Ravel, unravel, ravel again: Exploring ways of being through acts of care.

De Jana Sveistrup

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ABSTRACT

Through an embodied practice of crochet, this research explores how fibre can express the fluidity and care that are core to Queer Tagata Moana identities. Through the lens of Queer Indigenous theory and Oceanic paradigms, wool is crocheted, blocked, and printed onto to adorn vessels and become vessels of comfort. I utilise the malleability of yarn to create freeform panels that are consistently transformed. Tensions are tightened and expanded. A method of ravelry is done by crocheting, unravelling, and then crocheting again as the recursive act of doing and undoing causes the wool to change its form, becoming a type of Queer body. Crochet becomes an active archive to honour my late grandmother's teachings on being present as well as documenting the endurance of Queer existence. The materiality of wool and yarn acts as a vessel for carrying a knowledge of care that is archived within the fibres. The self has no bounds or limitations; it is continually remade and expansive.

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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, 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



07 May 2026

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PREFACE

Crochet has become my lifeline. I have established an everyday practice with crochet and craft processes. Reflecting on what brought me a resonance with crochet, I am taken back to 2023, when my nana injured her hip.

> *It is deep into the night, and nana has had a fall. A bad one. Mum and I have rushed to tend to her. Anticipating the long wait in hospital rooms ahead, I bring my crochet project – a yellow bag I'm making as a gift for a friend.*
>
> *It is chaotic, scary and all very new. Eventually, we are by my nana's side, hoping to be a source of comfort.*
>
> *I am sitting in silence; it is still the middle of the night. Although it is not too different to how our daytime visits are. My nana and mum are watching my hands as they wind and unravel my string of yarn. Occasionally, they are spectators to the scene of untangling myself from the trap of the unsupervised yellow wool that has wound around me.*
>
> *As if counting sheep, watching the constant looping has put my nana to sleep. Breathing easier, we leave her to rest.*
>
> *The next day, I go again, project still in hand, offering a sense of ease that no conversation could replicate.*

I use crochet as an archival process. The memory of being in my nana's company is preserved in the act of crocheting. As my nana aged, crocheting in her company brought us closer together. She became more sensitive to the sensory and felt uncomfortable when she couldn't participate in conversation. Crochet bridged that gap. She was able to be involved in my creative life through watching and feeling the materials I worked with. Activating the senses through touch, the material of fibre is rich in being able to honour and remember the impact my nana has in my life. Crocheting facilitated a calm, safe space with her in which I learnt to simply be.

INTRODUCTION

Crochet is my lifeline. This project investigates the metaphors within the materiality of fibre to discuss the multiplicity of Queer Tagata Moana (people of the ocean) identities. Uncovering a methodology to ground myself as I navigate the new adventures of adulthood, crochet serves as a grounding force amid cultural crisis. I am still on a journey to understand my gafa (genealogy). I am very close to my mum and her family, especially my nana. My nana, Rosie Hart, had Sāmoan and Scottish ancestry. Raised in Upolu, Sāmoa, in the village of Aleisa, she moved to Aotearoa with my mother, Judy Hart, in the late 1970s. My dad was born and raised in Paaraawai (Thames).[1] Through my Dad's line, I hold heritage from Denmark, England, Sāmoa, and Fiji. I strongly align with identifying as part of the Tagata Moana diaspora, with Te Moana-nui-a-kiwa being an anchor to my sense of self.

Setting out on a journey of rediscovering identity through a decolonial lens, this project explores how fibres can serve as a pathway to connecting with Queer Tagata Moana identities. This research inquires into the qualities of Queer Tagata Moana identities and how these can be expressed through the malleable tactility of fibre and craft processes. Many of the materials used in this project are recycled, found, or gifted. Taking care of these treasures through processes of crochet, felting, and stitching transforms these materials into stories of becoming. Bringing my projects along with me as I navigate moving to Taamaki Makaurau, nurturing my relationships and looking after myself, I have encountered dynamics of care, tautua (service), and alofa (love).

The first chapter of this exegesis, "Wayfinding", frames and guides the project in the form of a literature review of established Tagata Moana scholars: Epeli Hau'ofa, Maualaivao Albert Wendt, and Lana Lopesi. Defining what it means to be part of the Tagata Moana diaspora, the chapter extends to how multiplicity can be reconciled through embodied practice as a pathway towards Queer Indigenous futurism. The second chapter, "Conduits of Care", builds on this thinking by establishing the project's methodologies. Valuing the importance of being connected to one's community and looking after one another is central to the project's methodologies, rooting care as a core cultural tenet. The following chapter, "A Queer Body

[1] In acknowledgment of growing up in Waikato, I use the Waikato-Tainui dialect of double letters for elongated vowel when using reo Maaori.

Adorned", explains the parallels to the work's transformational phases to how identity is formed. Acts of being made and unmade are revealed in the traces of the material's past. The application of cultural and colourful adornment becomes an expression of the language of self. The final chapter, "Strength Held in Softness", encounters the adornment of a working hurricane fence. With this project, I discover the dignity found in bold self-expression and holding a space for the vulnerable softness that lives in everything. I invite you, the reader, to be soft and take a moment to breathe. Have a moment of rest in this ever-turning world that forgets to pause and come along on this journey of continuous transformation.

1 WAYFINDING

This chapter addresses the metaphysical qualities of Tagata Moana identities through Moana-Oceanic paradigms, framing a fluid and multifarious way of being. Te Moana-nui-a-kiwa is centred, through Epeli Hau'ofa's writings, as a hub for reciprocity and exchange that manifests expansiveness for Tagata Moana. The Moana serves as a pedagogy for embracing a re-indigenisation of how cultural identity is defined. This sense of expansiveness and fluidity contextualise how the materiality of fibre is utilised in this project. Acknowledging multi-heritage ancestry, I explore how an embodied practice can serve as a wayfinding tool to reconcile conflicts between my cultural and Queer identities, with the intention of moving towards Indigenous futurism to reconcile the history of harm enacted by colonial structures.

1.1 MOANA-OCEANIC PARADIGMS

Many days of my childhood were spent at the beach. Despite living in the land-locked city of Kirikiriroa (Hamilton), my family would make the long drives to beaches in Whaaingaroa (Raglan), Te Tara-o-te-Ika-a-Maaui (Coromandel), and Tauranga. After battling motion sickness on the long, winding drives the fresh sea breezes offered great relief. I would spend my time in search of the prettiest shells to take home with me – a memento for the day. These gleaming treasures brought me back to the sea while they sat proudly on my dresser. Discovering the magic of a conch shell was a game-changer. Bringing it to my ear and receiving the ocean's call I could listen to the crashing waves that I was so distant from.

Te Moana-nui-a-kiwa, in her grand multifariousness, grounds me within my identity. Holding vast histories of exchange across the islands, many Tagata Moana writers regard Te Moana-nui-a-kiwa as being an integral part of Tagata Moana identities. For example, Epeli Hau'ofa's work affirms the vastness of Tagata Moana cultures. In his essay "Our Sea of Islands" (1994), Hau'ofa makes a distinction between the phrasings "islands in a far sea" versus "a sea of islands".[2] The former negates Tagata Moana histories of exchange. A sea of islands

[2] Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," *The Contemporary Pacific* 6, no. 1 (1994): 148–61.

acknowledges the interconnectedness in which wealth, people, and skills circulated easily amongst the islands. It wasn't until the 19th century that colonial imperialism stopped this easy and flowing exchange, which changed how Tagata Moana navigated their expansive world.

Lana Lopesi, reflects on the effects of colonial imperialist legacies in *False Divides* (2018) and how Tagata Moana can surpass these imposed borders. The Moana was a unifying part of society that stimulated the reciprocal nature of Tagata Moana cultures. Their world wasn't constrained to the boundaries of the land but traversed outwards to the surrounding Moana with endless resources and possibilities. By applying this mindset, there is an opportunity to reimagine our contemporary world through the decolonial lens of Indigenous futurism. Within my project, I am interested in how the material nature of wool facilitates the same resourcefulness, reciprocity, and expansiveness as my *tupuga* (ancestors).

While I didn't grow up with *fa'asāmoa* (the way of Sāmoa), I am proud to be Sāmoan. However, with the reality of having predominantly European features, being Queer, and disconnected from my *āiga* (extended family) the continuous journey of reconnecting with my Sāmoan heritage has been tumultuous. I have not been to Sāmoa, but it is where my nana grew up and the birthplace of my mum. My "Sāmoanhood" has informed how I navigate the world. At the same time, I cannot simply ignore the levels of disconnect to my Sāmoan identity and must make efforts to learn and reconnect. There is much cultural knowledge I do not know, am yet to know, and might never know. The term "plastic" is a self-deprecating label used by Tagata Moana diaspora describing oneself as a cultural imposter. The term implies that cultural distance and disconnect renders them a fraud.[3] However, in my work, I look to acknowledge the multifariousness of identity to come to an understanding of my cultural identity that is not restricted by the notion of being a 'fake' or 'plastic' Sāmoan.

Sāmoan poet and writer, Maualaivao Albert Wendt's essay "Towards a New Oceania" (1976) critiques the concept of authentic culture. He explains how culture is not static and the concept of a traditional culture is flawed and almost impossible to define. The attempt to preserve a culture to be in an 'authentic' or 'traditional state' only serves to hinder it. Wendt also aligns Tagata Moana identities with the Moana. When attempting to articulate the

[3] See multi-heritage Sāmoan artist Jimmy Ma'ia'i work *Samoasonite 2.1* (2020) where the use of plastic material acts as a humorous ownership and acceptance of the nuanced dynamics of cultural legitimacy.

Moana, he states “no one ever will because whenever we think we have captured her she has already assumed new guises.”[4] In understanding Tagata Moana ways of being I look to the Moana, a force too grand to be fully captured. Thereby, my project’s intent is to unbind from restrictive Western structures through the malleable quality of fibre. Parallel to the Moana in its fluidity, I foster relationships through my fibre’s malleability and find understandings of identity that are grounded in care.

One of the most influential people in my life has been my nana. In her last years, I spent a lot of time crocheting in her company. Our relationship and mutual care for each other weren’t expressed in words but through actions. In being physically present and calming to one another we held so much love – we anchored each other amongst the thrashing waves of life. Much of this regulating of each other’s nervous systems was through crochet. I would quietly work beside her while she watched my crochet projects slowly develop. Crocheting transports me to those times. Rotuman writer Mere Taito, as part of a collective of Indigenous researchers in the journal article “Tupuna Wahine, Saina, Tupuna Vaine, Matua Tupuna Fifine, Mapiag Hani: Grandmothers in the Archives” (2022) explains how there are limits to the ways that institutional structures can express the impact of Moana women, especially grandmothers, in the Tagata Moana diaspora. Eurocentric standards of historical knowledge regard individual and communal memory as an unreliable source. However, operating into wider sources of knowledge, such as the senses, historical archives can be enriched. Taito argues that as the descendants of influential women hailing from the Moana, through creative research and the activation of senses we can honour, remember, and acknowledge their memory.[5] Following the path of Moana artists like Ani O'Neill, working with fibre practices connected to their grandmothers, through the implementation of an everyday embodied crochet practice, I activate and honour the memory of my nana.

[4] Albert Wendt, “Towards a New Oceania,” *Mana Review* 1, no. 1 (1976): 49.

[5] Mere Taito, “Tupuna Wahine, Saina, Tupuna Vaine, Matua Tupuna Fifine, Mapiag Hani: Grandmothers in the Archives,” *Public History Review* 29 (December 2022): 54–66.

