

THESIS

FORMA: GROWING IN ATTUNEMENT

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2026

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ABSTRACT

FORMA: GROWING IN ATTUNEMENT

Material culture has been a concept explored through the framework of the gender binary in the last decade which has led to a recent renewed interest for feminist scholars, art historians, and anthropologists writing and publishing documents about how intrinsic gender is to understanding the various practices such as fiber and ceramic. While this has allowed for a deeper understanding of making for several artists, it has created barriers for some, namely the gender queer community. This is not a critique of the research that has been done, but rather an expansion to include makers that do not fit into the gender binary since, without any additions, they are left with a new binary to understand and work with contextually, rather than just make. Over the past few years, as a gender-queer maker, I have been digesting various theoretical frameworks for making and forming them into my own which has realized in the body of work, *Forma: Growing in Attunement*. This body of work walks through the various aspects of material culture, historical significance, and gendered stereotypes all within the new context of *Forma*. This new take on Heidegger's Dasein has been paired with Jean Baudrillard and Jane Bennett.¹ *Forma* is defined as the realm of consciousness wherein all things, even those considered traditionally inanimate, have separated themselves from function and have agency outside of performance. At its core, this body of work explores how to reclaim

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 32.

the idea of function as well as what makes up a sacred safe space from my perspective as a gender-queer individual. Ceramic, wood, and fabric materials start a conversation about the legacy of craft and gendered theoretical framework by using them to create a new syntax of making. Each piece is both smaller and larger than itself and intended to be viewed as both a microscopic organism and an entire world that a body can exist within. This framework necessitated a new syntax, a swapping of language which clarifies how previously gendered materials, processes, and spaces need to exist for the sake of inclusion and representation of the gender-queer community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you first and foremost to my committee, Suzanne Faris, Del Harrow, Emily Moore, and Bryce O'Tierney. Without your insights and guidance, this would have been a vastly different body of work, and if you all had not pushed me as a person, I would not have grown in the same manner. I want to acknowledge that this body of work would not have been able to exist if it was not for the community of undergrads in the Sculpture and Pottery areas who repeatedly helped push, carry, and load pieces in and out of kilns and to and from my studio. Lastly, I want to thank my partner, who without their physical, emotional, and mental labor, none of this would have been possible.

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PART I: INTRODUCTION OF FORMA

Forma is defined as the realm of consciousness wherein all *beings*, even those considered traditionally inanimate such as tables and chairs, have separated themselves from function and have full agency outside of performance.² I propose the conversation about subjects and objects is no longer presented as one in service to the other, but that it is possible for them to be equal and interchangeable. I will refer to the objects, subjects, and materials for this conversation, and body of work, as *beings* to further this flat ontology. My understanding of the term is in close relationship to Heidegger's Being, namely his Dasein. This was what he used to denote human consciousness and existence from what he considered to be inanimate objects.

Forma is not unlike Jane Bennett's Vital Matter theory. In her writings there was a creation of a flat ontology, presenting objects, subjects, and material all on the same level by means of elevating the readers' understanding of non-living entities. This ontology is what allows *beings* to move into *Forma*, by attuning to the fact that everything has the same origin. This thought is pulled from Jean Baudrillard's *System of Objects*, where he discusses ontologies built on natural versus synthetic and what does or does not divide material.³ Baudrillard lays out that if we are assuming some form of consciousness or control on behalf of the natural world, then it can be argued that nature is designing and innovating in the same manner

² Forma is derived from the Latin word for form or mold.

³ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, (Duke University Press, 2010), 120.

as humanity, but on a different scale and material. This understanding of equality of origin and making across all is where *Forma* roots.

Materials and objects are living things, with their own sphere of influence, enacted agency, and value. *Beings* are the core part of *Forma: Growing in Attunement*, which is an example of how collaboration with material can foster an environment that suits and cares for both them and me in an equal way: a flat ontology. This necessitates a new syntax of the making process where rather than the traditional view of the artist as creator, I instead will use the language of growth and fostering. Switching the terminology is a way of acknowledging the process of originating across all *beings* as Baudrillard presents while also showcasing that the happening of these *beings* is not one that comes from the act of creation, but rather a gestation, not solely from my hand. This work was grown out of a place of exploration of self, material, history, and life.

