

A
KIT
OF
ODDS & ENDS

A
LOVE LETTER
TO
QUEER FEMINIST
CRAFTERS

Melissa Rogers

Dearest ones and strangers,

This is a declaration of love:

To the storytellers--
the weavers, spinners, shuttle- and
spindle-mistresses,
the loom dommes and machine witches;
to the yarn bombers, craftivists, and
crochet queens,
to the bitchy stitcher and the
domiknitrix,
the makers of granny squares and
assemblers of afghans,
wielders of needles and hooks;
to those who keep us in hats and
sweaters;
to those who keep latch hook and
macrame alive;
to those who tie knots and those who
untangle them;
to those who know their way around
twists, kinks, crimps, and snarls;
to the seamsters and seamstresses who
have a feel
for good tension--who can pleat,
tuck, and gather
working inside-out
(and to their power bottom
pincushions).

To the quilters and the patchwork
fanciers
practicing their elaborate art piece
by piece
in solitude or together
on mountaintops
and rural porches.

To the embroiderers, cross-stitchers,
needlepoint practitioners,
purveyors of hoopla,
counters of thread and fingerers
of floss,
freehanders and chart-drawers
with your heads bent, your digits
busy and aching.

To my fellow hoarders and materials
fetishists;
to the compulsively tactile
scrap savers and stash looters,
thrift store plunderers and yard sale
cruisers,
garbage day opportunists and
curbside resurrectionists;

to the amateurs and the fiber artists,
the self-taught, the home-learned,
the art school dropouts, the craft
fair junkies,
the designers, the decorators, and the
aesthetes,
the utilitarians and the dysfunctionals
the lay historians and everyday
theorists;

to the teachers;

and to the queer crafters
of all persuasions
who know that work and pleasure
are not so easily divorced
and that leisure time is a luxury
and a necessity
we must often make by hand, as a gift
to ourselves--

please accept "A Kit of Odds and Ends"
as a small token of my affection

and know that you are loved.

"A Kit of Odds and Ends" is a gift from one queer feminist crafter to another, an invitation to participate in a collective crafting practice by documenting the process of completing one of the included cross stitch designs (or creating your own) before sending the kit to someone else. Unlike store-bought kits, most of the materials in "A Kit of Odds and Ends" were procured at thrift stores, garage sales, and bargain craft bins, so no two kits contain the same supplies for executing the patterns. Each of the objects in the kit has a story, and while not all of those stories can be known or explained, they hint at complex social worlds built around craft practices. "A Kit of Odds and Ends" attempts to breathe new life into these objects by attaching them to queer worlds and projects. What kinds of stories is it possible to tell with an eclectic and imperfect assortment of materials? What unexpected modes of affiliation might emerge from the public circulation of craft ephemera amongst our intimate networks? By crafting gifts for other queer feminists with mundane, discarded bits and pieces (what some might call junk) it is my hope that we might reanimate these materials through our creative labor, and in doing so become more attuned to the erotics of crafting: its pleasures and

frustrations, its moments of habitual care, its sensuality, and the ways it connects us, materially and emotionally, to each other. By participating, you are engaged in the project of "Making Queer Love" to feminist crafters.

This project is inspired by fiber and textile artists who use craft to document queer worlds while also challenging craft's subordinate relationship to "fine art." These artists, and the queer theorists who sometimes collaborate in the interpretation of their work for larger audiences, are queering craft: making it strange and subverting its more familiar applications. "Making Queer Love" is a public feelings project that creates space for the expression of love, care, admiration, and affection for the work of these artists and crafters. It serves as an acknowledgement that the embodied labor of crafting is not merely decorative, but constitutes the slow and necessary work of bringing habitable worlds into being for those whose lives and loves are not recognized as beautiful or important. "Making Queer Love" attempts to craft what queer theorist Ann Cvetkovich calls a "utopia of ordinary habit": a set of practices and "modes of attention" that remain hopeful about the possibility of new worlds even as they exist within spaces of negativity and failure (Depression, 189). As a

publicly circulating project for the construction of social worlds based in friendship, solidarity, and unusual intimacies, the kit demonstrates that making queer love is itself a craft that we might learn to habitually practice.

