

Holding – an exhibition by Katherine Horn

HRNKAT002

22 November 2021

Catalogue: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OJ8eaSyXhXzHabVjoMb9r9760VmzSTYa/view?usp=sharing>

Artist Statement:

This body of work explores the concept of holding and its capacity for healing. I have sought to offer comfort and safety by making the viewer feel held and cared for. Methods of binding, covering and transforming contribute towards processing traumas that are too unpleasant to hold. This focus is also influenced by the chronic pain in my hands which prevents me from holding physical objects. My hands, however, are able to hold abstractions; the trauma and anxiety which causes their pain and the emotions which I channel through my fingers to make art.

My work focuses on tactile experiences, using soft sculptures and textiles to stimulate feelings of nurturing and empathy towards women who experience pain, anxiety and insomnia. The soft sculptures likeness to soft toys and the illustrative nature of my drawings, connects my work to childhood. Childhood innocence stands as a source of comfort for it symbolizes a time when we were free to explore our imaginations, free of responsibility and the cold realities of adulthood. It is this freedom of pain and capacity for play, that I wish for women. The two most notable mediums in my work are embroidery and screen printing. The embroidery calls for security through its historical association with domesticity and as a safe place for feminine expression. It is employed intuitively, allowing for a bodily expression of unspoken or silenced traumas. My printing further explores self-expression as a tool for healing. Screen printing emulates the ways in which hidden truths or traumas leak out of one's subconscious while dreaming, yet I reclaim emotional agency through predetermined, voluntary and controlled expression.







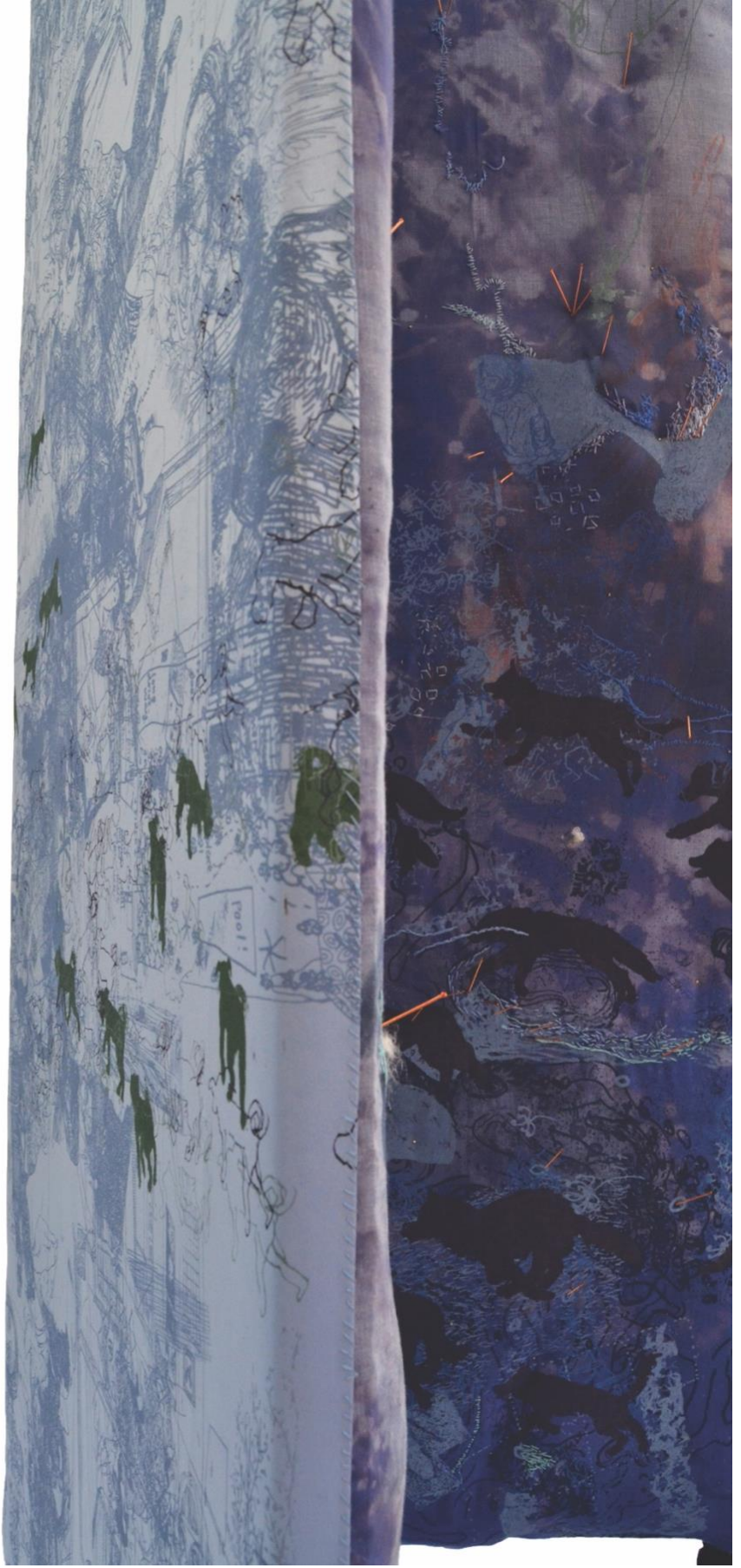
Repose:

