



Victoria College's  
**GLAM Exhibition, 2025-26**  
 An Undergraduate Curatorial Project



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**ALT**

AGLAM  
 — Galleries,  
 Libraries,  
 Archives,  
 Museums —  
 Project



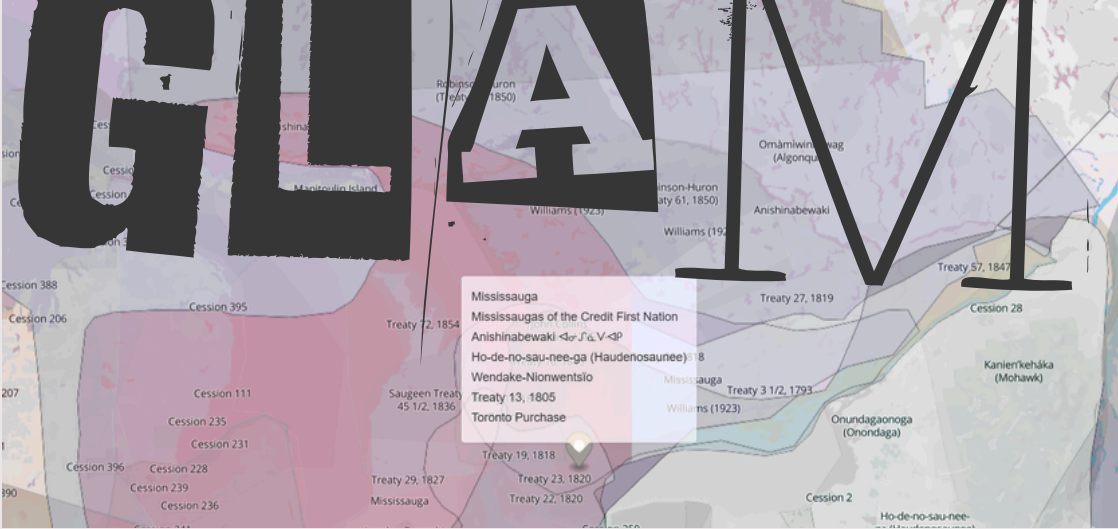
**SPACE**





# ALT SPACE

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# Land Acknowledgement

We wish to acknowledge the land on which the University of Toronto operates. We acknowledge that it was built on the traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit River. We have curated and hosted this exhibit in this place that continues to be home to many Indigenous nations from across Turtle Island. We acknowledge this privilege as settlers and are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

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# GLAM

## An Undergraduate Curatorial Project | Alt + Space

### Foreword

*Florence Lu and Leva Nowzartash*

Michel Foucault defines heterotopias as places that exist outside of societal norms and conventions. They are counter sites, simultaneously representing, contesting, and inverting dominant spaces and understandings. Drawing from this concept of heterotopia, ALT + SPACE is a curatorial project that explores how space both enables and constrains us. In the GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums) industry, for example, alternative spaces refer to art venues outside traditional art spaces, such as commercial art galleries or museums. Alternative spaces, in our curatorial team's conceptualization, are spaces that create possibilities for resistance, collectivity, and transformation. These spaces transcend the established and usually fixed meanings of spaces in formal circulation and are instead defined in relation to people's embodied meaning making and lived experiences. In these spaces, conventions and norms are temporarily suspended, allowing people to express parts of themselves that are otherwise difficult to articulate.

Third spaces, now a common buzzword, are an example of an alternative space. Existing outside the first (i.e., home) and second spaces (i.e., work), third spaces provide environments for people to foster



# G L A M M

community outside the rhythms of capitalism. Another example of a third space is online gossip accounts, where people engage in information exchange under the guise of anonymity. Alternative spaces are agential and interact with the bodies within them, shaping their subjectivities and relationalities. Although these spaces are part of our built environments, they stand outside the hegemonic narratives of space and have fluid meanings that shift with people's relations to them.

Our exhibition examines how these spaces and the bodies that occupy them become a map through which power, surveillance, and identity are negotiated. In an increasingly digital and media-driven age, where we are simultaneously subjects and curators of ourselves, alternative spaces emerge as zones of tension: between authenticity and performance, individuality and community, apathy and resistance. Through three thematic sections — Curtain Call, Users Online, and Creating Impulse — we examine the multifaceted nature of alternative spaces, in both their physical and digital forms. Ultimately, we invite viewers to reflect on how meaning, belonging, and selfhood are shaped by the places we inhabit, both online and offline.



# I. Curtain Call: Curated Identities and Social Performance

*Once the curtains go up, which of your identities will you choose to perform on the stage?*

# Curated Identities and Social Performance

*Sara Catherine Nayir*

The idea of curated identities compels us as social performers as much as it offends our sensibilities (Lesser 2010, 16). The insinuation of "performance" undermines our identity as not our own, positing it instead as an inevitable outcome within a constrained set of circumstances (Gramsci and Goffman; Adut 2018, 122). Yet the very proposal of social performance, a foundational concept within sociocultural anthropology, ascribes agency to us (Goffman). Denoting identity as a performance is not to say that it is superficially "performative," but instead it supposes that we as social actors are always immersed in communicative practices that construct and affirm our positionality within society. How then might visual language within the context of material culture impact these communicative practices?

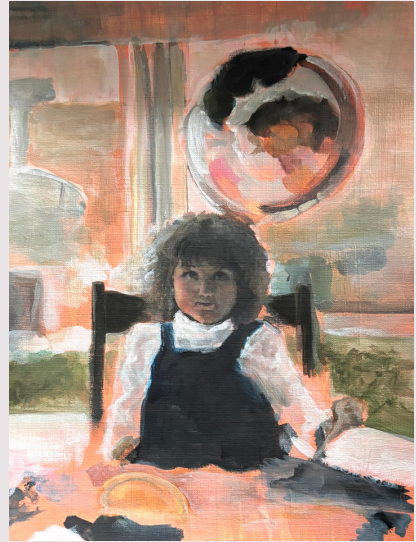
Could the visual language of aesthetics, then, allow us to carve out a space for ourselves in the public sphere (Adut 2018, 45–45)? As social performers and aesthetic curators, our visual choices speak volumes. Those "ordinary" items pieced together – the knickknacks clipped onto your purses and totes, or the chipped nail polish you kept on from two weeks ago – construct themselves into the imponderabilia of our lives. The supposedly inconsequential comes together to form a mosaic of potent, lively signifiers we carry with us. Power, as a curator of our identities, comes with this legibility or visibility of performance (2018, 124).

## Shutter Kisses (2026)

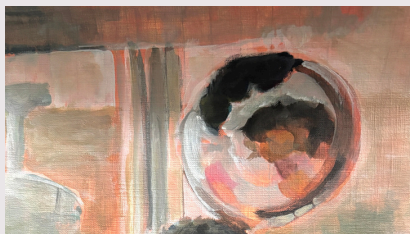
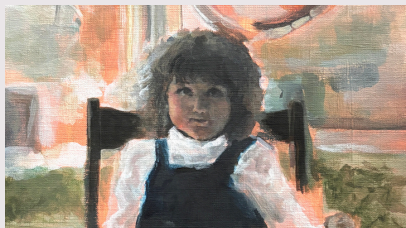
Loaned by Sara Catherine Nayir  
acrylic on canvas paper, 22.86 x 50.48 cm

*Sara Catherine Nayir*

The soft colouring of the piece has a certain harshness to it, similar to pixels. Its central subject sits upright, keenly aware of her surroundings and staring straight at us. I can picture my parents propping up my older sister on the wooden chair, cooing as they struggle to get her to pay attention and hold a pose. For once you're older, they must've thought to themselves, while photographing her. The swathes of vivid colours that construct the scene thus peek through and prod at the unconscious mind. However familiar you might convince yourself you are with the photo and the photographed girl, the unknown maintains the chasm separating the viewer from the subject. Is it our childlike yearning for the simplicity captured in the photo that pulls on us, tethering subject to object? Or is it that us two subjects are in conversation?



*Shutter Kisses* is a hazy snapshot of the sentimentality that carves out a place in all of us, an all-consuming space so intimately inscribed in our identities. The mourning of memory, though not our own within this context, is integral to our *curated* identities. It is odd to mourn a childhood that was not your own; to grieve the light-hearted laughter and fuzzy filtering of sunlight captured in *Shutter Kisses*.



Yet viewers find solidarity within the space afforded to these sentiments. In going against conventional ideas surrounding spacemaking, the photograph's affect constructs a liminal space for collective mourning. In the various iterations I produced of this photo—pixelating it to the point of uncanny legibility and painting loose suggestions of forms—none were as compelling as the impression of pixels on canvas. It suggests an anonymity that renders a particular memory palatable to nostalgia and thus consumable.

## Treasure Box

Loaned by Qiuzi Mei  
glass bottle, box for cigarettes,  
wood, receipts, stickers, letters

*Qiuzi Mei*

This collection of objects comes from the owner's practice of trash picking that crystallizes the fragmentary nature of memories into material remnants. The collection includes a glass soda bottle from Columbian Cafe near Trinity Bellwoods Park, a broken cigarette box picked up near Miaoying Temple in Beijing, receipts from various grocery stores, and letters from a remote childhood to the recent past. Since the owner struggles to discard objects, this collection becomes an ongoing project that replaces and manages the overflow of memory. Through this intimate practice, the owner curates objects that once lost their practical functions find a new purpose by associating them with one another to form a patched alternative persona of the curator.



This collection illustrates a new possibility of the past, which is neither static nor lost, but can create its new meaning and interpretations in the present. This alteration of temporal relations resonates with what Walter Benjamin calls “a tiger’s leap into the past”: when dialectical images bring past and present together in ways that challenge the linear progression of history. These material remnants are snapshots of a personal history that disrupt the present and reorient the future.

For Benjamin, the act of collecting is a struggle to rescue the unclassifiable objects that are left out by the dominant narrative. In addition, Benjamin underlines the difficulty of classification, This collection also participates in the question that is underlined in Benjamin's ideas of collecting: what kinds of objects are remembered, recognized and recuperated as treasures, and which ones are left in the realm of oblivion? The detritus that lives on the margins of our memory may provide an alternative and radical persona that is capable of embracing and overcoming loss. The owner wishes that this collection may help find a way to embrace these messy and incomplete ruins.

