

Maybe Twelve-Year-Old Me Would Think I'm Cool:

A Sculptural Investigation into Post-Adolescent
Anxiety and Growing Up Extremely Online

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Abstract

This practice-led project reflects on my coming of age online and other anxieties. Through a ceramic sculptural practice, I look back on past formative moments and feelings, and create objects that represent or express parts of my life from ages 10-20. I make objects that are recognisable, commemorative, and emotional. I am fascinated by how much I am influenced by being online; it shapes my feelings about myself and how I think about others. Being locked into self-reflection cycles aided by this digital record brings embarrassment and anxiety. While analysing these moments and setting the feelings in stone (as such) with my making, I am faced with the prospect that soon enough, I will feel the same way about myself right now as I did in the past. By investigating these insecure tendencies, I want to understand how they influence my making in sculptural practice.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the Acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed

9 May 2023

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Introduction

This project investigates my reflections on coming of age (online) and other anxieties. Through ceramic sculptural practice, this is expressed and reflected upon through objects influenced by past embarrassment, insecurity, and anxiety cycles. This research is centred around experiences and feelings I had and continue to have due to coming of age as a part of Generation Z.¹

Throughout this project, a ‘collection’ of objects have been created that consist of ceramics and/or sculptures² representing specific formative memories, my reflections, and the associated anxious feelings. My name is Sav Mattyasovszky, and I am a twenty-two-year-old woman³ and a totally anxious oversharer.⁴ Through this project, I am reflecting on my coming of age period, which spans my life from around 10-20 years old. Given my current age, I am only two years ahead of the project parameters. Currently, I feel I am in limbo between not being a child or teenager and not having a wholly developed adult brain. In the first phase of this project, I considered if this was the right time to have this reflection at the forefront of my practice – with the distance between now and then being so short. This decade that I’m focusing on makes up just less than half of my entire life. Right now, it’s still very much important to me; it’s not just a blip. I remember precise details from every year in that decade, and I remember how I felt. Maybe when I’m ten years older, ten years wiser, I might have more valuable insights, or some helpful critical reflection, or perhaps I would give myself more grace and be less embarrassed.

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¹ Generation Z was born between the late 1990s to early 2010s. Also known as ‘zoomers’, we are widely known for growing up with the Internet from a young age and having greater awareness of mental health issues.

² I use both ‘object’ and ‘sculpture’ interchangeably throughout this text, but mostly use ‘object’. I choose either depending on whether I am talking about an object-ness or a sculptural-ness of a piece.

³ I was born on the second to last day of the year in 2000 (this makes it really easy to calculate my age each year).

⁴ Someone who tends to give other people too much or inappropriate information about themselves, *especially online*.

However, self-awareness and reflection is a critical part of who I am and it will show up in my practice, regardless. Analysing every past, present, and future moment is my special talent (but actually, it's just anxiety).

This exegesis, in part, acts as a conversation with myself, where I am acknowledging cycles of reflection from both the past and present. Through analysis of the past, I have noticed actions and feelings I have carried with me to the present day and patterns I have accrued when expressing my identity. This document uses brackets often around words as a strategy to reveal how I may really be feeling, to reign in my oversharing, keeping it aside from my more 'put-together' thoughts. Not including snippets of oversharing would be to not share the true extent of my reflecting, where telling all and analysing all is part of my methodology. I am fragily walking the line of oversharing (in humorous, relatable Gen Z way) and, to an extent, just having a whinge and moan about how anxious I am all the time.

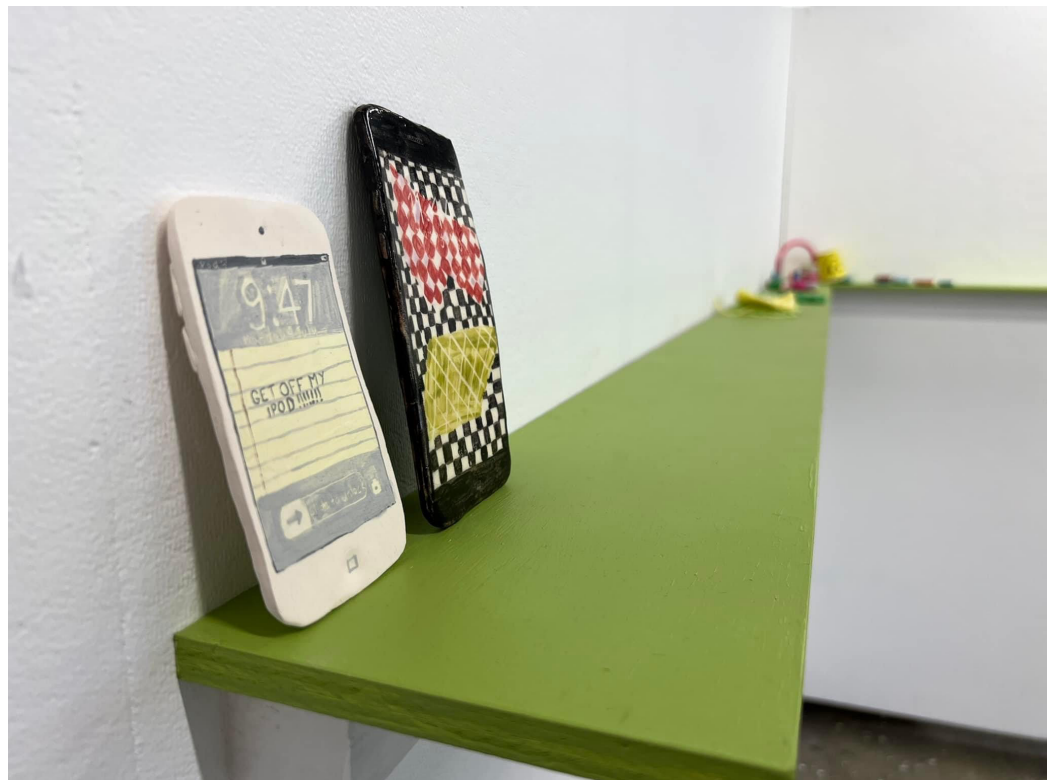


Figure 1. Sav Mattyasovszky, ceramic iPod and iPhone, August 2022.



Figure 2. My first selfie ever, on my Nintendo DSi, December 2010.

The project begins with a hot pink Nintendo DSi, given to me on my tenth birthday, 30th December 2010, my first device with a front-facing camera. From this gifted moment, I was introduced to the media that would soon change my life, the selfie. This device was the first object that really influenced who I was and how I would grow up. I used it frequently, taking up all the storage on the camera roll with all sorts of creative projects and selfies, also using the voice recording software for made-up songs by my friends and I, and the basic animation software to create seconds-long videos.



Figure 3. My Nintendo DSi.

The first object I made in ceramic for this project was a sketch of this same hot pink Nintendo DSi. The ceramic object fell apart, so the top and bottom screens are separate, which accidentally resembled what happened when you used a Nintendo DSi too much, and the hinges between the two screens became limp, and the screen flopped back and forth. The device was meant to be glazed hot pink; I don't know where I went wrong, but it came out patchy lilac. The colour of this ceramic device was the first encounter within the project that proved ceramic practice can be unpredictable. The ceramic process is about collaborating with clay, working with it and establishing trust between yourself and the medium. No matter how much effort and consideration you put into the work to ensure things go to plan, there are so many elements to the chemical process that clay undergoes, meaning that there is a level of uncertainty that is always present.



Figure 4. Sav Mattyasovszky, *Nintendo DSi with Pokémon Pearl opening screen*, April 2022.

I am online

Two years later, in 2012, I learned that selfies could be used to prove something. They showed my fellow pimply 12-year-old peers that I was cool (in my own way) because I could edit my photos to look like I was morphing with a tiger or floating in a galaxy. Over the years, I adjusted myself in real life and by digital editing (surprisingly, I never used Photoshop or Facetune to retouch or edit my face or body cosmetically, just editing images creatively). My Instagram feed became flooded with photos, capturing me from the shoulders up. I continued to take selfies and edit them in various styles, making sure that people knew I wasn't just a pretty face; I was also creative, cool, and unique (not like other girls).⁵ Through these images, I constantly tried to prove my identity and who I thought I was. I sent weekly reminders on followers' Instagram feeds that I still existed and wanted everyone to know I was still me. Looking back, I was competing for a sense of uniqueness, trying to maintain an image that best represents who I truly am. Though now I am old enough to understand that identity isn't just about image, especially online, being 'extremely online'⁶ made it seem like that's what it was about at the time. I found myself attempting to keep up with ever-changing teen beauty trends under the guise of 'loving and expressing myself'.

My eyebrows took the worst of it. They became thinner, then thicker, then thinner, then shorter, then disappeared, then came back again. In September 2022, I made a vase from memory to represent the approximate length and width of my eyebrows from 2017. It's a small vase, but big eyebrows.



Figure 5. Tiger edit, 2012.



Figure 6. Galaxy edit, 2012.

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⁵ A phrase that coincides with the negative 'pick-me girl' trope often used by people online, which describes when a woman says she's unique in that she doesn't engage in feminine stereotypes, often taking a dig at women around her that do. 'Pick-me' comes from how a woman might act this way to be seen as better than other women in an attempt to be 'picked' by (mainly) men.

⁶ 'Extremely online' describes a person so heavily involved in online culture and discourse that their perception of reality and life outside the Internet is skewed. I go into further detail in the first chapter about the origin and uses of this term.

