

Walking, Staying In, and Making Sense: Quilting with Pandemic Matter

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Massive/Micro Sensemaking: Towards Post-pandemic Futures

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Résumé de l'article

Cette conception et compréhension sont à la fois en relation avec la question de la pandémie et celle d'un plaid. La matière à portée de main : le tissu, le fil à broder, la carte à coudre en application et le langage, tissant du sens. Ces neuf blocs, cousus et assemblés ensemble, sont porteurs de sens, à la fois de manière individuelle et collective. La conversation qui découle à partir et à travers la fabrication d'un plaid associée à la question de la pandémie émerge et joue avec le texte et l'image. J'aligne la matière et les coutures pour maintenir et transformer le processus en produit fini, tout en continuant de créer et de donner du sens à la connaissance de ce que nous sommes, à notre manière de vivre les uns avec les autres et notre rapport au monde.

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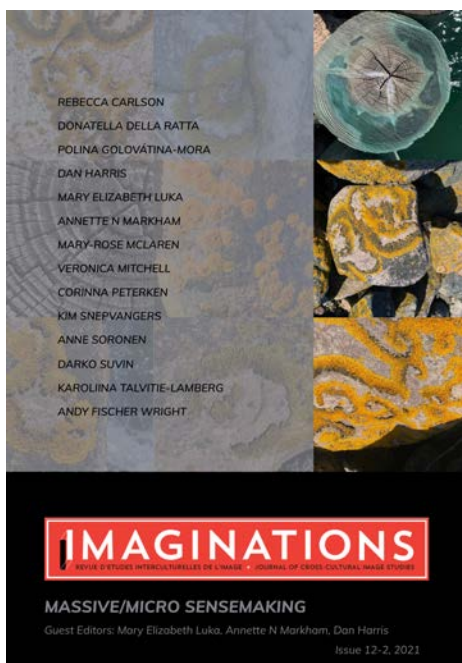
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Image credit: Annette N Markham

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WALKING, STAYING IN, AND MAKING SENSE: QUILTING WITH PANDEMIC MATTER

CORINNA PETERKEN

This making and making sense are in relation with pandemic matter and a quilt. Matter on hand: fabric, embroidery thread, and appliqué map and speak, sowing sense. The nine blocks sewn and joined together hold their sense making as individual and collective. The conversation from and through making a quilt with pandemic matter emerges from, and plays with, text and image. I align matter and stitching through to hold and turn process into product as I continue making and making sense for knowing about who we are and how to live with each other and the world.

Cette conception et compréhension sont à la fois en relation avec la question de la pandémie et celle d'un plaid. La matière à portée de main : le tissu, le fil à broder, la carte à coudre en application et le langage, tissant du sens. Ces neuf blocs, cousus et assemblés ensemble, sont porteurs de sens, à la fois de manière individuelle et collective. La conversation qui découle à partir et à travers la fabrication d'un plaid associée à la question de la pandémie émerge et joue avec le texte et l'image. J'aligne la matière et les coutures pour maintenir et transformer le processus en produit fini, tout en continuant de créer et de donner du sens à la connaissance de ce que nous sommes, à notre manière de vivre les uns avec les autres et notre rapport au monde.

Sensemaking with a quilt in this research is my artist/academic process for noticing important issues and possibilities in pandemic life. A quilt as visual means of connecting and understanding teaches and provides a way to think with and beyond (dis)comfort. This conversation from and through making a quilt with pandemic matter emerges from, and plays with, text and image.

The visual is vital in my work as an artist/academic, and a way that I engage with the micro and macro. As I revisited the images, quilt, and writing more than a year after lockdown I quilted further and made this paper as thinking “in the making” (Ellsworth; Ingold, “Making”; Peterken, “Knowing in the Making”) that is not over. Throughout this process of making sense with the quilt I took up openings and ruptures (Irwin and de Cosson) that stopped me and created spaces for thinking as I participated in “Massive and microscopic sensemaking during a global pandemic (MMS)” (Markham et al.).