## Postcard from Palestine Fundraiser Stall (2025)

Loaned by Portia Ho  
paper, 20.8 x 14.7 cm

*Shae Parnell*

In October 2025, during an artist market at San Cafe, a small postcard was sold by the Chinese Feminism in Toronto collective as part of a Palestine fundraiser. Artist markets like this one operate as alternative spaces embedded within the everyday commercial fabric of the city. Organized independently and structured around rotating vendors and collectives, they temporarily reconfigure familiar environments so that spaces of routine consumption become sites of advocacy, gathering, and exchange. Craft-like items sold in these contexts—postcards, prints, zines, handmade objects—are central to this transformation. Their small scale, affordability, and reproducibility allow political organizations to materialize their presence within the city,

constructing provisional networks of solidarity through objects that circulate easily between hands, homes, and neighbourhoods.

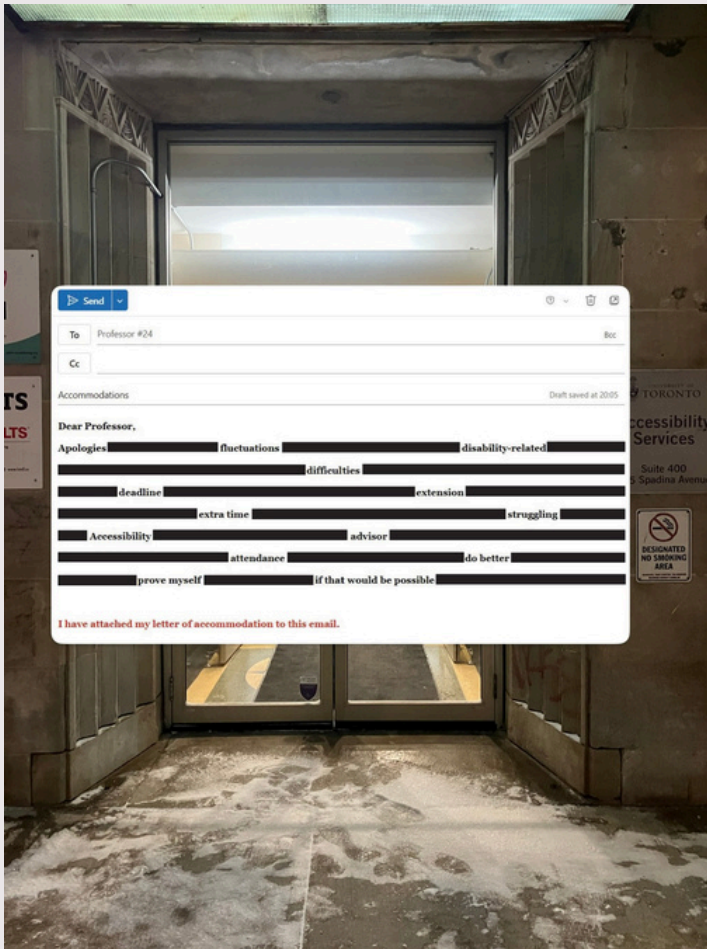
Importantly, the market does not position itself outside dominant economic systems. Rather than rejecting commerce altogether, it works within existing infrastructures, redirecting everyday transactions toward community support and political advocacy. Purchasing a drink, a print, or a postcard becomes a way of participating in a broader collective project. Exchange remains central, but its purpose shifts, enabling grassroots initiatives to carve out temporary, self-defined spaces of expression within commercial settings.

This postcard circulates within that provisional framework. Its modest format enables accessibility while allowing political alignment to take material form in an object designed to travel. When the tables were folded and the café returned to routine operation, objects like this one remain as traces of that reorientation: evidence of how alternative spaces can be assembled within dominant systems, momentarily reshaping them to support collective expression, craft based activism, and transnational solidarity.



# I have attached my Letter of Accommodation to this email (2025)

Loaned by Lauren Murray  
digital piece, 52 x 44 cm



**> Send**

To Professor #24 Rec

Cc

Accommodations Draft saved at 2025

Dear Professor,

Apologies [redacted] fluctuations [redacted] disability-related [redacted]  
[redacted] difficulties [redacted]  
[redacted] deadline [redacted] extension [redacted]  
[redacted] extra time [redacted] struggling [redacted]  
[redacted] Accessibility [redacted] advisor [redacted]  
[redacted] attendance [redacted] do better [redacted]  
[redacted] prove myself [redacted] if that would be possible [redacted]

I have attached my letter of accommodation to this email.

## *Kaitlyn Espey*

This piece explores how neurodivergent students or individuals with prolonged mental health struggles experience postsecondary education, reshaping university into an alternative space. The layered composition ties together the virtual and physical reality of a student requesting accommodations.

At the center of the work, an email screenshot reveals how a student learns to navigate an institution with a particular emotional weight that is not always fully communicated. While the accessibility office appears as a supportive environment, the process of requesting recognition can feel exposing, requiring students to translate private struggles into administrative language. The outside viewers only experience glimpses of particular words within the email, while the rest is left open to interpretation.

In the context of ALT + SPACE, the artist explores how alternative spaces can exist beyond the physical realms of dominant institutions, emerging digitally through acts of self advocacy.

Beneath the screenshot lies a photograph of the entrance to Uoft's Accessibility Services, the physical institution in which students negotiate their needs in order to traverse the university space. Its architecture—made up of neutral colours and stark linear forms—produces an atmosphere that can feel emotionally distant. What may seem like an ordinary doorway to a passerby becomes a threshold of anticipation and vulnerability for those who need it. In this way, the image draws attention to how the most ordinary of spaces can contain an unseen “third space,” perceptible only to those who move through them with intention.

## Empathy (2026)

Loaned by Professor Shirley Yeung  
punch needle embroidery on stretcher-frame, 27.94 x 27.94 cm

*Sara Catherine Nayir*

The overlapping of spaces is central to the composition, with its intersection looking at us, just as we look at it. The artist's empathetic eye thus sees through us at this point in which disparate spaces and lifeworlds converge—as symbolized via the Venn diagram's overlapping circles. The artist created her embroidered piece in conversation with Damien Milton's essay, "On the ontological status of autism: the 'double empathy problem'" (2012), use the visual and spatial tool of the Venn diagram to reflect on the possibility of mutual encounter at this site. As a conceptual tool, the Venn diagram is often used to spatially pictorialize "commonality" or "overlapping" elements in distinctive sets.

The artist reimagines this conceptual tool to reflect on the often fraught space of cross

neurotype communication—a space characterized by "a disjuncture in reciprocity between two different disposed social actors" where, in the context of neurodivergence, appeals to sameness and commonality may reinforce ableist communicative norms while foreclosing encounter and mutual understanding (Milton 2012, 884).

This work envisages a relational strategy where communicative "likeness" is not a pre condition for relatedness. This work asks: what would it mean for cross-neurotype communication to reconfigure and calibrate how we habitually perceive and relate? What new knowledge and what new communicative forms could emerge in the space of insight which the social encounter compels? If not reliant on similarity, what would radical empathy have us

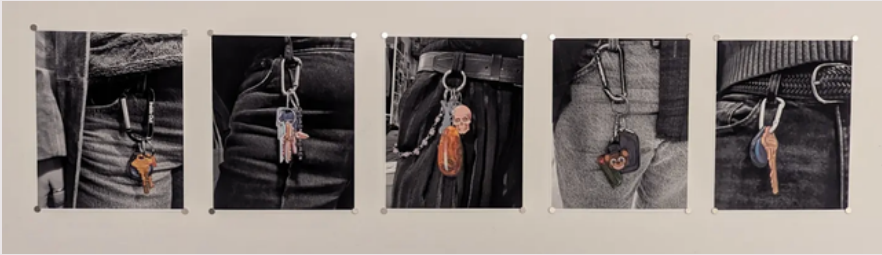
know? What collective spaces would we need to create in order to practice and materialize this empathy? The possibility of unsettling our preconceived relational practices leaves us with the promise of the empathetic eye's fertile ground.



# Queer Semiotics (2025)

Loaned by Ishita Chalise  
matte photo paper, painted over with acrylic paint  
five 21.59 x 27.94 cm sheets

*Kaitlyn Espey*



This series considers how alternative identities are outwardly expressed and constructed in space through the use of carabiners, a sapphic flagging symbol. To display a carabiner is an act of desire, to outwardly present oneself as “not just a lesbian, but as part of a lesbian culture that is alive and active” (Medhurst 2024, 145). Presenting such an accessory builds a sense of connection and therefore a community. The series engages with semiotic and phenomenological ideas by drawing attention to how fashion and objects are implemented to outwardly

express one's internal identity in physical space. This material presentation of one's identity subsequently affects how an individual exists within and is perceived across different spaces.

Keys as a lesbian symbol can be traced back to the 1960s when keys and keyrings appeared in recorded descriptions of butch women (Medhurst 2024, 144). The role of dress practices in queer culture is vital, with visual codes often being used to signify sexuality and sexual preference (Geczy and Karaminas 2025, 25). Someone within the subculture

may read a carabiner as a signal for queer identity, while someone else may only read it as a keychain. This allows for communication and self-articulation while still maintaining a sense of anonymity.

Ultimately, the work demonstrates how identity can be assembled and displayed through the use and accessorization of everyday objects like carabiners.

It functions simultaneously as a queer signifier and a personal accessory, revealing identity as something both culturally coded and individually articulated.

## **beloved/dictee & Fragments (2025)**

Loaned by Elizabet Nisenbaum  
mixed media zine, 12.7 x 10.16 cm

### *Lera Nowzartash*

These zines approach the body as an alternative space, shaped by inscription, regulation, and lived experience rather than coherence or autonomy. Working in the intimate and reproducible format of the zine, these works invite close handling and nonlinear reading, emphasizing fragmentation as both method and meaning.

