

it's always something different in the end

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**Abstract**

it's always something different in the end

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*it's always different in the end* is a collection of four projects that combine physical and poetic realms, exploring the ways that materiality and interactivity can heighten the poetic experience by leaning into fiber arts, ceramics, collage, video, and more. As a neurodivergent artist and poet, Coleman's projects include tactile, repetitive motions that she has leaned on to make her own education accessible, addressing judgements she has felt in academic spaces. In presenting and discussing the projects included in *it's always different in the end*, Coleman questions finality and emphasizes the importance of pursuing long-term, non-linear, deeply personal projects in the face of an ultra-fast paced society that demands astronomically high volumes of product with no regard for lost quality or meaning. Coleman, like many of the artists and writers she includes in her discussion, addresses the historic devaluation of women's work. Coleman hopes to widen the possibilities of what poetry is considered to be, encouraging writers, makers, and appreciators to embrace a slow poetics and create art that transcends capital.

*key words:* accessibility, fiber arts, interactivity, multimedia, poetics, zines

### **[foreword - on accessibility]**

My mind has always been a space in which creation and learning are intrinsically intertwined. I think that most academics would agree with the idea that creation and learning are connected. In my personal experience, it has often been the case that academic ideas of creation are very conceptual, whereas my relationship with creation lies in a tactile and physical realm. My work, characterized by its intricate and busy nature, can be seen as a burden in educational settings — its scale, motion, and visual complexity often perceived as a preventable distraction. This can be frustrating, as it is *the* necessary action that allows me to focus and retain information.

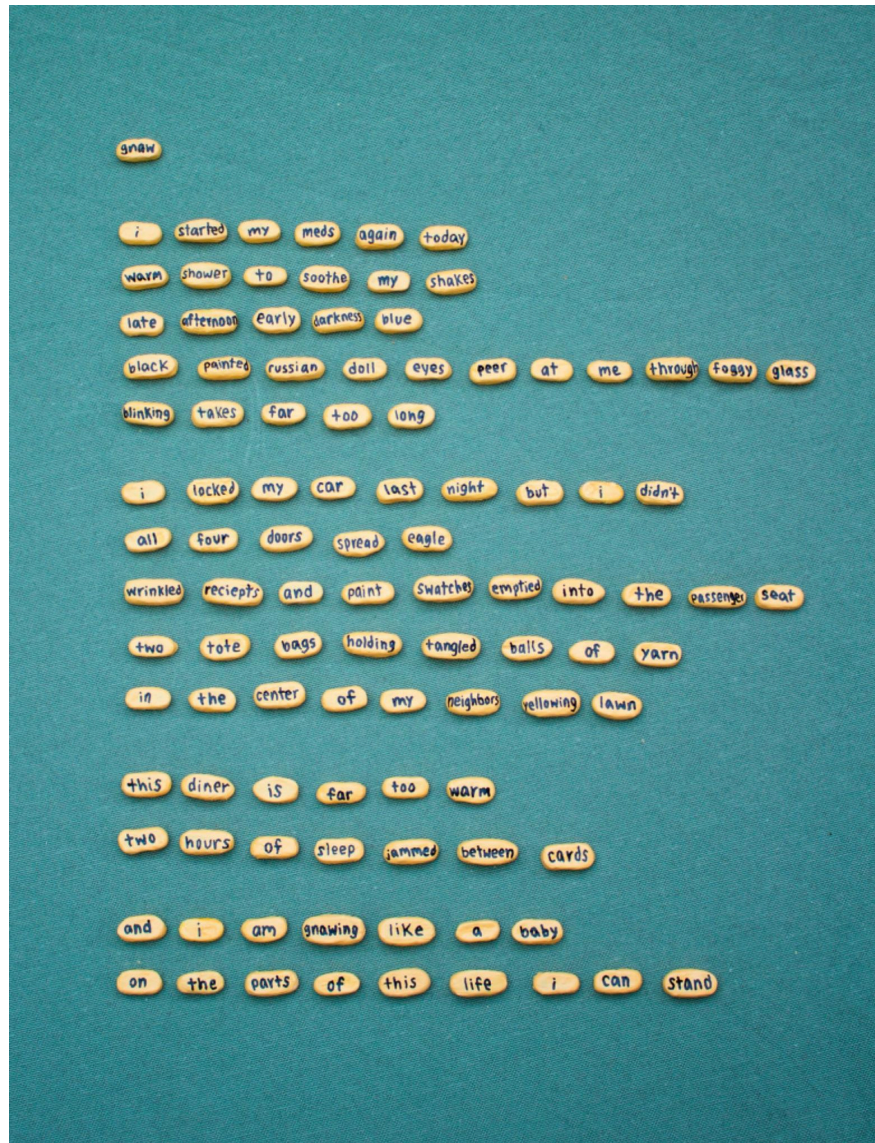
I make art to help me focus. However, throughout my college education, I have continuously struggled because some educators that I have worked with, consciously or not, have held the belief that there is no possible way that I could be fully focused on what is being presented to me in a lecture if I am simultaneously learning and creating in the classroom. I have been penalized for it repeatedly, even while earning my MFA.

It was not until my third year of my undergraduate studies that I was evaluated for ADHD. I had been drawing in class to help me focus during long lectures. In response to this, the professor insisted that I requested documentation of a disability to be able to continue. If it was not for them necessitating this, I would not have looked for a medical diagnosis, at least not for a while. I am thankful for what the evaluation provided me with, which included ADHD (Attention-deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder) and ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder). Receiving these diagnoses have allowed me to understand a lot about how and why I function the way that I do. At the same time, I am disappointed by the fact that this was something that I was forced into, rather than a decision that I made for myself.

I feel extremely privileged that I am a neurodivergent person who can pass as a neurotypical person in most facets of my life. The specific nature of my coping mechanisms result in finished products that people perceive to be visually interesting and valuable, which makes them more acceptable. Many neurodivergent people cope in ways that are not deemed acceptable — large movements, loud sounds, etc.— and those folks are often not awarded the same amount of compassion or respect that I am afforded with my “acceptable” coping mechanisms. This disparity, and my experiences as a neurodivergent student, have sparked my interest in researching Disability Poetics in both academic and creative work. All of the projects within *it's always something different in the end*, in some capacity, lean into the tactile and repetitive materiality that has been the cornerstone of my ability to scale my professional and artistic goals.

1. 9/18 2:55 p.m. [gnaw]

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9/18 2:55 p.m. [gnaw] - mother poem



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*9/18 2:55 p.m. [gnaw] - in bottle*

**1.1 [the idea]**

To write a poem that addresses my SSRI usage peripherally, then transform that poem by bringing it into the physical realm. Each individual word from the original poem is written on a small clay oval, roughly the same size and shape as the actual pills that I take. The “pills” are presented in one of my real, used pill bottles with my personal information redacted. Those who interact with [gnaw] are tasked with arranging the pills to write their own poem.

