

Other's hands - ON

EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE

AND ENCOUNTER

Graduation Project: ***Other's hands - on embodied knowledge and encounter***

Master Education in Arts

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Dear Examiners,

This document contains the content of my final thesis. As you will notice, the design concept influences the reading experience and is still under development (a red thread throughout the document, details to signal the layers, text highlights for reflection, and a transparent paper effect). Please keep in mind that the final design may differ from the version presented here and that there will be changes by the day of the examination.

I hope you enjoy reading it :)

This publication is a documentation of the process of searching for ways to create connections across differences. It is about practices that can soften the distance between people, for a form of research that values the knowledge produced in a kitchen, in mending each other's clothing. It began with this exploration of what makes people feel at "home" within learning moments and how these learning moments can take form outside a classroom.

This is a research in layers that coexist simultaneously.

A personal one, where it holds my personal relation with certain topics. Where I come from, who shaped me, what I carried when I left Brasil and arrived in the Netherlands, and how those experiences became the questions I am still working through. It does not always move in a straight line.

A practice one, where it documents what I have concretely done during this research period. Practice happens in three contexts: Mutual Mending, FAROFFA and practice of cooking. Mutual Mending is where I invite participants to stitch on each other's clothing, reflecting on clothing, identity, and needlework. FAROFFA is an event that I co-produced in Rotterdam celebrating the culture of Brasil and Cabo Verde. Cooking reflects on serving food, the act of eating together and food as a carrier of culture. This layer is written more descriptive, close to experience.

A research one, building a theoretical framework, reference projects and reflections. This layer happens in parts as an overlap with the other layers, not apart from them. Reflection appears overlaying practice and personal texts in transparent paper. Theory does not sit above practice and explains it. It comes through practice and personal experiences.

These layers move through the publication in parallel, contaminating and informing one another rather than

remaining isolated. You can follow the personal thread from beginning to end, or read all the practical documentation first, or move through the writing on tracing paper and let it fall over the pages beneath it. It is intentional that there is not a clear linear thought process from one central question to an answer, yet a red thread that holds it together with these exercises of creating temporary spaces of belonging through gathering, celebrating, cooking, mending, stitching.

What I ask from you is to read it with curiosity and to sustain the uncertainty for a little.

The same uncertainty I have been learning to sustain throughout this process.

When I try to understand what shaped me as an educator, I find myself returning to three people before I reach any book or institution.

Marilhane, my mother, grew up not in a wealthy situation and studied her way out of it. She became a lawyer, and she raised me with a particular conviction: that if you want something to happen, you have to make it happen. Studying, she always said, is an investment of time and energy that needs to give back. From her I learned that education is not passive, it is something that you claim actively.

Araci, my grandmother, had a room in her house full of fabric, buttons, threads, and a sewing machine, where my relationship with making with textiles began. Late at night, she would sit with a very thin brush and paint decorative figures onto tea towels, small careful marks made when the house was quiet. Some days she would teach me how to cook, some other days she would show me and my sister the power of crystals and why to hug trees. She never left a marriage that was difficult. Yet she found in making and in her curiosity, forms of expressions that no one could take from her. She was my first reference of making not as a hobby or decoration, but as a moment to relate to each other.

Maurliho, my grandfather, is the oldest of eleven brothers, grew up without a father and had to work from an early age to help his family survive. He never went to school. He never learned to read or write. And he is one of the most intelligent people I have ever met. At 100 years old, he still surprises me. He explains how to raise chickens not through instruction but by walking you to the hennery and showing you. His knowledge is entirely relational, entirely embodied, accumulated through attention and experience rather than text. His way of living is evidence of his knowledge.

Research Reflection [in transparent paper]

These three figures have guided me in understanding the values I wish to cultivate: independence and agency from my mother, creativity and making from my grandmother, knowledge built through observing and doing is not a lesser kind of knowledge from my grandfather.

Throughout my practice I cultivate these ways of knowing. In the moment when someone's hands are occupied with a needle and thread and they begin to speak more honestly than they would have otherwise.

In the active way of negotiating space with others while stitching on each other. When someone plays an instrument for the first time and allows the body to learn by feeling the rhythm and observing.

Most times I cook, I start with cutting garlic.

I grab some cloves and cut them into tiny pieces, adding salt on them.

Afterwards, I think about what I am going to do, which pan I am going to use or which vegetable I am cutting next.

While my hands are busy with something else, that garlic is there waiting, with salt in the corner of my cutting board.

Tiny little drops of water come to the surface. As the time passes, they become bigger, like tears.

The more the salt stays there, the stronger the aroma of garlic into the kitchen.

That corner of my cutting board and the burning smell bring me memories and I remember why I start with garlic.

I learned this from my grandmother, who was every morning in the kitchen of our house, fuming pans with amazing smells. Some with food to eat, some with syrup, some with potions.

She told me that everything starts with the garlic in the salt. And since then, I do that.

Every time I am cooking I remember her.

I remember the classes I had from her in that kitchen. From a young age I remember liking to stay with her there. I don't remember how it started, but I remember having a beet on my hand and having instructions to peel it.

There was no order, or at least not one structured previously. It was depending on ...

It was learning by doing. It was experimenting. No books were involved, no notes, no measures.

I can follow a recipe, but nothing matches building a flavour by intuition.

By knowing through lived experience and observing closely.

Tasting.

On Research and What Counts as Knowledge

I had to unlearn something before this research could begin.

I had to stop expecting it to move forward.

Research, as I had been trained to understand it, followed a linear logic: from question to answer, from problem to solution, from uncertainty to conclusion. My mind had been conditioned to search for coherence quickly, to measure what happened against what had been imagined, to immediately construct a narrative about success, failure, efficiency, improvement. I noticed how instinctively I moved into problem-solving mode that goes further than research, but in life.

Throughout this process, that impulse became a form of interference. If I already knew where I wanted to arrive, how could I allow space for discovery? How could I sustain the moment of uncertainty long enough?

What I began to understand is that research does not necessarily move forward. Or at least, it does not have to. Sometimes it loops, pauses, repeats itself, dissolves. Sometimes research is not the act of finding answers, but of learning how to stay with a question without forcing it to resolve.

Working with groups made this

impossible to ignore. During workshops, people stitched onto each other's clothing. They shared memories of home with strangers. The statements are highly subjective and intimate. The conversations around and about identity are (and should be) constantly being changed and constructed. These moments could not be controlled without losing something essential. I became aware of a subtle but persistent pull toward solution from me, towards bending the process until it produced what I had hoped for, imagined, or anticipated. And I started to recognize this as a kind of social manipulation.

Not intentionally harmful, but still a way of closing the space too early. Wanting the workshop to "work." Wanting the encounter to become meaningful in a recognizable way. Wanting a result. But wanting something to happen exactly as I pictured it often robbed me of the possibility of actually finding something else. It removed spontaneity. It removed the art?

What became important instead was the practice of not-knowing.

This shift also transformed how I understood documentation and reflection. I am exercising seeing documentation differently than proof that something worked successfully,

or as a strategy to make artistic research appear more scientific, measurable, or valid. I am becoming more interested in documentation as a trace: a way of registering what it felt like to be inside an encounter. This is written in the present continuous tense because I believe it is the opening of the learning process for me as an artistic researcher.

The feedback sheets participants filled out after workshops, fragments of conversations, stains left on fabric, handwritten notes, the red thread in someone's sweater are not data for supporting productive results. They are keepsakes of temporary spaces. Together, they form an informal archive of affect, intimacy, and shared presence. In this sense, the research does not only exist in writing. Part of it remains in the body.

This understanding was reinforced through reading *Research for People Who (Think They) Would Rather Create* by Dirk Vis. Vis writes that the etymology of the word "theory" includes meanings such as "to see," "to spectate," and "to contemplate." Taking a step back and looking at what one is making already becomes the beginning of theory¹. This gave me permission to understand my reflections as valid, that what I pay attention and remember, what lingers

¹ Dirk Vis, *Research for People Who (Think They) Would Rather Create* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2021)

in the body are clues for building knowledge.