I envision this project as a collective gift to the artists and feminist queer theorists who have been particularly influential in my thinking about queer craft. While this list is partial and still growing, I include it so that you can seek out and hopefully support these artist-theorists and their work:

Indira Allegra, Elissa Auther, Micha Cardenas, Ann Cvetkovich, Josh Faught, Aubrey Longley-Cook, Allyson Mitchell, John Paradiso, Emmett Ramstad, LJ Roberts, Sheila Pepe, Jeanne Vaccaro.

This list does not include the many friends and colleagues who have been companions and collaborators in craft, for whom I'm immeasurably grateful. Compiling such a list is, for me, a step toward constructing a patchwork, speculative feminist genealogy. Making love to such pieced-together histories of queer feminist craft--caring for them in the face of erasure and continuing to honor them through our everyday use--is a necessary political project that can make

livable worlds possible. To that end, "Making Queer Love" seeks to explore ways of knowing that are based in feeling, sensation, and touch: modes of connection that use our sometimes strange or surprising relationships with craft objects and materials in the making of social worlds.

In the essay, "Craft, Queerness, and Guerrilla Tactics," LJ Roberts writes that "the feminist act of intergenerational skill sharing" is "an act of love" (In the Loop, 113). This is the spirit in which I offer "A Kit of Odds and Ends"; not as a step-by-step guide to getting something done, but as an opening to further learning and connection. My instructions are therefore minimal, and you are of course free to ignore them.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Choose a cross stitch design from this zine, or create your own on the blank graph paper in the back. If you don't already know how to cross stitch, check out the practice page. There are also lots of great embroidery tutorials online. For my designs, I chose several queer words that I particularly love, and that are sites of strong feelings in queer communities. Adapt them any way you choose--they are just meant to be inspirations.

2. Your embroidery hoop will help keep your fabric taut as you stitch. The hoops unscrew and the fabric fits between them like a sandwich. Aida cloth is especially designed for cross stitch--it has a useful grid of openings that keep your stitches neat and even. If working with Aida cloth, use the small openings to guide your needle up and down through the fabric. Each square on the graph paper will be a square on the Aida cloth. If using a different kind of fabric, experiment with what works best for you. Embroidery has all kinds of rules--bend or break them!

3. The kit includes embroidery floss: special thread that comes in 6 strands. Use all 6 strands or peel off just a couple to achieve different effects; note that with more strands, it may be more difficult to thread your embroidery needle. The longer the amount of floss you try to use, the more likely it is to get tangled, so try working with only a foot or two at a time. Depending on how much experience you have with sewing, you can knot the floss to secure it at the back of the work, or weave it under your stitches as you go.

4. The kit also includes some notions--weird stuff that may or may not be useful for an embroidery project. Do with them what you will!

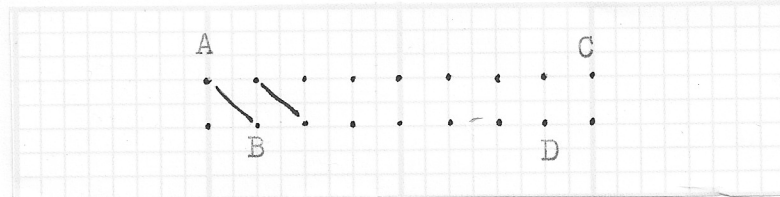
If you're feeling adventurous, take a trip to the thrift store for some inspiration. Thrift stores have a lot of craft supplies for cheap and you never know what you might find, especially if you make several trips. Use whatever is available and appealing to you!

5. When you're done with your project, you have a couple of options. You could send the finished design to a fellow queer feminist crafter as a gift (or it could be a gift to yourself!). You could replenish the kit with unused items from your own stash and send it out again for someone else to enjoy, or create an entirely new kit with fun craft finds! Anyone can make their own "Kit of Odds and Ends." Consider documenting your process if you're a social media butterfly; I'm partial to #QueerCraft and #OddsNends, but get inventive with hashtags of your own.