As a gender-queer maker, I have known and felt gender as an atmosphere or a room you walk in and out of as though it is tangible. This experience has made me examine gender through the lenses of function, time, and space. In my own self, I utilize Judith Butler's theory that gender is a matter of performance, shaped by the audience and space it inhabits in time.⁴ Growing up in a hyper-gendered environment as someone who was Assigned Female at Birth (AFAB), what was required to perform my gender was clear. Women were wholly subservient which meant to be seen and not heard, live only to bear children, and be loyal submissive wives from the moment you first bled. Taking up space, both physically and emotionally, was not allowed unless it was in the home. This is the space that is intended to be your sanctuary and

⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 2006) 34.

domain but still holds a lack of agency which made for a confining sphere. As I left these beliefs, I still struggled to view home as a space that could sustain any life. I was raised to think that this domestic space was an extension of myself and if I did not understand why or how that came to be, then I felt as though I would never be able to understand the space that I take up now. Butler's theory of gender as performance reaffirmed my own gender-queer nature and allowed for a reclamation of this domestic sphere. It opened up conversations about use and function that led me to the *beings* that I collaborate with now. Within my theory, performance and function are interchangeable because both denote a viewer, a beneficiary, and an audience. I looked again at the domestic realm and saw *beings* within the *Forma*, who were designed only to perform but just as I did, held more life and vitality than previously thought.

PART II: THE CLAY

It is understood within the ceramic community that clay holds memory and is seen as something with a mind of its own. This understanding sparked the first material collaboration within *Forma*, centered on clay's ability to hold form and enact its agency above my will. What I brought to the collaboration was an intention to grow forms that held clues to their movement, had no straight lines present, and highlighted intersex anatomy. This collaboration was one with a serious tone but transformed into one of play as it came into fruition. The combination of my own experience as a gender-queer individual from a hyper-gendered environment and the cultural contexts of the LGBTQIA+ community, when added to the clay's history within the home, created the perfect mold to break within the domestic space. As this work grew, it took the silhouette of a picturesque living room, a space that has historically been divisive in relationship to the gender binary and function. This space exists as the meeting point of the interior/exterior, masculine/feminine, and public/private where the pairs converge and become malleable. The clay takes this form as an extension of my own experience; spaces of the domestic are not safe or sacred and must be reclaimed. The living room is a point of tension historically, which necessitates a settling of that history for it to be a space that embodies *Forma*. As Baudrillard puts it:

The primary function of furniture and objects here is to personify human relationships, to fill the space that they share between them, and to be inhabited by a soul. The real dimension they occupy is captive to the moral dimension which it is their job to signify. They have as little autonomy in this space as the various family members enjoy in society.⁵

⁵ Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* (Navayana, 2008), 13-14.

The domestic space is over analyzed and symbolic, similar to object terminology, holds the weight needed for this to be an accurate example. The final, and main reason, I have chosen to examine the living room is because of the energy it holds since the room is one defined by its furniture more so than its function. A dining room functions based on an activity, as does a kitchen and bedroom, but a living room is meant to hold a relationship between the body and furnishings in a different way. Baudrillard refers to the elements of furniture in a home to be like the gods walking in their domain since they are what dictate the use of the space and have a different relationship to time than humanity does.⁶ That is why he has granted immortality to them. In that spirit the *beings* will be made from clay, a material that has an even longer lifespan, and the space they inhabit will be a sacred one. Furnishings dictate how humans orient themselves in space and how the space functions, but *beings* require a new attunement to space and body. This conviction is the origin point for this body of work and from that, clay arose as the natural material to use as a means of highlighting the relationship between the form and the body. The traditional expectation of functional living room furniture is inverted so that the viewer must negotiate their form rather than the *being* adapting to them. None of these *beings* are traditionally functional within *the Forma*.

This is not a new idea I am presenting, in fact it has ties to many indigenous communities' understanding of animism and how life flows among objects. Robin Wall Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass* has a whole chapter devoted to this idea and how it affects language.

⁶ Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, 14.