In *beloved / dictee*, fragments of text, ink, and collage span across the page. Drawing from Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee* (1982), the zine reflects on women's bodies as reduced to "vessels": sites of appropriation, containment, and imposed meaning. Passages from both novels are cut, obscured, and reassembled, resisting linear narrative in favour of interruption and rupture.

The body emerges not as a unified whole but as something shaped by violence, memory, and repetition. Through processes of extraction and reassembly, the zine refuses passive consumption, asking the reader to confront the instability of the body as a dynamic space that is continually inhabited, regulated, and rewritten.

*Fragments* turns toward the contemporary queer body as an unstable and contested site. Combining digital and analog processes, the zine incorporates risograph printing, linocut relief, physical collage, and unconventional relief methods such as lipstick impressions, allowing the body itself to participate in the act of production.

Poetry, interviews, and visual elements coexist without hierarchy, reflecting the nonlinear and often disjointed experience of queer embodiment. By blurring distinctions between object and subject, *Fragments* resists fixed definitions, proposing the queer body as something continuously negotiated through lived experience.

Together, these zines position the body itself as a heterotopic site; a space where power, identity, and meaning are contested, fragmented, and reimagined.



Fragments, 2025

beloved / dictee, 2025

# Butch "Boy" in the Bathroom

poem

Loaned by Leeanne Shubert

The pristine porcelain of a prettified port-a-potty  
makes even plastic decorations appear austere  
Privacy is pardoned by a pursed provocation:  
Mommy, there's a boy in here!

I'll talk down two teams of tip-toeing tennis trainers  
whose comments I should surely disregard  
Because comforting even crabby children's concerns  
is the only way to clean up bathroom boulevard

A hum, or a hushed hymn, or a hospitable hello?  
Femininity: enhance! How do I accomplish that?  
I settle for a soprano sing-song steeped in sensitivity  
and hope that fearful accusations will soon retract

## *Max Calame*

In this poem, the author reveals their experience in the women's bathrooms as a self-identified butch, being mistaken as a boy due to their outward presentation. 'Butch' is a terminology used by lesbians to define both gender identity and sexuality. It is often adjoined with both visual and aesthetic discourses that exist in subcultural spaces, challenging dominant society's status quo (Eves 2004).

On the other hand, this piece brings to light a very relevant perspective in today's society; being visibly queer in the bathroom. With that being said, not conforming to the socially accepted performances/representations of femininity in a space such as the bathroom can create conflict and tension. When suddenly being mistaken as a boy, Shubert evokes a feeling of anxiety that truly transports the reader into their shoes. Shubert then emphasizes how they cater to strangers within

the space to ensure that the latter feel comfortable by finding ways to emphasize their femininity, rather than rightfully occupying the space that they are entitled to. This poem weighs heavy, and shines light on how, with the increase of hate crimes targeting the 2SLGBTQM+ community in today's society, occurrences like these are not out of the ordinary, and represents how easily a community member can become vulnerable. This poem offers the audience a unique perspective and insight on a very real and frequent experience not just butch lesbians face in public bathrooms, but all visibly queer individuals.

## ***Tethered* (2024)**

Loaned by Victoria Li  
booklet, 21.5 x 7 cm

*Portia Ho*

Inspired by Sheila Heti's seminar about her then-upcoming novel, *Alphabetical Diaries* (2024), Victoria began to transcribe and arrange her own diary alphabetically in 2025. She noticed how certain phrases fragmented and recombined, consequently recontextualising her subjective experience. This inspired *Tethered*, a booklet comprised of creative texts that explore themes of fluidity, the instability of a multilingual identity, and, perhaps contradictingly, a willingness to be bound.

Originally from Hong Kong, Victoria represents her fluency in Cantonese, Mandarin, and English through interwoven strips of paper featuring texts in traditional Chinese and English. One detail is the inclusion of both formally written Chinese and

transcriptions of verbal Cantonese. Victoria asserts her identity as a Hong Konger, a distinct local identity founded upon Cantonese, while contemplating her ability to "shape shift across the boundaries of languages" into Mandarin and English.

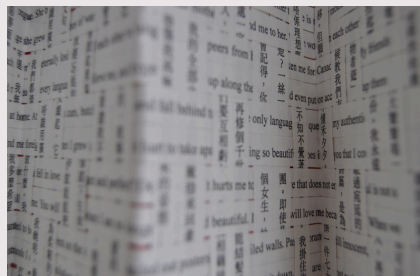
Indeed, the highlight of this piece is the intertwining of the three verbal identities. Like Sergei Eisenstein's Montage Theory, which holds that a film's meaning is generated through conflicts and syntheses between independent shots, an alternative space arises from this specific conjuncture. It is within this conjuncture that Victoria's identity is destabilised, an identity she deems essentially experimental, challenging the order of language: "I feel as though I fit into all of them, yet belong in none."

This is represented in the booklet through the English texts being arranged horizontally and the Chinese vertically, as these languages are typically written, and how these overlapping strips both block and accentuate certain words.

To fully comprehend the generativity of this interweaving of languages, Victoria invites the audience to pull apart the strips, read them, and interact with them.



She wishes for the booklet's form to be worn and changed, reflecting the instability of the self that it represents. This contemplation on the self not only applies to herself, but also to those who interact with this piece; she believes that we are all fragments, tied to each other through our interactions. After all, the booklet is titled *Tethered* — like the red string of fate, which replaces the three dots in the Chinese character for this term ( “絆” ) in the cover and extends through the booklet, the idea of being bound can mean both confinement and love.



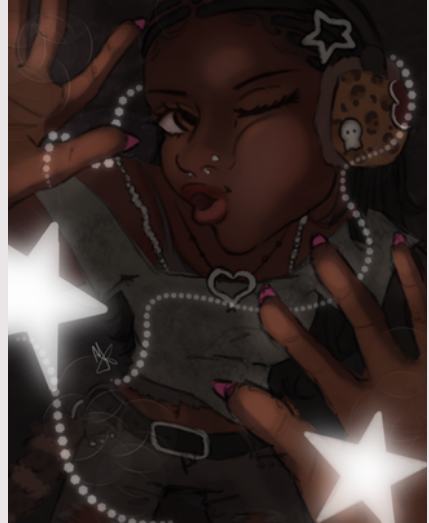
## Untitled (2025)

Loaned by Michaëlle Knights  
digital piece, 18 x 24 cm

*Klarissa Schiffert*

A black girl presses against the fourth wall of the digital painting. She wears leopard-print earmuffs, a silver heart necklace, and a keychain looped around her belt. She is surrounded by silver beads and stars illuminating the otherwise dark canvas.

When we think of alternative spaces, we often think of spaces designed for white people: the pale faced emo, the suburban grunge kid. People of color have often been restricted from these spaces due to, ironically, not fitting the mold of what the stereotypical “alternative” person should look like. Knights’ painting challenges this idea. Knight notes that the inspiration for this picture was the lack of Black people in alternative subcultures, and she hopes to create a space for them to comfortably interact.



To this end, she drew a somewhat more conventionally styled figure while maintaining the subversive flair of the scene. The figure’s pose is one of confidence; she is poised to push out of the space she is confined in, breaking the artificial barrier that confines her. She is unafraid to show her membership within this alternative space.

## The Ride (2024)

Loaned by Freda Tan (@paint\_of\_views / www.fredatan.art)  
diptych, acrylic on mirror, 50.48 x 50.48 cm

*Portia Ho*

The spaces depicted in *The Ride* are constructed of abstract forms, their illuminated silhouettes seemingly ever-shifting. In turn, these forms denote a sense of liminality, as the spaces are simultaneously familiar and derealised. As the name suggests, the piece depicts a space of transition, one neither here nor there. *The Ride*, in one sense of the phrase, could refer to a vehicle, carrying passengers who anticipate their arrival at a final destination. Interestingly, the human figures depicted in the two pieces, though recognizable, are also abstract forms. Such abstraction allows them to be both distinct from and melt into their surroundings. Considering how our bodies and identities constantly negotiate with our external environments, is it safe to assume that these bodies depicted in *The Ride* are shifting alongside the space they are

situated within, in anticipation of arriving at a final form? *The Ride*, in another sense of the term, could also refer to the journey, which in itself could constitute an alternative space. Instead of a fixed destination, would this process of self-transformation then remain endless?

As the audience, you are invited to this journey. As the artist notes: "By adapting the mirror as the painting surface, I aim to create an ever-shifting and interactive experience for in-person viewers. By standing in front of the works, you are now part of the ride."





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## ***II. User Online: Virtual Subspaces and Online Culture***

*We transfer fragments of our identities into the virtual world, but can our digital alter egos truly be contained within it?*

# Virtual Subspaces and Online Culture

*Portia Ho*

Following the rise of digital culture, virtual sites began to challenge hegemonic definitions of spaces tied to the confines of physicality. Considering the expansive dimensions of digital citizenship, virtual spaces interact with and subsequently transform the bodies within them. Enabled by the physical detachment of online interactions, users create virtual identities, or “avatars,” that deviate from their physical appearance and embellish their online personalities (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2015, 102). One could argue that this phenomenon is an extension of the fact that we, in our daily lives, adopt multiple roles and identities (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2015, 105). Indeed, virtual spaces could also be considered an extension of reality: dominant social structures and attitudes still permeate within such spaces, and site specific social conventions may be in

place (Bullingham and Vasconcelos 2015, 104). However, there are also virtual subspaces where dominant social structures are subverted, especially due to the affordances of pseudonymity. Although this may enable forms of antisocial behaviour (DeGloma 2025, 70), it also facilitates resistance and expressions of authenticity against the status quo and social stigma (DeGloma 2025, 55, 69). In short, online spaces such as social media platforms or digital games are imaginative sites; they fill the gaps of, or perhaps, provide refuge from, the dissatisfactions of real life. However, considering how our identities and social performances are increasingly mediated by digital spaces, one may wonder: will our alternative identities and forms of connections structured within these sites begin to invade or disrupt those we have established in our physical reality?

