot of my bed on the upper shelf of my desk next to Mousie, my stuffed mouse, and oldest friend. I do not have any plans for Ray currently, other than perhaps fixing the one bent piece of metal that holds the lightbulb region.

I have attached a photo of Ray in their new home.

(Participant reflection on their experience with Dear Discarded Object What's Your Story?, Philadelphia, PA)



Participant photograph of “Ray” in their new home (E. Irvine, 2018)

Watching participants relate to the objects of the installation, I was curious. What pulled them to a given material? In Philadelphia, I recorded ambient conversations and moments as they passed. In Athens, I watched, as best I could and asked questions sometimes, out of curiosity. In many of the conversations with participants, there was a strong sense of familiarity or storied connection that drew people to individual objects. A woman remarked at a pair of old roller skates. Reminiscing about moments skating, she described the presence of a small metal key, missing from this set, that was used to tighten the skates and alter the size when needed. Another adopted a broken blue plastic water marker post. When asked what drew him to the object, he described working one summer placing similar markers in river ways and a strong association with the look and feel of the object

Having missed the opportunity to gather contact information from participants at either of the Athens Home for Discarded events, I made a purposeful decision to gather emails and consent to use participant responses during the next event. As individuals adopted their objects in Philadelphia, I asked if they would be willing to participate further in this research and gathered emails of those who welcomed a follow-up conversation. I gathered 37 emails. A week after the Philadelphia intervention I sent an email to each of the participants with the following questions:

What prompted you to stop and participate in the installation?

What was your experience with the installation like?

What led you to select the object you chose?

How did this intervention affect the way you experienced the place or the object?

What has happened since the experience? Have you thought about the experience since?  
What became of the object?



If you have photos of the objects in a new home or future plans for the object, please let us know. We would love to know what happens after the event is over. ☺

When I first sent the email, I received two almost immediate responses. I was excited! People were going to respond!! By the end, I received 9 email responses from Philadelphia participants and two from the participants who had adopted objects at Science Library. In total 134 objects were adopted, and many other encounters took place. These 9 responses offer a tiny window into participant experiences, though each sheds light on thoughts formed and invitations accepted. I have compiled the responses together into a single essay or letter, leaving all of the words as they came but removing the questions that demarcate responses. Each of the paragraph breaks represents a change to the next question, following the order of questions presented above.



My eye was caught by the large machete and old rusty antiques. I can't lie; I wanted them badly. I stayed because I liked the idea of the project. In our consumerist society, people so often fail to get the full joy and utility of an object. We develop quick, functional relationship and then throw out things (and people) when they no longer seem as useful as the next, new thing. I like that this exhibit makes people stop and use their imagination. It was playful and I don't get to play as much as I would like or need these days.

It was interesting. I found it challenging to come up with a good backstory, but it was rewarding. I was very happy to see the interesting yarns others had spun for their objects.

It looked old and creepy. It reminded me of an old circus, and I have always been attracted to that aesthetic.

I left the object there. I am trying to acquire less things so I have more space and time in my life for people. I think I would think of the project more if I had kept the object, but I am very glad I did it. There was value in the few minutes of joy I got from the installation that I would not trade.





I love tea, and I love teapots. It was a beautiful and perfectly intact teapot that I intend to make lots of tea in.

Part of me adopted it to fill a bit of the emotional hurt that I was feeling. It helped me feel like I took action that had immediate results and it numbed and distracted me from what I was going through at the moment.

I went to a workshop and after the workshop I walked around with it in my hand all day, and it raised questions to others, and I was happy to explain to them that this was otherwise going to end up in a landfill somewhere and it was saved.

I feel like it's such a treat and it treated me well that day, so I have been making tea in it ever since I took it home and washed it, and will continue to do so.



I was feeling overwhelmed indoors and was going to leave the conference, but then I remembered seeing the art installation and decided it would be a good mental break from my duties as trip leader, my confusion about waste, and my frustration with the world.

It was nice to take a new approach to waste and discarded objects than the work we were doing inside the conference which was all about policy, behavior, and education. Very difficult things with little to no direct/immediate result. For the art installation, I was able to directly contribute to a collaborative project where I could feel more immediate inspiration from my actions. Let me put my feelings into something.

I have had a strong recent relationship to this object through my Master of Science degree. When I saw it, there was no question that I needed it (because I am always running out of snorkel masks for my project) and that it needed me since it needed to be adopted and loved. I also convinced myself that no one else would care for it like I would in that moment.

I felt happy to hold something familiar in my hands and to let all my memories of the object flood in to me from the past year and before. Instead of letting my anger control my experience of the conference, the object intervened on my mood and let me relax, to become a more effective leader for my group.

I only adopted the object for 20 minutes. I put my own personal story onto the object, let it serve its purpose for me and then I left it at the art installation. I have told 3 people about the art installation since it happened and was severely disappointed by their reactions. You would have to experience the installation to understand why it was necessary for me in that moment.



Since I know Kira from UGA, I stopped to say hello, and also wanted to see the beautiful chair with caning. Had I not flown, I would have adopted that item; it reminded me of my grandmother's dining room chairs. You don't see those very often any more, and not many people know how to repair the caning.

I really liked the setup; it was inviting with the furniture around the outside and the items laid out on the blanket. It seemed like all the items were truly cared for and valued, rather than seen as trash. For some reason, had they been in a pile and participants had been invited to rummage through, it would have been a very different experience.

Since I was traveling with limited space, I thought the drawer pull was very portable. It also reminded me of something I would have LOVED when I was younger and would have wanted my dresser drawers to have. I also liked the idea of how many there were; although this also proved an issue since I felt guilty for only taking the one.

I oddly felt an ownership of my newly adopted item. When I realized it was past the time that the objects would be available to pick-up, I instantly felt like I needed to go look for Kira and Abigail to retrieve my object. I also don't purchase many souvenirs, so this almost feels like a little piece of Philly.

It's currently on my bookshelf, but I'm trying to decide if there is a functional way to incorporate it into my house. Now that it has such a strong memory tied to it, I'm sure it will be difficult for me to see it as disposable. I visited my grandma this weekend, and saw her chairs and brought up the whole experience and how she should go visit the installation at the Science Library. I'm sure she would have a completely different experience even with similar items.



It seemed interesting and new, and I always make an effort to look at the displays to get my mind off of the stress of academics. I noticed the various objects, and in this particular display, the Jeep sign caught my eye.

My experience was pleasant. I stopped by it a couple of times, trying to capture all of the items in the display. I also tried to guess what the theme was, before reading anything. I found it very cool and neat.

I chose the Jeep sign, particularly because I LOVE Jeeps. I also come from a military family, so this sign has a connection with me. The sign itself is very capturing of the Jeep spirit and I was very happy when I saw it. It made me feel great, probably because of my past experiences and family history with Jeeps.

This display only amplified my experience around the object. My inner feelings were invoked and I felt proud, happy, and delighted.

I have reflected on Jeeps and their military roles again, as well as their significance in my life. This has caused me to reflect over countless family memories and experiences.



All of the objects looked so unique and eye-catching. Some of the objects were funny or strange and others still looked perfectly functional. I wanted to participate because taking one of the objects seemed like a much more meaningful way to remember the trip/conference than other typical souvenirs.

Looking at all of the items and trying to figure out what they were was a lot of fun! I was in a group and we spent over 10 minutes just looking at everything and chatting with other people at the installation. The storytelling part of the installation was great because it gave me the chance to talk to other people about what they were taking and why.

We chose to create a story for a set of paints that still looked like they would work. I love painting and I'm always looking for new paints (especially if they are free!).

Before we stopped at the exhibit, we were in a rush to get to the next part of the Zero Waste Conference. As soon as we started looking at the objects and learning about the installation, I completely forgot about why I was stressed and in a rush. Honestly it was really nice to just take a minute and think about the objects and where they had been.

Unfortunately, we did not have a chance to come back in time to collect the paints, but I have thought about the experience since. There is so much stuff that gets thrown away because people either don't have access to alternatives (donations, recycling, etc.) or because they are lazy. I see this at my campus when people throw away their half-used notebooks, dorm decor, etc. There's so much stuff in the world and I hope that people will learn to start reusing more of it rather than producing more.



I remember thinking, "wow this is very cool that they are taking these unique items and presenting them in a way that gets at the immeasurable creative value of an item"

I was also considering why it takes an alternative art installation to make people consider items in this context of art. People should be doing this more with everyday items, meaning placing value on it or getting it to someone who will appreciate it, rather than binning it.

I recall looking at a few attention-grabbing items first and then seeing more people drawn to those same items. I examined most of the items as a crowd gathered and weighed considerations such as weight and room in my bag (I had to fly to Florida).

Writing the item's narrative took the most thought but it became easier once I pretended it was a spoon-shaped person. I was rather realistic but I remember writing about its friends, the other kitchen utensils.

Functionality led me to the large, slotted spoon. I generally try not to acquire any items unless I see a clear need for it and this spoon is useful for an organization I am starting that serves free, community meals. Secondary attributes include the fact that the spoon looked old, the fact that most of it was metal, and I liked the shapes of the slots in the spoon.

I feel like the narrative had a direct effect on the way that I viewed the object. I made a history for it, I gave it a social network, I gave it feelings and experiences of loss/betrayal. Subsequently, I felt a sense of empathy with it and sympathy for it. The display made me curious about the sorts of activities that go on at Temple, i.e. how frequently this happens and how many students interact with it.

I have thought of the experience several times. I told a few people about it. I don't look at this the same way as I do other serving ware. The object has a new life serving the (majority houseless) community of Sarasota. I attached a picture of one cooking day.

### *Traces of Josephine*

When I first saw Josephine, it glistened in the sunlight against the concrete wall and refused dust at Revolution Recovery. Its red and white checkered pattern stood out in such contrast to the brown stools, dust covered suitcases, tubs, and streams of dump trucks passing around. As the sun beamed around it, it glistened, and I was immediately in love. It was open at the time. In that quick two-hour visit to the facility I was dazzled by a rainbow of colorful thread embedded and tangled around the grays and silvers of scissors, pins and other tiny objects, each holding a character, shape and energy of their own. I remember purples, oranges, greens, every color of the rainbow.

I adopted the basket, stuffed it in my carry-on luggage and brought it back to Athens, GA. When I returned, I opened the basket, naturally. In that moment, I discovered that the color variety was not nearly as bright nor as diverse as I had remembered; perhaps there had been a cross-over of Josephine's appearance with my own imagination of what would be



inside this kit, based on experiences and intra-actions with similar objects, or surprise at finding such a thing, so complete, vibrant, alive in a landfill; a site perceived as dead, decomposing, dirty.

In *Memory: Encounters with the strange and familiar* (2013), John Scanlan writes, “philosophy and memory share this much in common: they derive their existence from the self-awareness or self-consciousness of how time and experience take us from our origins while, at the same time that very experience roots us in the world” (p.9).

While in Philadelphia, I gave Josephine a story. It went something like this:

Josephine grew up in a working-class family in Cornwall. As a child, she loved to walk the cliffs of the Cornish coast and pick wildflowers on the way. She was forever enamored with the rich colors and the potential to make beautiful things. As she grew older, she went to school to learn to assist

great tailors and textile workers in their craft. She gained the highest level of distinction and was allowed to carry all her beautiful colors. Her favorite supervisor decided to take her on a big move to the US. On the way, the boat struck an ice berg and sank!!! Oh no! All the people survived but Josie was left at sea. After many fraught years, she came ashore in Philadelphia and was rescued from the landfill to share her colors with the world again.

I ask myself the same questions I would ask a participant. Why this object? Like any intimate relationship, I struggle to pinpoint a reason. I felt a draw or connection to this piece. Unlike many of the participants in their reflections, I had never had an object like this, nor had anyone in my family. It did not hold a direct sentimental link. I wondered how this object connects to my own lines in the meshwork? My mom has always kept a clear Tupperware box haphazardly filled with needles, thread spools, buttons and patches buried in the back of a cabinet in her bathroom. I carry associations with these materials, but only of the most urgent and basic garment repairs.

I was drawn to the look of the basket, the red and white checkered pattern, and the idea that it might be a picnic basket, at least from afar. As I drew closer, I was enamored by the color and the array of material within. It felt like a treasure chest, each object carrying connections and stories that sparked imaginative wandering.

In my story, I wrote of Cornwall, England. I spent just two days in Cornwall in 2016, but fell fast in love with the turquoise waters, overgrown trails and wild orange flowers along the coast. Being with Josephine allowed me to ignite my relationship with that place. It spurred thoughts of stories and films of England in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It conjured Lords and Ladies, fictional characters of novels like *Outlander* and *Poldark*, images of picnics, billowing gowns, and the art of garment making.

I notice marks of my own life in Josephine's story. I see the place I love, and the opening this object gave me to remember it. I see associations with an art school or creative environment. I feel

my love of color pour out in Josephine's shared appreciation. These are small moments, easily explained by other means. The box is full of items used in making, the pattern carries certain associations, but they are also specific to my life. The story may be the space in the middle of our separate paths. It is about Josephine, inspired by Josephine and given to Josephine, but it is also about me. It speaks to my love of travel and adventure. It focuses on color, which inspires my work and it discusses relocation, movement and change. All aspects that relate closely to my life.

### *Traces left behind*

The intra-actions from these experiments are temporary and relational (as all intra-actions are). After the experiences, we are left with traces of the connections made. Ingold (2007), describes trace as "any enduring mark left in or on a solid surface by continuous movement" (43). These movements may be physical and material, like the thread burrowing into the pulp fibers of the paper, or more abstract, as the vibrations and energy of different life lines coming in contact with one another. These movements may manifest as the memories and stories of relations, entanglements and configurations. Traces act both as imprints of moments passed and invitations for future shifts. In their encounters, the intra-actions of different material configurations leave marks. Some are visible—dirt on a hand, a story written on a page. Others touch different senses—a memory called forth from the chasm of human experience, a knot formed in a meshwork that may resurface again in spaces not yet known, or a shift in perception, feeling or mood instigated by the relational, temporary engagement.

Trace conjures the idea of a palimpsest, where words or marks are made on top of previous recordings, erasing some and leaving others—highlighting moments while clouding others. The trace or histories of material may also be thought of in the form of sedimentation. For Barad (2007):



As the rings of trees mark the sedimented history of their intra-actions within and as part of the world, so matter carries within itself the sedimented historicities of the practices through which it is produced as part of its ongoing becoming—it is ingrained and enriched in its becoming. (p.180)

Rovelli (2018) adds, “in order to leave a trace, it is necessary for something to become arrested, to stop moving, and this can only happen in an irreversible process—that is to say by degrading energy into heat.” (p.145) This trace forming may be viewed as a moment of pause in the ongoing movements of life, a knot forming in the meshwork. For this experiment, the pause occurs as the lines of the object and human participant intertwine, holding temporary space together (a temporality that may range in duration, though at some point the paths will likely diverge).

Rovelli (2018) goes on to say that, “it is memory that solders together the processes, scattered across time, of which we are made” (155). An acknowledgment that even as material of the world may be in perpetual movement, moments and experiences have impact. They leave a mark. This collection of marks contributes to a sense of identity and stability in a changing world.

*What are the traces of these overlapping installations?*

Writing on memory, Scanlan (2013) references the folding in of time that happens through remembering. When engaged in a memory, the walls of past and present fall into one another, distorting our human perceptions of time. Tokens, fetishes, souvenirs or mementoes may unlock past connections (Scanlan, 2013, p. 10). In *Evocative Objects* (Turkle, 2007), scholars and writers tell of meaningful relationships with material objects. “The Bracelet,” for Irene Castle McLaughlin (2007) invokes the spirit of “female ancestors and allies” when it is worn (p.112), while “Murray the Bunny” provides a bridge between the mental worlds of child and adult. In describing the many

ways “Murray” operates in the life of her family and young sister, Tracy Gleason (2007) expresses that:

Finally, Murray teaches me about myself. When I think about him I can sense how willingly I blur the edges of fantasy and reality, and how we all choose imagination as a forum for practicing our social skills or safely experiencing powerful emotions. I animate Murray into giving me what I need, even as I know that he is an assembly of cotton and stitches. (p.176)

The stories transcribed here are a collection of stories that spoke to me.\* As I read through them, I hover on certain ideas: memory, purpose, family. Themes that fade in and out of the collected stories. I observe these themes, but also find myself wary of categorizing. For each story brings its own offering for connection to each new reader.

*Stories from Dear Discarded Object, What's Your Story?*  
Philadelphia, PA

8. Popsicle's Menorah  
Atlantic City, NJ  
11.18.1954

Bought in a Lithuanian-Russian Jewish neighborhood, this menorah was the prized possession of a young school teacher. Through poverty and strife, the menorah was a worthy reminder of the light in life, and to never doubt or give up. Hope, even when religion subsided, maintained the menorah long after the bulbs were broken. The menorah lasted until one day the schoolteacher grew old and was known as “popsicle” by his grandchildren, softly talking with him by the broken menorah.  
-Samuel Trilling

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\* Additional stories available in the appendices



73. Paint for Models  
Grandpa's House  
1969

My Grandpa and I used to make toy car models. We would spend hours painting the intricate details. It was never about the cars. I didn't even like cars, but my Grandpa did. He wasn't much of a talker until you brought up his toy car models. He loved them more than anything. I never really understood it until I saw a picture of him and his father painting them together.

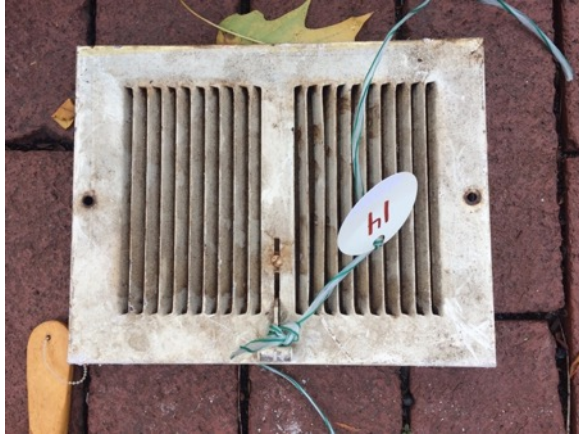
*-Cherise and Clara*

3. The Box of Tools of My Dreams  
Various Basements  
2007/10

Before the parts of this tool box came together to live in their gloriously small new home, they sat and waited for their partners in their still dance. Until now! Each nail will be for pictures and the tools will build a new home. Welcome Tools, welcome box of tools of my dreams, for now I no longer need anymore! Will live with me forever!

*-Michael A. Showell*





14. Mortimus McVent III  
Somewhere in Massachusetts  
1841

There was an old duplex on a hill outside of Boston. Very old. Upstairs lived the enigmatic Mr. McCready, who seldom left the house on account of his old age and mysterious, hermit-like nature. When young Billy and his mother moved in one day in fall of 1961, Billy was intrigued by old McCready and decided to spy on him. He found Mortimus McVent III rustic, unassuming, the perfect window in to the life and secrets of Seamus McCready. All his life Mortimus longed for purpose, and finally the eyes of young Billy peered through him with wonderment day after day, he found himself a portal into the unknown. Through Mortimus, Billy learned that McCready was an old chess wizard, and by studying him he surreptitiously became his protégé. Young Billy grew up to be known as the famed Checkmate William, a moniker that would be heard in song and legend around the world. To this day, he attributes his success to Mortimus McVent.

*-Paul Harrold*

28. Freddy North  
Kensington (Home)/ Martinsburg, West Virginia  
8.17.2000

I was published in West Virginia and sold in a bookstore in Philadelphia. The girl who bought me was from Kensington and she came from a poverty-stricken household. She barely had a dollar to waste but she saved up and bought me. She had an interest in politics and found inspiration from reading me as well. She wanted to change her family's financial situation and how the world works. She found the world to be unfair at times. One day, she had to leave and chose to leave me behind. However, she did so reluctantly. She could not fit me in her luggage and her parents were never fond of her ambitions. As she left the house, she placed me on the street with a cascade of tears running down her cheeks. She might have abandoned me, but I hope she does not do the same with her dreams, for she had a pure heart

*-J*





7. Laa Laa  
Ireland  
March 31, 1997

Laa Laa had a rough life. She was born in Ireland but moved to the U.S. when she was 7. That's when she met Tom Cruise. They fell in love and Laa Laa got pregnant at a young age. Tom turned out to be a dick and left her. She raised Laa Laa Jr. by herself, she struggled to bet by but ultimately gave Laa Laa Jr. a better life she never had. She is now retired and finally happy.

*-Tyler Valez*

48. Table  
The Grand Church, Holland  
4.11.1543

I was a mere table in the offices of the Grand Church in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries. I held important documents and forms but was later moved to Philadelphia in the late 1700s. In Philadelphia, I served as the personal side table to Thomas Jefferson, while he stayed here. In 1807, I was moved to a farm and never used until recovery and restoration in 2017.

*-Peter Bogaard*



## 56. Pokey the Garden Tool

Hands of a Craftsman, rural community, Vermont

Feb. 07, 1995

In the wet chill of February 1995, a stiff farmer awoke, ate breakfast, and entered his workshop to find that a hungry raccoon had wreaked a bit of havoc amongst his belongings. An upturned shelf had fallen atop the farmer's only hand-hoe, breaking it in half and bending the blade. After cleaning up the mess, the Farmer set to work quickly, building a new hand-hoe for the coming planting season. He worked tirelessly on the process he knew would take several weeks, for the ground needed to be kneaded and fluffed as soon as it thawed. One triumphant morning in April, the farmer sighed and leaned back in his chair, the shining product resting, finished and itching for use, atop his table. This was the birth of Pokey, who was used until the farmer's wife discarded him in 2016.