So, it is that in Potawatomi and most other indigenous languages, we use the same words to address the living world as we use for our family. Because they are our family. To whom does our language extend the grammar of animacy? Naturally, plants and animals are animate, but as I learn, I am discovering that the Potawatomi understanding of what it means to be animate diverges from the list of attributes of living beings we all learned in Biology 101. In Potawatomi 101, rocks are animate, as are mountains and water and fire and places. Beings that are imbued with spirit, our sacred medicines, our songs, drums, and even stories, are all animate.⁷

Forma differs from indigenous teachings and cultural traditions. These *beings* exist for their own sake and dictate space for themselves rather than the ontological plane traditionally had. This is not the case for Kimmerer, with a table specifically mentioned, though the way they view the apple does align:

The list of the inanimate seems to be smaller, filled with objects that are made by people. Of an inanimate being, like a table, we say “What is it?” And we answer *Dopwen yewe*. Table it is. But of apple, we must say, “Who is that being?” And reply *Mshimin yawe*. Apple that being is.⁸

To further this type of growth process in the forms, I turn to Kafka, specifically *Cares of a Family Man*, a short story originally published in 1919. This writing features Odradek, a mechanized creature described more by its presence rather than physical appearance.

One is tempted to believe that the creature once had some sort of intelligible shape and is now only a broken-down remnant. Yet this does not seem to be the case; at least there is no sign of it; nowhere is there an unfinished or unbroken surface to suggest anything of the kind; the whole thing looks senseless enough, but in its own way perfectly finished. In any case, closer scrutiny is impossible, since Odradek is extraordinarily nimble and can never be laid hold of. He lurks by turns in the garret, the stairway, the lobbies, the entrance hall... Many a time when you go out of the door and he happens just to be leaning directly beneath you against the banisters you feel inclined to speak to him. Of course, you put no difficult questions to him, you treat him--he is so diminutive that you

⁷Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass* (Milkweed Editions, 2013), 55.

⁸ Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 56.

cannot help it--rather like a child. "Well, what's your name?" you ask him. "Odradek," he says. "And where do you live?" "No fixed abode," he says and laughs; but it is only the kind of laughter that has no lungs behind it. It sounds rather like the rustling of fallen leaves.⁹

Throughout his writing Kafka utilizes a bestial otherness to highlight where our boundaries of the ordinary and expected are. "The grotesque as represented by Kafka, therefore, becomes a subversive aesthetic capable of exposing what is hidden by (and in) traditional forms of representation."¹⁰ This is the aesthetic theory that I follow throughout my process because I want the viewers think more about this space, body, and movement. The titles for each of the forms are also derived from this short story. Odradek is a word intended to be seen as both a derivative of the Slavic language as well as a name for the creature. In this same vein, each *being* is both named and titled with a Latin derivative that speaks to its character.¹¹

While the form type of the couch came from a domestic connection first, the forms themselves were grown by movement and imagined vitality instead and came to be as a group of three titled *Citus* (figure 1), *Celer* (figure 2), and *Pernix* (figure 3), respectively.¹² As the clay and I worked together, joints and ligaments took shape. Clay muscles and bones coiled together to form these *beings*. This community, huddled together, warmed up as they neared each other's form. Their strong legs thump around within *Forma* as they skitter and play causing bumps and callouses to form on their already scale-like surface, derived from doilies impressing themselves onto the wet clay. All grown, they take their place in a row to enter the kiln, a fire that will take the growing process from my hands and purely into the hands of heat to give them skin. Rocky

⁹ Franz Kafka, *The Complete Stories* (W. Ross Macdonald School Resource Services Library, 2019), 427-428.

¹⁰ Matthew Powell, "Bestial Representations of Otherness: Kafka's Animal Stories," *Journal of Modern Literature* 32, no 1 (2008):131, <https://doi.org/10.2979/jml.2008.32.1.129>.

¹¹ Kafka, *The Complete Stories*, 428.

¹² The Latin roots for each of them respectively are speed (time or metaphysically), quickness (physically), and agility (motion and emotive).

scales emerge from this process, with moments of ooze where the muscles have stretched the skin apart. They bound and clop around, much too nimble, and quick for their size. This group of *beings* show the importance of community, specifically the LGBTQIA+ group. Their form language continues into other forms but will always have originated from the community.