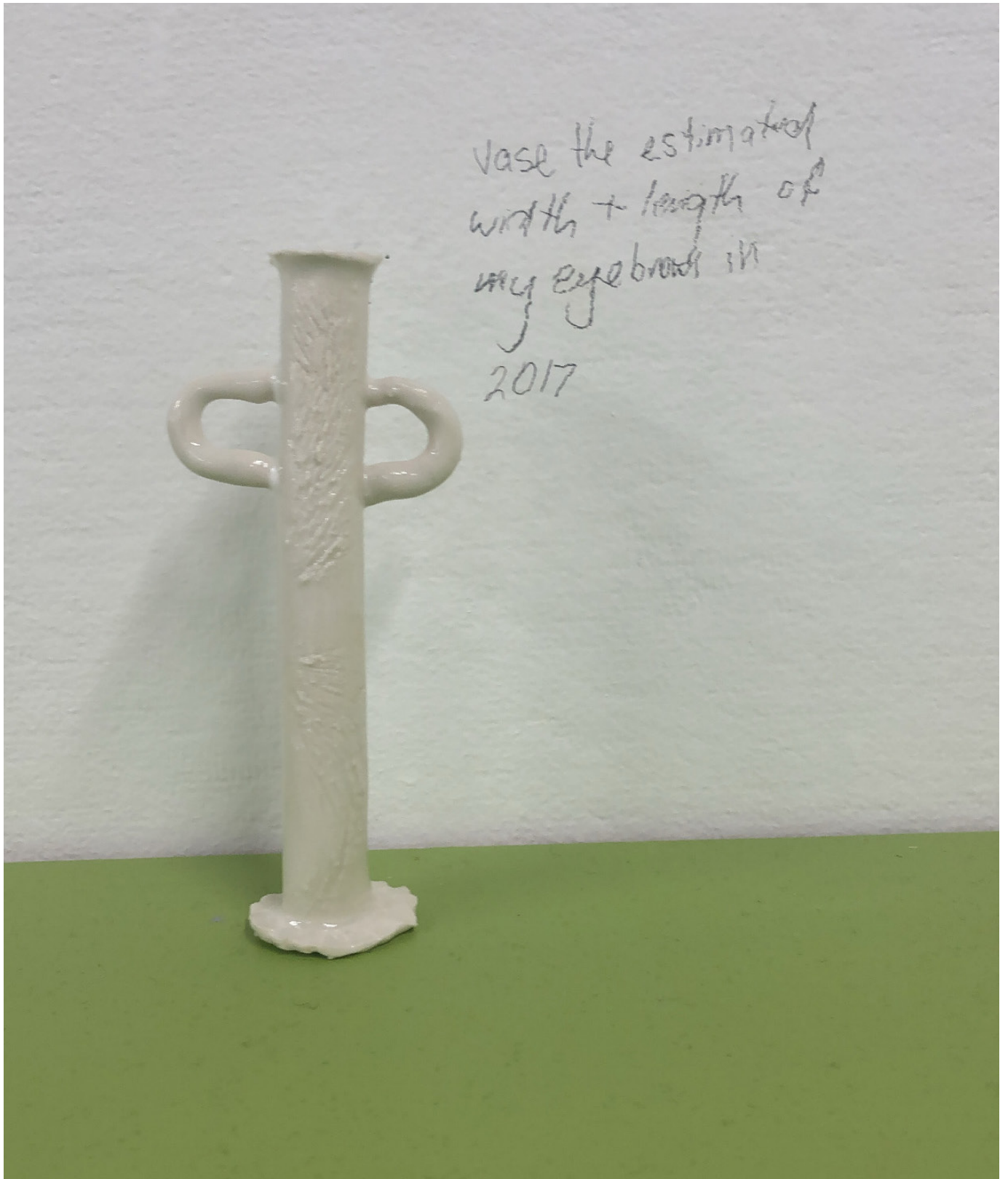


Figure 7. Sav Mattyasovszky, *Vase the estimated width and length of my eyebrows in 2017*, September 2022.

When I was sixteen,⁷ I received my first hate comment on a selfie I posted on Instagram with a caption quoting a Tyler, the Creator lyric.⁸ The comment was from a girl I knew from school; it said, “Kill yours”. That was it, not even a finished phrase. I laughed it off; I had hardly spoken to this girl before, and I was embarrassed that she didn’t think I was cool. I know that without the Internet, I wouldn’t have been able to share this selfie, she wouldn’t have known that I listened to the same kind of niche artist that she did and become annoyed about it, and maybe she wouldn’t have been angered enough to be motivated to tell me to off myself. Growing up with unrestricted access to the Internet is something most people my age experienced; we learned to communicate with each other in a saturated online public. Sure, similar situations of teen angst could happen in person, but most of it happens online now. It’s much more convenient, we have 24/7 access to each other outside of the schoolyard, and there is a digital fence to shout behind.

There is a worry that having so much access to each other’s history will cause issues for future generations. Writer Molly Knefel questions if having an extensive public digital account will change how we live as adults.⁹

The public sphere created by the Internet is ubiquitous, inescapable, normalized. Maybe it’s okay that they’re posting such ridiculous photos of themselves because there will be no one to run for president who hasn’t.¹⁰

Being online in this way has caused cycles of embarrassment to be multiplied to a larger and faster scale. As soon as I got my hands on a portable device of my own that connected to Wi-Fi (my first iPod, age 11/12ish), I spent every second, between school and sleeping, online. To this day, scrolling on social media is the first thing I do in the morning and the last thing I do before I sleep.



Figure 8. My first selfie on my iPod touch, 2012.

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⁷ I was year 12 here, I started primary school in 2006 and finished high school in 2018.

⁸ Tyler, the Creator is an American rapper. He was once banned from New Zealand.

⁹ Molly Knefel, “Permanent Records,” *The New Inquiry*, last modified October 2, 2017, <https://thenewinquiry.com/permanent-records/>.

¹⁰ Knefel, “Permanent Records.”

Anxiety and objects

Now that I am older, I am cycling between being embarrassed by my younger self and her tendencies to let everyone online know how she was feeling in every waking moment to knowing that in my art practice, I am continuing the same habits in different but not so different ways (this entire project). These feelings seep their way through cracks in ceramics, objects trying to ‘show off’, and through every “I think” and “Maybe” in my writing. The objects that make up this project can directly reflect a memory, an action, or an overarching expression of the era I’m currently living in, as a part of Gen Z. I consider how being a confident ceramics maker affects these insecure feelings I want to process, and how through the making I find myself acting in contradiction to my own anxiety. The ceramic process and my anxieties within my practice and life have parallels that I want to explore. One way of doing this is discovering the distance between myself and moments and the distance between myself and my work.



Figure 9. Sav Mattyasovszky, cracks in an emotional object, March 2023.

The first chapter of this exegesis, *Making for Attention*, details how much being online has affected my coming of age and has led my anxieties inside and outside of my practice. The second, *Recognisable Objects*, and the third, *Emotional Objects*, are organised by two approaches to making. The first type of making includes ceramic sketches and commemorative objects. I will discuss the problems and discoveries during this type of making, and the solutions I found that helped me move forward. The second type of making involves objects with a ‘looser’ subject matter, which I term emotional objects. This is the making that emerged in the second half of the project, which is based more on a feeling, a possibility, or an anxiety.

Making for Attention

Extremely online

The term 'extremely online'¹¹ describes a person so heavily involved in online culture and discourse that their perception of reality and life outside the Internet is skewed. It is unknown who was the first to coin the term, but it was first used in the early 2010s and has since skyrocketed in popularity in the early 2020s. It's often used as a mocking meme term to make fun of people that also might be called 'keyboard warriors'¹² from reading too much unfiltered news and opinions of strangers on the Internet, and it is often followed by phrases such as 'go touch grass'.¹³ I use the term 'extremely online' within the context of this project to describe myself as someone whose identity (both inside and out) has been cultivated via the Internet. Like many terms coined online, the meaning of this can vary slightly between different corners of the Internet. It is easy to be misunderstood and have opinions misconstrued sometimes. In my state of being extremely online, many people, similar age to me and younger, that use the Internet as a primary form of communication and media consumption are, on some level, *extremely online*.

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¹¹ Also known as 'chronically online'. Both terms describe the same type of person, but I have found that 'chronically online' is used more on social media platforms (where I heard the term first), whereas 'extremely online' is used in journalism or more formal types of research. Both terms have emerged through the Internet, with no known sole creator. There is discourse around whether 'chronically' is a suitable word for the phrase as it is more often used in the current day to describe chronic illnesses and disabilities. Since 'chronically online' is regularly used as a mocking/derogatory term towards someone, people online have pointed out potential ableism in the phrase, so I have decided to not include it in this research. Furthermore, there is discourse that finding the term problematic is extremely online in itself. Although it is interesting hearing how the Internet adapts new terms and evolves them quickly, it is too far of a tangent in my overall research. I find 'extremely online' accurately describes what I'm using the term as, so I will use it from this point forward.

¹² Someone who is highly opinionated and is a dick about it online. Likely, they are 'extremely online'.

¹³ Phillip Hamilton, "Touch Grass," Know Your Meme, last modified May 3, 2021, <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/touch-grass>.

Online public

Participating in the online world is not seen as a second life anymore; it is the basis for most communication between wider communities, whether locally or globally. Culture is evolving in this communication era; new ways of socialising and having an identity are becoming increasingly important. *Real Life* is a now-defunct magazine which described itself as “a magazine about living with technology. The emphasis was more on living.”¹⁴

In an editorial, they wrote:

Being online may simply be a matter of having a phone, whether or not we are looking at it. To be “extremely online” would designate when the habits common to communicating with screens seep into our awareness and our identity and our behaviours regardless of the screen’s presence. Online-ness, here, isn’t a remove or a retreat from the everyday and the real but is the norm that centres us in the world and in our own heads. It is to speak in memes, to see in photos, to intuit the metrics and know what counts.¹⁵

This quote made me consider how much digital technology has leached into how we act. When making ceramics, I often feel like I have a camera over my shoulder and that I’m making for later sharing online. There’s a whisper in the back of my mind when I install work that’s asking, “Is this going to garner a good response from my peers and the same six people who always like my Instagram stories?”¹⁶ and “Will this translate well when I post it on my Instagram?” With anxious thinking, there is often a lot of ‘noise’, such as racing and intrusive thoughts. I find being perceived online can add to this noise, as the Internet follows me

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¹⁴ “About,” *Real Life*, accessed April 11, 2023, <https://reallifemag.com/about>.

¹⁵ “EXTREMELY ONLINE,” *Real Life*, last modified January 16, 2018, <https://reallifemag.com/issue-extremely-online/>.

¹⁶ As an example of me becoming extremely online and obsessed with Instagram, I must note that I haven’t had one sole Instagram account in my entire life. There is no clear archive; I have had to trawl through the camera rolls of old iPods and phones to find my older content that was split between different accounts. Instagram invented the tool to archive your posts around 2017, meaning I lost a few posts before that time due to deleting them and moving between accounts. I have even deleted an old account because I wasn’t happy with the engagement of my followers. I had what was referred to as ‘ghost followers’ when I had a lot of followers but not many ‘likes’, meaning many followers did not like my posts, therefore throwing off my ratio of likes to followers. It sounds ridiculous, I know! It was like I was running a business based on my life at 13 years old.

everywhere; it's always in the palm of my hand. IMO,¹⁷ putting something on the Internet is more permanent than putting something out into the world IRL.¹⁸ There is now a stored copy forever following you, a digital paper trail more permanent than an actual paper trail. People who know me and like me, and even those who don't, can refer back to my images repeatedly. Whereas something in real life is often only captured by the audience in memory and therefore is less tangible and can be quickly forgotten.



Figure 10. Screenshot of my Instagram account that I saved because I had reached 300 followers, 2013.