1.2 EMBODIED PRACTICE

Navigating the dynamics of a Queer identity as Tagata Moana has been difficult. I have found myself in a crisis of how my Queer identity fits alongside my Sāmoan identity. Maaori and Paakeha writer, Cassandra Barnett, in "Kei Roto I Te Whare / On Housing" (2015) reflects on the fundamental state of being multiple and questions how methodologies can be used as a wayfinding tool for researchers to arrive from one state to another. During her doctoral study, Barnett was caught in a cultural crisis operating in a Western colonial framework that put her Paakehaa and Maaori identities at odds. The separation or compartmentalisation of cultural identity perforates into a crisis of being. Barnett articulated this experience as:

> I could feel my soul splitting, multiplying, fracturing, fragmenting, and I knew I needed to both listen to the call that had suddenly called me and proceed gently and carefully to find my way beyond a binary fracturing to the meaning of this newfound multiplicity.[6]

The strategy used to navigate this complex situation was to re-engage with her tuupuna directly through writing a second-person perspective. In her thesis, she wrote in conversation with the subjects of specific artworks. By breaking out of a Western subjectivity and enlisting constraints such as writing in English using only sounds and letters from the Maaori alphabet, Barnett encountered a different way of knowing and being. This methodology of "listening" to the artworks she was writing about became a journey toward embodied knowing. The different cultural and environmental threads that come together in creating the self are all relational. Holding varied aspects to identity does not dilute them. Cognitive separation of identity only serves to negate the nuance of a cosmopolitan identity.[7]

The wayfinding strategy developed in my research is an embodied crochet practice. Taking my projects along with me as I navigate moving to Taamaki Makaurau (Auckland), nurturing my relationships, and looking after myself I have encountered dynamics of care, *tautua* (service) and *alofa* (love).

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[6] Cassandra Barnett, "Kei Roto i Te Whare / On Housing," (paper presented at Place, Practice, Research. St Paul St Curatorial Symposium): 19.

[7] Sāmoan scholar, Lana Lopesi uses the term "Moana cosmopolitanism" to acknowledge the active complexity of Tagata Moana identities which engage in multiple communities and the global world rather than using "diaspora" which gives a limited binary of host and home. Lana Lopesi, "Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries: Toward an Emerging Theory of Moana Art," PhD thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2021, http://hdl.handle.net/10292/14298. 39-40.

Precolonial Sāmoa perspectives on sexuality and gender can be difficult to locate due to the way colonisation permeates through archives. Anthropologist Jeanette Marie Mageo explains how histories are collective remembrances.[8] What remains in a collective's memory becomes significant to the construction and legitimation of cultural identity. Memories that clash with the moral values of an identity are thereby collectively forgotten. Evidence of gender and sexuality that didn't align with Western society's gender binaries has been systematically smothered, leaving only remnants of ways of being that weren't tainted by colonial influence. Despite being left with fragmented archives to evidence non-Western concepts of gender and sexuality, non-hetero and non-cisgender identities have always existed and will continue to exist.[9] Framed by an understanding of Tagata Moana identity as expansive as the Moana, rather than fixating on what has been lost to imperialism, I look to a sense of wonder as a path toward Queer Indigenous futurism.

Cuban American Queer theorist, José Esteban Muñoz in his book *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2019) describes true Queerness as being on the horizon. It is a concept that warms Queer people in its potentiality. The concept of a Queer utopia is rooted in the disappointment of the present. Muñoz warns against completely turning away from the present in the search to escape the restrictions of a normative majoritarian society. To critique our present, in its lack of Queerness, Queer people must imagine a new world fostered by a hope methodology. Through affect, hope has an enduring potentiality. Muñoz explains how a sense of wonder or astonishment within ordinary life can transport people to this utopian feeling, stating that "astonishment helps one surpass the limitations of an alienating presentness and allows one to see a different time and place."[10] I imagine a new world through use of craft and fibre. With craft histories being undermined in the art world due to its association with women, it adds to the narratives of marginalised identities.[11] The qualities of fibre, in its softness and the ingenuity needed to utilise its malleability, are how I am transported to a sense of utopia. Working with my hands soothes me. The meditative repetitions alongside the soft fibres I work with put me at ease whilst living in an ever-changing, but stagnating world.

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[8] Marie Mageo, Introduction of *Cultural Memory*. (University of Hawai'i Press, 2001): 1.

[9] A few examples of collectives in Aotearoa amplifying the voices of these identities include FAFSWAG, Cunty Cryptids Club, and Utu aa Matimati.

[10] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia, 10th Anniversary Edition: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. (NYU Press, 2019): 5.

[11] See Daniel Fountain's "Survival of the Knittest: Craft and Queer-Feminist Worldmaking." *MAI: Feminism & Visual Culture*, no. 8 (2021) which expands on this storytelling quality of craft. https://maifeminism.com/survival-of-the-knittest-craft-and-queer-feminist-worldmaking/

1.3 AN EXCHANGE WITH THE TIDE

Within my crochet practice is a ceremonial lifting of everyday practicality. I engage with this embodied practice, intending to connect with my environment and the people around me with a sense of wonder and astonishment. In early November 2025, I went to Whangaparaaoa with friends from my cohort. We left early in the morning, with an itinerary of shops to gather materials for our projects and visit the beach. Our first destination was Stanmore Bay Beach. We sat by the shore and enjoyed the sounds of the waves, the fresh air, and each other's company. Knowing that there would be moments of waiting, I had brought along my yarn. I forgot to bring a crochet hook. To be waiting, without the soothing repetition of working with my hands, felt wrong. I attempted to crochet with my fingers, nearby twigs, and the end of a lollipop stick. Nothing quite worked. I reconciled my anxiety by going to the shoreline, stepping into the water and enjoying its tranquillity. Looking around the water, I encountered a twig floating on the tide towards me that was the perfect shape for crocheting (see fig. 2). I had to be gentle and tentative as not to break the offering. In slowing down and accepting the situation, I was given a gift from the ocean to help ease my mind. It was a poetic, surreal encounter. An affirmation from the Moana, whom I hold so much inspiration from, that I am on the right path. With a sense of calm provided by the Moana I slow down with an intention to connect to Te Moana-nui-a-kiwa, and therefore my tupuga who traversed it. Reconnecting to the Moana, with its qualities of expansiveness, fluidity, and multifariousness, I establish a sense of Tagata Moana identity. The Moana propels this project forward with a sense of awe and into further exploration of the grounding offered by crochet.

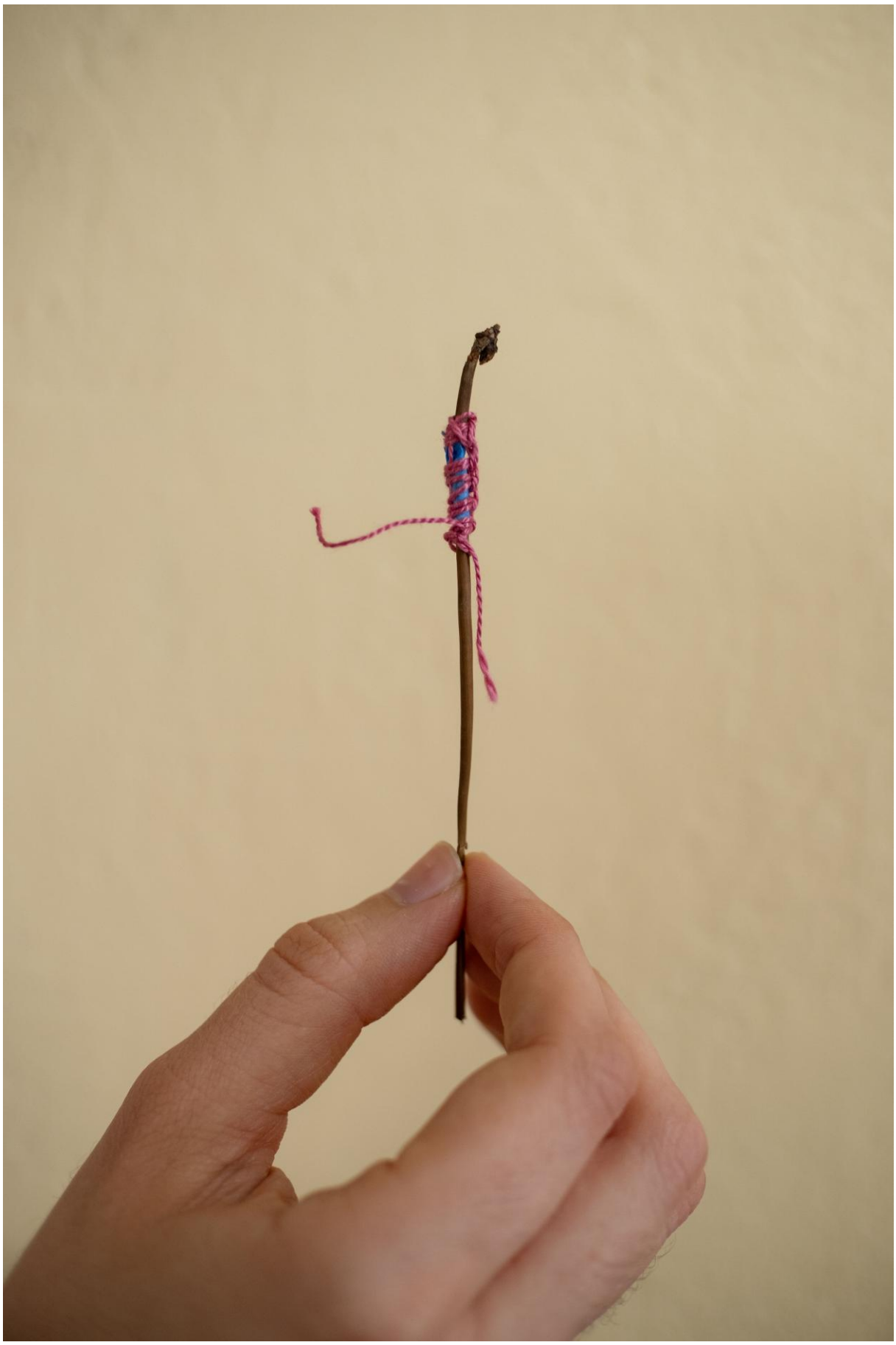


Figure 1 The tide's crochet hook was mended with a splint and crocheted cotton thread after breaking on the journey to my studio. Photo by Camden Jackson.



Figure 2 Crochet hook gifted from the tide in between stitches of project.

2 CONDUITS OF CARE

This chapter contextualises the importance of care within my project. The acknowledgement of reciprocal care, in my relationship with my nana, forms a foundation for my project's processes. Through experimenting with crochet and clay forms, I explore the importance of soft tactile engagement in feeling regulated, which aids a sense of safety. My project prioritises rest and comfort for the materials and people around me. Spaces of making expand beyond the studio, with my own allocated studio space operating more for rest than for practical work, lending a community nature to the practice. In being together, there is so much to learn, and it is in my relationships with others that I find the most strength within myself.

2.1 TEU LE VĀ

My nana always created a space where I could freely express myself. Favouring my more colourful and dramatic outfits, we shared a love for aesthetics and adornment. She suffered from a mental illness, which greatly impacted her and my family's life. It wasn't always easy, but having a devotion and love for her left my family with a strong foundation to care for each other through whatever strife we faced. Towards the last years of her life, she became sensitive to overstimulation. We would keep her company and tend to her needs. Untangling her from the sheets, fixing loose lightbulbs, and letting sunlight and fresh air in: these ritual routines anchored all of us. We knew her best in the tender silences we shared.

When she passed away (July 2024), her absence was deeply felt. With the start of my Master's and my move to Auckland (February 2025), my support structures changed significantly. It was the first time I'd been so distant from my family – especially while our grief was so fresh. Our routines were changed, and now there were limits to being physically there for each other. The way we showed care had to change. Looking at the Sāmoan concept of *vā* (space between), allows me to show and feel care through crochet.

Wendt describes vā as a relational space.[12] Vā is the space in-between that connects me to my environment and people. Teu le vā is the act of caring for these spaces and relationships.[13] In her essay, "There is a Vā between my thighs" (2021) Lopesi explains the social worlds of Sāmoan people: "the Sāmoan concept of self has meaning only in relationship to or through interaction with others. The self does not exist as a separate individual." While vā acknowledges the interconnectedness of everyone and the sacredness of reciprocal relationships, it is important to acknowledge those excluded from these spaces. Lopesi explains "we forget to see that the dominant Christian heteropatriarchy looms so large over all aspects and understandings of culture that it becomes embedded as the central and neutral position."[14] Despite the community oriented culture, existing outside of typical expectations leads to being excluded. While it is through the vā that I feel a connection to my aiga, it is also how I have felt a distance. The shame and fear associated with mental illness created a strain, especially being unable to follow fa'asāmoa. A lack of understanding led to a separation from the typical support within our aiga. This meant my nana, mum, dad, brother, and I had to rally around each other. With a staunchness in maintaining my nana's dignity, we were gifted with the nourishment that comes when caring for one another. This staunchness is carried forward in my practice through a care methodology.