The next form type of *being* that came to life was that of a lamp, though still not functional, named *Aestus* (figure 4).¹³ Rather than a bulb and a shade that provides light, it has a bioluminescent nature that emanates from the areas where the clay was stretched and molded. As it grew, this form spoke back, sharing truths about itself and the clay from which it was made. An excerpt from an Andrea Gibson poem, *A Genderful Pep-Talk for My Younger Self*, kept replaying in my mind:

Someday your middle finger will be a candle
lit for anyone who tries to rinse
the burning song out of your mouth.

You, the guest of honor, in your own skin
Your heart: the law, you will break over and over
to let the light in.

Your body, not theirs.
Your spirit, not theirs.
Yours.

Your life, your fury, your compassion,
your steel floating in the water, your water
to break in the streets.¹⁴

Its joints were more fluid than those of the communal forms. This *being* seems to float in the air as though it is treading water, its many limbs undulating through space. Even though it was raised above my head as it grew, it always remained grounded. When it entered the kiln, rather

¹³ The name is rooted in the Latin meaning of heat pertaining to passion or fury.

¹⁴ Andrea Gibson, *Pansy* (SCB Distributors, 2019), 65-66.

than the flame surrounding it and giving it merely flesh as it had done before, it gave the *being* illumination. Its red-hot glow in that state faded on the physical level, but was forever changed by that moment and continues to carry that vibrance with it. This *being* is the true embodiment of the consciousness of the forms. This work became one of discovery and self-reflection whose journey is not unlike my own and many others of the gender-queer community, one of becoming and affirmation. As explained previously, in the manner I was brought up as an AFAB individual, women were not allowed to have an understanding of self. You were not a person with individual thoughts; you were simply a reflection of your husband and family. These forms were nurtured in such order so that these *beings* are not alone but also know that they have value and independence on their own.

Succipio (figure 5) is a *being* that holds the space of a table in the living room. This form type is typically understood by its ability to hold something physically on its surface, but since this being is non-functional, nothing can be placed on its surface in the traditional manner.¹⁵ This concept of holding is brought into these *beings*' non-functional form as a passive action. Ursula K Le Guin wrote an essay titled, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, discusses holding which I bring into the work with this form. The argument put forward here is based on the anthropological conversation of disputing the idea that the first object was a sword, and rather it would have been a receptacle to be used for gathering. Le Guin then takes that idea and applies it to the current understanding of history and fiction stating that:

I differ with all of this. I would go so far as to say that the natural, proper, fitting shape of the novel might be that of a sack, a bag. A book holds words. Words hold things. They bear meanings. A novel is a medicine bundle, holding things in a particular, powerful relation to one another and to us.¹⁶

¹⁵ This is derived from the Latin word for receiving, typically used for spiritual gifts or epiphanies.

¹⁶ Ursula K. Le Guin, *Dancing at the Edge of the World* (Grove, 1989), 169.

This renewed understanding of origin not only impacts the concept of story but that of form. It acknowledges a need for holding in a way that is not just limited to humanity, but rather that the idea of holding is an origin point for all. The first action of a *being* is that of holding, then there is an expanse of self that comes after with the act of holding being the anchor.

From this syntax came a *being* with many legs and a forward lean. Its back is not flat; nothing can be set upon it, but still, it holds itself and moves forward. As this form was growing into itself, it kept trying to lean off of the table, fighting as the clay and I attempted to nurture it into *being*. When it was fired in the kiln it became vitrified; some of what it holds became permanent, others burned out. The holding and purging is not exclusive to this form; it mirrors my own journey as a gatherer of ideas and the eventual removal of some. However, unlike the clay form, my relationship to the nature of holding is one of consistent breaking down and rebuilding of ideas. The continuation of this process is what has formed who I am today because without knowing holding as an anchor point, I would never have come out as gender-queer and fostered this body of work.