-K



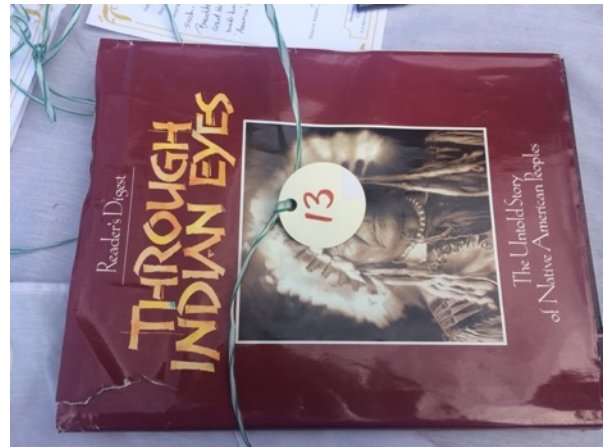
## 71. Raymond. Red Flashlight model 17

A strange factory somewhere on the outskirts of Pittsburgh, PA

Feb. 19, 1957

At the time of their birth, Raymond (Ray) had a bright future. They were bought by a nice couple, wrapped in a gorgeous red and gold wrapping paper, and placed under a brightly decorated pine tree in a warm living room. A few days later, a young child, who the couple called Emma, ripped off the gorgeous and exclaimed happily over Ray. Things were good for several years. Raymond lit the way

during several power outages, numerous camping trips, and a few games of hide-and-seek in the dark. Then things started going wrong. Emma would leave Ray in the back of a dark closet for long periods of time. Sometimes there would be lots of noise, sometimes silence. One day, it seemed as if the whole world was shaking. There was lots of noise, then silence, and Ray never saw Emma again.  
*-Elizabeth Irvine*



54. Jack's Suitcase  
 Chicago  
 May 1968

Jack was a student, not in school, but of life. His work involved travelling to the major American cities, observing and sometimes participating in the rich political and cultural unfoldings of his early 20s. He acquired this suitcase second hand. It was lightly used for business ventures, but now, carrying Jack's books, essays, scraps of paper, a change of clothes and light pajamas, it rides trains across America, helping its owner discover what it means to be alive. Perhaps this suitcase has been to Europe. Tomorrow, its new owner will use it to store books of political resistance. It will rest, retired from travel, on the floor of a Massachusetts dorm that once seceded from the union. I'm sure, however, this won't be its final journey.

*-Timmy Sullivan*

13. Book: Through Indian Eyes  
 United States (New York)  
 11.13.1995

This book is my story, the story of a place they call America. How do they call it such? We had many names. The one thing they got right was a song I think titled "Oh Beautiful or maybe it too was called America. It was beautiful from Sea to Sea, coast to coast. How can anyone destroy beauty? Only a madman. What he is mad at or what made him mad, I don't know. Maybe we can help him find his mind again and make 'America' beautiful again.

*-J*

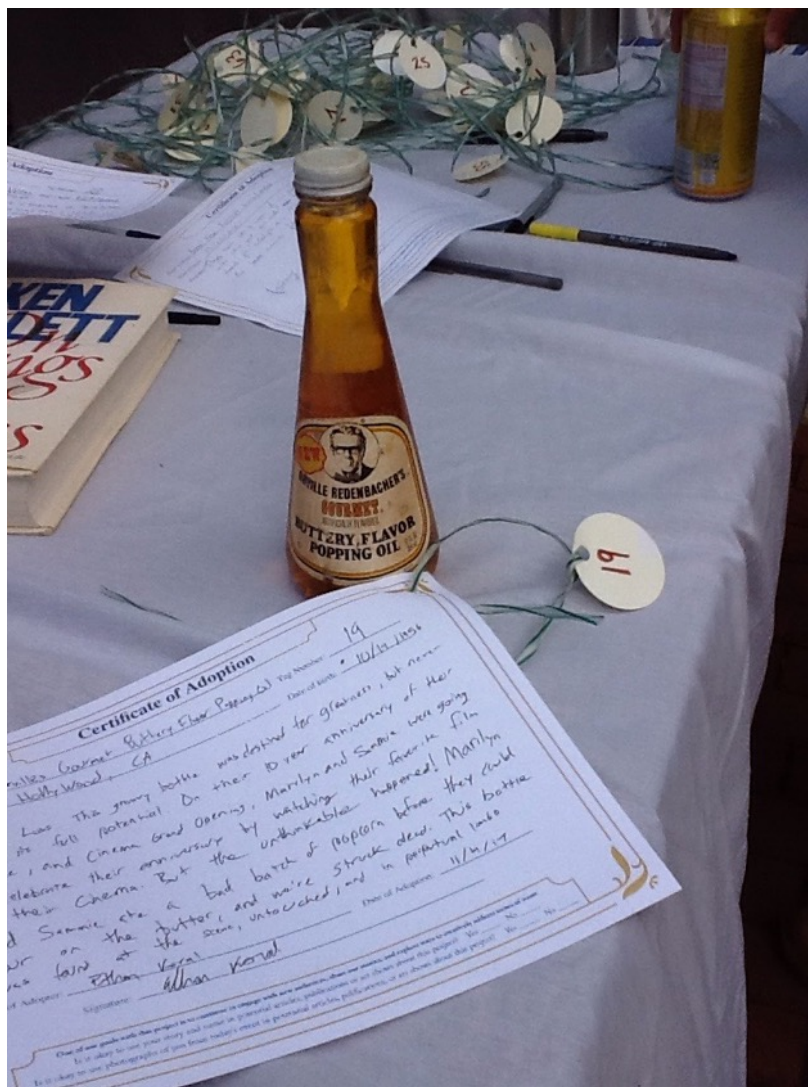




29. I don't Want Your Help  
Somewhere in Ireland  
1912 (Estimated)

This is the fragment of someone's childhood, but not something they remember fondly. This is what is left-over from someone growing up being told what to believe. This is what life is—jagged edges and dirty hands—broken bones and missing pieces—questions and guilt and rebellion—this shaped a child, but not an adult.

-Madeline Schoenfeld



19. Orville's Gourmet Buttery Flavor Popping Oil  
Hollywood, CA  
10.4.1956

Tragedy. Loss. This groovy bottle was destined for greatness, but never reached its full potential. On their 10-year anniversary of their marriage, and Cinema Grand Opening, Marilyn and Sammie were going to celebrate their anniversary by watching their favorite film in their Cinema. But the unthinkable happened! Marilyn and Sammie ate a bad batch of popcorn before they could pour on the butter, and were struck dead. This bottle was found at the scene, untouched, and in perpetual limbo.

-E

46. Maxwell  
New Hampshire  
8.14.1981

I used to be the sharpest knife in the drawer. I was cutting up prime rib, pork chop. You name it! Even the stalk of celery from time to time. But like all knives, I grew dull and rusty, but that's because my old owner didn't see my potential. I can be sharpened and shined to be as good as new! Look out world! And look our ribs!

-N



22. Distilled White Vinegar (DWV)  
Atlantic Ocean  
1.12.2007...?

DWV's first memory is washing ashore on a Miami beach. A bottle on the beach, but just vinegar, no message inside. DWV was picked up by a tourist and brought back home to a 4-family home in Media, PA, but spent its time in the kitchen cupboard searching for meaning from within. Clear like the ocean, meaning couldn't stick. DWV felt transparent, regarded as 5% acidic, but it was really just shy. Expired as judged by Heinz, DMV was cast away from the dark cupboard. Now, its only dream is to return to the one place that has meaning—the Atlantic Ocean.

-Adina Spertus-Melhus





*Athens Home for Discarded Objects I (February 2017)*



34

*Timothy the Chair*

b. August 1, 1972; Maryland

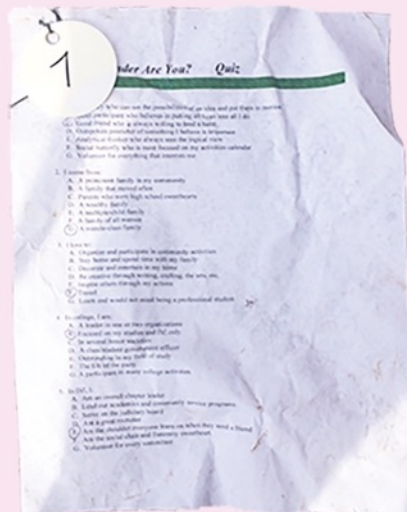
**T**imothy was hand-made for the youngest granddaughter of a carpenter. Her name was Alice, and she loved the little wooden chair for many years. When she outgrew, it her stuffed animals sat in it. It was passed down to her daughters, who passed it down to their own children. But alas, Timothy fell out of a moving truck one day en route to Georgia, and he was lost in the river. Until now.

7

*Daisy the D2 Founder Quiz*

b. January 9, 2017; The Elusive D2

**D**aisy the D2 Founder quiz has not always had an easy life. At a young age, the egg-shell white quiz was passed out to the masses of D2 (an unknown organization, Delta Zeta?) and with no name at the top or result scored, was discarded. Her secrets forever lost. An early retiree, she will live a quiet life with other papers in my desk.





23

### *Clay the Pipe*

b. February 7, 1984; Barcelona

Clay was made for use as a part of an extremely elaborate pipe system used for transporting mate to the mouths of thirsty children in the streets of Barcelona. One day the pipe burst and all of the pieces were sent into exile. Clay the pipe was sent to the river banks of the Oconee, where he lived out the remainder of his days in forgottenness.

24

### *Water Valve Caution*

b. June, 2003; Tacoma, WA

Someone dug too close to a water main and ruptured the pipe, sending it away from its home.



25

### *The Hand Stitched Afghan*

b. Carrollton, GA

This blanket was found abandoned in the river. It was once used by a very talented yogi named Dana. It was used to assist in head stands, hand stands, and other inversions, and add support. One day while on a picnic, Dana accidentally abandoned her blanket by the side of Tanyard Creek. It is now being rehabilitated and will hopefully serve as support to someone once again.



13

### *Jere's Pedestal*

b. Bowels of Tanyard Creek

Long ago, the founders of UGA foresaw a hero. A champion of the University, A man who would pull UGA from the depths and make it shine. His name: Jere Morehead. But it was too dangerous to reveal this to the public: the future child MUST be protected. So, they crafted a bust and hid it in the beloved Tanyard Creek. 200 years later, a great flood swept the bust away, swept it out to the sea to be part of all. Only this pedestal remains.



### *Poe*

b. The deep depths of the Ocean

Poe was a plant pot for an underwater civilization called the Flankendasherorgs. They were super cool people, loved plants, loved Poe and eventually sank deep into the sea floor until they were no more. Except Poe. Poe survived.

53

*Matty*

b. 1985; Orlando, FL

**Matty**'s first day began in the giftshop of Disney World, a classic origin as his parents and grandparents had done years before him. One exceptionally hot day, Matty was adopted by a young boy named Bobby and together they explored the unlimited adventures the park had to offer.

Bobby brought Matty home and left him on the shelf. Matty gathered dust and soon hit the can. On the way to the can; however, he caught the eye of Bobby's younger cousin who decided he wanted to wear it. The cousin wore it to the beach when it blew away and was lost in the sea.



47

*Patty the iPad*

b. October 16, 2010; The Ural Mountains

**Patty** was involved with some crucial top-secret government work. During his last mission, Patty was given sensitive information on an unlimited clean energy source while in transit to the United States. He was intercepted by enemy spies and was killed in action. His valiant service will never be forgotten.



48

*Mr. Giggles*

b. 03.31.1999

**Mr. Giggles** was helping a super stressed college student during finals one year. The student popped all of the bubbles and felt much better about their exams. One windy day in April, Mr. Giggles was set down while the student was getting a drink. The wind picked up Mr. Giggles and took him far away. He landed in the river and was left there till found by some amazing people.



*Athens Home for Discarded Objects 2 (University of Georgia Science Library)*

57. Marcel duPoubelle

Paris, France

April 20, 1917

Marcel was born as a part of a unicycle that was used by a troupe of travelling clowns. The troupe went bankrupt and had to pawn Marcel. Marcel lived in a Paris shop until one day he was made into the first ready-made piece of art. No one knows what happened to Marcel and the first ready-made unicycle wheel because he has unresolved trauma and doesn't want to talk about it.

*-K and T*

56. Replacement no. 4

Macon, GA

Feb. 2015

Replacement no. 4 followed original and Replacements 2 & 3 in the most affordable housing complex (for students, basically) in Athens. 3 break-ins, 2 legitimate & 1 prank-gone-wrong, paved the way for the Replacement 4. Unfortunately, she paved the way for replacement 5 after only 5.5 short months.

*-K*

56. Freedman

Franklin House, Athens GA

May 4, 1865

I was freed from physical bondage only to find that the door was closed. I've been locked out ever since. I am optimistic that I will find my way back in. Spread Love.

*-B*

63. Kari 595

Somewhere beyond the asteroid belt

600 BCE

Kari was part of the most important instrument on the ship of some of Earth's earliest visitors. They crashed to Earth and their ship blew apart, although they were able to reassemble the rest of their star ship, they never found Kari. The engine of their ship never ran again, and their alien race was doomed to roam the underground tunnels of the Earth.

*-E*







73. Jeep Tag  
Toledo, Ohio. USA  
1941

The Jeep Tag was made in 1941 for the iconic US Army Jeeps that were manufactured during WWII. The legendary Willy's Jeep was a classic symbol of proud "Americana", owing testament to the key ideas of freedom, liberty, and equality. Inspired to read [word unclear], this tag carries on the proud history and message of hard work of the American people. Although the jeep it was once bonded to has broken down due to old age, the tag preserves its memory and tells its story to all.

-W







73. Jeremiah  
Detroit, Michigan  
October 7, 1999

I had a humble beginning. One of many mass-produced Jeep components, I wasn't much to look at until I was stuck on Jeep and polished to a shine. After that though, life got real interesting real fast. Me and the rest of the automobile were sent to a dealership in Montana, and soon, a tall, strong man

named Rick bought me. Rick was a family man and he would fit his three young, always energetic kids in the Jeep for outdoor adventures all over the Northwest. I saw so many mountains, lakes, and even some old growth forests before a particularly large bump on a road trip in the Southeast knocked me free.

-R

74. "Tailgate Trash" Ken  
California  
8.29.1997

Ken grew up in sunny Malibu, CA. A lover of sun, surf and good times with friends, when it came time for college he naturally went looking schools with good party culture. He arrived at UGA eager to learn more about our sports culture and homegrown beers. Always one to follow his heart before his head he soon ran afoul of some Florida fans at one of his beloved tailgate parties. He doesn't remember much after the first punch was thrown. He woke up on the side of the river with no shirt, no shoes and no ID or bus money. While he is very grateful for the rescue by a service-minded sorority girl, he is really dreading trying to salvage his GPA this semester.

-S

75. The Bottle You save for an Important Occasion  
Valpolicello/Veneto Wine Region

Vern and Valentina were married in an elaborate wedding ceremony. Valentina's family gave the young couple a really nice bottle of red wine—the kind you keep in your cellar for years and years and drink on your 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary or some nonsense like that. Vern popped the cork on their 22<sup>nd</sup> wedding anniversary and well, the wine was actually amazing. Sadly, he was drinking alone.

-E

76. Capri  
Lawrenceville, GA  
2008

Capri was always sassy. But never as effortlessly chic as the most popular girl in school, Kiwi. Throughout high school, Capri trailed her constantly, trying to impress her with obnoxious entrances to parties and always cannon balling at pool parties. In Capri's many years in the suburban neighborhoods of Lawrenceville, GA, she was a regular at neighborhood barbecues and soccer games. She was always a little tart --which made her a complex gal. Years later, Capri went to college, which is when she got her name. Yes, that's right --Capri's real name was Kathy. lame right? Or so she thought. Maybe still thinks.

-B

77. Console 9  
NASA  
November 1965

Most people wouldn't guess is, but I've been to space. Yep, Gemini 7, December 1965. It's not the biggest space mission, certainly no Apollo. Most people jump to man walking on the moon and forget everything before that. But yep, I was one of the consoles in the cramped space craft. Frank and Jim treated me well, but I have to say, I've seen better days as of late. I may not be something to gawk at now, but back in my day, I was top-of-the-line. Just check out these processor cores. They don't make them like this anymore.

-N



### *Marks and Openings*

Ingold (2007) describes “trace” as either additive or reductive. For this story, the traces may function as both. They are reductive in the ways these experiences carve into the materials of the world. Physically, they may disrupt the environment of the installation through the bending of grass beneath footsteps, objects, blankets or furniture. They may push the fibers of handmade paper into new forms, as pieces of string or metal burrow into wet fibers. Or they may carve away layers of memory and experience to trigger connections with past moments. They may also be additive in the ways they produce new stories or memories. In the way drawings or photographs of encounters build on a page, adding to a collection of materials that make up the overall story. They may also provide openings for new imaginings, journeys or relationships.

For some, the intra-action between object and participant offered an opening to speak words that need to come out, such as J’s reflection on US affairs in her reference to America the Beautiful from her story, “Book: Through Indian Eyes.” The intra-action may provide the impetus to solidify ideas, or work through them in a way that can be shared with others. Such an intra-action may be a jumping off point for other thoughts or unexpected connections between various life materials, bringing into view the interconnected web of life-lines.

While each story gives a new life or experience to the object, for many participants, these objects also resemble material from previous life encounters. In Philadelphia, the menorah reminds of childhood gatherings. In the Science Library, the boombox calls forth visions of a family kayaking trip, or the basketball transports one to an elementary schoolyard. The overlapping of pasts and futures may be evidence of a folding in and out of time and experience.

To write a story about an object is a playful act. To some it may be frivolous. It may not have a direct, obvious impact, but it enables a merging of experiences in an empathetic way. We talk often of “walking a mile in another’s shoes” or “putting yourself in someone’s shoes.” With these encounters, there is an element of forcing the objects into our shoes, of attending to it as if it were human matter; thinking of their names, “births” and actions in a human relational capacity. In this process, the objects also force human participants to step into their shoes. The human participants are asked not only to consider the objects’ experiences from a human framework of being, but also to imagine themselves as another form of matter, such as a bottle found in a river. To question what the object matter might have been doing? Where it might have been situated? What it might have considered playtime, worktime or leisure time? Though the call to write a story is embedded in a sense of fantasy, a desire to awaken the imaginative capacity (Greene, 1995), there is also a seriousness in the engagement. An invitation to offer empathy towards other material. In thinking of these stories, I am reminded of these sentiments by Jane Bennett (2004):

I have also suggested that a playful, naive stance toward nonhuman things is a way for us to render more manifest a fugitive dimension of experience. In the moment of naivete, it becomes possible to discern a resemblance between one's interior thinghood (e.g., bones) and the object-entities exterior to one's body. In the sympathetic link so formed, which also constitutes a line of flight from the anthropocentrism of everyday experience, thing-power comes to presence. (P. 366)

I return to the question of what becomes through these installations? These experiences offer moments of connection—vessels for memory and imagination to pour through. Each of these intra-actions produce different connections, stories and lines of being. The materials produced (stories,



photographs, memories, art works) are woven into the histories of the participants, human or otherwise, catalogued into the meshwork that connects lines of being beyond linear conceptions of time. Through these materials we catch glimpses of the types of encounters had; of the feelings they conjured or the many ways they communicated. Each is unique, relational and contextual.

Limited in scope, this experiment lacks connections to the “future” of these objects and encounters. I know little of what has become since, or what the majority of participants felt, beyond the stories and images left behind. In an unexpected turn, a friend and colleague from the English Department offered her students the chance to visit the Science Library and write about their experiences for class credit. In these student responses, I found windows into the types of experiences people had with the exhibition while it was in place. From these reflections, I also found evidence of continued movement.

*After visiting the Science Library exhibit students wrote:*

**Chatania:** I really enjoyed admiring the vintage Athens Home for Discarded Objects. Each object was completely different from the other with a completely different story entailed behind it. Some of the objects looked familiar like the Coke can yet others looked unfamiliar like the dismantled speaker. Many of the objects had interesting stories attached to them which was fun to read. The concept of adopting an object and filling out its birth certificate was a terrific idea for me. This allowed me to engage with the collection and leave my own mark of stories through the object. The object that particularly stood out to me was the SONY radio covered with muddy sand. It was significant to me as I am passionate about music as it's my way of releasing all my stress and concerns. Music is like medication to me as it feeds my soul with abundance. This radio particularly gave me flashbacks of my childhood years as we owned such a radio many years ago where my whole family will dance to beat of the music. The shoe with moss entwined in it was another object that held my attention. This shoe represented one of my goals in life. I aim not to walk in other people's shoes but I want to wear my own shoes and make a difference in the world by embedding my footprint in the world and in people's lives. The moss on the shoe represents the growth I aim to achieve in my goals, ambitions and attitude.

**Jonah:** Washed away in the river and to be forgotten forever, students found a pair of zebra-striped slippers in the deep. Covered in mud that has dried up, it made the slippers look much uglier than they really were. A once white color fabric is now tan, light brown almost. Both slippers remain intact, materials still strongly bounded to each other. In a snippit of the slipper, a white tag slightly

protrudes; however, the inscriptions on it seem to be illegible. When I was a younger boy, my parents would rarely use air conditioning, leaving my body hot in summers, but even worse, my feet cold in winters. I would always wear socks, but that never seemed to do the trick, especially when my dad was a strong believer that feet needed to breathe. Thus, I would have to take my socks off at some point. Also, many Asian families do not wear shoes in their household, and we were one of them. Eventually, I had received a pair of monkey slippers in a gift exchange, and long story short, my feet suffered no more. Shoes were allowed in the house if they weren't exposed to outside elements, so no conflicts arose there. Although these zebra slippers may have a different story, they reminded me of the joy of when I got my first pair of slippers. Because I was young, I was growing at an exceeding pace, so the slippers soon outgrew me. Nonetheless, I bought a new pair, and I have been buying more pairs ever since!