## Look 吓 look 吓 (2026)

Loaned by Haszo (Hazel Cheng) (@whazso.co)  
digital video, colour, sound, 02:09 minutes

### *Portia Ho*

The film's title, "Look 吓 look 吓," is a play between the English word "look," and its Cantonese homophone "碌" (luk1), which can be defined as "busy," but also the act of scrolling on one's digital devices. This interplay between terms, in the filmmaker's words, "bounds the idea of the senses, motion, and condition." This traversal between the three notions constructs an alternative site, or a virtual reality, that deviates from our physical existence.

In the film, the girl lies on the carpet, mindlessly scrolling on her phone. Time passes, and the room darkens. She does not seem to notice, even when this darkness is interrupted as the hallway lights up: her boyfriend returning home. In turn, the film demonstrates how our obsession with the world within our screens and the subsequent disassociation from our tangible reality

challenges our definition of intimacy, reconfiguring how we facilitate human connection. As the filmmaker notes, connection and understanding begin to lose depth, rendered into a performance. Indeed, in the information age, the construction of identities and how we choose to express them in an online space deviates from how we do so in the physical world. Specifically, this new identity is mediated by what we choose to consume and share with one another. However, considering the interference of technology in our interpersonal lives, this begs the question of whether the alternate self, constructed within virtual spaces, will begin to assimilate into, or even take over, our fixed identities in the physical world. If so, considering our everyday interactions, with whom are we really connecting?



# Hayday (2026)

Loaned by Yaocheng Xia  
screenshot, 41 x 89 cm

*Qiuzi Mei*

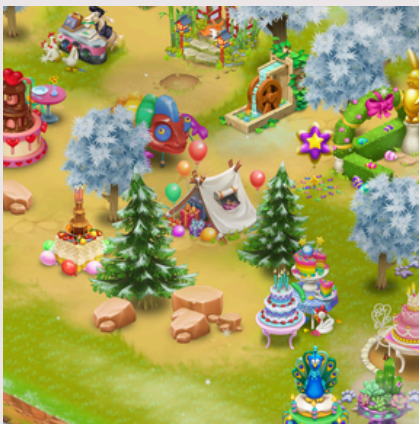


This photograph portrays the decorations of the donor's farm on the mobile game Hay Day — a farming simulation game that allows players to create their own slice of “country paradise.” On its official website, this imaginative farmland is described as where “food grows free, people smile and the animals are always happy to see you.” On Hay Day, players can reconnect with nature and experience a simple and even

utopian life untouched by stark reality. In this farm, land is organized in grids, each filled with different festive and cultural decorations, pine trees, and undeveloped forests covered in icy snow. The passing of time is in distortion, with seasons confused into a static yet glittering image of joyful celebration. The railroads on the right of this photograph frame it with the winter cliff at the top left of the

image, demarcating the bound of the fantasy land and also the frame of screen. Humans are notably absent from the screen, labor on the land becoming a labor of curation, sustaining nostalgia for an idyllic past. Animals, plants, and other living beings are now objects of decoration for humans' aesthetic endeavours, rather than active inhabitants of the shared land. This farmland is an alternative space, yet it blurs the boundary between virtuality and reality. It exists in a digital form, in the user's imagination, and also in a physical form as data on the game's server.

It is both a personal space and also a repository for a collective nostalgia for the lost and for a place one has never known.



## **Dead Arcade (2026)**

Loaned by Arlo Grzyb Reed  
digital video, colour, sound, 00:17 seconds

*Sophia Roy-Longino*

This video captures an arcade at the base of the escalators in Citi Plaza Mall, nearly ten years after the artist first visited it with their father. Once animated by footsteps and children's laughter, the arcade now sits largely abandoned, lending it an uncanny appearance. Although the surrounding stores and food court are shuttered, the machines remain powered on, humming, flashing, and waiting without an audience. It feels less like an abandoned corner of a failing mall and more like a quiet shelter for the lost entities of what once filled it.

Recorded in near-emptiness, the footage lingers on blinking neon and mechanical sounds that feel both familiar and estranged. The space appears suspended between life and

obsolescence, no longer a site of childhood but not entirely erased, gesturing towards a border phenomenon of the steady disappearance of spaces designed for play. In revisiting it, the artist confronts the dissonance between memory and today's reality, revealing how alternative spaces can emerge unexpectedly. After all, the arcade was not originally an alternative space, it was just another commercial site that was not afforded a second thought by those passing by. However, abandonment transformed it, turning it into an alternative space through nostalgia and the slow degradation of a once lively environment now lost to time.

Hence, this video exemplifies that alternative space is not only produced through resistance or collectivity, but

also through absence. The artist does not simply document a dying mall when revisiting the arcade. They also document the moment when a childhood space ceases to exist and transforms into something stranger and almost unrecognizable, a metamorphosis which is both crushing and soothing.





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### ***III. Creative Impulse: Creating Space and Its Aftermath***

*An impulse that precedes the self, an impulse that makes spaces, an impulse that yearns for rupture. When impulses recede to the normative rhythm of everyday life, what is left for us?*

# Creating Space and Its Aftermath

*Qiuzi Mei*

Isolation and community seem to be a set of opposites in our consciousness. Yet, this exhibition approaches them as co-constituents of the operational principle of relational living. Isolation can only be felt in relation to community, and community must exist by the exclusion of some over others. As if a palimpsest, community and isolation collide, overlay, and rewrite each other as identities are created, sustained, and renewed. This process creates a threshold of ambiguity, where norms can be re-inscribed and also redefined.

This exhibition explores how different venues of self-making render this ambiguous space possible. Henri Lefebvre (1991) theorizes space threefold: a perceived space at the material dimension, a conceived space at the ideological dimension, and a lived space at the experimental dimension, where alternative uses of space

flourish with memories and imagination.

Instead of being isolated, these three dimensions are interconnected, which together compose the social production of spaces. Creating a space is not only a physical act, but can also emerge through new social relations, imaginations and modes of belonging.

British Marxist geographer Doreen Massey (2005) describes space as a “product of interrelations”; space can never be completed, but is rather an ongoing process of making and unmaking. Though a dominant narrative may establish a claim over a space, it can never fully harness the interrelations between space, people, and materials. This is especially true in the aftermath of space-making — as the traces, fragments, and ruins preserve different registers for alternative forms of imagining how we might live in and share a world.

## Rosary Beads (2025)

Loaned by Silas  
Acquired September 2025  
wooden jewelry, 59.57 cm

### *Sara Catherine Nayir*

The Rosary is a Catholic sacramental used for the Rosary prayer. Worshipers use its beads to keep track of the number of prayers they have performed, with the larger beads indicating the recitation of “Our Father.” It is traditionally used in ceremonies contemplating the life and death of Jesus Christ, though its use has extended to Confessional prayer. By using the beads, worshipers enter an alternative space of prayer and community with their fellow worshipers. They mark Catholic membership, used to enter this alternative space. This particular Rosary contains 59 beads, with the different prayers denoted by changes in the chain length between the maroon beads rather than the beads themselves. At one end, hands hold a metal crucifix, signaling the beginning of the prayer and the entrance into the



prayer space, while an image of a female saint standing before Jesus ends the ritual.

The Rosary, along with other symbols of Catholicism, has been co-opted by the political right. Conservative journalist Megyn Kelly speaks about using a Rosary gifted by fellow right-winger Jack Posobiec to pray in the same breath that she attacks her neighbours. “TradCaths” film themselves praying, using their influence to spout anti-feminist and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric.



The devotional instrument thus becomes a prop of the far right, signalling membership of the alt right rather than the Church.

This symbolic use of these beads does not completely annul their meaning. The members of churches have long used Catholic symbols to attack those they deem “deviant.” When contemporary conservative figures deploy it as a cultural signal, they draw on this existing symbolic power rather than inventing something entirely new. The alternative space that the Rosary opens has always been double edged: it fosters intimacy with the divine and solidarity among believers, yet it can also sharpen lines of exclusion.

## Who Am I? (2026)

Loaned by Kaitlyn Espey  
twelve coloured photographs, 50.8 x 40.64 cm

### *Kaitlyn Espey*

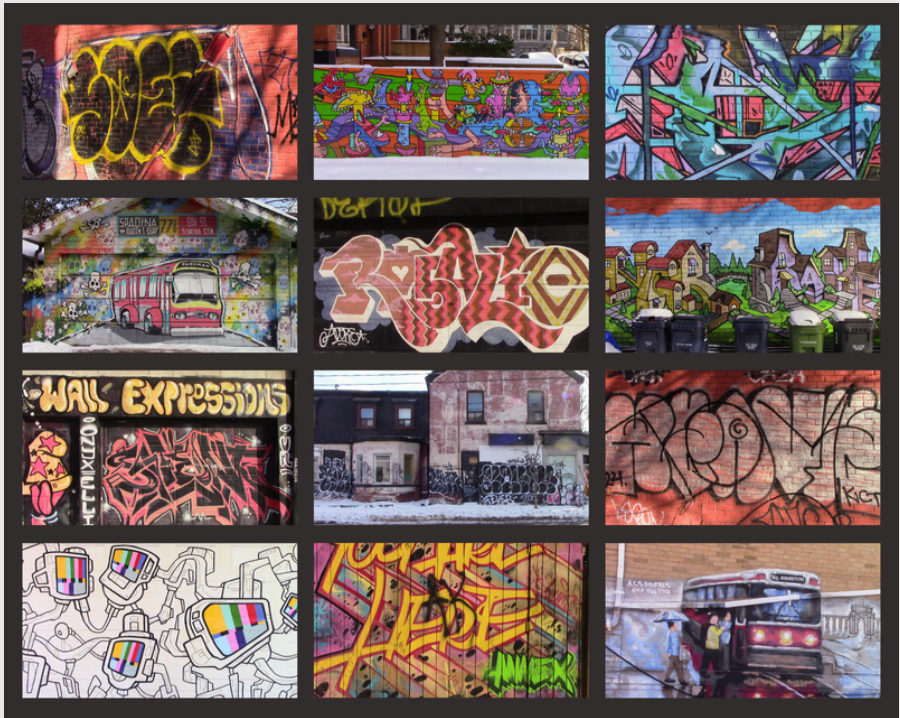
This photographic series documents graffiti scattered across Toronto – on alley walls, sides of buildings, and garages – revealing public space as an alternative site of expression. A particular emphasis is placed on artist tags, portraits, and symbols that evoke a distinctly “Torontonion” identity. Specific viewing sites include the Garage Murals on Alan Powell and David French Lane. Through anonymity, artists are able to communicate freely, constructing identities untethered from social status, education, race, gender, or authority, all factors that tend to privilege certain members over others. Amardo Rodriguez and Robin Patric Clair explore this sense of free expression in their article *Graffiti as Communication: Exploring the Discursive Tensions of Anonymous Texts*. “The lack of explicit rules and protocols allow people to express themselves without

the fear of social punishment that arises from any kind of violation” (Rodriguez and Clair 1999, 2). As imagery is created and displayed on public property, concepts of criticism quickly become intertwined with aesthetics.