PART III: THE ENVIRONMENT

The *beings* require their own environment to truly exist in the freedom that Baudrillard talks about, and to live as Kafka describes Odradek does. This environment is also one of collaboration, an ecosystem of a rhizomatic network called *The Copia* (figure 6).¹⁷ This part of the installation landscape is meant to not only save space for the *beings* but also create what their imagined state of existing is. The soft sculpture forms are the physical rhizome, that act as both the boundary and possibility of thought. They took form as vines, trunks, and lines that add to the curvature of the space to invite the clay *beings* into a conversation. They form a boundary of possibilities, that contract and extend, inhale and exhale. *The Copia* came to be by using an array of coiling techniques, each one moving its material as its motion dictates until it became a secure line, existing with raw fibers reaching outwards.

This process of becoming without function raises a conversation of caring being classified as a function. In my own life this conversation is rooted in my upbringing, where caregiving was the sole function of women. Growing up, caring became an act of labor, and expectation that I cultivated that as the main part of my person, placed on a higher level than a sense of self. Fiber is often used in the art world to conceptually function as a symbol of care which is why it is the sole material of this being.¹⁸ The word that I believe is a better match is that of attunement. This idea is rooted in *The Care Manifesto* by the Care Collective, a revolutionary book that was written post-pandemic to understand and call out where the focus and heart of the “caring industry” is placed. Their theory is based on the fact that people have become less interdependent and more independent since capitalism has commodified the act of

¹⁷This name is derived from the Latin word for supply or abundance, but not to a point of excess.

¹⁸ The Care Collective, *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Compassion* (Verso Books, 2020), 3.

caring. Jobs that revolve around care are undervalued and underpaid because of their feminine association, therefore it has become a trait in people that are underdeveloped.¹⁹ If we change our understanding of what care is as an action rather than a function, then attuning becomes a choice that comes freely based on individual character rather than expectation. This choice exists within *Forma* and is determined by the fiber *beings*; they decide on rigidity, enrapture, and focus. Just as Odradek is the model for understanding movement, they are also examples of characteristics. They are written to have emotions, actions, and be their own selves. *The Cippus*, as they hang, establish the traits of caring for kin as well as their embodiment of possibility.

The second *being* that makes up this ecosystem embodies safety and access is titled *Cippus* (figure 7).²⁰ This ecosystem of *beings*, just like every community, has boundaries which these branch-like forms create. Formed like a doorway, it is a reminder that this space must be entered, and that no matter how ambiguous, there is an interior and an exterior. This body of work is meant to embody the safe and sacred space that *beings* can exist within, and that separation must be denoted. This definition came from an excerpt of “Northern Red Oak: Mercy” by Alison Townsend:

An oak

tree isn't a woman. I am not an oak. I hesitate to braid our stories together, not wanting to impose mine on hers. But what I love most about the tree's wound is the place where she could not seal herself completely shut. The wood there is white and smooth as satin, the black slit splitting, fan-shaped, alluvial, down her trunk to the plush delta of moss at her roots. It teaches me something, broken beauty from which she re-grew, in this oak savanna—vanishing ecosystem we slowly “restore”—where trees talk

¹⁹Care Collective, *The Care Manifesto*, 4-5.

²⁰ This is a derivative of the Latin word that denotes a boundary and is typically marked with a rock or a tree.

to one another through their roots and I sit at her base, the cool,
blue hands of rain watering our lives in ways I never imagined.

This poem is here as a safeguard, an acknowledgment that for there to be a separate space that the *Forma* inhabits there will be a space where it does not take manifest. *Cippus* is the doorway, literally and formally, grown from various categorical opposites in material, nature, and motion: wood and fiber, hard and soft, rigid, and fluid. It is made of two distinct elements, wood, and doilies. The materiality is not only present as a form of worldbuilding but also holds significance to me as a gender-queer maker because there is an equalizing occurring between the fabric and wood. This combination acknowledges that even though both are gendered in opposite ways, they originate as fiber to form this threshold. The various branches are constructed so that this space is not totally closed off to the exterior, but the only entrance point is the doorway.

