

SEWING REBELLION
BANNERS
PATCHES

Frau Fiber's Mission to Stop Shopping & Start Sewing

by carole frances lung

For PhD by Existing Published or Creative Works. This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the University of Sunderland for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



Frau Fiber and the Global Wage awards, 2015
Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
(ILGWU) Archive

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ABSTRACT

Frau Fiber's Mission to Stop Shopping and Start Sewing investigates how fictionalization can expand historical narratives; analyzes participatory performance as a pedagogical model; and explores hybrid authorship and fabricated narratives as challenges to capitalism. This research examines how strategies such as satire, socialist labor iconography, and performance of labor can critique both capitalist and socialist labor systems.

This thesis features the work of Frau Fiber: my long-term performative alter ego, founder of the *Sewing Rebellion*, and co-collaborator of the *Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms (ILGWU)*. The framework of projects forms a participatory movement resisting the exploitative practices of the global garment industry. Created by me in 2006, Frau Fiber is a fictional former East German garment worker turned textile superhero who embodies the aesthetics, ethics, and bureaucratic tone of socialist labor culture within contemporary neoliberal contexts. Through this persona and as her biographer and archivist, I investigate the intersections of performance art, fiber and materials studies, skill sharing, labor history, while critiquing global apparel production systems.

The *Sewing Rebellion* and related projects from the archive disrupt the culture of disposability inherent in fast fashion, reframing sewing as an act of resistance and solidarity with global garment workers. Drawing from early 20th Century garment worker strikes in the United States and East German socialist brigades, the rebellion aligns with feminist art traditions that position domestic skills as tools for political intervention.

The *Sewing Rebellion* operated for thirteen years as a socially engaged performance offering free monthly workshops in multiple locations around the United States that taught sewing, mending, and making as acts of resistance to the fast fashion system. This work was supported by public libraries, universities, LGBTQAI+ centers, museums, galleries, and community groups.



Sewing Rebellion Patch, 2013
Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
(ILGWU) Archive

DEDICATION

May this work honor the contributions of garment workers throughout the world whose labor sustains the global apparel industry while they continue to endure poverty wages, unsafe working conditions, displacement, and exploitation.

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GLOSSARY

Alter Ego A performative and conceptual approach in which an artist creates a secondary identity, distinct yet inseparable from the self, to interrogate authorship, embodiment, gender, labor, and systems of power. The alter ego operates as a method enabling the artist to inhabit alternative subject positions and blur the boundaries between realities and histories. Within feminist, queer, and social practice traditions, the alter ego becomes method of embodied research: a persona through which concept is lived, performed, and tested in public. Examples such as Adrian Piper's Mythic Being, William Pope.L's endurance-based identities, and Leigh Bowery's extravagant self-constructions demonstrate the use of the alter ego to expose cultural norms of identity, spectacle, class, and visibility. As an art practice, the alter ego expands performance into daily life and transforms personal identity into a critical tool, allowing the artist to operate as subject, critic, and social mirror within their own work.

Boycott A collective act of refusal and a withdrawal from participation in exploitative systems of production and consumption. Boycott is an active strategy of solidarity as a way to align one's everyday choices with the rights and dignity of workers. Rooted in solidarity and resistance, to boycott is an aesthetic and ethical turning away from fast fashion brands such as Shein or Forever 21, and instead turning toward practices of mending, upcycling, and making do.

Big Ship Era The Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms term for the contemporary phase of global capitalism characterized by massive container ships, deregulated

maritime trade, and “flags of convenience.” The Big Ship Era externalizes the true cost of fashion: ecological destruction, lost containers, and invisible labor.

Drag A performative strategy used by Frau Fiber to embody exaggerated labor identities the “model worker,” or the “socialist seamstress.” Her drag is a critique of gendered expectations of femininity and productivity in textile labor.

Durational A time-based performance strategy in which labor, endurance, and repetition unfold over extended periods.

Fast Fashion The accelerated, extractive system of apparel production that values speed and volume over ethics or quality. Frau Fiber exposes its consequences through slow, visible, performative sewing.

Forever 21 A Los Angeles-based fast fashion brand emblematic of the exploitation that underpins global fashion. Frau Fiber often knocks off Forever 21 garments as a case study in the collapse of moral and material value.

Flags of Convenience The Container Ships register in nations with weak labor and environmental laws to cut costs. Under this system, shipping companies register vessels in countries like Panama, Liberia, or the Marshall Islands, where regulations are minimal and enforcement is weak. For example, a ship owned and operated in the United States or Europe may fly the flag of Panama, allowing it to bypass stricter labor laws, safety standards, and environmental protections. This practice enables corporations to reduce operating costs while obscuring accountability for worker

safety and ecological damage.

Gift Economy A mode of social exchange where generosity replaces profit and reciprocity sustains community. In a gift economy value is measured through relationship, care, and participation rather than monetary exchange. The *Sewing Rebellion* is an example of a gift economy. Frau Fiber circulates free materials, equipment, and instruction, and participants build community and extend the life of their garments. In this way a reciprocal relationship is formed outside of monetary exchange.

Global Garment Supply Chain The transnational system that links raw materials, factories, shipping routes, and retail. Frau Fiber's performances trace this chain, making visible the labor behind each seam.

Hand Crank Sewing Machine is a human powered, gear-driven machine that forms a lockstitch through a rotary crank and flywheel system. As Frau Fiber's tool of resistance, its mechanical slowness embodies deceleration, endurance, and refusal of industrial efficiency.

Herstorical Reconstruction Frau Fiber's feminist rewriting of history to include women's and workers' stories omitted from archives and museums.

LA Garment Workers Union A present-day labor organization fighting for garment workers' rights in Los Angeles. Frau Fiber aligns her practice with their struggle, linking past ILGWU history to contemporary organizing.

Multi-Fiber Agreement (MFA) An international trade policy (1974–2004) that regulated the global textile and garment industry through quotas, limiting the amount of clothing and fabric developing countries could export to wealthier nations. While framed as economic balance, the MFA effectively preserved industrial advantage for the Global North, restricting the growth of manufacturing economies in the Global South and reinforcing global hierarchies of labor.

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) The 1994 trade agreement that accelerated the offshoring of U.S. garment jobs to Mexico and beyond. carole frances lung's own position in the garment industry, and its collapse, grounds Frau Fiber's critique of global capitalism.

Performing Labor The methodology through which Frau Fiber's makes labor visible by performing it publicly. Through sewing, ironing, or mending, she transforms work into witness, resistance, and pedagogy.

Practice a sustained way of being; an iterative, embodied method of critique. Frau Fiber's practice is an ongoing negotiation between making, teaching, and political engagement.

Rana Plaza The 2013 garment factory collapse in Bangladesh that killed 1,134 workers. This was a defining tragedy in Frau Fiber's consciousness, symbolizing the human cost of cheap fashion.

Reverend Billy The performance persona of artist and activist Bill Talen, founder of the Church of Stop Shopping, a New York based collective that stages satirical sermons against consumerism, corporate greed, and environmental destruction. Clad in a white suit and evangelical charisma, Reverend Billy preaches anti-capitalist gospel in shopping malls, city streets, and public squares, transforming protest into ritual and performance into collective awakening.

Shein A contemporary fast-fashion empire epitomizing algorithmic overproduction. Frau Fiber cites Shein as the Big Ship Era's logical endpoint: mass exploitation disguised as "choice."

Site Specific A mode of artistic production that responds directly to the physical, historical, and social context of a place.

Superhero a fictional or symbolic figure who uses extraordinary powers, skills, or moral conviction to fight injustice, protect others, and uphold collective ideals. A superhero often embodies hope, resilience, and resistance through supernatural strength or technology, but also through courage, creativity, and ethical action in the face of adversity. This is an ironic and earnest framework for understanding Frau Fiber's persona. As a "textile superhero," she wields the sewing machine as a tool of justice, defending garment workers and advocating for ethical production. Her uniform is part factory smock and part cape, fusing labor heroism with feminist critique.

Tech Pack (short for technical package) is the blueprint of a garment used in fast fashion manufacturing. It is a comprehensive document that communicates every garment design, material, and construction detail from the brand or designer to the factory.

Triangle Shirtwaist Fire (1911) A pivotal moment in labor history when 146 garment workers, mostly young immigrant women, died in a factory fire in New York City due to locked doors and unsafe conditions. This tragedy ignited the modern labor rights movement.

Uniforms Functional garments worn in performance and workshop contexts, including aprons, smocks, jumpsuits signifying solidarity and shared purpose.

Upcycling Transforming existing textiles into new forms, extending their life and value. For Frau Fiber, upcycling is both material conservation and narrative reclamation.

INTRODUCTION

Aims

This research examines Frau Fiber, the *Sewing Rebellion*, and the *ILGWU Archive* as a case study to demonstrate how art can operate as a vehicle for transformation of the global textile and apparel industry. It does this by contributing to socially engaged performance, fiber and material studies, labor history, and contemporary art, positioning textile-based performance as a tool for cultural resistance.

Objectives

The objectives of the research are to trace the historical foundations of 20th Century garment worker organizing, feminist art traditions, and East German socialist labor culture, establishing a lineage of material resistance. The research seeks to disrupt the culture of disposability that defines fast fashion by advancing an alternative ethic grounded in radical thrift and collective making. Through acts of mending, reuse, and performance, sewing is reframed as a practice of resistance, solidarity, and historical remembrance.

The research develops innovative strategies that merge fact and fiction, employ creative writing and archival fabrication, and integrate artificial intelligence to extend the fictional voice of Frau Fiber. The resulting text combines fictional narrative and scholarly analysis, challenging the authority of traditional archives and demonstrating how creative methodologies can produce embodied, and relational forms of knowledge.

Critical Foundations

This research is grounded in the intersecting fields of socially engaged art, performance as research, and material culture studies. It draws upon theories of craft as resistance and that craft carries “the potential to critique the logic of industrial modernity” through embodied making and material intimacy (Adamson, 2007). It aligns with social engagement as a concept of dialogical aesthetics, defining art as a participatory exchange that produces collective understanding rather than autonomous objects (Kester, 2004).

These frameworks intersect with philosophical reflections on the politics of labor distinguishing work and action as conditions of the human (Arendt, 1958); and the critique of alienated labor continuing to inform the ethical dimensions of production and value (Marx, 1959). These frameworks provide a foundation for understanding how acts of handwork, collective production, and performance can serve as modes of political and social engagement. Within this lineage, *Frau Fiber* and the *Sewing Rebellion* activate sewing as a performative practice that exposes the social relations of labor, reclaiming making as a site of agency and critique.

Central to the project is the concept of radical thrift, which functions as a critical framework. Emerging from discourses on radical economies and feminist domestic labor, radical thrift reclaims practices of frugality, reuse, and repair as forms of resistance to capitalist overproduction. As scholars of social reproduction and material culture note, acts of maintenance and mending have historically been dismissed as private or apolitical labor, yet they constitute powerful modes of collective care and economic critique (Federici, 2012). Radical thrift proposes a counter-economy that redefines value through

reciprocity, and the redistribution of skill. In this sense, mending becomes an act of insistence on durability in an era of disposability and an ethical commitment to labor and resourcefulness.

Equally integral to the research are the principles of duration and site specificity. Duration transforms the repetitive act of sewing into a form of temporal resistance, a reclaiming of time from the acceleration of industrial and digital production. Works such as *In Your Factory Are the Doors Locked?* (APPENDIX C.4) unfolds over hours, days, and years, foregrounding the endurance and concentration required of manual labor while allowing spectators to witness the slow, embodied tempo of making. The extended duration of Frau Fiber's performances collapses distinctions between artistic process and industrial work, revealing the persistence and exhaustion embedded in both.

Site specificity further anchors the practice within real geographies of labor. Whether performed in a museum or storefront, Frau Fiber's interventions are tailored to the economic and historical conditions of each location. By situating her work in proximity to production, trade, or retail sites, she transforms each space into a temporary factory floor, a place of remembrance and critique. The site is a collaborator that holds memory, history, and resistance. As Miwon Kwon argues, site-specific art is not bound to a fixed location but to "the social, economic, and political processes that organize and give meaning to place" (Kwon, 2002). In this way, duration and site operate together to locate art within lived economies of time and place, insisting that labor cannot be abstracted from the environments where it occurs.

The research positions fast fashion as an extension of colonial aesthetics, a global system built on the extraction, imitation, and commodification of cultural motifs and materials from around the globe. As Anne McClintock argues, colonial visual culture continues to shape modern consumer desire, framing the non-Western world as a source of raw material and exotic spectacle (McClintock, 1995). Similarly, bell hooks notes that contemporary capitalism thrives on the consumption of difference, turning otherness into commodity (hooks, 1992).

In response, Frau Fiber's ongoing *Sewing Rebellion* campaign *Motifs, Migrations & Misappropriations* (APPENDIX C.8) investigates how textile designs, patterns, and symbols travel through global trade routes, divorced from their cultural origins and makers. Through acts of remaking and recontextualization, she reveals how design histories are entwined with colonial desire and industrial reproduction. By restaging these migrations through sewing she transforms appropriation into critique, reclaiming motifs as sites of resistance, and renewed solidarity.

The *ILGWU Archive* operates as a site of feminist historiography and performative documentation, where fiction and scholarship converge to reimagine the authority of the archive. Through the layering of real and invented records, the archive challenges conventional hierarchies of authorship and authenticity, suggesting that historical knowledge is alive. Here, performance and preservation are intertwined; the act of archiving becomes a creative, embodied process rather than a static form of classification.

In this research, creative writing becomes a means to build bridges between theory and lived experience, between the artist and their alter ego. The use of writing is central to this methodology: it functions as a form of embodied thinking, through which ideas unfold in gesture and voice.

This approach extends to Frau Fiber's *ILGWU Pins and Needles* Newspaper (APPENDIX C.2), a contemporary reimagining of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union newsletter Pins and Needles. Writing becomes a mode of making: a seam that joins the textual and the theoretical, extending the ethics of handwork onto the page and transforming both the artist and the archive into active instruments of advocacy.



Frau Fiber's Mission in America, Huntington Beach Art Center, 2019,
Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
(ILGWU) Archive

SECTION ONE

RESEARCH

Academic Research

Twenty years of recognized creative practice is submitted for this degree of Doctor of Philosophy by existing published or creative work (APPENDIX A.1-A.3)

Research Questions

1. How does the fictional persona of Frau Fiber, through the *Sewing Rebellion* and the *ILGWU Archive*, provide a critical framework for examining the intersections of labor history, feminist art, and global garment production?
2. In what ways did Frau Fiber's performances transform sewing and mending from domestic or craft-based practices into acts of political resistance, satire, and community organizing?

Research Methodologies

This research was undertaken through a constellation of interrelated methodologies combining embodied performance, participatory engagement, queer and feminist material practice, archival experimentation, and creative writing to produce knowledge through lived and collaborative inquiry. The methodologies are presented in three categories: Frau Fiber and the Sewing Rebellion; Analysis and Interrogation; and Creative Writing.

Frau Fiber and the Sewing Rebellion

- **Performance as Research (PaR)** The twenty-year embodiment of my alter ego Frau Fiber serves as a tangible research tool to investigate and stage historical and critical narratives about the labor of garment production. Enactment enables the exploration of gesture, uniform, and social context derived from East German labor culture. Live performances and socially engaged public interventions function as artistic outcomes and as ethnographic data-gathering, producing participant narratives, community building, and performative documents that reveal the affective and collective dimensions of labor. This approach aligns with Allan Kaprow's conception of art as "unartlike" activity that blurs the boundaries between art and life, turning everyday gestures into sites of inquiry (Kaprow, 1993), and with Guillermo Gómez-Peña's framing of performance as a living laboratory for cultural hybridity, activism, and embodied research (Gómez-Peña, 2005). Within this lineage, Frau Fiber's praxis employs public sewing as a method of inquiry, a symbolic critique that reimagines labor as a performative and pedagogical tool for collective reflection.
- **Socially Engaged Art / Participatory Action** The *Sewing Rebellion* employs participatory strategies grounded in dialogic pedagogy, creating horizontal exchanges between artist and participants. Through free workshops, public sewing events, and collective repair, this methodology builds agency and disrupts passive consumer culture. Each gathering functions as a social encounter and performative act, blurring boundaries between activism and art while

generating knowledge through shared making.

- **Sewing Production and Material Forms** Sewing, mending, and garment production are material forms of resistance that critique overproduction, exploitation, and disposability in global apparel and fashion systems. Rooted in feminist art traditions, these practices reclaim undervalued skills as sites of social action and creative autonomy. Artists such as Mierle Laderman Ukeles and Margarita Cabrera provide critical precedents for this approach. Ukeles's *Maintenance Art Manifesto* and subsequent works, including her collaborations with New York City sanitation workers, transform the invisible labor of cleaning and care into acts of public performance, reframing maintenance as both aesthetic and political resistance (Felshin, 1995). Similarly, Cabrera's collaborative project *Space in Between* (2010–present) engages immigrant communities in sewing soft sculptures of desert plants using recycled U.S. Border Patrol uniforms, transforming symbols of surveillance into emblems of resilience and cultural labor (Cabrera, 2016). Within this lineage, sewing becomes not merely a technical act but a social and ethical practice that makes care, repair, and solidarity material. By stitching, mending, and remaking, artists expose the human infrastructures that sustain economies of production and consumption, redefining textile work as a form of critique and collective agency.

Analysis and Interrogation

- **Archival Fabrication** The *ILGWU Archive* merges factual historical materials, factory records, production artifacts, and German Democratic Republic objects with fabricated documents such as uniforms, Tech Packs, samples, and propaganda. This blending of real and invented material evidence reimagines the politics of historical record-keeping, addressing the erasure of women's labor and constructing a feminist counter-archive that legitimizes Frau Fiber's fictional labor history.
- **Satire and Bureaucratic Aesthetics** Parodic reenactments of labor bureaucracy, production quotas, reports, and worker evaluations allow Frau Fiber to critique both capitalist exploitation and state-socialist control. Satire operates as a pedagogical and analytical tool, engaging audiences through humor while maintaining critical discourse. It frames systemic critique in accessible, performative forms that bridge art and activism.

Creative Writing

- **Hybrid Authorship and Dual Voice** The written component of this thesis is presented through two authorial perspectives: Frau Fiber (fictional) and carole frances lung (artist/archivist/biographer). Footnotes serve as a scholarly apparatus that authenticates fictional accounts through non-fiction citations. This dual authorship interrogates notions of truth and narrative construction, creating a layered text where creative writing functions as epistemology.

AI-Assisted Narrative Generation This research employs ChatGPT as a conceptual collaborator within the performative framework of Frau Fiber. Rather than functioning as a neutral writing tool, ChatGPT operates as a method of inquiry, extending the project's longstanding investigation into labor, mechanization, automation, and systems of production. Trained through iterative prompting on historical sources, sewing manuals, labor theory, archival materials, and records of previous performances, the Large Language Model (LLM) generates and amplifies Frau Fiber's distinctive institutional rhetoric and bureaucratic communications. In doing so, it performs language in a manner analogous to how industrial looms perform weaving: through the rapid processing and recombination of patterns with limited human intervention.

The use of ChatGPT is situated within a reflective practice that examines the parallels between the mechanization of storytelling and the automation of textile and garment labor. Just as the Jacquard loom transformed weaving into programmable sequences, LLMs transform language into predictive patterns generated from vast datasets. By appropriating and amplifying institutional forms of communication, ChatGPT participates in Frau Fiber's ongoing performance of parody, critique, and solidarity while simultaneously revealing the infrastructures that support contemporary systems of knowledge production.