**JC:** The Science Library is an amazing place to learn. The building is massive and full of books and classrooms. In the library, there is a case full of discarded objects that were “collected during a day of river and road clean-ups on the University of Georgia campus” (Kira and Abigail). While most of the objects are interesting, the boombox intrigued me the most. When I studied the boombox, I noticed that it was still in one piece; however, it was molded, dirty, and partially broken. The handle was in the upright position, and the buttons and CD holder were full of hardened dirt and Georgia red clay. Another interesting component of the boombox was that the radio was sitting on two books. This could be for viewing purposes, but I believe the radio was too broken to sit at a level position so they used the two books to balance the boombox. In addition, the speakers were torn out. Because of all the sediment and erosion, the boombox was no longer able to pronounce clear and beautiful music. Instead, it now sits quietly and somewhat destroyed in a glass case. However, the boombox still has significance. While its speakers are gone, it’s materiality still tells us about its past and its impacts on others. The college room boombox was a gift from a dad to his son or daughter in 1978. The kid dropped the boombox in the river on a tubing trip, and the boombox died. In the same way, my dad got an iPhone 6S and we decided to go on a kayaking trip. My dad was videoing the adventure when we hit a big rapid. All of a sudden, he dropped his phone into the river, and we never found the cellphone ever again. It is interesting to think that my dad’s cell phone might be a part of a discarded object exhibit one day.

**Maddie:** The exhibit of the Athens home for discarded objects was so interesting to me. On a bookshelf in the middle of the library they had discarded objects that could be adopted, and then on the other side of the room in a glass bookcase was adopted objects. The exhibit was so cool because each object had its own unique story. Some were hilarious and some were serious and realistic. My most favorite story was the mossy shoe. It is humorous as it talks about the shoes dreams of being an air Jordan of its life. But, his dreams were crushed when he was thrown into the stream. The shoes biggest accomplishment in life is it has become for moss. The exhibit made me think a little deeper than just a funny, unique exhibit. It made me think about how everything has a purpose and every object has a story behind it. Each object is unique in its own way, just as each object has its own story. These objects are just like humans. Every person has a different life story, and every person looks different. Also, it made me think about how every person has a purpose. Everyone’s purpose in life is different, just as every object had a different purpose before it was thrown into the stream. For

example, someone may be called to be a doctor and save lives, while another person may be beautician and cut people's hair. The mossy shoe was a protection for someone's foot at one point. It was super cool to see what objects people had adopted versus the objects that hadn't been adopted yet. Maybe people found a connection with the object that they had adopted.



3

### *Mossy Shoe*

b. January 1, 1998; Taiwan

❧ I always wanted to be a Jordan.  
Like, an AIR JORDAN!  
But it didn't happen -  
all I ever became was a standard  
leather shoe.  
But hey, now I'm home for  
some moss.  
So, I'm a  
green shoe, right?

**Angela:** I walked into the science library thinking that there would be a large exhibit displayed. However, it was smaller than expected. As I walked around the tiny in closure, I saw something that caught my eyes. It was tinted with old age and covered in dirt. But most of all, there was moss growing on the exterior. "Mossy Shoe" was the name. Showcased next to the object was a framed description of the shoe. It stated that it was born in the beginning of 1998 and that it always wanted to be a Jordan; however, the only thing it became was a typical leather shoe. Reading this actually made me understand what this whole exhibit was trying to achieve. It puts our brain at work by establishing creative scenarios for inanimate objects discarded outside. The thing I loved most about the shoe was that it had a nature aspect to it. The moss itself is evidence that the shoe had been abandoned outside for a long period of time. After closer inspection, I realized that this shoe must have been either on display or have been within someone's possession for quite awhile, considering the condition of the moss. The greenery isn't so green anymore. It looks lifeless due to the browning of the moss. But this creates an even more ancient and mysterious characteristic to it. I'm not sure if they're going to expand on the collection anymore, but if they do, I hope to see more interesting and unique objects on display. I want this exhibit to be bigger than it is now next year.

**Joseph:** The object that I really loved from the exhibit in the science library was the coke bottle. Coke is a brand that has its roots in Atlanta and is a brand that is close to me. Growing up and even now, when I have any sort of soda it is referred to as “coke”. I also would never think of drinking out of a Pepsi bottle. Seeing the old glass Coke bottle just makes me think of who it was that enjoyed the Coke. Was it a hot day and they needed just a cold drink to cool off? Were they drinking it at a picnic? The possibilities of what the use of the bottle could have been is endless. It also reminds me of what it is like to drink coke out of a bottle. Everyone knows that a coke always tastes better when it is in a glass bottle or a glass cup. Especially when the glass is cold, it just enhances the whole experience of drinking a coke. It was so interesting to me that the bottle was larger than the typical serving size than today. I think that so much emphasis today when it comes to soda is that we are drinking serving sizes that are too large, however that bottle was definitely larger than the typical can or bottle of coke today. Maybe people consumed it less often, but nonetheless it is a larger bottle. I would love to know the full backstory of how this coke was enjoyed.

**Knight:** Athens Home for Discarded Objects is an exhibit filled with objects that may come across as trash to many, but have valuable stories and are pieces of art. Within the exhibit there are little cards next to each object that personifies it and tells the story of the object’s journey. I loved how there were objects like a bat or coke bottles that normally would not stick out to someone, but it was interesting to see their story and the makers of the exhibit added humor so it was enjoyable. For example, there was a worn-out leather shoe and, on the card, next to it, it said “I always wanted to be a Jordan. Like, an Air Jordan.” Another piece was a pair of zebra slippers and they were apparently owned by a 60- year old man that liked to put them on every time he got home. I really enjoyed reading all the different stories and it was able to make me think about objects that I see. All objects have a story to tell and this exhibit has helped me see that. One of my favorite discarded objects was the mailbox. You could tell it has been through a lot, probably many different owners and probably been hit a couple times. A mailbox is just one of those things that no one ever pays attention to. People drive by them every day, but they don’t have a purpose besides holding your mail. However, now when I see a mailbox I am going to think of the story that is behind it.

On a few occasions, I ventured to the Science Library to observe the intra-actions. In the times I was there, no one adopted any objects from the case, or even sat in the chair of the little living room configuration. At the time, I felt disappointed that people were not activating the space. Around the same time, I received a message from Holly about her students’ writing on the exhibition. While their visits were initiated by the class assignment, their writing brings to light the traces of effects we cannot see, or the moments we are not privy to.

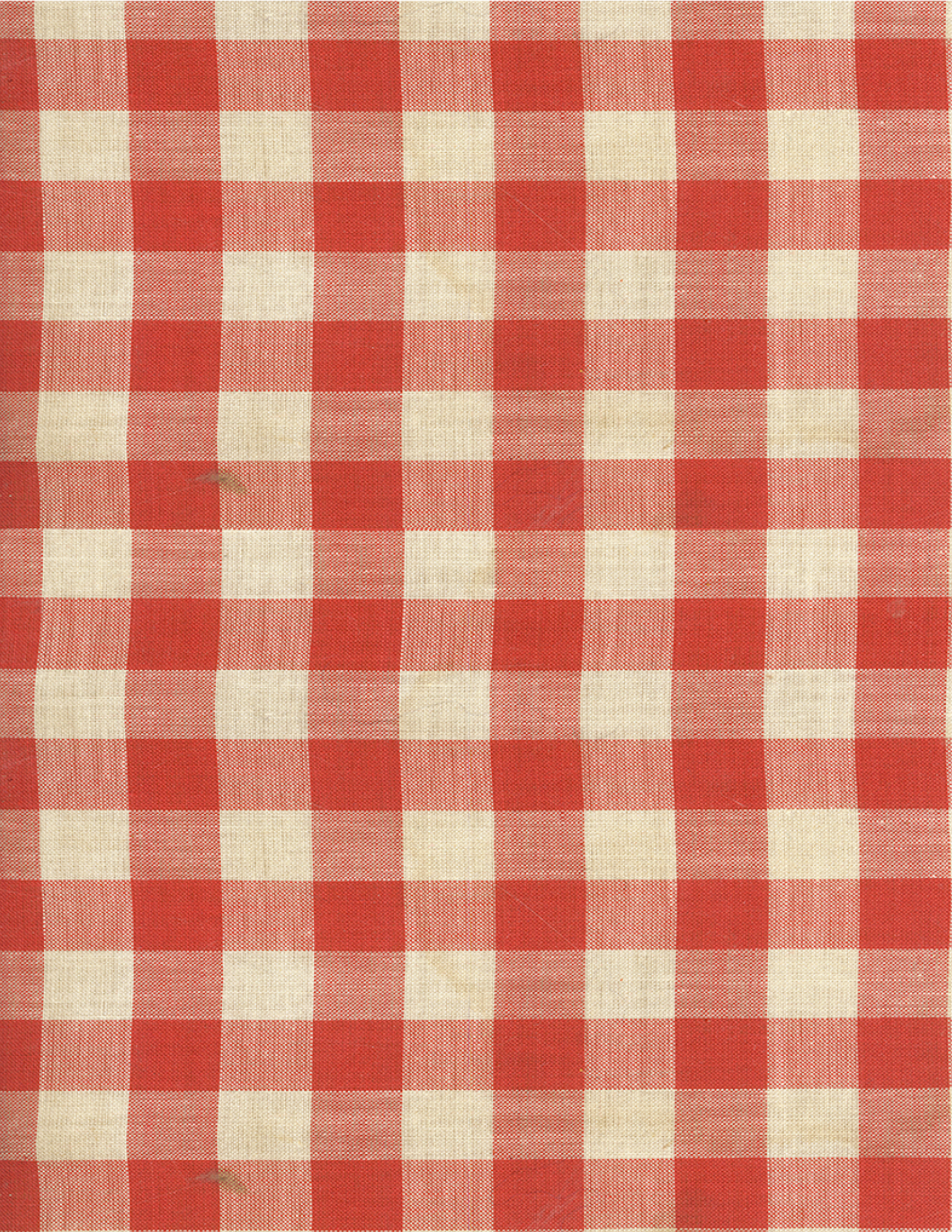
These traces live as residue, the trail of relational encounters that cannot be captured in their fleeting existence. They are also openings. Openings for further points of connection, for unexpected overlaps. Openings to imagine; to build worlds and stories; to combine past experiences with dreams, fantasies or inspiration garnered from other stories, images, or objects. And they are openings for remembering.

Conceptualized first as “moments of pause” in direct challenge to capitalist configurations of space and behavior, these installations work to invite another form of pause. One associated less with cessation of movement and more with an attentiveness to the varied matter of the world, human or non-human. Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind and Kocher (2017) align attentiveness with a desire to linger, spend time with, or “dwell in” something. In this attentiveness, we find the stories written by the participants and the movements or shifts they may describe in their words, images and recollections.

## Chapter 5: List of Figures (in order of appearance)

Figure 30: Letter and Bill Holder Certificate .....	81
Figure 31: Participants with Objects Post Events.....	82
Figure 32: Participant Photograph of Ray in Their New Home (E. Irvine, 2018) .....	87
Figure 33: Josephine.....	92
Figure 34: Popsicle's Menorah .....	99
Figure 35: Paint for Models .....	99
Figure 36: The Box of Tools of My Dreams.....	99
Figure 37: Mortimus McVent III .....	100
Figure 38: Freddy North .....	100
Figure 39: Laa Laa.....	101
Figure 40: Table.....	101
Figure 41: Pokey the Garden Tool .....	102
Figure 42: Raymond, Red Flashlight Model # 2.....	102
Figure 43: Jack's Suitcase .....	103
Figure 44: Book: Through Indian Eyes .....	103
Figure 45: I Don't Want Your Help.....	104
Figure 46: Orville's Gourmet Buttery Flavor Popping Oil.....	105
Figure 47: Maxwell .....	106
Figure 48: Distilled White Vinegar .....	106
Figure 49: Timothy the Chair .....	107
Figure 50: Daisy the D2 Founder Quiz.....	107
Figure 51: Clay the Pipe and Others .....	108
Figure 52: Jere's Pedestal and Poe .....	108
Figure 53: Matty .....	109
Figure 54: Patty the iPad.....	109
Figure 55: UGA Science Library Objects, Detail View .....	110
Figure 56: Writing with 65 .....	112
Figure 57: Jeep Tag.....	112
Figure 58: Jeep Bumper and Other Objects .....	113
Figure 59: Cabinet with Objects, UGA Science Library .....	115
Figure 60: Mossy Shoe .....	120







Strands of string burrow into cotton fibers. Together they are pressed to 2000 psi, transferred to dry felt, pressed again, transferred to cardboard, and placed under weight with a fan blowing to help them dry and remain flat.

Fingers gliding across paper move down as the topography lowers where the thread once sat, like shifts in a river bed, marked by the meandering flow of waters that push and pull at the soil as they move. The string has pushed the fibers of the paper to the sides, flattened some with its pressure, filling the space for a time. In the object's absence, there is a new configuration. The marks shape the paper, and the experiences had in its making.

Mimicking the intra-actions between participants and objects, the string and paper leave traces on one another. The act of making paper distributes threads and fibers in a wide arc. Pulp splashes out of the tub as it is stirred and agitated. Fibers catch to table edges, felts, and clothing items. As the string is pressed into the wet pulp their surfaces merge, becoming entwined-for a time. As they dry, their bodies re-bound and detach. The string pulls with it fiber from the dried paper pulp while leaving behind a shell of its form and ghosts of the dye it holds in its strands.

The green paper is a mix of two sheets found at the Habitat for Humanity Re-Store. One is blue and white striped and the other is a pale yellow with pink and blue flowers amidst green petals. Presumably both sheets are made of cotton, but I am not sure. Together, these sheets were the backdrop for a display in the University of Georgia Science Library. They were meant to give a sense of domesticity, referencing antique wall papers. Cut into small bits, they are shredded together into paper pulp through a beating process where the small bits are cycled through a beater that resembles a large blender. They fuse together to become a greenish paper. With no additional additives, the paper is soft to the touch, more like felt or cloth than paper.