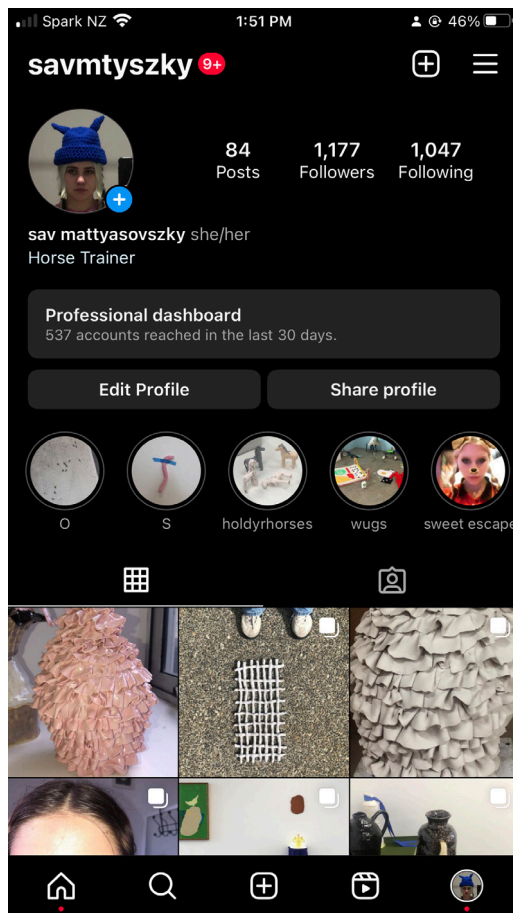


Figure 11. Screenshot of my Instagram account, 2023.

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¹⁷ In My Opinion

¹⁸ In Real Life



Figure 12. Natasha Matila-Smith, *I Know Everyone's Miserable, But How Does That Help Me*, Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, 2019.

Aotearoa artist Natasha Matila-Smith uses time spent online alone as subject matter throughout her practice. Still, most prominently in the work, *I Know Everyone's Miserable, But How Does That Help Me*,¹⁹ from the Te Uru exhibition titled *twenty-four-seven*.²⁰ The work comprised of an installation of suspended confessional texts, which looked at late nights spent online and the intimacy of privacy on the Internet. Matila-Smith's work in *twenty-four-seven* expresses how the Internet lures you in and constructs an easily accessible world with no end that can lead you anywhere, at any time. In an article from *Artnow*, writer Lucinda Bennett describes Matila-Smith as a Millennial. She says that "her self-revelations are seamless, easy to read for an audience weaned on oversharing[...] Matila-Smith came of age in a world where privacy was already under siege."²¹ Bennett's

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¹⁹ Natasha Matila-Smith, *I Know Everyone's Miserable, But How Does That Help Me*, digitally printed vinyl banners, 2019, Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, Auckland.

²⁰ Curated by Ioana Gordon-Smith, *twenty-four-seven*, 2019, Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, Auckland.

²¹ Lucinda Bennett, "Bedroom Diaries," *Artnow*, March 1, 2021, <https://artnow.nz/essays/bedroom-diaries>.

comment, “weaned on oversharing”,²² feels particularly relevant, even though I am of a different ‘generation’ to Matila-Smith, being Gen Z. I think that very personal artmaking comes naturally to me because I grew up oversharing online. The show’s title, *twenty-four-seven*, alludes to ‘revenge bedtime procrastination’,²³ another phenomenon that often occurs when being extremely online and working a capitalist work week. The term originated from Chinese social media platform Weibo in 2014.²⁴



Figure 13. Instagram post by me, 2013.



Figure 14. Instagram post by me, 2013.

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²² Bennett, “Bedroom Diaries.”

²³ The phenomenon of putting off sleep and staying up late, in an attempt to find the free time and relaxation we are unable to claim in the capitalist working week.

²⁴ “Bedtime Procrastination,” Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, last modified April 28 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bedtime_procrastination.

Matila-Smith's work specifically engages with the phenomenon of 'stalking'²⁵ online, which is often done in private – specifically, the suspended digitally printed vinyl banner with her search history on English actor Tom Hiddleston. The text on the banner reads:

Tom Hiddleston girlfriend
Tom Hiddleston black hair
Tom Hiddleston black long hair
Tom Hiddleston Loki 1
Tom Hiddleston sex scene
Tom Hiddleston butt
Tom Hiddleston shirtless
Tom Hiddleston girlfriend 2019
Tom Hiddleston Loki TV Show
Tom Hiddleston birthday
Tom Hiddleston Starsign
Tom Hiddleston
Tom Hiddleston favourite food
Tom Hiddleston favourite colour
Tom Hiddleston siblings
Tom Hiddleston rich
Tom Hiddleston pets
Tom Hiddleston Only Lovers Left Alive
Tom Hiddleston Crimson Peak
Tom Hiddleston dancing
Tom Hiddleston Comic Con
Tom Hiddleston interview
Tom Hiddleston young
Tom Hiddleston crying
Tom Hiddleston High Rise
Tom Hiddleston smile



Figure 15. Natasha Matila-Smith, *I Know Everyone's Miserable, But How Does That Help Me*, Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, 2019.

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²⁵ (Not like, actual creepy-man-peeping-tom-stalking.) Stalking in this context is a casual Internet term to describe researching information about someone online, whether it be someone famous, a co-worker, an ex-partner. Stalking is mostly done on people you do not follow or regularly engage with online. Although it is slightly frowned upon, most people extremely online will do it at some point, if not regularly, as most information gained is already public, so it's not always seen as creepy. It becomes serious when someone is harassing or trying to gain access to private profiles, paywalls, etc. when not authorized.

Matila-Smith uses text and personal commentary to express her “feelings no one is supposed to verbalise, at least not in public.”²⁶ I am using personal and Internet-derived motifs similarly in my sculptural practice. Having an online presence and being able to publicly access information about someone and what is going on in their life, whether they are a celebrity or an old high school friend, influences how we form relationships with others and see ourselves. I am aware that others may ‘stalk’ my profiles, which often encourages me to try and see myself from other people’s perspectives by going through my profiles in the third person.

With someone considered extremely online, parasocial relationships can begin to outweigh genuine relationships. The term ‘parasocial’ was first coined by Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl in 1956 and described having a one-sided relationship with a media personality, which feels close to one person and essentially non-existent to the other.²⁷ These parasocial relationships can even begin with people who aren’t considered celebrities or influencers; you can follow anyone online and keep up with them as you would a celebrity. This is another example of how being online has shifted the way we think about our identity, affected the mode of connection that Generation Z has grown up using, and that these aspects have, in turn, changed interactions in real life. For example, most people I have met as an adult I had already seen online before I met them, whether it was a potential romantic relationship or a friend of a friend. I have been advertising myself online to likely acquaintances for years through various online profiles and personas.

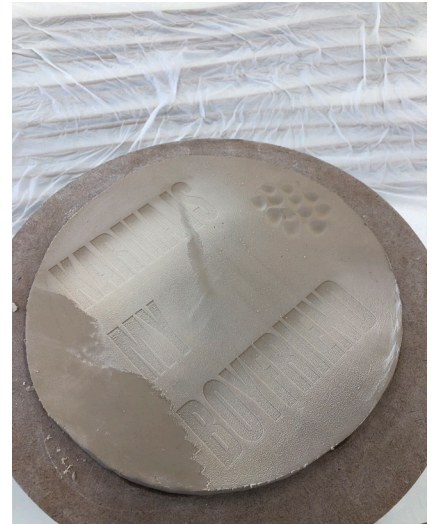


Figure 16. An oversharing instance where I made a clay slab that I laser engraved to say the Taylor Swift lyric “Karma is my boyfriend” October 2022.



Figure 17. Sav Mattyasovszky, vase with Internet-derived motif which is the old Instagram notification banner, May 2022.

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²⁶ Bennett, “Bedroom Diaries.”

²⁷ Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl, “Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction,” *Psychiatry* 19, no. 3 (1956): 215, doi:10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049.



Figure 18. Members of Public Share collective viewing Janet Lilo's *Top16*, Te Papa Tongarewa, 2018.

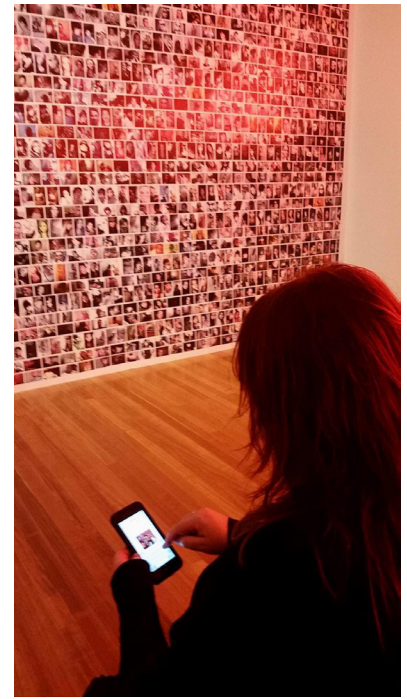


Figure 19. Member of Public Share collective (Monique Redmond) messaging Janet Lilo at *Top16*, Te Papa Tongarewa, 2018.

Janet Lilo's *Top16*²⁸ project exhibitions pose questions about social media's impacts and the nuances of sharing online. For *Top16*, Lilo printed out hundreds of public selfies of people from their Myspace and Bebo accounts, removing them from the context of social media posts. Although digital footprints exist, having a copy of something printed from the Internet still seems to feel a lot more permanent.

Being online is not often considered a 'second life' anymore; it's so ingrained in young people's lives that it's become a genre of being.²⁹ Growing up with a flat-screen space to present me and be so publicly accessible has made me rethink my entire public identity, repeatedly compounding the cycles of anxiety and insecurity about who I am. Looking through my digital archive of Instagram photos, old usernames and bios, there is a 'maturity' timeline of how I became me now and a reminder of every phase I ever went through.

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²⁸ Janet Lilo, *TOP16*, 2018-2021, printed 6x4 images, Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington.

²⁹ "EXTREMELY ONLINE."

Even my passwords have evolved and are now an overlapping record of events – some have remained the same for years, and others were added when I got a new pet or lost a pet, e.g. my cat named Belle. She had a nickname, and the shortened version became my laptop password for years, even after she passed. I type half of her nickname out every day. In October 2022, I made a small series of commemorative objects, including a candelabra to honour “(to) all the pets that turned into passwords”. This was to translate a moment of my digital footprint into a physical memorial.

I have often thought about the relevance of bringing ‘online’ as context into this project, but I think it is a central part of who I am and how I take up space in the world. Making objects that commemorate this somewhat dismissed information in our lives and revealing how we have taken things from our IRL lives and connected them online (whether we are thinking about it or not) is a way of acknowledging the small moments of being online.



Figure 20. Sav Mattyasovszky, *to all the pets that turned into passwords* on green shelf next to a doll boot, October 2022.