These markings transform ordinary urban surfaces into areas of collective storytelling and coded communication, effectively creating a “third space” within the city’s structure. The details of graffiti are left unnoticed as if they are simply another unit within the bustling downtown streets. And yet, if an individual stops for a moment to *really* look around, they are invited into a new space that already exists within plain sight. The common motif of public transit highlights the shared urban experience, one shaped by reliance and routine. Graffiti as an artform defies the urban design of

Toronto, with its agenda of gentrification, to open up space for an alternative identification of “Torontonians” that escapes the dominant narratives of the city’s institutions.

The city becomes an archive of voices that refuse erasure, demonstrating how alternative spaces emerge even when institutional powers try to restrict them.



## **UofT Bathrooms - "GLANCES" (2025)**

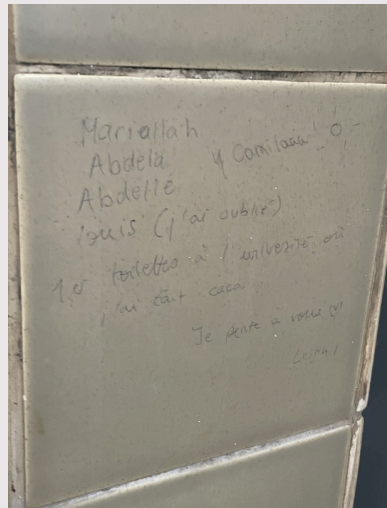
Loaned by Silas Busby  
photo collection shot on iPhone 12 with a seven element lens,  
1.6 aperture, 15.5 x 18 cm

*Silas Busby*

These photos of various public bathrooms around the U of T campus aim to capture their role as heterotopia. Broken tiles, explicit graffiti, and the eerie glow of the fluorescent lights remind us of the transient nature of our experience of public bathrooms. In the bathroom, we encounter others at the most vulnerable moment for their gendered constitution. In these spaces, the strict injunction on looking has the paradoxical effect of rendering even the slightest movement strikingly visible. The angle of feet under the stall, the sounds of excretion and the very attempts to mitigate those sounds, the angles of the spine, the shoulders, and the neck at the urinal are all constantly under surveillance. The scrutiny of these small tells is the basis upon which judgments about the

performance of gender and the discipline of the body are made. The subversion of the established norms which regulate belonging and make the body predictable can bring terrible violence, but under the right conditions, can bring about the total reversal of these norms. The risky decision to glance over, to initiate a hushed conversation, or to fail performance of the appropriate gender's bodily ideal, if well-received, can reverse the disciplinary norms of cisgender and heterosexuality to make the space a queer one. Thus, we see that the bathroom is not necessarily a dangerous space for queer and trans bodies. The extraordinary potential of the bathroom space cannot be overlooked in asking ourselves how the dominant sexual regime is established, and thus where it can be compromised.

The piece asserts the subjects' agency. The ritual of transformation acts not only inward but expands outward, redefining the site in which it occurs. While bathrooms are typically spaces of intense gender policing that restrict their occupants, here they become a vehicle for human agency. This subversion ultimately demonstrates how alternative spaces must be actualized by acts of personal resistance.



## Dye (2023)

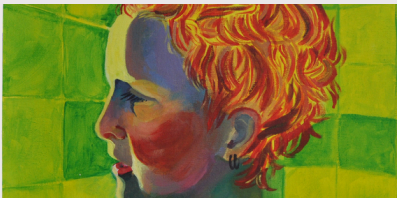
Loaned by Lais Soares

acrylic on canvas, 51 x 40.5 cm each



## *Lais Soares*

In this diptych, the artist reminisces on her friend group's practice of dyeing each other's hair in their early adolescence. Painted in hindsight during her junior year of high school, the artist came to recognize the formative nature of these ritual like occasions as instances of queer rebellion and self-actualization. Reinterpreted with dramatic hues, reference photos of the event were imbued with narrative power.



A story told in two parts, the panels represent a classic progression from struggle to triumph. Dominated by somber blues, the first panel's subjects hardly stand out from their dark surroundings. While the former's bodies form a clear triangular composition, the piece's rhythm is confused by the unidirectionality of the repeating square tiles, acting by the unidirectionality of the repeating square tiles, acting as a visual metaphor for the underlying tension between authenticity and conformity present in every queer person's life. In contrast, the artist's use of a fiery red, brightened by a pervasive yellow underpainting in the second panel achieves the opposite mood of the first: liberation. Still present, the background tiles are now appealing. They bend around the subject, and consist of thin washes barely concealing the joyful yellow underneath.

## **“Never Call it a Night” Pub Collection (2025)**

collection of five coasters, 10 cm in width each

### *Florence Lu*

“Never Call it a Night” is a collection consisting of memorabilia from pubs/bars, namely, coasters and menus. The pub coasters are of different shapes but a similar size, designed to protect surfaces from being damaged by water rings, heat damage, or scratches. Made of mostly cardboard and pulpboard, the coasters are visibly used, and the traces of human usage can be observed from the stains, wrinkles, decoloration, etc. Prominent on the coasters are the pub or brewery logos, marking their origins. The menus are crumpled and stained, implying human touch. Distinct menu designs differentiate the spaces from each other, evoking different fragments of memory that are intertwined with spatiality. The coasters and menus collectively signify the materiality of space and companionship.

“Never Call it a Night” presents artifacts that are closely associated with nightlife, taken from nocturnal settings such as pubs or bars. Most of the coasters are collected by the loaner in Calgary, Alberta, a prairie city dominated by the suburban landscape, lacking urban livelihood. To prolong nights that are often forced to end early, the loaner and her friends seek shelter in the city to have another drink, to continue the conversations, to delay calling it a night. The coasters bear memory, witnessing moments of companionship. Stained with drinks from the loaners and all those who came before them, the coasters are the materialization of human connections that unfold in corners of the pubs. The menus were once wrinkled by fingers, examined with attentive eyes, and discussed through lips that shaped syllables.

They preserve the material residues of tenderness, holding the intimate traces of friendship and love.

A car-centric city urges people to go home early, to not wander off track. The existence of pubs and bars opens up the possibility of lingering, momentarily unsettling the fixed trajectories that are prescribed by inaccessible urban design.

Through these materials encountered at and preserved from the pubs/bars, the loaner is reminded of the late nights spent with her companions roaming the city, postponing their homeward journeys. The coasters and menus may be generic items of mass production, but they become ingrained with memory as they witness the intimacy between friends and their relationships with the spaces they inhabit.



## Tricks (2024)

Loaned by Amani Hassan  
photographs, 10.5 x 10.5 cm

### *Florence Lu*

This series of eight photographs captures a “Litefeet” dancer’s performance in New York City. Each photograph is rich with motion, documenting the performer’s agile movements. The photographs are in black and white, reducing the noise that would result from saturated colors and instead orienting the viewer’s gaze towards the performer’s bodily movements. Light and shadow also play important roles in highlighting life and motion – themes that are omnipresent in the photographs. Through the photographers’ eyes, which appreciate the smaller moments of urban vitality, one can observe the city’s flow through the audience sitting on the benches, cars passing by.

Public space is seldom considered to be an alternative space, due to their public access and officially established meanings.

This series of photographs contemplates how public space can be transcended to form alternative spaces in which personal meanings are made through lived experiences.

Without the performer, the space is but a corner of the New York streets, possibly with a street name and history that are articulated through the city’s official narrative. As the performer claims the space with his dance, however, the space is transformed into a concrete place where people can establish more intimate relationships with their surroundings and each other. Embodied encounters with space create narratives outside prescribed meanings. “Litefeet” dancers, such as the performer in the photographs, make spaces for themselves on subway trains and street corners.

As the photographer articulates, “[the “Litefeet” dancers] embody the pulse of the city in a way that transcends the hustle and bustle of mundane city life.” Beyond skyscrapers that signify economic prosperity, moments like this performance truly form the urban fabric, constituting encounters that are mundane but can nevertheless generate meaningful connections among people, between places.



# School of Rock Poster (2024)

Loaned by Chloe Gong Miniere  
paper, 21.59 x 27.94 cm

## Maxx Calame

On this poster we see a crowd of people raising their fists or throwing up the “devil horns” with their hands, a symbol commonly used amongst metal and rock subcultures, and often seen at concerts or music venues. This poster is a piece of memorabilia from the “Band-Aid” concert fundraiser for the Markham Stouffville Hospital Atlas Program, hosted by School of Rock, a music school in Markham. The poster is loaned by one of the event’s participants, whose friends performed at the event. This was the last event of the 2024 school year for School of Rock, as well as the last event the loaner, amongst others, attended before summer and following their graduation. Although a benefit may only be viewed as a fundraising event and not an alternative space, this poster is



a testament to how it can transform into an alternative space when individuals gather together. The poster evokes a feeling of nostalgia, allowing one to reflect on youth and events they have attended in the past. It encourages the viewer to question: what are alternative spaces? How are they influenced by our subjective experiences?

An alternative space does not necessarily have to be enormous, or hosted in some underground venue you would need a secret password to get into. An alternative space can be created by caring for others and collective action. The crowd depicted in the poster represents how the benefit was transformed into an alternative space by uniting people together with music, while providing support for the local community.