Making a quilt with pandemic matter gave me space to think with encounters and materials. Hope and fear around herd immunity and vaccinations that were not available until recently (Loveless) are also into the quilt block analysis of responses to the MMS prompts. The quilt provoked (and made visible) thinking about fears and hopes (Kwon), self, others, and the world (Markham et al.) during the pandemic, and after vaccination gave more comfort. In the MMS project, prompts over 21 days between May 18 and June 7, 2020 (Markham and Harris) gave me some distraction with research (Markham et al.) and a focus to consider making sense of this different pandemic world with critical autoethnography.

This sensemaking allowed me to be personal while considering broader issues as I “perform meaning from and through [my body], situated daily routines, and relations with embedded, embodied, and everywhere digital technologies” (Markham et al. 2). My responses to prompts included motivated personal writing, embodied encounters, stillness and silence without ignoring but not being outwardly active, and active making: making images, poetry, and nine fabric blocks. These were brought together with quilting intra-actions (Barad, “Meeting the Universe”) where items for sewing (fabric, thread, stitches, quilt blocks, and the quilt as a whole) join forces, becoming-with my artist/researcher/teacher wanderings, wonderings, and thinking. The quilt was a way to deal with the impact of COVID on my life, the lives of those near and far, the world, and how we live during and after a pandemic.



Figure 1: Finished quilt front and back. Image of quilt provided by author.

Fearful, and closed in with pandemic advice to “stay strong” while at home, complying with executive orders and directives, on my daily neighbourhood walks I began to consider what matters with the MMS prompts. I walked taking notes and images while attending to what my body and senses noticed. My fear *and* hope in this pandemic assemblage/remix (Markham, “Remix Culture”) in the quilt render openings (Irwin and de Cosson; Springgay et al.) for listening to materials and to the quilt through piecing and piercing through with threads. The quilt also brought comfort, as is common in quilts used as coverings (Witzling), and it is a medium to give messages that can be read from “multiple directions” (Koelsch 823). Connections are across, up, down, diagonal, bound in, and altogether through the quilt, back and front (Figure 1).

PANDEMIC QUILT CONVERSATIONS AS RESEARCH

Living in the USA I am near quilting shops, but they were not open. Quilting can be considered an American crafting tradition connected to pioneering and lack of materials for warmth, as well as part of crafting and the arts in many cultures (Flannery; Fitzpatrick and Bell; Ferrarese). I used quilting for research before in Australia to bring together photographic images young children created (transferred onto fabric) for their meaning

making and belonging in an early childhood center (Peterken, “Crafting Living Inquiry”). Making a quilt can be a solo activity with many hours of sewing, part of leisure (Stalp, “Negotiating Time”), and can also give pleasure (Ferrarese) as materials are brought together to make visually appealing patterns. I wanted the quilt to be an artwork, to have visual appeal, but that was not the main purpose. It was a research product for sensemaking. Quilting has the potential to be “a powerful socially communicative practice” (Nieberding 8) as women/makers gather in ‘quilting bees’ to create a finished article, but quilting in a pandemic during lockdown is lonely. I find some comfort in working with fabrics in relation with the MMS prompts. My quilt-making as artist and researcher pulled focus and created a space to do something to think about and make sense with.

Quilting in research involves more than “the creative processes that everyday quilters face” (Stalp, “Quilting” 24), and William Nieberding proposes that as a visual medium quilting “generates socially significant visual texts” (9). The social issues and pandemic experience are in this research quilt as disparate events, and images are sewn in relation through the nine blocks in combination. The number of blocks needed to make a complete quilt varies, but I used items placed in a nine-cube storage shelf for one of the MMS prompts, which gave me the idea for a nine block quilt to engage with what matters and what I noticed. This quilt as a mystery text (Denzin and Lincoln) that collected (and holds) personal interactions with various materials teaches me as I create. Quilts are an exchange that does not always have words (Ellsworth; Peterken, “Crafting Living Inquiry”). In this research quilt the “cuts, tears, ruptures or cracks that resist predictability, comfort and safety” (Irwin and Springgay xxx) opened conversations about pandemic life. Artist/researcher/teacher inquiry and knowledge creation here was not about making quilts, but about making sense. It matters that “some knowings cannot be conveyed through language” (Ellsworth 156) and can be crafted (Ingold “Making”) through making as method, including making this nine-block quilt. My process of making with found materials and what was on hand had me thinking personally, as artist/researcher/

teacher “*through* observation [as well as] *after* it” (Ingold “Making” 11) with the quilting and writing process.