The question of what I am offering my communities is paramount to my work. With the work of Maaori artists and power couple, Lissy and Rudi Robinson-Cole, I find insight into what crochet can offer to people. *Wharenui Harikoa* (2023) is a full-scale crocheted neon wool wharenui (see fig. 3). Built through a love for Te Ao Maaori, the structure holds layers of storytelling. When entering the wharenui I am surrounded by colour. There is a comfort found in the stitches, knowing its tactile softness. Crochet cannot be replicated with machines, each stitch was done by hand in a grand act of care and a love for people. Lissy and Rudi Robinson-Cole describe their work as healing generational trauma one stitch at a time.[15] The materiality of wool acts as a conductor in exchanges of warmth and care from myself to the wool and back to myself through crochet. The resilience and absorbency of wool act as a

[12] Albert Wendt. "Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body." *Span*, 42–43 (1996): 15–29. https://www.nzepc.auckland.ac.nz/authors/wendt/tatauing.asp

[13] Lana Lopesi, "Vā Moana: space and relationality in Pacific thought and identity interviews" interview by Emily Parr, *Vā Moana - Pacific Spaces Research Cluster,* August 22, 2023, video, 10:17, https://www.vamoana.org/talanoa.

[14] Lana Lopesi, "There Is a Vā Between My Thighs," in *Bloody Woman* (Bridget Williams Books, 2021): 144.

[15] Pounamu Jade Aikman, "Into the (N/L)Ight," *Art News*, 2023.

vessel that transports to a state of joy in its meditative repetitions. Through connected loops that hold together, it strengthens itself through connections of unity and vulnerability. My tupuga used *va'a* (canoe) as a vessel to traverse the Moana and exchange resources to expand their world. In my work, the materiality of the wool serves as a vessel for carrying vulnerability, safety, and alofa with its continual acts of embrace.

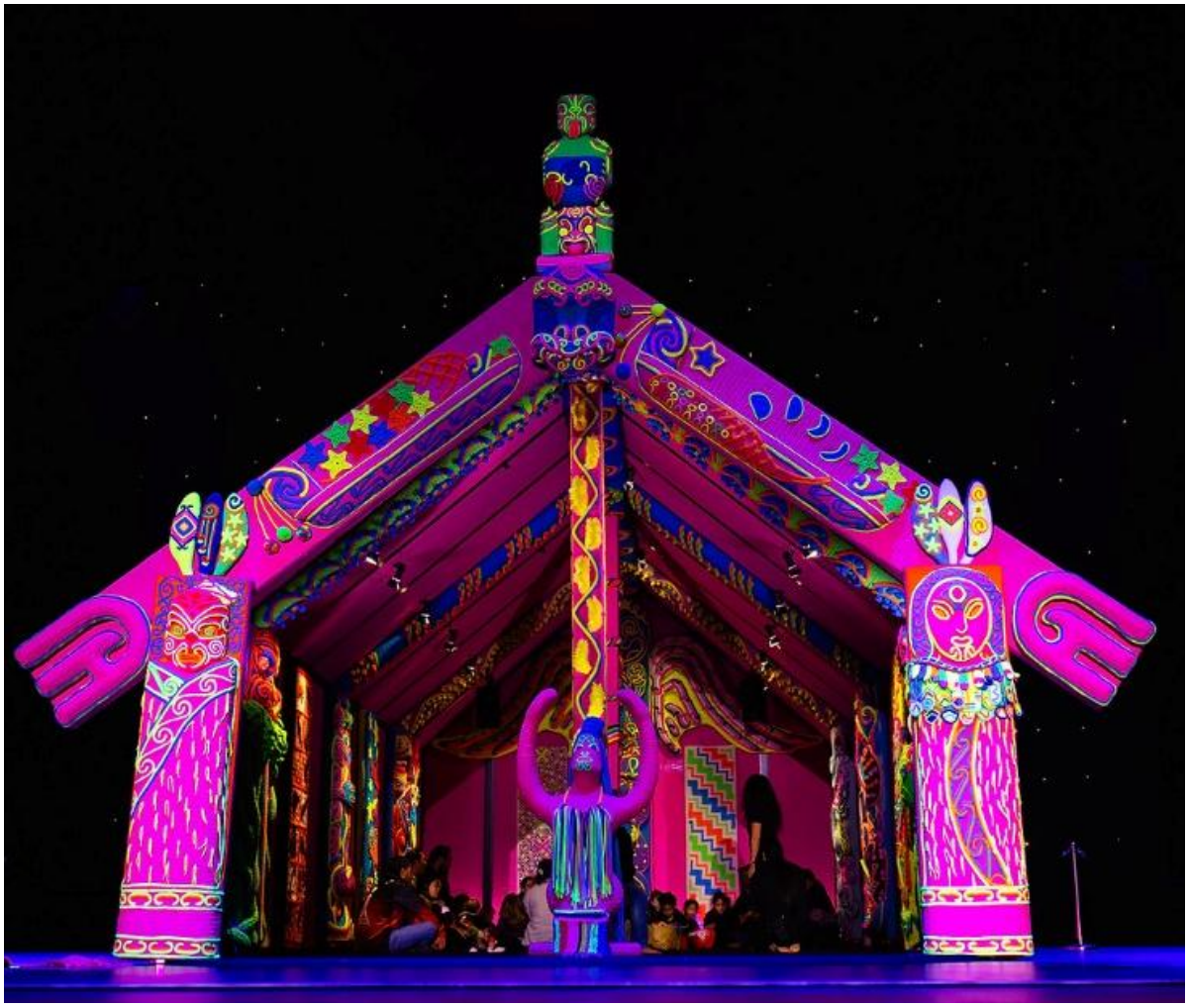


Figure 8 Lissy and Rudi Robinson-Cole, *Wharenui Harikoa*. Photo by Cara Graham July, 2025.

2.2 CONCH CALLS

I remember as a teenager asking my aunty about her life growing up in Sāmoa. She reminisced about the landscape and playing in the rivers and waterfalls. She grew up surrounded by beautiful beaches and mountains. A part of life in Aotearoa that reminds her of Sāmoa is the landscape. While being distant from Sāmoa, there are qualities to the New Zealand landscape that resemble a Sāmoan way of life. Like my aunty, beaches have always been a site that hold nostalgia for me. Beaches weren't easily accessible while living in Kirikiriroa. The closest beach was in Whaaingaroa. It was a 45-minute drive along winding roads and often the weather had to be perfect to justify the drive. Shells, which are such a prevalent part of Te Moana-nui-a-kiwa's ecosystem, served as souvenirs of my travels. My shells would become a vessel, transporting me back to the Moana through memory. Shells held mystical tactility through hearing the Moana at any location. Referencing Hau'ofa's "Sea of Islands", the Moana and by proxy the beach, is a site of connection for Tagata Moana:

> We are the sea, we are the ocean, we must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces that we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed places, and from which we have recently liberated ourselves.[16]



Figure 9 Small shell collection kept in my studio as a reminder of the Moana, held in a ceramic vessel wheel-thrown under the guidance of my friend Leva Kusari. Photo by Camden Jackson.

[16] Epeli Hau'ofa, We Are the Ocean (University of Hawai'i Press, 2008): 39.

In “Camping Paradise: I am what I am” (2022), curator Natalie King explains the undercurrents of Samoan Japanese artist Yuki Kihara’s photographic series *Paradise Camp* (2022) (see fig. 5).[17] Kihara uses the beach and ocean-scapes as backdrops that hold layers of history and are deeply impacted by climate change and tourist propaganda. Kihara reframes perceptions of paradise through Indigenous retelling with “camp” aesthetics, presenting a view of a world that is open and celebrates fluid identities. Kihara expands the understanding of non-Western gender and sexuality with *fa’afafine* (in the manner of a woman) and *fa’atama* (in the manner of a man) at the forefront of her Gaugin re-enactments.[18] Kihara’s work extends beyond visual appeal and into self-determination through the production's entirely Sāmoan cast and crew, taking control of Indigenous narratives. Within my own practice, the foundation of my community is likewise at the centre of my process. Radical forms of care are brought to life within the vessel of a soft conch shell.



Figure 10 Yuki Kihara, *Si'ou alofa Maria: Hail Mary (After Gauguin)*, 2020, Milford Galleries, Aotearoa.

[17]Natalie King, “Camping Paradise” in Paradise Camp, (Thames & Hudson Australia Pty Ltd, 2022): 11-36.

[18] Fa’afafine and fa’atama are gender identities in Samoa that exist outside of the male and female binary. A more nuanced history of the terms and their evolution of use in contemporary Samoan diaspora and society are explained by Dan Taulapapa McMullin in the introduction to *Samoan Queer Lives* ed. Dan Taulapapa McMullin and Yuki Kihara (Honolulu: Little Island Press, 2018): 5-13.

My friendship with a potter opened a pathway into playing with clay that I wouldn't have otherwise been comfortable exploring. As a fun activity during mid-semester break, she introduced me to the process of organic burnout, applying my crochet skills to working with clay. I crocheted three cups with thick wool and tight tension so that the gaps between the loops would be minimal. The woollen cups were coated in watered-down clay. After being fired in the kiln, the fibres burnt off, leaving a clay shell of its previous form. Glazing the vessels added colour and accentuated the shape of the stitches (see fig. 6). I found the process intriguing as it journeyed from soft wool to a new hard ceramic object. The idea of the clay being a shell stuck with me, so I started creating a conch shell with the intention of casting and burning it in the same process as the cups (see fig. 7). However, the crochet shell didn't undergo the organic burnout process. The shell came to life. Its softness and comfort rendered the shell too precious to undergo such a journey. Queer theorist and artist, Daniel Fountain, describes the transformations that clay goes through as an effective metaphor for crafting the trans body, "just as bodily feeling and sensation transform clay, bodily feeling and sensation transform flesh."[19] I argue that wool, in its ability to transform through connection, has similar metaphorical qualities to clay.

My friends and cohort responded with a mixture of excitement and dread when I showed the woollen shell and explained its prospective journey to becoming clay. When something is soft, there is a tenderness that breaks down emotional barriers. People fell in love with the shell in its soft form, me included. Just as Fountain had described, with bodily feeling transforming flesh, the soft feeling of the shell created a connection between those who engaged with it, breaking down emotional barriers and allowing a regulated state. The conch, after undergoing organic burnout, would become hard and brittle. If it were transformed, it wouldn't be able to be squeezed, thrown around, or offer warmth. There is a wonderful nature to the soft tactility of the wool that the clay can't give. It would become an object to look at, rather than connect to.

[19] Daniel Fountain, *Queer Crafts: Material Practices and the Making of Identity* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2025): 36.



Figure 11 Crocheted organic burnout vessels. Photo by Camden Jackson.



Figure 12 Crocheted Conch shell sitting on studio couch. Photo by Camden Jackson.



Figure 13 Having 'conch time' with the crochet shell. Photo by Camden Jackson.

The care the conch shell offers is through its being. The softness of its materiality allows an engagement, a connection between oneself and the shell. I filled the conch with leftover scraps I had been collecting from previous projects, even adding parts of yarn skeins that had tangled into knots too big to untangle. These colourful pieces of previous projects peek through the stitches like confetti. The colourful scraps add joy to the object, but also a weight that adds to its tactility. The shape sits comfortably in one's arms; it prompts one to hold it close, to squeeze it (see fig. 8). People have compared holding the shell to holding a baby or having a cat on their lap. The shell has been a source of comfort while living on the couch in my studio space. Having "conch time" has been a source of stress relief throughout my day. As I write this exegesis, the shell is keeping me company, sitting on my lap. When my peers or I am stressed, the shell provides tactile comfort. It is through this tactile engagement that relationships of care are established. The crocheted conch shell, like its counterparts that lived on my childhood dresser, transports me to a space of ease. While holding the shell, I return a call with the Moana. A call to home.