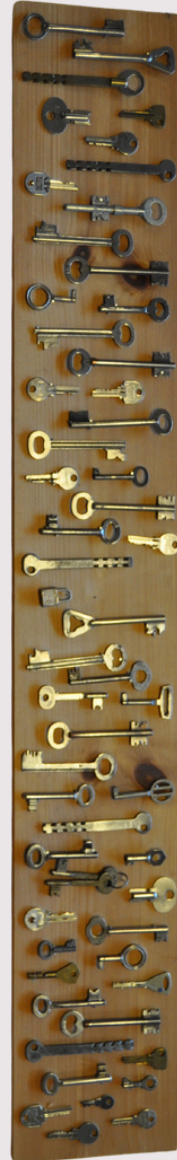
# Grandparents Apartment Keys in Warsaw (2001)

Loaned by Agata Kowalski  
wooden board, various metal keys, 18 x 122 cm

## *Tekla Gowrie*

Hanging on this board is much more than physical keys. They are memories not only of past spaces, but of people and times that are now gone. At one point, the keys would have facilitated a direct and tangible transition from hallway to home, outside to inside, public to private. Now they serve as an abstract transition, from present to past, from current reality into memory.

Keys themselves are very personal items. They are crucial everyday items, used constantly to move in and out of a home. They define ownership and introduce a space that is uniquely one's own. In present times, however the design of keys are increasingly depersonalised, becoming more standardized, or in many cases, non-existent, with the introduction of various smart locks with keypads and



thumbprint recognition. These keys are different. Each one has its own individual shape, some more peculiar than others. Regardless, their sheer size, weight, and toothiness create an identity unlike those seen with the keys of the present day. Their distinctiveness makes the transition itself become tangible and have its own identity, the threshold is materialized and characterized.

Far from ubiquitous, the expressive identity of each key makes the associated memory of its past owner and home much more distinguishable. They serve as a connection to a personal space that no longer exists, a space which transcends the physical notion of the term. Even if the house is still physically there, it is occupied by a stranger and barred by a foreign key and

lock. The memories of these past times and spaces are exclusive to the keys on display; when the memory is triggered, the gateway is unlocked.



## **The Redwood Romp (2026)**

Loaned by Klarissa Schiffert  
photograph taken in California, USA, 18 x 24 cm

*Klarissa Schiffert*

This photograph was taken inside the Saratoga County Library of the “Redwood Romp” — a new play structure housed within rows of children’s books. It is the first of three play structures created by the Storybook Children’s Play Space initiative across the Santa Clara County Libraries, which aims to increase literacy rates by blending learning with fun. The structure is modelled after a tree house, with its brown wood and green leaves evoking the massive redwood trees that define Northern California. Children are invited to play hopscotch on lettered tiles, rearrange the foam logs, and climb around the architecture as a whole. The structure transforms what had been a quiet reading area into a place of play.

Its creation asks the question, “What kind of space is a library? Is it a place of quiet

study? A place of learning? Or a place of fun?” For the loaner, it used to be a place to devour stories, a place she could leave carrying twenty books and return a week later for more. The structure marks a departure from the intention to promote literacy only through reading. Now, the same space where she sat quietly for years is filled with children playing. When the loaner first saw the structure, she felt as though a part of her childhood had been erased, that the meaning of the space had been lost. While the space no longer fits with the loaner’s own conception of what a “library” should be, perhaps that is not a bad thing. Now, the community’s youngest residents have a place to play, somewhere that prepares them to learn. At the March 18th opening ceremony, Jennifer Weeks, the head librarian, notes that five skills are needed

to develop literacy: reading, writing, speaking, singing, and playing. This new structure facilitates a space for these young minds to do all of this and more. While it departs from the space's traditional meaning, the new structure supports its primary purpose: encouraging children to read. No matter how a space takes shape, something remains the same: the sheer joy in adventures in and out of stories is what gives purpose to

this place, no matter the form it takes.



## Reconstruction of the Basement Prison (2024)

Loaned by Sophia Roy-Longino  
leaflet from House of Terror Museum  
ink on paper, 21.59 x 27.94 cm

### *Sophia Roy-Longino*

Located at 60 Andrásy Street, the former headquarters of the Arrow Cross Party and later of the ÁVH (Hungarian Communist secret police), the House of Terror Museum focuses on the fascist and communist regimes that took control of Hungary in the 20th century. Unlike traditional museums that foreground original artefacts and archival neutrality, the House of Terror constructs its narrative through an immersive experience, using multimedia elements, interactive exhibits, and theatrical installations to provoke an emotional response to the horrors of foreign totalitarianism while furthering a view of Hungary as an innocent victim.

This printed leaflet, distributed to visitors entering the reconstructed, hyper-realistic basement prison section of the

museum, outlines the experiences of prisoners held under the ÁVH. Through testimonial quotation and vivid descriptions of standing cells, water torture, and forced confessions, the leaflet prepares visitors for an encounter with a space framed as one of intense suffering and national martyrdom under a 20th century tyranny.

More than an informational guide, the pamphlet directs how the basement should be read and felt. It maps the space in advance and immerses visitors in terror, constructing their emotions and experience. Like the rest of the museum, the pamphlet also frames the basement as a site of collective victimhood under an oppressive foreign regime. In other words, the basement operates as a carefully staged environment,

and the pamphlet becomes a script that orients the visitor within it. In doing so, it reveals how cultural institutions can operate not as neutral sites of

preservation, but as performative and ideological environments where memory and space are staged, interpreted, and performed.

### Reconstruction of the Basement Prison

*"When they led me from the basement of 60 Andrassy út to my first major interrogation, I prayed for the Lord to erase from my memory the names of my friends."*  
Vendel Endrédi, Cistercian Abbot of Zirc, who spent six years in solitary confinement

During the Arrow Cross reign of terror, military deserters and many of our Jewish compatriots were tortured and murdered in cells constructed in what was once the coal cellar at 60 Andrassy út. After the war the communist political police took over the building and turned the former coal cellar into a true labyrinth. We still do not know the full extent of the basement's tunnel system at that time, and how many adjacent buildings it was connected to.

As the political police abandoned the building after 1956 and the communists tried to erase all traces of the previous ten years of brutality, it was only possible to reconstruct the former prison through the recollections of surviving prisoners.

The basement of 60 Andrassy Avenue was a realm of fear and pain. Armed guards stood outside the cells, the prisoners were not allowed to sleep or clean themselves, and they had little access to food or water. Interrogations, usually at night, took place on the upper floors of the building, and the bestial interrogation methods of the basement were "refined" in accordance with Soviet KGB instructions. Prisoners were tortured with electricity, burning cigarettes, pliers, broken glass, jets of water and electric hotplates, and beaten with lead-filled rubber batons, until they were ready to confess to anything and everything.

The standing cell, the wet cell and the foxhole are all testimony to the ingenuity of human evil and cruelty. The standing cell only provided enough space to stand, and was fitted with a glaring light bulb at eye level. In the wet cell, tortured prisoners were forced to sit or stand in ice-cold water. The foxhole was kept in permanent darkness, and the ceiling was so low that it was impossible to stand upright. The guards could also decide to turn off the ventilation system so that in the windowless cells prisoners would be left gasping for air. The motto of the ÁVO guards was "Don't just guard them; hate them too."

60 Andrassy út was not an official place of execution, but the exhibition's death cell and place of execution evoke the fate of all those who were sentenced to death by the communist tyranny.



## **Fields from Train Outside Kraków (1994)**

Loaned by Agata Kowalski  
oil on canvas, 40 x 29.9 cm

### *Tekla Gowrie*

The painting depicts a landscape through simplified, pure blocks of colour, omitting all details, figures and shapes that would otherwise occupy the space. This simplification to only colour is not done for the pure purpose of abstraction, but rather to emulate the blur experienced when one is in motion. The combination of greens, yellows, whites and blues represent the rolling hills and farmers' fields that occupy most of Poland's countryside. The painting is done from the perspective of a train that rapidly cuts through this serene countryside, without a spare moment to fully capture and comprehend the reality of the landscape.

By depicting the countryside in such a way, the artist emphasizes the liminality of mobile spaces such as trains, planes, buses or cars.

Although each their own individual space, their sole purpose is to transition and transport. Different people move in and out, and there are no stable features of travel. This landscape emulates how in these spaces, nothing stands still, and very little can be grasped of what is passed by. The sole purpose of these vehicles is simply to get from one point to another. In turn, the distinct nature of the fields or the blades of grass are effaced — they are just moving colours. In attempts to capture these landscapes, the reality of the space in which they are portrayed is already blurred. In other words, the abstract image depicted in the painting is not theoretical, but an accurate depiction of what the eye sees. This space of movement creates a completely true and accurate reality that is seemingly the furthest thing from realistic or

concrete. This state of constant movement can be considered, in itself, an alternative space, rendering a unique form of reality where, in seeming contradiction, things in motion appear derealized.



# Poster from the Toronto Outdoor Picture Show's 2025 Season: *When We Were Young*

Loaned by Leva Nowzartash  
paper, 45 x 27.5 cm

## *Leva Nowzartash*

Founded in 2011, the Toronto Outdoor Picture Show (TOPS) is a non-profit organization that presents free, open air film screenings in public parks across Toronto. Operating at the intersection of public art, cinema, and community programming, TOPS reimagines the urban park as a temporary cultural commons, shaped not by consumption, but by collective presence. By removing financial and institutional barriers to entry, TOPS offers an alternative model for cultural participation within an increasingly privatized urban landscape.

This poster, distributed during the summer of 2025, advertised TOPS screenings at Christie Pits Park and was acquired through the organization's promotional circulation.

Intended for temporary display on poles, walls, and notice boards, the poster embodies the ephemerality of the event it announces. Designed to be put up only to be soon covered by another poster, its existence parallels the transient nature of the space it produces: a public park momentarily transformed into an outdoor cinema, only to dissolve once the screening ends.





Photo by Leva Nowzartash, 2025

Within the framework of alternative spaces, the poster functions as an artifact of spatial reconfiguration. It marks the emergence of an alternative space that exists alongside dominant urban logics of surveillance, property, and exclusion. Rather than demanding consumption or compliance, the space TOPS creates is sustained through shared affect, proximity, and informal sociality.