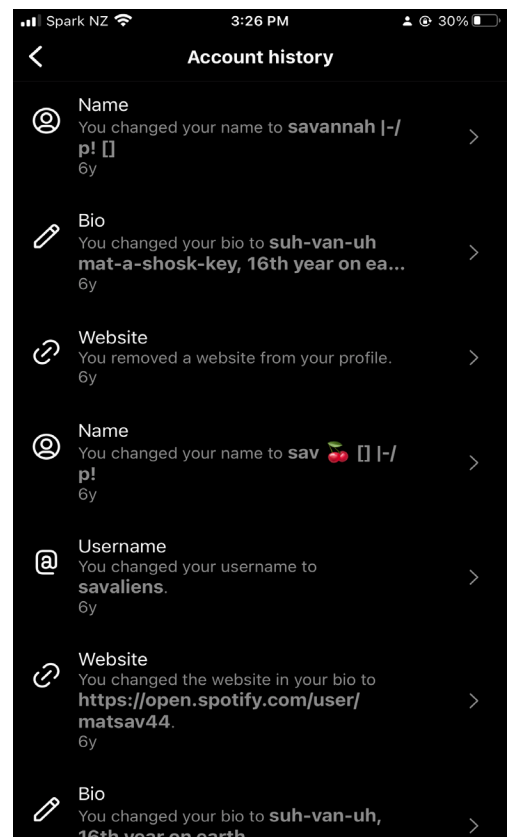


Figure 21. Screenshot of my Instagram account history, example of changes made six years ago.



Figure 22. Sav Mattyasovszky, *2022 Best Year So Fart*, based on a heading that was hacked on YouTube's homepage in 2012, November 2022.

Instagram is life

I started this project by conducting archival research into my online presence, beginning with my first selfie (on my DSi in 2010, through to Instagram stories from a few years ago. I've always overshared, so my posting was more frequent than many of my peers. However, in my age cohort, there have been trends in online aesthetics and how we post and interact on the Internet. For example, when I was 12 and was allowed Instagram for the first time, Instagram stories didn't exist, and not many people had 'finstas'³⁰ (aka 'privates'). I posted everything, and my account was publicly filled with hundreds of squares depicting how I felt and who teen-me was friends with. Instagram then became hyper-curated profiles of your life. As seen in Figure 23, I had an editing obsession when I was 16 and couldn't stop taking photos of my face during this time. Writer Dayna Tortorici states in *n+1* magazine:

The satisfaction of self-publishing is difficult to describe. To press a button and see your own excrescence appear in the preordained format, minted, can feel like a kind of magic. It can make you feel like you count.³¹

I definitely feel this way about self-publishing. And I feel this way about art too. Describing online presence as an excrescence makes it known that it is tethered to you; it is not separate from yourself. Same for art, I embrace that *I* make it, it includes my online presence.

Currently, 'casual posting' is the new trending format for online presenting. Casual posting is about removing all the editing and posing to best represent a genuine, authentic, Internet indoctrinated self. This casual posting brings the finsta out into the public eye through multiple series of camera roll 'dumps'.³²

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³⁰ A second Instagram account, short for "fake Instagram", is usually private so that only your close friends can access it. Posts often consist of funny photos of friends, deep mid-mental breakdown thoughts, and cringe cute images of romantic partners. This became popular on the Internet around 2011; the word's creator is unknown.

³¹ Dayna Tortorici, "My Instagram," *n+1*, last modified January 31, 2020, <https://www.nplusonemag.com/issue-36/essays/my-instagram/>.

³² A multiple photo post on social media (mainly on Instagram or maybe as a photo slideshow on TikTok) consisting of a variety of images of what the poster has been up to, in a casual, funny, reveal-all way.

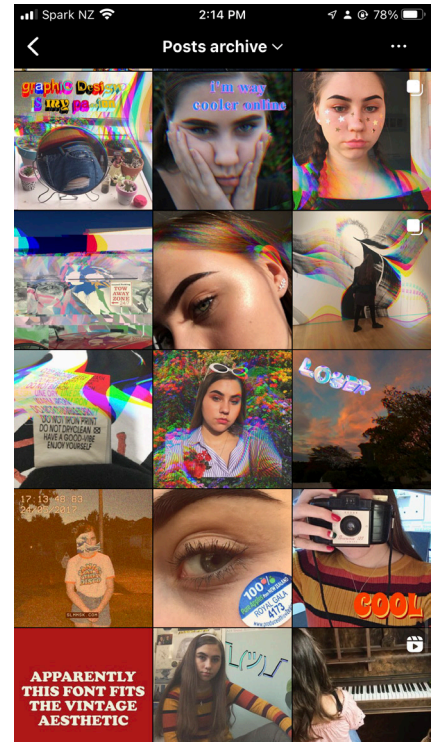


Figure 23. Screenshot of my archived Instagram posts from 2017.

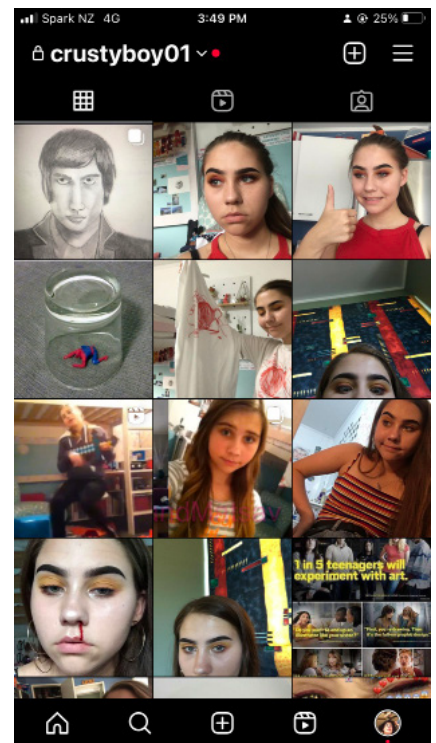


Figure 24. Screenshot of my 'private' Instagram in 2018.

Writer Adrienne Matei points out that:

[...]enjoying that pretence of apparent spontaneity doesn't necessarily mean we've collectively lost all grasp of the truth. For their intended audiences, these images don't seem like contrived attempts to pass off stylized setups as everyday life but instead imply dedication to the aesthetic.³³

Although 'casual posting' appears to be a more authentic way to be online, it's opened up a new realm of complex performativity. No matter how genuine someone 'extremely online' can try to be on the Internet, we are still performing to an audience. (I want them all to like me and think I'm cool. Obviously!).



Figure 25. Sav Mattyasovszky, first ceramic objects and 6x4 photo print of a 'lolsotrue' meme. Early on I printed these memes out on 6x4 just as I had done when I was 12 years old, June 2022.

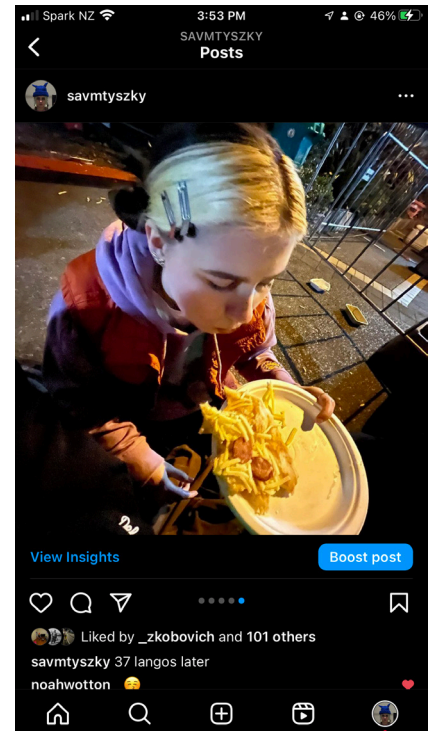


Figure 26. Screenshot of a 'casual' Instagram post from 2022.

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³³ Adrienne Matei, "Seeing Is Believing," Real Life, last modified April 16, 2018, <https://reallifemag.com/seeing-is-believing/>.

Technological fluency and a genre of being

There is a technological fluency that someone who grew up with Internet-capable devices learns intrinsically and has in their life toolkit. The technique of texting and Internet language has a casual style that inherits the same emotions and flair as an IRL conversation. As well as online language, there are also physical techniques of digital life, such as using a touch screen with ease. One week at work, I witnessed a mother and daughter interacting while managing the self-checkout. The mother had never used a self-checkout machine before, and she and her daughter slowly made their way through their items. They stopped for a second, staring at the pick-and-mix from the bulk bin they'd scooped up, and thought about how to scan it. After a split second, the daughter (around 10 years old) figured out how to type in the code, and the mother watched, baffled. "You must have done this before with your dad!" the mother exclaimed. "Nah." said the daughter. This child was even more fluent in technology than me: faced with a machine she's never used, she operated it seamlessly. I would say I'm fluent, but maybe toddlers who have grown up watching Cocomelon and Ms. Rachel on their parents' phones will likely have a better feel for a touch screen than I ever will. Being online is a significant part of my methodology; it impacts my methods and how I think and act in reality.

Treating being online as a genre of being rather than an actual space, or categorising it as a hobby, lets me investigate how it infiltrates my thinking and generates anxiety over my identity. I understand that online is something that now occupies the mind and influences the body, even when you're not online. Making with an analogue medium like clay, I feel separated from my online self. I am patient and present in every fingerprint I embed in the material. Physically and experientially, I couldn't be further from online. Still, since being online occupies a non-space,³⁴ which permeates my other experiences, it is always with me, influencing these impressions and making of my work.

³⁴ William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, Twentieth anniversary edition (New York: Ace Books, 2004), 69.

Recognisable Objects

I'm in love with clay

Despite how much ceramics has humbled me, I think it made me fall in love with it. Throughout this project, I've reached several intersections and have not always known where to turn next. Most of the making troubles I encountered in my first year of postgraduate study came with two problems: not knowing what to make next and what to *do* with my finished objects. As you will have read, I circle back to these two conundrums quite a few times. The root is that I wasn't sure what I wanted my ceramic practice to look like. I have a plethora of ideas for singular objects (e.g., Smiggle erasers, a Nintendo DSi, an apple from work, etc.). Still, I was unsure how my methodology might productively link to the overarching subject, especially in this medium. I'm drawn to clay because I enjoy the traditional process of a bisque firing followed by a glaze firing and how that makes you spend time with and away from your work. Apart from sticking to that process, the possibilities of clay are virtually endless, and there are varying levels of predictability you can adjust to control, especially with glazing. It has made me make with 'looser' standards for myself, knowing that even though I may try hard at something, there's a chance it won't work out for reasons beyond my control. I mainly hand build as I enjoy the wobbly edges that feel like sketching and how textured surfaces interact with glaze. Most of my work is made with a coiling method, by extruding long pieces and repeatedly smoothing each coil together to create patterns or smooth-ish surfaces. I have never learned to throw on the wheel, and I'm not planning on learning (I don't think.) The lumpy asymmetrical aesthetic of hand-built objects reflects ideas of fragility and insecurity, such as never standing up straight and being quite nervous in form – something I wish to acknowledge as this underpins much of my thinking.



Figure 27. Sav Mattyasovszky, 4139 (*granny smith apple*) and eraser, May 2022.



Figure 28. Sav Mattyasovszky, tall object, March 2023.