**1.2 [background]**

I have been on one particular SSRI since I was a teenager. Throughout the time that I have been on it, I have developed a deep, human-like relationship with it – stark ups and downs, cold

turkey quitting without telling my doctor because I believed I was cured, and the slow swirling slide down the drain of realizing my reliance on it. With that came the questions – “*Why can’t I cry anymore?*”, “*Why can’t I sleep at night if I take it past noon?*”, “*Why does it feel like I have had two cocktails when I only had one cider?*” I have forgotten to take it for days, weeks, months. I have failed it. I have questioned it. I have been soothed by it. It is a sort of companion, it follows me, in the form of chalky residue on the pads of my fingers, my restless legs sharking against the door of the car.

Over the years, I have collected all of those pill bottles in the way that some artists do, as a compulsion: “*One day I can make this into something.*”

I wrote [gnaw] at a turning point in my life, when I had just moved back to Oregon after living in Seattle for a year. As an autist dealing with the uncontrollable, I latched onto the few things that could ground me in any way by focusing on what Oregon had to offer – the lack of sales tax, my friends and family, and the slowness of a little-big city. I was also at a point where I felt like everything was in question. I felt I had somehow “failed” at living in Seattle. I was disappointed in myself for not bringing my care-free-girl-boss-casual-social-artistic fantasies of thriving in a big city after a devastating heartbreak to fruition. Moving back to Oregon was a bittersweet return, which felt less like being embraced by familiarity and more like coming back with my tail tucked between my legs. [gnaw] is a record of this odd period in my life, trying to build routine and community, while grappling with false failure and struggling in and outside of routine.

### **1.3 [on form and interaction]**

I felt this poem fit well with this sort of physical form because it is in the periphery of my experience with SSRIs, and I think that periphery is very important. I think that doing a poem that is directly describing my experience with SSRIs, that sort of hitting it on the nose, would cheapen the poem, or at least dampen its effectiveness.

SSRI usage has become a part of my way of life, existing simultaneously as a necessity and a normality. I feel that presenting this very repetitive and mundane commitment and action as a sort of spectacle would be a disservice to the work.

But here’s the thing, the poem, [gnaw], is not really that important to this project. It is just a bunch of words that I chose and arranged to portray something that tries to express an experience, a mood.

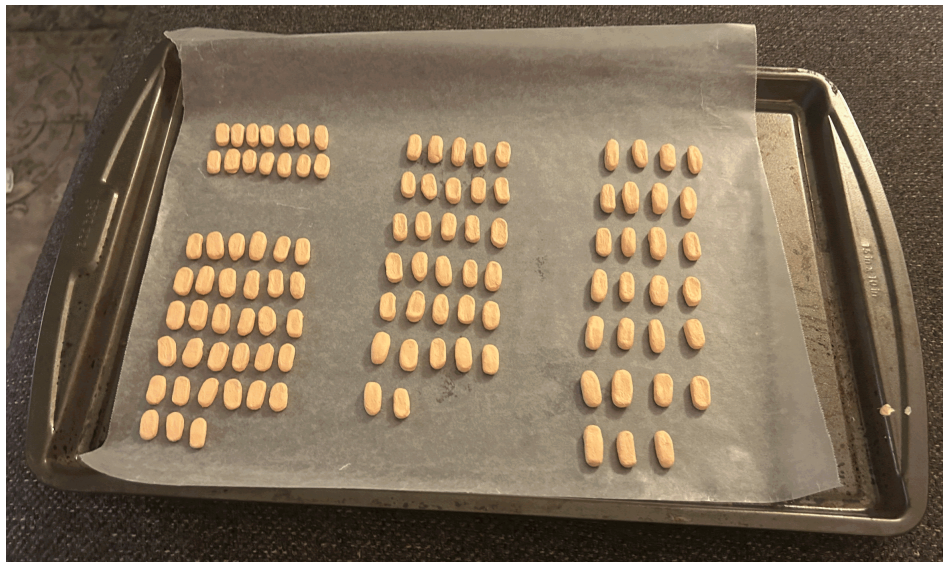
In her essay “Against Interpretation,” Susan Sontag addresses the many faults that exist in normalized ideas of artistic interpretation, which is something I have interacted with extensively within my literary and artistic education. We are obsessed with assigning a “correct” meaning to literary and artistic projects, using it as a way to assign value, both to the text, and the human that is interpreting it. Not having the “right” interpretation of something can be the difference between getting a good or bad grade. It can feel light-hearted, but it is serious – making something that is not easily interpretable is often punished; matters of opinion can bar one from professional opportunities.

It is my hope that the project of [gnaw] is simply a way “...to accommodate a multiplicity of equally plausible interpretations” (Sontag, 6). And that is what I am asking interactors to do

with it, to use the parts that make up [gnaw] as a tool to create their version of something. In that way, [gnaw] is nothing but a tool bag that I packed for someone else to use.

Sontag addresses the role of the reader in the literary space, stating “The interpreter, without actually erasing or rewriting the text, is altering it” (3). [gnaw] leans into this idea by encouraging – or demanding – this alteration, allowing the original poem to take on a multitude of different forms by allowing interactors to arrange, organize, or omit the tools that they were given to work with.

Later in the essay, Sontag makes the argument that “Interpretation takes the sensory experience of the work of art for granted, and proceeds from there” (9). The physical nature of this project, and the tactile, sensory experience that it demands help to return this sensory experience back to the art. Being able to feel the piles of clay pills in the palms of your hands, to scoot them around on the slick surface of a varnished wooden tray, is unique and transcends what is possible with typical text-on-page poems.



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*9/18 2:55 p.m. [gnaw] - shaped and painted clay pills*

#### **1.4 [process: material]**

I began by shaping 104 little clay pills using air dry clay. After letting them dry, I painted all of the pills a pale orange color that is very similar to my SSRI.

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**9/18 2:55 p.m. [gnaw]**

i / i / i / i / a / i

my / to / my / at / me / my / of / in / of / my / is / of / am / on / of

far / too / car / but / all / and / the / two / the / far / too / two / and / the / can

gnaw / meds / warm / late / blue / doll / eyes / peer / long / last / four / into / seat / tote / bags  
/ yarn / lawn / this / warm / like / baby / this / life

again / today / early / black / foggy / glass / takes / night / didn't / doors / eagle / paint  
balls / diner / hours / sleep / cards / parts / stand

shower / soothe / shakes / locked / spread / center / jammed

started / painted / russian / through / emptied / holding / tangled / between / gnawing

darkness / wrinkled / receipts / swatches / blinking

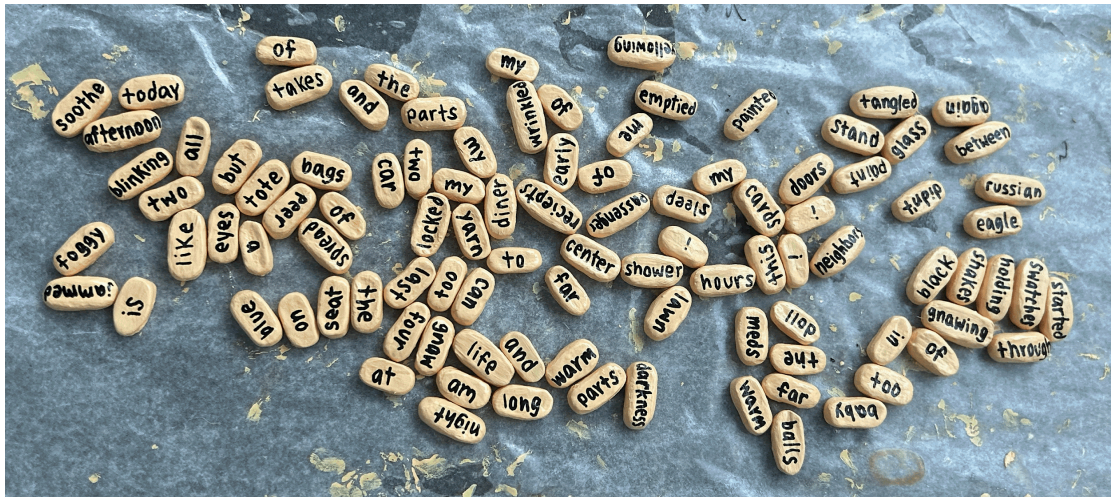
afternoon / passenger / neighbors / yellowing