Photo by Leva Nowzartash, 2025

In this sense, the poster does more than advertise an event, it maps a site of resistance to urban isolation, demonstrating how cultural programming can momentarily reclaim public space as a site of belonging, collectivity, and possibility.

## Wreck Beach Blanket (2025)

Loaned by Silas Busby  
Acquired August 2025  
textile, dyed, 2 x 2 m

### *Silas Busby*

This blanket was bought from a likely unhoused vendor on Wreck Beach. Its elephant, lotus flower, and vine motifs allude to South and Southeast Asian Buddhism, and appeal to a clientele composed of hippies and naturists. Wreck Beach is one of two clothing optional beaches in Canada, but according to James Woycke (2005), people have been taking advantage of its relative isolation for nude sunbathing since at least the Great Depression. The vendor of this blanket is one of a small network of unregistered food, alcohol, and textile vendors who barter with each other for food, water, drink, and coverings in addition to selling their wares for money to visitors at the beach. This community of vendors is part of a larger ecosystem of communities which exist in the heterotopia.

These other communities include the aforementioned hippies and naturists, but also everyday Vancouverites who may or may not choose to enter the heterotopia by shedding their clothes, as well as a small community of queers who prefer a portion of the beach isolated and further away from the often noisy central part of the beach. Wreck Beach is likely close to what Michel Foucault (1986) had in mind when he said that ships and the seaside were “heterotopia *par excellence*”: on Wreck Beach, communities and practices that are typically punished and located beyond the bounds of discipline — hippies, the unhoused, and queers; nudity, barter, and cruising — are norms in and of themselves.

All the while, these communities and practices are more broadly considered delinquent and, with the help of the heterotopia, are more effectively disciplined by the economy of power in the city above.



## Silence = Death Replica Pin

Loaned by Silas Busby  
manufactured in August 2025 at  
Vancouver Maritime Museum, British Columbia.  
handmade button pin, 5.81 cm

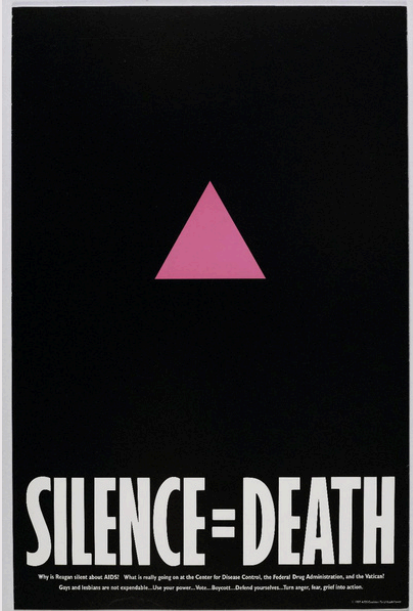
### *Silas Busby*

This pin is a replica of a design used by the “Silence = Death” Campaign that began in 1985. The pink triangle recalls the one used to identify homosexual men in Nazi concentration camps during the Holocaust. By drawing this comparison between the systematic murder of queer men and the government’s decision to let high risk individuals die of HIV/AIDS, the campaign hoped to show that inaction in the face of HIV/AIDS meant extermination. The “Silence” is that of President Ronald Reagan, who refused to personally acknowledge the pandemic until the year the campaign began. The design would later be used by ACT UP, a grassroots organization dedicated to HIV/AIDS justice, which demanded expanded treatment options, Medicaid coverage for those treatment options, and HIV/AIDS



prevention measures like needle exchange, condom distribution, and scientifically-backed safe(r) sex education. They are also famous for their Die-Ins, during which HIV+ individuals literally or figuratively took up death as an act of protest on the steps of government buildings. The power of the Die-In protest comes from its transgressions against the norms surrounding sickness and death in a carceral society — instead of keeping these activities

private, Die Ins bring them into the open where the people within the institutions of discipline, like the CDC, are forced to confront them face-to-face. According to Raymond Smith (1998), ACT UP's adoption of the symbol may be the reason that the pink triangle is still associated with HIV/AIDS activism today.



*SILENCE = DEATH* Project, Avram Finkelstein, Brian Howard, Oliver Johnston, Charles Krelloff, Chris Li, offset lithograph, Brooklyn Museum

## Condom Packet and Lube (2025)

Acquired from an Anonymous Donor collection, condom packet and plastic bottle of water based lubricant

*Silas Busby*

These items would be carried around a gay bathhouse by their owner. The condoms and lube would make anal sex safer and more comfortable. Details on the bottle of lube suggest that this is from the bathhouse's proprietary brand and it was likely purchased there. Gay bathhouses are heterotopic spaces in which the norms of interaction in male-only spaces are reversed, and expectations of consent change. Within most male-only spaces, homosexual desire must operate covertly. In contrast, the opposite becomes true in the bathhouse; homosexual desire is assumed to be the default and men freely solicit sex from each other. A similar reversal occurs in norms of how consent is communicated.



Whereas most spaces expect that consent is verbally communicated, verbal communication in a bathhouse usually signals a withdrawal of consent or lack of sexual interest. Sex can take place in a private room or in a public space. Exhibitionism is permitted, and some bathhouses have rooms designed specifically for engaging in various forms of public or semi-public sex.

The bathhouse space suspends many of the norms that make sexuality predictable outside of its walls. It also simultaneously affirms the norms governing sexuality by being a designated space in which they are controlled and suspended in contrast to the wider society in which they are enforced.



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## ***Confessionals and Interviews: Placemaking Practices***

*With Kaitlyn Espey, Confessionals Subproject Lead  
and Portia Ho, Interviews Subproject Lead*

**To pair with the physical exhibition, our curators  
have considered the existing infrastructure  
of the city as sites of place-making.**

# Confessionals

*Kaitlyn Espey*

In the age of social media, online communities have emerged as a “third space,” where the viewer exists simultaneously as both a subject and curator. Unlike many physical spaces, they offer fluidity of identity: individuals can choose to exist as their authentic self, a new identity, or remain entirely anonymous. As the boundaries of identity blur, viewers are invited to consider how online communities are shaped, and to reflect on what people are willing to reveal under the veil of anonymity. Participants were asked to submit answers to one of three questions: *What kind of spaces (digital or physical) make you feel a sense of belonging? Do you feel the internet has made it easier to find communities or spaces you don't have access to in real life? Do usernames or anonymity change how you interact with others online?* Their responses were transformed into a visual display, bringing

the intangible qualities of digital interaction and anonymity into a physical form.

The overwhelming response was that digital communities make it easier to find and interact with individuals who share specific, often niche, interests. These platforms foster a sense of global belonging, having the opportunity to connect with people from around the world. Particularly after COVID 19, when the world was forced into isolation, proximity has diminished as a primary factor in forming community. The internet has become a space for increased openness and transparency, where individuals feel more comfortable discussing topics that might otherwise be considered taboo. However, this ease of connection is accompanied by a sense of fragility; the lack of physical

connection makes it easier to drift apart. For some participants, anonymity did not significantly alter how they interact online. For others, by separating from their real name, the connection to people who know them personally is severed. This provides a sense of freedom by removing the act of performing; the individual can exist as their authentic self without fear of judgement. In this context, the boundaries between online actions and real world consequences become less defined. In numerous responses, individuals described engaging in behaviours they would typically avoid offline, which can be linked to a sense of emotional detachment from the situation.

To extend these ideas into the exhibition space, a confession booth was installed alongside the visual display.

This interactive element created an alternative space within the gallery, inviting visitors to engage directly with the project. They were asked the same questions as the online form, offering an additional layer of reflection and enabling the convergence of digital and physical modes of expression.

# Toronto Transit Commission Interview

*with Ellery Anderson*

*Our anonymous interviewee is a Stations Safety worker,  
an internal position within the Toronto Transit  
Commission (TTC).*

**Q: Do people behave differently on the subway than they would on the street?**

A: I believe that when people are in their community, where they know their neighbours, they feel more comfortable and safe. Therefore, they are more comfortable in letting their guard down. Whereas in the subway, in the last few years, it has become very apparent that people are unwilling to help one another. They keep to themselves, and they tend to be more guarded.

**Q: Are there certain behaviours that have become normalized?**

A: People are not as attuned to others and their surroundings. Behaviours such as playing loud music on speakers, talking about violence, violent behaviour, and drug use are a few common behaviours that have become normalized.

**Q: How do people react when something out of the ordinary happens?**

A: People get very frustrated and impatient that their day is being disrupted, rather than being understanding of the situation. They have a tendency to take it out on the employees who are trying to resolve the situation.

**Q: Is silence and people keeping to themselves the default behaviour? Or does it depend on the time of day and day of the week?**

A: During rush hour in the morning and the evening, 90% of people are willing to let situations or behaviours be swept under the rug.

## **Toronto Transit Commission Interview Continued**

**Q: Have you witnessed moments of connection between commuters? What happened?**

A: Yes, I have seen people go out of their way to help each other. I have seen people in medical distress, and others coming to their aid. I have also seen friendships made amongst individuals.

**Q: How do performers/buskers change the feeling of a station, if at all?**

A: They bring a sense of calm, happiness, and enjoyment when more than one person hear a song or see a performance that they all enjoy. It brings a sense of community.

**Q: Are there certain stations or times of day where performances feel more welcome or fitting in the environment?**

A: Definitely on the weekends and during evening rush hour; at stations Yonge and Bloor, Finch, Don Mills, and Kennedy. It also has to do with the weather — when the sun is shining, people are willing to stay to watch or listen. In the winter, when it is cold, everyone wants to get home.

**Q: In your opinion, do you think performers create a sense of community between commuters while they are performing? Is the opposite true? Do you have a personal experience of this?**

A: Yes, at Spadina station. There is a violinist who plays, and we established a connection over his performance of Mozart and Beethoven.

**Q: Has your personal perception of people and public spaces changed since working with the TTC? How so?**

A: Yes, my job is about safety, so I spend all of my time observing people and how they interact and how they are in their surroundings. Prior to this job, I didn't do that as much.