CONVERSATIONS AND SENSEMAKING IN THE QUILT



Figure 2: Completed quilt. Image provided by author.

The nine blocks connect across the whole quilt (Figure 2), and each of the blocks holds individual and collective sensemaking. Some responses in the quilt blocks were from an individual MMS prompt, such as in *Green dot* (Figure 3) seen in the still image from a video of Rock Canyon that is in relation with the idea of technology making its presence known, impacting what is seen and experienced.



Figure 3: Green dot. Image provided by author.

The little green dot shivers and shakes

a gift from the camera.

Pulling focus

away

from the mountain flowers

from the birdsong

and the freeway hum

the humdrum.

Sunlight growing brighter

rising

tipping over the mountain top

spilling

reaching beams spreading down the canyon.

The birds know-

they herald the day!

This iPhone camera uses this same light.

Photography is drawing with light I read.

The device uses this light.

It captures.

Shoots.

Creates

images (including its' added shivery green dot).

Video appears with sounds

of birds

of quiet breathing

of vehicles far off

containing a multitude of humans now out and going

about their business

below.

(Research journal iPhone notes)

Other blocks attended to the more general issues of life in the pandemic and 'what is happening here?' and opened to learning about sensemaking with the quilt as an artist/researcher/teacher (Spring-

gay et al.). Quilting through, adding embroidery, making knots as “places where many lines of becoming are drawn tightly together” (Ingold, “Making” 132) made sense. It was in these processes, and the emergent autoethnographic writing (Denzin and Lincoln; Ellis et al.), including poetic notes in my iPhone research journal (in italics in this writing), that openings to sensemaking called out through what was on hand.

As an artist I use the visual to show me what matters and, in this instance, making a quilt provided thinking with visual art processes. Images and words (including poetry) “invite attention” (Barone and Eisner 39) here in relation with my stories from the MMS prompts. The visual as well as written perspectives created this mystery text combining media and messages. Language other than words is with, and in between, words in different forms in this writing as artist/researcher/teacher to “learn in my head what my body already recognizes” (Sameshima 49). Making (sense and visual art) with the MMS prompts opened to sewing a quilt and some knowing about how to live through a pandemic and beyond as artist/researcher.

WANDERING AND STAYING IN SHIFT TO WONDERING AND MAKING



Figure 4: Pandemic bubbles. Image provided by author.

Wandering by myself and staying in to remain in my pandemic bubble shifted with the MMS prompts to wondering and making sense with art materials stashed in two nine-cube shelves and in baskets in my home. I sewed from four years of age, making clothing for dolls, and made clothing for myself and others from my mid-teens. I have supplies on hand to quilt, sew, knit, crochet, embroider, weave, spin, paint, and bead, as well as natural materials such as feathers, sticks, stones, grasses, and seed pods found and gathered from my yard and as I walk around my neighborhood for collage and adding to art pro-

jects. Thinking through making (Ingold “Making”) with these materials is part of my arts based research practice. Making (sense and art) with the MMS prompts opened to sewing and to knowings through making a quilt and sowing a garden. In this research, change occurring on a global scale had me noticing and feeling fear *and* hope. This autoethnographic w(a/o)ndering (Peterken, “Battledress”) with my sensing and the quilt opens to making and playing with some hopes/fears, and more things to ponder. My daily neighborhood walks during the pandemic lockdown in a college town in Utah, USA, shifted to considering the MMS prompts.

Attention was drawn to self during the period of pandemic lockdown. Making sense in this isolated bubble was a challenge, depicted in the *Pandemic bubbles* (Figure 4) quilt block. I wrote in my research journal iPhone notes while reading, thinking, and walking with MMS prompts:

Movement and embodied sensemaking come from attending,

“know[ing] for yourself” (Ingold “Making” 141) with the small and the large.