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*9/18 2:55 p.m. [gnaw] - organized by letter length*

### **1.5 [process: organization]**

I then prepared to add the words onto the pills. I began by sorting each pill by size, from smallest to largest (since I shaped the clay pills by hand, they varied a bit in size). I then sorted every word in the poem by number of letters, so I could use the smallest ones for the singular letter words and the larger ones for the ten letter words. This was a very interesting process, one that I feel like I would repeat if I ever felt stuck when writing or revising a poem. It allows the writer to take stock of the words that they used outside of the page and outside of the context and analyze word usage in a detailed way.



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9/18 2:55 p.m. [gnaw] - pills with words drawn on

### 1.6 [process: painting]

I used a very fine Posca paint pen to write all of the words on the pills, which proved to be challenging. I struggled to write so small and maintain legibility. I wrote on and painted over most of these pills at least 3-4 times trying to get them to look how I wanted. After I was happy with the way they looked, I sprayed the pills with an acrylic sealant to finish them. The first moment putting all the pills in the orange container was very exciting, but, in my excitement, I did not allow them enough time to cure. I left the pills in the pill bottle with the lid on overnight, and they all congealed into one massive pill brick, coming out of the pill bottle like a cylindrical rice krispy treat. I was very sad. Here I was, thinking I had finished my project. Alas.

Instead of reshaping 104 more clay pills and starting over, I peeled each pill from each other, sanded them down, painted them, wrote on them, and finished them with an outdoor sealant. I looked into different, larger kinds of pill bottles that I could have the pills in permanently, and gave the pills lots and lots of time to cure before putting them in a new orange pill bottle.

## 2. 11/12 10:46 a.m. [long negatives]

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### 11/12 10:46 a.m. [long negatives]

it was 10:46 this morning when i felt it, the silk, slick grayness ribboned upon an overcast sky. the kind where you wish you could turn down the sky's brightness, to turn down the exposure on a photo, too much, the kind that scrapes into your corneas, making you wonder why you didn't bring the one pair of sunglasses you own, likely in the bottom of some tote bag amongst crumbs and wrappers. i was sure it was fleeting, i tumbled and trotted behind it like a toddler getting my footing in my first steps, grasping for it, amiss, tripping over the raised crack in the sidewalk and the city's tumultuous, sopping mammoth leaves, sticking to the soles of my shoes, the beauty of autumn now to be scruffled against my welcome mat. it escaped from me, the simple breeze carrying it along like a thin piece of receipt paper from between my fingers, dear, life just churns through me, i, the bile in the throat of the universe's vomiting, i, the rain you can't see but can hear within the cold night's darkness, i, the fire on film that approaches when you open the camera too early, dear, i am not done living, i am not wound up and ready for developing, yet you are still exposing, dear, it is winter and love is dead yet somehow i still exist in all of this. it is horrendous. horrendous.

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*11/12 10:46 a.m. [long negatives] - original poem*

### 2.1 [the idea]

To adhere my poem, line by line, to a roll of 35mm negatives. The user interacts with the poem by holding a camera that has the roll of film in it. The user is tasked with opening the back door and winding the negatives through the camera in order to read it. To reset it for the next person, the user will close the back door and take around 24 "pictures," advancing the film until they reach the beginning of the poem.

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### [11/12 10:46 a.m. \[long negatives\]](#)

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*11/12 10:46 a.m. [long negatives] - video reading*

### 2.2 [the poem]

I wrote [long negatives] during a workshop with Cedar Sigo on focusing on prose poetry during my first term of my MFA. I had not yet been introduced to prose poetry as a poetic form, and was dazzled by the rectangular blocks of text and ability to use full sentences without worrying where line breaks would exist. Cedar's teaching of the prose poem and encouragement toward exploration and experimentation within the form was radically different to anything I had been taught before, and it changed my writing process cataclysmically. Almost all of the poetry I have

produced during my MFA would hinge off of the things that I learned during that workshop with Cedar, in both visual organization and content.

[long negatives] is the first poem that I wrote that I looked up from and went “*Oh, this is something.*” It was a breakthrough in the most plain sense, all of the poetry I had written up until this point had an undertone of confusion in which I worried about whether or not I was “doing it right” or infusing it with too much or too little abhorrent meaning.

### **2.3 [process: cannisters]**

I researched reloadable film canisters, which was something I didn't know existed. The ones that I have access to were pretty flimsy. With too much force, or if the negatives got caught on anything while winding, they would break and be rendered unusable. After accidentally doing this many times while prototyping, I looked into getting some metal canisters, but they were quite pricey and unreliable due to their age. So, I ordered five more plastic ones.

Given that the plastic refillable canisters were so flimsy, I wasn't sure that I wanted that to be the vessel that I gave to people to interact with. Then began the idea to have it run through the camera.