Ceramic sketches and making from memory

Beginning the project by making what Mon (Monique Redmond, my supervisor) coined ceramic 'sketches', I started sculpting some of the devices I've had over the years that had front-facing cameras. Through making objects based on childhood and teenage memories, I am reflecting on formative moments growing up, the beginning of my relationship with the Internet, and the embarrassments I've experienced now bottled up as anxiety. Through making ceramic objects, I was actively stringing together a timeline of moments I wanted to remember, to set in stone(ware). (I actually make earthenware, but I couldn't help but make the joke, sorry.)

Items included:

- A smiley face paper cup that we used in primary school in the ICT room that we flipped upside down to a sad face if we needed help
- One of my favourite ties
- A Granny Smith apple with the pink sticker reading one of the many apple codes I've memorised from working at supermarket checkouts, 4139
- A Club Penguin gold coin
- A vase with the old Instagram orange notification banner
- Smiggle erasers
- Co-dependent best friend vases



Figure 29. Collection of my work on the floor, June 2022.



Figure 30. Sav Mattyasovszky, *Smiggle Eraser*, August 2022.



Figure 31. Sav Mattyasovszky, *iPod and iPhone ceramic sketches in glazing progress*, May 2022.



Figure 32. Sav Mattyasovszky, *collection of ceramic sketches*, June 2022.



Figure 33. Sav Mattyasovszky, *Club Penguin Coin*, July 2022.



Figure 34. Sav Mattyasovszky, *Best Friends*, on green shelf next to a smiggle eraser, October 2022.

An interesting thing happened with the *Best Friends* vases in the figure above. I accidentally made the right-hand piece of the pair of vases reliant on the left-hand portion. Without the companion left piece, it is wobbly and unstable. This is a piece where maybe I was subconsciously projecting (co-dependent relationship problems) into my work. (Or perhaps this is more of a reflection of my making abilities, and I am just anxious and reading too much into it.)

The Smiggle erasers³⁵ that I slip-cast remind me how anxiously bossy I could be as a child. My friends and I had a ‘Smiggle Club’, and I’m pretty sure it went down in flames and arguments in the backyard. Same with the Paper Sushi Restaurant. And the newspaper business we made, too.³⁶ As my father told me as a child, “If you want something done right, you’ve got to do it yourself.” I took that too literally with the club, restaurant and newspaper. I was a collector kid and spent more time rearranging toys and planning their activities and scenes rather than ‘playing’ with them. That’s now translated to the adult me, into how much I love getting ready but don’t like going out. Spending hours and hours throughout my teenagerhood (and adult life), planning with my friends, deciding on hair and makeup and outfits, and taking photos to put online before we leave, is the best part. Much how I like making objects to plan to install, but not actually ever being happy with the finished installation.



Figure 35. Smiggle eraser in casting process, July 2022.



Figure 36. Greenware Smiggle erasers in progress, July 2022.



Figure 37. Sav Mattyasovszky, ceramic *Smiggle Erasers* on top of real Smiggle erasers, July 2022.



Figure 38. Sav Mattyasovszky, ceramic *Smiggle Erasers* with real Smiggle erasers, July 2022.

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³⁵ Early 2000’s children’s stationery brand which is still popular.

³⁶ These were ‘pretend play’ scenarios my friends and I made up as children.



Figures 39-40. Mark Schroder, *Fortune Teller*, Gus Fisher Gallery, 2021, installation detail.

Another artist that makes copies of objects in ceramic, usually through slip casting, is Aotearoa artist Mark Schroder. He often casts or makes objects by hand and installs them alongside ‘real’ objects to create complete installations that operate as fictitious environments. Copied objects remove function and allow the object to be viewed symbolically rather than literally.

What to do with objects

I was proud of the objects I made in the first semester of this project. I was learning more about the ceramic process, but at the end of it, I found all that was left was a series of copied objects, and in all reality, I never knew what to do with them.

To display them, I sprawled them out on a plinth (the most accessible option) and then tried to find other artists who dispersed things out on a plinth to back up my unreason.³⁷ (I’ve banned myself from using plinths now unless I’m going to make my own). Next, I decided to install a long shelf in my studio space.

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³⁷ The problem with thinking anxiously is that after the times of making, sometimes, ‘unreasons’ happen. This is what I call it if I am insecure about what a work is actually doing. I devise things that act as an excuse, an ‘unreason’ for the work. These excuses bring up a lot of uncertainty, and I easily doubt what I mean. This phenomenon is fuelled by insecurity, a need to find the best (coolest and smartest sounding) meaning in words for everything made.



Figure 41. Sav Mattyasovszky, installation of ceramic sketches and recognisable objects. Objects featured: Crocheted refill page, notepad, pot, bisque iPod, iPod stand, my favourite tie, smiley face cup, WordArt vase, New World receipt pot, eraser, photo stands, broken pencil, vase with the old Instagram notification banner, crocheted 'loser' necklace, two 6x4 photo prints of memes, 4139 (*granny smith apple*), my current iPhone, *Nintendo DSi with Pokémon Pearl opening screen*, June 2022.

I made the green shelf fit the corner of my space, like a bedroom shelf for displaying coveted things (see Figure 43). I painted it green because I wanted to, and I put it at eye level so it felt as if you were a kid looking at a typical shelf or a table. The shelf has remained in the studio for the duration of this project, becoming a dumping ground for any piece of work that can fit on it, like the spot you throw keys and junk mail onto when you get home. In every tutorial meeting, I kept saying, “I’ll get rid of the shelf; it’s not working for me anymore!” but I never did because:

- I filled all the screws over with joint compound
- My work would just end up on the floor, if not on the shelf.
- What am I supposed to do with two 2.6-meter-long shelves now? I can’t be bothered recycling them into something else just yet
- (Another secret fourth reason)

For most of my practice, I have been remaking things already in existence, most often ‘copies’ of objects I had as a child or adolescent. Whether it was painting, video performance, or other forms of sculpture, everything always focused on collating and copying something real. I can push these ideas further by surfacing the feeling underneath the objects.



Figure 42. Meme, posted by @snafuqd on Twitter, 2022.

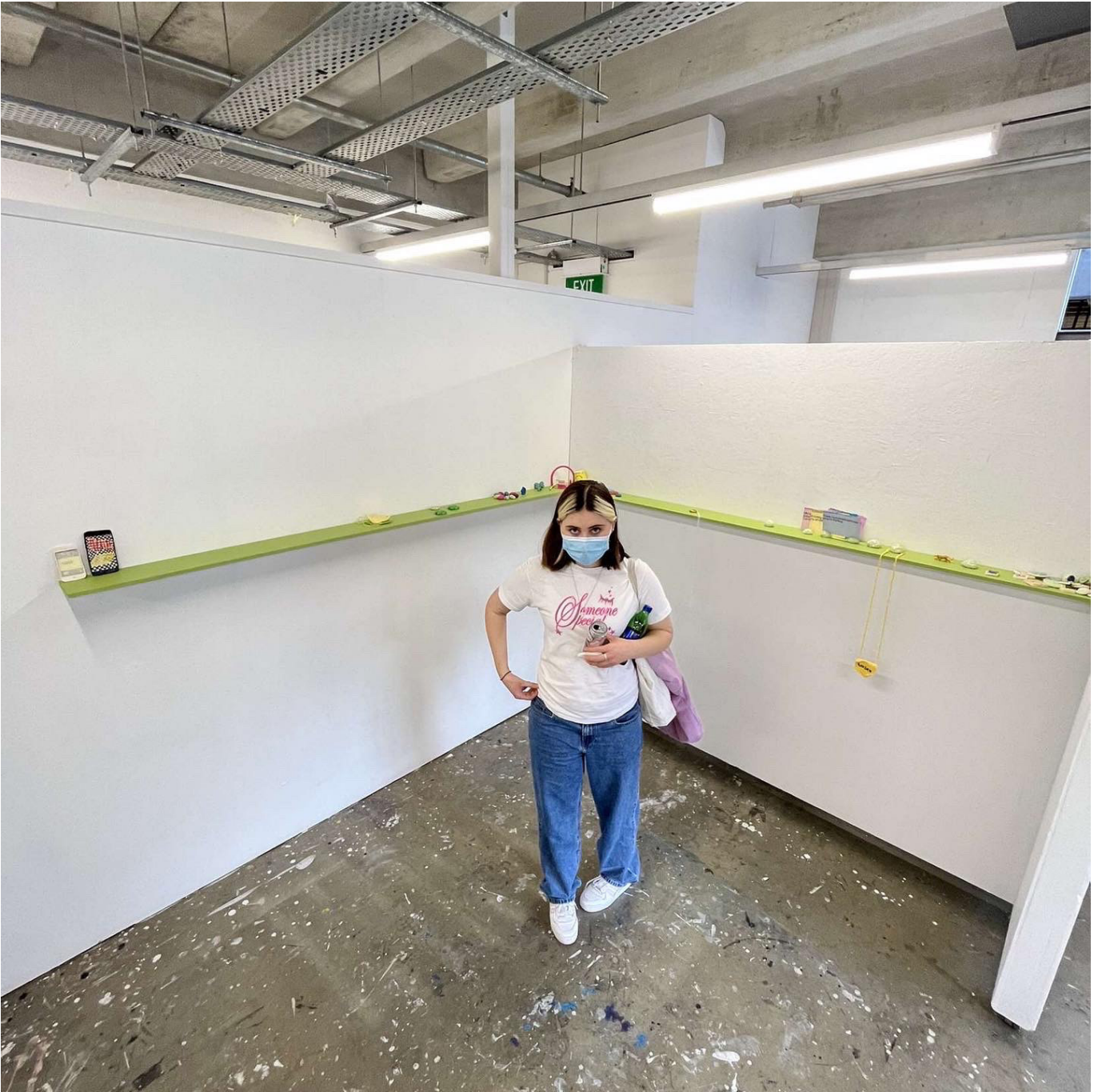


Figure 43. Me standing with my long green shelf, August 2022.

I often refer back to Swiss artists Peter Fischli and David Weiss's project, *Suddenly This Overview* (1981–), produced collaboratively over a thirty-year period, which is a collection of unfired clay 'scenes' that refer to moments in time, or jokes and concepts that leave you questioning our understanding of reality.³⁸ There is a casualness in their method of sketching with clay, using the raw material as a way to remember ideas and represent them as a collection.



Figure 44. Peter Fischli and David Weiss, *Suddenly This Overview*, 2016. Image taken by Monique Redmond.



Figure 45. Peter Fischli and David Weiss, *Endless Loop*, *Suddenly This Overview*, 2016. Image taken by Monique Redmond.

Thinking through Fischli & Weiss's approach, I made a series of objects to commemorate the moments of growing up. Some referencing old Internet memes I found in my archival research at the beginning of this project, some awarding insecurities.

Items included:

- *Best Year So Fart* vase
- *To all the pets that turned into passwords* candelabra
- Six award medals
- A vase that is the approximate length and width of my eyebrows in 2017 (really big)

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³⁸ "Peter Fischli and David Weiss, *Suddenly This Overview*, 1981–," The Guggenheim Museums and Foundation, last modified January 28, 2016, <https://www.guggenheim.org/audio/track/peter-fischli-and-david-weiss-suddenly-this-overview-1981>.