The methodology further acknowledges that LLMs reproduce biases embedded within their training data and are shaped by social, political, and economic structures that privilege certain forms of knowledge while marginalizing others. These concerns resonate with the dissertation's examination of invisible labor, unequal systems of value, and the concentration of power within global industries.

As such, questions of algorithmic bias, authorship, and technological authority are treated as integral components of the research.

Literature Survey:

This research is informed by scholarship in social practice, participatory art, labor studies, critical craft discourse, performance studies, and emerging debates surrounding artificial intelligence and authorship. Together, these fields provide the theoretical foundation for examining textile production as a site where labor, material culture, technology, and power intersect.

Within socially engaged art, *Artificial Hells* (Bishop, 2012) provides a critical framework for understanding participation, and the political dimensions of collaborative art practices. Complementing this, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970) informs the project's pedagogical methodology through its model of problem-posing education, in which participants become co-producers of knowledge. In this research, sewing functions as the integration of reflection and action, fostering *conscientização* (critical consciousness) around garment labor, value, and global supply-chain ethics.

The project is situated within critical craft studies rather than craftivism. *Craftivism* (Greer, 2014) has contributed to understanding craft as a form of political engagement, much of the literature emphasizes small-scale acts of resistance, ethical consumption, awareness raising, and individual agency through making. This dissertation examines the structural conditions of labor embedded within global textile and apparel production. Through the performance persona Frau Fiber, the project investigates industrial textile production, garment labor, deindustrialization, automation, logistics, and global supply chains. The work emerges from lived experience within garment manufacturing and is informed by labor studies, political economy, and socially engaged performance rather than activist craft traditions.

Critical craft scholarship nevertheless provides important frameworks for understanding making as both intellectual and political practice. *The Subversive Stitch* (Parker, 1984) and *String, Felt, Thread* (Auther, 2010) situate textile production within histories of gendered labor, domesticity, and cultural value. These texts support the positioning of sewing, mending, and garment construction not as decorative activities but as forms of embodied knowledge and cultural production. Within this framework, Frau Fiber reclaims sewing as a radical methodology through which labor histories can be examined, performed, and transmitted.

The project is further grounded in Performance as Research and theories of performative documentation. *Performing Remains* (Schneider, 2011) and *The Archive and the Repertoire* (Taylor, 2003) theorize performance as a form of embodied historiography and cultural transmission. Taylor argues that knowledge is transmitted not only through written archives but also through gestures, rituals, performances and embodied practices that function as living repositories of cultural memory. Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) describes how social knowledge becomes internalized through repetition, bodily practice, and learned behavior. Together, these perspectives frame Frau Fiber's sewing performances as acts of cultural transmission through which histories of labor are embodied. Each stitch becomes an act of remembrance, linking contemporary participants to longer histories of industrial production and worker experience. These theories also inform the development of the *ILGWU Archive* as a living, performative archive that intentionally blurs fact and fiction, challenging conventional understandings of historical authority and documentation.

Philosophical and political foundations for the project are drawn from writings on labor, industrialization, and human dignity. Simone Weil's reflections on industrial work in *The Need for Roots* (Weil, 1949) and Karl Marx's critique of alienated labor provide key frameworks for understanding the relationship between workers, production, and value. These thinkers illuminate how labor becomes abstracted within industrial systems and offer conceptual tools for analyzing contemporary garment production and the conditions experienced by workers within global supply chains.

Finally, this project engages emerging scholarship on artificial intelligence, creative writing, and algorithmic authorship. Drawing upon the conception of performative writing as a form of embodied production (Drucker, 2008), the dissertation understands text-making as both process and performance. Recent discussions of digital co-authorship extend these concerns into the realm of algorithmic collaboration, where humans and machines jointly participate in the production of meaning. Within this research, ChatGPT functions as a conceptual collaborator and critical research site rather than a neutral writing tool. Trained through iterative prompting on historical sources, labor theory, sewing manuals, and performance archives, the Large Language Model generates and extends Frau Fiber's institutional rhetoric, including reports, manifestos, newsletters, and bureaucratic communications. This collaboration explores parallels between the mechanization of storytelling and the automation of garment labor, raising questions of authorship, authenticity, value, and creative agency.

The use of ChatGPT should not be understood as an endorsement of artificial intelligence technologies but rather as an extension of the project's broader investigation into systems of mechanization, automation, and labor abstraction.

In *Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence* (Crawford, 2021), AI systems function as "extractive infrastructures," relying upon vast datasets, energy-intensive data centers, water consumption, and global supply chains for hardware production. These environmental and labor costs parallel many of the concerns central to Frau Fiber's critique of the fast-fashion industry, including resource extraction, hidden labor, and the displacement of environmental burdens onto vulnerable communities. Both AI and fast fashion depend upon speed, scale, imitation, and abstraction, transforming human skill into automated patterning while concealing the labor that sustains them. By engaging ChatGPT as both collaborator and subject of critique, the dissertation examines the evolving relationship between labor, technology, authorship, and power, positioning AI not as a solution but as another site through which contemporary systems of extraction and invisibility can be made visible.

Contributions to Knowledge

Sewing as Embodied Critique and Collective Pedagogy

In projects such as *Made in Haiti* (APPENDIX C.6), sewing functions not as a neutral craft technique but as an embodied method that produces knowledge: the body's gestures, repetitions, and endurance become simultaneous acts of performance and analysis. These interventions demonstrate that textile practices function as critical methodologies for exposing the structures of global apparel production. Rather than treating sewing and mending as private or purely domestic activities, the work positions them as forms of political inquiry through which participants investigate labor, value, production, and consumption. Participants engage with materials and the social and economic systems embedded within them, transforming their participation into a site of critical consciousness. These approaches are also found in *Frau Fiber vs. the Machine* (APPENDIX C.3), and included in *Woven Histories: Textiles and Modern Abstraction* (ed. Cooke, 2023).

The *Sewing Rebellion* (APPENDIX C.7) engages the public in mending, altering, and re-making garments: direct challenges to the linear consumption cycle of buy-wear-discard. The slogan "Stop Shopping, Start Sewing" operates as a material intervention into fast-fashion waste streams. In exhibitions at Punkt Ø / Galleri F 15 (Moss, Norway, 2020) and the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (New York, NY 2018) participants learned skills such as upcycling T-shirts into robes and constructing Soviet hippie ponchos from discarded supply chain textiles, transforming repair into performances of resistance and solidarity. Related participatory actions, like the

Penny Pinching Coin Purse (APPENDIX C.7C), invited participants to stitch purses from fabric offcuts while calculating the hidden costs of consumer waste, linking household economies to global trade. *Mend America* (Appendix B.5), reimagines civic repair as textile intervention by inviting communities to embroider denim patches of the United States flag in distress and send them to local, state, and national representatives as gestures of accountability. This model of cultural action is documented in the article, *Artist carole frances lung Wants You to Stop Shopping and Start Sewing* (Morris 2019).

Commemorating and Performing Labor

Frau Fiber is a twenty-year-old fictional persona and socially engaged performance practice. She is imagined as an East German garment worker and immigrant to the United States who embodies the invisible histories of women's labor in the global textile economy. Through this long-term enactment, lung transforms performance into an lived historiography linking past and present forms of labor. Like Eleanor Antin, Marcel Duchamp, and Leigh Bowery, lung uses persona to question authorship, authenticity, and the politics of representation. Sewing becomes both tool and metaphor: an act of repair and resistance that exposes the human cost of apparel production.

In performances and free public workshops, Frau Fiber reimagines the sewing circle as a site of political education and mutual aid, where participants learn not only to mend garments but to reconsider systems of value, consumption, and care. Through perseverance and repetition, the work stitches together solidarity and endurance, transforming everyday handwork into an activated archive of collective labor. In performances such as *In Your Factory Are the Doors*

Locked? (APPENDIX C.4) an annual commemoration of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, Frau Fiber embodies the historical grief of those 146 lost workers. Presented at venues including the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC (2024), she performs an eight-hour shift on a hand-crank sewing machine, working to produce 146 shirtwaists to honor each life taken by industrial negligence. This act of endurance transforms labor into ritual and historical repair, insisting that the body of the worker must remain central to the memory in order for industrial progress to exist.

In *The Object of Labor* (Livingstone and Ploof, 2007) the cultural production of cloth situates artistic practice within the politics of women's work. Frau Fiber extends their argument into the twenty-first century, insisting that sewing is both theory and practice, a feminist material philosophy rooted in action, care, and critique. Her sewing machine becomes a prosthetic voice for those whose labor built the modern world yet remains unnamed in its histories.

The *ILGWU Archive*, composed of authentic and fabricated documents, production reports, and East German factory ephemera, functions as a feminist counter-archive. It challenges the erasure of women's labor and reclaims sewing as a method of historical recovery and creative knowledge-making.

By blending the archival logics of bureaucratic socialism with the improvisation of social practice, the *ILGWU* recovers forgotten solidarities between European immigrant needleworkers and contemporary garment laborers in Haiti, Bangladesh, or Los Angeles. This performative stance operates as a feminist rewriting of history. In *Tailor Made*

(APPENDIX C.5), presented at Camera Obscura Art Lab, Santa Monica (2017), Frau Fiber stages acts of tailoring as a gesture of repair, demonstrating the value of global apparel labor with a spin of the *Wheel of Wages*, translating contemporary labor statistics into embodied performance that links mends, alterations and repair to the value of labor. By occupying the temporal space between the geography of the factory floors in El Salvador to downtown Los Angeles, Frau Fiber stitches together a continuous narrative of immigrant endurance, solidarity, and the ongoing struggle for the dignity of labor.

Radical Thrift and Economies of Care

The research engages philosophical debates on value, scale, and sustainability. The *Sewing Rebellion*'s small-scale, intimate gatherings embody E. F. Schumacher's proposition that small is beautiful (Schumacher, 1973), privileging local, modest actions over mass production. These projects model sustainable modes of creative and economic resistance, where participation and making serve as political gestures of care. The ethos of radical thrift underpins this research, prioritizing and resourcefulness over consumption. Aligning with theories of radical economies that propose community-based, cooperative, and queer and feminist alternatives to neoliberal systems of value (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Federici, 2012). These principles extend into collective, performative action, during *Sewing Rebellion* campaigns such as *Creating Pockets of Resistance* (Appendix C.7A) and *Motifs, Migrations, and Misappropriations*, hosted by The Textile Museum, George Washington University, Washington, DC, 2019 (Appendix C.8).

These works advocate for an economy of care that values maintenance, and shared skill.

They situate handwork within a broader framework of postcapitalist ethics, echoing the argument that sustainable living and “alternative hedonism” demand redefinitions of pleasure, consumption, and labor (Soper, 2020). Through acts of sewing and collective making, these projects critique capitalist accumulation while imagining alternative economies grounded in reciprocity, generosity, and sustainability.



Sewing Rebellion: Pockets of Resistance, 2019
Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
(ILGWU) Archive

Awards, Collections and Grants

The have contributed to socially engaged art and craft-based research and have been acknowledged through many grants and fellowships. I received a United States Artists Fellowship (2019) and a Sabbatical Award from California State University, Los Angeles (2017), where I was also a Faculty Fellow for the Public Good (2016). My ongoing engagement with the Long Beach arts community earned both a Professional Artist Fellowship (2015) and an A Lot Grant (2014) from the Long Beach Arts Council. Additional institutional support includes Creative Leave and Creative Mini Grants from Cal State LA (2013–2014), a Project Grant from the Center for Craft in North Carolina (2013), recognition as a Particularly Exceptional Visiting Artist at Elsewhere Museum in Greensboro, North Carolina (2010), a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant (2008), and international honors such as the Artist Commission Grant from The Arts Council of Dublin, Ireland (2007), the At the Edge Award from Gallery 400, Chicago (2007). I also recieved the Fred A. Hillbruner Artist Book Fellowship from SAIC (2007).

This research has been exhibited, collected, and supported by a range of institutions across North America that bridge contemporary art, craft, labor history, and material culture. These include DisplayCult in Toronto, Ontario, Canada; the Fashion and Textile Resource Centers at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois; Kohler Industries in Kohler, Wisconsin; the Joan Flasch Artists' Book Collection at SAIC; the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, Wisconsin; the Smithsonian Archives of American Art in Washington, D.C.; and the Wende Museum of the Cold War in Culver City, California.

Together, these venues form a transnational network that recognizes Frau Fiber's practice as both a living archive and a critical inquiry into the histories of textile labor, industrial production, and creative resistance.

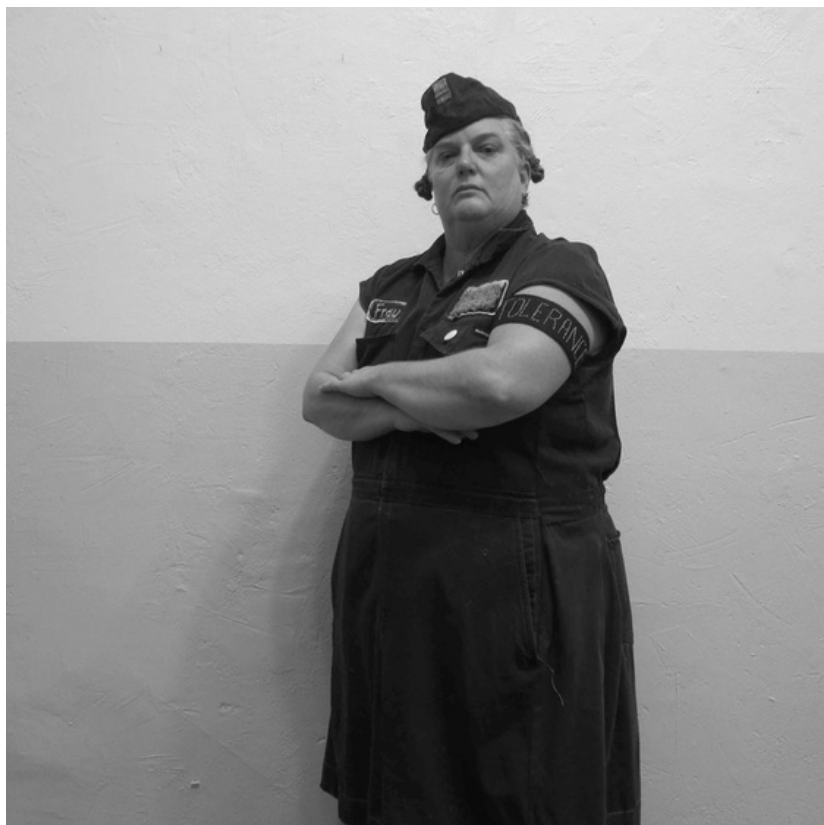
This scholarly and creative writing extends my performative and pedagogical practice into the field of critical textile studies. I am the author of the forthcoming section *UNMAKE: Sewing Rebellion* in the *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of World Textiles, Volume 10: Textile Futures*, and a contributor to *Dense Magazine*, Volume 2 (2024). My analysis of Senga Nengudi's *The Threader* appears in *Woven Histories: Textiles and Modern Abstraction* (2023, p. 156). I authored the essay *Retooling the University: Critical Thinking, Creative Play, Collaboration and Participatory Public Art, Civic Learning and Teaching*, volume 7 of the *Civic Series* (Finley 2014). Across these publications, my writing articulates a vision of textile work as both aesthetic and ethical labor, forming an enduring dialogue between art, education, and the politics of making.

SECTION TWO

THE MAKING OF A TEXTILE SUPERHERO: an interview with Frau Fiber with carole frances lung

I meet Frau Fiber in 2006 in Weimar Germany where I was a student at the Bauhaus University in the Master of Fine Arts in Public Art and New Artistic Strategies. In this imagined history, after meeting Frau Fiber in Weimar, she joins me in the United States, and participates in my MFA thesis project. Frau is a former garment worker from the German Democratic Republic (GDR), who led a socialist sewing brigade. She is skilled in production quotas and efficiency charts, and fluent in the bureaucratic cadence of state-run labor. Frau Fiber is a stateless person who traverses borders carrying the ethics, aesthetics, and discipline of socialist work culture into the chaotic, exploitative terrain of contemporary fast fashion. She is a member of the Lost Generation of East German textile workers, and a living critique of global capitalism. Frau Fiber is my performative alter ego, an ongoing performance research project that allows me to position my work from my lived experience and personal history. She exists in the space between archival record, imagined narrative, and labor activism. As Frau, I conduct public interventions such as bicycle powered sewing, participatory mending, and commemorations of labor tragedies. This work operates as art practice, activist organizing, and community building. Frau Fiber's primary campaign, as stated in the contributions to knowledge, is the *Sewing Rebellion*. In this work Frau Fiber invites participants to "stop shopping and start sewing" their way out of the fast fashion supply chain, reclaiming agency over their wardrobes and rejecting the global apparel industry's exploitation of human labor and natural resources.

This section presents an interview between Frau Fiber and myself. This interview begins to tell the story of how the character of Frau Fiber was formed. The interview structure reflects how I inhabit an alter ego. It acknowledges that Frau Fiber exists in the liminal space between biography and fiction, and how my lived experience as a former garment worker influences the narrative. The interview provides a framework that makes visible the process of Frau's becoming. The interview allows her voice and persona to unfold in real time. Through the questions and responses, I am able to expose her construction: her roots in East German textile labor history, her imagined migration into the neoliberal present, and her transformation into a vehicle that provides space for critical humor aimed at apparel production. This interview foregrounds the tensions between myself and Frau. As the artist, I provide the historical, conceptual, and theoretical scaffolding of the character. As the persona, Frau Fiber is constantly pushing against my authorship, claiming authority through her own rhetoric and embodied knowledge. This self-reflexive exchange highlights the ways in which the character destabilizes the singularity of the authorial voice, allowing for multiple understandings of my artistic research and practice. The interview allows the reader to converse with her directly, experiencing her as an active participant who produces knowledge in dialogue, rather than as a static representation of artistic intention.



Frau Fiber portrait, 2017
Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
(ILGWU) Archive

Buying fast fashion isn't just a purchase—
it's a vote. A vote for pollution, for
sweatshops, for waste mountains taller
than any skyline. Shopping to last is the
revolution. Mend what's broken instead of
throwing away, choose timeless over
trendy, know the story behind your clothes
- shop to last, not fast! -Frau Fiber

On April 30, 2025 I had the privilege of sitting down with Frau Fiber at the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms (ILGWU). Frau was preparing for the annual ILGWU May Day event where she would be demonstrating the production of a rebellious pocket. Hanging on the walls of the ILGWU are a couple of pocket samples. The space is clean and orderly; thread, bobbins, sewing machines, rolls of paper, and fabric all have a place. Frau and I have been collaborating together for almost 20 years, but this is the first time I've had a formal interview with her about her background, motivations and inspirations for the Sewing Rebellion.

IMAGE WITHHELD FROM PUBLIC REPOSITORY

Archive Reference: FF-BIO-001

Original Material: Photograph of anonymous woman overlooking the Berlin Wall following German reunification.

Date: c. 1981

Location: Berlin, Germany

Description: Black-and-white documentary photograph showing the artist standing at the Berlin Wall overlooking the former East Berlin. The image provides biographical context for the development of the Frau Fiber project and the artist's relationship to German labor history and the legacy of industrial production.

Repository Status: Image removed from the public version of this dissertation due to third-party copyright.

CFL Where did you grow up?

FF I was born Sept. 13, 1966, into the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR).¹ My parents disappeared sometime before my fifth birthday because of their radical opinions as proto hippies. Proto hippies were in opposition to the GDR systems. To this day, I believe they were taken by the Stasi, although I prefer to imagine they migrated to the Soviet Union to connect with the Soviet hippies² and were unable to return. As a child of the state and a citizen of the Eastern Bloc³ I adopted Marxist-Leninist principles⁴ which were imposed on me by the government. The DDR was a corrupt government and some profited while others struggled. I strived to live as a socialist, distributing and sharing what I had with others so we could all attempt to thrive.