With the conch shell, reciprocity and care have been evident throughout its material making and continue after its completion. The wool used to create the shape of the conch, the teal and yellow yarn that traces the spiralling shelves of the conch, were all gifted to me. The yellow yarn came from my friend Sappho in September 2025. She offered me the leftover skein, which was too small to knit anything else with. In exchange, I helped her with a task she had been putting off. The other yarn used to make the shell came from a haul gifted to me by peers in my cohort in March 2025, at the beginning of the project. The teal yarn came from classmate Anna Santos, and the white yarn from classmate Helen Harvey. Being able to make use of leftover yarn from different people's spaces and give it new life is core to the project's value of reciprocity. Through this continuation of material exchanges that is prevalent in craft circles, I reconnect with my tupuga. As discussed in the previous chapter, reciprocity in Tagata Moana is rooted in oceanic paradigms. The openness of Te Moana-nui-a-kiwa allowed for the exchange of skills and resources in pre-colonial Moana-Oceania. In Sāmoa, there is a history of importing resources, such a*s* 'ie tōga (fine mats) and tapa cloth from Fiji and Tonga.[20] Reciprocity manifested through craft continues in my practice.

[20] Sean Mallon, *Samoan Art & Artists: O Measina a Samoa* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002): 79. Nina Tonga, "Kie Hamoa (Fine Mat)," Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 2018. https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/91520?page=1&rtp=1&ros=1&asr=1&assoc=all&mb=c. Emily Parr, "'Oli 'Ula:

2.3 CARE METHODOLOGY

Service is a value I hold in great importance. When I think about reciprocity, I think about how caring for others helps me care for myself. I cannot give from an empty cup, so it is important to sustain myself to be able to care for others. Through developing my care methodology, I've become aware of how it extends to the immaterial labour involved in looking after my friends and family. The immaterial labour of care is what capitalist society relies upon to function. Lopesi, in "Moana Immaterial Labour and Invisible Care" (2024) explains how in New Zealand, Tagata Moana are the most actively engaged demographic involved in care work. Care is a core way of being in the world for the Moana diaspora. This care-based methodology, rooted in my cultural identity as Tagata Moana, is grounded in relational reciprocity. The continuation of care as a core value of my practice is informed by the women who raised me. Lopesi situates care as a core cultural tenet for Tagata Moana:

> … in a Sāmoan context … care in the form of service or tautua, and love or alofa, are core cultural tenets and ways of being in the world. In a cultural context that values the collective, care is a vital part of a functioning society, thus it is a labour that is highly regarded and valued.[21]

People look after me and I look after them. I wouldn't be able to do the work I do without my other needs being met. While being away from my family, I found myself replicating the ways my parents look after people as a means of staying connected to them in the everyday. Offering cups of tea, helping with my peers' problem-solving, giving rides home, and numerous other acts. The way they in return care for me, also sustains my creative process. My project is fed by the immaterial labour of love from friends. Leva, hosts homemade dinners, sending me off with containers full of leftovers for lunch the next day. Camden documents my work, keeps me on task, and organises my space when it's overwhelming. Natalia helps me in my decision-making and offers great support through moments of creative crisis. Meremaihi, my best friend, anchors me throughout every ordeal. While living in different cities, we become living journals of each other's lives. The practical and emotional care offered through my friendships allows me to attend to needs that can be tedious and

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Housing the Kronfeld Collection through Moving-Image Practice," (PhD thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2024), 81.

[21] Lana Lopesi, "Moana Immaterial Labour and Invisible Care: A Performance by Leafa Wilson / Olga Krause." In *Sight Lines: Women and Art in Aotearoa.*. ed. Kirsty Baker (Taamaki Makaurau: Auckland University Press, 2024): 284.

burdensome when done alone. My project concerns itself with establishing a sense of identity as Queer Tagata Moana. In my process, it is a maintenance and documentation of relationships that influence my sense of self. With this company, my studio space became a site of connection and comfort. The space continued to get cosier throughout the year (see fig. 9-14).

My studio walls are painted a warm yellow, with a pop of burgundy at the edge. Making the space glow with a warm tone accentuates the comforting nature of the yarn I work with. At lunch time, I offer my peers pots of tea. We eat and relax in my studio before returning to our respective activities. More often than not, I follow along to their studios to get my work done, crocheting in their company. Rather than a workspace, my studio served as a resting space, offering reprieve from the university's white walls and hard desks. In "warming" this space, I created room to breathe within an otherwise constrictive Western academic structure - a structure which has a history of harm towards Indigenous communities.[22]

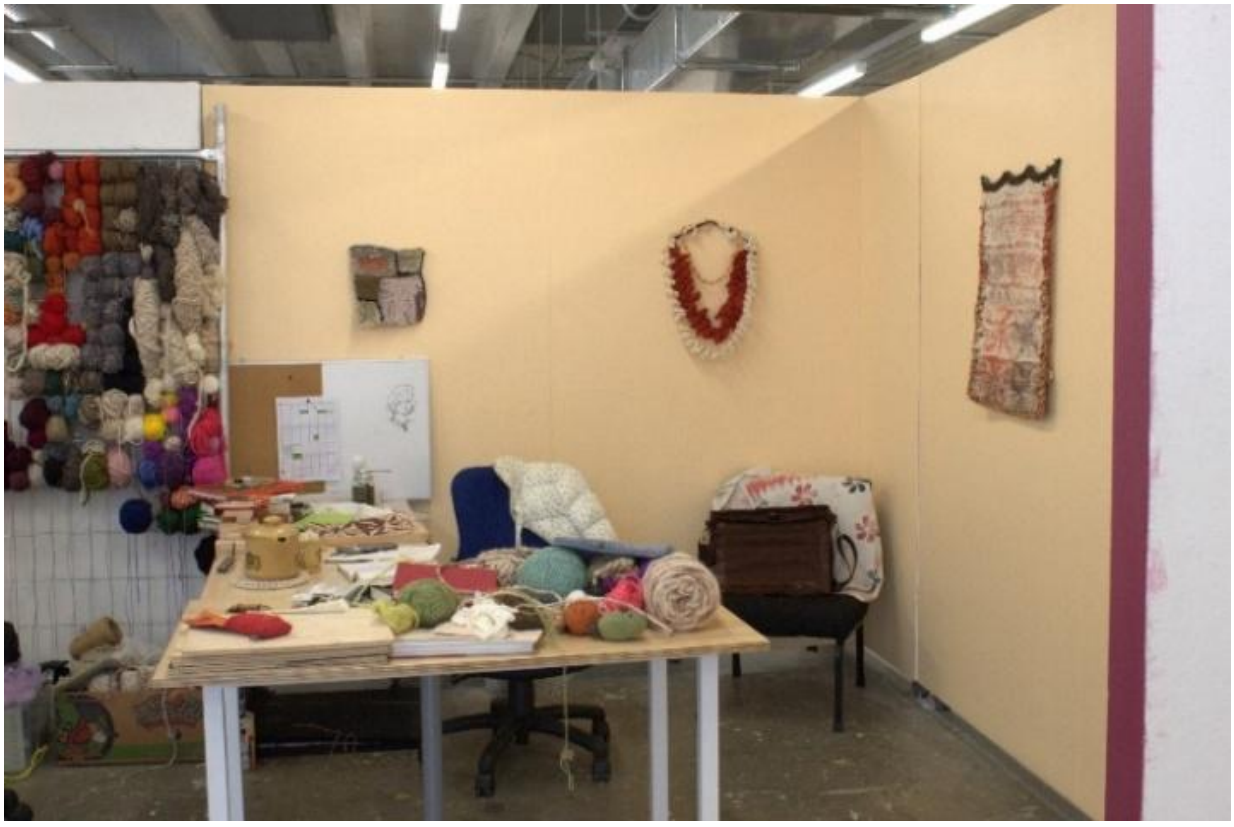


Figure 14 Studio space in August 2025, before the introduction of the couch.

[22] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Introduction of *Decolonizing Methodologies* (Dunedin: Zed Books, 1999): 36-37

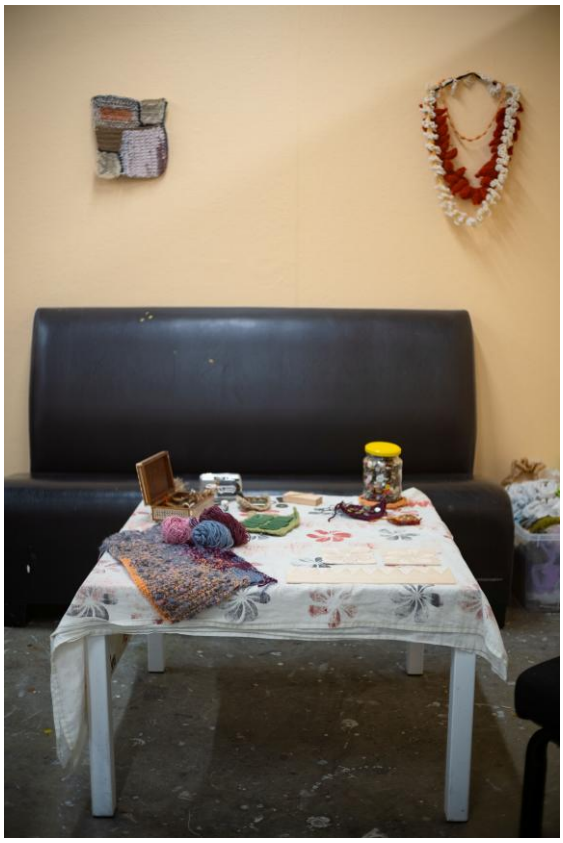




Figure 15 and Figure 11 Studio space in September, 2025 set up for a supervision meeting after bringing in the couch to create a conversational space. Photos by Camden Jackson.



Figure 12 Studio space in May 2026, with the couch softened with a blue sheet to cover the visually harsh black. Photo by Camden Jackson.



Figure 13 Storage trays implemented by Camden to help keep my space organised, while accommodating my haphazard method of putting things away. Photo by Camden Jackson.



Figure 14 Yarn pouch hanging on wall, wooden shelf from Leva to hold small scrap patches and threads. Photo by Camden Jackson.

Maungarongo Te Kawa's exhibition, *Hiinaatore: A Love Story*, held at Objectspace in 2021, featured quilts exploring maatauranga Maaori through whakapapa and storytelling (see fig. 15). Using bold colours and tactile fabric applications, the quilts hold scenes rich in imagination that tell the stories of *aatua waahine* (goddesses) and influential people in Te Kawa's life. The exhibition also incorporated a sewing studio to embody and make physical the rejuvenating space of the Hiinaatore realm (see fig. 16).



Figure 15 Maungarongo Te Kawa, *I Have Everything. I Am Eternal Creativity and the Best is Yet to Come*, 2021. Mixed media quilt. 2030 x 1840mm



Figure 16 Maungarongo Te Kawa, Installation view of *Hiinatore: A Love Story,* 2021.

Te Kawa held workshops within the exhibition studio that invited the community to create their own works. Mataaho Collective member Sarah Hudson, when remarking on Te Kawa's joyful practice, said: "We are all responsible to our Indigenous audiences, to make them feel safe and seen in foreign gallery institutions."[23] The accessibility of Te Kawa's work, with its loud visual celebration of Te Ao Maaori, and invitation to create in such a space, serves the community he is a part of, creating relational reciprocity.

I have resonated with this concept by making care a core part of my project. In intentionally fostering a relaxing studio space to take a moment to breathe amongst the chaos of everyday life, I continue the care that was fostered by my family and is core to Tagata Moana identity. There is an all-encompassing preciousness to the warmth felt in the space, both physically and in the metaphysical emotional space of my friendships. I feel a sense of duty in facilitating a safe environment to the people I love and care about. There is an activeness to showing my love and care through service. While caring for others is important, how we enact that care so

[23] Sarah Hudson, *Love as a Rebellious Act*, (Objectspace, 2021). https://www.objectspace.org.nz/journal/love-as-a-rebellious-act-sarah-hudson-on/.

that others feel cared for, is paramount. Acts of service are not out of obligation, but in a sense of devotion. Service is the embodiment of care, a softening of everyday interactions. Crochet has a strong ability to foster safety in conversation through its rhythmic, meditative process. Thinking through conversation, or rather, *talanoa*, I have been able to uncover the conceptual foundations of my work.