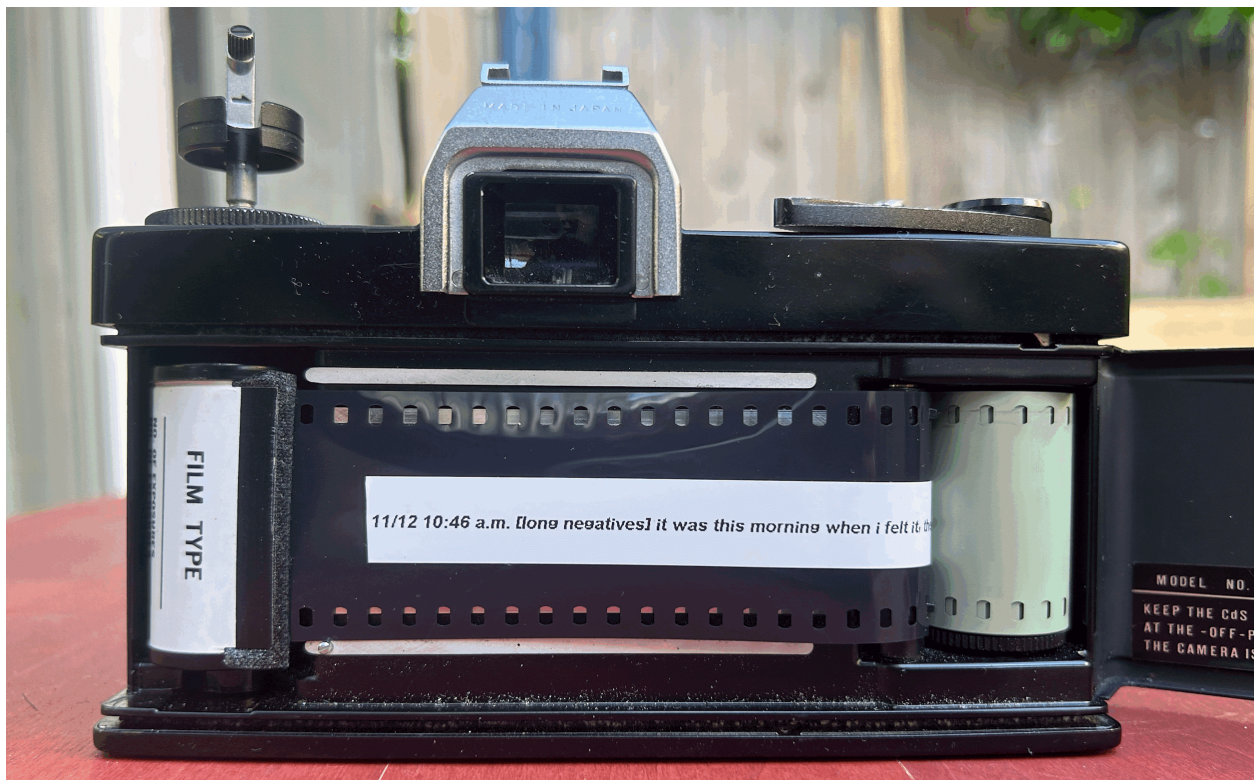
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11/12 10:46 a.m. [long negatives] - the camera, 1967 Sears TLS

## 2.4 [process: the camera]

Figuring out what kind of camera could work for a project like this was challenging. A different long-term project that I have been working on for the past couple of years is based around found film – negatives that people leave behind when they sell or give a camera away. I buy second-hand film cameras when I can see that there is a roll of negatives inside, develop them, and write poetry surrounding the images. When I am done with this, I am left with many different, mostly-functional cameras.

I first experimented with a few automatic cameras that I had, hoping that the auto-rewind would be of-use to the folks that interact with the project, but what I found was that newer, automatic cameras will sense that the back door of the camera is open and not allow the user to take a picture because of that. I needed to be able to have the back of the camera open as that is where an interactor would be able to read the poem.



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*11/12 10:46 a.m. [long negatives] - back view*

After realizing this, I tried my hand with a few manual cameras. This camera, a 1967 Sears TLS, was my first manual camera. It is a hunk of very heavy metal, but in turn, also very durable, which made me feel confident in its ability to be handled by the public.

This camera made a good physical vessel for the poem, as it invites the interactor to participate in many of the acts that one must complete when shooting 35 mm film, relating to the poem's

content, and providing an adequate physical context for it to exist in. The repetitive action of advancing the film to reset it fits well with the other repetitive actions that I participate in as a coping mechanism and as a means of making it true to myself and my creative practices.

## **2.5 [process: length]**

A roll of 24 exposures of 35mm film is surprisingly long, 3.675 ft, to be exact, which can make the act of winding and resetting the poem a time consuming process.

At the same time, a roll of 24 exposures is surprisingly short. [long negatives], in its original form, was a reasonable size for a prose poem, a medium paragraph. This length is not concerning on paper in its block-text format, but can feel perilously long when pasted line by line. The original poem did not fit on the roll of 24 exposures, and the refillable canister cannot hold more than that length, which gave me no choice other than to revise it to that length.

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## **11/12 10:46 a.m. [long negatives]**

it was this morning when i felt it, the silk, slick gray across the overcast sky. the kind where you wish you could turn down the sky's brightness, the kind that scrapes into your corneas, too much. i tumbled behind it like a toddler, grasping for it, amiss, the city's sopping mammoth leaves sticking to the soles of my shoes, the beauty of autumn scruffling against my welcome mat. dear, life just churns right through me, i, the bile in the throat of the universe's vomiting, i, the rain you can't see but can hear within the cold night's darkness, i, the fire on film that approaches when you open the camera too early, dear, i am not done living, i am not wound up and ready for developing, yet you are still exposing, dear, it is winter and love is dead yet somehow i still exist in all this. it is horrendous. horrendous.

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### *11/12 10:46 a.m. [long negatives] - condensed version*

This was what I'd call a forced revision, but one that I tried to embrace. There is a version of this poem that exists on paper. There is a version of this poem that exists for interaction. They both live, one does not have more value than the other. I continually revised [long negatives] until it could fit onto the roll of 24, losing a lot of the length but preserving what I perceived to be the most important parts. I feel that, through experiencing it – holding the camera, winding, and taking pictures – there is something that users gain that cannot be replicated in a paper format. They are different, in length, material, and form, but they have similar weights.

It would make sense, then, that I have a little bit of a tie to the original version of this piece, and that cutting it down like an overgrown shrub to fit the physical format made me feel a bit uneasy. In his book of lectures titled *Guard the Mysteries*, Cedar Sigo states, "I feel that the grain of poetry is meant to be illusive. It must eventually take on different forms to survive" (94). The way that the physical and original versions of [long negatives] can exist concurrently has transformed my anxiety toward losing parts of the poem into a sense of immense artistic freedom, connecting to my philosophy on finality.



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*11/12 10:46 a.m. [long negatives] - negatives with label tape*