These sculptures are created in conversation with their intended recipient, catering to the individual's preferences and physical needs to create maximum comfort. The individuals are consulted on every aspect of their pillows: the material, pattern, shape, colour, weight and stuffing. The subjects I have chosen are all neurodivergent women, who experience varying degrees of insomnia, anxiety, chronic pain, trauma and abuse. Weighted blankets are often given to people who have experienced such struggles, but these can be insufficient in their generality. Furthermore, these experiences can lead to a heightened sense of loneliness and alienation from society, which is why creating comfort for these individuals is particularly important. Displaying this need for comfort in a public space works towards creating a softer and more accommodating public world. These sculptures have been placed on small mattresses so that viewers can climb onto the mattress and hold them. The viewer can then sense what kind of comfort another person enjoys and how they are held in a vulnerable and private context. In this way, the viewer experiences a physical empathy for the individual bridging the gap of their differences through an embodied experience. These creatures of comfort are given to their recipients so that they may be held, safely, while they sleep.











Bodily Interiors:

This room divider sculpture consists of three screen printed, fabric panels on each side. The interior panels display subtle works on satin depicting sketches from my daily journals, while the exterior panels are chaotically overlaid prints of my nightmares with large, messy and intuitive stitching. The distressed surfaces of *Bodily Interiors* are intended to be visually reminiscent of the trauma of my nightmares, contrasting with the smoothness of the interior. This contrast reflects how the privacy of a bedroom contains both the safety of routine and brings out darkness within one's subconscious.

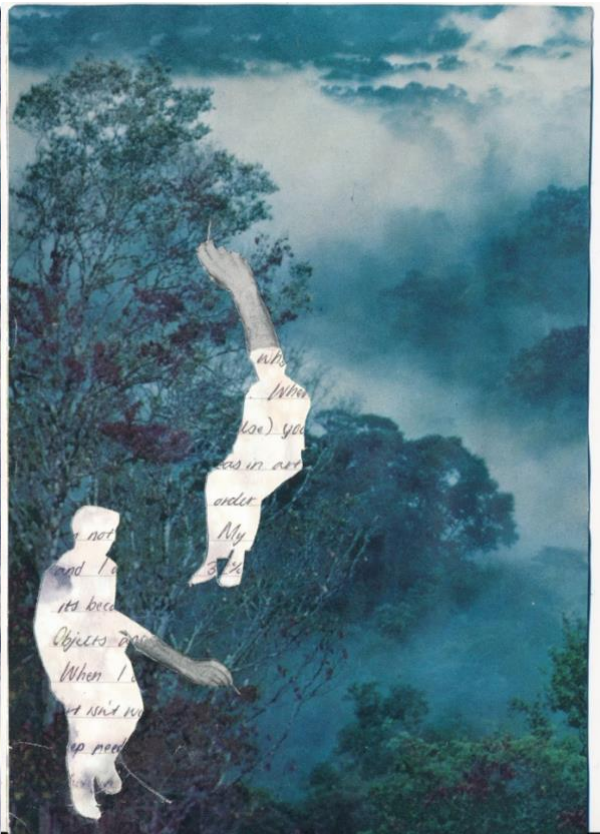
Handwritten text in a stylized, illegible font, consisting of six lines of scribbled characters.

Handwritten text in a stylized, illegible font, consisting of five lines of scribbled characters.

Handwritten text in a stylized, illegible font, consisting of four lines of scribbled characters.