The practical framework I return to while reflecting on workshops comes from this learned problem-solving urge, where at first I would categorize moments into "what worked" versus "what did not work". Slowly I changed to look at "things that worked" and "things I would like to work on", inspired by "The Riddle" method from *Hands On Research*², where the reflection is divided into 4 questions: What do I ask? What did I do? What did I find? What I (don't) know?. For this publication I borrow the first two questions for clarification purposes for the multidisciplinary approach and transform my two statements into more gentle questions - what worked? What do I want to work on? The last question shifts the focus from what I judged as "failure" to what I would like to explore further.

The structure is also a reflection on research itself.

Not as a single narrative moving toward resolution, but as multiple ways of knowing existing at once: embodied, analytical, emotional, collective, intuitive, practical.

Not separate from one another. But stitched together.

² Harma Staal, Miriam Rasch, and Jojanneke Gijsen, eds., *Hands on Research for Artists, Designers & Educators* (Amsterdam: Set Margins', 2024)

Leaving my hometown in the south of Brazil was an interesting process. I felt like I was stepping out of a small, familiar world into something larger and unknown, exciting. My mother, whom I considered to be strong and fearless, asked me multiple times: Are you not afraid? This question stayed with me for a long time. Was I supposed to be afraid? At the time, I understood my decision as a desire to explore, to encounter differences, and to move toward the unfamiliar. What I did not yet understand was that leaving is not the same as arriving. Migration, I have come to realize, is about entering new spaces but also about detaching from existing ones, the ones you knew well.

Every step you take away, feels like you are stretching, and sometimes cutting, your roots. And then there is this time, you are rootless, not knowing what is even that. You feel the ends of your roots for the first time maybe, the importance of what it was attached to beforehand. It takes time to recognize oneself as displaced, and even longer to rebuild a sense of home. It takes months to understand you are loose in the ground. At least that is what happened to me.

I moved from Brazil to the Netherlands to study some eight years ago. I was living in a different continent, country, city - the difference was geographical but highly sensory and cultural. Not often numbers can provoke such emotions in me, but this one is shocking - The Netherlands as a country is 3.2x smaller than my state, Rio Grande do Sul, in Brasil. Porto Alegre is a vibrant city, with constant sound and movement. I found myself in Arnhem, where silence was striking. The absence of familiar noise, once taken for granted, became unsettling. In Brazil, the morning soundscape could be formed by the chickens of the neighborhood together with the chaotic streets where buses pass fast, dogs barking, trucks' alarm systems going off when they drive backwards, and different kinds of

birds singing simultaneously. And, of course, people talking loud, laughing but sometimes also screaming. In the Netherlands, I could hear ducks in the distance and not much else. What might be considered as calm instead echoed my sense of displacement.

This experience marked my first embodied understanding of what it means to feel alone, not in the literal sense of isolation, but in the absence of recognition. It was a feeling of not seeing myself reflected in the surrounding environment, of lacking a support system, and of struggling to situate within a new social and cultural surroundings. I could feel the language obstacle, but also the cultural, legal and institutional barriers. I was inserted in a different context and, at the same time, also being perceived as different. I became aware of myself as the Other.

Having graduated in Fashion Design and MA Critical Fashion Practices, fashion is deeply rooted in my academic background. However, my relationship with fashion is very problematic. I love it for being a tool for self-expression, for creativity, for protection. A garment can communicate and be as interesting as an art piece hanging on a wall. It can be considered an embodied art and also just something you put on today because you did not do the laundry or had no interest in curating your personality through clothes that day. I am fascinated that sometimes clothes can be so well thought through, meaningful and other times just plain mundane social construction of covering yourself.

I hate fashion for being entangled with the industrial revolution, for replacing artisans with machines. For standardizing bodies in numbered patterns. For reproducing colonial thinking, for reinforcing eurocentric views, for cultural appropriation on behalf of “diversity”. For big conglomerates snatching designs for small designers and being so rich that it is impossible for these small designers to fight for the ownership of their ideas. For being intrinsically responsible for fastening the pace of life, of the industry, of production. Throwing quality off the window in exchange of plastic glitter that ends up in the oceans and irritates our skin.

Calling what I like to study Fashion, one with a capital F, makes me nauseous.

It paralyzes me, makes me feel hopeless and anxious. Countless times I thought about letting go of Fashion, somehow I never did.

I do a shift.

I call it clothing.

The act of making as a tool.

The garment that someone reaches for on a morning when they need to feel like themselves.

The needle moving through fabric in a room where people are talking.

The thread that stays on a sleeve months after the moment of mending.

It is a language for care, for identity, for intimacy?

This is what I did not let go of. Small, relational, bodily.



During my previous MA studies, I often felt Othered by symbolic and micro aggressions that would happen from students and from teachers. It was during a higher education class when this became more evident to me. The assignment was to bring up a topic that moves us, that makes us mad.

My choice was a subject that impacted me everyday in Brasil, was and it still is highly important to me - sexualization and violence against women. In the classroom there were 2 women teachers and the majority of the students also identified as women from Europe. A strange atmosphere took over the room of irrelevancy, no clear relations to the topic and dismissive comments about my madness and pain. On that day I was told that this specific topic was not relevant to the context of the Netherlands.

My starting point for discussion was a video of a concert in Brasil, where there was a violent act during a dynamic with a female fan and a male dancer from a famous band. On that occasion, the woman was called from the audience to dance on the stage with the dancer. It started with them having fun dancing together, but the music went faster and the dancer bends the woman - making movements as he was fucking her from behind, playing with her body without consent. The woman tries to escape, but the dancer holds her strong until the music stops. While that happens, the vocalist of the band laughs at the scene with the microphone. After the audience says that the woman has a boyfriend, the vocalists address the boyfriend apologetically, but also remarking that if he did not want that happening to his girlfriend, he should not let her come to the stage.

This video still makes me mad until today. There are so many layers involved in why this video makes me mad. She was trapped in a position that she did not want to be. She went to the stage to dance and have fun. She left being humiliated, her boundaries having been crossed. She was not free to leave, there was no acknowledgement of that towards her - there was an apology to her boyfriend as he was the one offended. There was also the sentence that the boyfriend should not let her on the stage - as if she is not allowed to have fun and dance when she is in a relationship. On top of all the reasons, there is also the normalization of the notion that the boyfriend was the one in charge of allowing her or not to be on the stage to dance.

At this class in the middle of the center of this small Dutch city, there was silence among the students. An awkward feeling took over that I was touching a subject that people would rather avoid. There was discouragement from the teacher,

I was told that situations like what I brought were not relatable to the Dutch contexts, even though it was an international masters course (with the majority of the students and teachers being locals). After class, I was speaking with the only classmate that was not from the EU about how I felt alienated and she shared with me similar feelings.

Motivated to understand more of why that was happening, I started to research why certain topics were perceived as not relevant. The teachers of the master were from a specific background, working in a specific field with certain things on their mind. It felt like if you were not matching that - your research was not as valid. Or there was not enough room and interest to guide you through that.

Some months later we had a class about decolonial thinking. That class was given by an anthropologist guest lecturer about the context of a dying weaving craft in Indonesia. It was very odd for me and my classmate to have that class from researchers who were not from that context - even though we could resonate with what was being presented. We felt an urge to speak about these topics from our context and about the experiences we had by studying at that institution.

We gathered with other students from other years from similar backgrounds (from the global south). We decided to study together that dynamic and take actions to what we felt while studying in that masters. Our first action was to write a letter to the institution to voice our experiences and ask for change. In that letter we wrote about cultural dissonance, lack of plural visions, our experience of international students and the support that was actually given through that process. That was the first thing we did together as a collective and for some years we continued to explore how it was possible to teach fashion, art and design incorporating plural visions. bodily.

On Othering, Belonging, and the Possibility of Encounter

There is a moment, when you arrive somewhere new, when you become visible to yourself in a way you were not before. Not because you have changed, but because the environment no longer reflects you back. The social code such as language, gestures, sounds, humor, foods that are familiar to you are not there anymore and, without that, you begin to feel the outline of yourself more sharply. This is how I first understood what it means to be Othered: not as a dramatic event, but as an accumulation of small dissonances that together form something heavier. The concept of Othering describes the relational process through which a norm is established and difference is looked down upon.