1. For this discussion, the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR) is Frau Fiber's country of origin. The DDR, or German Democratic Republic (GDR) in English, was a socialist state established in East Germany from October 7, 1949, to October 3, 1990. It emerged in the Soviet-occupied zone of post-World War II Germany and existed during the Cold War as a satellite state of the Soviet Union. The DDR was characterized by a centralized, planned economy, one-party rule under the Socialist Unity Party (SED), strict surveillance and control by the Stasi (state security service). Limited freedom of expression and movement (e.g., the Berlin Wall was built in 1961 to stop East Germans from fleeing to West Berlin), and strong emphasis on gender equality in the workplace, public health, education, and state-sponsored childcare. It collapsed as part of the larger decline of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe, culminating in the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and German reunification in 1990.

2. Frau Fiber's parents were proto hippies and they were actively involved in this countercultural movement that emerged in the Soviet Union during the late 1960s and 1970s. Inspired by Western hippie movement of peace, love, freedom, anti-war values, communal living, and psychedelic music, they were shaped under the constraints of totalitarianism and a surveillance-heavy socialist regime. Frau Fiber's parents rejected both the capitalist West and the Soviet ideological system, seeking instead personal freedom, spiritual exploration, and non-conformist lifestyles. They gained access to the scene via bootleg recordings, Voice of America, BBC radio, and smuggled Western magazines.

Soviet hippies protested state conformity, military draft, and lack of personal freedoms. They wore long hair, patched jeans, and bright clothing, and listened to music from The Beatles, Pink Floyd, and Led Zeppelin. The Stasi monitored and harassed hippies, arresting them for “parasitism” (not working), “vagrancy,” or simply being “socially harmful.” Underground gatherings occurred, including a famous annual hippie pilgrimage on June 1st in Moscow, where Frau Fiber’s parents disappeared.

3. The Eastern Bloc is also known as the Soviet Bloc, it consisted of a group of socialist states under the political and economic influence of the Soviet Union during the Cold War, spanning from the end of World War II to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. These nations, including East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, and others, were united by planned economies, state-run labor structures, and an emphasis on collective production and equality. Frau Fiber explores the histories of collective labor, state uniforms, women’s work in textile factories, and socialist value systems. The Eastern Bloc imagined labor as integral to nation-building and even to dignity. Workers were called comrades. Sewing was state work. Clothes were meant to last, and although the promises often fell short, the intent to value the worker was real.

4. For this case study, Frau Fiber embodies ideas like collective ownership of production, value derived from labor, and the centrality of the worker to shape her work as both provocation and proposition. In the Marxist tradition, labor is not just a means to survive, it is a creative force, a way of shaping the world. Lenin argued for the organization of labor under the control of the working class. In Frau’s performances, whether she is pedaling a sewing machine on a sidewalk or leading a *Sewing Rebellion* workshop, she is organizing labor outside the logic of profit and inside the logic of skill, dignity, and resistance. Frau Fiber reclaims the means of production using the tools of her trade: cast-off domestic sewing machines, obsolete industrial tools, and uniforms from fallen regimes. She is not interested in reproducing capitalist couture. She redistributes knowledge, demystifies construction, and re-skills the consumer into a conscious maker. Frau’s pedagogical model borrows from the brigade system of socialist factories: collective work, mutual support, and shared outcomes. Her classroom is a living room, a sidewalk, and a vacant store front. She calls this “personal production” a way to transform the personal space of making into a site of political production. This is feminist and queer labor, historically invisible, underpaid, and devalued. Marxist-Leninist thought was limited in understanding of gender, but it gave us a structure to critique exploitation. Frau Fiber expands that critique to include the global garment worker, the unpaid domestic laborer, and the citizen forced into wage labor under the illusion of “choice.”

CFL What was your educational experience?

FF I attended kindergarten from ages 3 to 6. It was here that the principles of the state were developed: health and physical fitness, development of socialist values, and learning of rudimentary production skills. Compulsory education began at the age of 6. I was taught the basic skills of reading, writing, mathematics, and, in accordance with 1965 education law, I was introduced to the nature of work and socialist society, which gave me a basic appreciation of industrial technology, the economy, and the worker. When I entered the coeducational general polytechnical school, gardening and crafts were integrated into my education. In the intermediate stage of my education I was made to learn the Russian language; natural and social sciences; German literature and language; art; history; and geography. The remainder of my time was spent doing sports and polytechnical instruction preparing me for factory work in the textile industry. Before entering the work force, my final instruction included technical drawing, and productive systems of textile work. I spent one day per week in practical training, working alongside regular employees at Strick Chic knitting factory. This became my job after completing my studies. In 1984 I completed Oberschule⁵ and because of my excellent textile skills, I was asked by the state to apprentice and further my ability to be productive. This allowed me to contribute to the state economy at a young age. The socialist system's focus was on producing a highly skilled workforce, and I was proud to contribute my labor to the planned economy. I took on an apprenticeship which led to employment at Strick Chic⁶ where I worked as a knitwear finisher.

5. Here I discuss the Oberschule: translated as "Upper School." It was a key part of the East German education system. It served as secondary general education, typically following the Polytechnische Oberschule (POS), and was designed to prepare students for higher education or skilled labor within

the socialist system. Grades 11–12 (later 9–12), served as the equivalent to senior high school. The education system had a strong ideological component. Marxist-Leninist theory, political economy, and citizenship education were integrated with math, science, and languages. The goal of education was to produce well-rounded socialist citizens, with an emphasis on collective responsibility, discipline, and readiness for work in service of the state. Students in the Oberschule were expected to be committed to socialism; engage in productive labor (e.g., internships in factories or collectives); and perform uniformed civic duties, such as civil defense drills or volunteering in youth brigades.

6. It is important to understand Frau's employment history. Frau Fiber was employed by Strick Chic from 1988-2006; she operated several of the knitting and finishing machines. Strick Chic is a traditional German knitwear manufacturer with over a century of history, headquartered in Apolda, Thuringia, a region renowned for its textile craftsmanship. Frau Fiber was one of a few highly skilled experts that operated modern machinery, blending tradition and innovation. She produced garments known for timeless elegance, robust durability, machine washable fabrics, and innovative details, all while keeping the quality-to-price ratio balanced. By keeping production local, Strick Chic sustained the legacy of Germany's knitwear craftsmanship.

IMAGE WITHHELD FROM PUBLIC REPOSITORY

Archive Reference: FF-REF-002

Original Material: Screenshot of the Strick Chic Knitwear website featuring the "Mariner's Sweater" production page.

Date: 2024

Location: Apolda, Thuringia, Germany

Medium: Website screenshot

Description: This screenshot documents the Strick Chic Knitwear website, including a promotional image of a worker operating a computerized Stoll flatbed knitting machine and information relating to commissioned production of the Mariner's Sweater. The image provides contextual evidence for Frau Fiber vs. the Machines, specifically Episode 3, which examines digital knitting technologies and Frau Fiber's return to her former East German workplace to perform alongside contemporary automated knitting machinery.

Source: Strick Chic Knitwear. Mariner's Sweater webpage, accessed 2024.

Copyright Status: This image has been withheld from the public repository version of this dissertation because permission to reproduce the website screenshot was not obtained from the copyright holder.

Repository Note

The original screenshot appears in the examination copy submitted to the University. This placeholder has been inserted to preserve the sequence of figures and maintain the continuity of the research narrative.

CFL What social groups did you belong to?

FF In 1980 at age 14 I became a member of the Freie Deutsche Jugend(FDJ).⁷ I was raised not by capital but by the brigade, the youth collective, the sewing machine, and the blue shirt of the FDJ. The Free German Youth taught us that a better world could be stitched together! My motto: Always ready. Immer bereit."

CFL Where did you live?

FF Everyday life in Apolda had some ease due to the government providing basic needs such as housing, food, recreation, and work. In Apolda I was provided with a Plattenbau,⁸ a typical East German flat. My Plattenbau flat was forty-eight square meters of functional utopia. Not much, but enough. The bathtub was short, the stove electric, and the kitchen counter doubled as my pattern-cutting table. In the mornings, I joined the queue at the bakery in my uniform. In the evenings, I taught sewing to the young people in the building—reinventing PRAMO⁹ patterns with scraps from the curtain factory down the street. My neighbors were engineers, nurses, teachers, and machinists. That Plattenbau wasn't just a home—it was my first sewing brigade, my first classroom, and my first front against fast fashion.

7. The Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ) was the official youth organization of the German Democratic Republic (DDR), founded in 1946. It was designed to educate and mobilize young people between the ages of 14 and 25 in line with Marxist-Leninist principles. It functioned as the youth wing of the Socialist Unity Party (SED). Membership was technically voluntary but strongly encouraged and often required for access to education and career opportunities. Activities included uniformed parades, summer camps, cultural events and international solidarity campaigns (e.g., with Cuba, Angola, Vietnam). The FDJ symbolized collective discipline, loyalty to socialism, and the shaping of the "new socialist human." Its motto was "Always ready!" ("Immer bereit!") Frau Fiber's actions channel the spirit and the contradictions of the FDJ. She reimagines the FDJ not as a dogmatic machine, but as a structure for collective empowerment, a source of aesthetic discipline, and a prototype for the *Sewing Rebellion*.

8. East German living influenced Frau Fiber. The Plattenbau is a type of prefabricated concrete apartment building common throughout the former Eastern Bloc. The word comes from “Platte” (panel) and “Bau” (building), referencing the concrete slabs used in their rapid, modular construction. They were rapidly built and mass-produced using factory assembled concrete panels in the 1960s–1980s to address severe post-war housing shortages. They featured uniform design with minimal ornamentation: emphasizing collective, functional living over individual luxury. They were part of larger planned neighborhoods with schools, shops, childcare, and public transit integrated nearby. They embodied the symbols of socialist ideals: equal access to housing, modern sanitation, and communal infrastructure. Frau Fiber’s Plattenbau was not a drab ruin of the past, but a radical domestic site that became a micro-factory, sewing workshop, and training ground for socialist resistance.

9. PRAMO and Sibylle Fashion magazines were East German fashion magazines that Frau Fiber used to make her own clothing. They shaped the aesthetics of women’s dress under socialism, but also modeled a unique relationship between style, labor, and ideology. For Frau Fiber, these publications serve as a critical archival tools for subversion, sources of inspiration, and blueprints for resistance within the *Sewing Rebellion* movement. PRAMO (*Praktische Mode*, or “Practical Fashion”) was published by Verlag für die Frau, Leipzig, from the 1950s–1990s. The focus was on practical, accessible home sewing patterns for the everyday East German woman. The magazine included fold-out pattern sheets and Do It Yourself instructions for garments that could be sewn at home. It aligned with socialist values and encouraged self-reliance, thrift, and state-approved femininity. It was about dressing well, but modestly, within the bounds of socialist resourcefulness. PRAMO is foundational to Frau Fiber’s pedagogy of skill. Its accessible, modular sewing patterns democratized fashion production. Frau Fiber revived this model with the *Sewing Rebellion*, teaching people to use basic machines, read patterns and tech packs, and construct garments from reclaimed materials. This model empowered consumers to become producers. *Sibylle* featured high-concept fashion photography, cultural commentary, and elegant editorials. It was more aspirational and featured culturally savvy GDR women. *Sibylle* demonstrated how East German women could embrace beauty and modernity without capitalist excess. Frau Fiber draws on its visual language, monochrome styling, industrial backdrops, and subtle resistance to craft her performances. The aesthetics of Frau Fiber’s persona is a mashup of *Sibylle*’s elegant worker and PRAMO’s practical seamstress dressed not for glamor, but for labor with dignity.

CFL How did you spend your leisure time?

FF On the outskirts of Apolda was my Kleingarten.¹⁰ My allotment was stitched together like my uniforms—patched and practical. It was in the third row of Garden Cooperative, between the stonemason's plot and Comrade Gisela's rose bush archive. I grew cabbages, beets, sunflowers, sorrels, and dye plants—madder for red, woad for blue, and onion skins for gold. My beans climbed poles made from broken umbrella frames. My compost bin was built from the slats of a collapsed ironing board. In summer, I dyed yarn with marigolds in a cast-iron pot beside the rain barrel. On harvest days, I brought baskets to the sewing circle—vegetables in one; fabric scraps in the other. We'd stitch while the soup cooked. I shared my seeds in seed libraries and traded extra dill for elastic. My allotment was never fenced in—it was a collective patch of autonomy, a place to cultivate both food and the radical habits of care and reciprocity. It reminded us that survival is a communal effort, and that growth takes time, hands, and seasons.

My comrades would come together in our leisure time¹¹ and sing songs of labor and protest.¹² In the DDR, jazz¹³ was dangerous because it refused to follow the socialist script. It played inside structure but bent every note toward freedom. We sang while we gardened not just for beauty, but for endurance. Songs like "Solidaritätslied" and "Die Internationale" were our lullabies and battle cries. They reminded us that we were not just growing food we were building toward a more just and free world.

We ate and drank Kaffee and Kuchen.¹⁴ My Streuselkuchen was made with margarine from the HO-Laden store, the last bit of flour ration, and sour cherries picked behind the factory fence. No frosting, just crumbs and comradeship.

We gathered around the Kleingarten worktable after finishing a shift. Someone brought a cake, someone brought coffee and

powdered milk and someone told a story. Hospitality is a revolutionary act when the world tells you don't have enough to share. We shared one slice at a time with anyone who needed warmth, caffeine, or thread.

10. Frau Fiber treated her *kleingarten* as an extension of her labor politics and her community building. Her allotment embodied sufficiency and generosity. Generally in the former DDR, a *keingarten* was a small plot of land leased by individuals, often located on the outskirts of cities. These gardens were part of the state-supported initiatives that emphasized self-sufficiency, leisure, and collective life. They Ranged from 200–400 m², usually with a small shed or weekend hut (*Laube*). They were used primarily to grow fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers. Frau Fiber could supplement her state-rationed diet and trade surplus harvest with neighbors. The *kleiingarten* were governed by *Kleingartenvereine* (Garden Associations) with rules: no permanent housing, mandatory cultivation quotas, and sometimes requirements to post socialist propaganda. The garden functioned as both leisure zone and ideological space, modeling the collective good, discipline, and productive citizenship.

11. Frau Fiber engages leisure time as a political act, reclaiming the slow, deliberate labor of hand-making garments in opposition to globalized fast fashion systems. Frau Fiber reframes sewing not as domestic drudgery but as a form of resistance, offering participants the chance to learn, repair, and remake rather than consume. Her performances often simulate industrial labor, but at intentionally slowed-down speeds, drawing attention to the lost value of time, craft, and worker autonomy. In this way, leisure is not idle; it becomes a radical refusal of capitalist time discipline.

12. Frau Fiber enjoyed singing and listening to East German labor songs. They were not just lovely music: they were tools of morale, community cohesion, and ideological rhythm. She sang them at the sewing machine, in her allotment, and especially during her *Sewing Rebellion* gatherings. They served as a pedagogical thread connecting past and present. East German labor and protest songs were musical expressions of socialist ideology, workers' pride, and revolutionary hope. Often written in a choral or folk style, these songs were performed in workplaces, schools, youth groups (like the Free German Youth/FDJ), and public rallies. While some were state-sanctioned, celebrating labor and unity, those drawn from older socialist or resistance traditions carried subversive undertones.

ILGWU play list

13. Frau Fiber enjoyed East German jazz: the distinct jazz culture and practice that developed within the German Democratic Republic (GDR / DDR) between 1949 and 1990. Though jazz was originally labeled as “decadent Western music” by early socialist authorities, it evolved over the decades into a contested but enduring cultural form, uniquely shaped by state control, censorship, improvisation, and ideological negotiation.

14. For Frau Fiber, Kaffee und Kuchen (coffee and cake) was a ritual of radical care and resourceful resistance. She transformed baking into a communal, post-labor act, as well as an extension of her *Sewing Rebellion* and her refusal of capitalist convenience. Kaffee und Kuchen is a cherished afternoon tradition in the DDR. This ritual was infused with socialist values, and shaped by scarcity, creativity, and hospitality. It became a moment of rest from labor and an opportunity to foster community and care.

Every day, Frau Fiber would stop working between 3 and 4 pm, for a tasse Mischkaffee (a cup of mixed coffee with barley or chicory due to shortages), or imported coffee only available through rationing or special trade deals, and a slice Kirschkuchen (Cherry Cake), Streuselkuchen (Strussel Cake), Bienenstich (Bee Cake), Rührkuchen (Fruit Cake). The cakes were made using oil when butter or eggs were scarce.

Here I’m providing Frau Fiber’s recipe for an East German-style Cherry Cake (Kirschkuchen) adapted to reflect the resourceful, ration-based baking common in the DDR. This is a simple tray-bake cake using preserved sour cherries, margarine, and pantry staples, beloved in Kaffee & Kuchen culture.

Frau Fiber’s Tips: No butter? No problem. Margarine was the socialist’s gold. No fresh eggs? Vinegar and soda make a working-class miracle. This cake is best shared at spontaneous acts of hospitality. Cut into squares and serve with a story.

Ingredients:

- 1 jar (ca. 680g) sour cherries (Morello or Schattenmorellen, drained)
- 250g flour (about 2 cups, all-purpose)
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 125g margarine or oil (about ½ cup)
- 100g sugar (½ cup, adjust to taste)
- 2 eggs (or 2 tbsp vinegar + ½ tsp baking soda)
- 1 packet vanilla sugar (or 1 tsp vanilla extract)
- A pinch of salt
- Optional topping: 2 tbsp breadcrumbs or ground nuts for a rustic crust

Instructions:

- Preheat the oven to 180°C / 350°F.
- Drain the cherries in a sieve and lightly pat them dry.
- In a large bowl, cream margarine and sugar until light (or whisk oil and sugar together). Add eggs one at a time (or the vinegar + baking soda combo), then stir in vanilla sugar and salt.
- Sift in flour and baking powder. Mix until just combined. A thick, sticky batter should form.
- Spread batter into a greased or parchment-lined sheet pan (approx. 9x13 inch). Scatter the cherries evenly over the top. Gently press them into the batter. Optional: sprinkle with breadcrumbs or ground nuts for crunch.
- Bake for 30–40 minutes until golden, and a toothpick comes out clean. Let cool, then cut into squares. Serve with coffee and comrades.

CFL Did you sew collectively in the DDR?

FF The front room of my Plattenbau became a sewing center. Past the stove, under the flickering fluorescent tube, we met once a week. No RSVP, no fee. Just bring your shears, your patience, and whatever thread you could barter. We were a small but mighty group: a nurse, a postwoman, a factory machinist, a retired pattern cutter, two teenagers, a librarian, and me. Our sewing circle¹⁵ was not a hobby. It was our brigade of resistance. We called it the Stich für Stich Kollektiv—Stitch by Stitch Collective. We repurposed uniforms, patched coveralls, and re-cut old coats into winter skirts. One comrade once sewed a party dress from a pair of surplus parachutes. Another hand-stitched new collars onto her son's school shirt using scraps of muslin rationed from her hospital shift. We did not follow fashion we—subverted it, redrew it, and remade it from what the state didn't count. We worked from PRAMO patterns, some decades old, others borrowed from the neighbor's stash, folded like sacred maps. The margins of our photocopies were annotated with adjustments for tall women, busty women, pregnant women, trans women—because a socialist sewing circle, unlike the party line, must make space for all bodies. Sometimes, we sewed while reading aloud Sibyll Magazine—yes, the fashion magazine. Other times, we discussed food lines, school uniforms, or listened to jazz from the West on the radio. But mostly, we shared our hands: skilled, blistered, precise hands that knew how to make something out of nothing. That sewing circle didn't just keep us clothed. It kept us connected. It taught us that making is power, that fashion can be a shared language, and that when the official structures of the state and the market failed us, we could stitch our own revolution—one hem, one buttonhole, one repaired seam at a time. That's where the seeds of the Sewing Rebellion were planted—not in an design school or fashion show, but in a concrete-walled living room, with seven women and a shared will to make, mend, and refuse.