A feeling in silence and stillness.

The micro and macro captivates and astonishes (Ingold “Making”) as I

“live in hope” (Ingold “Making” 141), uncertain.

(Research journal iPhone notes)

I found that materials on hand offered ways of making art and meaning with what was happening. Findings from walking and thinking with MMS prompts were analyzed using fabric, thread, and other art materials. Relationships between my artist/researcher/teacher (Irwin and de Cosson; Irwin and Springgay) selves, others, and the world were called into focus with the quilt.

MAKING DO AND A PANDEMIC ASSEMBLAGE

As I moved around my neighborhood, I noticed small elements and connections with larger contexts. I gathered images of moments that captivated and matter that evoked awe. Moments of making with the quilt then gave extended time for attention to feelings and to make a difference to my knowing in the making (Ellsworth). This brought me hope and some comfort along with my concern for others and the planet. Pandemic time lengthened and collapsed (Ingold “Making”), and with no attention to markings on a clock, days melted together into a week, or it could have been a month? “How long will this go on?” I wondered ... “when will bubbles pop?” Time and space also collapsed as I spoke with friends and family (me in my time) across multiple continents and time zones, in my home, in my town and state, and others all over the world. We were in virtual bubbles. Connections online and offline helped us in knowing self, others, and the world. Lines of communication, walking lines, and lines of sewing converged in the quilt. One block, *Blank journal* (Figure 5), became a piece of crystal organza sewn through with lines. Lines with messy ends. Gaps that still sparkle and draw attention. They present unseen events and encounters, more that I can and cannot do for others and the world, if I learn and attend and act.



Figure 5: Blank journal. Image provided by author.

I was in my bubble as spring arrived and flowers bloomed after a long, bare, white, winter, bursting color and texture. Life. Making the quilt, nature is noticed, living and announcing this joyously to the world and to me. Splashes of color and knowing from bubbles and stitches. The image here of the neighborhood campus garden I walked in to gain respite from the pandemic is becoming-tapestry with pixelation (Figure 6) blurring the leaves and petals, shifting lines and making squares.

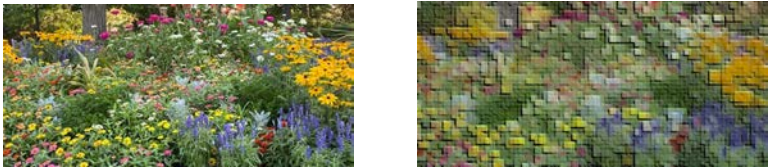


Figure 6: Flower tapestry. Image provided by author.

I was also stitching a tapestry. The stitches were made in the same way seeds are planted, “thread[ing] through and among” (Ingold, “Making” 132), laying lines, line by line in rows, or here and there, entangled. The *Flower squares* (Figure 7) block of the quilt holds this sensemaking and the way that meaning (like flowers where I walk, and in my garden) can be laid out in tiny increments before me, before us.



Figure 7: Flower squares. Image provided by author.

I accept with the quilt blocks' sensemaking that life can be messy, and there is (dis)comfort in that, as in the lines and pages that were left blank in my journal. Making sense is more than an endeavor with words, as the quilt "plays an active, indeed agential role" (Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity" 826). The floral squares come into relation with the empty journal and play an active part, calling attention to times where making/research sustained me during weeks of lockdown and tentative venturing out afterwards until I was fully vaccinated. Making was a method to process and sort through changes brought on by pandemic life, and to engage with self, materials, others, and the world when isolation and fear closed in. Making blocks and the quilt did not always have any answers, but I wondered with "wonderments" (Andrews and Duff 30) that in research allow assemblages, energy, and movement that attend, within pauses, to some of what matters.

Walking is part of my creative sensemaking practice (Peterken and Potts, "Pedagogical Experiences") and in this research trees, plants, and flowers around me also made a difference to my physical and mental health. I became more attentive to my surroundings. I took time to be present. I felt less isolated with connections to the natural world. Not everyone had a place to walk, family to be with, a garden to be planted, health care, or space to safely be away from risk of infection in a bubble through the pandemic. I felt with so many others who lost loved ones. I worked from home but the connection with students and colleagues was virtual and unembodied, we were all tired using new technology and processes, and that made a difference. At times I felt empty and blue.