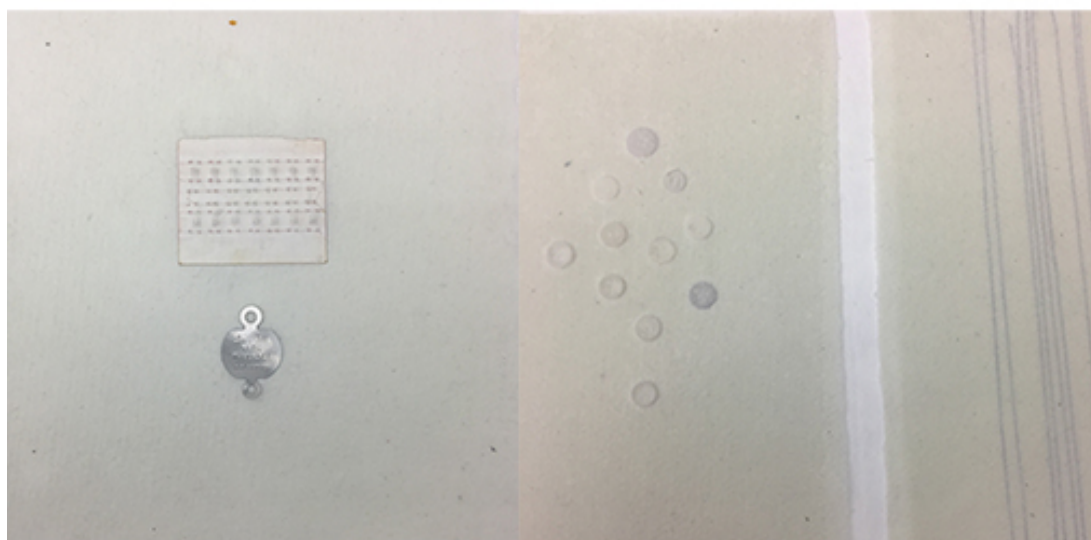








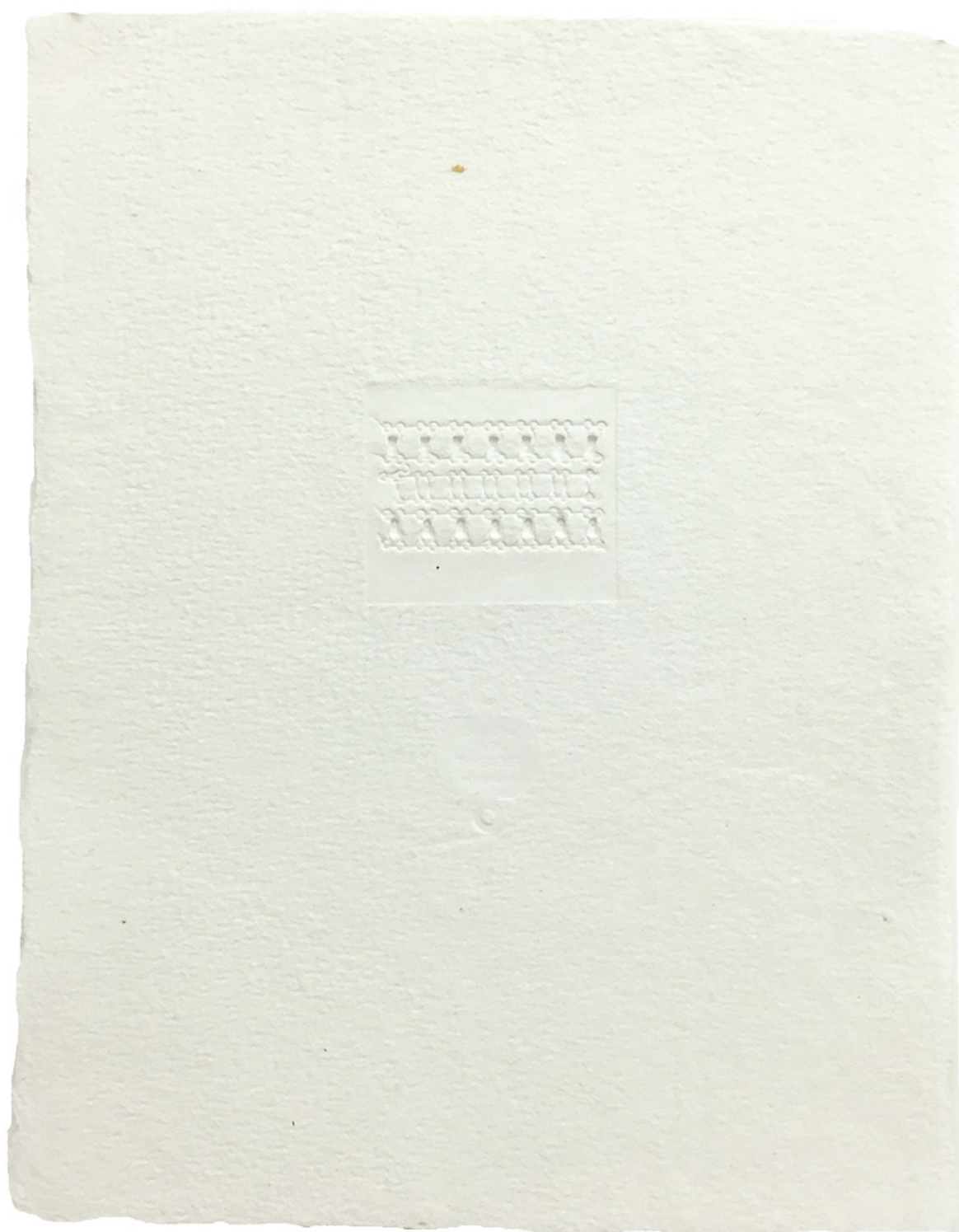










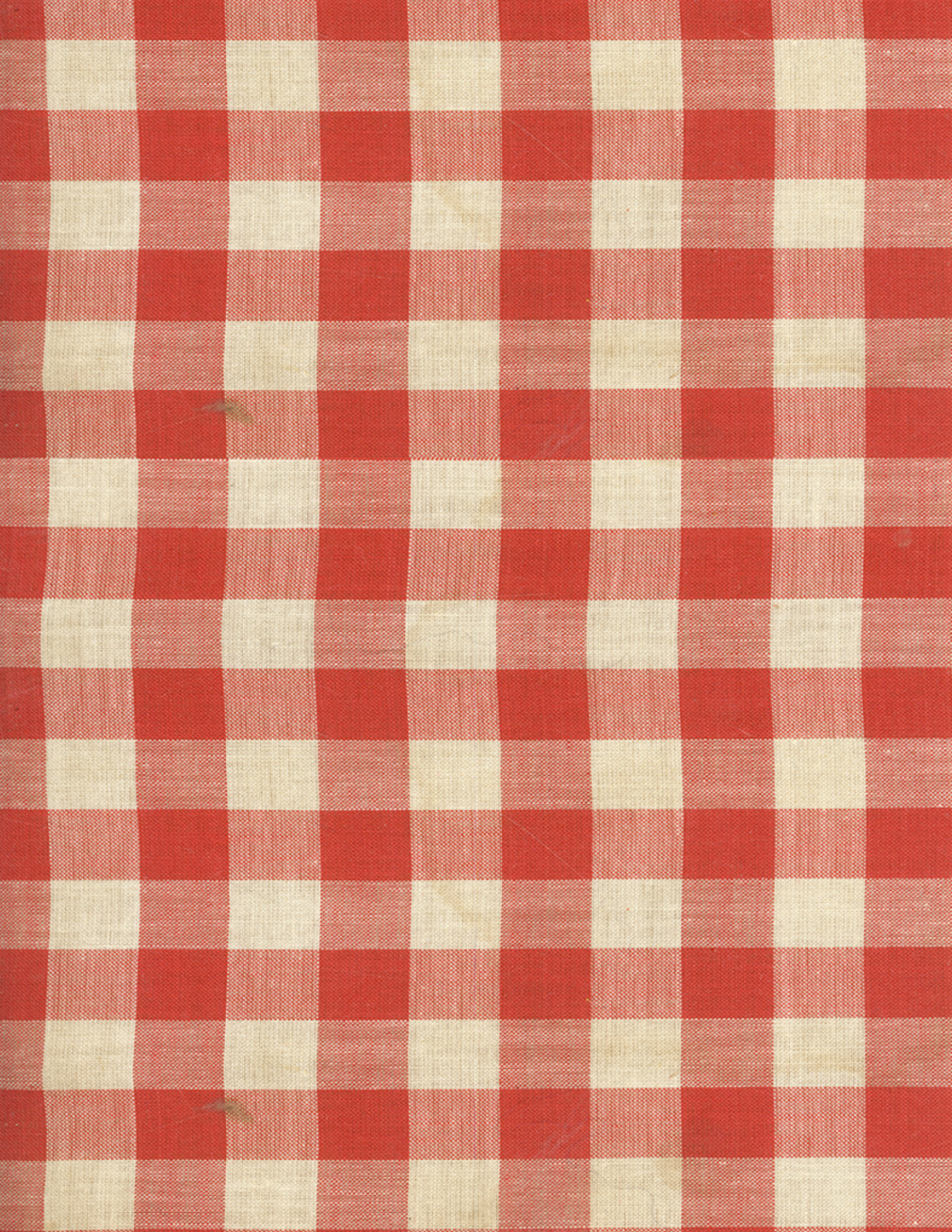
















## Conversing and Collaborating Through Making



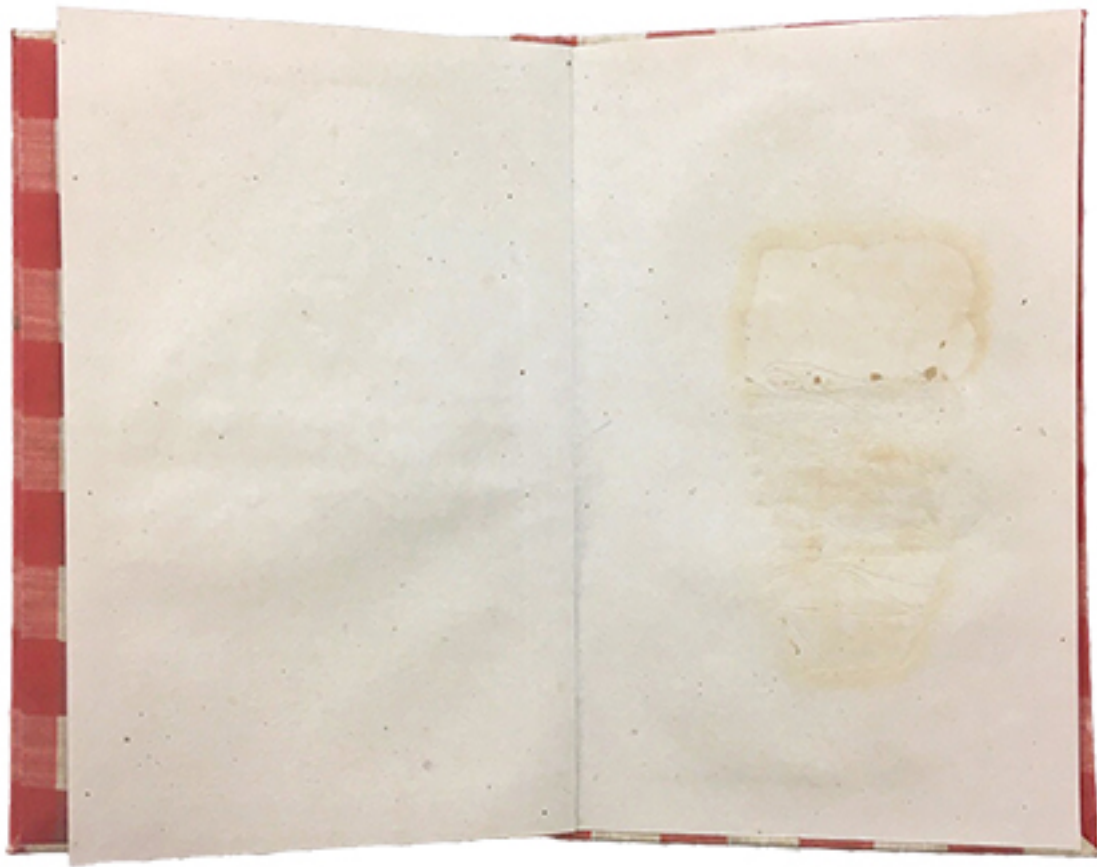
In my studio, these pages hang on the wall. 8 selected. They hang in a grid, behind me. My chair and desk face the other wall. I turn often to look at them. I turn to think; to contemplate; and to engage with the materials. As I think with these 8 pages, I find my mind wandering to new places. The marks of string travel off the page, morphing to become river ways and veins, trails to be hiked, or tracks left in journeys passed. In these marks, I envision fossils, archeological digs or relics of past encounters.

Physically, they are the traces of material bodies, marking encounters formed in the process of attending to them through making. The pages bare contours of objects embedded in their fibers,

for a time. These objects were brought with Josephine, the checkered sewing basket pulled from the refuse at Revolution Recovery. In the shells of their shared encounter, I find additional marks and openings. Like the stories of the previous chapter, the process and products of this making transcend planes. They simultaneously catalogue moments, traces or marks of material, and offer new lines with which to connect. Each new encounter or engagement adds to the meshwork, forming knots in the fray and openings for new encounters.

The materials of the accordion book behave in unexpected ways. I try to manipulate the book and it tears. I stitch, and knots occur. I draw, and my pencil goes through the page. I could only sew the envelope on half way because the cover came off...or mostly off. Now I will cover it with something.

Excerpt from personal journal



*Hovering Between Process and Product*

Many artists speak of an energy present in the exchange of drawing or making. Yves Berger (2007) wrote, in a letter to his father artist and critic John Berger,

I feel the process of drawing as something like an electric circuit: something passes from what I look at to me and from me to it. There is an exchange between me and the model. And, hopefully, when the conditions are right, when everything is plugged in, I'm carried away by this flux. (p.124)

His father adds, speaking on Van Gogh, "the gestures come from his hand, his wrist, arm, shoulder, perhaps even the muscles in his neck, yet the strokes he makes on the paper are following currents of energy which are not physically his and which only become visible when he draws them"

(Berger, 2007, p.14). Exploring from a new materialist perspective, this energy may speak to the “vibrations” or interconnections between matter. Speaking specifically on trash, Jane Bennett (2010) describes the feeling of energy carried by the items that she found on the street. “As I have already noted, the items on the ground that day were vibratory—at one moment disclosing themselves as dead stuff and at the next as live presence: junk, then claimant; inert matter, then live wire” (p. 5). Bennett (2010) attributes this energy or vibration as thing-power, the ability of “inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle” (p. 6).

Curious by this idea, I wondered how one might converse with objects across material-discursive barriers. Would it be possible to open up to the energy or vibration through visual practices? Would the practices—acts of making—enable these materials, the non or other-than human, to contribute their voice through this felt energy or vibration?

In my studio, I sought to give the materials of this project agency (Hultman and Lenz Taguchi, 2010). Striving to dedicate time and space to being with these materials, I developed a series of exercises to open myself up to their “energy.” I was particularly intrigued by Zach Stephens, the remote-control military helicopter. According to the story written by participants,

This lil’ guy performed rescue missions in the jungles of Tanzania before being rescued by Americans. Served two tours in Afghanistan.  
(Athens Home for Discarded Objects, February 2017)

I tasked myself with drawing Zach repeatedly, on a series of days. As John Berger (2007) described,

Image-making begins with interrogating appearances and making marks. Every artist discovers that drawing—when it is an urgent activity—is a two-way process. To draw is not only to measure and put down, it is also to receive. When the intensity of looking reaches a

certain degree, one becomes aware of an equally intense energy coming towards one, through the appearance of whatever it is one is scrutinizing. (p.77)

In this act of drawing, I gave myself fully to Zach. I focused on the lines that made its contours and shapes. I recorded dates and times of the sketch, wondering what information this act would provide.

Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, & Kocher (2017), remark on the role of art in opening space to be with materials. For them,

part of what art does is ask us to attend to things. It draws our attention, often to new things, or to older things said or presented in new ways. Basically, art asks us to make sense of things, or to figure them out. (p.7)

Drawing Zach, my eyes, hand and pencil traced the curves as they moved around the nose. I paused on the place where the wing met the body, followed the contours around the wing and back to the body on the other side. Above, a red cylinder was embedded, representing missiles or gunnery contraptions. I zoned in on the top of the helicopter. As my eyes settled, my awareness shifted. The flat surface opened up to reveal subtle curves and beveled edges. It was a second smaller platform on which the wings rested. I had not noticed it before. Continuing to draw, I witnessed patches of the plastic that had worn, cracks filled with dirt and subtle nuances easily missed. I saw a hole near the nose of plane. Incised lines represented hinges that would allow doors to open, if they were not fused together. Drawing felt like a form of excavation. Through deeper attention, layers unfolded to reveal previously unseen details. In the process, I could feel a relationship forming. This material body transformed from “a toy helicopter” to “Zach the toy helicopter” to “Zach.”





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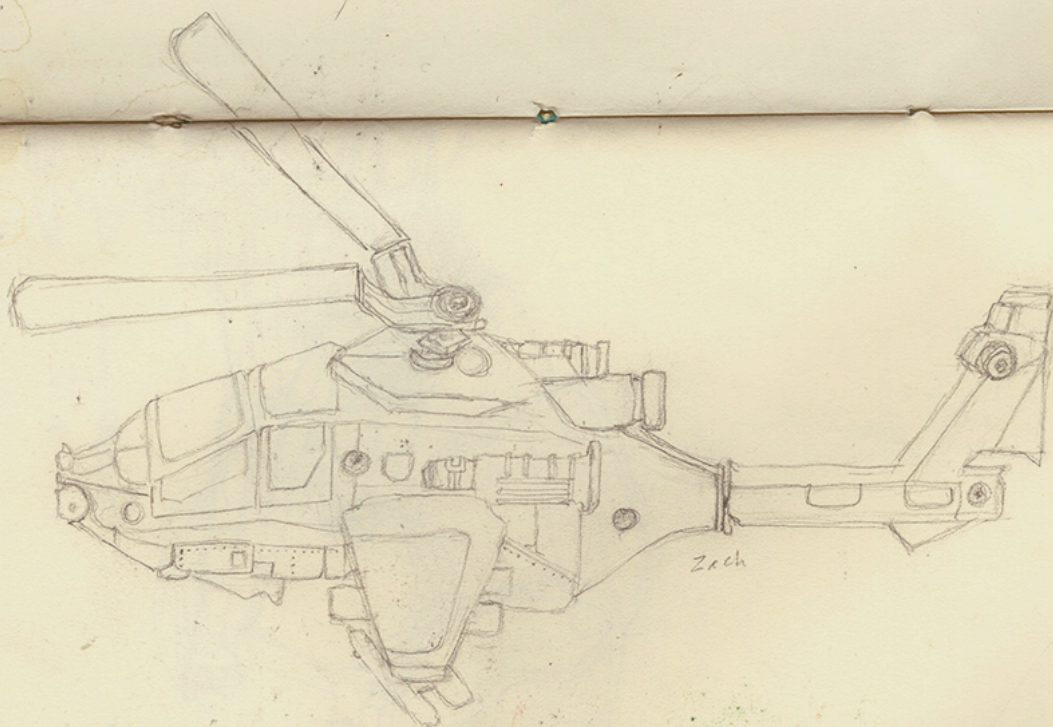
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*Research Journal #1*

*\* Card from the upholstery Repair Kit, Temple*

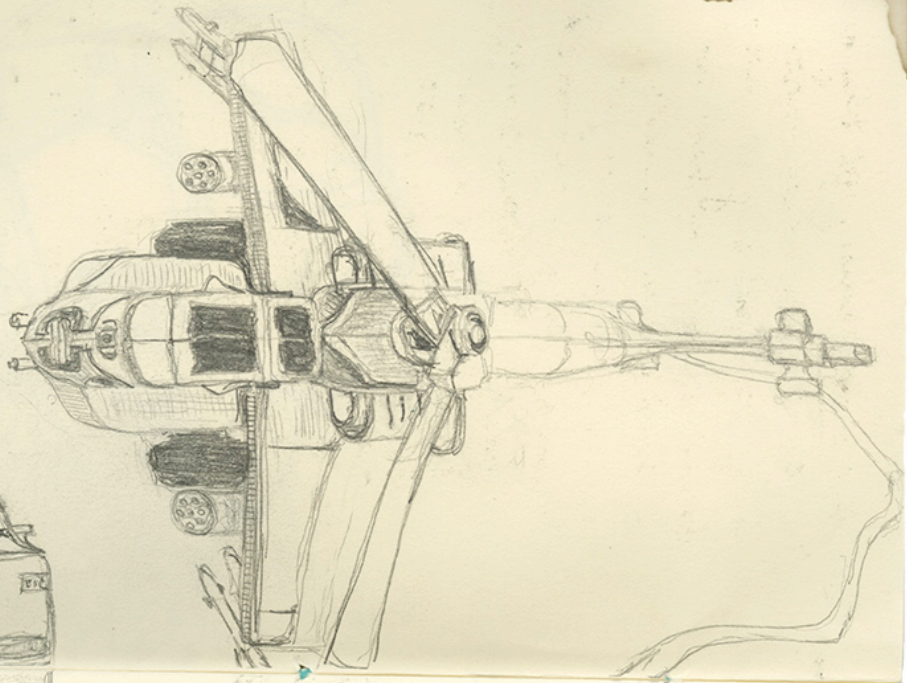




Zach

11.19 5:15 pm





Zachary's Lighter  
1:22 '18 8:15 pm



"Our traces remain, yet they are far less substantial than those of the tree and they are two-faced. It would be hard for a third person to decide whether we were leaving or returning, were in the process of appearing or disappearing, whether we were alive or were ghosts." Burger, p. 59

"Because the faculty of sight is omnivorous, because visual categories (red, yellow, dark, thick, thin) remain constant, and because so many things appear to remain in place, one tends to forget that the visual is always the result of an unpredictable, momentary encounter" p. 67

I was thinking a lot about how to do volume & shadows

I still wonder if I'm thinking about the object or about the act of drawing?

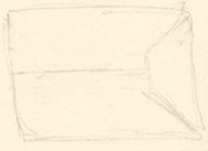
That's where the ghost is. Yeah. We'll  
have to ghosts in our room. Yeah, wookies.  
This is a subject, adopt an object make  
a story.

He can definitely use a cleaning

Drawings and objects  
(i.e. books) as a means  
to account for the  
un-human matter



← for Setting Photos



Make print of chair &  
objects

analogues of images?



Valentine's Day  
1858

"The Esque. Where is the Esque located?  
Richard."

"I'll get down and see if I can find the  
stamp. No, it's gotta be creative!"

"He's all propped up now. Our child"

"I wouldn't go that far."

"We're adopting him"

off to the side: "Do I need to take all the door  
knobs in here?"

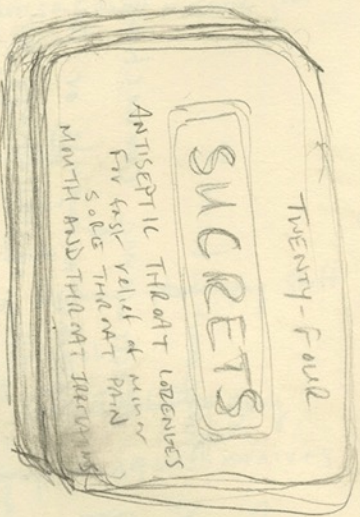


Concept 1: Can you converse with an object through not making?

Sub-concept: Objects carry with them  
 Spines → spines which connect  
 to our lives and carry memory

Associations

What does it mean to converse with an object?  
 I keep looking for the materials to tell  
 me something but not sure they are



I found myself thinking 1st about the person who had the object. Did you die? Why did we not keep anything?

Do they know everything away in nursing homes?

- But then I thought just about the lives, shapes, colors, and words of the object.

TWENTY-FOUR

SUCRETS

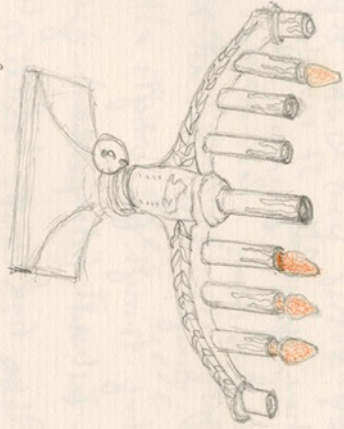
ANTISEPTIC THROAT LOZENGES

© 1931

Since 1931 450 million tons of SUCRETS have been sold. People can chronicle the era of the tin by the color and look (size, color of lettering, etc.)

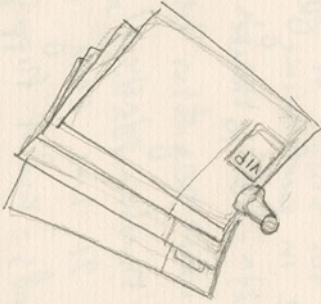
In the 1950s some of the British Crown Jewels were housed in a SUCRETS tin. The tins have long been put to use after the lozenges are gone.