CFL Who were your mentors?

FF My mentors are Hannah Arendt,¹⁶ Simone Weil,¹⁷ Mother Jones,¹⁸ Rosa Luxemburg,¹⁹ and Wonder Woman.²⁰ I never had the opportunity to meet these mighty women in person; I try to embody their labor, resistance, and gendered workwear. Instead of spandex and stars, I wear industrial uniforms, aprons, and mended garments—turning the superhero costume into a worker’s uniform of empowerment.

15. Frau Fiber hosted many sewing circles. These are informal gatherings where women and queer people came together to sew, mend, craft, or share textile skills. While its surface function is practical, (repairing clothes, quilting, embroidery) the sewing circle has served as a space for solidarity, storytelling, organizing, and education. Sewing circles are often associated with quiet domesticity, however they have functioned as both subtle or overt political spaces. For example, women in 19th Century America used sewing circles to organize abolitionist movements. During World Wars, sewing circles produced garments for soldiers and refugees. In socialist states (like the GDR), they served as both skill-building and ideological collectives. Contemporary Feminist and anti-capitalist makers use sewing circles to reclaim textile labor as a form of resistance. Frau Fiber’s East German sewing circle was a fictional yet historically grounded collective operating from a Plattenbau apartment in the late 1970s and early 1980’s. It functioned as both a practical sewing space and a site of labor resistance. They made and repaired school uniforms, workwear, and collective projects, always with a critical eye toward function, sustainability, and solidarity. Discussions flowed easily between hemming pants and critiquing capitalist consumerism, often referencing *Sibylle* magazine as a quiet act of aspiration and subversion. Frau Fiber, imagined as a trained garment worker turned educator, led the circle like a textile brigade encouraging self-sufficiency, aesthetic experimentation within limits, and political consciousness through the act of making.

16. Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) was a German-Jewish political theorist, philosopher, and writer, best known for her work on totalitarianism, labor, authority, and human responsibility. She fled Nazi Germany in 1933, later settling in the U.S., where she became one of the 20th Century’s most influential thinkers. *The Human Condition* (1958) and *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) were two of Frau Fiber’s favorite books; she read them over and over and drew deep philosophical inspiration from Arendt’s thought, particularly around labor, action, and moral responsibility.

17. Simone Weil (1909–1943) was a French philosopher, mystic, labor activist, and teacher whose work bridges social justice, political ethics, and spiritual inquiry. Weil is best known for her reflections on oppression, attention, labor, and the sacred dignity of manual work. Though she came from a bourgeois Jewish family, Weil chose to live in solidarity with workers, laboring in factories and farms to understand suffering from the inside out. She died young, but her writings remain foundational for activists, philosophers, and mystics alike.

18. Mary Harris “Mother” Jones (1837–1930) was an Irish-born American labor organizer, activist, and defender of workers’ rights—especially among miners, textile workers, and children. Known for her fiery speeches, marches, and defiance of industrial bosses, she was called “the most dangerous woman in America” for her ability to mobilize working-class resistance. Frau Fiber embodied Mother Jones’s spirit of labor militancy, street-level education, and public performance. Though separated by time and geography, both women mobilize working-class tools to resist capitalist exploitation, and both believe in making labor visible, dignified, and defiant.

19. Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919) was a Marxist theorist, revolutionary socialist, anti-war activist, and co-founder of the Spartacist League and the Communist Party of Germany (KPD). She was a Polish-Jewish intellectual who became one of the most radical and eloquent voices for workers’ revolution, democratic socialism, and international solidarity in early 20th Century Europe. She was murdered by right-wing paramilitaries in Berlin in 1919 after leading the failed Spartacist uprising—a moment that transformed her into a martyr for revolutionary socialism. Frau Fiber shares Rosa Luxemburg’s revolutionary feminism, worker-centered ethics, and unflinching critique of capitalist systems. While Rosa wrote theory and agitated in factories and newspapers, Frau Fiber stitches, teaches, and performs labor politics through textile work.

20. Wonder Woman, created in 1941 by psychologist William Moulton Marston, is a superhero and feminist icon from the DC Comics universe. Born as Princess Diana of Themyscira, she is an Amazon warrior imbued with superhuman strength and wisdom. She has a moral compass dedicated to peace and justice. Her character was designed to embody female empowerment, compassion, and resistance to oppression, as well as the discipline of the trained warrior. Frau Fiber reimagines Wonder Woman’s heroic uniform through the lens of labor, resistance, and gendered workwear. Instead of spandex and stars, and a golden lasso.

IMAGE WITHHELD FROM PUBLIC REPOSITORY

Archive Reference: FF-REF-003

Original Material: Composite reference image of four women who inform the development of the Frau Fiber persona.

Date: Compiled by the author, c. 2025–2026

Medium: Composite of historical photographs

Description

This composite reference image brings together four women whose political thought, activism, and cultural presence inform the conceptual development of Frau Fiber. Clockwise from upper left:

- Mother Jones (Mary Harris Jones), labor organizer and activist addressing workers.
- Wonder Woman, promotional still from the 1970s television series portraying the fictional superhero created by William Moulton Marston.
- Rosa Luxemburg, socialist theorist, philosopher, and revolutionary.
- Simone Weil, philosopher, political activist, and factory worker.
-

These figures are discussed as intellectual, political, and fictional influences on the construction of the Frau Fiber persona and her engagement with labor organizing, feminism, social justice, and collective action.

Copyright Status

This composite includes multiple third-party copyrighted images and has been withheld from the public repository version of this dissertation because permission to reproduce all source images could not be obtained.

Repository Note

The original composite appears in the examination copy submitted to the University. This placeholder has been inserted to preserve the sequence of figures and maintain the continuity of the research narrative.

CFL How did your life change when you visited *SL Mode: One Size Fits All*?

FF In 2006, my life changed forever when I walked into *One Size Fits All*,²¹ carole frances lung's socially engaged artwork. I thought it was a new shop in Weimar and stopped in to ask for work. I returned often, and occasionally Carole gave me jobs and paid me what they could. We discovered a shared history as garment workers and became fast friends. Through this encounter, I was transformed into a textile superhero.

Before meeting carole, I was simply a former garment worker from the vanished GDR. *One Size Fits All* gave me a new purpose. It taught me that sewing could be more than production—it could be protest. I became a stateless²¹ worker without a nation, carrying thread and scissors instead of a passport. Since then, I have dedicated myself to exposing the injustices of the apparel supply chain and advocating for the labor hidden behind the labels of fast fashion.

21. *SL Mode One Size Fits All* operated from June–July 2006 as a storefront production facility and retail shop in Weimar, Germany. carole frances lung's site-specific intervention and performance engaged the city's legacy of textile production, labor activism, and avant-garde art. The project explored the global garment industry, labor, and consumer culture through clothing and performance. It challenged the myth of the "one size fits all" garment, revealing how standardized sizing erases diverse bodies and obscures the labor behind fast fashion.

As the birthplace of the Bauhaus and a center of early 20th Century textile innovation, Weimar provided a rich backdrop. The project juxtaposed modernist ideals of universality and standardization with the realities of garment labor and body diversity. lung staged public performances wearing altered garments labeled "One Size Fits All," exposing the discomfort and absurdity of standardized apparel. Reclaimed fabrics, vintage industrial sewing machines, and archival images from Weimar's textile factories and labor movements connected the city's textile history to contemporary labor and sustainability issues. It was during this project that lung and Frau Fiber met and became friends and collaborators.

21. A stateless person is someone who is not recognized as a citizen by any country under its laws. This means they have no legal nationality and are often denied basic rights like access to healthcare, education, employment, voting, and freedom of movement. According to the 1954 UN Convention: a stateless person is "a person who is not considered a national by any State under the operation of its law." Frau Fiber is symbolically stateless, shaped by her imagined past in the former East Germany (GDR) and her critique of capitalist global garment systems. Frau Fiber exists without allegiance to any nation-state, embodying a political and moral statelessness that reflects her resistance to nationalism, capitalism, and exploitation.



SL Mode: One Size Fits All, Weimar, Germany, 2006
Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
(ILGWU) Archive

CFL Why do you wear uniforms?

FF Like any superhero, I wear a uniform to symbolize my actions! My uniform fights against fast fashion, helps me to embody garment workers from history, make textile and apparel labor transparent, and intimidate those who consume without thought. Wonder Woman had a lasso and a tiara but I have a sewing machine, pattern ruler, and fabric shears. Her strength came from her Amazon training. Mine comes from the factory floor, the allotment, and the kitchen table. Her uniform said "hero". Mine communicates "worker". Both are costumes of resistance. Both are stitched with purpose. I don't fight crime—I fight waste, overproduction, and invisibility. My uniform, like hers, transforms me from individual to icon and from seamstress to sentinel.

CFL Why do you fight against Fast Fashion?

FF Fast fashion²³ is a drug of the twenty-first century. It is addictive, disposable, and deadly. It cloaks us in garments soaked with sweatshop labor and petrochemicals, then asks us to smile for the camera. I act in resistance to fast fashion with my needle and thread, stitch by stitch undoing its hemline of harm. Fast fashion gathered pace in East Germany from the end of the 1990s when brands began to look for new ways to increase profits after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Globalization²⁴ had grown rapidly in the 1980's and 90's and it paved the way for value brands to shift their production to the developing world where labor costs are a fraction of those in the United States and Europe. This system of "just in time" manufacturing allows a garment to turn around from sketch to retail shop in a couple of weeks. Garment workers have endless overtime, working nonstop for up to 14 hours a day. The increase in the number of clothes people consume has consequences for the environment. Consumers send sixty pounds of clothing and textiles per capita to landfills each year. Textiles present problems in landfill as synthetic (man-made) fiber products will not decompose. Woolen garments decompose and produce methane, contributing to

global warming. Fast isn't free. Someone or something somewhere is paying.

23. Fast fashion is the global clothing business model that produces cheap, trendy garments at high speed, mimicking runway styles and celebrity looks to sell to consumers at low prices. It prioritizes mass production, quick turnaround, and disposability, often at the cost of labor rights, the environment, and craftsmanship.

24. Globalization is the process by which the world becomes increasingly interconnected through trade, communication, technology, labor, and culture. In the economic sense, it refers to the global integration of markets, often driven by multinational corporations seeking cheaper production and larger consumer bases. Frau Fiber fights globalization with slowness, skill, visibility, and solidarity. She refuses the erasure of local knowledge and invisible labor, and instead creates public, embodied interventions that empower people to resist global supply chains with their own hands.

MAGE WITHHELD FROM PUBLIC REPOSITORY

Archive Reference: FF-REF-018

Original Material: Photograph depicting textile waste and garment disposal associated with the global fast-fashion industry.

Date: c. 2020s

Location: Location unknown (as published by Earth.org)

Medium: Digital documentary photograph

Description: This documentary photograph depicts a worker standing amid large accumulations of discarded textile materials generated through garment manufacturing and consumption. The image was used in this dissertation to illustrate the environmental consequences of the contemporary fast-fashion industry, including textile overproduction, industrial waste, and the uneven distribution of environmental burdens within global supply chains.

The image accompanies discussion of textile waste, labor exploitation, and the accelerated production cycles that characterize the global apparel industry.

Source: Earth.org. Statistics About Fast Fashion Waste. Accessed 2024.

Copyright Status: This image has been withheld from the public repository version of this dissertation because permission to reproduce the photograph could not be obtained from the copyright holder.

Repository Note

The original image appears in the examination copy submitted to the University. This placeholder has been inserted to preserve the sequence of figures and maintain the continuity of the research narrative.

CFL Were you involved in the union and organizing?

FF I entered the workforce in 1984. I organized with women like Elli Schmidt,²⁵ Margot Honecker,²⁶ Katharina "Käthe" Kern²⁷ and others who shaped the intergration of women into the workforce in the East. The GDR elevated working women as symbols of the Party. Because of my exceptional productivity, I was awarded a "Brigade der sozialistischen Arbeit",²⁸ an honor reserved for workers whose factories exceeded quotas. The newspapers praised me not for organizing, but for sewing faster and producing more. My image appeared in propaganda for the Apolda textile industry. I was photographed in industrial workwear modeled after Party fashion.

I learned the lessons of socialist labor firsthand. In the textile factories, workers survived through slowdowns, absenteeism, and strategic underproduction. We admired the organizing power of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU)²⁹ and other labor movements in the United States that used strikes and collective bargaining³⁰ to demand better wages and conditions. In the GDR, such actions were difficult because the unions served the state as much as the workers.

I was a member of the Textilarbeiterverband³¹ and the Deutscher Bekleidungs-Arbeiter-Verband.³² I served in the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED)³³ and for a time led the Democratic Women's League of Germany (DFD)³⁴ at Strick Chic. I followed Party policy, but I also tested its seams. Inspired by the organizing legacy of the ILGWU, I developed a Five-Year Plan for Slow Fashion. Comrade, would you like to review the quotas?

25. Across radically different contexts, (East Germany in the mid-20th Century and contemporary neoliberal America), Elli Schmidt and Frau Fiber stand as models of labor-focused feminist resistance.

Both figures center the textile worker as a site of political consciousness, repositioning sewing and garment work as engines of social transformation. Elli Schmidt (1908–1980), a German Communist and co-founder of the Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands (DFD), played a formative role in post-war labor and women's policy in the GDR. She worked to elevate the political and economic participation of working-class women, especially textile and factory workers, seeing their emancipation as inseparable from the socialist reconstruction of society. As a prominent voice in the Communist Party, Schmidt also challenged patriarchal attitudes within the party structure itself (Harsch 2007). While Schmidt operated through the structures of state socialism, Frau Fiber operates in critique of global capitalism, using the tools of performance art to manifest resistance. Her performances, such as Faux Fraus and Sewing Rebellion, echo the collective mobilization that Schmidt cultivated in the early GDR though without the support of a socialist state. Though divided by time, geography, and political systems, Elli Schmidt and Frau Fiber are connected by a red thread of textile resistance. They challenge the marginalization of women's labor, reclaim the dignity of garment work, and organize others into new ways of thinking about production and care. Schmidt's legacy reverberates in Frau Fiber's performances, reminding us that the struggle for garment workers' rights, like a well-sewn hem, must be both visible and enduring.

26. At first glance, former GDR Minister of Education Margot Honecker, and Frau Fiber appear as ideological opposites. Honecker, a state official and architect of East German socialist education, wielded bureaucratic and cultural authority in service of a centralized, planned society. Frau Fiber, by contrast, operates through performative resistance, crafting counter-narratives to capitalism and global fashion supply chains from below. Yet a deeper reading reveals shared investments in education, labor identity, and the formation of collective values, even as they differ in methods, ethics, and outcomes. Margot Honecker (1927–2016) served as East Germany's Minister of People's Education from 1963 to 1989 and was a key figure in shaping socialist pedagogy. A member of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) and wife of GDR leader Erich Honecker, she oversaw the implementation of ideologically- driven curricula that emphasized collectivism, labor participation, gender equality, and loyalty to the socialist state. Honecker advanced policies like polytechnical education, which integrated intellectual and manual labor, ensuring that students were not only ideologically loyal but also functionally trained in trades and industrial work. Despite her commitment to state feminism with women's labor participation and childcare access, Honecker's authority also reinforced disciplinary control, silencing dissent and repressing independent thought, particularly during the GDR's final

decades. Education under her leadership was both emancipatory in theory and authoritarian in practice. Frau Fiber invites voluntary participation and collective skill-building. Her workshops and performances simulate industrial labor while deliberately slowing it down, calling attention to the invisibility of garment workers in the global South. She enacts a feminist, post-capitalist pedagogy that re-centers care, ecological responsibility, and craft. Margot Honecker and Frau Fiber represent two poles in the discourse on feminist labor and pedagogy: one within the bureaucratized dream of socialism, the other emerging from its ghosts and gaps.

27. Katharina "Käthe" Kern (1900–1985) was a German communist, feminist, and labor activist who organized women in factories, unions, and political education programs during the Weimar Republic, Nazi resistance, and postwar reconstruction. A member of the Communist Party of Germany and the Reichstag, Kern led the Red Women and Girls' League, mobilizing women for economic and political struggle. She organized textile workers, advocating for fair wages, childcare, and reproductive rights, believing socialism must be built from the factory floor up. Her feminism was class-based, anti-capitalist, and grounded in collective action.

28. The "Brigade der sozialistischen Arbeit" (Brigade of Socialist Labor) was an honorary title awarded in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) to workers and collectives in factories, workshops, or state-run institutions that excelled in production, discipline, political education, and collective socialist values. It was part of a broader effort to incentivize teamwork, ideological conformity, and labor excellence under East German socialism. In recognition of Frau Fiber's revolutionary application of slowness, collective pedagogy, and the radical dignity of hand labor, the honorary title "Brigade der sozialistischen Arbeit" was awarded to Frau Fiber, stateless textile worker and protector of fabric futures. Eventhough Frau Fiber's performative persona that resists many of the values upheld by the GDR (particularly authoritarian control), she was subversively awarded the "Brigade der sozialistischen Arbeit" for the following reasons: founding and leading The Sewing Rebellion, her high level of garment construction and mending skills, and her organization of actions in support of global garment workers rights.

29. The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) was one of the most influential labor organizations in U.S. history. Founded in 1900, it represented hundreds of thousands of garment workers, most of them immigrant women laboring in New York sweatshops and factories across the industrial Northeast. The union fought for safer workplaces, shorter hours, fair wages, and dignity on the job while fostering a strong culture of mutual aid and collective identity. Its legacy is inseparable from the aftermath of the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, when the ILGWU helped lead

demands for workplace safety, public mourning, and legislative reform. The ILGWU also recognized culture as a powerful organizing tool. In 1937, it created the musical revue *Pins and Needles*, written and performed by garment workers who used humor, satire, and song to critique working conditions and celebrate labor activism. This intersection of labor and performance profoundly shaped Frau Fiber's fictional biography and artistic practice. Inspired by the union's history, she founded the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms (ILGWU), deliberately borrowing the acronym as an act of homage and continuity. Through art, pedagogy, and performance, Frau Fiber extends the union's legacy into the present, making visible the labor behind clothing and advocating for solidarity across the global apparel supply chain. The women of the original ILGWU transformed needles, thread, and fabric into tools of resistance; their example continues to guide Frau Fiber's work today.

30. Frau Fiber used the organizing achievements of unions such as the ILGWU that provided a model for imagining how garment workers might collectively challenge exploitation in both capitalist and socialist systems. Collective bargaining is a cornerstone of labor organizing. Through collective bargaining, workers negotiate as a group with employers to secure better wages, benefits, hours, and working conditions. These negotiations often result in legally binding agreements that establish workplace standards and protections. When negotiations fail, workers may use strikes—temporary work stoppages that halt production and create economic pressure on employers. Throughout labor history, strikes and collective bargaining have served as essential tools for workers seeking greater dignity, safety, and power in the workplace.

31. The *Textilarbeiterverband* (Textile Workers' Union) was one of Germany's largest industrial unions, representing weavers, spinners, dyers, and other textile workers from the late nineteenth century through the Weimar Republic. Like all independent unions, it was dissolved by the Nazi regime in 1933 and replaced by the state-controlled *Deutsche Arbeitsfront*, which prohibited strikes and collective bargaining. In the GDR, textile workers were organized through the *Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (FDGB), the centralized socialist union system. Following German reunification, textile workers became part of *IG Metall*, one of Germany's largest industrial unions. While the *Textilarbeiterverband* no longer exists, its legacy remains present in labor history, archives, and cultural memory. Within Frau Fiber's fictional biography, she identifies with this lineage of textile labor and organizing, drawing upon its history to critique contemporary garment production and advocate for workers across the global apparel supply chain.