Figure 46. Sav Mattyasovszky, *She Believed She Could So She Did*: medals and laser cut medal hanger, amongst other objects on green shelf, November 2022.

In making the award medals, I wanted them to be funny but sincere, to reveal humorous truths and overshared details about my life – laying out what makes me who I am, antipsychotics and superiority trend complex and all. These were the start of making objects that still meant something to me and reflected a particular moment or feeling but were not a 'copied' object from the moment I thought about it.

The award medals were given for:

- Body just isn't made for ballet
- For never earning a medal
- Lowest dosage of antipsychotics
- (Second) Oldest person in Saturdays³⁹
- Maxing out student living costs 2019-2022

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³⁹ Saturdays is a nightclub in Auckland CBD.

As well as making ceramic works based on feelings rather than an existent object, support structures became what I think of as a two-birds-with-one-stone answer. I began to create objects that operated as tables, shelves and plinths. Using this strategy to break out of representative habits, I discovered different aesthetics I enjoyed in ceramic techniques. Objects that don't necessarily represent something memory-specific can interact in interesting ways with other objects. Sometimes these held objects are not my own; for example, my objects holding up my studio peer, Nikki Donald's shelf and felted wool piece in our collaborative exhibition.



Figure 47. Collaboration with Nikki Donald, December 2022, installation detail.



Figure 48. Nikki Donald photographing our installation, December 2022.

Collaboration with Nikki Donald

In December 2022, Nikki Donald and I decided to collaborate on an exhibition in two iterations, a foyer space and a window display space.⁴⁰ We deliberately didn't set any intentions for the installation; we went on the hunch that some interesting discoveries would emerge. In discussions, Nikki and I had concerns about our assemblages being too 'still life', possibly even looking like a museum installation. In response, we aimed to focus on the dynamic connections and possibilities that might arise when placing your work alongside someone else's objects.

⁴⁰ We installed in Level 5 foyer, 6-9 December 2022, and WE window space 23 January - 14 February 2023.



Figure 49. My work upon one of Nikki's shelves, pleated fabric added by me, and laser engraved piece hanging above that reads: *I'm neither joking nor serious but other secret third thing*, December 2022.



Figure 50. Collaboration with Nikki Donald, December 2022, installation view.

We discussed which objects needed support or support objects, and seeing my work become both opened a lot of making possibilities. The relationship I was the most drawn to from the first installation was the purple pleated support with the yellow vase. The purple fabric was successful because of the way it draped, slumped and stretched, the opaque deep purple resounding against the matte yellow. (I thought I hated purple and yellow together, but for some reason, this really works.) Together, the vase and support are gaudy and extravagant; they embrace being displayed for attention. The vase has its hands on its hips and a star-shaped top hat; it is showing off.



Figure 51. Purple pleat details, December 2022.



Figure 52. My blue frilly object and yellow vase atop one of Nikki's shelves with painting behind, December 2022.



Figure 53. My assemblage of objects in WE window space, January 2023.

The netted blue frilly object was one of the first pieces made without an exact intention for it to be something specific when finished. In this installation, it became its own piece but also a support and vessel for other things, creating successful assemblages. It has appeared in several installations now.

The day after we installed, I made a lot of new objects, many of which blurred the lines between being support and object to me. I don't want my work to have so much meaning that it makes its reference point so apparent. I like the ideas to sometimes be implied instead of shouted out. (Sometimes, I just wish my work would just shut up. Sometimes, I wish I would just shut up.) Seeing the installation for a few days, I began to feel guilty as I saw that so much of my work was sitting on top of Nikki's. My objects lined her shelf-like structures and rested on her felted textiles; all I could think about was how my objects were trying to take centre stage. There is something 'out of sorts' about my vessels sometimes. They stand large and proud and bold and

insecure, making me anxious. I cringe; this is precisely how I feel about myself. Ego crisis aside, a subconscious hierarchy had taken over when installing our work together. Shelves are meant for things to sit on, vessels go on top of things, and flat objects fit well underneath things. This was how our objects performed and related together, with the habit we had formed with the familiarity of our own styles. When my work is alone, I don't feel so much emotion about this issue. The materials of our objects, when combined, also influenced these arrangements. The hard doesn't always play nice with the soft (something I learned in Intermediate school PE class after a rugby ball to the neck). After post-supervision tutorials, we decided to have a reflective conversation and rearrange the work. Nikki referred to a part of her practice as discovering why we're drawn to making art, and she referred to life and art as a hyphen. A hyphen joins but also separates; there's a tension to be explored.



Figure 54. Collaboration with Nikki Donald, December 2022, installation view.



Figure 55. Collaboration with Nikki Donald, December 2022, installation detail.

After our discussion, we decided to disrupt our installation stereotypes and see all objects as nothing more than a piece of matter that can be connected to something else. I had to make conscious decisions to go against sculptural inclinations; we looked at each object and pretty much went, “How can that do the complete opposite of what it’s doing?”. Quickly, things went from below to above. Felted pieces became smoke, capes, covers, and bonnets. Vases were turned on their heads, and tables were disassembled, creating new sculptural objects and relations. A ‘pillow’ completely gobbled up the Cadbury purple pleats and did so proudly.

Through my collaboration with Nikki, I found answers to my ongoing question of what to ‘do’ with my objects. Embracing all the different types of objects I make, such as support structures and objects that can be assembled together regardless of their shape and scale, has been productive in expanding my practice. From my beginnings in making ceramic ‘sketches’ of recognisable objects to this collaboration and discovery of support structures, I realised the need for a much deeper understanding of how these objects and supports behave in the world and how my feelings and memories manifest as sculptural assemblages.



Figure 56. Collaboration with Nikki Donald, December 2022, installation view.



Figure 57. *Pigtails* with one of Nikki’s felted pieces, December 2022.



Figure 58. Collaboration with Nikki Donald, view from inside WE window space, January 2023.



Figure 59. Collaboration with Nikki Donald in WE window space, January 2023, installation detail.

Emotional Objects

Anxiety as a methodology

This chapter explains the quandary I've faced on realising my embarrassment hasn't ended; it's still happening. This realisation became integral to the project as I started to conceptualise the cycles of anxious feelings as a part of my methodology rather than just reflecting on past emotions from a distance. Since these feelings recur over and over, I notice differences and connections between my past self and my present self, like how I overshare and can be blindly confident for a time, then shrivel over a moment later. By investigating these insecure tendencies in conjunction with an art practice, I want to understand how they can influence my decisions during making and what I make in response. For example, with the series of commemorative objects, I made medals of perhaps less-than-important achievements, but ones that influenced my anxiety or identity at some point in my life. I am expanding into emotional objects: sculptures based on a feeling instead of a moment or memory.



Figure 60. Sav Mattyasovszky, medals in progress, November 2022.

Being 22 and still an anxious person, I realise how much of my time I spend thinking about every little hiccup, mistake, or unfortunate formative moment I've had – which I keep in a pseudo filing cabinet of bad memories. This has been magnified through this project, too. Daily, my vomiting of words and actions are recounted and replayed before I try to sleep. I am keeping score of everything and creating a physical output through ceramics to express a bubbling over archive of anxiety. I get over it by reminding myself that most people will forget 90% of what I said to them that day and that I'll wake up the next morning, forgetting what was keeping me up that night. (But what about the 10% they did remember?)

In contrast to much of my thinking, the truth is, I am confident when I am making. A tempered awkwardness might appear in the completed objects, as something wonky or fragile poking out, but it was made intentionally. I am confident in processing these feelings and letting them go. In clay, you have to be confident in the making, letting things happen and trusting the process and life of clay itself. Being confident in sculpture requires me not to be afraid of taking up space, not to be limited by what I think I don't know, and to be aware of my performativity, something I've become aware of because of being aware of my online presence. I wanted to understand how these 'negative' feelings stemming from insecurity in life (and being extremely online) influenced my decision-making in my sculptural practice. I know most people and artists go through cycles of confidence and insecurity at some point. Using these cycles as a tool is how I've navigated this project, especially as the object has shifted from representational to embodied emotional objects.



Figure 61. Some of my objects in the Wet Lab at AUT, February 2023.

Following a hunch

When making, I am following a hunch. Chasing a feeling and building things up coil by coil requires patience and being present with the materials and feelings. There is no trepidation, only curiosity and keenness in my physical making. Working this way leaves room for material possibilities and allows me to make freely without having analysis interrupt the process. When I am in the moment, building and pushing clay about, I don't fear failure or worry that something will or won't work out. I follow a shape, a size, and an emotion I want to represent. I have been trying to make things that evoke my anxious vocabulary and feelings. I do this to push myself materially and produce work that locates a broader range of Gen Z experiences through the lens of 'now'. I am not working in this way as a healing process but as a commentary and a reflection on my experiences (I didn't start this project to make myself feel better). I want to recount a life had extremely online to document it for the future, so I can continue to compare and reflect as I age and keep working with similar methodologies beyond this project.

An artist I find relevant in ceramic making and approach is Woody De Othello, a sculptor and painter who anthropomorphises household objects through ceramic and bronze. His sculptures go beyond representational sculpture and turn fans, telephones, and vases into dynamic objects that appear hunched over, slouched, breathing, and connecting with each other. Designing and sculpting every aspect of his installations, he creates new domestic worlds that invite thinking about identity and self and draws connections to his childhood in Miami as the son of Haitian immigrants. His way of bringing life to such a still medium is interesting as he works with the gravity of clay and lets it be itself while maintaining a strong sense of artistic style and subject.



Figure 62. My progress of coil building the base of a support structure, October 2022.

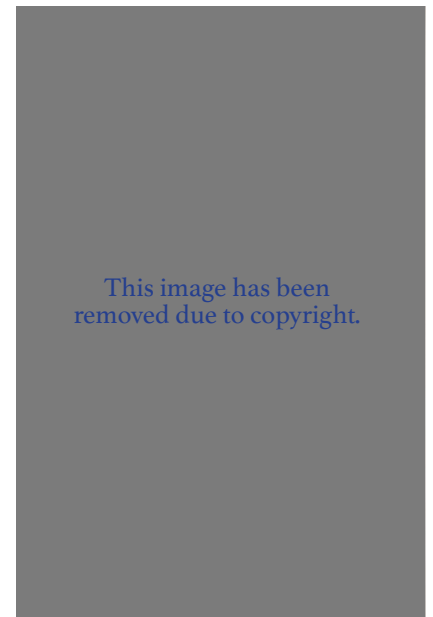


Figure 63. Woody De Othello, *Missed calls, unread messages*, 2022.

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Figure 64. Woody De Othello, *Whitney Biennial: Quiet as it's Kept*, The Whitney Museum of Modern Art, 2022.