Figure 8: Blue. Image provided by author.

This *Blue* (Figure 8) quilt block was made in relation with the walking and images for a collaborative MMS video (Frølund et al.) that braided the dislocation of researcher lives and selves with the pandemic, noticing the stillness and messiness of that. I noticed blue for hope, loneliness, blue breath, and blue skies as not only fair weather in images I made for the video. As we wove our experiences across the world into the imagery we were “reading insights through one another” (Barad, “Meeting the Universe” 25) to notice what was happening at that moment. Being with images and others as researcher/teachers who embody the “caring diligence required” (Markham et al. 6) for learning gave openings for connections and more perspectives that were hopeful. *Blue* (Figure 8) is central in the quilt, so it touches all the blocks as COVID touched all our lives. The magical presence of a unicorn and gold patterns in it also offered glimmers of hope when all I noticed was blue. Working with others across time zones in the MMS research held some challenges but was enriching as we threaded our lives, stories, and the world, sensemaking together in the video. That mattered to us.

SEWING/SOWING FOR SENSEMAKING



Figure 9: Sewing, quilting through. Image provided by author.

Sew to know, knowing in the making

To give hope

To “live in hope” (Ingold “Making” 141) as scholars do...

To feed

hope more than fear.

For artist/researcher/teacher selves, for others, for the world.

A new normal

I hope...

with the world.

(Research journal iPhone notes)

Handmade blocks for a quilt as part of storytelling (Ingold “Making”) provided room to learn and presented “guidance without specification” (109). Openings between things that matter as held in each block were joined together as the quilt was pieced, sewn, pinned through, and quilted (Figure 9). This process provided a means to attend to matter for making sense. The quilt blocks, the quilt as a whole, and materials are telling with color, texture, juxtaposition, stitches, repetition, and rupture.



Figure 10: Mapping pandemic home. Image provided by author.

Sewing the *Mapping pandemic home* (Figure 10) quilt block, I noticed that flowers and planting featured once more. The associated MMS prompt had me mapping (Markham and Harris) my home life, the staying in with time for planting a garden, and sowing seeds in rows. The back of the block gave another perspective that maps outlines and reduces the visual to what was essential. A garden was not essential, but for me (and others) gardening was a way to escape and be outside. It was hopeful; a garden sown (and sewn) here was unsuccessful in that most plants died or were not fruitful, but it was a distraction during a pandemic. It gave something to care about and to make sense with, like the MMS prompts and research project (Markham et al.) and the quilt.

Making a quilt with micro and macro, matter, and making was a “process of correspondence” (Ingold, “Making” 31). Fabric, thread,

the quilt blocks, and my artist/researcher selves in conversation were enmeshed in this knotted, matted, patchwork of scraps taken up and put together then sewn across and through. This process of knowing and thinking used materials as “substances-in-becoming” (Ingold, “Making” 31) as I quilted with the flowers and plants as pandemic matter that made me attend to the fragility of life and connections.

LISTENING TO MATERIALS IN THE QUILT

While making this quilt I was isolated, but in relation with pandemic prompts and matter on hand including fabric, materials, dragonflies, flowers, images, neighborhood walking, reading, and virtual responses. These were my companions. There was a lot being said. Bronwyn Davies (2014) urges emergent listening, the type of listening that I use as teacher/artist in my work in early childhood education. I urge my teacher education students to attend to children. To listen to and with and take cues from children (Rinaldi), materials, and the world as it presents encounters. This style of listening has no anticipation or prediction, accepts surprises, and bids us work with what occurs, exploring openly what it might mean as we “meet in spaces of difference” (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 30). This type of listening as an artist/researcher/teacher is necessary for making sense of things. The quilt tells stories of and from artifacts bound together; collaged, appliquéd, quilted in a pleated text (Richardson) that holds stories and encounters of learning/teaching with art and making as thinking.