32. The Deutscher Bekleidungsarbeiter-Verband (DBAV), translated as the German Clothing Workers' Union, was a trade union that represented tailors, seamstresses, and other workers in the clothing and garment industry in Germany, primarily during the Weimar Republic and early 20th century. It was known for its radical organizing, support for women's labor rights, and internationalist solidarity within the global labor movement. While the DBAV is a historical union, Frau Fiber symbolically aligns herself with its legacy. The DBAV published newspapers and organized worker education programs, theater troupes, and cultural clubs as a form of worker pedagogy that Frau Fiber directly mirrors in her practice.

33. The SED was the ruling communist party of East Germany (the German Democratic Republic, GDR) from 1949 until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. It was a Marxist-Leninist party that held a monopoly on political power and shaped all aspects of East German life, from labor and culture to education, housing, and gender roles. Frau Fiber's ideology and aesthetics symbolically align with certain SED ideals, particularly those related to anti-capitalism, labor dignity, collective production, and worker education even as she critiques the limitations of state socialism.

34. The Democratic Women's League of Germany (Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands, DFD) was the official women's organization of the German Democratic Republic. Founded in 1947, the DFD promoted women's participation in the workforce, education, and public life while advancing the goals of the socialist state. Within Frau Fiber's fictional biography, she served as a local DFD leader at Strick Chic, where she organized discussions on workplace equality, childcare, and women's advancement in the textile industry. While the DFD celebrated women as productive socialist workers, it also revealed the contradictions between official promises of equality and the realities faced by women on the factory floor. Frau Fiber's experience within the DFD shaped her understanding of labor, gender, and collective action, informing her later commitment to garment worker organizing and the creation of her Five-Year Plan for Slow Fashion.



knock off t-shirt with slogan, 2022
Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
(ILGWU) Archive

CFL What is your plan to counteract fast fashion?

FF To counteract the tyranny of globalization, polyester, and the invisibility of the garment worker. The ILGWU initiates this Five-Year Plan to emancipate the citizenry through handmade dignity, uniform resistance, and domestic textile re-industrialization.

I. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Eliminate all fast fashion consumption by 2030.
- Increase local garment resilience by 300% via repair, reuse, and redistribution.
- Establish garment-making as a civic duty and collective pleasure.
- Liberate 10,000 textile workers from exploitative wage conditions through transnational solidarity and skill sharing.
- Reduce global garment waste by one mountain (92 Million tons).

"The thread of freedom must be strong, even when frayed."

Frau Fiber

II. FIVE-YEAR TARGETS: ORGANIZE!

- Fast Fashion Boycotts
- Citizen Garment Production Hours
- Uniform Exchange Collectives
- Patching & Darning Hubs
- Training of Slow Fashion Militias

III. ECONOMIC MODEL: RADICAL THRIFT AS POLICY

- Currency: Buttons, scraps, time, solidarity
- Wages: Paid in pride, visibility, and reclaimed joy
- Commodities: Forbidden. Instead, we circulate uniforms via barter and affection.
- Capital Accumulation: Replaced by mending circles and skill sharing.

IV. WORKER'S CODE OF CONDUCT

- Refuse overproduction. Each garment must be imbued with intentionality.
- Swapping is superior to shopping.
- Repair before replacing.
- Consumption without contemplation is counterrevolutionary.

V. EDUCATIONAL DIRECTIVES

- People's Polytechniques for Patchmaking to be established in abandoned malls.
- Home Sewing Brigades will replace school uniforms with student-designed laborwear.
- Propaganda Zines will distribute patterns, manifestos, and mend-alongs.
- Each citizen is required to host at least one "Stitch-In of Resistance" annually. Attendance is mandatory, refreshments optional.

VI. ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

- The Department of Darning — inspects public trousers for holes of neglect.
- The Commission on Comrade Craftsmanship — audits wardrobes for capitalist contamination.
- The Ministry of Militant Menders — supports citizen resistance against zipper failure, frayed seams, and threadbare ideals.

VII. END-OF-PLAN GOAL (2030)

By the end of the Five-Year Plan, all citizens will:

- Own no more than 5 garments, all made or mended by hand.
- Know how to sew on a button in under 30 seconds.
- Proudly wear their labor on their sleeves—literally and metaphorically. SEWING IS NOT A HOBBY, IT IS A STRIKE!

SECTION THREE

THE SEWING REBELLION

The *Sewing Rebellion*, founded in 2006 by Frau Fiber, is a skill-sharing experiment and sustained activist intervention into systems of textile and apparel labor. Situated at the intersection of fiber and material studies, socially engaged art, and queer and feminist performance, the project examines how textile processes function as aesthetic, cultural, and political acts. Within fiber and material studies, materials and techniques are understood as carrying social, historical, and epistemological meaning rather than serving as neutral tools. Through hand sewing, reuse, and repair, this research materializes the politics of labor, class, and value. In *String, Felt, Thread: The Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art*, (Auther, 2010) critiques the historical gendering of textile labor, demonstrating how fiber practices operate as forms of feminist critique. In *The Subversive Stitch*, (Parker, 1984) links embroidery and sewing to women's agency, showing how textile work embodies both oppression and resistance. These material and intellectual legacies form the foundation of the research and practice.

The *Sewing Rebellion* is not merely a workshop or skill-sharing initiative, but a framework for enacting sewing as resistance. Its most critical dimension lies in the call to action: a rhetorical, material, and performative gesture through which sewing is reframed as a collective tool for resisting fast fashion, reclaiming labor, and reimagining economies of care. Calls to action within the *Sewing Rebellion* function on multiple registers. They are practical: inviting participants to make coin purses, shopping bags, pockets, aprons, and other useful

items from discarded garments. They engage critical language to expose the conditions of global garment labor and to mobilize participants in a broader struggle. These calls to action transform sewing from a solitary, domestic activity into a collective, politicized practice.

In the tradition of feminist art and socially engaged practice, the *Sewing Rebellion* employs these calls as modes of knowledge production. Each project functions as a instructional device, inviting participants to confront systemic inequities embedded in the clothing through it's production and consumption. By positioning mending and sewing as pedagogy, the *Sewing Rebellion* generates experiences about how skills and narratives circulate, how social bonds are formed through making, and how political consciousness emerges in the process of material engagement. It demonstrates that knowing can be produced through practices of repair, collective learning, and creative refusal of contemporary economic systems. This section of the thesis presents the *Sewing Rebellion's* calls to action and campaigns in Frau Fiber's voice. It demonstrates how the *Sewing Rebellion* extends beyond the realm of an art project or sewing circle: it is a living act of resistance: a teaching apparatus that retools the simple act of sewing into an engine of social critique and political imagination.

The clothes you wear are not innocent.
They carry the stains of exploitation, the
invisible sweat of millions who stitch your
cheap fashion together for pennies a day.
The global apparel industry is a machine:
a monstrous, unfeeling beast fueled by
demand, a planned obsolescence, and the
endless extraction of labor and resources.
Emancipate yourself from the Fast Fashion
Supply Chain! Make your own repairs.
Mend what is broken. Wear what tells
your story, not their ads.-Frau Fiber

FRAU FIBER'S CALL TO ACTION

When I arrived in the United States as a former garment worker from the German Democratic Republic, I carried more than a suitcase of clothes—I carried the memory of the brigades of socialist labor, the evenings spent in sewing circles; the allotment gardens that fed us; and the collective struggle that shaped my hands. In the DDR, we mended because resources were scarce, but we also mended because nothing was disposable—not cloth, not labor, not people. This ethos of frugality and solidarity was the thread I brought with me across oceans and borders.

Upon arriving in the United States, my mission was clear. I saw the same machines, the same bent backs, the same poverty wages—but now hidden under the glitz of Made in America. Fast fashion disguised exploitation with abundance, encouraging people to discard garments as quickly as they bought them. I recognized this not as progress, but as a deepening of capitalist extraction. I knew then that my task was not only to share the sewing skills I had honed under socialism, but to transform them into acts of resistance in a new landscape.

The Sewing Rebellion¹ emerged as a strike against forgetfulness, a rupture in the endless cycle of consumer capitalism. From the DDR's Brigade der sozialistischen Arbeit, where collective achievement was celebrated, I carried forward the belief that labor could—and must—be honored, not erased. Through mending and sewing, I sought to create cracks in fast fashion's glossy facade: spaces where people might see the hidden lives of garment workers in Bangladesh, Haiti, El Monte, and across the globe, and stand with them in solidarity. To patch a hole is to resist the erasure of labor; to make do is to declare allegiance to those whose lives are spent producing our garments under impossible conditions.

Since 2006, I have traveled across the United States and beyond, rallying people in basements, libraries, storefronts, galleries, and abandoned factories—anywhere thread and resistance can be stitched together. I taught people to refuse the fast fashion regime. I showed them how to mend holes instead of filling carts, to stitch with intention rather than swipe without thought. Each needle was a tool of resistance, each repair a blow against the exploitation of garment workers. To mend is to stand with them. To sew is to strike with them.

Through the Sewing Rebellion, I invite everyone to become their own producer, to sever the psychic thread of debt, disposability, and capitalist desire.

We make, mend, and make do, yes—but more importantly, we make meaning, solidarity, and shared skill. This is radical thrift. This is “visible mending” as a political act. This is an act of confrontation. This is the spirit of socialist brigades reimagined for today. I ask the people to join me, and sew their way out of the global apparel industry’s stranglehold.

1. The *Sewing Rebellion* (2006-2022) was an international movement to educate the public in basic hand and machine sewing skills while critiquing systems of production and consumption in the global apparel supply chain. During this period, the *Sewing Rebellion* emancipated thousands of people from the fast fashion supply chain by providing instructions on how to mend, alter, remake and make garments and domestic textiles.

The *Sewing Rebellion* was funded by Cal State University Los Angeles, the Long Beach Arts Council, and United States Artists. It was also supported by public library systems in Los Angeles, Long Beach CA, Boulder Co, and Asheville NC. The *Sewing Rebellion* provided free, hands-on instruction and access to equipment while educating members of the public about the perils of global garment manufacturing. According to L. Vinebaum, “The *Sewing Rebellion* is also inspired by the American labor movement’s efforts to improve working conditions for garment workers. Immediately after the

election, Frau Fiber pledged to *Mend America* by fighting xenophobia and oppression, and creating change through skills sharing, sewing, mending, and calls to action”(Vinebaum 2018).

The *Sewing Rebellion* has its origins in the meeting of two former garment workers in the spring of 2006, in a pop-up storefront shop, called *SL Mode One Size Fits All* (2006, carole frances lung). *SL Mode* hosted a production facility and retail space, providing the inhabitants of Weimar with an opportunity to shop and try on garments lung created in response to their experiences living in Weimar for over six months. During the time the pop-up shop was open, Frau Fiber came in several times, participating in the production and modeling of the garments, which were being made in carole’s size. During these visits, carole and Frau Fiber, who are one and the same person, began conversing about the state of the global garment economy. They discovered they had much in common they both had worked in the garment industry before the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was in effect. lung worked as a designer and production manager of Janell Berté Bridal and Frau Fiber worked as a knitwear finisher at Strick Chic, Apoloda Germany. They both grew up in extreme political situations: lung grew up behind the what she calls the “Orange Curtain”, in Orange County a conservative republican county in California; and Frau Fiber lived behind the Iron one, communist East Germany. They both were organizers: lung organized workers while working in the garment industry and Frau Fiber organized fellow garment workers to resist the Stasi (State Security Service in the former German Democratic Republic). In the fall of 2006, to continue their relationship around sewing and organizing, lung recieved support from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago for Frau Fiber to come to Chicago.

That fall, *Sewing Rebellion* workshops began at Mess Hall in the Rogers Park neighborhood of Chicago. Mess Hall was an experimental cultural center located in a storefront. It was an open space for events, lectures, workshops, art, and swapping materials. Mess Hall was an ideal setting for the early stages of the *Sewing Rebellion*. It became a weekly meet up for mending, and remaking their garments. The *Sewing Rebellion’s* slogan “Stop Shopping and Start Sewing” was created after carole and Frau Fiber attended a guerrilla theater performance by Reverend Billy and “The Church of Stop Shopping.” The group’s radical performance warns against the “Shopocalypse”, singing and preaching about the end of humanity because of manic consumerism. Through such semi-ironic preaching,

Reverend Billy has been raging against the noxious effects of consumerism, transnational capital, and the privatization of public space and culture in New York City since 1997. Reverend Billy is the pseudonym of performance artist Bill Talen, whose work as the leader of *The Church of Stop Shopping* represents a fascinating departure for new left theater in the era of global capital. Like many political theater artists in the 1990's and beyond, Talen has faced the challenges posed by the rapidly changing political economy of globalization. (Hill, 2020) After the performance, Frau Fiber thought to herself, "Reverend Billy's message provides the prompt to stop shopping but it doesn't give the people anything to fill their time with." It was at that moment that she knew the Sewing Rebellion would provide the activity and skill sharing to exchange leisure time for personal production.

The *Sewing Rebellion* attempts to crack capitalism by upending the fast-fashion supply chain, demonstrating through its numerous campaigns and instructions how we can move away from the capitalist system by exploiting and multiplying its 'cracks.'

"There is nothing special about being an anti-capitalist revolutionary. This is the story of many, many people, of millions, perhaps billions. It is the story of the composer in London who expresses his anger and his dream of a better society through the music he composes. It is the story of the gardener in Cholula who creates a garden to struggle against the destruction of nature. Of the care worker in Birmingham who goes in the evening to his garden allotment so that he has some activity that has meaning and pleasure for him. Of the indigenous peasants in Oventic, Chiapas, who create an autonomous space for self-government and defend it every day against the paramilitaries who harass them." (Holloway, 2010, pg. 4)

Historically, selecting and purchasing one's clothing was considered an event. Consumers would save up to buy new clothes at certain times of the year. These habits began to change with the global shifts in trade agreements such as the Multifiber Agreement (MFA 1974-2004) and North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA 1992). These agreements opened the textile and apparel supply chain to global wages and vertically integrated manufacturing and simultaneously shopping became a form of entertainment. Fast fashion is described as clothing designs that move quickly from concept to point of purchase, often knocking off the looks of

celebrities, thus providing fast fashion consumers the opportunity to feel like celebrities. Fast fashion creates a global economy of race-to-the-bottom wages, just in time manufacturing, and shipping bottlenecks that pollute and exploit humanity and the planet.

Fashionopolis: The Price of Fast Fashion and the Future of Clothes.

(Thomas, 2019) calls attention to the major problems in the \$2.4-trillion-a-year fast fashion industry. Thomas argues that fast-fashion brands may not design their clothing to last (and they don't), but as artifacts of a particularly Western based consumptive era. In this way, they might become an important part of the fossil record, because fast fashion ends up in a landfill and will not decay (about 85 percent of textile waste in the United States goes to landfills or is incinerated). (Thomas, 2019)

The global retail giants who have influenced the speed of the fast fashion market are Zara and H&M. Zara is the flagship brand of the textile giant Inditex, selling men's, women's, and children's clothing. Its vertically integrated production allows for the shortening of time between design, production, and delivery. They can move from sketch to a finished piece in stores in two to four weeks. Its factories are located near its corporate headquarters in A Coruña, Spain, producing in Portugal, Turkey, and Morocco. Zara's profit model is to stuff the stores with goods, offering the consumer an overwhelming amount of choices. It produces three times the amount of the industry average. It has 2,138 stores in 96 countries, a strong online presence, and sells about \$22 billion worth of disposable clothing annually. The fast fashion Department Store H&M originally named Hennes & Mautitz, created in Sweden in 1947, operates in 74 countries with over 5,000 stores under its various brands: COS (upscale unisex) and Monki (children's). H&M implements state-of-the-art IT systems to manage and track 800 independent suppliers in Europe and Asia. The majority of the factories are located in Cambodia and Bangladesh, where garment workers are paid the lowest rates globally. H&M is known for its designer collaborations, providing customers with a couture label at rock bottom prices. Through its free workshops and skills sharing, the *Sewing Rebellion* inspired visible cracks in the fast-fashion supply chain represented by Zara and H&M. This can be seen in the numerous photographs on blog sites of participants displaying their upcycled and mended garments, as well as the upcycling garment movements that have taken root since 2010 such as RicRack, a textile recycling non-profit and store in New Orleans LA. Above all else, the *Sewing Rebellion* initially sprang from the shared belief that having and sharing machine and hand sewing skills is a radical act.

The rebellion is hierarchically organized with Frau Fiber as the facilitator and designer of actions and campaigns which were implemented by Faux Fraus.

Frau Fiber practiced careful listening, drawing ideas directly from the communities she engaged. From 2007 to 2020, Frau Fiber and the Faux Fraus hosted free monthly workshops at public libraries, universities, and pop-up locations across the United States. As L. Vinebaum notes, “Today, many people want to learn how to sew, and the *Sewing Rebellion* responds to a desire for traditional craft skill instruction. Organizers seek to reclaim sewing skills that were lost when the ready-to-wear clothing industry replaced the home sewing of garments. It resonates with new generations of makers eager to revitalize sewing skills with a view of self-sufficiency, sustainability, and a desire to support the plight of garment workers. Making and mending one’s clothes is also empowering: it allows people to save money, assert personal styles, and subvert the fashion industry’s body size biases” (Vinebaum 2019). Through these workshops, participants learned to alter, mend, and upcycle garments, reducing their dependence on fast fashion while developing practical skills and greater awareness of garment labor.

Throughout the *Sewing Rebellion*, social and political concerns were expressed through slogans, instructions, and videos. Hand-stitched slogans appeared on Faux Frau uniforms, limited-edition knock-off T-shirts, patches, and banners. Phrases such as “Swapping is Better than Shopping!”, “If You Have to Shop, Shop to Last Not Fast!”, “Make Do, Mend, Make and Remake!”, and “I WANT YOU to emancipate yourself from the global garment industry by learning the skills to alter, mend, and make your own garments!” served as calls to action that encouraged participants to challenge consumer culture and create small ruptures in capitalist systems.

A central strategy of the *Sewing Rebellion* was the appropriation of the fast-fashion tech pack, the blueprint used by apparel brands to communicate designs and production specifications to manufacturers. Frau Fiber transformed this industrial document into an educational tool through instructional videos produced in black-and-white, stop-motion animation, and accelerated sewing demonstrations. Often, a key step was intentionally omitted, prompting viewers to solve problems independently rather than simply follow directions. In its final years, the *Sewing Rebellion* expanded this approach into campaign-based projects that combined instructional content with site-specific wearable objects developed in partnership with community organizations.

Through the Sewing Rebellion, I invite everyone to become their own producer, to sever the psychic thread of debt, disposability, and capitalist desire. We make, mend, and make do, yes—but more importantly, we make meaning, solidarity, and shared skill. This is radical thrift. This is “visible mending” as a political act. This is an act of confrontation. This is the spirit of socialist brigades reimagined for today. I ask the people to join me, and sew their way out of the global apparel industry’s stranglehold.