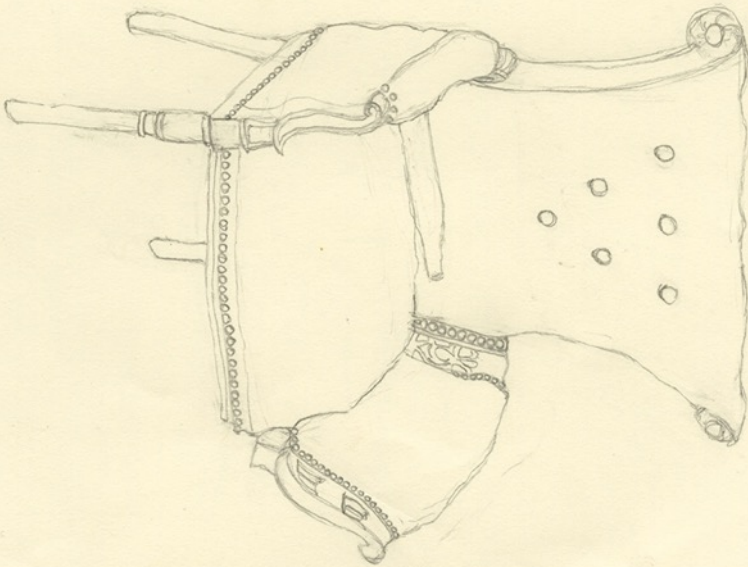


I didn't notice the drips before  
I started drawing

3:18 pm - 10.16.18 - Sitting with the objects



# VINYL MATERIAL FOR PRACTICE REPAIRS

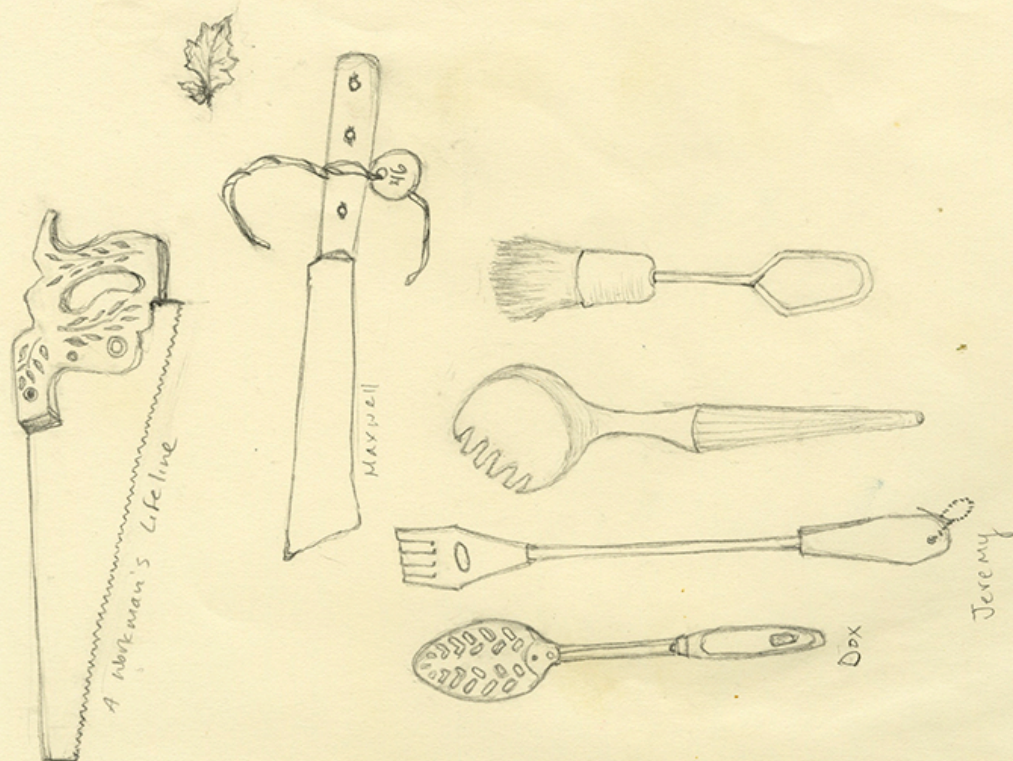


67. Dox

34. Jeremy

40. Maxwell

30. A Workman's Lifetime

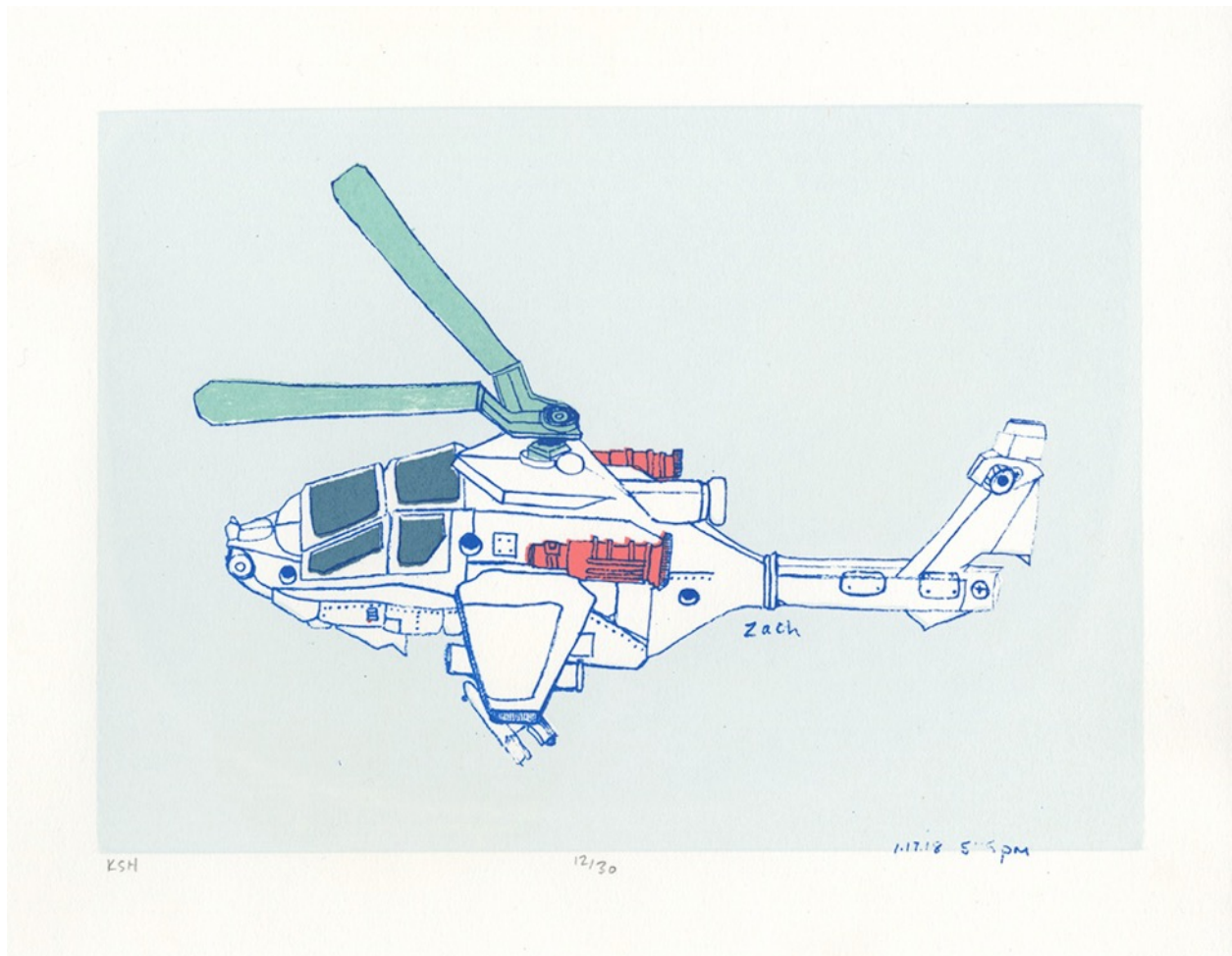






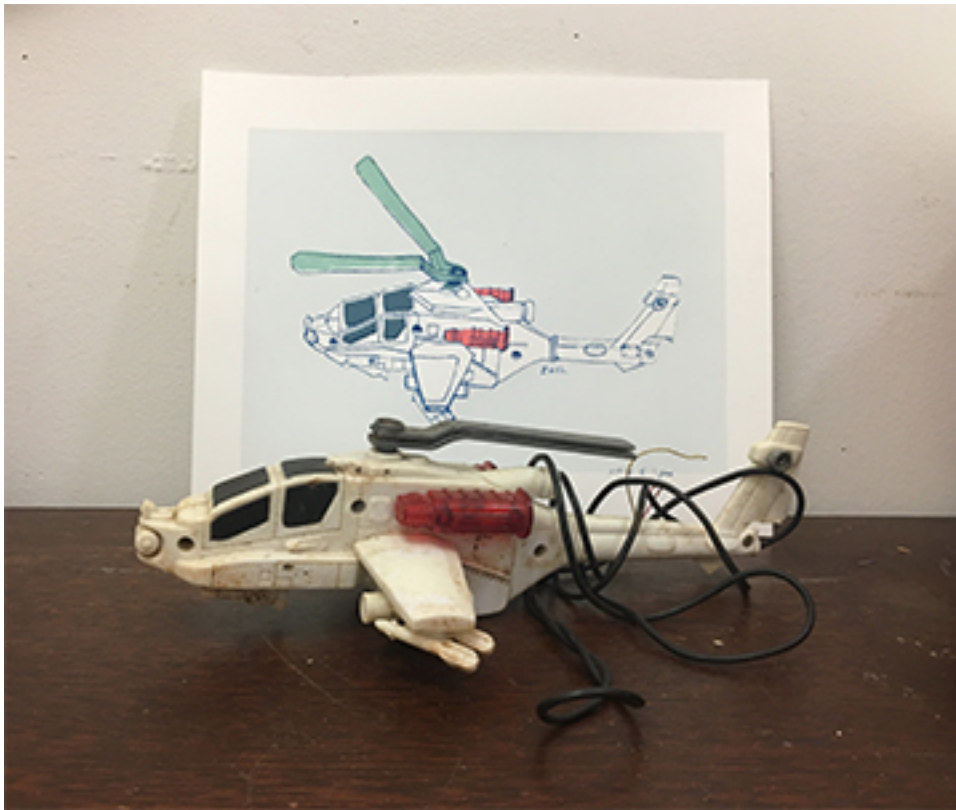


I later made a print of one of these drawings. The print served two roles. It was an entry into a print exchange at the University of Georgia, and an opportunity to reimagine Zach, playing with the colors or atmosphere it offered. With the print exchange, I wondered how this material would relate with others, outside the scope of my experiment. I saw this as an opportunity to extend the materials out, expanding the venues from which they may engage with other material bodies.



One of the finished prints hangs above my desk. I look at it often. Through our ongoing relationship I find it has enlivened. It seems to be floating in the air. Though the colors are not true to the plane, they have merged with my vision of the plastic form that sits on the shelf around the corner. They are both Zachary Stevens. The print has anchored me to the material of Zach, a knot

in the meshwork. I feel an attachment to this print and to the encounter from which it was born. This print may represent our shared space. It carries both the material of Zach as it presents to the world, and the material of my own experiences and imaginings as I relate with the material. In thinking of our exchange, I am reminded of an interview with artist Dryden Goodwin where he describes the process of drawing human beings. He comments, “But interestingly, the intensity always seemed heightened for both of us; we were both exposed and vulnerable” (Maslen and Southern, 2011, p.181).







In *Making: Anthropology, archeology, art, and architecture*, Ingold (2013) discusses reciprocity in the act of making. He prefers to think of making as a process of growth that stems from the relationship between materials, rather than a practitioner placing a form from their mind on the external world. With this, the maker is placed “from the outset as a participant in amongst a world of active materials” (p. 21), joining forces with the materials in the making process. He goes on to contend that even if a maker has a pre-conceived form in mind, it is not the form that creates the work but rather the “engagement with materials” (p. 22)



Making is a collaborative act. Like many collaborations, the process begins with an idea, usually driven by one of the collaborators. In being open to collaboration, this driving force must be willing to change course as the process unfolds.

I began to weave. Though the drive to weave came from my own life experience (a desire to learn to weave and the reality that soon I would graduate and lose access to the weaving studio), rather than the objects themselves, the merging of our life lines sparked a journey in visual mapping and mark making. The most meaningful elements of the process came in the avenues that I did not intend. Wondering what would happen if I made a cyanotype on my warp (the yarn that is threaded through the loom as a base for weaving), I embarked on an adventure of gathering cyanotype traces from objects on white thread that had been wound on a temporary hand loom. The initial experiment proved unsuccessful. After exposing the objects, I discovered that they did not take. The mixture was off, the pressure was insufficient, or some combination of factors. Whatever the cause, the objects were unclear. Much of the cyanotype blue washed out from the thread. What was left emerged as a beautiful remnant of the cyanotype process. The yarn had been dyed with shades of blue that faded in and out of the cream base thread. Rather than an image of the end result, it was a marker of the journey shared between myself, the objects, and these new materials introduced in the

realm of weaving. In my first failed attempt, I found a new method of dying that carried a sense of connection with the materials of this project.

I set out to purposefully dye another spool. While this was successful in many ways, it also worked differently. It was much lighter and could not be controlled by my hand. It required an openness to the direction determined by the material. In what ways would it accept the cyanotype blue and where would it reject it? Would it all wash out or only some? Were the chemicals to its liking or did they need to be remixed?

Intrigued by the act of making marks in such a way, I decided to rust dye more weft. With the rust dying, I felt that I could include the objects in the weaving process without simply illustrating them. From this, I felt they could physically and metaphorically be a part of a new woven piece. I went on to wrap the rusty polyurethane can, “Rusty can man” with wet cotton thread. I sprayed some vinegar to help the rust transfer to the yarn, wrapped it in a plastic bag, and let it go to work. Similar to the cyanotypes, the dyeing process did not take in many places, leaving a spotty end product. Yet the yarn also became softer and took on a slightly warmer hue. When woven into the warp it created a rhythmic or melodic pattern. It became a collaboration between the objects and myself in the dyeing.





I came into my studio today and the box with all the picture frames on it had fallen down. I thought, "I wonder what knocked it down?" An earthquake? Haha, probably not. Most of the frames had landed on the table, two on the floor beside the wooden frame and one a little farther out in the middle of the studio (face down). Mostly they were all face down, though miraculously they didn't really break. They were intact, even the ones on the floor. I picked them up and put them back on the shelf. Then, I got to the last one in the middle of the floor. I turned it over and sure enough, it was broken. It was the story "Zebra Slippers"

The little screen prints of the stories are inside the frames. The glass broke on this one frame. Then I wondered what happened? Was there a fight? Did the frame jump to its death? It triggered an imaginative spiral attempting to story the factors that caused this one frame to fall and break and not the others. I imagined a rumble. A jumping or shaking of the frames. An unresolvable quarrel. One that escalated to extreme heights.

Or possibly someone shook the wall and the poor frame was in the wrong place, at just the right (or wrong angle) and that was it.

The episode triggered a lot of thoughts about unseen movement and action. What caused this to fall when it did? When it has been relatively stable before, in a corner without much room to move in a cement building without a lot of things to move or shift. How much movement is happening below the radar. What slight motions add up or trigger a sequence or new movement/configuration?

*As we share the space together and our lines/threads/vibrations overlap, how might this non-human matter share its story?*

*An anecdote:* When I began the journey of conversing with Josephine I imagined creating a book of drawings and prints, pulling out elements from the basket and printing drawings of them in conjunction with questions, stories from the days in Philadelphia and contextual information such as facts about the materials or their places of origin. As I began working with the material, however, I found myself drawn to create paper and embed elements from within the box, recording surfaces and traces in the process. I am unable to pinpoint a specific point where I decided to do this or an external inspiration. What I remember is bringing the box into the papermaking studio, opening it on the silver table and looking at the materials at hand. As I made these sheets of paper, I did very little planning, working with improvisation instead. The box remained open beside me, the different colors of string, the plastic bag filled with buttons of all sorts (glass, plastic, quarter sized, tiny, bedazzled, or small metal clips), the bag of elastic, zippers still in their packaging, or a metal Sucrets tin with bits and bobs. Decisions of what to embed and in what combination were made in the moment—spontaneously—as specific materials called out. Much of the work came from a sense of experiment, “what would happen if I do this?”





Traces of Josephine, handmade  
book of handmade paper, found  
objects, box

### In a conversation with mattered bodies

*In this experiment where I am trying to also attend to the non-human matter, how do I receive and honor its influence?*

Discussing the materiality of mediums used in their early childhood education classrooms, Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind and Kocher (2017), too illustrate moments of collaboration with materials. As they describe,

In thinking about making, it would be a mistake to think these movements are sequential or continuous in a linear sense.... Instead, these movements are recursive, acting on each other in a continuous exchange back and forth. They reverberate and continue long after something is made. (p.27)

Making may be imagined as a form of wayfaring (Ingold, 2013), a journey without intended outcome, following the “flow” of the energy within and between matter as it moves and fluctuates. In this concept of wayfaring, the wayfarer is continually on the move and actively engaged with the materials and landscapes present. For Ingold, the wayfarer must also pause for rest. These pauses may be seen as moments of completion in artistic practice. As the page that hangs on the wall or the book that is bound. Pausing from the movement of making for a time. Yet, in perpetual movement, the wayfarer has no permanent destination, but acknowledges change and the influence of bodies in relation. From this perspective, making “is a question not of imposing form on matter, as in the so-called hylomorphic model of creation, but of intervening in the fields of force and flows of material wherein the forms of things arise and are sustained” (p. 178). Wayfaring invites an attentiveness to the energy of materials, human and non, and an opening to be with them in moments of pause and moments of making.

To work with the materials requires an attentiveness to what they may communicate. Davies (2014) presents the idea of “emergent listening,” which offers a means of opening up to “the ongoing possibility of coming to see life, and one’s relation to it, in new and surprising ways” (p.21). Emergent listening embraces uncertainty and allows for courses to shift and new knowledge to become through the relationship of listening. Emergent listening requires an opening to the “not-yet-known”, to the influences and movements of others, acknowledging the iterative acting and receiving of relational encounters. It further calls for a willingness to change or *become* through the process.

Connected to acts of making, I imagine “emergent listening” to be performed through an embodied attentiveness. Through the hand, I touch the materials. I feel the ridges of dried dirt on the surface or the contours of rough string and smooth plastic on wet paper pulp. I smell the fragrance of earth awakened by water as both string and object are saturated together in the act of rust dye. I see the shapes of light as they reflect off of glass objects while they wait to leave their mark in the process of a cyanotype. I focus on the colors and shapes of the landscapes in which these installations have lived in order to isolate and weave their likeness, mapping the installation scapes as they fold in together.

The body and material are connected through these senses. As Powell (2015) describes, in reference to Garoian’s notions of embodiment in art and research, “art, he reminds us, is of the flesh, interconnected with materiality and practice” (p.530). In my experiments, hand and eye engage with paper, object and pencil in the act of drawing. As I sit on the floor to gather objects, hold them or connect them with other materials, I feel the sensation of folded legs that begin to tire, the cold of my concrete studio floor pressed against my body. Attentiveness to these sensations fades in and out

as other sensations take precedence. I am distracted from the cold on my legs as I marvel at the rhythmic copper patterned printed on weft yarn and the faint smell of vinegar embedded in the fibers through the process. Speaking specifically on drawing, Ingold (2013) writes:

it is not as though the hand, in drawing, gradually empties out what first fills the head, such that the entire composition slides like a transfer from mind to paper; rather both hand and head are together complicity throughout in the work's unceasing generation. (127)

While drawing, I zone in on the fabricated “wax” drops formed on the plastic, electric menorah. Focusing on these details and the relationship of hand to paper to object, I lose sense of the space around me for a time. My focus shifts between cognizance of my hand moving across the page, working out the shape and curve of the lines, and visions of my mother's samovar, a vessel for tea, carried by Jewish ancestors, brought to port in New York City generations ago.

Such an embodied attentiveness to the research materials opens up lines of communication beyond written and spoken. It creates openings for visual, textural, auditory or olfactory lines to weave into the meshwork. As Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) describe, thinking, and this case making is relational, it happens “in-between” bodies and agents during an encounter.

I recall sitting outside with a woven I had created from textural representations of materials found in Philadelphia. I sat on a stone wall outside the University of Georgia fabric studios on a Fall day. The sun was out and there was a light breeze. The temperature was likely in the 60s. I sat on the stone wall with the woven piece and a booklet of matches that returned with me from Philadelphia.





### In my journal I wrote:

Sitting outside burning elements of the fabric (woven) with the matches from the matchbook I found in the dump - they were too old or wet or both to light when I struck the matchbook, but I lit them with a lighter. They would burn a bit and appear to go out, but then, I would move them, and the flame would live - coloring the threads of the woven sandy browns. We danced across the woven like this until it finally went out. I tried to record the flames and residual smoke, but the match would not cooperate. All that remained in my recording was the blackened shard of the stick.

I loved being outside with these materials, hearing the squirrels chase each other in the dead leaves that cloak the wooded area of Lily Branch, and the cars go by and feel the wind on my face, or the joy in looking for rocks to weigh down my films as I test cyanotypes in the late afternoon sun.





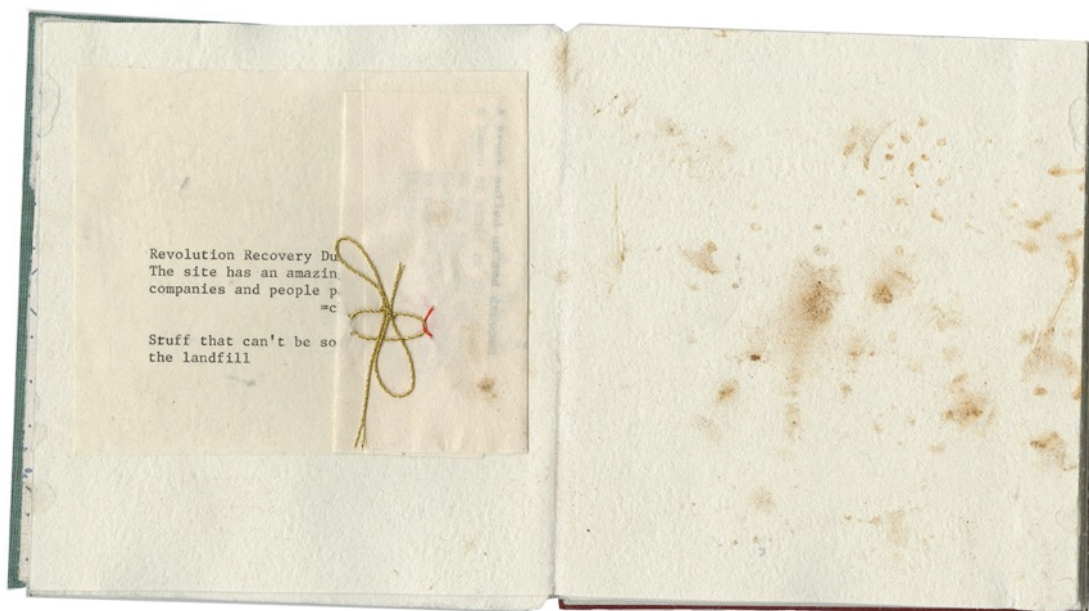
The matches, fabric and I experimented with the result of lighting bits of the woven on fire. I peeled the matches from the book and lit them with a long handled lighter, the plastic wands you might use to light a grill. The matches ignited with fire. Placed on the woven, they shifted the color of fibers and danced around the woven. The fire would appear to go out, but would reemerge as the match was moved, even slightly to a new position. The wind blew on me and, on the matches, playing a role in the life span of the flame. As I sat in the sun with this woven, these matches and lighter, I thought about how beautiful the colors were in the late afternoon light reflecting off of a shimmer in the warp thread. I thought about how nice it was to be outside and feel the breeze on my face. To escape the cold of my air-conditioned studio, over which I have no control and sit beside the small wooded area behind the art school. While I worked, the smell grass and trees intermingled with the sulfur in the match and the burning threads as they altered form. The sensations reached multiple parts of my body and extended into the body of other materials present. The flames of the matches responded to my movements as I responded to their actions. The marks we created developed in collaboration, cataloging our reciprocal movements.

This act of embodied attentiveness enables a diffractive analysis of the research material (Barad, 2007). A diffractive reading looks for “events of activities and encounters, evoking transformation and change in the performative agents involved” (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 535). For Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010), “A diffractive ‘reading’ is thus not a reading of a photograph as in the taken-for-granted understanding, but a reading with the photograph in your encounter with it. In this event something new is created with the data” (P. 537). In such a reading, the researcher and researched oscillate as agents and recipients of influence. This diffractive reading

honors the influence of the research material on the research-scape and the researcher, inviting the researcher to join with the materials in a process of exploration.

In spending time with the materials of this project, I become aware of the different roles they played. Like a work or sports team, the different participants possess certain strengths or attributes that define the movements they enact. Rusty Can Man facilitates the process of dying yarn. The iron drawer pulls with their sculptured curvature, Zach Stephens with its contoured body and the glass bottle, Hope Returned, with its reflective capacity lend themselves to the work of a cyanotype, suggesting marks that are intriguing as through their familiar forms that may also distort in the process to offer new pathways and associations.