The Effusionis (figure 8), the final component, are thousands of small *beings* which exist as a collection of excess.²¹ Thinking about this as an analogy for a natural space, these small *beings* would make up the dirt on the forest floor. Wood, doily, and ceramic shards with words pressed on them form this floor. All of these small pieces make up one of the most important parts of this ecosystem. This theme of excess is something that exists on both a personal and theoretical level. In the hyper-gendered upbringing of mine women were not to speak unless spoken to, and just like the old adage about children, meant to be seen not heard. This inability to take up space meant that I always had a feeling of being too much, that as a person I was mostly composed of excess. This is why the concept of selvedge introduced in *Mendings* by Megan Sweeney has become a fundamental part of *Forma*. Defined as “the edge on either side of a woven or flat-knitted fabric so finished as to prevent raveling. Specifically: a narrow border

²¹ This name is derived from the Latin word for excess.

often of different or heavier threads than the fabric and sometimes in a different weave,” this attending to and additive process is one of containing excess.²² However, as Sweeney explains, this finished edge is often not the end; trim is often added and now that becomes what is understood as the end. I want to take another step forward and point out that we add tassels and fringe even beyond the trim at times, so it is an end that is temporary and able to become more even if that is not the tradition of the practice. This is just as ground is in the natural world. It is the end of the visible but also holds its own ecosystem, and there is so much not seen below the surface. Selvedge also holds a “false” ending in its relationship to time in past and present. Cloth is not immune to wear, tear, and fray. The ending stitches are not omnipotent and are merely a temporary binding that necessitates the act of mending, and additive process. As time passes, the garment changes and becomes more. Tidy warps and wefts are let loose and add volume to the previously ordered and flat surface. This piece is a celebration and saving of space for excess, that effort of time upon space and being. The wood and doilies continue on conversation as a symbol of balance. The ceramic shards are not just remnants of the clay pieces; they are representations of the past. The viewer will never be able to piece them together or know the order, but are still there underfoot, waiting to foster a new life. They are my excess, given their own ecosystem to exist as nothing more than *beings*.

²² Megan Sweeney, *Mendings* (Duke University Press, 2023), 22.

PART IV: THE DOILY

The cornerstone of this space is the doily, specifically the antimacassar. The antimacassar, or a chair tidy, at its most basic level is “a small piece of cloth put over the back or arm of a chair to protect against grease or dirt, or for decoration.”²³ They were popular particularly in the middle- and upper-class families during the nineteenth century and could be either handmade or machine made depending on the skill level of the woman of the house or the budget of the family. Antimacassars are not just items purely used for decoration; they did have a function. At their core they were meant to protect the furniture from the daily oil and grime of the body. However, during this period there was the popularization of Macassar Oil for men to use in their hair that made the soiling of furniture substantially worse which is where this form-type gets its name.²⁴

The antimacassar had multiple social and cultural expectations placed upon it just as many objects from the home during this era did, which makes it a perfect example of gender as performance. The expectation of someone with a female identity was the keeping of the home, maintaining tidies, and developing taste just to name a few, therefore whoever performs these tasks has a feminine identity. To do these actions is to perform as a woman in Victorian times, but it also is a form of subversion against the systems and expectations in the realm of functionality, social expectations, and theoretical implications specifically within the antimacassar. There is both a positive and a negative outlook on social expectations as well as debate about whether or not woman actually wanted to do these social roles and that is best

²³ Oxford English Dictionary, “antimacassar (n. & adj.).”

²⁴ “Macassar Oil,” *Scientific American* 3, no. 5 (1847): 40.

exemplified in the conversations existing around embroidery. In *The Subversive*

Stitch Rozsika Parker addresses that discourse by saying:

In among the complex determinants of women's lives and the curious contradiction they faced, one thing remained constant – women of all classes embroidered. Embroidery, therefore, was viewed by some as the major cause of women's unhappiness, while others insisted that it was their sole solace... It occupied a key place in the exploration of what it meant to be a woman in the middle class, when industrial capitalism was increasingly disrupting the established economic and social structure.²⁵

It is not a purely negative or purely positive situation, just a complex one. Using Butler's argument, fulfilling these social roles means that one is performing femininity, and this language is extremely helpful to this conversation because of the mixed reactions to stitching socially. It gives more agency to the women who did not enjoy this practice because it can be seen as something that is not part of who they are, merely a performance reflecting the social environment.