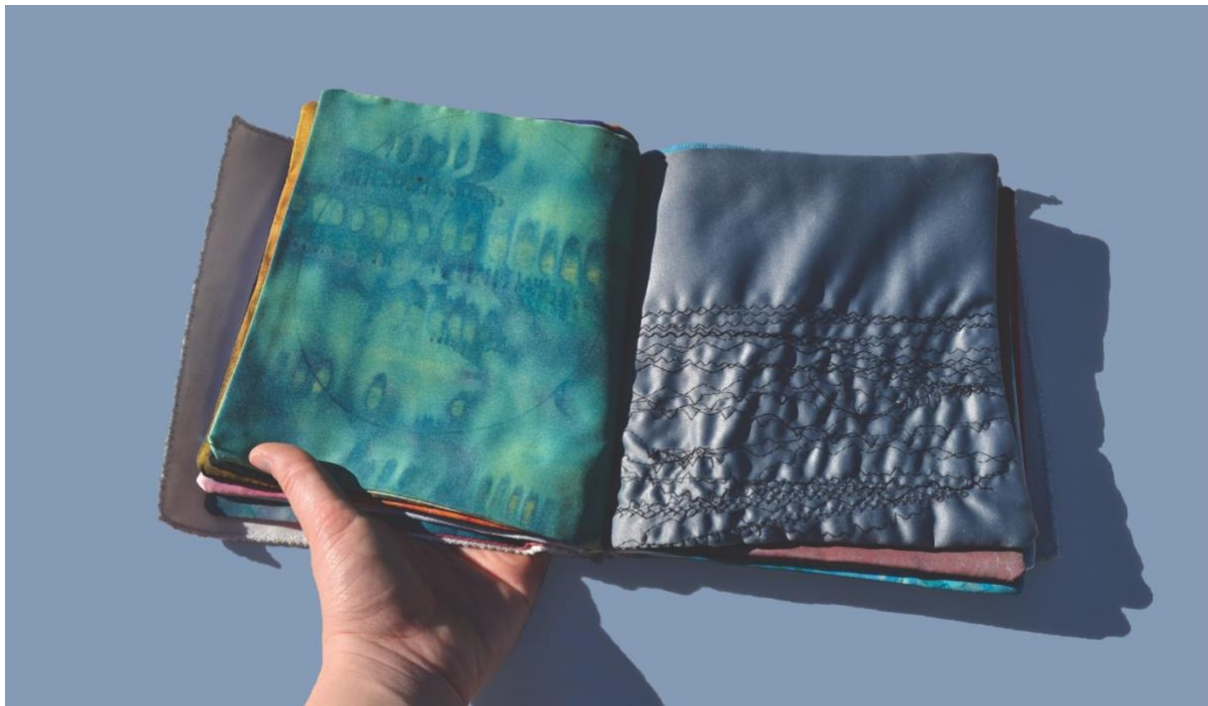
Somniloquy:

Writing is an effective tool in processing trauma, as it allows one to explore and observe internal narratives without judgement. It has thus, been ideal for expressing my dreams safely and privately. For as long as I can remember, I have had extensive, detailed and macabre dreams. As one's dreams are explorations of their everyday anxieties and interactions, this world explores places, people and situations that reside deep inside my subconscious. My writing allows me to process what my subconscious communicates about my waking realities. The indecipherable pillow font is used to deepen the privacy of my writing and brings a playful softness through the coded letters, which nods to the imaginative gibberish of children.



Salvage:

The collages in this book are made over old journal pages from a time when I was dealing with serious depression and abuse. Although those circumstances are far behind me now, the effects of that trauma still linger within my body particularly as pain in my hands. To aid my healing, I have bleached out and painted over my painful memories, banishing them into the past. The pages have been reordered and collaged over, placing them between a dream and the reality of my life now as I work through the trauma in my body. Within this reimagined journal I have left many blank pages, symbolising the truths I had denied myself and that which I have now laid to rest and no longer wish to write about.



Feeling:

In some instances, intense emotion, whether positive or negative can leave us speechless. Such feelings become difficult to express, especially for those who are neurodivergent, like myself. This book consists of a series of emotive paintings that are accentuated with the textures of various fabrics. The fabric nods to the fabric books of toddlers, drawing on the safety and softness of infancy. This book was further inspired by *My Many Coloured Days* by Dr Seuss. As a young, intermittently non-verbal autistic child, this book had a heavy impact on my learning to understand my emotions. My book aims to mimic the tools that *My Many Coloured Days* gives children to express themselves, but in a style that targets an adult audience. It is unfortunate that we are denied such tools after our childhood and I want to return to adults what they have lost.