It is not simply about prejudice or hostility, it is more structural than that. Othering operates through the assumption that some ways of being, knowing, and speaking are neutral, universal, “civilized”; and that others are particular, exotic, or in need of explanation. Sara Ahmed, in her phenomenological analysis of race and encounter, describes how the body that does not fit the expected shape of a space is made to feel its own edges, how “the stranger” is not a fixed identity but a position produced by the social and spatial arrangements already in place³. To

3 Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in*

feel Othered is to feel the weight of a room that was not built with you in mind.

More than a personal experience, it is a structural one. Embedded in colonial histories that continue to shape institutions, curricula, and cultural life. Walter Mignolo’s concept of the colonality of knowledge names the way in which certain epistemologies (European knowledge) came to be understood as universal knowledge, while other ways of knowing were dismissed as folklore, craft, or tradition⁴. Boaventura de Sousa Santos extends this critique through the concept of cognitive justice which is the recognition that the dominance of one knowledge system over others is not simply an intellectual problem but a political and ethical one. Santos proposes what he calls an ecology of knowledges: the understanding that no single knowledge system is sufficient to account for the complexity of human experience, and that different ways of knowing must be allowed to coexist, to be in dialogue, and to challenge each other⁵. The erasure of certain knowledges is, in this framework, an

Post-Coloniality (London: Routledge, 2000).

4 Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000)

5 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2014)

act of epistemic violence, one that runs parallel to the social processes of Othering. The classroom where I was told that violence against women was not relevant to the Dutch context was not an isolated failure of empathy. It was an expression of a system in which some urgencies are judged as important and others are not.

Paulo Freire, writing from Brasil in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, argued that education is never neutral⁶. The banking model of education, where knowledge is deposited into passive students by an authoritative teacher, reproduces the same hierarchies of knowing that Othering depends on. bell hooks, drawing on Freire and her own experience as a Black woman in white academic institutions, extended this into a practice she called teaching to transgress: a pedagogy that treats the classroom as a site of encounter, where knowledge is built collectively, where the personal and the political are not separated, and where difference is not a problem to be managed but a resource to be engaged⁷.

These frameworks matter to my research because they help name what I am working against and what

6 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia do Oprimido* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1968)

7 bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994)

I would like to move towards in education. What interests me is the question that comes after: if Othering is produced through processes of separation, through the construction of rigid borders between self and other, what practices might soften those borders, at least temporarily?

The word “temporarily” is important here. I am not proposing that a workshop, a shared meal, or an act of stitching can undo structural inequality. That would be both naive and misleading. What I am proposing is that it is possible to create moments of encounter in which difference is present but not dangerous, in which people are invited into a shared experience that was not there before. These are what I call temporary spaces of belonging. They are not institutions. They do not repeat with the same group. They do not produce a community in any fixed sense. They are more like spaces that open to allow something to happen, and then close, leaving something in the people who passed through them. This idea draws from Audre Lorde’s concept of the erotic as a form of knowledge and power⁸. For Lorde, the erotic is not about sexuality narrowly defined, but it is about the capacity to feel deeply, to be fully present in an experience, to know something through the body rather

8 Audre Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1984)

than through analysis alone. She argues that the suppression of the erotic is a political act, one that keeps people disconnected from their own power and from each other. When I think about what happens in a room where people are cooking together, or stitching onto each other's clothing, or sharing a memory of home - the erotic, in Lorde's sense, is present. Not as spectacle, but as attention, as presence. As the small, charged fact of being genuinely with another person.

This is the territory my research moves through: the space between structural critique and embodied practice, between the analysis of Othering and the attempt to (partial, temporary) blur these borders.

On Projects that inspire me

Golden Joinery and Margreet Sweerts

An important reference for my practice is Golden Joinery, a project by Painted Series⁹. I got to know this project from Margreet Sweerts, who was also my thesis tutor during my Master in Critical Fashion Practices. Even though I never directly experienced Golden Joinery as a participant, her work deeply influenced how I think about repair, storytelling, and the emotional and political meanings in textile practices.

Golden Joinery takes inspiration from the philosophy of kintsugi, the Japanese technique of repairing broken ceramics with gold, where the “damage” becomes highlighted rather than hidden. The project brings this idea into textiles, seeing repair as a process that acknowledges damage in clothing. In her work, mending becomes a visible and narrative act, where time and transformation becomes part of the identity of the garment.

The act of mending is about extending the lifespan of clothing and about recognizing the emotional relationships people develop with garments. Repair becomes a way of caring for objects while also reflecting on vulnerability, labour, the value we attribute to things and to people. The stitches and patches

work as storytelling as the garments have visible traces of their history and the hands that have worked on them.

Through my conversations with Margreet during my previous thesis, I was introduced to the idea that stitching, knitting, and mending are languages of knowledge exchange. The moment of crafting is a moment of storytelling, where intimate conversations can happen while the body is participating in making - which influences me till this day. For my final project of that previous Master's, I created a participatory experience where I invited people to learn how to knit together. The project was rooted in a personal narrative connected to Tecelina, a children's story inspired by a childhood book of mine. Teaching knitting became a way of building connections between participants, allowing knowledge to circulate through conversation, listening, and collective experimentation.

My understanding about needle work and reflection boarded through a performative lecture Margreet developed as part of the Feministische Handwerk Partij that I attended at Brienenoord Buitenplaats in 2024. On that afternoon participants gathered to knit, stitch, and mend clothing collectively. During the meeting, an integrant of the Feministische

Handwerk Partij read fragments of the book *The Subversive Stitch* from Rozsika Parker aloud while Margreet performed sounds, gestures, and interruptions¹⁰. The performance included soundscapes referencing sewing machines, whispered gossip, fragmented thoughts, and echoed words from the reading. Theory was not delivered, it was felt. The moment moved between humor and gravity, between the domestic and the political, between individual hand and collective history. Participants were invited to mend their work or start a new one, while listening to the class(?).

Margreet's work, the Golden Joinery and the performative work makes me inspired and resonates with the idea of using textile and needlework as a moment for storytelling and reflection. It also connects with clothing, storytelling as part of identity forming and what happens when it is transformed (in the case of Mutual Mending through an interaction with others).



⁹ Saskia van Drimmelen and Margreet Sweerts, *Golden Joinery, Painted Series*, ongoing. www.goldenjoinery.com

¹⁰ Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: The Women's Press, 1984; repr. London: I.B. Tauris, 2010). Read aloud at Feministische Handwerk Partij, Brienenoord Buitenplaats, Rotterdam, 2024

On Projects that inspire me

JOIN Collective Clothes

Another project that strongly influences how I think about clothing, making, and collective experience is JOIN Collective Clothes, initiated by Anouk Beckers¹¹. JOIN proposes a system where garments are constructed through modular pattern pieces that can be assembled, reassembled, and altered by different people. Instead of presenting clothing as a finished object designed by a single author, the project treats garments as open structures that evolve through participation. When I participated in the workshop it surprised me how this system was visually clear and accessible. The system of patterns was easy to experiment.

During the workshop, people were asking questions, helping each other, improvising solutions, and negotiating decisions together. The focus was not on achieving a perfect garment, it was about what happens when multiple hands and perspectives encounter each other. The pieces of the patterns when tied together were visual tellers of the connections that happened during the making moment and of the differences existing - not in opposition with each other, more as a “standing side by side”. JOIN felt intimate and daring because there is this feeling of losing control over the

final outcome which is interesting to me.

Later, as part of the collective NOT_____ENOUGH, we included JOIN Collective Clothes in the exhibition Ways of Caring at the State of Fashion Biennial 2022. Through our work, we questioned how colonial structures continue to shape design, education, and cultural production. Within this curatorial context, JOIN proposes making shared clothing as an attempt to reconnect people with the act of making through collective and experimental learning sessions.

JOIN is an important reference for my own research because it shows how clothing can function as a shared space where identity and authorship are negotiated in a group. It connects with stitching on each other's garments as a way to reflect on identity by the “dare” of intervening with each other's construction of the self. Clothing in my vision is both a protection and a daily performance of identity. Inviting each other to intervene creates an intimate and powerful moment such as JOIN.

The fact that the modules of JOIN are visible, exchangeable, and not finished is interesting to my practice for the attention to the process and not the result. The garments remain open to modifications, repair,

reinterpretation, new combinations. JOIN Collective Clothes visually translate fashion as a communal practice where garments become meeting points between people. This connects to what I am exploring in the Mutual Mending workshops: the garment as a space of negotiation, where intervening in someone else's clothing requires conversation, consent, and attention. The stitching on another person's garment is leaving a mark on something that belongs to someone else, something close to their body, something tied to how they understand themselves.