For my research, a talanoa methodology involves an extension of care to sustain a safe space. My project is a tribute to my nana's teachings of simply being. To be comfortable with oneself and slow down. In my time with her, there wasn't any pressure to perform. We would simply sit in comfortable silence and enjoy each other's company. Tongan scholar Timote Vaioleti (2006) breaks down the concept of Talanoa into *tala* (to inform or tell) and *noa* (nothing, the ordinary).[24] Talking about nothing, without a constraining framework, creates a space to comfortably speak openly. Talanoa with my mother, especially, has helped with the exploration of our shared grief of my nana's passing. Within my processes of making is a breakdown of intergenerational trauma. When crocheting with my community, family, friends, and peers, I can facilitate conversation. Crocheting enables one to slow down. Within that slowness is the ability to give time to the long-enduring process of grief. The conversations had are not to be documented in a literal sense, but are embedded in the fibres, in the act. Through this project, I have been able to have conversations that explore my family histories and issues without exposing our vulnerability. I hold them safely within the fibre. They are an archive of memory – of conversations had and of time with my nana.

With the support and company of many, the works formed in this project each hold their own history. The generosity of care brings a life force to the fibres, the objects, and the people it surrounds.

[24] Timote M. Vaiolete, "Talanoa Research Methodology: A Developing Position on Pacific Research." *Waikato Journal of Education,* 12 (2006): 23. https://doi.org/10.15663/wje.v12i1.296

3 A QUEER BODY ADORNED

Referencing Hau'ofa's perspective that Tagata Moana cultures are expansive, this chapter investigates how the methods of crochet ravelry, woodblock printing and adornment become expressions of cultural and Queer identities. The fibres' adaptability, ability to undergo constant states of change, and material resistance are related to the formation of identity. Wool, which I crochet, print onto, unravel, and re-ravel fluctuates into different forms, becoming a type of Queer body operating outside of binary patterns. Investigating Queer gesture through these constant fluctuations, the crafted forms hold traces of their history, and through cultural and colourful adornment, are a celebration of self-expression.

3.1 ADAPTABILITY

Keeping people company while I work has meant I have needed to adapt to being on the move. Daniel Fountain in "Survival of the Knittest: Craft and Queer-Feminist Worldmaking" (2021) relates craft to the way Queer people navigate the world.[25] Craft, in its adaptability, can be related to how Queer people find community and the need to navigate creating their own identities in a world that denies their right to exist or be seen. In August, 2025, I created a leather toolbelt and made pouches to hold my yarn and tools while I'm on the move (see fig. 19). I can take my work with me as I travel, go to work, and visit friends and family. The yarn becomes an extension of myself. The ability to take my work with me also correlates with the adaptability of Queer people. In the need to create their own identity, which sits outside of heteronormative society, Queer people find ways to survive by finding community with other like-minded people. The toolbelt has extended my practice in being able to archive the relationships I have with my peers. Every patch I make holds memories of different times. Through care methodologies, crochet acts as a conduit through which care is passed back and forth. It is ever-giving in its love. This adaptability and continuation of reciprocity have expanded not just with the people around me but also with the environment and the materials I use.

[25] Daniel Fountain, *Survival of the Knittest.*

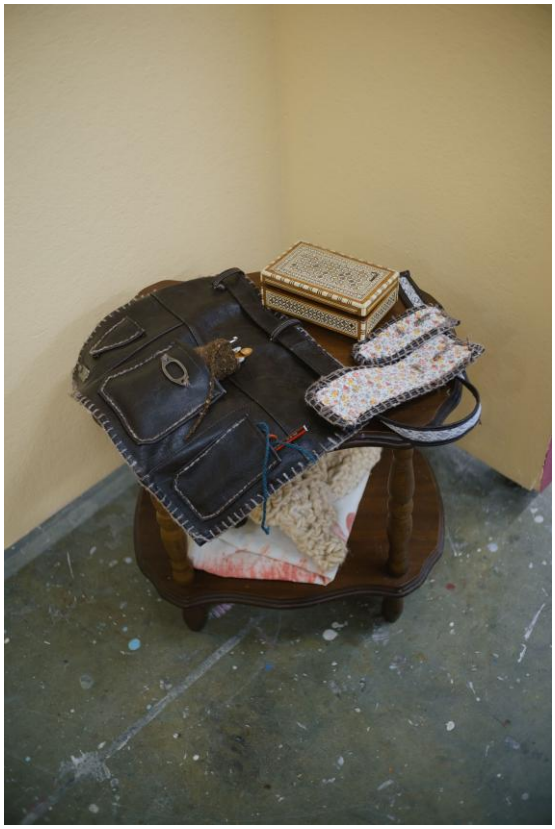


Figure 17 Leather toolbelt on side table in studio. The underside of the belt is floral pattern, with the fabric coming from a dress I had outgrown. Photo by Camden Jackson.

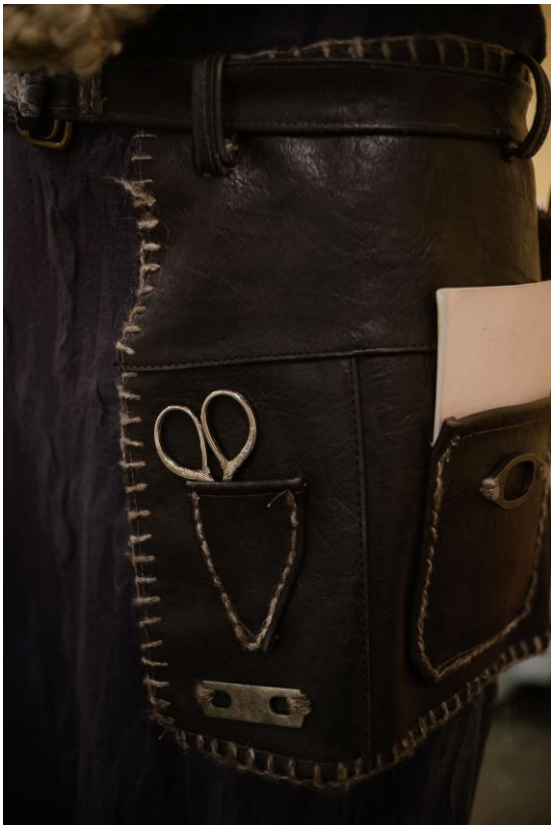


Figure 18 Side view of me wearing the toolbelt. Each pocket has practical purpose, perfectly fitting my scissors, crochet hooks, and notebook while on the go. Photo by Camden Jackson.



Figure 19 Wearing the toolbelt while crocheting a panel. The pouches hold the yarn I work with, and a collection of other skeins that I might wish to use. Photo by Camden Jackson.

3.2 RAVELRY

In my project, I find concepts of reciprocity and the vastness of Tagata Moana identities through a system I refer to as ‘ravelry’. Crochet is a process that uses a hook to interlock yarn with loops. Ravelry is done by recursively ravelling and unravelling these interlocking loops. My crocheted panels hold a history of living through different stages of being made and un-made. With different-sized hooks, I can manipulate the work’s tension. In March, 2025, at the beginning of my project, I discovered a breakthrough in my work. My exploration of woodblock printing led to an epiphany that prompted me to let go of my inclination toward representational art. This investigation started with a simple malu symbol. Beginning with a simple form to focus on the method, I intended on later being able to print representational forms of the body onto my works. The malu symbol comes from the Sāmoan practice of tatau (tatoo). It denotes protection and shelter and is applied to women's thighs. Using a block of wood found from the roadside in my neighbourhood, I carved the malu.



Figure 20 My carving workspace and woodblocks. The wooden board used to help keep my blocks in place while I carve was assembled under my dad's guidance. Photo by Camden Jackson.

Before printing on my crochet panels, I use a blocking process. The wool is dampened to accept the ink when pressing the woodblock onto it. Often, after blocking, the wool seems more at ease with its shape. After printing, I unravel the work, then re-ravel once again. Absorbing the first round of water makes the wool more malleable, loosening the tension from its first iteration. The panel is then adorned with the woodblock, embedding a gesture of care with the symbolism behind the malu. (see fig. 21) The wool is thick, and the lines aren't crisp with the ink choosing to travel across the fibres. Once dried, I partially unravel the panel (see fig. 22). When first unravelled and re-ravelled, I had thought some of the printed image would return. Instead, what was left were black ink marks – ephemera of the print (see fig. 23). While the image of the malu pattern is lost, its trace remains. The re-ravelled sections have a tighter tension compared to the rest – evidence that it has taken on a new form. Although returned to its rectangular shape, the yarn has twisted in new ways. A metaphor for the formation of identities, in the act of perpetually crocheting, then unravelling, the yarn enters varied states of becoming through a continual transformation of undoing. The works are in an unfixed state.



Figure 161 Crochet panel with repeated printed malu pattern.



Figure 22 Partially unravelled panel.



Figure 23 Reravelled panel.

When attempting the ravelry process, but with the image of a figure onto my crochet, the positive and negative spaces were unclear due to the thickness of the yarn (see fig. 25). Capturing a clearer image on the crochet could have been remedied by using thinner cotton yarns with tighter tension in the stitches. However, with the exploration of fluid identities, the notion of striving for a perfect printed image felt hypocritical to my intentions. Imposing the notion of a representational body onto the crochet panels was restrictive. My perspective had

to shift. The crochet panels are a body. They absorb and transform just as I do. I celebrate crochet's fluidity and the wool's denial of conforming to the shapes imposed on it. This epiphany led me towards my freeform method of crocheting.



Figure 24 Figurative woodblock print on newsprint paper.



Figure 25 Figurative woodblock print on crocheted panel.

Letting go of the need to depict a clear image, I explored recording the act of crocheting onto wool through traces of touch. In *Diary of Reciprocity* (2025) (see fig. 26), the relationship of my hands with the wool is recorded through blue ink being imprinted onto the fibre. Before starting to crochet, I wet the yarn, allowing the ink to hold onto the fibre more effectively. With ink on my hands, I crochet the soggy wool without following a pattern (see fig. 27). As I went on, the wool took hold of the ink on my hands, recording our contact. I crocheted spiralling stitches until there was no more yarn in the skein. The form became an organic spiral (see fig. 29). Once this iteration dried, I proceeded to unravel the piece with fresh blue ink on my hands, which recorded new transformations (see fig. 28). Finally, I crocheted it to be in its current form, a more linear panel. I had clean hands when I began, but once finished, the wool had returned the ink back to my hands. There was nothing to distinguish what blue marks were from what iteration. However, this indistinguishability doesn't negate the relationship between me and the wool. The give and take of ink from my hands to the wool is made visible through the wool's ability to act as an archive.



Figure 26 *Diary of Reciprocity,* 2025. Wool, acrylic ink. 300 x 370mm.



Figure 27 Crocheting with blue ink on my hands, recording my touch onto the wool.

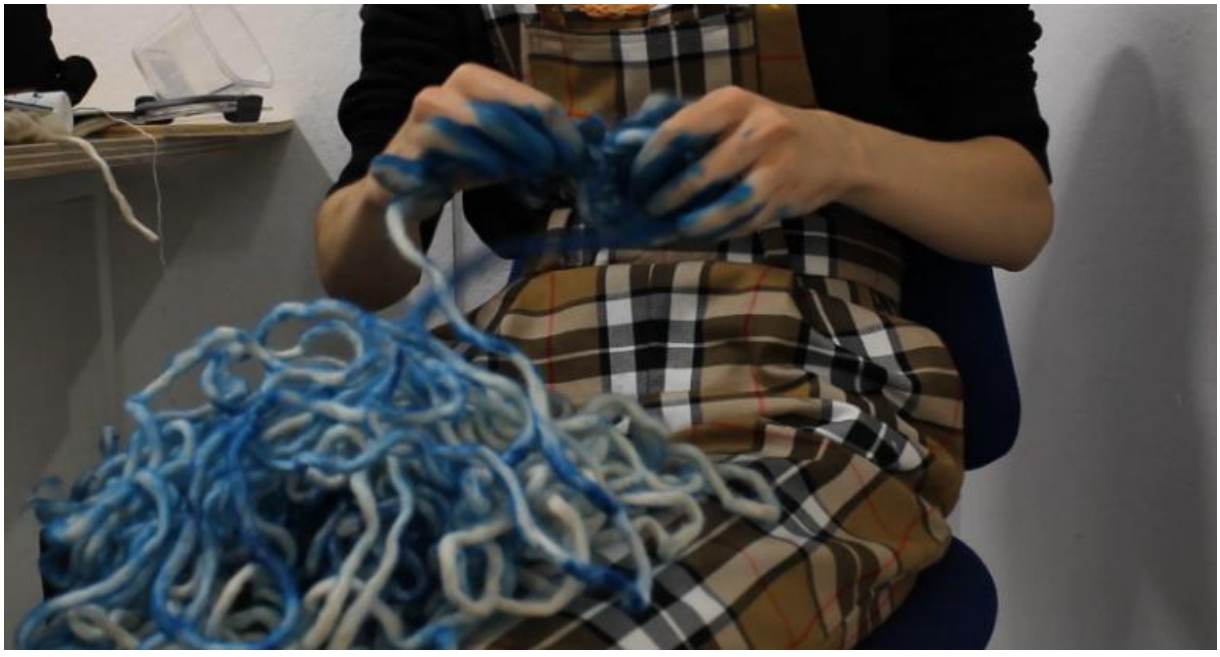


Figure 28 Unravelling the form with a fresh round of blue ink on my hands, disrupting the linear ombré of the first iteration.