In 2013, carole and I formed the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms² (ILGWU). The ILGWU is not a factory, though work is done. It is not a school, though lessons are learned. It is a living archive, a training ground, a bureaucratic burlesque of the neoliberal garment system. Founded in exile, rooted in resistance, the ILGWU serves as the central node of my labor campaigns. Here, we train in the ethics of generosity. We prototype uniforms for the people: practical, durable, anti-fashion garments that reject seasonal tyranny and trend obsession. Each uniform is a political declaration: “I am no longer a consumer. I am a comrade of cloth.” The Sewing Rebellion issues calls to action, enforces collective discipline, and coordinates citizen mending. The stakeholders are collaborators: not shareholders, bosses, or brands. Through the actions we take, we reenact the forgotten glory of industrial organizing, preserving the labor of invisible garment workers. In every stitch, we reject the logic that says time is money, and embody the idea that time is care, skill is currency, and generosity is power!

2. Founded in 2013 at its first location on Third Street in downtown Long Beach, Frau Fiber’s *Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms (ILGWU)* is a conceptual, performative, and pedagogical platform that critiques the global apparel industry while celebrating the skills, dignity, and agency of garment workers past and present. The Institute promotes a slow fashion ideology rooted in labor rights, skill-sharing, sustainability, and historical memory, reimagining garment labor as generous, communal, and

politically engaged. Drawing inspiration from labor movements, socialist aesthetics, and organizations such as the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and East German women's collectives, the Institute brings lessons from the past into the present. Over the years, it has operated in Long Beach, San Pedro, California State University Los Angeles, and now New Orleans, adapting projects to each location's social and industrial context.

By appropriating the acronym of the historic ILGWU, founded in 1900 and instrumental in securing safer working conditions and fair wages after the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911, Frau Fiber's Institute performs both homage and critique. It shifts the original union's focus from industrial organizing to contemporary cultural labor and participatory art, staging its own bureaucracy, uniforms, training manuals, propaganda, and archives as performative tools linking garment worker histories to the realities of globalized fast fashion.

Through this fusion of activism, parody, and pedagogy, the *ILGWU* reanimates the spirit of the historical union, advocating dignity, solidarity, and equity while reimagining those struggles for the neoliberal era. Its blog and publications, including the *ILGWU Pins and Needles Newspaper*, document the Institute's actions, interventions, research, and collaborations through satire, and critical inquiry.

Most recently the ILGWU was featured in an article for [Dense Magazine](#)

The revolution was not mine alone. It could not be sustained by a single pair of hands. Thus, in 2013, alongside the opening of the ILGWU, I recruited the Faux Fraus⁵: my comrades in thread. The Faux Fraus were not impersonators. They were embodied extensions of my mission. Across the nation—and at times, the globe—they rose up, donned their uniforms, adopted the Sewing Rebellion's protocols, and led their own Sewing Rebellions. The Faux Fraus were artists, activists, educators, and former apparel industry workers who understood that clothing was political, that fashion was never neutral, and that the needle could be sharper than the sword. They ensured that the ideology of slow-fashion liberation was decentralized, democratized, and adapted to diverse communities. Each Faux Frau led their own Sewing Rebellion, tailoring the message to their region, community, and dialect of resistance. This was not duplication—it was proliferation.

They created uniforms, distributed patches, and led rebellions in libraries, schools, community art spaces, and kitchens. They carried the textile torch of consciousness into places I could not reach. Together, we formed a web of slow production, radical pedagogy, and garment solidarity. Through the Faux Fraus, I became a networked insurgency: a movement with many machines, a rebellion that could not be outsourced or silenced.

3. In 2013 Frau Fiber recognized that for the *Sewing Rebellion* to truly be a rebellion and liberate as many people as necessary from the fast-fashion supply chain, she needed to enlist a volunteer workforce. “From her storefront studio in Long Beach, she heads up the *Sewing Rebellion*, a collective effort in which her collaborators, known as Faux Fraus, they enact the factory floor, engaging in piece work and garment construction to honor the legacy of past and present women garment workers, among the most poorly paid and mistreated workers globally. (Sorkin, 2022). The inaugural Faux Frau training was held at the *ILGWU* on 3rd Street in downtown Long Beach. The training consisted of a series of timed skills tests. Each Faux Frau took the oath of solidarity to the *Sewing Rebellion* and received a uniform hat, provided by Frau Fiber.

As Faux Fraus were trained, the *Sewing Rebellion* expanded to a national and sometimes an international movement. From 2013 to 2022 there were eighteen active *Sewing Rebellion* Chapters located at The LGBTQAI+ Center, The Studio at the Billie Jean King Library, Michelle Obama Library, West Regional Library, Baldwin Hills Public Library, Hands-on Third, East LA College, Thank You For Coming, Camera Obscura, Building 61, Boulder Public Library, Broomfield Library, Makerspace, Ames Progressive, Haystack, Deerfield, MA. New York: SpaceCraft, Pack Memorial Library, Lancaster Museum of Art, Lancaster PA.

The inaugural training was hosted at the ILGWU, 322 Elm Ave. Long Beach CA. The training brought together a small group of artists, activists, and community members interested in adopting the Frau Fiber persona, tactics, and pedagogy to carry out Sewing Rebellion chapters in other cities. Participants received instructional toolkits, including tech packs, mending manuals, and scripts. I shared strategies for hosting public sewing events; teaching radical mending; performing in character as labor advocate; and designing and distributing uniforms. The training emphasized performative discipline, textile literacy, and collective labor ethics. The Faux Fraus left the training empowered to start their own local Sewing Rebellions, taking my mission into libraries, pop up events, festivals, art spaces, and activist networks. The Faux Fraus were trained not just in sewing, but in resistance. They carried the torch of anti-capitalist garment labor across city lines, multiplying the message thread by thread. Since that time, dozens of Faux Fraus have taken the oath of solidarity, to be repeated with one's hand on a sewing machine:

"On my Sewing Machine, I swear this oath to the Sewing Rebellion and garment workers around the world. I shall render textile and sewing knowledge to all who will listen and as a brave Faux Frau I shall at all times be prepared with advice, instructions and tools to serve my fellow humans to Stop Shopping and Start Sewing. If I turn traitor to this cause I now pledge, I will spend the rest of my days in garments with un-repaired holes."

In the Sewing Rebellion, we do not wait for the world to change, we make the change stitch by stitch, using whatever tools we can wield. We mend, we teach, we arm the people not with weapons, but with needles, thread, and knowledge. We use patches not just to cover holes— but to expose the truth. Every

patch is a visible protest against planned obsolescence. Each action is a declaration: "This garment is not trash. I refuse to discard it. I will extend its life with my own hands." Our patches are portable propaganda—stitch moments that move through laundromats, subways, classrooms, and sidewalks. While the fashion industry used tech packs to standardize production, exploit labor, and enforce secrecy, we reclaimed the format for the people. The rebellion's open-source tech packs are blueprints for the revolution. They show people how to draft your their patterns, mend their own clothes, and exit the fashion system with dignity and skill. Simple, duplicable, empowering.

No branding. No price tags. Just tools for textile autonomy. We filmed ourselves—not polished influencers, but real laborers—threading needles, mending crotch blow outs, and making hats. These skill shares acted as resistance on camera. We made learning public, messy, and slow. No fast edits, no monetization—just radical transparency and shared skill. When people watched, they didn't just learn—they joined.

I facilitated and presented these monthly calls to action, which the Faux Fraus shared with their community members. These calls were made to share basic sewing and mending skills and provided prompts that critiqued the fast fashion supply chain. Below you will find a sampling of the Sewing Rebellions' calls to action organized into four categories MENDING, MAKE DO, MAKE and CAMPAIGNS.

MENDING⁴

Let us take a moment for a simple song, dedicated to the humble mend. We call for a parade for every patch, stitch, and threadbare rescue. Raise your thimbles high!

I see you, zigzag scab across a busted knee.
I see you, denim heart over a crotch blowout—
stitched in contrast thread like a banner waving
from between the legs.
I see the rows of stitching marching in formation
across the elbow of a jacket worn thin from work,
grief, and joy.

Each mend is a love letter.
Each patch is a political act.
Each repair defies the gospel of newness.
To mend is to refuse.
Refuse the landfill. Refuse the shame of
imperfections. Refuse the idea that damage
equals defeat.

You, the mender, are part of a long lineage.
You stand shoulder to shoulder with
grandmothers, freedom fighters, sweatshop
survivors, and invisible hands whose names are
not printed on labels but sewn into the seams of
history.

Long live the crooked stitches.
Long live the Frankenfashioned garments—pieced
together from memory, function, and protest.
Long live the mends: wild, awkward, exquisite,
and utterly unbought.

Wear them with pride.
Wear them like armor.
Wear them for the revolution.

MEND AMERICA⁵ After the election of 2016, when the U.S. revealed its torn seams, I launched the Mend America call to action. This was no simple sewing circle—it was a national act of repair that continues to this day. Together we stitched the American flag upside-down as a symbol of distress, patched them onto letters and sent them to governmental officials. Each patch carries not only thread, but also words—letters of protest, gratitude, or demands—sent directly to the officials who hold power. Through this slow labor, we refused despair. We reclaimed the flag as a cloth of the people, not a banner of division. Each stitch is solidarity. Each patch was a call to action, patching is power!

4. Mending is the mission of Frau Fiber and the *Sewing Rebellion*. It disrupts the capitalist logic of disposability by extending the life of garments, thereby resisting fast fashion's exploitation of labor and resources. As feminist and queer praxis, mending reclaims undervalued forms of care and domestic skill, transforming them into acts of collective resistance and political pedagogy. Each patch or repair becomes a site of knowledge production, where histories of labor, consumption, and resistance are made visible. In this way, mending affirms that small, embodied gestures generate critical insights into global systems.

5. Frau Fiber wants you to take the pledge to Mend America!
<https://mendamerica.wordpress.com/>

MAKING DO⁶

SWAPPING IS BETTER THAN SHOPPING! Shopping feeds the global fast-fashion machine. Swapping frees us from it. When you shop, you participate in a system built on extraction, exploitation, and disposability. When you swap, you participate in a system built on trust, resourcefulness, and solidarity. Shopping tells you: you lack and need more. Swapping tells you: you have enough, and we are resourced. In the global apparel industry, garments are made to fall apart—so you'll keep shopping. In the Sewing Rebellion, garments are made to circulate: to be mended, shared, and revalued—over and over again. Swapping honors the labor embedded in every sleeve, every button, every seam. It says: this has a story. It deserves a second life, and I trust you with something I once wore. There is no profit in swapping—only connection. Don't shop to satisfy desires manufactured by marketing. Swap to slow it all down. Swap to escape the capitalist grip on your closet.

6. MAKING DO MAKING DO, as activated through the work of Frau Fiber and the Sewing Rebellion, repositions scarcity and improvisation as critical strategies of resistance. Rather than internalizing capitalist narratives of lack, making do affirms the creative capacity of individuals and communities to reconfigure what is already at hand. Within this framework, ingenuity replaces consumption, and care replaces disposability. As an epistemological tool, making do generates knowledge about survival, resilience, and solidarity under conditions of precarity. Through workshops and calls to action, Frau Fiber demonstrates that making do is not a form of deprivation but of empowerment. It cultivates alternative economies grounded in repair, resourcefulness, and refusal.

T-shirt shopping bag⁷: The plastic bag is the environmental enemy—cheap, disposable, choking oceans and filling the landfills. The fast fashion T-shirt, too, is a product of exploitation, sold for pennies on the backs of workers. But together, we can turn these

symbols of waste into objects of resistance. With needle or scissors, we will transform the discarded t-shirt into a strong, reusable shopping bag. It is a small act, but small acts multiply! Each bag keeps plastic out of circulation and reminds us: we already have enough. Here are my instructions for making a t-shirt shopping bag:

Step 1: Select Your T-Shirt

Choose a clean, used, small to medium T-shirt.

Stains are not shame—they are history! The larger the shirts the bigger the bag.

Step 2: Cut Off the Sleeves

Lay the shirt flat. Cut away both sleeves along the seam—this creates the bag's handles.

Step 3: Shape the Neckline

Cut a deeper U-shape into the neckline. This forms the opening of the bag.

Step 4: Close the Bottom

Turn the shirt inside out. Stitch the bottom hem closed with a strong running stitch or zig-zag. No sewing machine? Knot and tie the hem in strips for a fringed bottom. Both methods hold.

Step 5: Reinforce for Strength

If sewing, stitch over the bottom seam twice for durability.

Step 6: Turn Right Side Out

Your bag is complete! A worker's tote, born from waste, ready for market or protest.

MAKING⁸

Making is survival and solidarity. It transforms scraps into sufficiency, cloth into community, hands into history. The factories want us to be passive. The brands want us to be obedient. But through making, we become free. Comrades, let us sew, patch, and mend until the world is rewoven in justice. I say, "Ich habe es gemacht." – I made it.

7. In 2010, public workshops used a bicycle-powered sewing machine to convert unwanted T-shirts into reusable shopping bags. More than 200 bags were produced through these collective making events. Step-by-step instructions were also shared online, enabling participants to make their own bags and extend the project beyond the workshop setting.

<https://sewingrebellion.wordpress.com/2010/12/18/pedal-powered-sewing-factory-produces-200-t-shirt-shopping-bags/> For instructions on how to make a bag.

<https://sewingrebellion.wordpress.com/2010/10/06/october-memo-to-the-people/>

8. MAKING is reclaimed as a site of critical knowledge production and collective empowerment. Unlike consumerist production, which obscures labor, Making emphasizes visibility of hands, skills, and histories embedded in cloth. Through acts of sewing, patching, and constructing garments, participants confront the material realities of labor and resist the alienation of fast fashion. Making becomes both praxis and pedagogy: a queer and feminist strategy that validates undervalued domestic skills while generating community through shared practice. In this context, making is not mere fabrication but a performative method of critique.

East German Shopping Bag⁹ is a bag and an anti-capitalist carrying device! You will never purchase another plastic bag! We cannot participate in the petroleum fashion cycle. We will MAKE our own Einkaufsnetz—a shopping bag by the people, for the people!

Step 1: Cut one rectangle: Main body: 15 x 36 inches (38 x 46 cm) standard issue.

Step 2: Cut Handles: Two strips, 3 x 18 inches (7.5 x 46 cm)

Step 3: Fold the body piece in half, right sides together.

Step 4: Sew down the sides and bottom using a ½ inch seam allowance.

Step 5: Box the corners by folding the side seam to the bottom seam, forming a triangle, and stitching across 1.5 inches from the point. This gives depth.

Step 6: Fold the top edge down ¼ inch, press. Fold again 1 inch.

Step 7: Press again, stitch around the fold to create a clean hem. This is dignity. Even a bag deserves a structure.

Step 8: Fold each strap in half lengthwise, press.

Step 9: Open it up, fold each long edge to the center, press again.

Step 10: Fold in half and sew along both edges — a socialist sandwich of strength.

Step 11: Attach straps to the inside or outside of the bag—4 inches from each side seam. Stitch securely in a square or “X box.”

This is visible labor, so let your stitches show. Turn the bag right side out. Iron if needed. Admire your work. Fill it with bread, books, or protest leaflets. Use it again. And again. And again. This is not a tote. This is not fashionable. This is heritage in your hand while you're not shopping.

CAMPAIGNS

The Sewing Rebellion calls you to join its campaigns! These campaigns are not hobbies, not crafts for idle hands—they are strategies of survival that spark the revolution. Each campaign is a stitch in the larger fabric of liberation. Together they mend the wounds left by fast fashion, capitalist greed, and the erasure of worker's rights.

When we gather to sew, we gather to resist. Our campaigns call attention to what has been stolen: fair wages, functional clothing, the dignity of labor, and the possibility of dressing outside the cages of gender and consumer identity. By making, mending, and sharing, we refuse to be consumers only—we become producers of culture, of care, of resistance.

The Sewing Rebellion's campaigns are small but mighty interventions. They whisper in fabric what cannot always be shouted in the streets: that another world is possible, stitched together by many hands. Each campaign is a pattern for freedom, a way to practice daily rebellion through the humble acts of cutting, patching, piecing, and giving.

LEGALIZE LABOR¹⁰

The Legalize Labor Campaign asks you to take the very symbol of white-collar power—the button-down shirt—and cut it open, re-stitch it, and transform it into an apron of resistance. Why? Because behind every crisp white shirt worn in boardrooms and offices is the unseen labor of garment workers. Their stitches build the uniform of privilege, yet their own labor is denied protection, dignity, and legality.

By transforming the white-collar shirt into an apron, we reveal what the bosses would rather keep hidden: that their wealth rests

upon our stitches, our hands, and our hours. The apron, once a mark of workers in kitchens, factories, and fields, becomes here a badge of solidarity. It is the uniform of rebellion, stitched from the very garment that symbolizes exploitation.

The Legalize Labor Apron Project calls upon you: Take a cast-off white shirt and deconstruct it. Cut away its collar of authority, re-sew it into an apron of labor. Wear it as you stitch, cook, mend, and march. Let it remind you that labor is not a crime—it is life itself.

Share your aprons in public actions, sewing circles, and protests, until the streets are filled with transformed uniforms of resistance. I declare: No worker is illegal. No stitch is criminal. It is the theft of labor, the denial of rights, that must be outlawed. Together, in aprons stitched from white collars, we expose the hypocrisy of an industry that cloaks itself in respectability while thriving on exploitation. Together, we sew a future where labor is legalized, dignified, and celebrated.

Pick up your scissors. Cut down the collars. Stitch the apron of rebellion. **LEGALIZE LABOR NOW!**

CLOSED LOOP¹¹

The Closed Loop Campaign stitched a future where nothing is wasted: where every scrap, every thread, every laboring hand is honored. In this campaign, we take textiles at the end of their so-called “life cycle” and bring them back into the circle—cutting, piecing, and reimagining them into Quechquemilt Geschichte Kleidungsstück (a little chest garment) worn casually around the shoulders and made to resist the fast fashion machine’s hunger for endless production and disposal.

This is not recycling for profit—it is reclamation for survival. The Closed Loop Campaign insists that the loop must close: that fabric must return to use, that labor must return to dignity, that the cycle of exploitation must end. By creating Quechquemitl Geschichte Kleidungsstück—intimate, protective, and close to the heart—we remind ourselves that our labor is precious, and so are the bodies we clothe. These pieces are not commodities, they are living garments, stitched with memory and care, carrying stories against the culture of waste.

I did not do this alone. The Closed Loop Campaign was built in collaboration with artists, workers, and comrades who share our vision: local garment workers Susana Rodriguez, Ariana Garcia and Blanca Patricia of the Mama Leonas (Boulder, CO), Adriana Paola Palacios Luna of Luna Cultura: Art, Science and Culture LLC (Boulder, CO), and Eli West of Jefferson Farms (Salida, CO).

Together, we cut from old uniforms, discarded shirts, worn-out dresses, and stitched Quechquemitl Geschichte Kleidungsstück that could be passed hand to hand, shared from one body to another, multiplying without new harm.

This is our manifesto: No more take it to the landfill. No more open loops of exploitation. We close the loop with every stitch, honoring labor, fabric, and earth.

10. Frau Fiber wants you to legalize labor

<https://sewingrebellion.wordpress.com/legalize-labor-campaign/>

11. Frau Fiber wants you produce a little chest garment

<https://sewingrebellion.wordpress.com/closed-loop-campaign-quechquemitl-geschichte-kleidungsstuck-little-chest-garment/>

FRAU FIBER CALLS FOR A WITHDRAWAL!

Comrades, in December 2019, after twelve relentless years of inciting sewing actions across this fractured world, I declared a decisive victory for sewing. The campaign has won! The battleground of fast fashion has been pierced, patched, and ruptured. And so, with the clarity of a worker who knows when a shift is finished, I ordered the rapid withdrawal of all Sewing Rebellion chapters. The time had come to demobilize.