¹¹ Anouk Beckers, JOIN Collective Clothes, ongoing.
<https://www.thisiswarehouse.com/shop/2020-04-11-join-collective-clothes-manual>

On Projects that inspire me

The Restore-rant

In 2024 I visited The Restore-rant¹², and the experience is still very present in how I think about intimacy, gathering, and the way materials can shape conversations between people. The project was set up as a performance-dinner that you could visit in small time slots. Each group had around four to six people, and you would move through a series of rooms built inside the gallery using textiles, photographic banners, lighting, sound. Each room proposed an activity connected to vulnerability, the body, and how we relate to each other.

The first room invited us to massage each other using metal objects. It immediately created a slightly awkward situation. The group did not know each other and suddenly we were asked to touch or be touched. There was hesitation, some nervous laughter, and a lot of awareness about boundaries. But that awkwardness also worked as an icebreaker. It forced us to acknowledge each other physically before speaking, which changed the atmosphere of the group in a very subtle but powerful way. Later there was a room with a table where one person was already sitting and telling a story about nudity in that session (later I found that artists were invited to discuss different

topics in that room per session). At the end, they invited us to share our own experiences or feelings about it. What surprised me was how easily the conversation started flowing. We didn't know each other's names, backgrounds, or anything about each other, but the conversation was already there. The earlier physical exercise somehow created a form of bonding that made talking about something usually considered taboo feel lighter and more open.

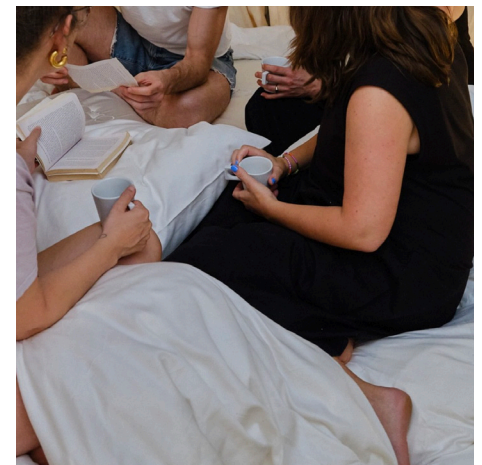
After that we moved into a kitchen space where we shared a meal together. Conversations about nudity continued but also slowly shifted into other personal topics. Eating together created a more casual but still intimate rhythm. It felt strangely familiar, like sharing food at home with people you have known for a long time, even though we were strangers.

Another room invited us to sit together around a warm foot bath with essential oils and very soft lighting. The atmosphere felt extremely calming. It created a moment of collective stillness and care. The last room was a large bed filled with pillows, blankets, and books about the body, healing, and storytelling. We were invited to sit, lie down, or just exist in the space while listening to a reading or browsing through the books. It felt like a

moment of rest after the other rooms.

This experience stayed with me because of how at home I felt. The exhibition created ways where difference was still present, but it didn't feel dangerous. Instead, it allowed connection to happen through shared experiences with the body: touching, eating, resting, listening, and talking. It is an example of how an intimate space can be constructed through materials (textile, food, sound, smell, lighting) and performative actions (massaging, touching, talking, washing feet).

The knowledge produced exists in the experience of having been there, having been touched, having shared a meal with strangers who did not remain entirely strange. My practice through Mutual Mending and FAROFFA do not produce objects that can be exhibited or propositions that can be summarized. They produce moments in which people encounter each other differently than they would have otherwise. The garments that carry a red thread stitched by someone else's hand, the meal whose recipe travelled from Brasil or Cape Verde, the memory of home shared in a circle with people you did not know an hour before: these are the forms my research takes.



pictures from The Restore-rant, retrieved from project's instagram page

¹² Michelle Woods, Anne Kluytenaat, The Restore-rant, performance-dinner, Garage Rotterdam, Rotterdam, July 2024.

PRACTICE THROUGH COOKING

A package of farofa wrapped in a plastic bag, the bottle of cachaça tucked between clothes, erva mate on vacuum containers. Often when I travel from Brazil to the Netherlands, there is food in my suitcase. This is not something particular about me, often other migrants travel with ingredients that are important for them to feel grounded. It is different from bringing a snack to travelling, it is a way culture travels through food, the way flavour carries memory across distances that language sometimes cannot cross. Moving to the Netherlands, I did not bring much, but I brought the knowledge of how to cook, and slowly I understood that this was one of the most important things I could carry.

I come from a country where food is central as a language of care, celebration, and identity. Cooking was not something I decided to make part of my practice. It emerged naturally, as the most intuitive way I knew to introduce my culture to others and to create a feeling of welcome in spaces that did not always feel welcoming to me. I learned to cook without a curriculum. I can follow a recipe, but nothing matches building a flavour by intuition, by knowing through lived experience and close observation.

My grandmother did not write recipes down. What she held was embodied, relational, accumulated over a lifetime of cooking for people she loved. I carry it the same way: in my hands, in my nose, in the memory of watching her work and watching others along the way.

Cooking became central to my practice through FAROFFA, where I work simultaneously as cook and cultural producer. Serving food at FAROFFA is part of the cultural programming. When someone asks what Cachupa is, or what goes into Moqueca de Banana, the answer is also a story: about Cape Verde, about Brazil, about the histories and geographies that shaped these dishes. Through food, culture can travel. Through a question about an ingredient, a conversation can begin that would not have started otherwise.

During 2025, I began working as a private chef for an architect's office. I mention this because my relationship to what I used to call my side job has shifted. The more creative freedom I have, and the more food functions as a carrier of culture, the more I understand cooking as a genuine part of my artistic practice. Cooking for them became a way of nurturing connections between people, gradually becoming an act of belonging. Food has a primal

function of fueling our bodies, has a strong connection to memory, care, pleasure, telling stories and how we value our nature. These are all research topics for me and serving/sharing/cooking food helps me navigate through that.

At the end of 2025 I was invited by OASE Kantine to be a guest chef for two weeks. They asked me to cook a dish and tell its story. I chose to cook feijoada: a classic Brazilian black bean stew whose history is inseparable from the history of slavery in Brazil, and whose presence on the table carries that weight alongside its warmth. The story of feijoada and my connection to it is included in the appendix. Through the Oase Kantine experience I began to understand my choices as a cook more clearly: what I cook is not neutral, and the stories behind the dishes are as important as the flavours themselves.

Cooking and serving food creates a situation in which people come together around something made with care, and in that coming together something else becomes possible. The barrier of intimacy between people softens when there is food on the table. Taste brings up memories. The warmth, the

smell, the act of being nourished, the pleasure of eating e opens a conversation that a more formal setting would not. Someone mentions a recipe they made once with a friend. Someone else describes what was special about eating when they were growing up, and who was cooking, and what that relationship was. From a simple act of eating, it is suddenly possible to go somewhere much more personal. Food helps with creating temporary spaces where people can encounter each other with less distance, where difference is present but not threatening, and where the feeling of being at home, even if temporarily, becomes possible.

On Embodied Knowledge, the Erotic, and Learning Through Encounter

There is a kind of knowledge that does not begin in a book. It begins in a body, in the hands pressing salt into garlic, in the eyes watching how moisture rises to the surface of the cutting board, in the nose recognizing the moment the oil in the pan is ready. My grandmother never explained what she was teaching me. There was no curriculum, no sequence, no assessment. There was a kitchen, a task, and presence. I learned by being there, by watching closely, by doing and failing and trying again. What I carried out of that kitchen was not a recipe. It was a way of knowing: intuitive, sensory, relational, accumulated over time through repetition and attention.

This kind of knowledge has been systematically undervalued by institutions that privilege the written, the abstract, and the theoretical. One example is textile practices such as embroidery. Rozsika Parker, in *The Subversive Stitch*, traces how working with threads - once a practice shared across genders - became feminized and domesticated over centuries, coded as leisure rather than labor, decoration rather than thought¹³. The effect was epistemological: it placed the knowledge embedded in textile practice outside the boundaries of what counted as serious expertise.

13 Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*. (Short form — full reference at note 8.)