Figure 29 After the first round of crocheting, the spiralling form became tall and cone shaped. I wore it as a hat around the studio for the day, till I was emotionally ready for it to have a new form.

3.3 GESTURE AND FORM

Muñoz's perspective of Queer gesture as a way of being that doesn't align with gender binaries informs how my work functions as a Queer body. It is through Queer gesture, which resides in moments of change, that my works come into being. My work holds many previous forms through its transformational act of becoming, which is emphasised through my ravelry method. The act of becoming is apparent through the many transitional phases of life. Parts of identity are lost and found, leaving parts of oneself behind only to be rediscovered in later phases. The material in my works become anew with each iteration. The material starts as a ball of yarn, becoming a crocheted panel, then a printed panel, which is then unravelled, then re-ravelled.

Muñoz speaks to the concept of loss and the importance of Queer ephemera when documenting Queer lives. Muñoz states that "for Queers, the gesture and its aftermath, the ephemeral trace, matter more than many traditional modes of evidencing lives and politics."[26] In the inevitability of losing precious people, places, and objects, there is a language to the experience of loss. With loss, the presence of absence becomes tangible through residue. There is an ephemeral trace of evidence that a loss has occurred. Documenting experiences of loss enables new stories and relationships to be held. An action is not limited only to the time it was enacted. There is something tangible within the ephemera left behind. Wool fibres have the ability to retain memory. The ink marks left in the wool hold evidence of the act of printing as well as the act of their unravelling. With the intention towards Queer Indigenous futurism, the archival aspect to my work extends to the evidencing of Queer lives. These Queer bodies are an expression of the transformation that occurs when unpacking one's identity and releases oneself from arbitrary constructs, to be made anew again and again.

Freeform crochet can take many forms. I use the four basic crochet stitches, varying between slip stitch, single crochet, double crochet, and half-double crochet. With simplicity, I can hold complexity in how the stitches differ in colour, tension, and direction. Often, I start without a plan, grabbing whichever colour I am drawn to most. I use multiple strands at once. Thick and thin, bright and muted, I bring together yarns with varying tensions. Creating without a pattern is another way of moving with openness and fluidity. Working in non-linear ways, my

[26] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 81.

freeform crochet method allows me to change direction at will. Seen in the stitches of *Fa'apelepele*[27] (2025) (see fig. 30), at any moment I decide to change direction, change the yarn, change the stitch. With no pattern being followed, the panels operate outside of binary systems. I am inclined to create patches and panels that relate to painting conventions with rectangular and square shapes.[28] However, the yarn resists hard edges and uniformity, becoming organic in shape. Wool's material resistance is against conforming to the shape that it's being guided into, rebelling against its own frame of being. I see this resistance to conforming as a material embodiment of Queer Tagata Moana resistance to conforming to Western gender binary systems. Pre-colonial gender identities like fa'afafine and fa'atama are the determination and endurance of Indigenous Queer identity, persevering through colonial violence.

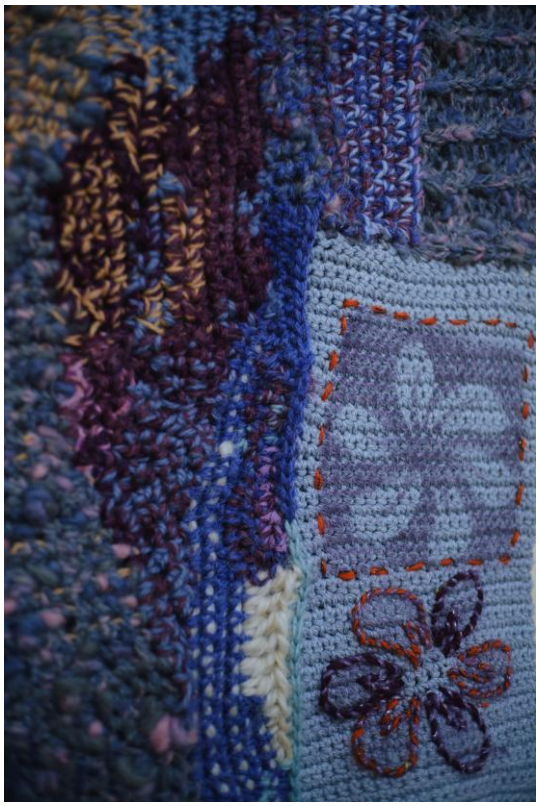


Figure 30 Detail of *Fa'apelepele* (2025) the stitches twist and turn at whim. The flower print is accentuated with stitches, done by hand as an act of care. Photo by Camden Jackson.

[27] Fa'apelepele means to be beloved, adored or precious in the emotional sense.

[28] Ani O'Neil also refers to her works as crochet paintings, see *Crocheted Paintings* from Cottage Industry (1997) in Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery. https://chartwell.org.nz/seeing/collection/crocheted-paintings-from-cottage-industry-1997/.



Figure 31 *Fa'apelepele* (2025). Wool, cotton, acrylic. 420 x 420mm. Photo by Camden Jackson.

3.4 ADORNMENT

To be resistant to hegemonic normative structures is to be bold. My nana wore brightly coloured clothes with patterns that clashed. She framed her eyes with a great variety of hues, and her thin arched brows were applied with pointed precision. Her extravagance has been passed down to me. Aesthetics of saturated colours, contrasting patterns and many accessories have become my heirloom. No vintage jewellery or antique finery could replace the joy that comes from my nana telling me, "You always look nice." While I do freeform crochet, there is a consistency to the rectangular panels that embody our shared silences. There is a depth to having a shared language of care. In the comfort of silences held with my nana, there was a mutual dedication. The panels embody our shared silences. The rectangular forms maintain a consistent tension enacted by my hand through muscle memory. The base stitches embody the consistency and dedication of showing up. It is the details of adornment that do the speaking. The adornment serves as an expression of joy and pride in my identity. The gestures, the colour, and the pattern are a celebration. It is with pride that I adorn myself and my work, celebrating who my nana was and how her influence continues through me in my everyday.

The work *Carrying the Everyday* (2025) (see fig. 32), follows the structure of silent dedication in its rectangular shape. The blanket stitch around the edges border the printed images in an embrace. A way of holding and being held simultaneously. The images, woodblock printed on top to adorn the crochet, are derived from the patterns of my nana's *'ie lavalava* (cloth wrap-around) (see fig. 33). Impressing cultural pattern onto my work I celebrate my Sāmoan-hood – marking it an integral part of my being. Pattern is a visual language that has long been part of Sāmoa. In utilising cultural pattern to adorn, I extend on the concept of wool as a body. Art historian Ngarino Ellis, in the essay "Waahine Maaori and the Worlds of Adornment" says, "he toi raakai, he mana waahine, he mana taangata" (by the arts of adornment, there is the prestige of women and all people).[29] Adornment has been a part of women's history across all cultures in different ways. Weaving threads in various methods to bind materials together, our foremothers created warmth and adornment for their communities. By incorporating adornment from Measina o Sāmoa (treasures of Sāmoa), through crochet, I embody the rich history of my foremothers.

[29] Ngarino Ellis, "Waahine Maaori and the Worlds of Adornment," in *Sight Lines: Women and Art in Aotearoa,* ed. Kirsty Baker (Taamaki Makaurau: Auckland University Press, 2024): 5.



Figure 32 *Carrying the Everyday,* (2025). Wool, shells, acrylic ink. 200 x 300mm. Photo by Camden Jackson.



Figure 33 Wearing my nana's ‘ie lavalava. My family doesn't have much as heirlooms from her life, so the everyday items that she used become even more precious. Photo by Camden Jackson.

The way we adorn our bodies is an expression of culture, of community, and of self. Curator Andrea Low, in "Contemporary Pacific Adornments and the Vernaculars of Place", a March 2026 lecture held at Objectspace, articulated the ways adornment holds story and expands cosmopolitan understandings of Tagata Moana.[30] While in the diaspora, Tagata Moana continue adornment practices with new materials, adapting to the scarcity of traditional natural materials. For Sāmoan and Irish artist Rowan Panther, situated in Aotearoa, contemporary lacemaking adornments are a convergence of culture.[31] Their inquiry into using *muka*, a fibre extracted from native harakeke, with Western methods of lacemaking, to create chest pieces rooted in Sāmoan adornment is an elaborate intersection of exchange (see fig. 34). As Low and Panther demonstrate, through invention and ingenuity, Tagata Moana diaspora maintain connections to their gafa in new ways, expanding their sense of cultural identity in diaspora environments.



Figure 34 Rowan Panther, One of three adornments that make up *A Triad for Safekeeping* (2021). Muka, silver, and beech wood. 510 x 540mm

[30] Andrea Low, "Contemporary Pacific Adornments and the Vernaculars of Place," lecture, Ockham Lecture Series, Objectspace, Taamaki Makaurau, 26 February, 2026.

[31] Low, "Contemporary Pacific Adornments and the Vernaculars of Place."

Ula fala is a significant cultural adornment in Sāmoa. It exudes Sāmoan pride. In July, 2025, I created an ‘ula fala, crocheting individual pandanus keys with an orange acrylic yarn that held glittering blue fibre (see fig. 36). Yuki Kihara’s *Paradise Camp* (2021) challenges Paul Gaugin's depiction of Tagata Moana as noble savages. With vibrant adornments in front of tropical landscapes (see fig. 35), Kihara heavily stylises scenes of fa’afafine and fa’atama models – Sāmoan gender identities that don’t fit into the Western views of binary gender. Kihara creates an earnest reconstruction of an alternate Queer world, reclaiming Tagata Moana narratives through the composition of Gaugin’s paintings. Kihara comments that “we must find ways to decolonise from institutional structures that retain a stronghold in Sāmoa, the moana and its diverse group of people and that keep them from fully realising their freedom and sovereignty.”[32] In creating my own cultural adornment, through lei and ‘ula, I situate myself alongside practitioners who reimagine a world that forges understandings of identities not confined to Western colonial views of gender and categorical binaries that undermine the sovereignty of Tagata Moana.



Figure 35 Yuki Kihara, *Two Fa‘afafine on the beach (After Gauguin)*, 2020.

[32] Yuki Kihara, “First Impressions: Paul Gaugin” in *Gaugin: A Spiritual Journey,* exh. cat. (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 2018): 173



Figure 36 Orange ‘ula fala hung amongst three crochet lei. I wore the crochet flower lei to my graduation ceremony for my bachelor’s degree in 2023. It is particularly special to me because my nana has held it and seen me wear it on such a prideful occasion. Photo by Camden Jackson.

4 STRENGTH HELD IN SOFTNESS

This chapter explores the innate care embedded in craft practices that offer a safety to relax. In my project, adorning with crochet extends care to not only the relationships with those around me, but also to my tools and materials. Throughout my project, I have found myself with an inclination to make cozies for my tools. My cups and teapots all have their own coasters, my crochet hooks are snug in a woven sleeve, and my notebooks are protected in a leather cover. These tools are like family members, and just as I care for my family, I pass on a similar tending to my tools. With *Mānava* (2025), the adornment of an industrial fence offers empathy to an unconventional vessel.

4.1 THE WORKING FENCE

There were two hurricane fences left behind by a past master's student. Seeing the excellent storage opportunities, I implemented the fences into my studio space (see fig. 37-38). Operating as a working wall, the fence holds my work and is a site of encountering the reciprocity and fluctuations of my making. Reciprocity establishes relationships of continuous exchange. My crochet panel-making is constant. There isn't a point of completion; that isn't the intention. Reciprocity and care are not on-off acts. Being able to see all the crochet patches I make, I can assess what might work well together. This sense of flow links to the everflowing exchanges evident in the culture of Tagata Moana.