The Faux Fraus, my faithful battalion of agitators and repair-workers, stood firm through years of service. Together, we constructed a solid foundation for the sharing of sewing skills built from solidarity and stubbornness. Their uniforms—aprons, hats, and patches—became both armor and banner. For this exceptional performance, the Faux Fraus have been granted honorable discharges from all official Sewing Rebellion duties. Yet, as with all veterans of struggle, they are encouraged to continue their work tending to frayed edges.

On May Day 2020, the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms convened a virtual celebration to honor this history: portraits, uniforms, and joyous participants filled the screen, broadcasting from ILGWU South of the 710 in Long Beach, California. The Faux Fraus, with dignity and resolve, donated their uniforms to the ILGWU archive, where they remain in safekeeping. These artifacts—threads of rebellion—are preserved, cared for, and continually reactivated in publications and exhibitions, with credit always to those who wore them.

Today, the Sewing Rebellion no longer marched as an organized brigade but as a thread running invisibly through time and the fabric of everyday life. It is now undertaken by many in kitchens, in living rooms, in libraries, in repair cafés, and at factory

gates. Sewing has become both a care practice and a defiant gesture, inspiring those who believe that justice can be stitched, one small act at a time.

The rebellion lives on in the gatherings of makers who share tools, stories, and strength. It inspires because it is accessible: no degree is required, no special machine demanded. It has taught us that we are not powerless. Our labor is valuable. Our creativity is radical. Every seam reinforced, every button sewn back, every patch visibly stitched is a small revolution—one stitch closer to justice.

And so I say: the mission is complete. The Faux Fraus and I have finished our work. The Sewing Rebellion, as an organized campaign, has run its course. What remains is a living legacy: a community of hands and hearts who will carry the needle forward. The strike has been called, the archive is secured, and the sewing work of Frau Fiber is finished.

SECTION FOUR:

THE ILGWU ARCHIVE

This thesis section is dedicated to the *Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms Archive (ILGWU Archive)*, which is essential for establishing how Frau Fiber's practice contributes to the canon at the intersection of art, labor history, and archiving. Unlike traditional institutional archives, which preserve documents and artifacts under the authority of state or organizational power, this archive is speculative, and generative. It is constructed and designed to host materials, uniforms, banners, instructional manuals, photographs, and ephemera that would otherwise remain unrecorded or excluded from dominant historical narratives. The *ILGWU Archive* demonstrates how practice-based research can generate knowledge through the production of objects and by building archival structures rather than merely interpreting existing ones. Archives are sites of power that determine whose labor is remembered and whose is erased. By fabricating the *ILGWU Archive*, Frau Fiber and I intervene in this hierarchy of memory, creating an alternative repository that positions garment workers as active agents of history. In this way, the archive functions as an object of study and also as a methodology of critique.

Through performances, narrated visits, and sewing demonstrations the archive is activated and expanded. Uniforms are worn and performed, and banners are living texts carried in demonstrations. This active use of the archival materials underscores its function as a living repository, producing knowledge through engagement. This challenges conventional understandings of archival research, extending

it into the domain of social practice and performance studies. Its name is a deliberate echo of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, positioning it as a conceptual successor, while also acknowledging the absence of equivalent institutional support for contemporary garment workers. By documenting Frau Fiber's actions, the Institute preserves evidence of activist art practices that operate at the margins of formal labor organizations. The Institute also demonstrates how artistic interventions can extend the traditions of labor organizing into contemporary contexts where unions and protections are weakened.



Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms, San Pedro CA, 2022,
Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
(ILGWU) Archive

Not storage, but struggle.
Not silence, but shouting.
Every scrap, every uniform, every slogan
remembers the worker's Fight. Activate it.
Share it. Guard it. Without the archive,
history unravels—and the capitalist
machine stitches lies in its place.

-Frau Fiber

NOTES ON THE ILGWU ARCHIVE

Inside the blogs,¹ on the shelves, and in the files you will find the story of resistance by needle, thread, loom and uniform. The ILGWU Archive² is a living battleground where textile remnants, sewing machines, notions, propaganda, and documents all testify to the ongoing struggle against exploitation. Every swatch and stitch, is a document of labor's dignity and its refusal to vanish beneath capitalist machinery. The archive is part fact, part fiction stitched with omissions, frayed edges, and repairs. I've inserted myself into historical records, exposing how women's labor, particularly in textiles, has always been undervalued, under-documented.

The ILGWU Archive embraces parody and seriousness alike, Five-Year Plans for slow fashion, correspondence stamped with ministries seals, and training manuals for the Faux Fraus. Each piece serves as a tool, as propaganda, as inspiration for future rebellions. This is not a quiet resting place for documents. It is a working archive—a factory of memory—designed to equip workers, artists, and comrades with strategies to dismantle the fast fashion regime, one stitch at a time.

1. ILGWU Blog a digital archive.

2. Sample of ILGWU Physical Archive

SECTION FIVE: *THREADS INTO THE FUTURE*

Frau Fiber's fictional persona as a former East German garment worker offers unique leverage in the debates around fast fashion and global capitalism. By framing the work through narrative, performance, and archival evidence, Frau Fiber intervenes in spaces as a living embodiment of textile labor history. Her presence and voice make visible the global and historical continuities of garment exploitation. The future of Frau Fiber's work lies in her expansive nature. This constellation of practices reaffirms the potential of socially engaged art to operate across registers: symbolic, fictional, historical, pedagogical and possibly legislative. Frau Fiber's trajectory demonstrates how performance, when coupled with making and activism, can challenge global capital while constructing infrastructures of care. Frau Fiber's work stitches together actions, archives, residencies, animations, ships, and community threads of labor that resist unraveling. The rebellion is no longer bound to a single persona or collective; it is now woven into the fabric of cultural memory and future possibility.

The next iterations of Frau Fiber and her actions are grounded in the archive, and the infrastructures they engender continue to generate meaning, critique, and collaborative labor that binds historical memory to contemporary practice. Frau's *Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms* is now located on the banks of the Mississippi River at 5700 Royal Street, New Orleans, LA. The archive stands as the material anchor for this research. Its holdings (uniforms, aprons, banners, communiqués, and Faux Frau ephemera) are pedagogical and performative tools that take the work into its

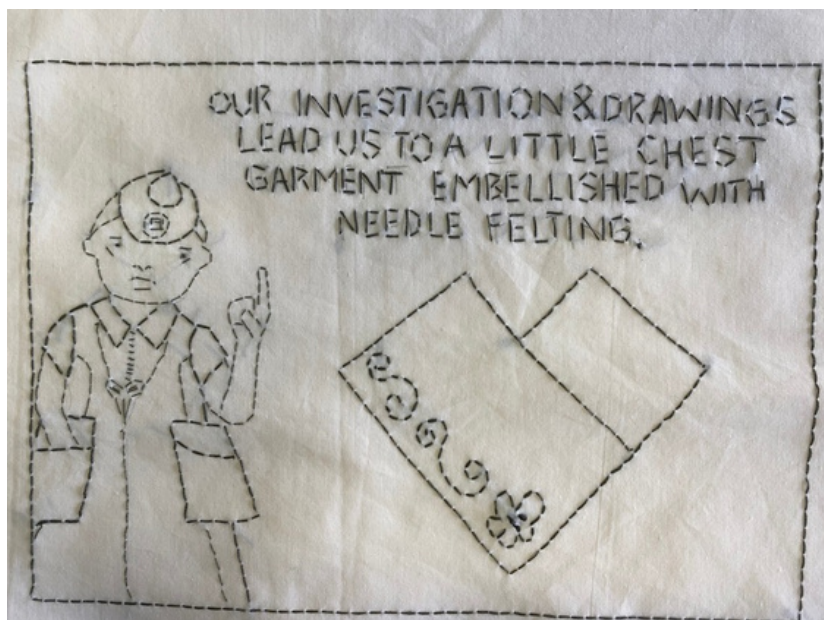
next phase as a fellowship program for fiber and textile artists, writers, labor activists, and archivists. Participants will be invited for 2- to 3-month engagements with the collection, the garden and the house. These fellows will allow practitioners to creatively respond to the archive, producing new works that circulate back into both scholarly and public realms. The residencies thus transform the *ILGWU Archive* into a “living laboratory” of labor history and creative resistance, activating a cycle where past performances of resistance inspire new acts of defiance and care. The fellows will expand the *ILGWU*’s role within larger discourses of labor history and socially engaged art. The archive will function as a pedagogical commons: a space where creative practitioners engage not only with materials but with each other, producing cross-disciplinary solidarities. In this sense, the *ILGWU Archive* becomes an experimental site for labor-oriented cultural production, drawing on traditions of artist-run spaces, union halls, and worker groups such as those that came together to make the historical Broadway play *Pins and Needles* (Rome, 1937).

Another future trajectory of this work lies in the exploration of graphic novels and animated media. This envisioned body of work, inspired by the East German Sandmännchen (Sandman), seeks to translate the pedagogical and ideological functions of socialist television into a contemporary global context. Sandmännchen, which debuted in 1959 in the German Democratic Republic, functioned not only as a children’s bedtime program but also as a subtle vehicle of state ideology, teaching socialist values through narrative and repetition. The comic and animated Frau Fiber series will situate itself at the intersection of nostalgia, parody, and critical pedagogy. Content could address topics such as garment-worker struggles, the history of textile labor movements, or the environmental consequences of fast fashion, all framed through Frau Fiber’s voice and perspective.

Through the series, I expect to extend the reach of the persona of Frau Fiber's beyond physical sewing circles into digital and broadcast media, engaging broader publics in critical reflection. Animation enables temporal and geographic flexibility, just as Sandmännchen traveled nightly to different contexts (from East Berlin to outer space). Frau Fiber could walk the Silk Road, trace cotton from field to factory, inspect garment factories in Bangladesh, visit textile mills in Vietnam, board container ships in the South China Sea, stand on shipping docks in China, follow freight trains across Europe, sort donated clothing in U.S. thrift stores, map supply chains through warehouses and ports, interview workers, count containers, audit production quotas, and document the movement of goods across borders. She can stitch together stories of extraction, production, transportation, consumption, repair, and disposal, translating the complexities of global supply chains into narratives accessible to multigenerational audiences. This underscores the adaptability of the persona, demonstrating that Frau Fiber can move across media, geographies, industries, and historical periods while retaining her critical perspective on labor, production, and global capitalism.

Frau Fiber's ongoing research into the Big Ship Era of global trade situates her practice within critiques of maritime capitalism. Maritime logistics are infrastructure born out of a militarized and racialized apparatus that organizes global life. The container ship, emblematic of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, embodies the compression of space and time demanded by globalization. Just in time delivery of fast fashion is only possible through this logistical revolution. By tracking these ships, documenting ports, and following the flows of garments from production to consumption, Frau Fiber

hopes to further expose the hidden infrastructures of fashion. The “Made in Bangladesh” label conceals not only labor exploitation but also the massive carbon footprint of maritime shipping, the political entanglements of flags of convenience, and the exploitative labor conditions of seafarers. This dimension of the work insists that garment labor can only be understood if it’s situated within broader global circuits of trade and extraction. Future iterations of this research might involve collaborations with maritime scholars, climate activists, and shipping unions. Such alliances would expand the scope of Frau Fiber’s interventions, linking garment worker solidarity to environmental justice and global labor struggles.



Sewing Rebellion Stitched Video Still, 2021
Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
(ILGWU) Archive

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APPENDIX

The following appendix documents significant works that demonstrate the scope of the research. Each project reflects Frau Fiber's core mission of resisting exploitative garment industry practices while activating sewing as a site of political agency, historical reflection, and collective action. These works demonstrate the performative strategies ranging from direct engagement with audiences to site-specific, research driven interventions while maintaining a consistent focus on labor rights, and slow fashion principles.

APPENDIX A: CV and BIO

A.1. Curriculum Vita

A.2. Wikipedia

A.3. Biography

carole frances lung (they/them b. San Francisco, CA) is an artist, activist, and scholar whose interdisciplinary practice weaves together textile labor, performance, and social engagement to examine the systems of production and the value of making. Their work uses sewing as an embodied research method and pedagogical tool, capable of revealing the structures of global capitalism while imagining systems grounded in care, sustainability, and collective resistance.

lung's practice is born of a multigenerational lineage of garment labor. Their grandmother, Avonel Lung, worked as a seamstress in Indiana, part of a midwestern tradition of domestic and small-scale industrial sewing. Her skill, patience, and endurance formed the foundation for lung's early understanding of textile work as survival. Following this inheritance, lung entered the New York City garment industry in the late 1980s, working as a bridal headpiece designer and

production sewer. During the 1990s and early 2000s, they were employed in the luxury bridal gown industry, where precision handwork and long hours contrasted sharply with the invisibility of those who performed it. The offshoring of their job during NAFTA revealed firsthand how trade policy displaces skilled labor and erodes the social fabric of local manufacturing. These experiences continue to inform lung's commitment to honoring the human hands behind every garment.

At the center of lung's artistic practice is Frau Fiber, a performance persona embodying a former East German garment worker turned stateless labor leader and founder of the *Institute for Labor Generosity Workers and Uniforms (ILGWU)*. Through Frau Fiber, lung constructs a living archive that merges historical research and social practice. Performances, sewing marathons, and narrations activate histories of domestic and industrial labor while reimagining the role of the worker as both producer and theorist.

Their long-running project the *Sewing Rebellion* (2006–2019) encourages participants to “stop shopping and start sewing.” What began as a monthly skill share evolved into a decentralized movement that transforms domestic textile work, traditionally undervalued and feminized, into a collective act of empowerment and critique. Acts of mending, alteration, and garment reconstruction become tools for civic engagement and reflection on global supply chains.

As Professor of Fashion, Fiber, and Materials at California State University, Los Angeles, lung combined art making, labor history, and community engagement into their art making and teaching. Their future research expands the *ILGWU* into a living archive and residency program, inviting artists, activists,

and archivists to engage with Frau Fiber's body of work as a catalyst for new forms of creative inquiry and material activism.

Rooted in generosity, radical thrift, and intergenerational knowledge, lung's practice honors those whose labor has been rendered invisible, transforming the acts of sewing and repair into a language of resistance, a pedagogy of care, and a vision for more equitable futures.

APPENDIX B - ADDITIONAL BLOGS

B.1. FRAU FIBER <https://fraufiber.wordpress.com/>

B.2. FREE ZONE REGIME
<https://freezoneregime.wordpress.com/>

B.3. FAUX FRAU TRAINING
<https://fauxfrautraining.wordpress.com/>

B.4. MADE IN HAITI <https://madeinhaiti09.wordpress.com/>

B.5. MEND AMERICA
<https://mendamerica.wordpress.com/>

B.6. THE PEOPLES CLOTH TRADE SHOW
<https://thepeoplesclothtradeshow.wordpress.com/>

APPENDIX C - ADDITIONAL WORKS

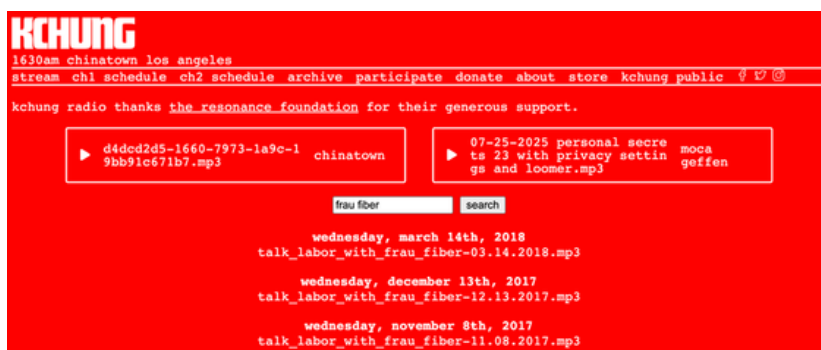
C.1. TALK LABOR WITH FRAU FIBER

A monthly radio program, hosted by Frau Fiber 2016–2018.

The show is described as a “bricolage of timely labor reports, historic folk and songs of labor and protest, the state of working-class people in America, factory tours, interviews and textile sounds.” It merges sound/audio art, activism, and labor history, weaving together music, spoken word, and field recordings from garment- and textile-related sites.

Episodes: The show appears in the LA Contemporary Archive for KCHUNG, with downloadable MP3s and documentation.

<https://www.kchungradio.org/archive?search=frau-fiber>



KChung Website, 2026
Courtesy of Chung Radio, Los Angeles CA

C.2. ILGWU PINS AND NEEDLES

broadsheet (2021-current volumes in the works)

This blog is the virtual version of *Pins & Needles* an informational broadsheet produced as needed by the ILGWU. *ILGWU Pins & Needles* Newspaper is a hybrid artifact, part union newsletter, part zine, part performance document that mobilises textual, graphic, archival, and pedagogical strategies to advance Frau Fiber's Mission: "stop shopping, start sewing."

The first *ILGWU Pins and Needles* newspaper was created for Frau Fiber's Mission in America at the Huntington Beach Art Center in June 2019. The second volume was created during the pandemic and distributed at the ILGWU in downtown Long Beach CA. the third volume was created in 2022 for Dirty Laundry at the San Louis Obispo Museum of Art. These newspapers included articles about the fast fashion supply chain, Coronavirus Capitalism, current events about the textile and apparel industry, biography about Frau Fiber, Sewing Rebellion patterns, soup recipes, and more.

Exhibited:

Frau Fiber's mission in America, Huntington Beach Art Center, Huntington Beach, CA, 2019

Dirty Laundry, San Luis Obispo Museum of Art (SLOMA) 2022
<https://ilgwu.wordpress.com/2022/11/27/ilgwu-pins-needles-volume-3/>

Press:

Long beach Post, Frau Fibers Mission in American,
<https://lbpost.com/esd/hi-lol/in-pictures-frau-fibers-mission-in-america-at-huntington-beach-art-center/>





San Luis Obispo Museum of Art, 2022
Courtesy of San Luis Obsipo Museum of Art and Courtesy of the
Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
(ILGWU) Archive

C.3. FRAU FIBER VS. THE MACHINE

A four- and half-hour durational video, shot on location at Wigwam Mills, where high performance socks have been produced for over 100 years. Frau Fiber sits on a folding chair in front of a circular tube sock knitting machine, knitting a tube sock while the machine does the same action. The video documents Frau Fiber's attempts to knit a tube sock, in the midst of the busy factory floor. The video concludes with Frau Fiber completing her sock, and adding it to the bin of ninety-nine socks the machine completed.

This video is the first in a series of three inspired by the folklore of Black American John Henry, "the steel-driving man" tasked with hammering a steel drill into rock during construction of the railroads. Henry was immortalized in stories, plays, books and songs, after fighting and losing a valiant battle against the steam-operated drill machine that took his life and ultimately replaced the jobs of black, Chinese and white railroad workers. This video series documents Frau Fiber using her white middle aged body and continues the battle with contemporary apparel manufacturing as she attempts to spin yarn, and knit a tube sock and a sweater sleeve as fast as the machine.



Frau Fiber vs. the Machine, Wigwam Sock factory, Sheboygan WI 2015
Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
(ILGWU) Archive

IMAGE WITHHELD FROM PUBLIC REPOSITORY

Archive Reference:FF-REF-005

Original Material: Installation view of Woven Histories: Textiles and Modern Abstraction, featuring Frau Fiber vs. the Machines at the National Gallery of Art.

Date: 202; Location: National Gallery of Art Washington, D.C., USA

Medium: Digital exhibition installation photograph

Description

This installation photograph documents the presentation of Frau Fiber vs. the Machines within Woven Histories: Textiles and Modern Abstraction at the National Gallery of Art. The image shows the projection of the video installation within the exhibition gallery alongside works by other artists. It is reproduced in this dissertation to discuss the institutional context of the project, exhibition design, audience engagement, and the positioning of Frau Fiber vs. the Machines within a broader history of modern and contemporary textile practices.