6. Remember: process, not product. There's no "right" way to do this. The designs are intentionally small and simple to facilitate learning, but you're under no obligation to finish what you've started if you're not having fun. You might even send an incomplete design to another crafter to finish--a gift that keeps on giving! Whatever happens, I hope you use the project as an excuse to reach out and connect with other queer feminist crafters.

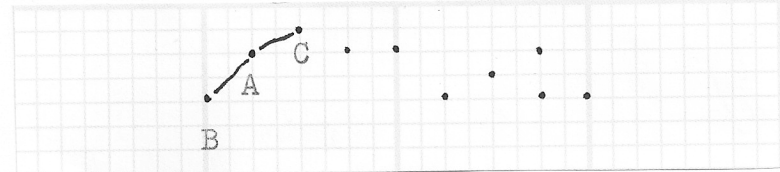
CROSS STITCH:

To make the cross stitch, bring your needle up through the fabric at 'A' and back down at 'B.' Continue like this for a row. On your way back, bring your needle up at 'C' and back down at 'D' until you reach the start of the row again. This should create an X-shaped stitch. Or, you could make each X individually. Practice here!



BACK STITCH:

The back stitch is a simple stitch used for outlines, lettering, and small details. It creates a solid line with no breaks in it. Bring your needle up through the fabric a little ways away from where you want your line to start ('A') and work backwards bringing the needle back down at 'B.' Now come back up at 'C' and go back down through 'A' again. Keep going until your line is the length you want. Any of the designs in this zine can be made using just the back stitch if desired. Chalk or a fabric pencil can be useful when plotting your line.



Check out the back of your
stitches here!

"A Kit of Odds and Ends" includes:

*This handmade zine, containing: a love letter to queer feminist crafters, instructions with images on cross stitch embroidery, original patterns for a sampler of queer words, and blank graph paper.

*One embroidery hoop, size and material variable.

*Aida cloth, color and thread count variable; printed fabric quarters, patterns and material variable.

*Embroidery needles, straight pins, and a pincushion.

*Four skeins of 6 strand, cotton embroidery floss, colors variable.

*Notions, contents variable: buttons, beads, fake flowers, ribbon, feathers, lace, trim, etc.

Read my extended essay on "Making Queer Love" on the web at hyperrhiz.io

Get in touch! I would love to hear from you: m.s.rogers17@gmail.com; queererworlds.wordpress.com; [@melissarogers17](https://twitter.com/melissarogers17) on Twitter