What was made with the hands, in the home, by women, did not count as knowledge production. It counted as a pastime.

This erasure is part of what my practice critiques. When I bring stitching into a workshop space, or when I cook for a gathering, I am valuing it as a pedagogical tool and manifesting that these practices carry knowledge about care, about bodies, about culture. This knowledge is legitimate, valuable, and powerful. Audre Lorde is an inspiration for me to ground this notion into written form. In *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*, Lorde argues that the erotic is a resource that has been suppressed, particularly in women, and particularly in those whose bodies and ways of being have been colonized or marginalized. For Lorde, the erotic is not about sexuality in a narrow sense. It is about the capacity for deep feeling, for full presence in an experience, for knowing something from the inside rather than observing it from a safe analytical distance. She writes that the erotic functions as knowledge: when we know something erotically, when we are genuinely moved by it, when it registers in the body as well as the mind, we know it more completely. The suppression of this capacity keeps people disconnected from themselves and

from each other. Reclaiming learning through feeling, through the body, is a political act¹⁴.

I understand what happens in my workshops through this lens. When someone closes their eyes and is guided back to the memory of getting dressed that morning, something shifts. The body remembers before the mind organizes the memory into language. When people share food together, the pleasure of eating opens something that a discussion alone would not. When hands are occupied with stitching, the guard that structures social interaction softens. These are not incidental effects. They are the method.

Skye Maule-O'Brien's concept of intimate pedagogy extends this further, proposing that learning can happen through the body, through proximity, through the shared experience of vulnerability. For Maule-O'Brien, intimacy in a pedagogical context is about creating conditions where genuine encounter becomes possible, where differences can be felt and engaged rather than only discussed¹⁵. This resonates directly

14 Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 54–55. (Short form — full reference at note 6.)

15 Maule-O'Brien, Skye Nancy. "Intimate Pedagogy: Visual Explorations of Race and the Erotic." PhD dissertation, York University, 2021. <http://hdl.handle.net/10315/38657>

with my practice: I am not trying to talk about Othering abstractly. I am trying to create situations in which people encounter each other across differences and feel, temporarily, that the distance between them can be dissolved, diluted, blurred.

I am aware that I am not neutral in these situations. I design the exercises. I wrote the script for the guided meditation. I decide what food to cook and in which language to write the menu. I choose which red thread to use. These decisions shape what becomes possible in the room.

Marit Dewhurst in *Teachers Bridging Difference*¹⁶ writes that art education at its most powerful does not transmit knowledge from one person to another, it creates the conditions for people to encounter each other across difference and, in doing so, to expand what they thought they knew. The educator is not the source of meaning but the "setter" of the situation: someone who arranges the "sources" (this meaning physical materials, but also cultural performances, food, reading theory, stories), space, and invitation in such a way where intimate learning is possible. This framing has been central to how I understand my own

16 Marit Dewhurst, *Teachers Bridging Difference: Exploring Identity with Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2018).

role, how my practice is shaped
and the connections between how
I operate at Mutual Mending and at
FAROFFA.

What I propose is a situated
facilitation. The learning that emerges
in my workshops is not directed by
me, but it is shaped by conditions
I have built. Yet, what happens
between people is theirs when the
stitching begins, the food is shared
and memories surface. A similar thing
happens at FAROFFA, the setting
is curated for collective embodied
learning to happen, but how it is
indulged is up for the people who
attend. When difference softens in
those moments, people encounter
worldviews that were not previously
available to them and for me that is
what learning is about.

EARLY EXPLORATION

MAKING A SKIRT TOGETHER AND WHAT THE FUNK?

Two Workshops That Changed Direction

Not every experiment leads where you expected, and that is not a problem. Making a Skirt Together and What the Funk? A Textile Exploration of Baile Funk are two workshops I developed during this research period that redirected the research.

MAKING A SKIRT TOGETHER

(May 2025) began from a question about collective ownership, whether making a garment together could resist the logic of individual identity construct. Participants chose roles, cut fabric, sewed, and made decisions together. The skirt was meant to be shared between them afterward.



Participant trying the skirt at MEiA classroom, July 2025, Piet Zwart



MEiA Cohort making a skirt together, May 2025, Piet Zwart



Interventions on the collective skirt at MEiA classroom, July 2025, Piet Zwart

Practice Reflection [in transparent paper]

What did I ask? Can making a garment together resist the logic of individual ownership that drives dominant fashion systems?

What did I do? I facilitated a workshop where participants chose roles, cut fabric, sewed, and made decisions together toward a skirt that was intended to be shared between them afterward.

What worked?

The workshop made it possible to test the collective-making aspect of my practice in a concrete way.

The experimental quality of the activity created space for genuine negotiation between participants.

Their reflections produced something more interesting than what I had planned for: a conversation about the nature of sharing. According to the group, sharing should not be imposed, that it rarely happens equally, and that assuming automatic collectivity is itself worth questioning.

What I would like to work on?

The skirt was too complex an object for the time available. The task division ended up feeling more industrial than intended, closer to a production line than a shared act of making.

A simpler object, a tote bag or a scarf, would have allowed more focus on the relational process rather than the pressure of finishing the garment.

I also underestimated the number of sewing machines needed to support genuine collective work.

What this workshop clarified most clearly is that I am more interested in what happens between people during the making than in what happens to the object afterward. The skirt not being finished hardly mattered. The object was always a tool for encounter.

EARLY EXPLORATION

MAKING A SKIRT TOGETHER AND WHAT THE FUNK?

Two Workshops That Changed Direction

WHAT THE FUNK?

(November 2025) came from my own fascination with baile funk as a cultural form that carries layers of history, body, sexuality, and resistance. I wanted to use collective embroidery as a space to explore those layers with a group.



Participants working on collective embroidery at What the funk workshop, November 2025, De Zolder



Textile explorations at What the funk workshop, November 2025, De Zolder

Practice Reflection [in transparent paper]

What did I ask? Can collective embroidery create shared ground for exploring baile funk as a cultural form of resistance?

What did I do? I facilitated a day-long workshop combining an introductory thread exercise, collective embroidery on a shared fabric, and discussion of baile funk as a starting point for reflecting on body, shame, and cultural erasure. I cooked food as part of the gathering and read aloud my personal connection to funk to contextualise why it matters to me.

What worked?

The opening exercise of choosing a thread to introduce yourself created intimacy and vulnerability within the group quickly. Small physical gestures, when well framed, dissolve barriers between people faster than conversation alone. Food being part of the gathering contributed to conviviality.

The collective fabric generated genuine curiosity, particularly the discovery that the underside looked completely different from the top, a visual metaphor I want to return to.

What I would like to work on?

The baile funk context did not create shared ground. Without existing references to the genre, I found myself explaining rather than exploring, which is not where I want to be as an educator.

The workshop carried one layer too many: learning embroidery, engaging with complex social topics, and collective making all at once was too much for a single afternoon. The space also needed to be warmer and more comfortable for the length of time people were sitting on the floor.

The textile ended up documenting individual experiments rather than the conversations of the afternoon.

Practice Reflection [in transparent paper]

What I understood afterward is that baile funk was functioning as a medium for my own reflections rather than as a genuine entry point for collective questioning at that moment. The questions it raises about body, sexuality, shame, and cultural erasure are questions I care about deeply. But in this context they needed a different form, or a different moment. What both workshops together clarified is that my research lives most fully in the space of relation: in the encounter between people, in the softening of distance between self and other. The theme, the object, the cultural reference are all tools.



Raven van der Steen showing her embroidery work at What the funk workshop, November 2025, De Zolder



Participants eating and stitching at What the funk workshop, November 2025, De Zolder



Participants exploring embroidery together at What the funk workshop, November 2025, De Zolder

STITCHING ON EACH OTHER

November 2024, Practice and Research Seminar, Piet Zwart Institute

The workshop took place within the course Practice and Research Seminar at Piet Zwart Institute. The group was made up of my fellow students, people I knew, who knew each other, and who were already familiar with working together in experimental formats. That familiarity mattered, and I want to be honest about it: the conditions were relatively safe ones to try something new.

I set up the space beforehand. Cushions and pillows on the floor arranged in a circle, moving away from the structure of a classic classroom. The intention was to create a sense of equality and openness from the start, no chairs, no table, no clear distinction between who was leading and who was participating.