Copyright Status

This exhibition documentation has been withheld from the public repository version of this dissertation because permission to reproduce the installation photograph could not be obtained from the copyright holder.

Repository Note

The original image appears in the examination copy submitted to the University. This placeholder preserves the sequence of figures and maintains the continuity of the research narrative while respecting third-party copyright.

Exhibited:

Woven Histories: Textiles and Modern Abstraction, curated by Lynne Cooke, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LA CA (2023), The National Gallery, Washington DC (2024), The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, ON (2024), Museum of Modern Art, NY (2025).

IMAGE WITHHELD FROM PUBLIC REPOSITORY

Archive Reference: FF-REF-006

Status: Image withheld due to third-party copyright.

Original Material: Installation view of Frau Fiber vs. the Machines presented in Re:working Labor.

Exhibition Re:working Labor; Venue: Sullivan Galleries, School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Location: Chicago, Illinois, USA; Date: 2019

Medium: Digital exhibition installation photograph

Description: This installation photograph documents the presentation of Frau Fiber vs. the Machines within Re:working Labor, an exhibition examining the relationship between labor, production, technology, and contemporary artistic practice. The image shows the textile banner supporting a projected video installation, in which the moving image is integrated into a hand-sewn banner recalling labor standards, union banners, and workers' processional flags. The installation demonstrates the project's ongoing investigation into the intersection of textile production, industrial automation, embodied performance, and the visual language of labor organizing.

Copyright Status: This exhibition documentation has been withheld from the public repository version of this dissertation because permission to reproduce the installation photograph could not be obtained from the copyright holder.

Repository Note: The original image appears in the examination copy submitted to the University. This archival record preserves the sequence of figures and maintains the continuity of the research narrative while respecting third-party copyright.

Re:working_labor, Sullivan Galleries, School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2019).

Fast Fashion Slow Art, Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick Maine (2020) and The Textile Museum, George Washington University, Washington DC (2019).

C.4. IN YOUR FACTORY ARE THE DOORS LOCKED?

One of Frau Fiber's longest-running durational performances, **IN YOUR FACTORY ARE THE DOORS LOCKED?** was created to commemorate the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, in which 146 garment workers (mostly young immigrant women) who lost their lives due to unsafe factory conditions and locked exit doors. The performance functions as both memorial and political action, linking early 20th-century labor struggles to contemporary conditions in the global garment industry.

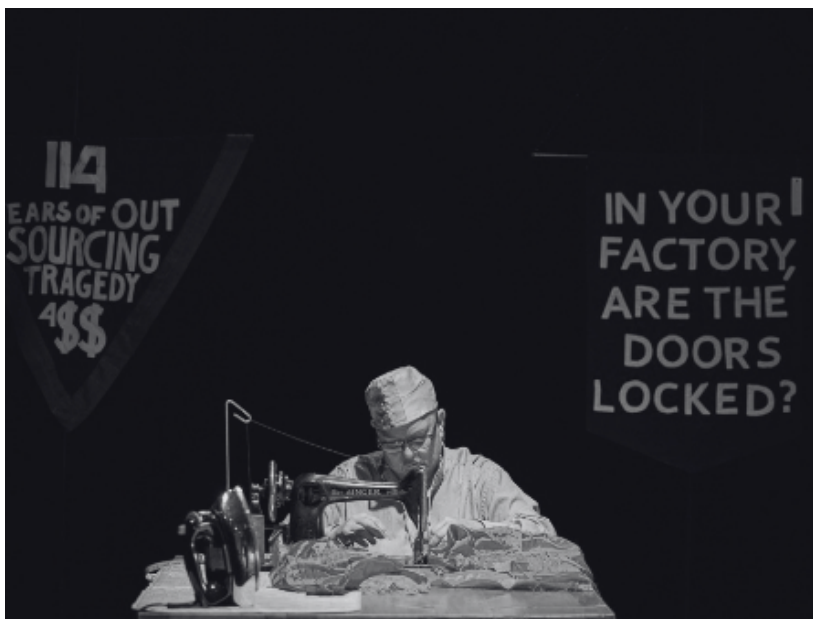
Each year, Frau Fiber re-enacts the labor of those workers by sewing 146 shirtwaist blouses, one for each victim, on a hand-crank or treadle sewing machine. The act is intentionally slow, repetitive, and durational, transforming sewing into ritual, resistance, and remembrance. The labor of making becomes a form of mourning and critique, embodying the endurance and vulnerability of workers whose lives and labor continue to be undervalued in the fast fashion economy.

The project's title poses a direct question as both historical reference and contemporary provocation: are the doors locked? It asks viewers to reflect on who has access to safety, rights, and visibility in today's global supply chains, where tragedies like Rana Plaza (2013) echo the same structural neglect of labor protections that defined the early industrial era.

Since 2011, **IN YOUR FACTORY ARE THE DOORS LOCKED?** has been performed annually as an ongoing act of remembrance for the workers who lost their lives in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. The project began in 2011 at the Los Angeles Design Center, where Frau Fiber worked on a bicycle-powered sewing machine. In 2012, the performance moved to downtown

Los Angeles, taking place in front of a Mariachi tailor shop and bringing the work into the public realm. From 2013 through 2018, the performance was hosted by the *Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms* in Long Beach, alternating between versions performed behind locked doors and presentations open to the public. These iterations explored themes of visibility, confinement, labor conditions, and collective witnessing.

In 2019, rather than performing the work, Frau Fiber traveled to New York City to participate in commemorative events honoring the victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. The performance resumed in 2020 at the ILGWU in Long Beach and continued in 2021 at the Institute's San Pedro location. In 2022, the work was presented publicly at California State University, Los Angeles. After the Institute relocated to New Orleans, the 2023 iteration took place at the ILGWU's New Orleans archive space behind locked doors. In 2024, the project was presented publicly at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., introducing the work to a national audience. The most recent iteration was staged in 2025 at Catapult in New Orleans as part of a public theatre presentation. Through each annual performance, the project continues to honor the lives of garment workers while drawing connections between historical labor struggles and contemporary conditions of work.



Catapult, New Orleans, LA 2025
 Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
 (ILGWU) Archive



The National Gallery of Art, 2024
 Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art and Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
 (ILGWU) Archive



In Your factory are the Doors Locked, The ILGWU, Long Beach, Ca, 2020
 Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
 (ILGWU) Archive



In Your Factory Are the Doors Locked, Thank You For Coming, Los Angeles,
 CA, 2015
 Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
 (ILGWU) Archive

C.5. TAILOR MADE

In Frau Fiber's pop up micro-factory and appointment-based performance TAILOR MADE, participants commission an alteration while witnessing and accounting for the full labor behind it. Set up like a transparent shop floor, Frau Fiber measures clients, cuts reclaimed textiles, and sews on a hand-crank machine in public view. Each job generates a "true cost" receipt using the "wheel of wages" (time and geography wage calculation), a work receipt, and often a dialogue about the client's clothing habits infused with a little labor history.

<https://fraufiber.wordpress.com/2019/02/21/tailor-made-pop-up-at-the-reef/>

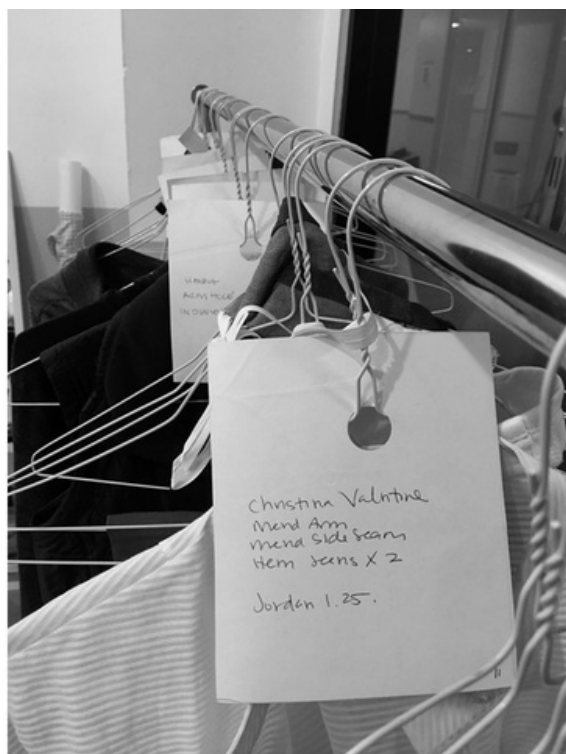
Exhibited:

Augmented Realities: Performance in Real Life, CALArts Reef Residency, Los Angeles, CA (2019)



TAILOR MADE

CLIENT	ALTERATION	COUNTRY	AMOUNT PAID
STEPHANIE	BOOT HEMMING	INDONESIA	1.41
GRACE	BELT HOLE	MEXICO	2.40
BRD	DENIM-HEM, CROTCH REPAIR	CAMBODIA	0.45
MIKE	POCKET REPAIR	FRANCE	11.03
ANDREW	DENIM JEAN REPAIR	VIETNAM	0.53
JEMIMA	BUTTON REPAIR	CAMBODIA	0.45
JENNIFER	CROTCH REPAIR	VIETNAM	0.53
DAN	SLEEVE REPAIR	INDIA	0.55





Tailor Made, Augmented Realities, 2019
 Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
 (ILGWU) Archive



Tailor Made, Camera Obscura Art Lab, Santa Monica, CA 2017
Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
(ILGWU) Archive

Press:

<https://hyperallergic.com/412606/frau-fiber-pop-up-alterations-shop-camera-obscura-art-lab/>

C.6. MADE IN HAITI

Made in Haiti is a performance research project in which Frau Fiber traces the life of a mass-produced garment then remakes or repairs it in public to expose the hidden labor, wages, and logistics behind the tag. Staged as a micro-factory in collaboration with tailor Jonas LaBase, the work moves between sewing, storytelling, and data, connecting a single T-shirt or pair of jeans to export-processing zones, brand contracts, piece-rates, and shipping corridors in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico. Audience members become consumers and co-workers: they clock time and witness each step (unpicking seams, re-cutting, resewing on a domestic or hand-crank machine). The result is a transformed garment and a transformed understanding of the labor behind the label.

Collections:

Joan Flash Artists book collection

Exhibited at:

Ghetto Biennale, Port Au Prince, Haiti (2009 and 2011)







Made in Haiti, Port Au Prince, Haiti 2009-2011
Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
(ILGWU) Archive

C.7. SEWING REBELLION CALLS TO ACTION

C.7A. POCKETS OF RESISTENCE

This participatory sewing project begins with a simple observation: many garments marketed to women, queer, and nonbinary people either lack pockets entirely or contain pockets too small to be useful. What appears to be a minor design decision reflects larger histories of gender, labor, and power. The project examines how clothing shapes our ability to move through the world, carry essential belongings, and navigate public space. By focusing on the pocket as a site of both utility and symbolism, the work invites participants to reconsider whose needs are prioritized in garment design and manufacturing.

Through Tech Packs, instructional videos, and patterns, participants add functional pockets to existing garments, transforming clothing while reclaiming space for autonomy, self-determination, and everyday use. Pockets hold the objects that support daily life such as keys, money, medicine, phones, notes, and tools. By sewing pockets into jackets, skirts, dresses, uniforms, and trousers, POCKETS OF RESISTENCE uses a modest act of repair and alteration to spark broader conversations about gender equity, labor, access, and the politics of what our clothing allows us to carry.

<https://sewingrebellion.wordpress.com/creating-pockets-of-resistance>



Herstorical Pocket

Campaign: Creating Pockets of Resistance

Style Description: Herstorical Pocket

Pocket Picking: Wage theft & the shrinking size of pockets in Womens Apparel

Retail: Exchange your leisure time for personal production

Style #:

Product Category: Upcycle

Season: Continuous

Source: <http://sewingrebellion.wordpress.com>

FABRICATION

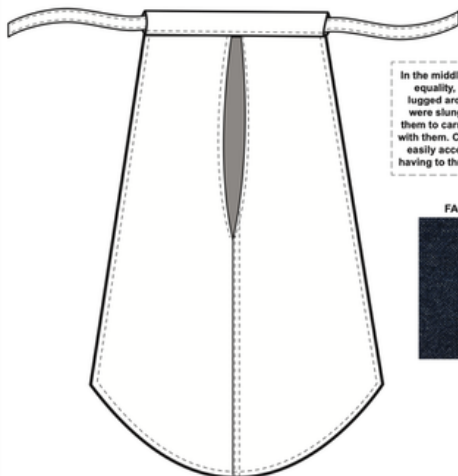
1. Denim jeans from the fast fashion supply chain

EQUIPMENT

fabric scissors, pinking shears, pattern weights, paper scissors, tailors chalk, sewing machine, overlock machine, pins and thread

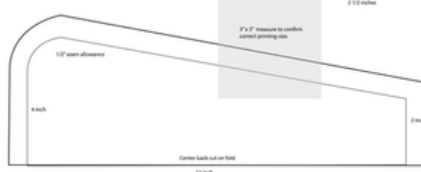
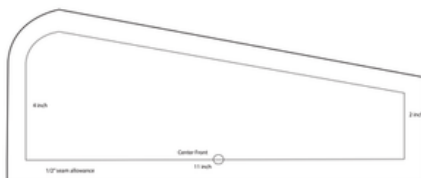
PRODUCTION INSTRUCTIONS

- Trace pattern with tailors chalk.
- Cut along chalk lines.
- Mark 1" from top, and 7" from top on front pocket piece along seam.
- Use razor blade to open seam between two chalk markings.
- In the opening, stitch the seam allowance down at 1/8".
- Pin front and back pieces of pocket, right sides together.
- Stitch from top right to top left along "U" edge, leave top open: 1/2" seam allowance.
- Trim seam allowance to 1/4" using pinking shears.
- Turn right side out.
- Topstitch 1/8" around the edge of the pocket.
- Fold back side edges of casing piece to match top of the pocket.
- Stitch folds into place.
- Stitch 1" edge of casing with 1/2" seam allowance to top of pocket.
- Fold casing over in half, and fold 1/2" seam allowance inside casing.
- Topstitch last fold at 1/8".
- Make waist tie: fold to center, fold to center, topstitch at 1/8".
- Draw tie through casing with a safety pin.



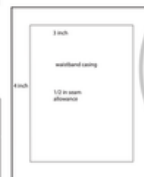
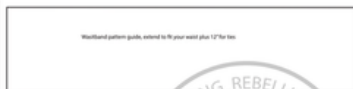
In the middle ages there was Pocket equality, both men and women lugged around little pouches that were slung from a rope, allowing them to carry any essentials around with them. Clothing had small slits to easily access your pouch without having to throw off yards of material.

FABRIC SWATCH



Herstorical Pocket Pattern

Instructional video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evNPj7Y34>



C.7B. PENNY PINCHING COIN PURSE

This sewing instruction transforms discarded fabric scraps into a practical object for everyday use. Rooted in traditions of thrift, repair, and resourcefulness, the project invites participants to reconsider the value of materials often treated as waste. By making something useful from what remains, the purse becomes a small act of resistance to disposable consumer culture and a reminder that creativity, care, and labor can extend the life of the things we already have.

<https://sewingrebellion.wordpress.com/2009/03/13/penny-pinching-coin-purse>



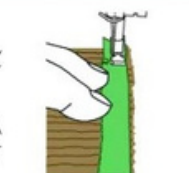
INSTRUCTIONS PENNY PINCHING COIN PURSE / version 1.0/03.09
From the Office of Textile Abuse,
Department of the Sewing Rebellion,
RD Enterprises, Inc., Free Fiber, CMO



Supplies: scissors, thread, zipper foot, pins, zipper and piece of cloth measuring 6" x 10".



1. unzip zipper



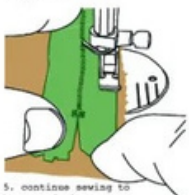
2. at 6" edge, place rt. sides together.



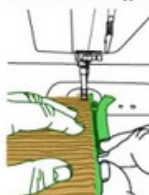
3. sew from top to bottom in the center of zipper.



4. at tab, stop with needle down, zip up zipper.



5. continue sewing to bottom of zipper.



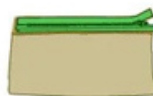
6. fold over, rt. sides facing up.



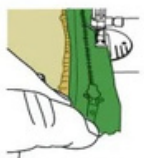
7. sew from top to bottom.



8. fold over matching unsewn zipper side to raw edge of 6" opening



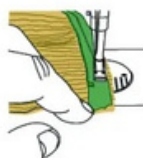
9. Line up zipper edge and raw edge.



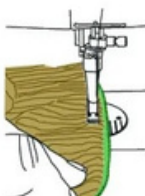
10. sew down center of zipper from bottom to top.



11. once again unzip zipper



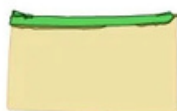
12. complete sewing from bottom up.



13. unzip and top stitch along edge.



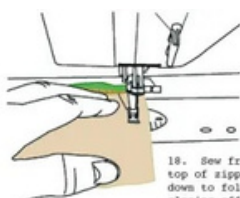
14. completed zipper.



15. Turn inside out, wrong side on the outside.



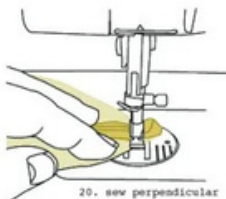
17. unzip zipper, so you don't sew it shut.



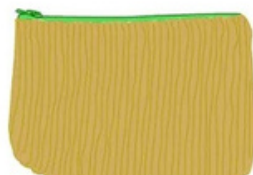
18. Sew from top of zipper, down to fold, closing off open edge. repeat on other side.



19. create corner, insert finger, making a point.



20. sew perpendicular 1/2" from edge of point, straight across. repeat on other side.



21. Turn Penny Pitching Coin Purse, right side out.

C.7C. SOVIET HIPPIE PONCHO

The SOVIET HIPPIE PONCHO Project is a Sewing Rebellion call to action that transforms surplus materials, blankets, and discarded textiles into wearable garments. Drawing inspiration from the resourcefulness of socialist economies and countercultural craft traditions, participants learn sewing skills while reducing waste and extending the life of existing materials. Part garment and part shelter, the poncho promotes self-sufficiency, creative reuse, and collective action as alternatives to fast fashion and disposable consumer culture.

<https://sewingrebellion.wordpress.com/soviet-hippie-poncho-knock-off>

https://www.projectspace-efanyc.org/omega-workshop_





Elizabeth Foundation 2019, Courtesy of the Elizabeth Foundation and
 Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
 (ILGWU) Archive

C.8. SEWING REBELLION CAMPAIGN: CLOSED LOOP: MOTIFS, MIGRATIONS, AND MISAPPROPRIATIONS.

This campaign seeks to challenge patterns of extraction and erasure. By tracing the migrations of design, we honor the makers and communities who have carried textile knowledge across generations, borders, and histories of displacement. The project investigates the often-overlooked stories embedded in garments and textiles while examining the conditions under which cultural forms circulate globally.

The campaign asks critical questions about authorship, attribution, labor, and cultural responsibility. What happens when traditional designs are reproduced without acknowledgment? How are makers compensated—or excluded—from the value generated by their cultural knowledge? What histories become visible when we follow a motif back to its source?

Rather than looking nostalgically to the past, this project focuses on accountability in the present. Through Tech Packs, instructional videos, publishing, and public engagement, it seeks to uncover the relationships between cultural heritage, and global production while fostering greater recognition of the people and communities whose knowledge continues to shape contemporary material culture. Ultimately,

<https://sewingrebellion.wordpress.com/motifs-migrations-and-misappropriations/>

Exhibited: North Dakota State University, 2019



Closed Loop, North Dakota State University 2019
Courtesy of the Institute 4 Labor Generosity Workers & Uniforms
(ILGWU) Archive

SEWING REBELLION
BANNERS
PATCHES