## **2.6 [process: label maker]**

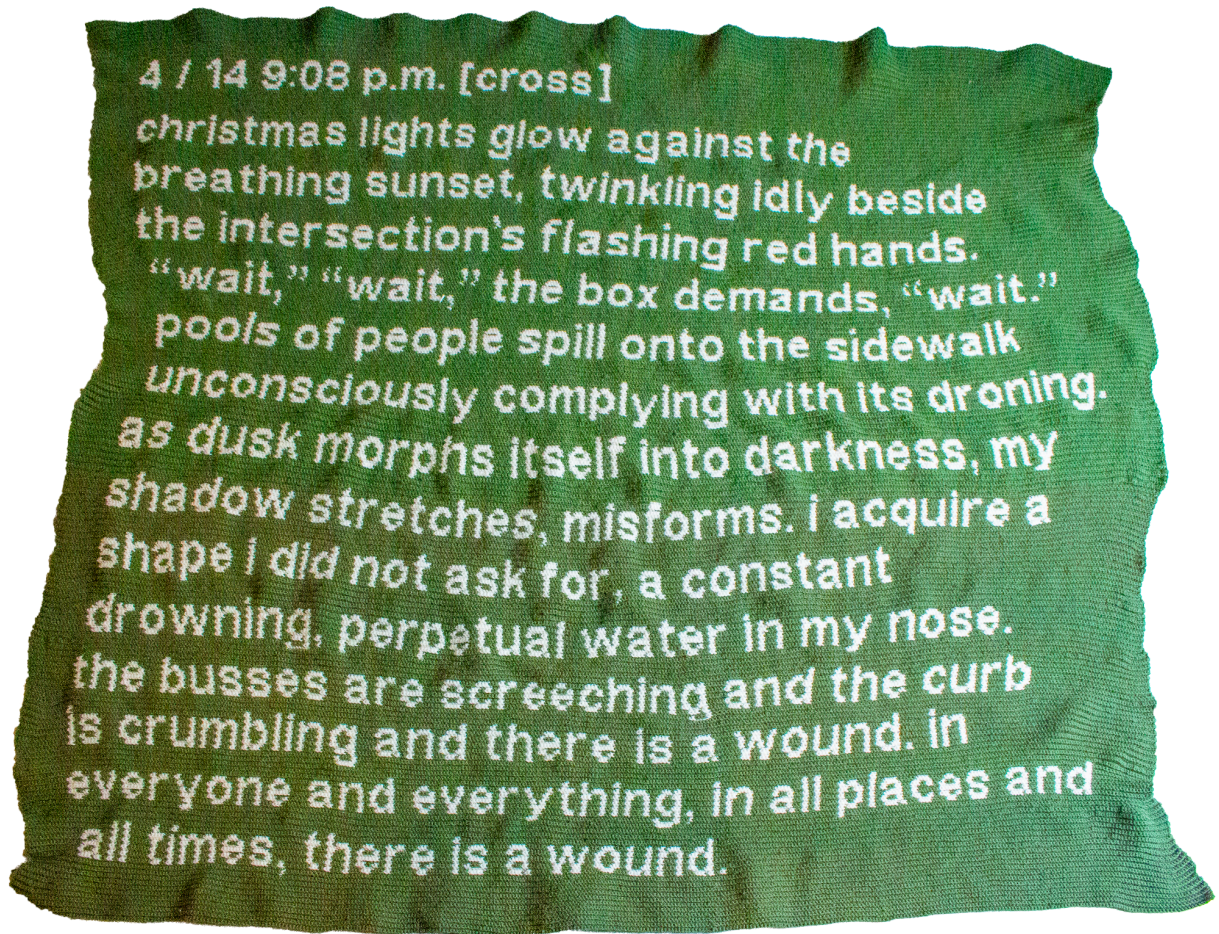
When it came time to begin putting it together, I began by reformatting [long negatives] into singular lines, printing it out onto cardstock, cutting it out, adhering those lines together to make one giant strip of text, and adhering that giant strip onto the negatives. It looked okay, but the cardstock was too thick and got caught when I wound the negatives into the canister, ripping it.

I sought a material that was thin enough to not disrupt the texture of the negatives and adhered enough that it would not come off when winding. Enter: the Dymo label maker.

It really is that simple. I went to the thrift store and bought an old Dymo label maker, bought the right tape for it, put it on the smallest font setting, printed out each line of the poem and stuck them onto the negatives.

### 3. 4/14 9:08 p.m. [cross]

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*4/14 9:08 p.m. [cross] - tapestry*

#### **3.1 [the idea]**

A large, crocheted tapestry including the text of a prose poem that I wrote, intertwining the poetry that I was writing with the action that allowed me to learn more about writing poetry.

#### **3.2 [background]**

During my undergraduate studies, my most common in-lecture stim was drawing. That changed during the summer between my undergrad and beginning my MFA, when I learned how to

crochet, switch colors, and effectively follow patterns to create crochet tapestries. This quickly became my craft of choice for workshops and seminars.

### **3.3 [process: the poem]**

There were a lot of things that needed to be considered when embarking on this project, starting with picking the poem that I planned to crochet.

I started creating crochet patterns for the shortest poem that I had written at that time, simply because it was the shortest. I was not very impressed by the poem. I felt like the content was vague in its themes, not very grounded in terms of space, and it didn't have the style that I was developing. It simply did not feel like "me." But because of its shortness, I used it to begin experimenting with creating patterns. Most free online cross stitch/crochet pattern makers had a limit on how many stitches a project could include, which was a constraint I was not really anticipating. I experimented with different fonts and sizes, many of which were unreadable when actually, physically crocheted. I considered a lot of different techniques for how I would be able to bring it to life in a way that would not be too burdensome. It was when I moved back to Oregon that I decided, if I wanted this to happen, I needed to stick to the crochet tapestry strategies that I knew and lock into working on it, knowing it would be huge, that it would take a very long time, and that it would not be perfect.

Compared to other poetic forms, I didn't consider my poems to be very long, but my perception of that changed greatly once I began thinking about how I was going to create a pattern for the poem in a crocheted tapestry. Each word, each letter, was potential hours of work, taking up both visual and physical space.

If I was going to put all of this work into it, I knew it had to be a poem that I loved. 4/14 9:08 p.m. [cross] was a poem that I wrote while living in Seattle, highlighting visuals of crumbling city infrastructure, public transportation, and the solace that I found in the people who surrounded me during a very difficult period of my life — all attributes and themes of the poetry that encapsulated my time there — making it a great, shorter piece to commemorate all that I have done and created while getting my MFA.

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**4 / 14 9:08 p.m. [cross]**

**christmas lights glow against the  
breathing sunset, twinkling idly beside  
the intersection's flashing red hands.  
"wait," "wait," the box demands, "wait."  
pools of people spill onto the sidewalk  
unconsciously complying with its droning.  
as dusk morphs itself into darkness, my  
shadow stretches, misforms. i acquire a  
shape i did not ask for, a constant  
drowning, perpetual water in my nose.  
the busses are screeching and the curb  
is crumbling and there is a wound. in  
everyone and everything, in all places and  
all times, there is a wound.**

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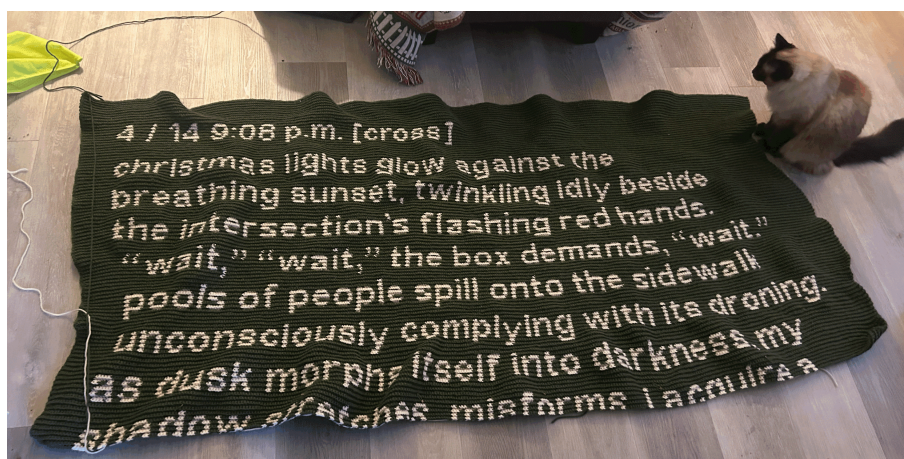
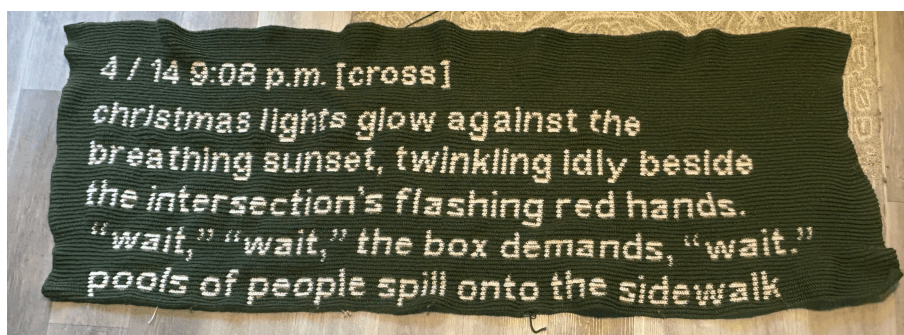
*4/14 9:08 p.m. [cross] - pattern*