1/3

loving

Uih.



1/3

ticking

Uih.



1/3

hurting

child



1/3

dreaming

child



1/3

stimming

Lilith



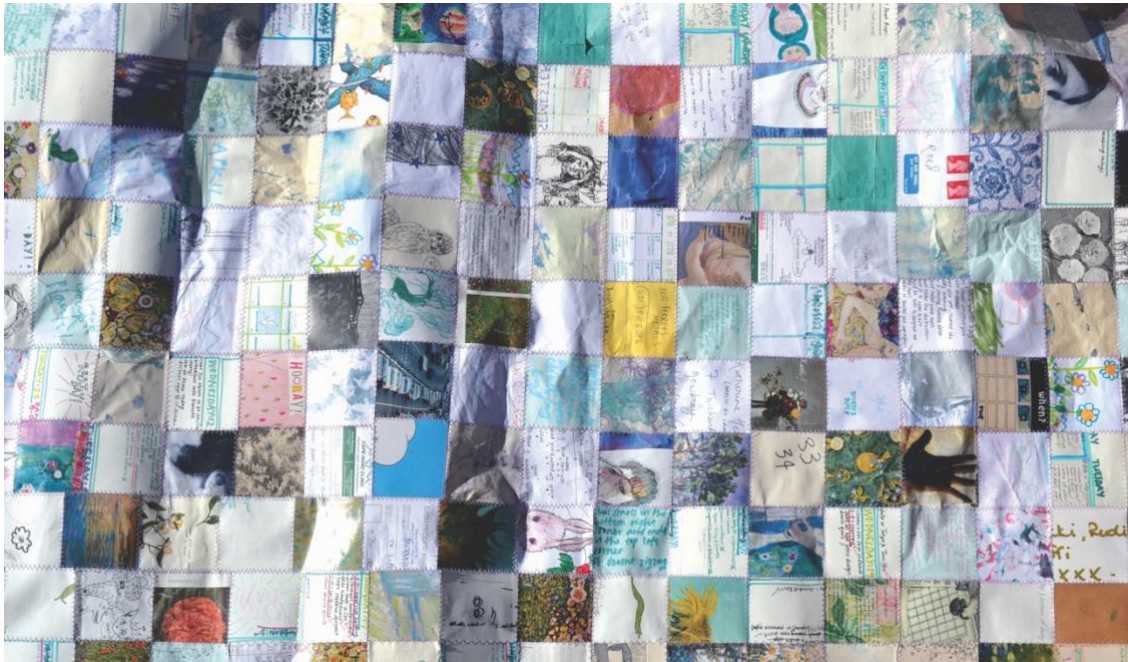
1/4

playing

Lilith

Restless:

Our beds are spaces that signify a multitude of intimate emotions and moments. They are spaces of rest, company, love, joy, lust and birth; of pain, loneliness, sickness and death. Our beds are restless, they fluctuate between these states, morphing into a vessel to hold our emotions. I have attempted to capture this by etching my bed in six different ways, to communicate the different moods held by the same space.



Quilted:

This work uses notes and scraps of paper from my room to transform the oddments of my life into a symbol of comfort: the quilt. As I cannot write for long, I see this quilt as a diary, detailing my life through doctor's scripts, appointment cards, schedules, doodles, letters and pictures. I find the paper fitting as it reveals that although I may wish for comfort, the reality is cold and stiff like paper, not warm and soft like fabric.



Assuage:

This work is dedicated to my grandmothers and investigates how they have informed my art through their craft and their example of domestic strength. Although my ouma has advanced alzheimers and my granny has immigrated, they remain here in me, and I reflect them both equally in appearance and spirit. They are in my work, which embodies their teachings, the pains they faced and the nurturing they maintained. They showed me how to use softness and hardness together to create strength. Collages of them mitigate screenprints of my nightmares, mimicking how their care held me through my own pains. The cushioned pieces represent the comfort this gave me, while the wooden pieces reflect the flatness of memory and the grief I feel at being apart from them. Yet together, wood and cushion represent the strength I have learnt.



Growing and Mapping:

These works are made out images from an MRI and X-Rays of my hands. I have rearranged and mutated different aspects of these scans to create imagined spaces and dreamlike diagrams. The embroidery that will cover these images is the stitching up and mending that which is injured. The end result will be somewhat transformed away from the somber medical themes to become something new and healing.