These larger conversations of function, social expectations and gender theory bring the Victorian woman and the antimacassar into the same context. Function in this context is equated to "a doing," as well as the action that is happening or manifestation of that verb. It is obvious from the history of the antimacassar that it does have action expectations placed upon it that relate solely to woman. This chair tidy is performing femininity in its use by holding the same care and visual importance that women are performing simultaneously in the home. It can be argued that because they are placed by a woman that is where they inherit the feminine, but to press against that notion I want to examine the objects relationship to the user as Butler does gender and sex with one being a physical manifestation that is assumed to inform the other. Butler says, "It would make no sense, then, to define gender as the cultural interpretation of sex,

²⁵ Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (The Women's Press, 1986), 148- 151.

if sex itself is a gendered category.”²⁶ The antimacassar is an object defined by its function, not its form or physical body, just as the femininity of these women was defined by their function or doing of femininity not their physical being. For both the women and the antimacassar the social expectation is the same on some level.

The doily is one of the *beings* at the center of this body of work. I found kinship in this form, named and created by so many specifically to function in service of someone else.²⁷ It has found its way into every aspect of this body of work and where it is not physically present, it has still left an impression on this work just as I have. All of the fibers in the work are reclaimed doilies of various scales and origin. This kinship comes as an understanding of how the doily and I both had similar expectations of function placed upon us at our origin points. This experience shaped *Forma* into something that I needed in order to understand my past and future as an AFAB gender-queer maker. Forever fossilized in the ceramic, the doily has been pressed on both the large *beings* and the small shards on the ground. Doilies are the lifeblood of *Forma*, conceptually and materially.

²⁶ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 10.

²⁷ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* (Duke University Press, 2016), 103.

PART V: CONCLUSIONS

This body of work was made in part as a reclamation of my identity and self as a gender-queer maker, but also as a way of understanding the vitality that home can hold within its walls. While I may have been raised with various ideals of creation, I no longer identify as a woman and that origin point no longer defines my making. Being gender-queer has freed me from performing this femininity and therefore as I make, it is not as a function or because of a moral imperative. This understanding of being freed from function and performance for objects does not just impact my making process; it impacts my life. While *Forma* might not have the answers for every person who makes, it does for me. The way that gender has impacted the study of material culture and art theory makes it inaccessible for makers like myself. This body of work is both a deeply personal showcase of space and material while also holds ideas that are true for many individuals. While the majority of this thesis has been of my own thoughts and experiences, I am not the only gender queer person who considers fluidity within material and language. Jos Charles is a trans poet who uses Middle English to write in a way that transcends time and the materiality of language. This specific poem, *XXIV*, is one of celebration of the trans experience:

Being tran is a unique kinde off organe / i am speeching materialie / i am speeching abot hereditie / a tran entres thru the hole / th ehole glomes inn the linden / a tran entres eather lik a mothe / wile tran preseeds / esense/ her forme is contingent on the feeld / the maner sits cis within inn a feeld / wee speeche inn 2 the eather / wile the mothe bloomes / the mothe bloomes inn the yuca.²⁸

²⁸ Jos Charles, *Feeld* (Milkweed Editions, 2018), 24.

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FIGURES



Figure 1. *Citus*, Stoneware glaze fired to Cone 6, 2026.



Figure 2. *Celer*, Stoneware glaze fired to Cone 6, 2026.



Figure 3. *Pernix*, Stoneware glaze fired to Cone 6, 2026.



Figure 4. Maquette of *Aestus*, Stoneware glaze fired to cone 6, 2025.



Figure 5. Maquette of *Succipio*, Stoneware glaze fired to cone 6, 2025.



Figure 6. Portion of *The Copia*, reclaimed lace and doilies, cheesecloth, muslin, synthetic dye, and black bean dye, 2025.



Figure 7. Cippus (1 of 3), reclaimed doilies and lace, found branches, and threaded bolts, 2026.



Figure 8. *The Effusionis*, excess wood, doilies, and ceramic shards, 2026.