### **3.4 [process: pattern]**

Feeling that I had finally settled on a poem I was willing to pour my whole self into for the next year, I began getting serious about what program I was going to use to make my pattern. After many web searches and stress, I settled on a pattern program called MacStitch (or WinStich for

computers that run on Windows) that would allow me to create a very large pattern with both individual letters and words, and have the ability to copy, paste, and move them freely within the grid structure. This flexibility and simplicity of the program allowed me to adjust the pattern as I worked through it, which proved to be necessary.

Mac Stitch also helped me a lot with dealing with the math that comes along with a project of this size. MacStitch has a row counter where one can highlight, horizontally or vertically, which line you are within the pattern. This is not always necessary with smaller patterns, but this was a huge deal for a project this big, where I might do 200 stitches of one color before switching to the other color. Being able to mark where one color began and another without having to individually count the grid squares was really helpful and saved me a lot of time.



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*4/14 9:08 p.m. [cross] - progress pictures*

### **3.5 [process: tools & materials]**

I had to think about what kind of materials I wanted to use and how the price, availability, and quality would affect my ability to execute the project. For example, after some experimentation, I ended up choosing to make the project using a small crochet hook that would make the texture of the material more dense and stiff, but would leave less gaps within stitches, making the text more legible. Making these decisions was as overwhelming as it was freeing. There were many times where I felt some pretty intense choice paralysis, as one small choice could drastically change the outcome of the finished piece.

### **3.6 [on fiber arts, crochet as a poetic medium]**

Working in the realm of fiber arts opened up a lot of choices and opportunities for poetic expression that are typically withheld in the realm of traditional, text-on-paper poetry. Depending on where one is submitting poetry, the text of a poem is expected to be black, in a simple, legible font, on white paper. In contrast, for this project, I had to think about what color I wanted the text to be, what color I wanted the background to be, and how that would affect not only the readability of the piece, but also how that would affect the mood that it might exude.

When choosing the font for this project, I was greatly influenced by textile work that included text (which I like to refer to as “text-ile”) by artist Flora Wilds. Her quilted tapestries include a multitude of different found fabrics, often decorated with bolded and italic short, but powerful phrases such as *“I have been many people but I have always been desire”* and *“Nothing held back.”* I considered having [cross]’s text be in italics because I adored the aesthetics of Wilds’ capitalized, bold italic text, a signature of her quilted tapestries. A significant typographic attribute of my poetry is the use of all lowercase letters, which didn’t mesh well with italics and, in a crochet format, it made it significantly less readable. So I ditched the italics for readability, but the choice to include the Arial font was inspired by Wilds’ work.

### **3.7 [on craft as resistance & slow poetics]**

Wilds’ textile work, like my own, embraces a slow poetics, stating that her works “reflect capital and its pace.” Wilds’ work reflects this in her use of discarded or forgotten found objects — worn clothing, purses, quilts, making a commentary on production and waste within our contemporary capitalistic society, and how we value quality, quantity, and time.

Virginia L. Lewis, a gender-fluid author, crafter, and professor at Northern State University, in their Youtube video “Knitting and Crafting as Subversion of Neoliberalism,” addresses ways that our current capitalistic environments “divorce people from the process of making things, from understanding what it is exactly that they’re putting together and from being able to make it themselves...” (8:14 - 8:24). Emphasizing the slowness as an integral and necessary of anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist resistance, Lewis states, “it [handcrafting] elevates notions of care and patience instead of extractive output” (11:08 - 11:13).

Taking on a long term project like [cross], which ended up including 124,440 single stitches, required delving deep into repeated action and slow production. Lewis emphasizes this, stating “The whole slowness, the deliberateness, of this process ... It’s one stitch at a time” (9:13 - 9:25). I was asked many times when I was first beginning the project if I was going to find a way to use a machine to help produce it. To do so, at least for me, would negate the point of doing a project like this. The value of this project comes from, not only the value of the words that I strung together to express a significant time in my life, but the time spent, the commitment, and the craftsmanship that it took to execute it.

Something that I especially connected with that Lewis discusses is the idea of crafting in public as an important form of protest. They state, “When you see the process and you make the labor visible, it just brings people back... somebody has to do that labor somewhere” (10:24 - 10:37). This idea is especially pertinent to my own identity as an artist. I am known for dragging around my projects with me to public events, readings, lectures, cafés, concert halls, and family gatherings. For folks who are familiar with me and my particular cocktail of deficiencies and mental illnesses, there is acceptance and even adoration of the necessity of working on my projects during events. With strangers or those that know me peripherally, I feel their judgment, their perception of me as non-attentive and even rude, from my participation in crafting in public. Though crafting in public, for me, is more of an accessibility necessity and less of a choice that I make deliberately as an act of resistance, I admire the outlook of public art as resistance, very interested in the ways that Lewis’s ideas coincide with my own experiences.

### **3.8 [on women’s work]**

I feel that I would be amiss if I didn’t address the ways in which textile and fiber arts are considered to be “women’s work.” In their video, Lewis acknowledges the historic, systemic devaluation of women’s work, stating, “... we have the idea of knitting as feminized labor that has traditionally been regarded as unserious and marginalized” regarding contemporary participation in hand crafts as, “restoring the agency that is invoked in women’s work and reclaiming it as an autonomous way of acting” (12:28 - 12:44).

In her essay “Knitting, Weaving, Embroidery, and Quilting as Subversive Aesthetic Strategies: On Feminist Interventions in Art, Fashion, and Philosophy” Natalia Anna Michna addresses the ways that artistic genius has been historically considered as intrinsically masculine. Women’s handicraft, including most fiber arts mediums, was limited to functional creations, making them valued significantly less to male canonical art, which was created for pure aesthetic pleasure (168).

This project included so much labor, hundreds of hours, at the low end of things. Sometimes working on it felt like a real slog, where I would feel paralyzed by how much there was left to complete, anxiety that could only be soothed by working on it. There were times that I would crochet after a long day at work, and was so tired that I would fall asleep sitting up while working on it. Anyone who has tried to crochet, knit, embroider, or sew, knows how utterly difficult the simplest of handicrafts can be to learn and execute, and how laborious even the smallest of projects can be to complete. It is hard for me to wrap my head around why these

sorts of skills would not be put on the same pedestal as other traditional artistic mediums that are historically dominated by men.