I opened by introducing my own background: studying fashion design in Brasil, initially drawn to color, texture, and making, and becoming disappointed with fashion serving the market more than self expression. More and more I searched for what fashion does socially and culturally, how it constructs identity, how it produces belonging and exclusion. From that personal framing, I introduced the central question of the workshop: why do we wear what we wear?

To get the participants to be present in the moment and be aware of the feeling of clothes, the first exercise I proposed was a short guided meditation. I asked participants to close their eyes, breathe, and mentally return to that morning into the moment of getting dressed and standing in front of the mirror. I asked them to identify one item they were wearing that day that made them feel most like themselves. It could be chosen for any reason: a color, a fabric, a fit, a memory attached to it, something that helps them hide or expose themselves. When they opened their eyes, each person shared their item and briefly explained why they had chosen it. This moment worked well. People were attentive and willing to share something personal. The room had a particular quality after it, more open, more present than at the start.

The workshop then shifted into a theoretical frame. I read a passage by Anja Aronowsky Cronberg, editor of *Vestoj: The Journal of Sartorial Matters*¹⁷, which reframes fashion not as frivolous but as a play of power. This introduced a key duality: fashion as a tool for self-construction, and simultaneously, a mechanism for producing “the Other.” I talked about Othering as a process that everyone participates in, both as subject and as object, and invited participants to sit with that honestly rather than defensively about the roles of being othered and othering.

¹⁷ Anja Aronowsky Cronberg, “Editor’s Letter,” *Vestoj: The Journal of Sartorial Matters*, no. 8, “On Authenticity” (2017), 8

A second meditation followed. This time I asked participants to focus on the materiality of what they were wearing, the fabric, the stitches, the seams, the hands that had made it. When they opened their eyes, I handed each person a needle already threaded with red thread and asked them to find someone whose garment they could stitch onto, preferably the item they had just described. When guiding the exercise, I make sure to say that if someone does not feel comfortable with letting someone interfere with their clothing, I had brought some of my clothing that they were welcome to stitch on if they liked. Also, when stitching on each other, there should be a negotiation between them - not an imposed interference, but based on respect and conversing about each other’s wishes.

The group said yes. Not without hesitation - but that was the “friction” I was looking for. The moment where this self is challenged. People turned to each other, asked where on the garment they could stitch, and began. The conversations that happened during the stitching were noticeably different from those at the start of the session, quieter, more personal. Having hands occupied with something seemed to make talking easier. Eyes were on the fabric rather than on each other, and something in that created more room for honest exchange.



Workshop "stitching on each other" november 2024, Practice and Research Seminar, Piet Zwart Institute

Research Reflection [in transparent paper]

After the workshop, I noted what had worked and what I wanted to develop. The circle, the meditation, the personal sharing before the physical activity had created a good foundation for the stitching exercise. Integrating written theory into the session had been less interesting: some participants found the reading useful, others found it interrupted the flow of the grounding experience. This is something I continued to work on in later iterations, moving toward a more embodied and narrative way of introducing theoretical ideas rather than reading directly from a text.

What stayed with me most came afterward. In the weeks and months following the workshop, I noticed that colleagues were still wearing the garments with the red stitches on them. Nobody had removed them. Some mentioned they had considered it and decided not to. The stitches had become a kind of token of the workshop and of that exchange with the other - a physical trace of a shared moment that people chose to keep. This was not something I had planned for or anticipated. It became one of the clearest indicators that something meaningful had happened, not a note on a feedback form, but a thread still present on a garment being worn in ordinary life.



Stiches from me to Mariana on november 2024, Practice and Research Seminar, Piet Zwart Institute

Research Reflection [in transparent paper]

What did I ask? Can collective stitching disrupt the mechanisms of Othering and can a garment become a site where the boundary between self and other is negotiated rather than fixed?

What did I do? I designed a workshop that moved from guided meditation to storytelling to a direct physical act: stitching onto each other's clothing with red thread, with consent, in conversation.

What worked?

Storytelling was commented as something that was pleasant and it helped to contextualize my background was important to contextualize the exercise and my critiques about Fashion and the market. To direct the attention to the social function of clothing. The willingness of the group was immediate and generous. Everyone was up to participating in stitching on each other. The stitching created a quality of conversation that had not been present before: quieter, more honest, opened by the occupation of the hands. The stitches, months later, are still being worn. Guided meditation worked well to ground participants.

Research Reflection [in transparent paper]

What I would like to work on?

I do not know how much of what the workshop opened was specific to this group, who already knew each other and shared a context. I want to understand whether the same willingness is possible with strangers.

If not reading a theoretical text, how can I explain what I am meaning with clothing being a construction of the self and a process of exclusion?

The prompts for conversations during stitches were not clear thought through. A conversation started for the mending should be through: which discussions or conversations I would like to encourage?



MEiA cohort stitching on each other on november 2024, Practice and Research Seminar, Piet Zwart Institute

MUTUAL MENDING AT FAROFFA

18 April 2026, De Zolder, Rotterdam

This workshop was at FAROFFA, on the day of this workshop, I was also cooking, organizing the environment, the person welcoming people at the door, selling food, making sure the program ran on time, and occasionally taking pictures. I want to name that from the start because it shaped some conditions on how the workshop happened: when it happened, who participated, and the difficulty of trying to slow down and be present at an event that requires a constant overview mindset. The key distinction of this workshop was the choice to speak about Otherness in my own words instead of reading theory from an author, through experience rather than text.

The edition started at 13:00. I had deliberately not communicated a fixed time for the workshop, giving myself room to begin when enough people had arrived and the atmosphere had settled. Around 16:00, before the first dance performance was due to start, I found two people who were willing to participate. They did not know each other. I decided to work with just the two of them rather than waiting for a larger group, and that decision turned out to be the right one.

We found a quieter corner of the space. Around us, FAROFFA was happening with music, movement, people arriving and greeting each other. The workshop was taking place inside something larger and louder, which created its own kind of pressure: I was aware throughout that my attention was divided, that part of my mind was tracking the event rather than being fully present with the two participants in front of me.

I introduced myself and my background in fashion, my interest in clothing as a carrier of identity and culture, and what the workshop was about. To create presence, I asked them to close their eyes and guided them through a short meditation: to breathe, to picture the moment of getting dressed that morning or before coming to the event, and to identify one item of clothing that had helped them feel themselves. When they opened their eyes, they shared what they had chosen and why.

One participant described a coat that had nothing especially remarkable about it, they said, but it was their reliable coat, the one they reached for when they needed to feel comfortable and put together. The other described a long-sleeved shirt with a pattern made in collaboration with an artist, something about the way

the pattern continued from the front through to the sleeves that pleased them every time they wore it.

After sharing the items, I introduced the next part: I asked them to close their eyes again and picture a place where they had felt at home. Not to share it yet, just to hold it in the mind. Then I placed a needle threaded with red thread into each of their hands and explained what I was asking: to stitch onto each other's chosen garment, and while doing so, to share the memory they had just pictured.

There were questions and hesitations before they began. One asked: what if someone does not want to be stitched? I answered that the conversation itself (the negotiation, the refusal if it came) is already interesting for the research, for reflecting on what it takes to dissolve these borders between people. The other asked what they should create. I said there was no expectation about quality or form, and that the memory they were holding might give them something to work from. They checked with each other, confirmed they were both willing, and reassured each other that whatever was stitched could be undone later if they wanted.

They began stitching and began talking. One shared that the last time they had felt at home was during a difficult trip when visiting their grandparents' house after the grandparents had passed away, going with their mother and siblings to help sort through everything. At some point during that trip, they had moved the dinner table outside into the garden and sat together in the afternoon sun. The grandparents had been somewhat strict; putting the table outside was not something they would have done. It felt, the participant said, a little rebellious, and also freeing.

The other participant described their grandmother's living room, a space that was always full of noise and movement, people watching television, their grandmother cooking, a general chaos that had always felt, to them, like home. Some links between the two memories started to form - the stories were about family and grandparents, somehow rebellion, chaos, being together. The participants noticed this themselves and began talking about it while they stitched.