What acted as storage brought to life the fluidity of my crocheted works, enhancing the potential transformations the patches could undergo when combined with other yarns and patches. The care done through making my panels is celebrated on the fence. *Mānava* (2025), a Sāmoan word meaning to breathe, offers a sense of pride to the hurricane fence. I let the fence rest after working so diligently, and in return, it supports the people who engage with it (see fig. 39).



Figure 37 Working wall in October, 2025.



Figure 38 Working Wall in May, 2026. Photo by Camden Jackson.

4.2 THE RESTING FENCE

My parents and I always wish each other "sweet dreams" when we say goodnight. There have been a few times when I have accidentally given a "sweet dreams" after a morning call, very distant from bedtime. Instead of entirely dismissing my wish for their sweet dreams, I redirect my sentiment to their daydreams. Having courage to see the magic within the world is key to Queer Indigenous futurity. A strategy of hope invests in our present world and maintains the potential for better outcomes for future generations. In a similar vein, Muños speaks of educated hope:

> Some will say that all we have are the pleasures of this moment, but we must never settle for that minimal transport; we must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world and ultimately new worlds.[33]

My hoping for a Queer Indigenous future is not out of naivete or being ungrounded from reality. Hope is enacted in applying a certain magic to our everyday by making our daydreams sweet. Lopesi remarks on the radical imaginings of Indigenous futures as a pathway for intergenerational healing. Love and kinship can then act as a medicine in restoring our bodies, genders, and sexualities and liberate Tagata Moana communities from historic trauma.[34] Crocheting over the entirety of one of my hurricane fences offered a sweet embrace, allowing a moment to breathe through the imaginings of the fence's personification.

The long process of adorning the fence meant I had to stay in one place (see fig. 40). It anchored me since I was unable to attach it to my belt loop and drag it along to my workplace. Late at night, while I'm crocheting the fence after an 8-hour hospitality shift, I settle into the monotony of the stitches and start to wonder: Is the fence cold at night? Does it feel lonely in the dark? We keep each other company, both exhausted after working all day. The hurricane fence is expected to work 24/7. Once erected, they weather harsh conditions. They are co-opted into the violent job of demarcating sites of gentrification. While supposed to be temporary, in reality, they are not. Both in their galvanised steel construction and in their placement, hurricane fences are often long-lasting. Countless of my hurricane fence's cousins

[33] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*: 1.

[34] Lopesi, *Moana Cosmopolitan Imaginaries*: 54-56.

I spot throughout my neighbourhoods have overgrown grass sprouting through their feet. Even while abandoned, they continue to work. I have grown to know the beauty of care in seeing my family, all exhausted from our respective daily labours, still find the energy to care for each other. That is how I survive. It is through caring for others that I care for myself. It's rare to find someone not exhausted from the constant weight of labour that is put on the working class.



Figure 39 *Mānava* (2025) Galvanised steel, plastic, concrete, wool, acrylic, nylon. 3600 x 1800mm**.**
Photo by Camden Jackson.



Figure 40 Crocheting a yellow panel to the fence, one stitch at a time. I wear compression gloves as a preventative measure, protecting my hands from the repetitive strain of constant crocheting. It's not just the fence and I keeping each other company, but Camden as well. Photo by Camden Jackson.

Adorning the body of the fence with colour and softness enhanced the fence's life force. There is a sweetness to the colourful patchworks hugging the fence. Crocheting effectively tucked the fence in, ready for bed. The fence is relieved of its duty to guard things and to keep people out. Now, it proudly wears mismatched fluffy socks, keeping it warm (see fig. 42). As a result of this work, I can't walk past a hurricane fence without worrying if its feet are cold. The adorned fence doesn't need to be staunch. It still holds a strength but can relax. Yet, even while in a state of rest, it offers support. *Mānava* displayed for critique partway through the project, was illuminated in a dark space by two spotlights, similar to streetlights. Instead of standing around the fence, my classmates brought chairs to sit in the company of the fence. In the space, we were able to have a moment to breathe, bringing ease to the overstimulating conditions of an academic institution. Settled in the space, we could gently admire the fence. The adornment of the fence offers a reprieve from the mundanity of existence. It provides a moment of wonder in its glimmer.

A felted panel is added to the fence with a blanket stitch (see fig. 41). Felted onto the panel is the word *kalofae* (a term of endearment, offered in empathy). Usually, the fences display advertisements for construction and development companies. Here, the panel doesn't demand consumption but rather offers empathy to both the viewer and the fence. Wool's strength as a material comes from fibres binding together, as in the act of felting. Individually, the slivers of fibre don't do much, but together they are a strong warming force. The panel is a declaration to have empathy for one another, and within that offering is the strength of uniting as a community.

Wool is the embodiment of a duality between hard and soft. To be strong and soft isn't contradictory. There is a strength to softness. Similar to the dynamic of safety and care I found with my nana, I have found something similar in the fence. The condition needed to access one's softness and vulnerability is safety. To feel safe, strong boundaries are put in place to protect from harm. The hurricane fence creates a boundary. It is staunch in that. Similar to the dynamic of safety and care I found with my nana, through adornment I have found softness and strength in the fence. In this way, I offer care to all types of vessels and bodies. All beings are deserving of care, especially those that are forgotten or put to the margins.



Figure 41 Attaching the 'Kalofae' panel to the fence with a blanket stitch. With connotations of a blanket, there is an intimacy of care akin to tucking the fence into bed. Photo by Camden Jackson.



Figure 42 Fluffy slippers to keep the fence's feet warm and cozy. Photo by Camden Jackson.

CONCLUSION

Like the Moana, it is time for the tide to retreat. As I approach the end of this Master's project, it does not close my journey of continuously unravelling and reravelling. In the exciting opportunity to be remade again through the deconstructing of identity, I continue to find myself anew in the mending of the past, in the maintaining of bountiful relationships, and in the fostering of new friendships. Fibre, as a method of nurturing oneself and others, is endless in potentiality. I have recently been gifted alpaca wool and possum fur that will entail rallying my friends into helping me process the fibres with a new endeavour of scouring, picking apart, and spinning into yarn—venturing further into hidden labours of care. There are more vessels to be adorned, with my other hurricane fence yet to be tucked into the safety of yarn's embrace.

Through this research, I have made discoveries that have always been present throughout my life; I have finally really seen them, even though they have always been there in front of me. Breaking away from restrictive Western binary views of gender, I have engaged fibre, and its malleability, as a celebratory metaphor to reclaim the multifarious fluidity of Tagata Moana cultural identities. In my investigation of Queer Tagata Moana ways of being, methods of crochet ravelry to adorn vessels and become a source comfort has expanded my view of reciprocity and care. Care has not only been a research methodology, but core to how I move through the world, prioritising the communities I'm a part of. Evidencing the transformative acts of care through crochet, my crochet paintings are deeply personal. Like pages of a diary, they document my life as Queer Tagata Moana, becoming an archive of my life and relationships.

Embodying my practice has blurred any sense of barriers between yarn and myself. The thread becomes akin to the veins in my body. Taking my work everywhere, it is rare to find me without a fibre in my hands – or at the very least evidence of stray threads from whatever I have been working on. A connector and a conductor, crochet isn't simply a lifeline but a life force. Living between each stitch is a dedication to care, a continuation in the devotion I have to my nana. To honour, remember, and acknowledge. My practice is the ongoing tending of the vā every time I pick up my hook, carrying a knowledge of care that is archived within fibre. With a conch shell held to my ear, I wait to receive another call from the Moana for when the tide naturally goes out again.

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APPENDIX I

RAVEL, UNRAVEL, RAVEL AGAIN

Final Exhibition Documentation
Ngutu Kākā Gallery
11 June, 2026



Installation view of *Will you keep me company?* (2026), polypropylene mat, monobloc chair, wool, nylon, polyester. Back: *Manavā II (Working)* (2026), galvanised steel, plastic, concrete, wool, acrylic, nylon. Photo by Camden Jackson.

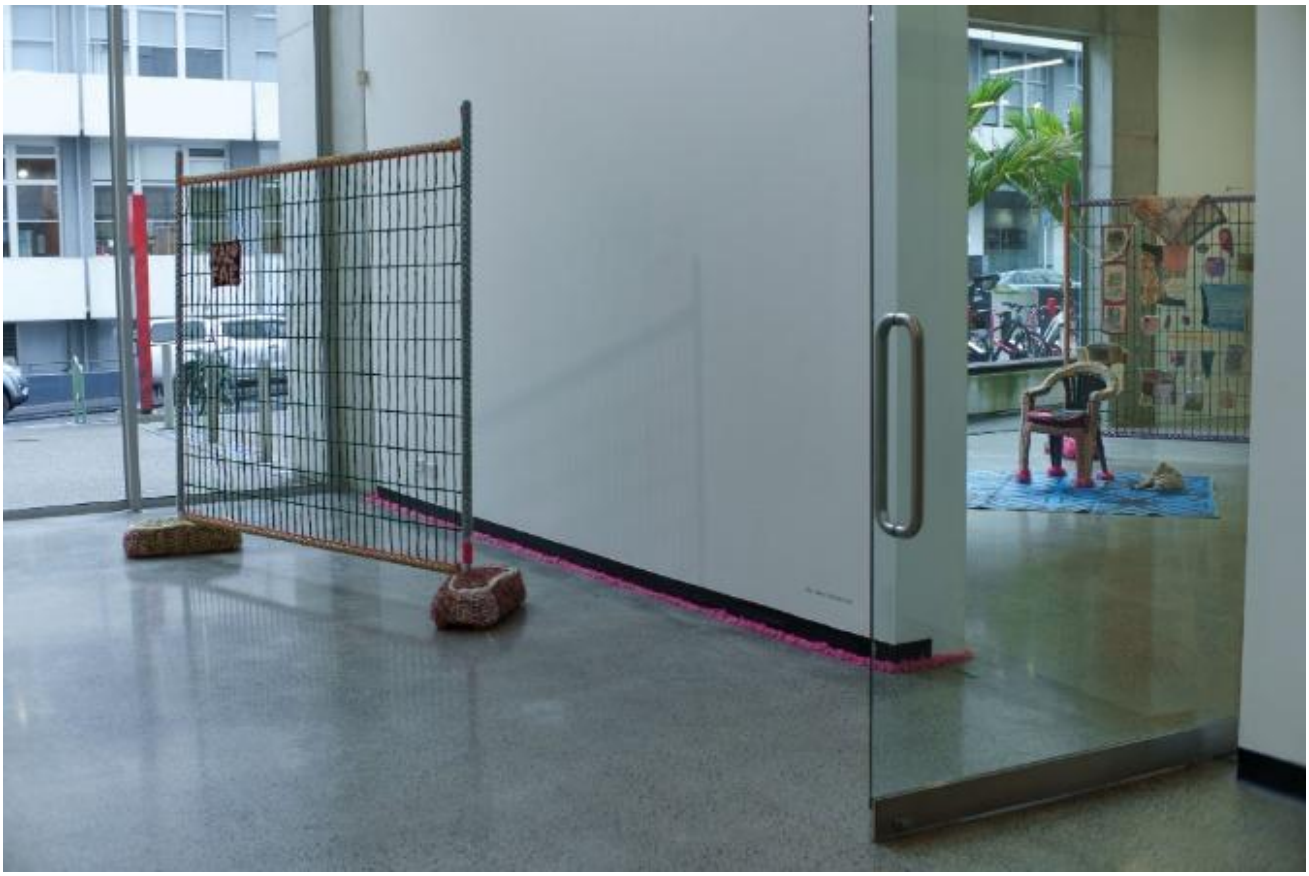
Adornment as an act of care becomes a strategy for tending to the gallery space in which both the viewer and the room are cared for. *Manavā I (Resting)* (2025) acts as a host, standing proudly in the foyer, silently greeting the viewer to guide them towards the doorway of the gallery.

Will you keep me company? (2026) is an invitation to stay in the space. The concrete floor is softened with a polypropylene mat. The mat is borrowed from Camden and is typically used in studio for when working on the floor is more comfortable. These polypropylene mats are common for Tagata Moana diaspora and is used as a substitute to the traditional fala made from pandanus fruit. To show care to the mat, I add a blanket stitch to the edges. Sitting on the mat are two monobloc chairs that have been enveloped in crochet. Found beneath my house, my flatmates wanted to throw them out. Instead, they've been given a new life. Wearing their own pink fluffy socks, the chairs joyfully invite the viewer to rest in comfort with them.