The fabric pieces were selected as they stood out in relation with thinking as researcher while making with the prompts as artist. I was making and making do (Markham, “Bricolage”) with what was on hand, thinking through making in what Tim Ingold describes as the “art of inquiry” (“Making” 6). As an early childhood teacher/teacher educator I am used to using matter on hand and in hand. The matter and my artist/researcher/teacher selves exist before, now, and in the future with what Barad considers as having “historicity” (“Posthumanist Performativity” 82), always already becoming. I listened and

heard/noticed some intra-actions (Barad) with the fabric and quilt, and I am sure I missed many others. Nevertheless, matter brought what mattered and needed to matter then/in the future to me. It is a gift. Present. Presented and here/now/then as “substances-in-becoming” (Ingold, “Making” 31) for quilting with these blocks.



Figure 11: Dragonflies dancing. Image provided by author.

An encounter with dragonflies dancing around on a mountain trail was also a gift. It prompted the *Dragonflies dancing* (Figure 11) quilt block as an analysis of an MMS prompt to create a dance/movement piece (Markham & Harris, 2020). Care for nature and the world now and for the future is also in this block. Dragonflies here drew my focus and admitted me to the dance without a ticket or any practice.

The buzzing and swirling bodies with vibrating wings surprised me, and I jerked my head side to side with their flybys and turned to see then head off, darting and returning. Dragonflies showed me there was no need to make a dance, the dance was there and it included me, and mountain and trail with vegetation were audience.

QUILTING AS ANALYSIS: REMIX WITH BRICOLAGE FOR KNOWING
IN THE MAKING



Figure 12: Matter. Imagine provided by author.

I attended community gatherings in support of Black Lives Matter while inquiring with the MMS prompts. Making the *Matter* quilt

block (Figure 12), I wanted to make sense of the challenges and inequity where I live, and I wrote in my research notes:

*Dried rose and geranium petals, crowns,
floral emblems,
green embroidery encroaching,
creeping in
folds in tulle,
sewn cages
stitching that cuts across and hems in
Blackness
crosses and flat straight stitches of matter
what matters?
Black matter
Black Lives Matter!
The assemblage of this matter
stopping at a point lost in the middle
no (easy) answer.
(Research journal iPhone notes)*

I experienced community coming together in compliance with safety, restrictions binding us like the black tulle pockets in *Matter*. We were outdoors, wearing masks, spaced for physical distancing, while Black voices gave their perspectives. We listened with ears, hearts, bodies for what we might do and how to make a difference, “communicating

in new ways with neighbors” (Markham et al. 2). We cared as a community of self and others, we saw some sparks of hope like the gold pattern through the tulle. Families and children came, were attentive and cared. This was a small opening and threads of green grow across this section of the quilt, hopeful for growth in understanding and kindness, that Black Lives will matter in our community where more empathy, care, acceptance, equity, and support are needed. It is complicated, messy and I notice that we are all entangled, part of this community.



Figure 13: Tangles make sense. Image provided by author.

As encounters, text, artist/researcher/teacher and quilt matter interact (Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity”) there is no last thread to be knotted (Markham, “Remix”; “Bricolage”) and I leave tangles underneath to keep the instability alive (Figure 13). Research observations emerged in relation with making and writing as the pieced-together quilt was finished off. Crafting “the aesthetic and material” (Denzin and Lincoln 4) in a synthesis of methods, theory, and perspectives allowed me to research in personal ways through creative processes with the quilt as product *and* data (Ellis et al.; St. Pierre). The “textual performance” (Denzin and Lincoln 6) of the fabric with autoethnographic encounters (Holman Jones; Ellis et al.) and the micro and macro are entangled, stitched together, and embedded in the quilt.

Making sense using material I have-

Stash

Iron. Steam. Breathe.

Pacing.

Placing.

Appliqué first

Piecing

Embroidery later

Threads smooth and knotting,

tangled,

Matter making some sense of the world for/with me.

(Research journal iPhone notes)

Making sense with an assemblage/remix



Figure 14: Walking, iPhone steps graph. Image provided by author.