I stepped back and let the conversation unfold, returning a few minutes later

MUTUAL MENDING AT FAROFFA

18 April 2026, De Zolder, Rotterdam

to help with some knots that had formed in the thread. When I came back again, one was finishing and the other was nearly done. In a collective reflection afterward, both said the experience had been more intimate than they expected. One said the meditation could have been longer, that it had helped them feel grounded and present, and that it was worth taking more time for. One noted that stitching means making a hole in something, that there was something slightly risky in that, and that it had required a willingness to trust. Once it was done, neither of them wanted to undo it.



Participants negotiating interferences on each other during Mutual Mending at FAROFFA, 18th of April, 2026



Participants beginning the stitches during Mutual Mending at FAROFFA, 18th of April, 2026



Participants stitching on each other at Mutual Mending at FAROFFA,
18th of April, 2026

Research Reflection [in transparent paper]

For me, the workshop was important to test how this atmosphere of intimacy could work with strangers. that the willingness I had seen in the first iteration, with people who already knew each other, was not dependent on prior familiarity. It also confirmed something about scale: with two people, the conversations were more immersive and more focused than they had been in the larger group. Something about the intimacy of one-to-one exchange, even within a shared exercise, allowed the workshop to go somewhere quieter and more personal.

What I was not able to do well that day was be fully present. I helped with knots and checked in when I could, but my attention kept moving toward the event around us. This is a tension I have not resolved: FAROFFA is one of the most important contexts for my practice, but it is also a context in which I carry too many simultaneous responsibilities to give the workshop the attention it deserves. The research happened, and it produced something real. But I was aware throughout of what it might have been if I had been able to simply be there.



Participants showing the stitches made during Mutual Mending at FAROFFA, 18th of April, 2026



Participants showing the stitches made during Mutual Mending at FAROFFA, 18th of April, 2026

Research Reflection [in transparent paper]

What did I ask? Can the Mutual Mending format work with strangers, outside a controlled workshop setting?

What did I do? I ran the workshop with two participants who did not know each other, in a quieter corner of an active event. I guided them through a meditation, asked them to share a chosen garment and a memory of home, handed them needles threaded with red, and invited them to stitch onto each other's clothing while sharing their memories.

What worked?

The format works with strangers. The willingness was there without prior familiarity.

With just two participants the conversation was more immersive and focused than in the larger group iteration.

The memories that surfaced both circled around grandmothers, family, a particular quality of being together. The memories found each other naturally during the stitching.

Neither participant wanted to undo what had been made. They wanted it as a keepsake to their interaction and that day.

Research Reflection [in transparent paper]

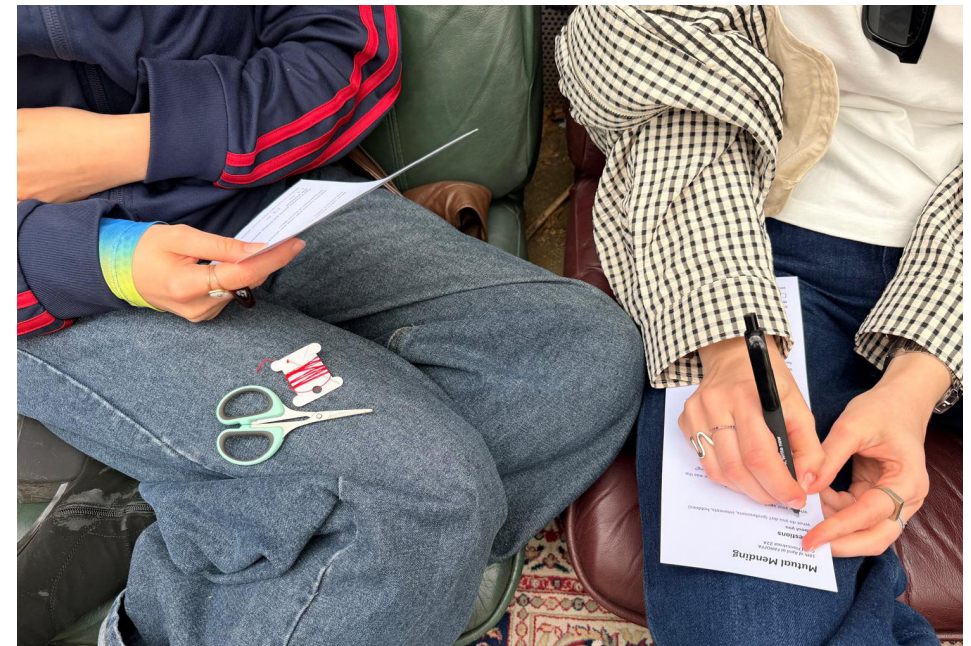
What I would like to work on?

I do not know what the workshop would have been if I had been fully present in it. The divided attention was real and it had an effect I cannot fully measure.

I also do not yet know whether the intimacy of this iteration was specific to the one-to-one format, or whether a slightly larger group could reach the same quality of exchange. The next iteration I would like to work on that.

The participants asked for the meditation to be longer. They said it was a grounding experience that deserves more time.

Feedback sheet - designs into a different way, more personal that goes together with this idea of welcoming, vulnerability and intimacy.



Participants writing feedback from Mutual Mending at FAROFFA, 18th of April, 2026

MUTAL MENDING AT CONVERSAS

6 May 2026, TENT Rotterdam

Conversas is a biweekly series of informal gatherings hosted at different locations around Rotterdam, built around exchange about people bringing projects, stories, and ideas into conversation with each other. I was invited to participate in an edition hosted at TENT, an institution where I work as part of the public engagement team on a freelance basis. It felt like a good context: an audience already oriented toward open exchange, a space I knew well, and enough distance from the pressures of producing an event to be more fully present in the workshop itself or to find a group where it is possible to text exercises with. Throughout the course, if you are not inserted in an institutional environment, it is quite challenging to find an audience because you need space and time to build community. Conversas already have this community and their gatherings have a good attendance. On that night, 9 people participated in Mutual Mending.

In preparing for this iteration I made two significant changes based on what the previous workshops had taught me. The first was to give the meditation more time and sustain the silence within a group for this moment of grounding to happen. This change came from the participants' reflections and from this instinct that the workshop works best when it stays close to the body and to personal experience, and that anything which interrupts that (a formal reading, a rushed meditation) creates distance rather than closing it.

I also cooked. The dish was a cassava soup with a mushroom garnish. It was vegan and gluten free, chosen for dietary accessibility, though one participant could not eat it because of garlic, which I find ironic considering my text of "Garlic Hands". It was a gentle reminder that accessibility for all might be a naive ambition. Better to think about adaptability and negotiation. The cassava is a root vegetable, and roots had been present in my thinking for some time in my writing about migration and displacement. Farofa, which gives FAROFFA its name, is made from toasted cassava flour. The mushroom garnish came from an earlier assignment in my previous master's in 2018, where it was asked to make a dish explaining who you are. I wrote a short poetic piece about me and a mushroom that I thought it would be nice to revisit (on appendix). Bringing these two things together felt right: a dish that was inspired by roots, earth and serving vulnerability on the plate.

The workshop followed the structure I had developed across the previous iterations. Participants were guided through a meditation (to help them feel grounded), asked to identify a garment that helped them feel themselves (as a self-reflection exercise), invited to share that with the group (a way to encourage share vulnerability) and then handed needles threaded with red and asked to

stitch onto each other's clothing while sharing a memory of home (to inspire loosening the barriers between people and their differences, to negotiate space with "The Other", to interfere and let be interfered with "The Self", to have a different type of dialogue when the hands are busy with something else). With the addition that at the end we were eating together (a tool for conviviality and a way for me to give back as a researcher to the participants of this research that help to produce knowledge). They are elements (apart from the making) that are base for my practice.

Different from the first workshop with a larger group where they stitched on each other in the circle, this one the stitching happened in smaller groups. I believe this happened because the sharing of their clothing item also happened in smaller groups. This decision was made by me for time saving purposes (which is part of real life conditions). Yet, there were several different types of exchange within that format, it was visible by the way they were giving and taking space from one another when stitching on their garments. Two participants found each other and went somewhere personal and open together. They had not met before, came from different countries, belonged to different age groups, and presented differently in terms of gender. Watching them was, genuinely, beautiful. One person was stitching the other person's pants. The person wearing the pants had their leg resting on the sewer's lap while they stitched, leaning against the other person's shoulder. They talked while they stitched, shared things that felt private, and laughed at points of recognition.