# Another Story Bookshop Interview

Lais Soares

*Another Story Bookshop, located in Roncesvalles, is an independent bookshop founded by Sheila Koffman in 1987. As an alternative site for knowledge production, Another Story is dedicated to creating spaces for marginalized writers and readers. Housing a wide selection of books focusing on social justice, equity, and diversity, the bookshop platforms 2SLGBTQ and BIPOC writers and independent presses. Another Story also works closely with local organizations, and hosts events in the city, collaborating with international academics, activists, poets, and literary writers.*

**Q: So I'll start off with my first question: How would you describe your relationship with your neighborhood, your clientele, and the broader Toronto area?**

A: Another Story Bookshop is one of Toronto's oldest independent shops, founded around 1987— we started on the Danforth and then moved to Roncesvalles around 15 years ago. We are very much a community shop with close connections to the neighborhood. We have a big children's section, so we have a lot of children who come here right from birth until adulthood. We watch them grow and sell them books. But because we are a bookshop that specializes in social justice, equity, and diversity, and we have a selection of books you can't easily find elsewhere, we have a lot of people

who come here from beyond our neighborhood to shop as a designated space. We have an excellent selection of books on queer and trans issues, social justice, critical race theory, Indigenous issues, and environmental issues. Our fiction and poetry, and cultural studies sections also have a diversity focus as well. But we do sell a lot of kids' books like Dog Man and Diary of a Wimpy Kid, which are pretty mainstream. So I would say we have a very close connection to our customers, both close and far.

## Another Story Bookshop Interview Continued

*Lais Soares*

**Q:** Have you ever considered expanding to more locations, or does that idea of expanding go contrary to your mission statement?

**A:** Well, it's not contrary. It's very tricky in a city like Toronto, but Another Story Bookshop is also a major wholesaler to schools across southern Ontario. We actually do have a warehouse in Mississauga where we warehouse all of our school orders, with two staff members there every day working on those orders. Our customers, mainly teachers and educators, are welcome to go to the warehouse and shop there, so we actually do have a separate location. But opening another retail location in Toronto is tricky because the rent is so high, and there's no guarantee that we would be able to make the same income there to pay our rent. There are also lots of independent bookshops across the city, so the question is: where do you go where there's not another indie bookshop that you have to be in competition with?

**Q:** So your slogan is “educate, organize, resist”. I'm in post-secondary studies, and there is often this tension between theory and praxis. How do you see your role in bridging that gap?

**A:** I feel like we play a very critical role in bridging that gap. If you go into our politics and cultural studies sections, we do carry a lot of what's considered academic press books, but we sell them to the general public. We're very invested in the role of what the public intellectual is. There's a scholar who used to be at UofT for many years — Rinaldo Walcott, who has done a lot of work around Black studies and Black queer life. We've hosted many events with him over the years, and we've always sold his books. Christina Sharpe is another example — she's a very well known scholar in Black studies from the States and is now living in Toronto. One of the things that's really special about Another Story is that we host a lot of book launches and community events, not just in the store, but outside as well. Those events are really critical in building the cultural and intellectual life of the city. We've hosted events for Rinaldo Walcott

# Another Story Bookshop Interview Continued

*Lais Soares*

that really bring a cross section of activists, academics, and literary folks, for example. So you have access to books at Another Story that you can't easily find elsewhere. Our selection is curated in such an interesting way. For example, our queer and trans sections will have books on critical trans studies from a Black mase trans perspective, alongside books about performance, or poetry books from the same perspective — so we bridge a lot of types of knowledge production here, both through the books we have and the events we curate.

**Q: In line with this curation, your selection is pretty different from lots of the big corporate bookshops we have in Canada. How do you choose the books you stock?**

A: They have to fit in our mandate, “educate, organize, resist”. We have to carry books about Left wing politics, about social justice and change, Black, Indigenous, queer and trans studies; we have a lot of books about what's happening in Gaza and Palestine over the last few years, as well as world events. I'll be honest, it can be hard to curate fiction because there's so much

being produced, and you don't always know every book that you are ordering. We do have two buyers — the two co-owners, Laura Ash and Eric McCall — who make the decisions up front on what we are buying. But sometimes customers will order things and we think, “Oh, this looks great, we should make sure we have it for the store.”

**Q: So there is a kind of interaction as well.**

A: Yes, absolutely.

**Q: Is there ever an explicit attempt to do something different from the big corporations?**

A: Well, everything we do is definitely different from the big corporations. Consider just our reason for existence, right? Not a lot of places would have taken a chance on organizing events, or house the breadth of books we have on Palestine and Gaza, so that's what's unique about our store as well.

# Another Story Bookshop Interview Continued

Lais Soares

**Q:** The reason I heard about your store was that I attended a conference at UofT on Palestinian feminism — you were selling books.

**A:** Yeah, that's right, that was me selling books.

**Q:** The last question is a bit more fun. Do you have a favorite book or a recommendation that reflects the store's mission?

**A:** There are so many! One of the most popular books this year has been a book called *Gendertrash* that we did a big, beautiful, launch for at the TRANZAC in November. That was organized by my colleague. *Gendertrash* is a new book put out by LittlePuss Press, based in the States. It brings together the collected works of a zine published in the 90s and 2000s called *Gendertrash*, which was one of the only zines, or magazines, written by and for the trans community. And a lot of those are now unavailable, but LittlePuss Press has brought all the issues together into a collected edition. And so I think from the perspective of GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives, museums) — doing museum and archival work —

this is incredible archival material about the trans community in Montreal, Toronto, and beyond. It brings together previously unavailable work that I think is of interest to lots of different generations.





## Concluding Remarks

*Florence Lu*

In Toronto today, we have witnessed the decay and disappearance of spaces that have been dear to us. Commenting on culture as a ruin, Walter Benjamin (1994) writes that “‘Construction’ presupposes ‘destruction.’” (x). Spaces must be destroyed for the city to be constructed, and relations must be severed for new narratives to be formed. In a period characterized by intense spatial reorganizations, it is important to hold onto who we are, what we remember, and how we want to proceed. When we stand on shaky ground, material objects can connect us to the spaces outside the mainstream imagination, evoking kaleidoscopic stories built upon sensorial encounters.

*All Space* is an ode to all the spaces that bear our traces. We are nothing without the spaces that we create and inhabit, especially those outside the hegemonic spatial trajectories that demand conformity. Spaces can be an escape, a sanctuary, a haven, an outside (or an inside). Through our connections with different spaces, we become who we are and make meanings that are both embodied and affective. It is also because of our relationships with spaces that we form communities, make homes, and feel a sense of belonging. Attending to alternative spaces is a form of care and resistance that rejects the imposition of capitalistic ideals, such as hyper-individualism and mass consumerism.

Glowing arcade machines in a mall forgotten by time, writings on the bathroom walls, photos of dancers in a busy street, a blanket with sand in its wrinkles, a treasure box of miscellaneous knick-knacks collected from different moments of life...there is a tenderness in noticing and memorializing these material traces that we and others leave behind. These objects both make up spaces and are themselves lifeworlds, where glimpses of life peek through.

# Curatorial Team

## Presidents

*Florence Lu*  
Co-President



*Leva Nowzartash*  
Co-President

# Curatorial Leads



*Kaitlyn Espey*  
**Senior Curator**



*Portia Ho*  
**Senior Curator**



*Qiuzi Mei*  
**Senior Curator**

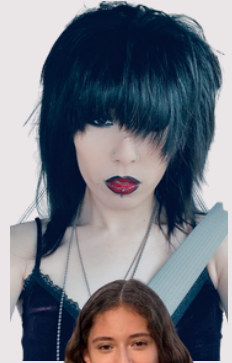


*Sara Catherine Nayir*  
**Senior Curator**

# Assistant Curators



*Silas Busby*  
Assistant Curator



*Maxx Calame*  
Assistant Curator



*Tekla Gowrie*  
Assistant Curator



*Sophia Roy Longino*  
Assistant Curator



*Shae Parnell*  
Assistant Curator

*Klarissa Schiffert*  
Assistant Curator



*Lais Soares*  
Assistant Curator

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### *Exhibition Catalogue*

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Ishita Chalise  
Kaitlyn Epsey  
Florence Lu  
Chloe Gong - Miniere  
Leva Nowzartash  
Klarissa Schiffert  
Andrea Yip

### *Digital Exhibition*

Quizi Mei (Lead)  
Sara Catherine Nayir  
Sophia Roy-Longino  
Yaocheng Xia

### *Interviews*

Portia Ho (Lead)  
Ellery Anderson  
Lais Soares  
Zaina Soliman  
Andrea Yip

### *Confessions*

Kaitlyn Epsey (Lead)  
Tekla Gowrie  
Klarissa Schiffert  
Lauren Murray

### *Zines*

Tekla Gowrie (Lead)  
Ishita Chalise  
Sophia Roy-Longino  
Lais Soares

## Executive Teams

### *Administrative Team*

Florence Lu (Co-President)  
Leva Nowzartash (Co-President)  
Nat Domegan (Administrator)  
Sophie Zhang (Assistant Administrator)

### *Events Team*

Lauren Murray (Director)  
Chloe Gong - Miniere (Assistant)  
Andrea Yip (Assistant)

### *Finance Team*

Zaina Soliman (Director)  
Ellery Anderson (Assistant)

### *Marketing & Outreach Team*

Yaocheng Xia (Director)  
Andrea Yip (Assistant)

### *Media Coordinator & Graphic Designer*

Ishita Chalise

# Loaner Credits

*Thank you to those who generously trusted  
us with their precious objects and art:*

*Anonymous*  
Silas Busby  
Ishita Chalise  
Hazel Cheng/Hazso  
Kaitlyn Espey  
Chloe Gong - Miniere  
Tekla Gowrie  
Arlo Grzyb - Reed  
Amani Hassan  
Portia Ho  
Michaëlle Knights  
Victoria WK Li  
Florence Lu  
Qiuzi Mei  
Lauren Murray  
Sara Catherine Nayir  
Elizabeth Nisenbaum  
Leva Nowzartash  
Sophia Roy - Longino  
Klarissa Schiffert  
Lecanne Shubert  
Lais Soares  
Freda Tan  
Professor Shirley Yeung  
Yaocheng Xia

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