Find the thread to pull through.

Caught and flowing.

Knotting and cutting.

Laying out the blocks.

What do they say to each other and to me??

(Research journal iPhone notes)

Materials in the quilt were placed in juxtaposition, alignment, and relation; familiar work for an artist who creates with found materials and textiles/fiber. I cut and stitched and followed threads, placing blocks, arranging them to speak together, to make sense of pandemic

life and research. The quilt and this matter was/is vibrant, as I allowed “matter it’s due as an active participant of the [quilt’s] and the world’s becoming” (Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity” 803). *Walking, iPhone steps graph* quilt block (seen in process in Figure 14) brought together iPhone, walks, my body, Health App graphing, fabric, and threads to present the importance of wellness. Wellness became more of a focus in the pandemic, but walking meant possible contact with others, others who might pass on the virus. As I walked for this research I “reflexively explore[d my life] and limits” (Markham et al. 3) as well as making and making sense. I was sure to cross the street if others were coming, or choose my path depending on if I could see anyone. I could not see the virus, only possible hosts. This quilt block shows days when I walked for the allocated time outside for recreation and also days of less, and almost no, movement. I sewed these strips of orange fabric in relation with the orange graph in my iPhone App. Sewing also gave stillness in the middle of chaos where movement and making taught, and “visual and textual understandings and experiences... [were more than] representations” (Irwin in Springgay 185). Spaces for openings created with making the quilt, such as this, were generative. I looked beyond myself, my fears, and recognized there were others not as privileged as this who could not get out or who lived in in high density housing or were homeless. I wondered about lives, the world, and living with a virus. Wellness (and sickness) for self, others, and the world are in this orange fabric graph.

SEW THIS, KNOW THIS

The quilt developed my understandings with fabric, thread, knots, and loose ends. Over a year later, fully vaccinated and feeling somewhat safe, I am here (still) in relation with time, my garden as I write in it, fabric, and connections in quilted lines of communication. Knowing in the making and with making (Ellsworth; Peterken, “Knowing in the Making”) as artist/researcher/teacher produced a pandemic quilt. Words are not the only way to make sense. The visual and making matters for me (and for others). I continue to align matter and stitching through to hold and turn

process into product with this writing for more wondering and more stitching/making.

The quilt reveals.

Led by materials. What I have.

Tying off

and leaving loose ends

It takes time.

Pulling threads through, tying careful small knots to not be seen.

The finishing

The unseen neatness

And the mess hidden

(Research journal iPhone notes)



Figure 15. Pieced blocks laid out. Image provided by author.

I return visually with this image (Figure 15) to laying out the blocks to assemble the quilt with all the various combinations that could

have been and I wonder if remix and bricolage as tools for thinking/making might be the same *and* different (Markham “Remix”; “Bricolage”). The quilt blocks and I are in relation with making do and making tentative sense. The quilt is (un)finished, product and process, as is the sensemaking. I continue walking, making and wondering in personal ways as artist/researcher/teacher/mother/sister about who I am in those subjectivities, how I and others can research in visual ways, and how research with visual art informs how we might live with each other and the world.

...AND FURTHER LINES ARE ‘DRAWN’: ONGOING LEARNING WITH THE QUILT

I find out from my daughter in Germany that I have made a mistake. You don’t cut the backing until the quilting is done. I pin and pin with bent quilting safety pins to hold the layers and Machine sews lines to hold it all together. I hope it comes out smooth. Polished. An art work. Then I realise that it doesn’t really matter. It’s the making to make sense that is my focus.

(Research journal iPhone notes)

I can ‘make do’ (Markham, “Bricolage”) when sensemaking with matter on hand is the matter in hand. Mistakes are part of the process, and part of life. The act of making/research sustains me during pandemic seclusion. I am excited, alive in a call to engage the MMS prompts, to process, to be with, to sort through what is happening, for making with matter and sensemaking with what is. Research and sewing came together and made lines for listening and communicating.