The materials that are no longer present invite processes that can be engaged at a distance. From a photograph, I may connect with Chip the tea pot or Popsicle's Menorah, drawing and printing their forms in acts that both catalogue and re-imagining as they enter into new configurations. Colors are changed; scenes are built. The notes and moments recorded from the different experiences invite their own engagement. Through the process of bookmaking I am able to narrow in on snippets and moments. Utilizing a typewriter, I found in surplus, I engage in an act of reading the materials through typing passages that call to me. I have a small book I made. It is an accordion book, made from the paper sheets formed from the cloth sheets used in our display at the Science Library. I call this book my improvisation book. In this book, I work with the materials in as free a way as I can muster. I strive to not overthink my acts but just to act. Worrying not about the consequences. This book is a compilation of moments with the materials. Similar to a visual verbal journal, it meanders between words, marks and visual representations.



I opened the plastic bag with the vinyl for the first time yesterday. It revealed a selection of bright colors - red, orange, blue, black - I had thought they were all red! As I was feeling through the vinyl a typed instruction sheet fell out for performing vinyl repairs. It was like finding a hidden letter or treasure. I noticed the textures in the vinyl when I pulled them out of the bag - the black had a particularly visible texture. The blue had a couple of strange holes.

Likely an exercise in performing the repair. The instructions said to make a hole and then practice repairing it.

The vinyl had a strange smell  
Plasticky/rubbery

And interesting texture. It was easy to roll around in my hands. Kind of floppy and you could feel the texture. The black was the roughest.

I laid the squares out on the floor in different color variations. At first, I was excited by the colors and possibilities, but there weren't that many squares and they were quite big. I made texture rubbings of the blue and black squares, in blue and black pencil.

The edges were rough so I cut them out.

Then I cut them into smaller squares and glued them into my "intuitive" book (the accordion one). They looked like landscapes.

I've been trying to figure out how to listen to you objects. But, also...if everything is relational, am I a conduit or a collaborator?

Personal Journal Excerpts



The clear plastic bag with a red square of vinyl had been in my studio, hanging on a thumbtack for months, but I had never opened it. Sitting with the objects, I was compelled to look inside the bag. I was overwhelmed with surprise when I found 8 squares of different colors, each equally vibrant. There wasn't just a red square, but two oranges, two blues and a black. They carried a plastic smell, and each had its own surface texture and pattern. Rubbing my hands across the surface, I could feel their different fingerprints. Their unique make up. In this embodied attentiveness, their fragrance pervaded my nose and our fingerprints inter mingled. I was inspired to rub these patterns on tracing paper. Using colored pencils similar to their colored surfaces I rubbed across the square. With a shallow relief, the patterns were not crisp, but they carried the marks of the materials. Staying with these materials, I opened my improvisational book and held them in my hands. I found the movement to cut the tracings into smaller squares and arrange these small squares on the page. To me, the collages both represented the vinyl squares but also gave a sense of more organic forms. Perhaps a beach on a dreary, grey day.

The interest in surface carried over to rubbings of Colleen, The Creature Comforts Can, a flattened beer can. In contrast to the subtle, quite marks of the vinyl, the rubbings of Colleen felt wild and frenetic. They danced across the can, hugging the contours of the form, but little other likeness. I performed a series of 9 rubbings of Colleen. Six were of the front and three of the back. Each time the marks travelled in new ways across the page. Perhaps the variations in the marks represented the shifts and changes that happen as the material reconfigures in each movement, or the spaces where I had deposited parts of myself onto Colleen and Colleen onto me.

These rubbings exist as process. Rather than finished works to be displayed, they offer additional moment of joining—physically and mentally connecting with this other than human

participant through an embodied attentiveness. In these acts, aspects of the material shine through. The marks extracted represent the folds and bends of its flattened form. The strokes capture the vitality of the material. They illustrate an inner dance, inviting a question of what is the material made up of? Not just thinking of aluminum, but historically and energetically? How many fingers entangled with it, or clumps of dirt, or currents of water? Was it entangled with a fish or caught in a mower? From where did it travel to be found in Tanyard Creek?



From these encounters or intra-actions, I wonder what material is carried in this embodied encounter? What imprints are made on my body or deep in my wells of experience that have not yet emerged in verbal or visual thoughts? What is carried through this encounter, to be held in the meshwork with the possibility of surfacing at another time?

I have repeatedly asked myself, why make? Is it necessary to this research process? While the question of necessity may too fraught to sufficiently answer, in a simplified version, I would say yes.

Making is necessary in the sense that it creates openings for the materials to continue to participate in the research. It invites their continued active engagement. One could argue, that even as passive participants they are contributing to the research, but through the making process they are invited to engage physically, to mediate courses of action and to lead or influence movements.

My questions then shift away from what the action is doing towards questioning what is left out without these actions? What ways would the voices of these materials be minimized if the openings to communicate across multiple sensory faculties were not afforded?

In *Making*, Ingold (2013) discusses the unfolding of creation in a collaborative or reciprocal relationship. The outcome of my own studio experiments regularly travelled far off the intended courses I had laid out for myself. In each iteration of “making,” as much as I tried not to, I began with an intended outcome. I planned to create a “book,” or a print, or a rectangular white woven piece upon which I would print or capture trace images of my object co-conspirators. In reality, none of these ideas came to life in the manner I intended. In the same way that my handmade paper sheets carry traces of the different materials, the visual explorations carry traces of my intended destinations. A map has been woven, though in the process of weaving it has taken on a different footprint. Through the act of being with the different materials of this research, new colors and forms of manipulating the weft and warp emerged. The light turquoise of the failed cyanotype or rhythmic variety of copper coloring left from the rust dying were not accounted for in my original ideas because they did not exist in my repertoire of possibilities. They emerged from and with the materials at hand.















## Chapter 6: List of figures (in order of appearance):

Figure 61: Traces of Josephine (Digital Book) 124-137	
Figure 62: Making Paper with Josephine.....	138
Figure 63: Traces of Josephine Artist Book.....	140
Figure 64: Research Journal #1 (Digital Book) .....	143-150
Figure 65: 1.12.18 5:15 PM.....	151
Figure 66: Zachary Stevens .....	152
Figure 67: Cyanotype Traces.....	153
Figure 68: Weaving Detail .....	154
Figure 69: Objects in Author's Studio .....	156
Figure 70: Traces of Josephine Artist Book and Box of Collected Items .....	158
Figure 71: Weaving and Matches Collaborate .....	162
Figure 72: Marks from Matches on Author's .....	162
Figure 73: Match Dances Across Woven .....	162
Figure 74: Improvisation Book Detail .....	165
Figure 75: Improvisation Book.....	165
Figure 76: Colleen the Creature Comforts Can Rubbing .....	168
Figure 77: Performing Inquiry Through Weaving (Digital Book) .....	170-173





What may come of these moments of attentiveness?

“We are vital materiality and we are surrounded by it, though we do not always see it that way. The ethical task at hand here is to cultivate the ability to discern non-human vitality, to become perceptually open to it” (Bennett, 2010, p.14).

This call to be open to the vitality of matter has been a guiding force throughout this project. The material configurations have offered signs of movements or becomings, traces left in their varying forms—those that leave marks and those that invite further wandering, journeying, moving, entangling, entwining and unfolding.

With every iteration of the Athens Home for Discarded Objects I have thought “this is it. This is the end. The project has run its course.” And then I am called back by something; sometimes a reflection by an anonymous student on the meaning they have gleaned from the exhibition, or a re-reading of a sweet story about a frisbee finding its way. Other times, it comes as a drive to create a print; a request to create another installation; or a feeling of enchantment with the objects around me. In these moments, there is a feeling that this work is inviting shifts and transformations that may not always be obvious or visible but vibrate along the varied lines of the meshwork.

When I began this work, my questions inquired into what is produced in these interventionist, arts-based, material configurations and what becomes through them?

In the process, I gathered written stories for 134 objects. Additional stories were spoken but not recorded, and others were imagined but not yet shared in visual or verbal ways. Many object-participants went on to live with human companions, who sent messages and photographs of their new configurations. Letter and Bill Holder has been painted and hangs on a wall, holding bits

and pieces of other life matter. Dox, a slated spoon cooks meals for homeless youth in Florida. Other matter went on to unknown places, or lives in my studio, continuing to intra-act as it produces and receives movements.



Fig.78 Dox the Slated Spoon, Photograph by workshop participant.



Fig. 79 Letter and Bill Holder and Pope at Dear Discarded Object What's Your Story, Philadelphia, PA.

At times matter follows an expected course, moving in ways we might recognize or imagine. Other times it may carve new paths. Speaking specifically on electricity, Bennett (2010) adds that “electricity sometimes goes where we send it, and sometimes chooses its path on the spot, in response to the other bodies it encounters and the surprising opportunities for actions and interactions that they afford” (p.28). These changes or unexpected trajectories are evidence that the meshwork is active as each mattered body contributes its own pulse or vibration (Bennett, 2010).

Born from and situated within the meshwork—the configuration of lines that carry the experiences and histories of mattered bodies—the installations of this experiment also carved unique trajectories. Some unfolded as imagined: stories were shared, participants detoured from their planned courses to engage in the configuration of materials we initiated. Others arose from and through the configurations. Each iteration and movement of this project was relational, responding to invitations received or questions formed through engagement with portions of the project. A pre-

determined course was not possible as there were regularly changing variables. There was no way to know who would stop and who would not. What materials would vibrate, and which ones would opt out of these engagements. What lines they might share and where their encounters could spark new or unexpected turns, knots or becomings.

The three installations were invitations to see matter differently. For Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005), pedagogy is intertwined with being continuously and “radically” in relation to the world. The temporary configurations of these installations created the space to relate intimately with materials of the world, to be in relation with material bodies that had been overlooked or discarded. They offered moments of pause for selected matter to intra-act, carving the space for them to become together. This selected matter focused attention on human made objects that had been “consumed” in a market-based sense, making visible unexpected, forgotten, or not-yet-known ways their stories influenced and overlapped with those of human matter in a given locale.

Through these configurations, the Athens Home for Discarded Objects became the conditions of possibility for matter to entangle, for such stories to run beside or within one another. A condition of possibility is often viewed as a necessary framework for something to happen, the collection of factors that make a given outcome possible. In this work, I further consider conditions of possibility as openings of potentiality. As movements that open space for “something” to happen. A something that is regularly becoming in relation to contextual configurations and intra-actions and makes itself known through these becomings.

As spaces for embracing unknowns, these sites also become the conditions of possibility for pedagogical encounters. A pedagogical encounter may be defined as an experience that move. For jagodzinski and Wallin (2013),



such an encounter should not be thought as meeting between two constituted identities or wholes in dialogue or communicable exchange; rather as a field of effects from which the creation of something new and unforeseen has yet to be determined. (p.35)

A pedagogical encounter is open and curious. It honors an exchange between active and vibrant matter through listening and paying attention to the influences such vibrant matter may bring. As a moving experience, such an encounter looks for the “not yet known,” forcing matter out of the habitual to present new possibility. Such an encounter offers a “way of seeing the world differently” (O’Sullivan, 2006, p.1) that is interested in what might emerge from “unexpected relations,” and “transversal connections” (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind & Kocher, 2017, p.36). Returning to Ellsworth (2005), a pedagogical encounter may then awaken the senses and promote discovery, striving for learning or becoming that may not be known at the outset but emerges through the process.

Though I had not yet defined it in such a way, these installations were built from my own interest in such encounters. More than offering a lesson, I was interested in exploring what might happen through the relational engagements of different matter: human, object, outdoor public space. I was curious about this idea of “meeting” not as a conference of separate bodies but as a means for matter to connect and intermingle. Physically, I envisioned space for human and other to spend time with one another from a place of discovery rather than a sense of knowing. I wondered, *what might happen if our relationships or understandings of matter were challenged through an encounter that invited a potentially new or different way of being with such material?* In this sense, I envisioned these installations as “anomalous sites of learning” which utilize non-traditional learning sites or

disrupt normative environments to encourage wonder, discovery, exploration, and collisions with unfamiliar bodies or ideas (Ellsworth, 2005).

Engagement in these installations called for an openness on the part of participants, both human and non. It required an openness to the potential and possibility present and a willingness to explore with other matter in this relational space. In their account of experimenting with materials in early-childhood education Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind and Kocher (2017) describe similar acts of *being with* charcoal

Charcoal is a thing: a stick of compressed burned wood. But it is also a continuum, a story, an event, a happening, a doing. We are interested in charcoalness, the expression and experience of charcoal in the encounter: always in process, always becoming charcoal (p.34).

In this description, there is a sense of the relational nature of the encounter. Though the charcoal is used as a compressed stick, it is also recognized as a force that extends beyond the form of the stick and shifts with the encounter. *Being with* the charcoal, Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, Kocher and their students attended to it in its many forms. Recognizing it as matter that moves, affects, and has stories to share. In the space where human participants came together with object-participants, they also attended to one another an act of *being with*. In their acts of attentiveness, they were open to one another; open to watch, listen, feel, sense and receive what the other might have to share. Physically being with the objects through touching, observing, and smelling, opened space for Ellsworth's (2005) awakening of senses, both for participants as they crafted stories together, and myself as I entangled with objects through artistic practice. Through the senses, matter passes and shares, creating new stories and mattered configurations, suggesting ways that artful approaches to

being with matter—human and beyond— may become sites of anomalous learning and moving experiences.

O’Sullivan (2006) further describes a pedagogical encounter as an invitation to think, question and challenge. The Athens Home installation series purposefully invited participants to question and consider. Moving around one of the installation sites, their questions might have begun by considering attributes of the materials around them. *Where did they come from? How did they get there? What events led to their place in one of these installations?* As a human participant spent more time with a particular object participant, their questions might have expanded to consider potential relationships, geographies and line scapes (maps of lines forged by the matters’ unique movements), wondering: *With what other matter had this material connected? What configurations had it been a part of? What journeys had it followed, or paths traversed?* From there, questions might have expanded to include subjects beyond the immediate configuration. Perhaps bringing participants to wonder on ideas like materiality, assumption, value, energy, connection, memory, place, making, scavenging, or discovering— mimicking the course of lines that branch out from the meshwork and venture into the unknown.

Such moments of attentive questioning’ align with notions of wonder. Wonder may have precipitated participant entry into the space. Curious about what was happening before them, participants might have wondered: *why have these objects been collected in this way in this space? What is it to “adopt” an object? Why are people sitting and writing with something that looks “broken,” caked in dirt, missing a leg or growing moss?*

Being with and attending to the materials, their stories may have further grown and unfolded through a sense of wonder. Such wonder may have manifested as curiosity about the unknowns,

about the life paths of the matter before them; about a given mark, color, bruise or dent on the form. Opening to wonder may have also led to musings on possibilities both realistic and fanciful: *was this bottle closely connected to French royalty? Was it influential in the development of a prominent art movement? Did this frisbee travel the world after falling in the Ocean?*

Perhaps their wondering orbited around closer connections: *was this the can that was cast away at the party last weekend? Did this hub cap come off of a truck in South Georgia? What ways might this material connect to my own movements and experiences?*

In pedagogical encounters such as these, the act of wondering allows for possibility. It plays with questioning, rather than settling on answers or outside knowledge. It promotes thinking without determined outcome. For ecologist and writer Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (2015), curiosity is the “first requirement of collaborative survival in precarious times” (p.2). Curiosity and wonder invite participation into entanglements with unfamiliar matter or ideas; they prompt entry into configurations that produce new types of intra-actions. Moments of attentiveness, fueled by wonder, may then help to re-animate connections to the many intriguing, beautiful and varied sensations of the world around.

As the lines of different matter touch and wrap around one another, wonder may soon turn to enchantment. Bennett (2001) describes enchantment as an act of assenting wholeheartedly to life, to the experience of living itself. To assent wholeheartedly to life involves opening up to the mysteries and energies present. From this, to be enchanted by something implies being awakened to its movements and presence.

Such enchantment manifests in a “mood of intense and lively engagement with the world” (Bennett, 2001, p.111). The connected and present feeling of enchantment may be synonymous



with Ingold's (2011) "astonishment" which involves awakening to the energy and flow of the earth. For him, astonishment is "the sense of wonder that comes from riding the crest of the world's continued birth" (p. 74).

After the Science Library opening, I spoke with a friend who had attended the event and adopted an object. The conversation was informal and took place in the corner of a local restaurant. Amidst the buzz of this space she spoke of her experience adopting an object. Initially, she thought the exercise was a little silly, maybe even corny. But as she sat with the object and began writing she described a shift. She became immersed, finding herself looking up historical references to situate the story, building a character from the object's shape as a wheel and her own stories, experiences, and learning. In her informal account, she described an unexpected investment in the creation of this story (personal correspondence, October 2017).

In cases like this, enchantment may build slowly. The space of being with the matter invites attentiveness—a pause—which allows other feelings to become. Feelings like curiosity, humor, connection or sentiment. Enchantment may then be the catalyst to a shift. As one becomes enchanted, the object of enchantment earns new status or purchase in our life-matter compositions.

The word enchantment implies being delighted or taken with something, even falling under a spell—succumbing to its magic. I wonder, then, what a world would look like that embraced being captivated by the magic of other matter? Matter beyond human configurations? What might become if we were to let that magic carry us away for a time, to unexpected terrain?

"Somehow the attentiveness expressed a kind of respect, even nurturing being, as if evidence of an attempt at genuine connectivity" (Artist Dryden Goodwin speaks on acts of drawing strangers. Maslen & Southern, 2011, p.181).

*Addressing the Anthropocene*

“Particular possibilities for acting exist at every moment, and these changing possibilities entail a responsibility to intervene in the world’s becoming, to contest and rework what matters and what is excluded from mattering” (Barad, 2003, p.827).

Conceptually and pedagogically, the work of these installations honors a responsibility to care for the “world’s becoming” (Barad, 2003, p.827). In his *The Three Ecologies*, Guattari (2000) attributes contemporary ecological problems to not just environmental destruction, but also mental and social breakdowns, where kinship networks have been reduced to almost nothing and “domestic life is being poisoned by the gangrene of mass-media consumption” (p.27). He attests, that in-order to return to richer and more connected human relationships, we must also pursue more ecological and sustainable relationships with nonhuman material. With this, he claims that ecological problems are as much about culture and psychology as they are about watershed management or environmental activism (as cited in Bennett, 2010).

The breakdown of kinship networks may stem from a practice of “othering,” fueled by social and ecological discourses marked by metaphors of difference and separation (Bertling, 2015, p. 2). In *Mushroom at the End of the World*, Tsing (2015) describes,

there is one connection between economy and environment that seems important to introduce up front: the history of the human concentration of wealth through making both humans and nonhumans into resources for investment. This history has inspired investors to imbue both people and things with alienation, that is, the ability to stand alone, as if the entanglements of living did not matter. Through alienation, people and things become mobile assets; they can be removed from their life. (p.5)

Enchantment, in the way Bennett (2001) describes may help to re-awaken appreciation for the kinship web of life. A feeling of enchantment may open a space for connection that fills the gap of separation imparted by discourses of othering. With this work, the feelings of enchantment formed through curious attentiveness engendered compassionate ways of being with varied matter, human and beyond. This form of attentiveness through “adopting” an object acts almost as a form of conversation, where listening and sharing are reciprocal. Building from Freire’s (1970) critical stance on the equalizing potential of listening and sharing, this “conversing” with material invites a shift in hierarchical notions of matter based on productive value or “othering”. As Bennett (2010) contends,

if matter itself is lively, then not only is the difference between subjects and objects minimized, but the status of the shared materiality of all things is elevated. All bodies become more than mere objects, as the thing-powers of resistance and protean agency are brought into sharper relief. (p.13)

Through attentiveness, the movements of these installations invited relations of care between different mattered bodies. To be attentive requires a pause, a “being with” other matter in moments of “emergent listening.” Such acts honor and respond to the experiences and contributions of other bodies present in the configuration. In this way, attentiveness and care are intertwined. Care may be considered a purposeful attention to and responding to the needs or vibrations of material bodies.

Attending to the object matter through storytelling invites an empathic way of being with matter that may extend beyond the objects of these installations to guide ways of being with other human, animal and environmental matter as well. Gray (2015) describes empathy as “the practice of putting oneself in another person’s position; getting curious, imagining, or recalling/observing

personal events that promote understanding the other's point of view" (p. 53). The act of imagining provides openings to experience different perspectives and modes of being (Greene, 1995a). To extend this opening to non-human matter may help to expand the idea of kinship beyond the confines of family, community, or even human matter. Our kinship may instead be visualized through the meshwork that holds the layered lifelines of matter together in an overlapping and collaborative system. In such a knotted and interconnected world, "to harm one section of the web may very well be to harm oneself" (Bennett, 2010, p.13).

An awakening to these interconnections through attentiveness and imagination challenges humancentric views that exploit and deplete. As they challenge the primacy of human matter, these compassionate acts towards objects of discard also bring ideas of hierarchy and "value" into question, bringing to light where certain matter benefits from value structures and what matter defines such structures. In promoting care for matter such as the "trash" of these configurations, these artful interventions present entry points for more sustainable systems; turning away from systems that discriminate, oppress, or discard based on ideas of separation and difference.

In 1987, The World Commission on Environment and Development defined sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Portney, 2015, p.4). Originally written from an economic perspective, the basic premise of this is that the Earth's resources cannot be used and depleted indefinitely. Portney (2015) adds that, "not only will these resources run out at some point, but their exploitation actually undermines the ability of life to persist and thrive" (p.4). Sustainability has historically focused on the three e's: environment, economics and equity. In order for long term sustainability to be



achieved, all three areas must work in equal measure. No area should be sacrificed to the benefit of the other.