The value of women's work has increased throughout the years, slowly becoming more widely celebrated in mainstream artistic communities. With rising consciousness surrounding overconsumption, as well as the rise of second hand shopping and thrifting culture, individuals have begun to realise the difference in value between one of a kind, hand-made and vintage items versus cheap, mass-produced ones. Furthermore, the internet has made learning these crafts extremely accessible, with a multitude of patterns and tutorials being just a click away.

One fiber artist, Lauren Grant, has taken women's work a step further by infusing her embroidery with meaning, using needle work to express her experiences, memories, and emotions relating to lived events. Micha states, "The use of handicrafts in Grant's projects is thus not only subversive... but also therapeutic" (176). This is something that was certainly true for me while working on [cross]. Crochet is a strong mental regulatory action that I participate in to relieve stress, and so is writing poetry. Combining the medium of crochet and the emotional expressions of a particularly melancholy time, [cross] stands as a physical manifestation of coping with and through my existence.

[cross] is by far the thing that I am most proud of from this collection of work. I want this project to encourage makers, appreciators, and everything in between, that participating and engaging in long term creation like this is unfathomably valuable. We move so fast and expect so much from one another in every facet of our lives, and while slowing down can be incredibly difficult to do in our current culture, it is astronomically important to practice as an act of resistance to non-attainable productivity that is pushed onto us systemically.

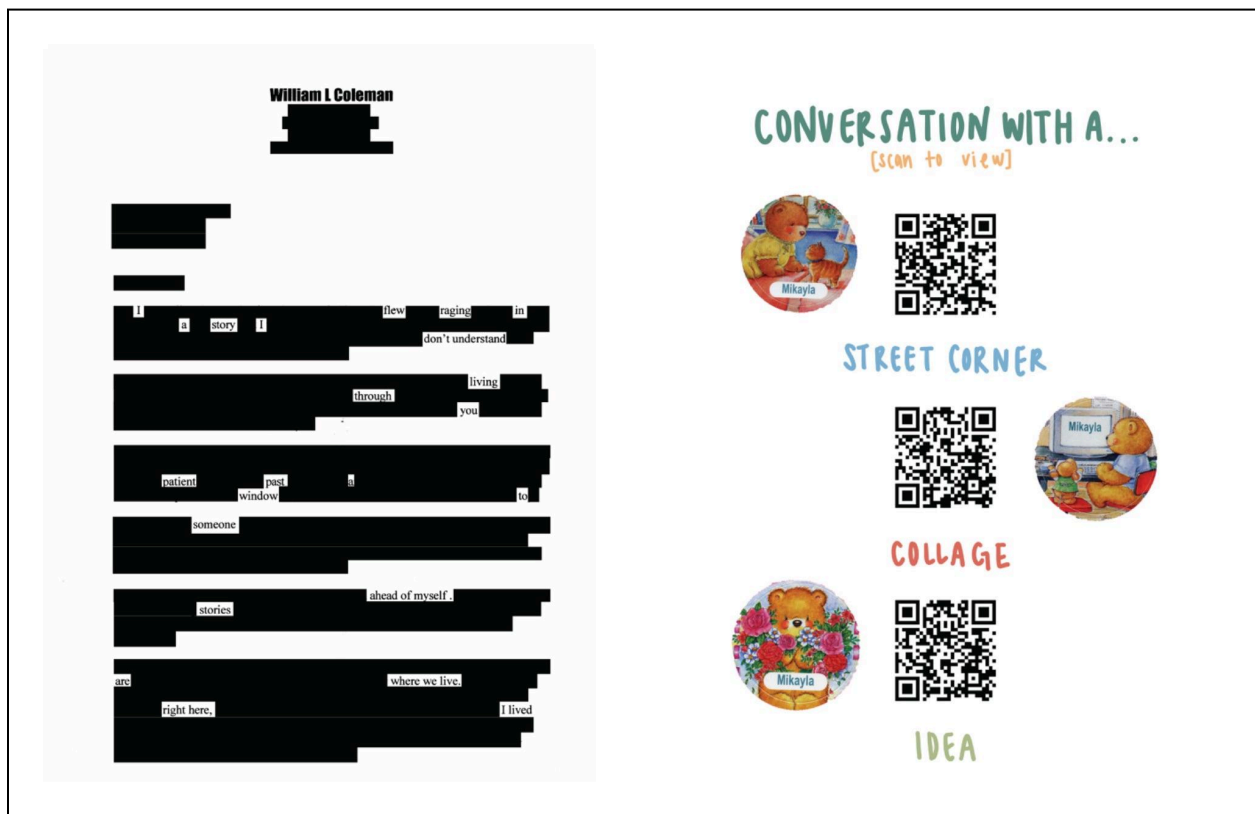
## 4. 2024 zine [it's always something different in the end]

### 4.1 [the idea]

To create a zine as a larger container for the creative work that I produced during the 2023-2024 academic year, combining any and all work that I felt I wanted to share, as well as several different mementos and ephemera to encapsulate my experiences.

### 4.2 [background]

Each year since 2021, I have made a zine to contain my creative work from the year before. I was assigned a zine project in a digital design course during my undergraduate studies, and totally fell in love with the analog and experimental space that zines provide and continue to create them annually.



### 4.3 [process: collection]

The biggest process that I take part in while making my zines is very simple on its face – to live and document the process. Throughout the year I collected pieces of ephemera: receipts, tags, pins, stickers, and various other forms of evidence of existence. I lugged around a big film camera and took pictures of ordinary and habitual objects, places, and people. I wrote poems, pasted text onto images with glue sticks, had conversations with places and concepts, and redacted old letters from deceased family members.