Making lines of stitches. Lines with machine. My body as machine and the sewing machine. Machine snaps cotton. Bobbin ends part way through a row of stitching. I have no control over this. I work with it. I let machine dictate my progress. There is no other way. I do hold and adjust. I sneak a look at the back. Seems straight. Many years of sewing coming back to me. Muscle memory. Familiarity with materials.

(Research journal iPhone notes)

I am sewing, sensemaking in relation with questions, prompts, the people, materials, my selves, micro and macro, academia and all its' challenges and joys and potentialities. Through making I feel “when” (Markham and Harris 933) it is, “where” (Markham and Harris 933) I am, what is important or of “concern” (Markham and Harris 937). Making art is making sense for me. I feel connected to peers and processes, to ideas and products of research we create.

THREADS FOR MOVING ON

Again, I thought I was finished...

threads beckon.

We walk across the quilt, making more connections.

Always in the middle

(Research journal iPhone notes)

I add more hand stitching with embroidery thread. It takes me for a walk. A wander to wonder more...



Figure 16: Quilting connecting lines. Image provided by author.

Encircling ‘so what?’ and some flowers for hope, I begin to connect across blocks. On the other side of the quilt, a wandering line cuts across bubbles and out to the border (Figure 16). Visual thinking wanders across and through this a/r/tographic research (Springgay et al.; Lazo and Smith) where renderings of a/r/tography and my artist *and* researcher *and* teacher selves were brought into combination and worked with, across, and in between to notice what demands attention with openings in cuts, tears, and ruptures in the evolving process of this living inquiry. Making and writing are in relation with fabric, embroidery thread, and appliqué. Encounters were mapped in the quilt and it spoke, sowing sense where “meaning un/create[d] itself” (Irwin and Springgay xxx) and played with what was happening. This pandemic assemblage becoming-quilt (Deleuze and Guattari; Flannery) notices that what mattered is inquiry, care, and connection.

Making the quilt is sensible. The visual nature of this analysis in between material and pandemic matter, sandwiched in a quilt, is making sense. Tiny stitches connected across ideas and fabrics in the nine blocks, my encounters in nature with dragonflies, mountain, and others, and a need for inclusion and change from a Black Lives Matter gathering, wellness with blue, my blank journal, and steps walked and graphed in the orange of my iPhone App, pandemic red bubbles for safety, virtual dots of green, flowers and gardening, home, neighborhood and beyond out into the world were placed in relation with personal stories and lines of thought. We sensed, and we came to knowings together in the making.

It was through making bricolage and remix (Markham, “Fragmented Narrative”; “Remix”; “Bricolage”) in the quilt that sensemaking moved into collaboration and analysis with this place, time, others, the world, my selves, and thinking through the making process (Ingold, “Making”). The micro and the macro emerged as an entangled quilt assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari) to make some sense of global trauma, albeit from a privileged position (Markham et al.). As artist/researcher/early childhood teacher on this research ‘hunt,’ the quilt gave comfort and opened to moving forward or sideways, over, around, and through (Rosen and Oxenbury; Ingold, “Footprints”)

what was troublesome and what was joyous and hopeful. The visual took precedence here. Pandemic research encounters in relation with this material on hand are quilted sensemaking that teaches with the micro and macro. Sensemaking with materials and making art matter.

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IMAGE NOTES

Figure 1: Finished quilt front and back. Image of quilt provided by author.

Figure 2: Completed quilt. Image provided by author.

Figure 3: Green dot. Image provided by author.

Figure 4: Pandemic bubbles. Image provided by author.

Figure 5: Blank journal. Image provided by author.

Figure 6: Flower tapestry. Image provided by author.

Figure 7: Flower squares. Image provided by author.

Figure 8: Blue. Image provided by author.

Figure 9: Sewing, quilting through. Image provided by author.

Figure 10: Mapping pandemic home. Image provided by author.

Figure 11: Dragonflies dancing. Image provided by author.

Figure 12: Matter. Image provided by author.

Figure 13: Tangles make sense. Image provided by author.

Figure 14: Walking, iPhone steps graph. Image provided by author.

Figure 15: Pieced blocks laid out. Image provided by author.

Figure 16: Quilting connecting lines. Image provided by author.