In an interconnected world, the beyond human matter (plant, animal, object, rock) also contribute to the balance of systems. Exploitation of non-human matter leads to inequities for human matter such as lack of access to clean water, depleted farm land, or rising sea temperatures that ultimately challenge economic, environmental and social health for all. Considering non-human or human produced material objects as vibrant matter with stories and agency may then help reshape ideas of “resource” and “good” in pursuit of more equitable and balanced relationships between environment, economics, and equity.

Concerning sustainability driven pedagogy, Garoian (2012) proposes adoption of an inter-species approach that honors interconnections between plant, animal and human. While such an approach may help to re-conceptualize the human-centric pyramid, it may fail to address resource use and consumption of what are deemed “inanimate” objects. Inter-species may then be expanded to become an inter-matter approach, which honors the interconnections of all matter as important elements of a world in formation. An inter-matter approach envisions respectful and compassionate engagement with materials that have historically been viewed as inert or prime for consumption, as well as matter considered “living” in a biological sense.

### *Artful Engagement*

“When I work with a leaf, rock, stick, it is not just the material itself, it is an opening into the process of life within and around it...I’m not an artist born full of things I want to express. I’m empty, hungry, wanting to know more...my art is a way of learning in which instincts guide best...I need the shock of touch, the resistance of place, materials and weather...It is a collaboration, a meeting point between my own and earth’s nature. (Andy Goldsworthy in Friedman and Goldsworthy, 1990, p.23)

The installations of this dissertation were designed as works of art. Building off of the work of artists such as Kaprow, Situationist International, Mark Dion and contemporary works of socially-engaged practice, these installations required participation and engagement with daily materials in order to be fully realized (Bourriaud, 1998). Beyond being participatory, these works were designed to be experiences that produced shifts, movements or re-mattering. In line with Donal O'Donoghue's (2015) "turn to experience", they were born from a belief that "participation activates a shift in the one who experiences at the moment of experiencing, with the result that one is made different or becomes other than one was prior to participation" (p. 104). As experience producing works of art, they live as both contemporary art practice and spaces for arts education.

In their invitations to engage with materials bodily and imaginatively, these installations created space to explore materiality, sensation, visual marks, narrative, felt "knowings," wonder, and discovery. Like Goldsworthy (1990) described in his own practice, they fostered openings into the "process of life within and around it." In their movements, these installations offered opportunities for participants to discover avenues of social practice in contemporary art, and to participate in artful acts that seek imagination, material engagement, re-configuring and playing.

In these invitations to engage, works such as these also invite us to rethink what may be defined as educational space. They bring the arts pedagogy out into public sites, inviting "involuntary" (Ellsworth, 2005) or "unexpected" engagement. The sites in this project focused on narrative and material connection, but they could expand to include other avenues of engagement such as drawing, printmaking, or multisensory exploration. Future iterations could invite more direct "making" with objects, opening space to collaborate with materials in an embodied

attentiveness. Or, they could incorporate new designs and materials to address other issues of concern.

Parallel to their spaces as apparatuses of research, participatory installations such as these may also envisioned as apparatuses of learning, responding and re-configuring to the materials of a given setting in in purposeful acts of being there. In their responsiveness they may move and shift to meet the needs of neighborhoods, populations, and environments, responding to each site's corresponding materials, ideas, and discourses.

In their spaces of movement, these works may embody Garoian's (2012) "processual art education" where research and practice through the arts does not end with a lesson, project, or disciplinary boundary but continues to engage and expand as new relations are encountered. Moving to new sites, "popping-up" temporarily, these works can reach varied audiences, creating opportunities to engage participants "unknowingly" in art practice as they enter scenarios and begin to engage. In this way, they may "re-ignite the imaginative capacity," (Greene, 1995) or offer new ways for participants to think of and engage with their creative practice. Built around the materials and ideas of a given places, they also create space for engaging wide-audiences in "thinking," "questioning," and "challenging" (O'Sullivan, 2006) contemporary socio-political views of matter and being.

Connecting with more formal educational settings, such works further offer extended avenues for designing curriculum. They may serve as curricular starting points, inviting students or participants to create their own configurations. As arts educator Jack Watson describes, (2012), "strategies for artmaking that are active and socially engaged enable students to make use of the

methods of communication that they already possess but feel disempowered to use” (p.34). They expand creative media to include place, relationships, and participation.

Additionally, the principles of interventionist art—temporary configurations of unusual or untraditional materials in unexpected places with invitations to playfully engage—may guide experiments in classroom-based pedagogy. Utilizing these ideas, we might ask, “what would a classroom session look like if it were approached as an intervention? What might happen if a day’s instruction involved bringing in a variety of materials and invited explorations or encounters between students, materials, places or ideas? How might such class sessions enable unexpected or unplanned trajectories? In what ways might students participate in the development or implementation of such classroom interventions?

### *Moving Matter, Moving Pedagogy*

This project began as a form of public pedagogy aimed at question beliefs systems that perpetuate socially and environmentally destructive perceptions of value and matter. The environments of the installations were chosen as a means to reach wide audiences; to open space for unexpected intra-actions and unsettle or decenter normalized/normalizing practices. These acts were designed to intervene in public space as a means of provocation and participation (Miles, 2004).

For Desai and Darts (2016), interventionist practices hold pedagogical value by raising questions and offering information. The Athens Home for Discarded Objects sequence engaged in both of these practices. It created space for relational encounters that could lead where they may, and it commented on practices that are often overlooked or shielded from daily views. Practices of “throwing out” or discarding the materials of our lives, which sometimes escape containments of waste systems to embed in other landscapes, like rivers, roadways, boulevards, or backyards. In



reference to historical and metaphorical associations of garbage, Scanlan (2005) describes the abundance and invisibility of garbage present in contemporary social configurations. He attributes the idea of “garbage” to “a human propensity for differentiation (a complicated way of saying we choose or accept something whilst rejecting something else) that inaugurates a lifetime of cutting off, disconnection and removal” (p.13). These activities become the marker for what is worthy and valuable and what is not.

The Athens Home for Discarded Objects series brought “discarded” objects back into the visible, also bringing the question of their worth and value back into view. As a means of “informing,” the laying out of objects was designed to illustrate the abundance and variety of materials that had been “trashed.” When participants entered the configuration, I shared with them the locations—local rivers and roadways—where these objects had been found. Further illuminating discard practices that may devalue both the objects and local ecological systems.

As interventionist practices, these installations may fall short. Much of the literature on artistic interventions speaks to an improvisatory or unsanctioned quality. Interventions are often embedded in public spaces without permission as a means of igniting civic engagement and challenging systems that may govern public movements and geographies. The Athens Home for Discarded Objects was not as politically charged as the interventions described by Desai and Darts (2016) Pinder (2008) or Dawkins and Loftus (2015). Commissioned as a part of larger events, they were not guerilla acts. In each iteration, we had permission to be in the place and to use the materials for a time. With this in mind, I wonder what might become in sites that exhibited a wider range of public venues? What might become in a space that is not connected to a sustainability related event or educational institution? Who might be reached or invited to engage that has not been invited in

these venues? How might participants respond on a Saturday afternoon in downtown Atlanta or amidst the configuration of a car show, the central square of a small town or in the scope of a national park? Each of these landscapes offers a new set of potentials, a new set of relations and contextual possibilities. While place has not been a focus of this discussion, that does not downplay its significance in the configuration. The matter of place is also active, participating in the entanglements. As active matter, it invites deeper attention in future work.

Though sanctioned, the Athens Home installations still fought to challenge and even slow down generalized movements through space by fostering moments of attentiveness. The three installations were designed to be artful tactics, intervening in the quotidian movements of public spaces in order to play with social, political and economic ideas (de Certeau, 1984; Richardson, 2010). As Desai and Darts (2016) contest, public spaces “still serve as important spaces for democratic participation, where people engage in dialogue, dissent, and protest regarding issues of concern to them” (192). These installations were my act of dissent. My challenge to a system that kills the vibrancy of matter in pursuit of comfort and convenience. One that erases the stories of matter and material bodies. As acts of dissent, they offered alternative ways of being with these materials, ways of being that encourage playfulness, imagination, exploration and interconnection.

Participatory, playful, public projects such as these extend the web of learning to embed and intervene in daily movements. As interventions, they invite “unintentional, involuntary learning” (Ellsworth, 2005). Learning happens as becomings that merge through intra-actions with the materials of the configuration. A specific learning destination is not pre-determined. Rather, the materials are purposefully put into a place with invitations to engage. The matter and place are selected to bring unaccustomed matter or practices into relation with one another.

Through wonder and curiosity, one may enter into an installation such as The Athens Home for Discarded Objects. From the exchange, participating matter may feel sensations, engage curiosity, find stories, or explore new ways of being; of becoming. In these moments, participants—human, plant, bottle, bookshelf—may find themselves unbound, opening space to re-bound anew. Each new encounter may then offer opportunities for growth or shifts in course.

In a world that is regularly moving, pedagogy too must regularly move. With this I envision a *pedagogy of movement*. A pedagogy of movement seeks to shift, bend, fold, and morph as configurations form and reform. A pedagogy of movement engages with the active flow of the living world. It reconfigures to be with bodies in their becoming, present with the moment, allowing the configuration to collaborate in the course of learning, questioning or discovering. It seeks juxtapositions or encounters that encourage relations with new or different material, and compassionate ways of being with all matter. In line with this, Rosi Braidotti (2013) proposes a life that is “process, interactive and open-ended” rather than the right or “property” of one species such as humans. She offers “Zoe” as the “dynamic, self-organizing structure of life itself,” which reconnects bodies that have been segregated and separated by previous ways of thought.

As forms of dissent in public sites, such pedagogical movements may further offer a call to collectively reshape the world. Remarking deeper on public interventions, Desai and Darts (2016) add that, “they also help us animate the public sphere as an autonomous, agnostic, and egalitarian site, where we can all participate in shaping our everyday reality” (p. 192). With an intervention such as the Athens Home installations, the egalitarian feel of the site expands to honor the participation of a vast array of matter configurations. In the same way object matter collaborates in the making process, it too may collaborate in the world-making process— in the shaping of daily

configurations that honor a dynamic and mattered world in lieu of a static and hierarchical one. In the case of these interventions, they sought to encourage a re-thinking of the way we live with materials, proposing material relationships focused on care, longevity, and sustained life, in contrast to fast consumption and regular disposal. These installations envisioned life practices that honor the value, stories and influence of the materials in our lives.

### *Ongoing Movements*

“There is a structure of reality that is the gravitational field; it is not separate from the rest of physics, nor is it the stage across which the world passes. It is a dynamic component of the great dance of the world, similar to all others, interacting with the others, determining the rhythm of those things that we call meters and clocks and the rhythm of all physical phenomena” (Rovelli, 2017, p.70).

In the two years since the first Athens Home for Discarded Objects, the materials gathered have become the source for doctoral research, visual art making (both mine and Abigail’s), classroom presentations, conference sessions, sustainability events, and “free flea markets” where the commodity of exchange is story-telling. Through these acts, the materials have continued to invite new engagements and directions, unfolding in exhibitions, archives and moments of shared space. Through these acts, I have also formed my own feelings of enchantment. Our lines have intertwined and formed knots. I have been moved by our intra-actions.

I have felt surprise at the speed with which relationships formed. Joy and humor from the stories produced. I have felt disappointment at missed opportunities to explore, at moments when human matter declined to participate, or object matter did not connect. I have found inspiration in the interest and enthusiasm from participants across wide ranges of human matter and hope that



moments like these carry the power to shift ideas and perceptions, to create movements strong enough to transform ways of approaching relationships and intra-actions.

Amidst these moments and activities, I have tried to find new homes for as many objects as possible. Those that remain, live in my studio, continuing to collaborate on various projects. Even as we make together, I am aware that one day I may have to send them to the landfill. One day my configuration may no longer hold space for them and then I wonder: are the stories enough to honor their vibrations?

For Barad (2007),

the past is never left behind, never finished once and for all, and the future is not what will come to be in an unfolding of the present moment; rather the past and the future are enfolded participants in matter's iterative becoming. (181)

Time may fold in on itself as the stories of these objects are told and re-told—prior encounters brought into present moments through their reading. In these readings, perhaps the story reignites the energy of the object and calls it forth to enter new intra-actions, encounters or assemblages. Or perhaps the stories from these past encounters foreshadow movements or configurations yet to come, holding elements of future entanglements in their words.

Zachary Stephens still sits on a rickety wooden shelf in my studio. The screen-printed portrait hangs not far away. For a time, they were displayed together in a gallery space, amidst other objects, paper, woven and printed pieces. When I began this research, I overlooked what connections I would make with the materials through the process. I sought to invite shifts in general or social perceptions of material value, not for a love of materiality, but with the hopes of respecting more the materials we currently have in our lives to curb a persistent cycle of using and discarding materials

stresses environmental and social systems. Quite unexpectedly, I came to love these objects, things once deemed as “trash.” The experiences left their marks on me. They expanded my personal linescape and fostered relationships across mattered bodies.

I recently, brought the materials from the first Athens Home for Discarded Objects to a new workshop. Students pursuing a certificate in sustainability added stories to the bundles; the objects went on new journeys, adopted new names and developed new relationships. I thought then about the power of repetition, of sustained and regular action. I believe part of the power of this project lies in the sequence of related interventions which enabled a sustained theme to be brought to life in varied contexts and environments. The many stories shared, and the way the installations overlapped and intersected to one another brings to light the power of small movements, a recognition that change is slow, but with each configuration, encounter, or intra-action there is the opportunity for new lines to extend, for movements to shift course and for stories to expand. Each story may represent a small shift, perhaps a new seed of thought or care planted between mattered bodies. Reconizing the ongoing movements of a dynamic, relational world, I am curious to see where the intra-actions with these materials, Zachary Stephens, Josephine, Dox and others, continue to lead.

As they morph and entangle with new matter, the stories from their Athens encounters may remain as markers of points in their journeys—a trace among many left behind in the matter’s sustained movements and becomings.

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*Appendix A: Stories from Dear Discarded Object, What's Your Story?*

1. Pat  
A Large Lush Garden  
4.5.92

Patricia of the garden was lovingly placed in a lush South Philly backyard. After 5 years of sinking into the soul, Pat lost multiple of her appendages to aggressive roots and shovelers.

Faye

2. Josephine  
Cornwall, England  
9.12.1942

Josephine grew up in a working-class family in Cornwall. As a child she loved to walk the cliffs of the Cornish coast and to pick wildflowers on the way. She was forever enamored with the rich colors and the potential to make beautiful things. As she grew older, she went to school to learn to assist great tailors and textile workers in their craft. She gained the highest-level distinction and was allowed to carry all her beautiful colors. Her favorite supervisor decided to take her on a big move to the US. On the way, the boat struck and iceberg and sank!!! All the people survived but Josie was left at sea. After many fraught years she came ashore in Philadelphia and was rescued from the landfill, to share her colors with the world again.

Kira Hegeman

3. The Box of Tools of My Dreams  
Various Basements  
2007/10

Before the parts of this tool box came together to live in their gloriously small new home, they sat and waited for their partners in their still dance. Until now! Each nail will be for pictures and the tools will build a new home. Welcome Tools, welcome box of tools of my dreams, for now I no longer need anymore! Will live with me forever!

Michael A. Showell

4. Zooper  
Space  
11.4.76

Fell off the National space station, got caught on a meteor, landed in an old woman's backyard.

5. Book: Ken Follett: On wings of eagles  
Philadelphia  
1983

This book was a book of a great Philadelphia writer, who put his work into telling a great story about Philadelphia's history. The name of the book comes from his love for eagles. (Story written by Babur A.)

Juan Franco

6. The Pride of Philadelphia  
Philadelphia  
11/4/80

He was purchased by a Philly tourist but was soon forgotten on a double decker tour bus.

Kat Ward

7. Laa Laa  
Ireland  
March 31, 1997

Laa Laa had a rough life. She was born in Ireland but moved to the U.S. when she was 7. That's when she met Tom Cruise. They fell in love and Laa Laa got pregnant at a young age. Tom turned out to be a Dick and left her. She raised Lala Jr. by herself, she struggled to bet by but ultimately gave Lala Jr. a better life she never had. She is now retired and finally happy.

8. Popsicle's Menorah  
Atlantic City, NJ  
11.18.1954

Bought in a Lithuanian-Russian Jewish neighborhood, this menorah was the prized possession of a young school teacher. Through poverty and strife, the menorah was a [worthy] (hard to read this work) reminder of the light in life, and to never doubt or give up. Hope, even when religion

subsided, maintained the menorah long after the bulbs were broken. The menorah lasted until one day the schoolteacher grew old and was known as “popsicle” by his grandchildren, softly talking with him by the broken menorah.

Samuel Trilling

- 8.B. Priscilla (glass carafe)  
Europe  
11.14.17

Made to share tea with friends.

11. Cordless Electric Juicer  
Unknown  
11.5.1917

This juicer was discovered during the Red Scare, around the time of the October Revolution. Nobody knows where it came from, but it was detained because it was suspected of being a communist. It was just released from jail by a group of prison abolitionists.

Carylye Herman

12. Lost at See  
Extracted: Saudi Arabia  
Manufactured: SE Asia  
Purchased: United States  
12.20.91

I've been loved by many people but never for long enough. The 1<sup>st</sup> people to carry me took me to the Bahamas to learn about marine biology. Through these lenses, the people discovered the magic of coral reefs and the abundance of the ocean ecosystem. Next, the people took me to Alaska, but only because I was in the bag. They didn't take me out of the bag once. Finally, I went on a graduation trip to Hawaii. The people took me to the green sand beach. I body surfed. I saw a turtle, I kissed a queen angel fish, and then I was ripped away from the human face, tossed in the sea and roamed the ocean for 10 years.

Sierra Jech

13. Book: Through Indian Eyes  
United States (New York)  
11.13.1995

This book is my story, the story of a place they call America. How do they call it such? We had many names. The one thing they got right was a song I think title “Oh Beautiful or maybe it too was

called America. It was beautiful from Sea to Sea, coast to coast. How can anyone destroy beauty? Only a madman. What he is mad at or what made him mad, I don't know. Maybe we can help him find his mind again and make 'America' beautiful again.

Juanda Myles

14. Mortimus McVent III  
Somewhere in Massachusetts  
1841

There was an old duplex on a hill outside of Boston. Very old. Upstairs lived the enigmatic Mr. McCready, who seldom left the house on account of his old age and mysterious, hermit-like nature. When young Billy and his mother moved in one day in fall of 1961, Billy was intrigued by old McCready and decided to spy on him. He found Mortimus McVent III rustic, unassuming, the perfect window in to the life and secrets of Seamus McCready. All his life Mortimus longed for purpose, and finally the eyes of young Billy peered through him with wonderment day after day, he found himself a portal into the unknown. Through Mortimus, Billy learned that McCready was an old chess wizard, and by studying him he surreptitiously became his protégé. Young Billy grew up to be known as the famed Checkmate William, a moniker that would be heard in song and legend around the world. To this day, he attributes his success to Mortimus McVent.

Paul Harrold

16. Glass Drawer Handle  
PHL, PA  
11.4.17

This glass drawer handle once belonged to a dresser in Germantown, Philly, PA. It was purchased to change out the wooden pulls and later discarded for new, fancy etched metal pulls "for a more modern look", Its new life is headed for Colo Spgs to be admired.

17. Bertie the Broom  
Saturn  
11.4. 4188761 BCE

Bertie was manufactured on Saturn by unknown, undocumented labor. Bertie's story is largely unknown, but has been recorded at various stages throughout history, including the first dust bunny on Mars, the Great Mily Way Dust Cloud Collision of '76 (143176 BCE), and the election of Harry Truman <- (right?)

Happy Birthday Bertie! <3

18, Madonna  
Vatican City  
1875

This Madonna sailed here to Philly all the way from the Vatican. With the change of the new Pope, the Church get rid of many statues they deemed were unfit.

Fasan

19. Orvilles Gourmet Buttery Flavor Popping Oil  
Hollywood, CA  
10.4.1956

Tragedy. Loss. This groovy bottle was destined for greatness, but never reached its full potential. On their 10-year anniversary of their marriage, and Cinema Grand Opening, Marilyn and Sammie were going to celebrate their anniversary by watching their favorite film in their Cinema. But the unthinkable happened! Marilyn and Sammie ate a bad batch of popcorn before they could pour on the butter, and were struck dead. This bottle was found at the scene, untouched, and in perpetual limbo.

20. Glass Doorknob Duo  
Scotland  
3.21.1956

Together since they first met in 1970. They came from separate homes, one in CA and one in Maine. They were united in a home designed and built by a young couple in the woods of Colorado. The couple found the doorknobs on separate occasions at garage sales. They were surprised when they each unveiled them as a contribution to their new home.

Nicole Chatterson

20.B. Polly  
Philadelphia  
11.4.94

Polly was born to live an exciting life – helping people fix their items! From clocks to figure skates, Polly gives new life to products. In 1994, she started her career in a tool shop in Philadelphia. She went home with her new parents excited to save them money and avert waste. Polly did a great job, but in 2007, her family decided she was too rusty and old for them. So, she spent some time in a thrift shop. In 2017, her lucky adopter brought her to a new home in Philadelphia where she helped countless students at Carleton College.

Emma Leither



21. Letter and Bill Holder  
 Ridge Spring, South Carolina  
 4.7.1947

After a long day of housekeeping, Mae was eager to collect letters from her loved ones who migrated north due to increase lynching. She saved up all the money and purchased this holder to keep track of her cards. This holder has seen many stories, many stressors (bills), and the family legacy Mae left behind.