Manavā II (Working) (2026) holds works in their moments of pause. My precious toolbelt and pouches are momentarily hung up amongst patches and paintings that are yet to be returned to. These works archive the love and tenderness of the people in my community. Despite the ephemeral nature of some relationships, moments shared continue to be held in the fibres of my work.

I continue the yellow wall into the installation to cushion the works displayed on it in a warm glow, covering the stark coldness of the previously white surface. Leftover yarn from making fluffy socks for my hurricane fence reaches perfectly around the perimeter of the wall, receiving its own version of a fluffy sock. Displayed are crochet paintings which are connected most closely to my family. Made in the company of my parents, and the reminiscing of memories with my nana, the works are similar to family portraits. The ula in the centre is the focal point of the wall. The ula fala, known to be a high status symbol, is displayed amongst my most precious crochet flower ula. The acrylic frangipani ula was felt and seen by my nana in 2023 after wearing it for my graduation. Like the tide returning to the shore, I come back to crochet to continue moving through life reunited with the grounding force of my nana's love and pride.





Installation views of *Manavā I (Resting)* (2025), galvanised steel, plastic, concrete, wool, acrylic, nylon.
Photos by Camden Jackson.



Installation view of *Will you keep me company?* (2026), polypropylene mat, monobloc chair, wool, nylon, polyester. Back: *Manavā II (Working)* (2026), galvanised steel, plastic, concrete, wool, acrylic, nylon. Photo by Camden Jackson.

Following three pages: Details of *Will you keep me company?* (2026), polypropylene mat, monobloc chair, wool, nylon, polyester. Photos by Camden Jackson.


FLAPOKO









Installation view of *Manavā II (Working)* (2026), galvanised steel, plastic, concrete, wool, acrylic, nylon. Photo by Camden Jackson.



Detail of *Manavā II (Working)* (2026), galvanised steel, plastic, concrete, wool, acrylic, nylon. Photo by Camden Jackson.



Installation view from left to right: *Carrying the Everyday* (2025), wool, acrylic; *Atualoa* (2025) wool, acrylic ink; *Ula* (2025), wool, nylon, acrylic; *Fa'apelepele* (2025) wool, cotton, acrylic ink.



Left: *Carrying the Everyday* (2025), wool, acrylic. Right: *Atualoa* (2025) wool, acrylic ink. Photo by Camden Jackson.



Left: *Ula (2025), wool, nylon, acrylic.* Right: *Fa'apelepele* (2025) wool, cotton, acrylic ink. Photo by Camden Jackson.



Fa'apelepele (2025) wool, cotton, acrylic ink. Photo by Camden Jackson.



Ula (2025), wool, nylon, acrylic. Photo by Camden Jackson.

APPENDIX II

List of works made during the project, which hadn’t been included in the written component.





Left: Wool gifted by Helen, acrylic and wool bought secondhand, wool raveled and unraveled with acrylic ink on my hands. Patches made in studio keeping company with cohort.

Right: Wool gifted by Helen, acrylic gifted by Anna, and second hand wool. Made in studio and during bus rides to and from my flat.



Wool gifted by Helen. Made late at night in studio with raveled and reraveled panels. Making with the large weight of the work gave the same warmth as having a cat on my lap. Repeated starfish pattern based on the Sāmoan proverb on the duality of harm and healing–“E fofo e le alamea le alamea.”



Made during a long train ride to Tuscany, this is a wool vessel to hold taonga for my best friends host family in Italy after her year as an au pair..



Wool and acrylic, gifted by Sappho. Made in Italy during a train ride after being reunited with my best friend, Meremaihi..



Mohair, bought in Florence with Meremaihi after many deliberations over colour choices. Made while appreciating the delicate softness and reminiscing on nights in Prato.



Wool gifted from Helen, second hand wool bought while visiting family, and mohair bought travelling in Florence. Made in studio keeping friends company while they work and venturing off on smoke breaks.



Store bought wool, and second hand wool bought while visiting family. Made in Kirikiriroa, sitting in the lounge after dinner watching shows and drinking tea with my parents.









Top Left: Acrylic and wool mix gifted by Anna. Made at a friends house in between games of backgammon and cups of tea.

Top Right: Wool gifted by Helen and wool bought with birthday voucher. Adorned while the ink was still wet, leaving a mess fingerprints tracing where I touch. Holds the discovery of how much I touch my face in the day.

Bottom Left: Store bought wool, wool gifted from Helen, second hand wool. Made in studio, after a tea break with Camden.

Bottom Right: Store bought wool. Made on a bus ride to uni.



Wool gifted by Helen, second hand wool, store bought wool from one of my first crochet projects. Made in studio amongst my cohort.





Left: Wool gifted by Helen, acrylic and wool bought secondhand. Made during a train ride to Kirikiriroa.

Right: Second hand wool. Made with inconsistent stitches during a walk with a new friend.



Banner made with scrap fabrics. Started at a banner making workshop at Ramp Gallery in Kirikiriroa. Finished on train rides, bus trips, and at home talking to my mum about our relationships with the word “fiapoko.”

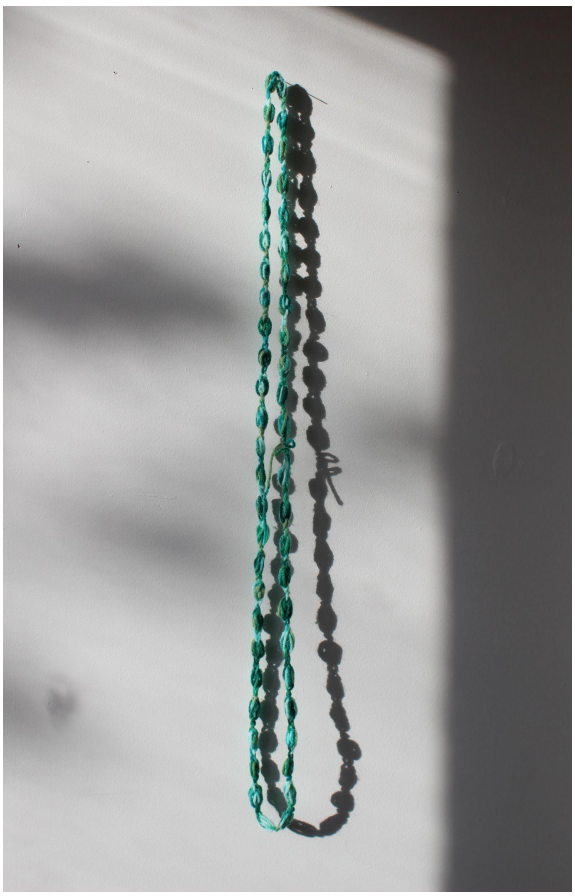


Wool gifted by Helen, second hand and store bought wool. Made in studio, at home, and during lunch breaks at work.



Wool gifted by Helen, mohair and hand dyed wool from Prosper Yarn workshop, second hand and store bought wool. Made in studio in the company of friends.









Crochet bubble stitch lei made in studio throughout the year made reusing scrap yarn from past projects.



Beginning of a crochet flower lei. Yarn gifted by Sappho.





Left: Wool gifted by Helen. Raveled and unraveled with ink on my hands, then wound into a ball.

Right: Wool gifted by Helen. Raveled, printed onto with acrylic ink, unraveled, then wound into a ball.



Wool gifted by Helen. Raveled, printed onto with acrylic ink, unraveled, then wound into a ball.





Left: Second hand wool. Made while watching a movie with a friend.

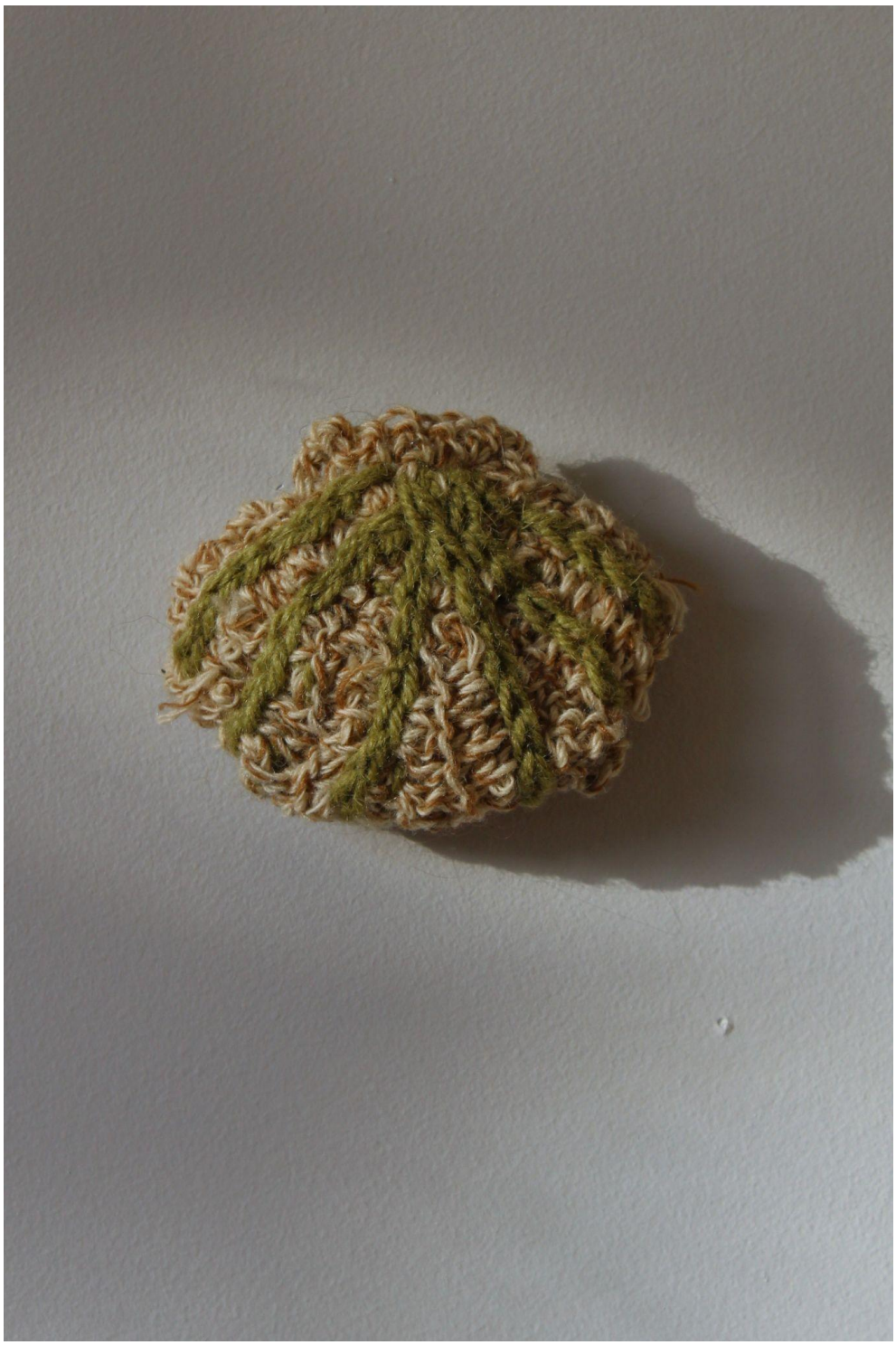
Right: Wool gifted by Helen which was raveled, printed on, then unraveled, and second hand wool. Made in studio with company of friends.





Left: Cotton gifted by Sappho. Made during a bus ride.

Right: Second hand wool. Made keeping company during a friends smoke break.



Second hand wool. Shell made to test organic burnout method, but once again, seemed too precious in soft form.





Acrylic yarn crocheted for an unfinished project when I first began crochet.
Patterns from my nana's 'ie lavala printed with acrylic ink.





Left: Acrylic gifted by Anna, and second hand wool. Made in Kirikiriroa, with family cat on my lap.

Right: Scrap wool leftover from making a yellow bag for Meremaihi's birthday. Made during a bus ride.









Second hand wool, store bought wool, wool gifted by Helen. Circular swatches that all became coasters around my studio. Kept cups warm while sharing tea and coffee with friends.



Scrap fabrics, secondhand, and store bought acrylic yarn. Made untangling messes of scrap yarn with friends.