In talking with The Brooklyn Rail's Charles Schultz, he refers to intuition as a being like a muscle; the more you exercise it, the better you are at it.⁴¹ I found this a helpful way of thinking about the hunch when making. The more you try to trust your gut and learn from successes and failures, the better you become at getting it right, rather than starting over and over again. I try my hardest to see an object through the entire firing process before deciding whether it's successful. This means I may fire an object a third time to reglaze, continue to finish objects that are broken or on the verge of breaking, or even just small sculptural pieces made from leftover clay. I find that this is productive to push through my own anxieties.



Figure 65. Sav Mattyasovszky, close up of a small piece made from leftover clay, February 2023.

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⁴¹ The Brooklyn Rail. "NSE #659 | Woody De Othello and Charles Schultz, with Raevan Aliyah Senior," *YouTube*, September 30, 2022, <https://youtu.be/FMdihvCoi4w>.

Writing with anxiety

Cycles of confidence and anxiety impact my writing also. I understand that the exegetical writing in this project is contextual for the artmaking, but it's another way 'to be perceived', which makes me nervous. I worry that people will be able to read my writing better than I can, inferring that I have no idea what I am doing (even though I know I do). There will always be a disconnect between how I see myself and how others will see me. This is a space I want some of my objects to occupy, away from myself. This has become 'positive fodder' for my making – sitting on the edge of anxiety and self-deprecation. I utilise this edge as a method that aids critical reflection and plays with these feelings rather than letting them consume my thinking. I am making objects that become an essence of vulnerability, which allude to a formative memory that started as an insecurity, to solidify and share a feeling. These objects subtly express this vulnerability and make these feelings less of a matrix of liabilities and more of an asset to becoming a better artist and person.



Figure 66. Sav Mattyasovszky, *Lattice*, March 2023.



I am holding the cat and the dog nose
to nose and strocing them

Cat and dog - 25

The direct-love concept. You hold the cat and dog nose to nose and stroke them and so induce them to love each other. In fact the preaching and practising of love.

Figure 67. Edward De Bono, *Children Solve Problems*, page 39, 1972.

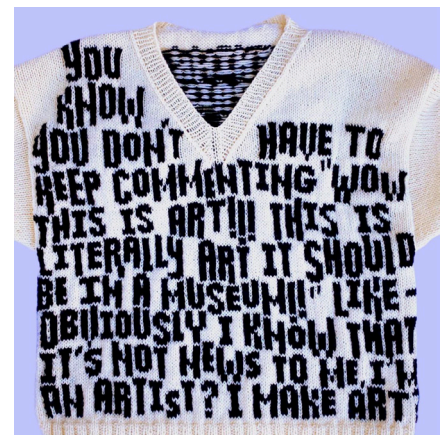
I have been musing that writing and making it feel like I'm trying to walk a dog and a cat simultaneously. They hate each other, one is very enthusiastic, and the other is just there because it has to be. But I must make them get along. In the book *Children Solve Problems*,⁴² psychologist Edward De Bono asks children to solve simple problems, such as how to make a cat and dog get along, invent something that helps someone sleep better, create a machine that can weigh an elephant, etc. He posed simple questions and political problems that got kids to think about what we already know about the world and how to combine things to make something new or understand things differently. It's one of the world's biggest questions: How do two things that don't like each other get along? I find this interesting, and I can devise a simple solution: my making and writing need to face each other, and then they will be friends. But how will they actually do that?

⁴² Edward De Bono, *Children Solve Problems* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1972).

For this project, vulnerability as a feeling, emotion, expression, and gesture must be exposed. Although the physical output of the work is confident and holds space, a matrix of emotions, thoughts, and memories feeds the work. I am influenced by Kendall Ross, a fibre artist, because of her use of vulnerability and honesty in her art-making. She posts her knitted objects on her dedicated Instagram account: @id.knit.that. In her online presence, she discusses her work and problems as a fibre artist and is frank about her disdain for backhanded feedback. I strongly relate to her open oversharing, verbally and through the knitted statements. The way Ross describes her practice is synchronous with my own thinking:

Knitting is how I process my emotions, experiences, and memories. I am most inspired by the exercise of using a historically woman dominated craft to share my personal stories of being a young woman. So often, femininity is seen as a weakness... My goal is to use my traditionally feminine skills to celebrate these small, overlooked, seemingly silly moments of young womanhood in fine art. Each piece is like my own diary entry of how sad, confusing, exhausting, freeing, and fun it feels to be 22.⁴³

Ross was also 22 when she wrote this, so I find it even more relevant that we share similar ideas at the same age.



Figures 68-70. Kendall Ross, Instagram posts of her knitwear, 2022-2023.

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⁴³ Kendall Ross, "Kendall Ross," 108 Contemporary, last modified June 30, 2022, <https://108contemporary.org/artist/kendall-ross/>.



Figure 71. Sav Mattyasovszky, *Suit and Tie* being laser engraved, October 2022.



Figure 72. *Suit and Tie* in installation with Nikki Donald, December 2022, installation detail.

I understand that having an abstractly diaristic approach is vulnerable already, but I also want to combine my anxiety about writing and apply it to ceramics. For example, the vase *Suit and Tie* has a snippet of lyrics from Justin Timberlake's hit song of the same name engraved down the side of the vase. This is one of those 'guilty pleasure' songs I love (but I find no shame in it). I wanted everyone to know that this was my favourite song of 2021-2022; I even added it to every Instagram story I posted for a few months. I found using text, even to reference pop culture circulating at the moment, was slightly confronting, as it more plainly expresses an idea and makes it harder to guess, which I like about my text-less objects. Materially, it was also confronting, as laser engraving burns sharply through the finger-embedded texture of my clay hand-building.

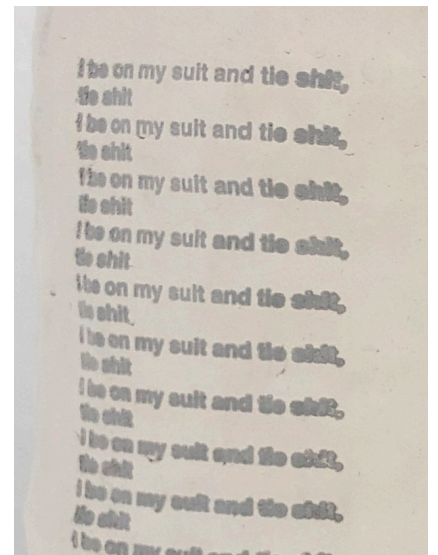


Figure 73. Sav Mattyasovszky, detail of *Suit and Tie*, October 2022.

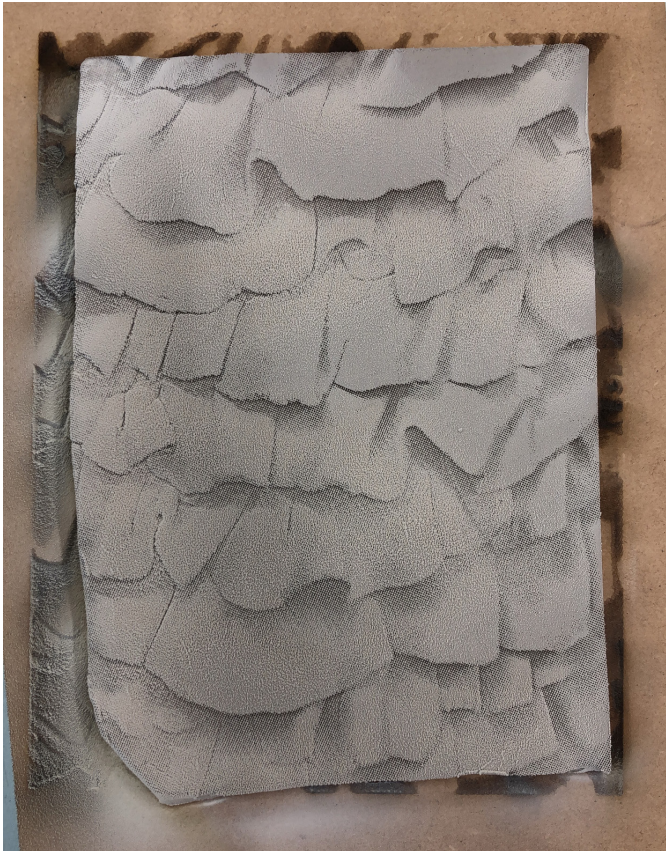


Figure 74. Sav Mattyasovszky, laser engraved image of *Frills* on clay, March 2023.



Figure 75. Sav Mattyasovszky, laser engraved monkey meme on clay, March 2023.



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Figures 76-77. Martin Creed, *Thinking/Not Thinking*, video stills, 2011.

Martin Creed's video work *Thinking/Not Thinking*⁴⁴ features dogs representing two mental states: thinking and not thinking. This work speaks about our subconscious and conscious minds working with and against each other when creating. Both contribute in different ways. There is something to be found in the disagreement between my conscious anxiety in front of my head and my subconscious confidence when my hands are in clay. There are ceramic processes that must be adhered to (most of the time) and set boundaries, which adds to my confidence and knowledge within sculptural practice. I also enjoy having conventions that I can adhere to as they ground the process so I can focus on other aspects of making, such as feelings and visual aesthetics. For me, ceramic has the perfect ratio of conventions and processes to lean on while also having enough freedom to create almost anything I want.

Once I get my thoughts into words and onto paper and it is all laid out in front of me, I see signs of unsureness, flipping back and forth on ideas, emotions, and opinions. There is a switching on and off of thinking thoroughly and streams of consciousness that intertwine and contradict. Words require certainty, whereas objects do not always. In writing, there isn't room for errors, cracks and wobbles. And these words are completely and totally controlled by me; they are with me the entire time. Unlike ceramics, there is no distance to process.

⁴⁴ Martin Creed, "Martin Creed - Thinking/Not Thinking (Music Video)," *YouTube*, March 18, 2011, <https://youtu.be/dAScfwfBzEs>.



Figure 78. Sav Mattyasovszky, *Pigtails*, November 2022.



Figure 79. Sav Mattyasovszky, close up of vase with frills and bows, March 2023.

Girlhood and vessels

Through this process, I've decided to embrace 'negative' feelings and push them back into my work, so they become an outlet to reflect and a way to 'work through it'. So far, this has generated work that alludes to an uneasiness, a fraction of a memory, or a teetering shape. This kind of work often feels more like a memory, something not entirely made clear, maybe skewed by its surrounding stories and feelings. An example of this is my large vase with the synthetic pigtails. It has two layers of glaze; underneath the murky black is a bright, bubbled purple. I reglazed it because the purple didn't go to plan and didn't suit the vase. Covering it with the dark glaze made it more sinister. To me, it's manifested into mourning being a young girl. These exact pigtails are the ones I used to wear as ponytail extensions when I had a short blonde bob. They've been stored tangled in drawers and boxes for years until this vase. There wasn't a specific memory I was trying to reference in this work. But, when

planning and making, I thought about the loss of girlhood and the weirdness I knew the hair might deliver, bringing something that represents the body and putting it into an inanimate object. As mentioned in the first chapter, *Making for Attention*, something remembered is often quickly forgotten and is less tangible, a fuzzy picture. I am working with these different types of memories, some that are digitally archived and some repeated through anecdotes and replayed as insecurities until they are an amalgamation of many memories.