Ansley Pope

22. Distilled White Vinegar \*DMV)  
 Atlantic Ocean  
 1.12.2007...?

DWV's first memory is washing ashore a Miami beach. A bottle on the beach, but just vinegar, no message inside. DWV was picked up by a tourist and brought back home to a 4-family home in Media, PA, but spent its time in the kitchen cupboard searching for meaning from within. Clear like the ocean, meaning couldn't stick. DWV felt transparent, regarded as 5% acidic, but it was really just shy. Expired as judged by Heinz, DMV was cast away from the dark cupboard. Now, its only dream is to return to the one place that has meaning—the Atlantic Ocean.

Adina Spertus-Melhus

23. Faye Madonna  
 Paradise, Nevada  
 22 Apr 1981

Lamp to the stars in the gorgeous Pyramids Hotel on the Vegas Strip, Faye Madonna has cast light to the most glamorous celebrities of our time from Tammy Faye to Young Brittany Spears. After remodeling, Faye went from dumpster to thrift shop to shrift shop to Philadelphia.

23. B. Chick-a-dee-dee  
 Philadelphia, PA  
 Oct. 28, 1904  
 Protector of tables from burns  
 Since the OG '04

- 27 Glass Jean Naté Bath Crystals Jar  
 Casco, ME  
 December 20, 1974

When I was in elementary school, my mother gave all of my teachers Jean Naté as a holiday gift. This was left over, as no one ended up with the Bath Crystals. The jar ended up in the very back of the bathroom closet.

28. Freddy North

Kensington (Home)/ Martinsburg, West Virginia  
8.17.2000

I was published in West Virginia and sold in a bookstore in Philadelphia. The girl who bought me was from Kensington and she came from a poverty-stricken household. She barely had a dollar to waste but she saved up and bought me. She had an interest in politics and found inspiration from reading me as well. She wanted to change her family's financial situation and how the world works. She found the world to be unfair at times. One day, she had to leave and chose to leave me behind. However, she did so reluctantly. She could not fit me in her luggage and her parents were never fond of her ambitions. As she left the house, she placed me on the street with a cascade of tears running down her cheeks. She might have abandoned me, but I hope she does not do the same with her dreams, for she had a pure heart.

33. Lobster Clamps

Portsmouth, New Hampshire  
7.4.1776

These discarded clamps represent the abandon of ancestry; not only of our own human ancestors, but of the natural world. The coasts of New England have long been stained red with crustaceous inhabitants, which were a plentiful food source for Native inhabitants and Martian colonators alike. Clamps were (Industry was) invented through the erasure and usurpment of Indigenous people's ancestral traditions by Martian colonators (Romans/English). Reclaiming these clamps is a metaphor for revisiting and dismantling our (my? Your?) Martian heritage for the sake of nourishing others. Mars represents domination and greed in this context.

Thomas Haas

34. Jeremy

Columbus, Ohio  
1.6.1983

Jeremy the backman is in retire; taking it slowly lately, but don't let that deceive you. Back in the 90's Jeremy was the top day trader on Wall Street. He used to score coke, get [unknown word] and trade middle class fortune's every day without twitching a finger. He lost it all in a tech boom, they learned he had a bad hand in a lot of back deals that went sour, but he still millions hidden away and he is now living the dream. He even has a personal back scratcher.

Emily Gardner

36. A workman's lifeline  
Handmade in a workshop  
1910

This saw was handmade by a shop keeper who made different types of antique furniture. He used this saw with his son and when his son passed, he mounted it to the wall in memory of him.

37. "Clyde"  
Philadelphia, PA  
November 4, 1992

Clyde pushed the peddles forward of his brand-new bike, wobbling as he struggled to balance. Gaining momentum as he pushed through the resistance of the pavement beneath him. His heart racing with excitement as he rushed down the other side of the big hill on his street. He was doing it! He was riding a bike for the first time! And even if he fell off and skinned his knees or the palms of his hands, he would get back up and try again, because today he was 7 years old. Clyde represents the perseverance through the opposition we face, youthful idealism, and the "cycles: that give us the momentum to move forward.

Hannah E. Schell

38. Lad with Torah  
Menorah  
1994

This mad has crafted his entrance into manhood. He has studied this Doco (Torah) and viddied it with his drookies for years. Now he is lad. ☺ TX

Matt Sharrah

40. "Ask for Bill"  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
1966

Francis Ignatius Cummings was in search of a local, reliable, and professional repair service for his collection of vinyl furniture and car seats. With V.I.P (vinyl industrial products), Frank found the perfect restoration company. Ever since, he recommends V.I.P to all of his friends and coworkers at Eagle Motors.

## 42. Roller Skates (Rolland and Donald)

Madison, Indiana

1967, Christmas Day

Rolland and Donald used to belong to a young girl, Mimi. She had asked for them for Christmas when she was eleven years old. She had loved them with all of her heart and wore the everyday until she out grew them. They then went on to her younger sister and were passed until they no longer worked in 1979. From then they stayed on Mimi's shelf until she eventually felt they needed a new life and got rid of them in a garage sale. Someone adopted them, thinking they were worth a lot. Discovering they weren't, she threw them out. Eventually someone found them in a dumpster and saved them. Turned them into a thrift campaign and I adopted them!

## 45. Donna Suevo

Chicago, IL

Dec 10, 1993

Donna is a wild young lady from Chicago who moved to Philly to pursue her dreams of being an astronaut, she has a cat named sprinkles.

## 46. Maxwell

New Hampshire

8.14.1981

I used to be the sharpest knife in the drawer. I was cutting up prime rib, pork chop. You name it! Even the stalk of celery from time to time. But like all knives, I grew dull and rusty, but that's because my old owner didn't see my potential. I can be sharpened and shined to be as good as new! Look out world! And look our ribs!

## 47. Chip

France

2.14.1872

Was separated from his mother who died of old age in the beast's enchanted castle.

## 48. Table

The Grand Church, Holland

4.11.1543

I was a mere table in the offices of the Grand Church in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries. I held important documents and forms but was later moved to Philadelphia in the late 1700s. In Philadelphia I served as the personal side table to Thomas Jefferson, while he stayed here. In 1807 I was moved to a farm and never used until recovery and restoration in 2017.

Peter Bogaard

51. Sobo Cigars  
Philly  
10.11.1930

Although tobacco has been proven to not be the most healthy substance to consume, cigar boxes are cool! Unfortunately, there is a lot of stigma around cigs and stuff, the boxes hold meaning and tell a story.

52. Leta  
Scaghticoke, NY  
11.9.91

Leta was a fashion-forward scupper, both ounces and cc, very useful, but she got tossed away just because she wasn't as pretty as she used to be. She still holds water and will have a 2<sup>nd</sup> life in measurement after she get cleaned up by some brass polish.

54. Jack's Suitcase  
Chicago  
May 1968

Jack was a student, not in school, but of life. His work involved travelling to the major American cities, observing and sometimes participating in the rich political and cultural unfoldings of his early 20s. He acquired this suitcase second hand. It was lightly used for business ventures, but now, carrying Jack's books, essays, scraps of paper, a change of clothes and light pajamas, it rides trains across America, helping its owner discover what it means to be alive. Perhaps this suitcase has been to Europe. Tomorrow, its new owner will use it to store books of political resistance. It will rest, retired from travel, on the floor of a Massachusetts dorm that once seceded from the union. I'm sure, however, this won't be its final journey.

Timmy Sullivan

55. Hedge clippers  
Amman, Jordan  
15 October 315,164,983 BC

The Iron on these clippers was formed under the western bounds of the Arabian desert, likely dug up by ancient Arabian civilizations or French or British imperialists in the last 150 years. The handles made of Fraxinus Americana (white ash) wood were harvested and varnished more recently in South Ontario, at some point in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, given the varnish is still intact.



## 56. Pokey the Garden Tool

Hands of a Craftsman, rural community, Vermont  
Feb. 07, 1995

In the wet chill of February 1995, a stiff farmer awoke, ate breakfast, and entered his workshop to find that a hungry raccoon had wreaked a bit of havoc amongst his belongings. An upturned shelf had fallen atop the farmer's only hand-hoe, breaking it in half and bending the blade. After cleaning up the mess, the Farmer set to work quickly, building a new hand-hoe for the coming planting season. He worked tirelessly on the process he knew would take several weeks, for the ground needed to be kneaded and fluffed as soon as it thawed. One triumphant morning in April, the farmer sighed and leaned back in his chair, the shining product resting, finished and itching for use, atop his table. This was the birth of Pokey, who was used until the farmer's wife discarded him in 2016.

## 57. Bike Life

Off a bike

I like a bike life gang and I like to ride all the times and I like to ride wif rarazara

## 62. Flowers of Joy

Denison, Texas  
7.25.1985

This painting was done by a young man to give as a gift to his new young bride on the day of their wedding. The painting adorned the mantle in their first home for many years.

## 66. Measuring Spoons

Rural VA/Williamsburg  
Late 1700s

Used by slaves to cook for George Washington @ his home in Williamsburg, VA (Mt. Vernon), these measuring spoons have a *long* history. Passed down from gen. to gen., these spoons have helped bake cakes, muffins, and bread for significant people in history and made its way into the lives of both ordinary and inordinary people. In an act of ignorance towards the spoon's history, they were thrown into a landfill for a few years before being uncovered and saved by some amazing humans! Now, these spoons have safe home with me to use in my culinary adventures.

## 67. Dox

Minneapolis, Legacy Wares  
September 13, 2000

I was born in fire and hardened in a factory. I spent years on a dusty shelf with my mates. My first adopter bought me as part of a set. The forks were definitely the favorite children. My best friend was a cookie cutter named Latil in my drawer. Then they moved and I went to the curb. I am excited for the future filled with being held.

Emily Anne King

68. Hailey the Clown Mug  
the Circus

Circus school was an interesting place for a clown. I felt like an outsider in the tent. My whole life was lonely because everyone was either sacred of me or made fun of me. My only friends were the animals, but now I have Hailey.

69. Clipper and Shears  
Yangtze River Valley, China  
1985

Created by hands in a large factory, nestled away in dark boxes and containers, these tools traveled the world's ports before seeing the light of day or feel the cool inside of a freshly clipped plant, but after a long journey they aged in the sun and developed rust in the rain, only to be tossed aside, rescued and reused again.

Matthew Nace

71. Raymond. Red Flashlight model 17  
A strange factory somewhere on the outskirts of Pittsburgh, PA  
Feb. 19, 1957

At the time of their birth, Raymond (Ray) had a bright future. They were bought by a nice couple, wrapped in a gorgeous red and gold wrapping paper, and placed under a brightly decorated pine tree in a warm living room. A few days later, a young child, who the couple called Emma, ripped off the gorgeous and exclaimed happily over Ray. Things were good for several years. Raymond lit the way during several power outages, numerous camping trips, and a few games of hide-and-seek in the dark. Then things started going wrong. Emma would leave Ray in the back of a dark closet for long periods of time. Sometimes there would be lots of noise, sometimes silence. One day, it seemed as if the whole world was shaking. There was lots of noise, then silence, and Ray never saw Emma again.

Elizabeth Irvine

73. Paint for Models  
Grandpa's House  
1969

My Grandpa and I used to make toy car models. We would spend hours painting the intricate details. It was never about the cars. I didn't even like cars, but my Grandpa did. He wasn't much of a talker until you brought up his toy car models. He loved them more than anything. I never really understood it until I saw a picture of him and his father painting them together.

Cherise and Clara

75. “Red”ginald  
The Estate, Richmond, VA  
02.14.1858

“Red”ginald lived a long and glorious life at the Estate. The owner of the Estate, Sir Dip Johnson, often sat in “Red”ginald and pondered the nature of existence. Many epiphanies came to Sir Dip Johnson as he sat upon “Red”ginald, which included the theory of general relativity and the fate of his trusty chair “Red”ginald. Little did he know, that 159 years later, “Red”ginald would find his way to a landfill. Luckily, he was intercepted and brought to the SZW17 Conference in Philadelphia, PA. At this conference “Red”ginald was adopted into the Regner-Oligny Family for further pondering.

Michaela Regner and Brandon Oligny

78. Goggles  
Soth Philly  
June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2006

I like this because sow I can see more

No number. I don’t Want Your Help  
Somewhere in Ireland  
1912 (Estimated)

This is the fragment of someone’s childhood, but not something they remember fondly. This is what is leftover from someone growing up being told what to believe. This is what is life--jagged edges and dirty hands—broken bones and missing pieces—questions and guilt and rebellion—this shaped a child, but not an adult.

Madeline Schoenfeld

*Appendix B: Stories from Athens Home for Discarded Objects II*

68. Tape  
Athens, GA  
1985

I am a mixed tape, given to a long-lost love from teens of the 80s. I played the hottest rock-love ballads the world ever heard. I had a good life, and while I can't be played anymore, the music lives on.

Mallory Lind

65. Tony Leviathan

Our dear Tony lived a thrilling life – grazing the wrists of scholars and artists and renaissance folks across the globe, until one tragic day he was thrust off the wrist during an intense rock paper scissors match and was lost deep in the sea until tectonic plates swallowed him into the mantle of the earth. Tony's strength proved sufficient and he was eventually pushed up into the crust of Athens.

65. Tom  
No Pllqse

Wuns there was a man Q and he wint through a nice life in thin he dide. There was a bloody mess. And this was his woch.

77. Console 9  
NASA  
November 1965

Most people wouldn't guess it, but I've been to space. Yep, Gemini 7, December 1965. It's not the biggest space mission, certainly no Apollo. Most people jump to man walking on the moon and forget everything before that. But yep, I was one of the consoles in the cramped space craft. Frank and Jim treated me well, but I have to say, I've seen better days as of late. I may not be something to gawk at now, but back in my day I was top-of-the-line. Just check out these processor cores. They don't make them like this anymore.

57. Marcel duPoubelle  
 Paris, France  
 April 20, 1917

Marcel was born as a part of a unicycle that was used by a troupe of travelling clowns. The troupe went bankrupt and had to pawn Marcel. Marcel lived in a Paris shop until one day he was made into the first ready-made piece of art. No one knows what happened to Marcel and the first ready-made unicycle wheel because he has unresolved trauma and doesn't want to talk about it.

57. Spokey, the Wheel of Destiny  
 Tucker, GA  
 December 2, 1944

This wheel has saved my life. I would tell you the whole tale but then we'd be here all night. I'll do my best to give it justice. Ol' Spokey was born in the forges of Tucker as a wagon wheel you see for supplies over yonder across that pond they call the Atlantic Ocean. People were fightin' as part of my entourage (Pardon my French). I'll never forget the day I was movin' medical supplies when a machine gun fire started chattering away. Spokey took the brunt and I live to tell the tale. I'm sorry I lost you in Normandy but yer home in Georgia again.

56. Replacement no. 4  
 Macon, GA  
 Feb 2015

Replacement no. 4 followed original and Replacements 2 & 3 in the most affordable housing complex (for students, basically) in Athens. 3 break-ins, 2 legitimate & 1 prank-gone-wrong, paved the way for the Replacement 4. Unfortunately, she paved the way for replacement 5 after only 5.5 short months.

56. Freedman  
 Franklin House, Athens GA  
 May 4, 1865

I was freed from physical bondage only to find that the door was closed. I've been locked out ever since. I am optimistic that I will find my way back in. Spread Love.

73. Jeremiah  
 Detroit, Michigan  
 October 7, 1999

I had a humble beginning. One of many mass-produced Jeep components, I wasn't much to look at until I was stuck on Jeep and polished to a shine. After that though, life got real interesting real fast. Me and the rest of the automobile were sent to a dealership in Montana, and soon, a tall, strong man named Rick bought me. Rick was a family man and he would fit his three young, always energetic



kids in the Jeep for outdoor adventures all over the Northwest. I saw so many mountains, lakes, and even some old growth forests before a particularly large bump on a road trip in the Southeast knocked me free.

73. Jeep Tag  
Toledo, Ohio. USA  
1941

The Jeep Tag was made in 1941 for the iconic US Army Jeeps that were manufactured during WWII. The legendary Willy's Jeep was a classic symbol of proud "Americana", owing testament to the key ideas of freedom, liberty, and equality. Inspired to read [?], this tag carries on the proud history and message hard work of the American people. Although the jeep it was once bonded has broken down due to old age, the tag preserves its memory and tells its story to all.

63. Kari 595  
Somewhere beyond the asteroid belt  
600 BCE

Kari was part of the most important instrument on the ship of some of Earth's earliest visitors. They crashed to Earth and their ship blew apart, although they were able to reassemble the rest of their star ship, they never found Kari. The engine of their ship never ran again, and their alien race was doomed to roam the underground tunnels of the Earth.

74. Jimmy Sprinkles  
Brooklyn, New York  
7.7.1873

Jimmy had a good life. Until he did not. Jimmy was a child's play toy and the girl who owned treated and played with him with the utmost care. But the girl had a dog and he took Jimmy and buried him in the ground. This was the story of Jimmy.

74. "Tailgate Trash" Ken  
California  
8.29.1997

Ken grew up in sunny Malibu, CA. A lover of sun, surf and good times with friends, when it came time for college he naturally went looking schools with good party culture. He arrived at UGA eager to learn more about our sports culture and homegrown beers. Always one to follow his heart before his head he soon ran afoul of some Florida fans at one of his beloved tailgate parties. He doesn't remember much after the first punch was thrown. He woke up on the side of the river with no shirt, no shoes and no ID or bus money. While he is very grateful for the rescue by a service-minded sorority girl, he is really dreading trying to salvage his GPA this semester.

74. Kenderson Kardashsian  
 Alpha Centauri  
 876.5 B.C.

Kenderson was beamed down to earth as a spy during the Dawn of time to set the stage for the upcoming illuminati agenda.

59. Tiffany  
 A Potter's Studio  
 6.26.16

Tiffany was made to be sold at a craft fair. The potter who made Tiffany traded her for some Jerk Chicken from a food truck. The food truck owner left Tiffany on the bumper of the truck and when it hit a bump she tumbled to the side of the road.

No tag number. Entanglement  
 Amazon.com  
 11/15

She tossed me to the side of the road in frustration as she walked home from the bus stop with tears in her eyes. One year earlier, I attached the phone that she received his first text (inviting her for coffee (coffee emoji symbol <3) on to the outlet in the wall. I kept her phone powered every night for the texts that arrived, and then didn't...and then arrived again but with no emoji and palpable chill. That night her eyes and mind were too clouded to untangle me from the other in her backpack. My new adopter seems to like streaming Might Morphin Power Rangers.

76. Capri  
 Lawrenceville, GA  
 2008

Capri was always sassy. But never as effortlessly chic as the most popular girl in school, Kiwi. Throughout high school, Capri trailed her constantly, trying to impress her with obnoxious entrances to parties and always cannon balling at pool parties. In Capri's many years in the suburban neighborhoods of Lawrenceville, GA, she was a regular at neighborhood barbecues and soccer games. She was always a little tart --which made her a complex gal. Years later, Capri went to college, which is when she got her name. Yes, that's right --Capri's real name was Kathy. lame right? Or so she thought. Maybe still thinks.

59. Jeffrey  
 -\\_(“)\_/\_-

Cuando paso el evento bajo del capeta, Jeffrey decidiosaliia pa'fuera de su casa. Jamas lo volvieron ver, solamente cuando Jeffrey queria ver el sol salio.

adopted 10.11.17

67. James  
 Assembly line somewhere  
 90s

James was one of millions, a cog if you will –always questioning life and his purpose. He knew he was different, but why? What was hi purpose? What did it all mean? James was always thinking about the really hard questions. He even picked up abstract mathematics to help him find his place in the universe. But nothing helped him sleep at night. Day in and out James questioned everything; trying to figure out life. Until he cracked.

67. Reflector  
 China  
 1575

He had a good life on the side of a car but then one day reflector hit a mail box and rolled away from his home. Reflector eventually found a new home at the bottom of a river. He made a ton of new friends and then he was found by a person who didn't care about reflector and hit reflector's reflector and shattered all over the ground. Then he met a man and he fixed him up and found his new home on the side of a Honda.

83. Gaffney  
 Columbia, SC  
 8.17.99

I'm not sure why my parents decided to cross the line into Georgia, but they did. Maybe they thought I might find other friends who like wild creatures or little people with big imaginations. Although to know where I truly originated, I might have to cross an ocean or two. For now, I'm content to chill in the river with my new mom, bathing in the sunlight, grateful for existence.

79. Name is a bunch of symbols  
 Earth  
 Year 1

(name) was once an enormous glowing palace where the first civilization to ever inhabit Earth held their parties, meetings, elections and any other fancy gatherings. No one knows what happened to this civilization. All we know is that the people must have been really really small.

79. The Bottle You save for an Important Occasion  
Valpolicello/Veneto Wine Region

Vern and Valentina were married in an elaborate wedding ceremony. Valentina's family gave the young couple a really nice bottle of red wine—the kind you keep in your cellar for years and years and drink on your 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary or some nonsense like that. Vern popped the cork on their 22<sup>nd</sup> wedding anniversary and well, the wine was actually amazing. Sadly, he was drinking alone.

69. The Big Black Dick  
Highland Park, Illinois  
12/31/2010

The bottle that started it all. Many have heard of the infamous card game, Cards Against Humanity. What they don't know is that it wouldn't have happened without this bottle of rum. Drunk on New Year's Eve, the designers of the game came up with the card game and, as a tribute to the magical liquid that brought them together, named a card (the "big black dick" card) after the rum.

68. Tape  
Athens, GA  
1985

I am a mixed tape, given to a long-lost love from teens of the 80s. I played the hottest rock- love ballads the world ever heard. I had a good life, and while I can't be played anymore, the music lives on.