RYKE

RYKE

■ = cross stitch

▲ = $\frac{1}{4}$ cross stitch

└ = back stitch

QUEER

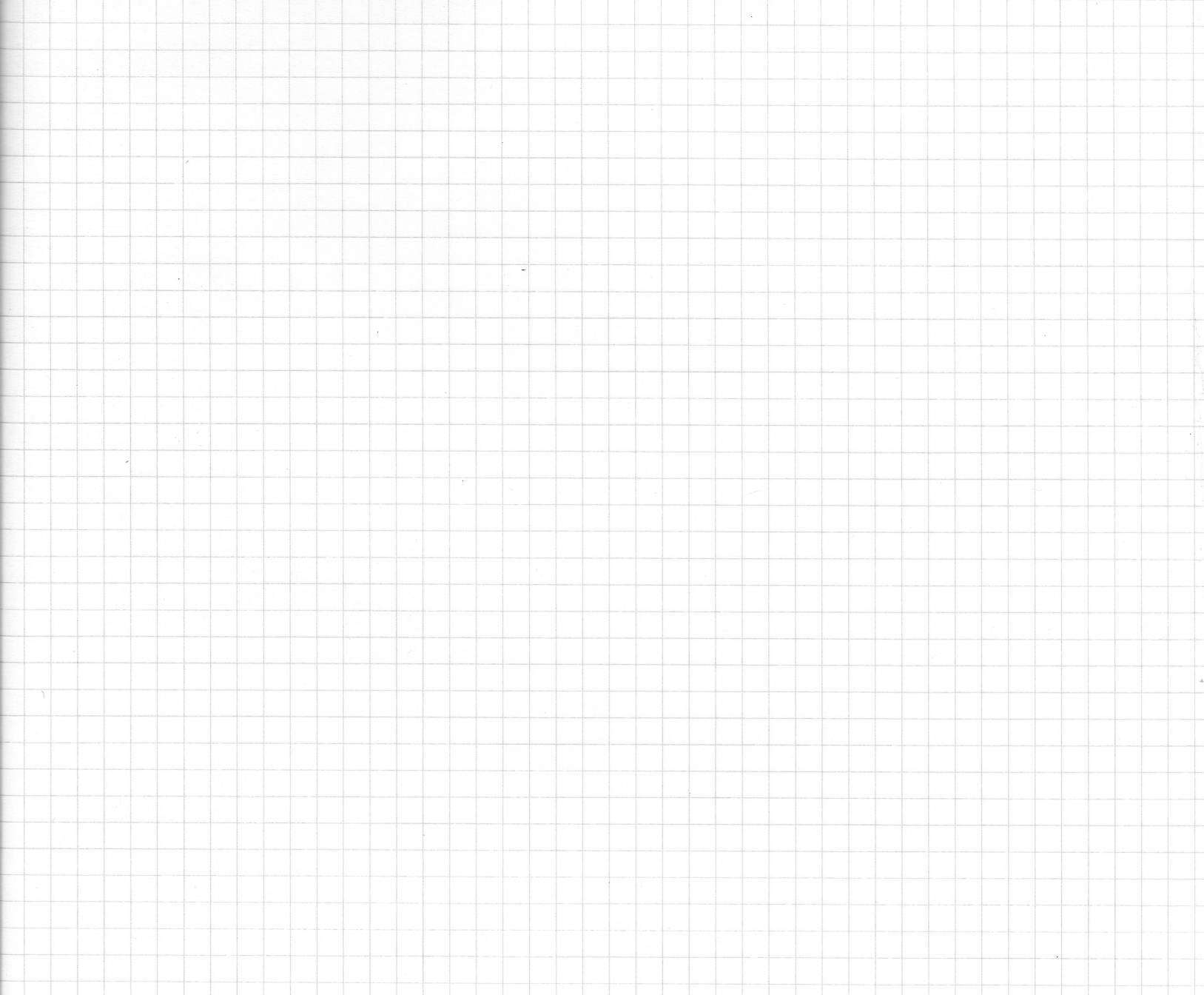
QUEER

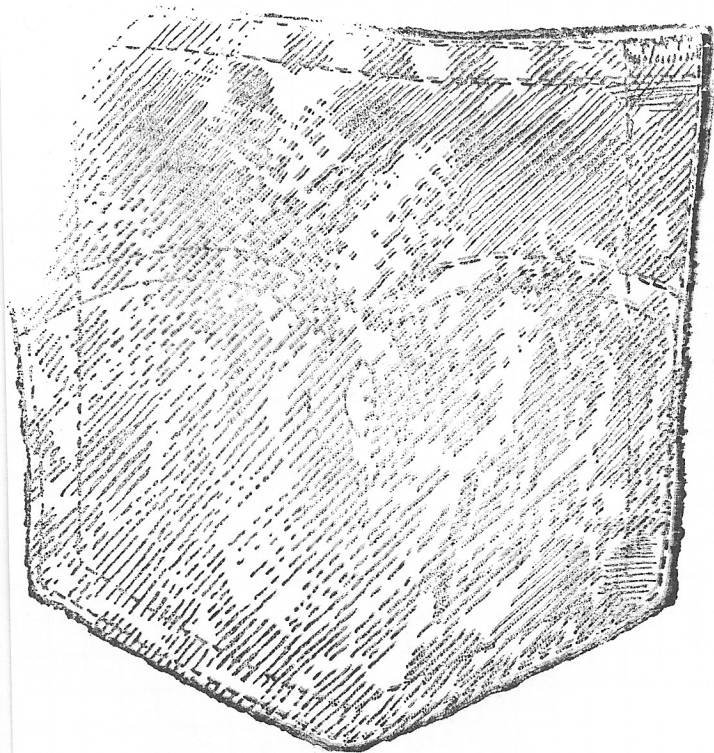
HIRONS

HIRONS

FEMINE

FEMME





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