I make a lot of vessels and find that as forms, they often have human-like qualities. They stand up, their bellies and necks protrude and stretch with arms and hands on hips or arms that slump, accessorised with frills and ribbons and skirts. The frills have become a façade of girlhood, and the other feminine traits my objects may have to express my anxious feminine experience. Maybe I have a feminine instinct to accessorise, getting my sculptures 'ready' for their event, making them look their best, with lumps and cracks. There's a possibility I am hyperbolising the pressure to be 'girly'. Although, as a child, I was not pressured by the close people around me to conform to any certain gender norms, especially regarding self-expression. I did feel it when I started to become extremely online. In that forum, there is pressure to decide on a style because the photos you post online must match your feed; an aesthetic must be chosen and adhered to. Even the frills, bows, ribbons, and sports chic trends of right now have snuck into my work. Although some of these might be coincidences, the media I consume daily is seeping into everything I do, whether I like it or not. I also care for each sculpture, making it feel better by dressing it up, just like I would if I felt insecure about myself.



Figure 80. *Pigtails* on one of Nikki Donald's felt pieces, December 2022, installation detail.



Figure 81. Sav Mattyasovszky, *Frills*, next to vase with frills and ribbons, March 2023.



Figure 82. Sav Mattyasovszky, detail of *Lattice* and a mini frill, March 2023.



Figure 83. Sav Mattyasovszky, assemblage of emotional objects, April 2023.

Processing distance

In the traditional ceramics process, there is a repetitive action whereby you spend time with and away from your work as it is made, dried, in the kiln, out of the kiln, glazed, in the kiln, out of the kiln, and then finished. I have found myself thinking about the cliché quote, “Absence makes the heart grow fonder”.⁴⁵ When time is spent away, a chemical process is undertaken. In the clay body, extreme heat will expose the weak spots, weaknesses that I have given it. Thin spots and not well-secured spots will crack and sag and droop. Without breathing room, sealing a space tight will create explosions if you are careless in your making. I am not careless; these are just examples of things that could go wrong. In these waiting phases, I have time to reflect on my work as I remember it before the shrinkages and cracks. When I am met with my work again, it is not always how I remember it. I am greeted with flaws I’d forgotten or imperfections that grew through the firing. Or I am addressed with a love I didn’t know I had until meeting again.



Figure 84. Sav Mattyasovszky, emotional object as greenware, February 2023.



Figure 85. Sav Mattyasovszky, glazed emotional object with cracks, March 2023.

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⁴⁵ When I think of this phrase, I sing it in my head like the song “One Day” by the NZ band Opshop.

I don't remember a time without school

Thinking about my final installation, I want to make support structures that act as a conduit to connect all of my objects, to give them a sense of togetherness via a shared context. There is a common theme throughout the decade of my life that I've focused on, and which is actually still present. I've been in education since I've been able to retain memories, never a gap year or a break larger than a few months. Recently I've been considering school halls and gyms, bleacher-like structures, and objects that might be in one final school assembly. These are the places of awards and quiet competitiveness. Places that I have spent a lot of time, whether standing at the front performing or sitting at the back observing.



Figure 86. Sav Mattyasovszky, emotional objects on makeshift podium with purple fabric, April 2023.

Conclusion

There was a moment in the project when my objects started becoming more serious, when I realised that 'anxious reflecting' was a significant component of my methodology. A copying approach slowly faded when I began considering a more emotional side of myself that I previously often pushed aside in my making.

Many of the arisen imperfections act as a metaphor for my anxieties and insecurities. I am the one that creates these objects, and even though I am confidently doing so, mishaps sneak their way in. Most of these flaws are seen as mistakes in ceramics, but I don't want to hide or repair every single one. They remind me of my identity and the awkwardness of constructing that 'who'. Maybe it's casual posting but for sculpture. Maybe I am trying to perform in a blasé manner, trying to be present and share my flaws rather than carefully curate them out. Maybe I am now curating the flaws, eliminating the effortlessness. Maybe I will accidentally manifest more flaws now that I know this. And the cycles of anxiety continue.

I cannot wait to look back on this project and my life at this point in time and potentially have a full-circle cringe on my intense analysis of my younger self. I will probably wonder why I cannot let go of the past. I know that this process of reflection will be ongoing. Just by living my life (both online and off), I provide myself with an endless amount of 'content' to create from. After this Master's project comes to a close, it will be the first time I haven't been enrolled in education since I was very, very young. I will try to remember what life was like back then. If only I had Instagram as a baby, then I would know. Being met with yourself repeatedly is a process that has given me resilience and patience.

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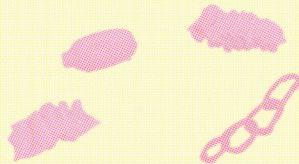
Exhibition Documentation

This MVA graduate exhibition was held at ST PAUL St Gallery II at AUT University (now Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery) from June 15th to June 17th, 2023.

maybe twelve-year-old me would think i'm cool

a sculptural investigation into post-adolescent anxiety and growing up extremely online

Reflecting on my coming-of-age online (and other anxieties) through a ceramic sculptural practice, I look back on past formative moments and feelings and create objects that represent or express parts of my life from ages 10-20. Objects fall into three categories: recognisable, commemorative, and emotional. Through being fascinated by how much I am influenced by online life, I have let myself lean into how the internet shapes my feelings about myself and how I interact with others. While analysing these moments that repeatedly present themselves in anxiety fuelled self-reflection cycles, I set the feelings in stone (as such) with my making. I am faced with the prospect that soon enough, I will feel the same way about myself right now as I did in the past. By investigating these insecure tendencies, I want to understand how they influence my making in sculptural practice.



Master of Visual Arts Graduating Exhibition
2023
Sav Mattyasovszky
@savmtyszky
matsav44@gmail.com

clay
glaze
lustre

two hair extensions
two craspedia
three poppy heads
two bunny tails
two candles
various ribbons

(from left to right)

back row: horse tie, instagram pot, kylix bowl, suit and tie, two frills, pigtails.

middle row: medal, frills #2, fortress, chain, smiley face cup, table, to all the pets that turned into passwords.

second row: yellow vase, goblet, granny smith apple (4139), lattice #2, medal, padder tennis bat, bow vase, frills #1, lattice #1, smiggle erasers, ipod, two frills.

front row: vase the estimated width and length of my eyebrows in 2017, slump shelf, chain, 2022 best year so fart, mirror, frills, chain, blue frilly object, club penguin coin, iphone, medal.

under & beside: alternative vase, i'm neither joking nor serious but another secret third thing, table, medal.

Room sheet, 2023.



Maybe Twelve-Year-Old Me Would Think I'm Cool, Installation view. Clay, glaze, lustre, hair extensions, craspedia, poppy heads, bunny tails, candles, ribbons, timber. Photo by Paul Chapman.

Bleacher dimensions: H1.8m x W3m x D1.6m.



Horse tie, instagram pot, kylix bowl, suit and tie, frill, medal, frills #2, fortress, chain, smiley face cup, yellow vase, goblet, granny smith apple (4139), lattice #2, medal, padder tennis bat, bow vase. Photo by Paul Chapman.



Chain, blue frilly object, club penguin coin, iphone, medal. Photo by Paul Chapman.



Two frills, pigtails, smiley face cup, table, to all the pets that turned into passwords. Photo by Paul Chapman.



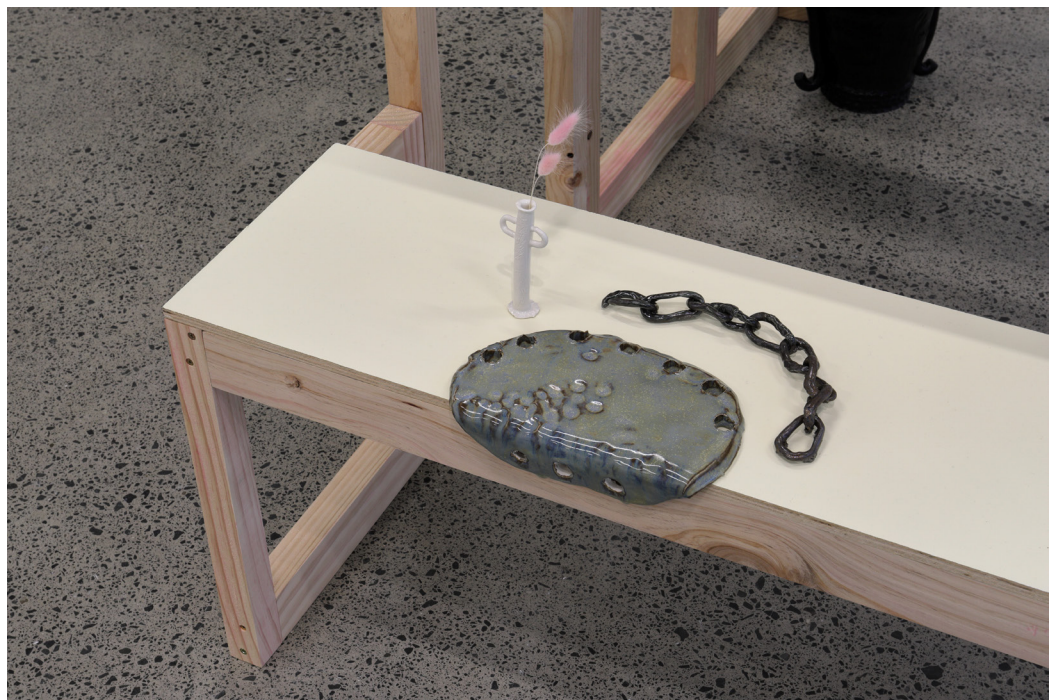
Suit and tie, two frills, pigtails, chain, smiley face cup, table, to all the pets that turned into passwords, bow vase, frills #1, lattice #1, smiggle erasers, ipod, two frills. Photo by Paul Chapman.



Alternative vase. Photo by Paul Chapman.



For never earning a medal. Photo by Paul Chapman.



Vase the estimated width and length of my eyebrows in 2017, slump shelf, chain. Photo by Paul Chapman.



Mirror, frill.



Yellow vase, goblet, granny smith apple (4139).



4th best checker of the year auckland central, table.



Frills #1, lattice #1, smiggle erasers, ipod, two frills. Photo by Paul Chapman.



Bow vase.



Medal, table. Photo by Paul Chapman.



Isabella Dampney's MVA work, *A Child of Divorce*, alongside mine in ST PAUL Street Gallery II.