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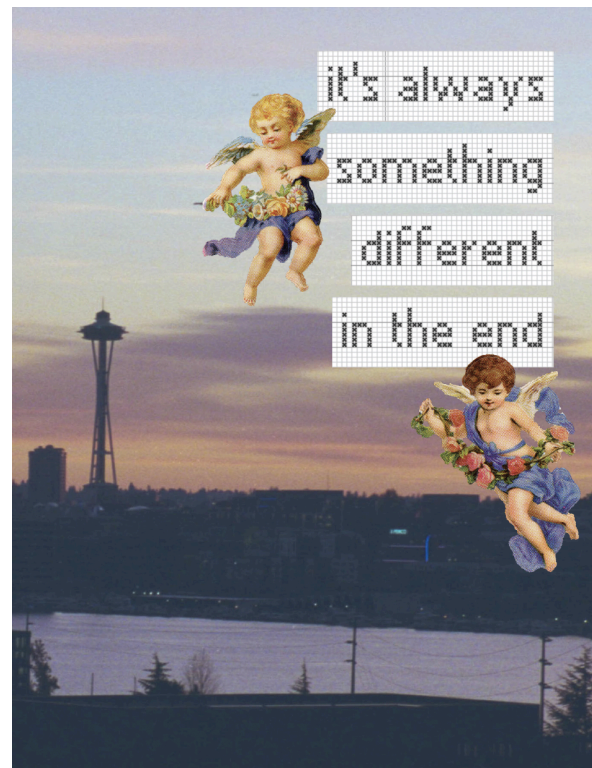
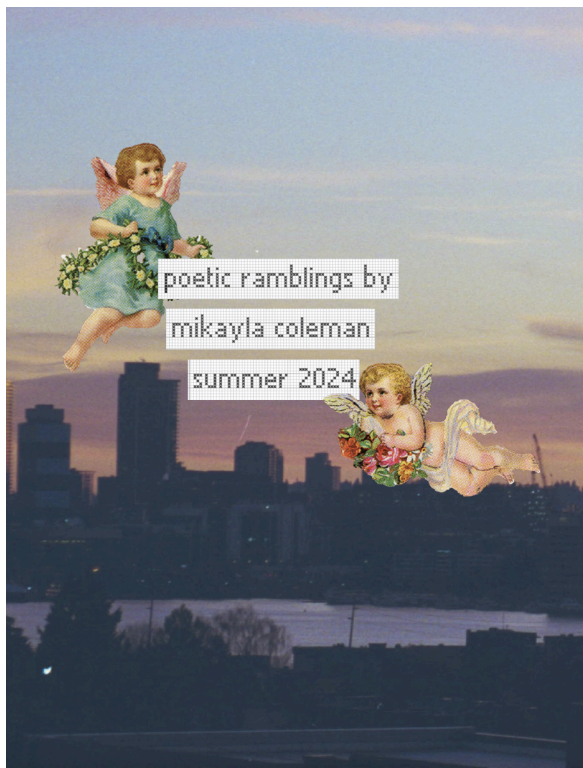


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*2024 zine [it's always something different in the end] - scanned bits & bobs*

### 4.4 [digitizing]

The process of organizing all of my media was long and tedious. I scanned all of the physical objects, images, and words and tried to put them in some sort of order that flowed, adding and subtracting pieces to ensure the right amount of pages that were required for it to be printed.



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*it's always something different in the end - back cover, front cover*

#### **4.5 [front & back covers]**

For the front and back covers, I chose a film photo that I took on top of my apartment building in downtown Seattle. The image shows the Seattle skyline in silhouette, including the infamous Space Needle, over a beautiful, pastel sunset, ensuring the image was split between the front and back cover and meeting at the seam to create a complete image when the zine is held completely flat. On top of that image, I included the scans of some cherub and flower stickers that matched the palette of the base image. To tie it all together, I included the cross stitch pattern format for the title and description on the zine's front and back covers.

#### **4.6 [designing & formatting]**

Once I had a digital version of the zine that I was happy with, I used ProCreate, a drawing software for the iPad, to hand write the page numbers, table of contents, and different written embellishments. Then began the tumultuous process of trial and error to ensure that the zine would print in the correct booklet format. This process can be extremely time consuming and

difficult – there is a lot that can go wrong depending on the printer and software that one is using. When that was sorted, I folded the pages into a small booklet, and sewed the pages together at the spine using embroidery floss and a tapestry needle.

#### **4.7 [on zines, collage as poetic medium]**

Containing earlier versions of some of the poems that I decided to expand within my thesis project, like [long negatives] and [cross], as well as film photos, scans of physical items, collage, video poetry, redaction poetry, and more, the zine is effectively a big scrapbook-type collage of things that I experienced and/or enjoy. In *Guard the Mysteries*, Cedar Sigo touches on the idea of poetic collage – “The element of collage is not always imposed after the fact, but often arises as we are facing language and attempting to chart it in the moment” (96). As an interdisciplinary artist with my hand in many creative pots, and with the frame of ADHD, ASD, and anxiety shaping the way that I experience the world, I have and continue to feel very held by the zine format, which embraces compartmentalizing, interrogating, and archiving everything and anything. In this way, zines are less organized than, say, a book, but that is the point. We, as humans, experience things messily.

#### **4.8 [on the relationship between zines, time, and revision]**

In the foreword of *Girl Zines: Making Media and Doing Feminism*, Andi Zeisler touches on the ways zine projects relate to young feminist experiences, underscoring them as “a work in progress” (xiii) and “a marker of it’s time” (xiv). My zines, instead of being an overt call to action or focusing on a particular theme, are intended to be a sort of time capsule for myself to look back on, a reflection of who I was with, where I was, and what I was doing or making during a particular year. In this way, it is extremely personal to myself and my lived experiences, with the intended audience being me, somewhere in the future. I like to share my zines with those who are close to me, doing small physical prints and mailing them to my friends and family who have a grasp on the current happenings of my life. But because the intended audience is myself, and focusing on my experiences, there are things that are included within the zine that might not make sense or not have a purpose to someone that is not me. I am okay with that. I think that trying to understand art, especially my own, is nonsensical.

Because of its time capsule nature, there are images of people in my zines that I have painful memories with and no longer talk to, as well as written and visual works that I no longer enjoy or identify with. What I am trying to say is that this is the point. Like a journal, it is a record of my lived experience – thus, this piece has not been altered or revised since I finished working on it in late summer 2024.

#### **4.9 [on finality]**

While taking on these projects, I was often asked how I felt about the finality that comes with taking poetry into physical forms. I don’t really have an answer for this, but I will try to explain my philosophy –

I am not a fan of finality. There is truly no “finished” version of any of my works, across any medium or genre. There is no final draft, there are, simply, versions of my work that I decide that I will commit to. There is certainly a difference between being committed to a version of something and something being finished.

Are there things that I wish I could have changed when I look back at a “finished” piece? Absolutely. But I think that is a big part of my work, committing to the mistake, and to be unabashed in that commitment, to be proud of the ways in which my work is human. This is especially true with [cross]. I believe that this is what makes my work artistry.

**[conclusion: it's always something different in the end]**

*"it's always something different in the end"* is a phrase that I have lived through in many contexts, taking on many different meanings through many different times in my life. The phrase *"it's always something different in the end"* was taken from the title of my very first collection of poetry that I turned into Cedar Sigo, and then I used the title again for a zine that I made that summer, and now I have used it to encapsulate my greater poetics statement for my thesis.

The phrase was herded together based on my ideas pertaining to the relationship between idea generation, creation, and the revision process. These ideas connected greatly to what I felt had been strengthened within that workshop, that even though one can go into creative processes with specific intentions, the things we make almost never exactly match what we sought out to create initially.

This can be disappointing, especially when one is trying to learn. But this sort of inability to control the process of writing poetry, the idea that the poem itself is a being that will evolve and change, and that it will be stifled by suppressing this change, is something that Cedar encouraged our cohort to lean into and to cherish as a part of the creative process. This concept ties not only to my creative processes, but my interpersonal relationships and experiences, especially those that I endured while living in Seattle, where almost nothing went to plan, and there was a substantial amount of struggle.

In taking this phrase with me through the evolution of my poetics over the last two years, I hope that I am able to express the freedom I have found in it, it truly is *"always different in the end"* and that ability to change — though sometimes painful, sometimes brutal, sometimes unbelievable — is the unending gift that artistic expression offers us. Spend years on pieces. Make art that won't sell. Make art that won't be published because it can't be categorized. It is the only thing that matters.

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