Three other participants were busy stitching something onto their own clothing rather than onto each other's, while still talking. They were present in the exercise but had adapted it to what felt right for them. A third person in this smaller group did not stitch at all. She explained that in her cultural understanding, stitching onto another person's clothing is associated with cutting threads is a negative act, and that she had not wanted to elaborate further on this. She also worked with needles throughout her professional life and was simply not in the mood to engage with that medium in this context. More than that, she said that constructing a sense of self had been a long and important process for her, and that preserving that felt necessary. She shared with the group that finding yourself within a community is not easy, and that the boundaries of the self are worth protecting. She said that being able to say no in this context had mattered to her, and that she was glad she had felt comfortable enough to do so.

MUTAL MENDING AT CONVERSAS

6 May 2026, TENT Rotterdam

Two friends sat next to each other and exchanged their sweaters, stitching onto each other's. One of them said afterward that it had felt like holding each other in their arms, that she thought she would remember that evening and this warm feeling with her friend on other days, when she was wearing the sweater and felt the stitch. Another participant said it had been difficult to begin, they had a hard time giving permission to have her clothes stitched. They felt afraid about how it would look and chose a red sweater deliberately, so that the red thread would be less visible afterward. It felt strange at first, she said, and then it made sense by focusing on the interaction they were having.

The idea was to have a moment for distributing the new "feedback" form I prepared in a different format (more personal, almost as a personal letter) and to eat together. The time was short for that, so we ended up eating together and talking about the experience which was very fruitful. This is something to plan more carefully in future iterations: building the closing reflection into the time rather than adding it at the end. The food moment was an expression of care and it made a difference in how I wanted to end the moment. The energy around eating started already that afternoon, when I was chopping garlic and intentionally wanting them to feel welcomed, comfortable, cared for and safe.

Research Reflection [in transparent paper]

This was one of the most significant moments of the evening for me. The workshop is built around an invitation, not a requirement. The fact that someone could decline, explain their reasoning, and feel good about having done so made me feel good about the environment created. The space for no is part of what makes the yes meaningful. Not engaging and feeling comfortable to talk about it is valuable information because it gives spaces for different questions and other ways to reflect on the subject. my practice, but it is also a context in which I carry too many simultaneous responsibilities to give the workshop the attention it deserves. The research happened, and it produced something real. But I was aware throughout of what it might have been if I had been able to simply be there.



Stitching in progress at Mutual Mending Conversas, 6 May 2026, TENT Rotterdam



Participants stitching on each other at Mutual Mending Conversas, 6 May 2026, TENT Rotterdam



Participants stitching on each other at Mutual Mending Conversas, 6 May 2026, TENT Rotterdam

What did I ask? What can Mutual Mending format do with a group of people who previously did not know each other? Would intimate exchange happen? What is the role of food in that context?

What did I do? I ran the workshop with nine participants at an informal public gathering, using a revised script that replaced theoretical reading with personal storytelling, extended the meditation, and included food as part of the gathering. I guided participants through the meditation, invited sharing, and asked them to stitch onto each other's clothing while sharing a memory of home.

What worked?

The format held a wider range of responses than previous iterations and that range is the finding. Two strangers connected deeply and quickly across significant differences. Two participants adapted the exercise to themselves, stitching onto their own clothing while remaining in conversation. One participant declined entirely, explaining her reasons with clarity and care, and said that being able to say no had felt important. Two friends exchanged sweaters and described the experience as a form of holding each other. One participant chose her garment deliberately to make the intervention less visible, and found that the strangeness of the act resolved itself once she was inside it.

The workshop created conditions; what people did within them was built together.

Food was a great way to celebrate the moment and also, for me as a researcher to give care back in exchange of their attention, time and knowledge production.

Food was also an exchange moment of who I was in that context, it was an entrypoint for the group to know more about me.

What I would like to work on?

Thinking about what would be suitable for eating at that moment also led me to further reflections on the concept of the dish and relevant memories to further explore.

I do not yet know how to build the closing reflection or how to document participants' reflections from their point of view. The written form was one way, but I still have to test how that would work since there was no time on this last format of Mutual Mending.

It is very interesting to reflect on the cultural dimension that surfaced when one participant explained that stitching onto another's clothing carries a different meaning in her context.



Me serving Cassava soup with mushroom garnish for the participants at Mutual Mending Conversas, 6 May 2026, TENT Rotterdam

Research Reflection [in transparent paper]

Each iteration of Mutual Mending helped me develop my methods as an educator. The circle on the floor, the meditation, the personal sharing before the physical act, and the food carrying identity and care have become structural choices within my practice. Each element helps create the conditions that make the stitching possible. The meditation slows the body down. The question about a garment invites personal reflection before anyone is asked to share with others. When hands are occupied with something small and careful, the guard that often structures social interaction softens, and conversations move somewhere quieter and more personal. These are tools that allow intimate moments to emerge and help dissolve the distance between differences. I learned them by doing, by testing, observing, reflecting, reflecting together (peers and the group), and adjusting.

The group composition differed each iteration. Some groups knew one another well, while others consisted of people meeting for the first time. There were different backgrounds, group sizes, and contexts. I would like to continue exploring these variations to better understand both my own preferences and what works best within the format. The project remains a space for experimentation, development, and expansion.

What I did not anticipate, and what stays with me most, is that people kept the stitches. Months after the first workshop, colleagues were still wearing garments with the red threads. Some had considered removing it and then chose not to. The knowledge generated through the encounter (the conversations, the people, the reflections) does not remain in the room. It travels with those who participated, carried on the body long after the encounter itself has ended.

"When you arrive at a place and the distance doesn't matter".

FAROFFA

I moved to the Netherlands from Brasil eight years ago carrying with me culture and wishing to share with others. Michel Andrade describes himself as a Cabo Verdean that was born in this city, which is somewhat in the wrong country. We connected immediately from speaking in Portuguese, which historically connects both countries, but we discovered many other common points. The music, the way of being close to each other, being close with the family, the flavours and the food were a big match. In a way, the complete opposite from what I have experienced in the Netherlands so far. We wanted to recreate what feels like home to us and share this warmth with others.

In July 2024, on a Sunday afternoon, we opened the doors of our house to our friends to try it out. Farofa, where the name FAROFFA comes from, is a garnish from Brasil made of fried spiced cassava flour. The two letters f were added because of “Roffa”, a popular street-slang for Rotterdam. Each edition has a different atmosphere, shaped by the changing menu, programming, and location. What remains constant is a feeling of being at home, where everyone is welcome to connect and share warmth.

The intention behind FAROFFA connects with creating temporary spaces of belonging where people can encounter each other across difference. The learning happens inside the celebration, inside the pleasure of eating together, dancing together, hearing music that is new to you. In this section I am documenting some of the editions of FAROFFA and what I learned from them. On this project I am not the only one taking decisions on the format and and grows organically. For this reason, I reflect on FAROFFA differently than textile explorations workshops. My reflection here is about the learning moments that connect with my beliefs as an educator.



2nd FAROFFA, 15th of September 2024, at home



Living room transformed in a performance at 1st FMM-FA, 14th of July 2024, at home

1st FAROFFA – 14TH OF JULY 2024, AT HOME

The first edition was in our house. We had other parties in our place for family, but not like this. Part of the idea of FAROFFA is to be an event that can take the street, so we wanted to use the sidewalk in front of our house. We organized a live band with people we know are involved with music: Nando Silva, João Ortet and Teresa Bouwman. Michel and El Javier B played vinyls in our living room. We cooked Moqueca de Banana (a dish from Brasil made with bell pepper, tomato, onions, palm oil, coconut milk and plantain) and had to make three pans of rice on the spot for more people who were coming. Tamboreiras de Rotterdam played at our door as the start of the cultural performances. Tamboreiras de Rotterdam are a women-led percussion group dedicated to preserving Cape Verdean cultural traditions and celebrating the historic connection between women and drumming. There was also a capoeira performance by Edison Ponteira at the door of our house, where he asked his students to come along. In the corridor, there was a painting exhibition by Brig.Draws.

The first edition of FAROFFA had a strong impact on us as organizers, but also on those who attended. People who came to this edition said that it was a very different format of cultural events that exists in Rotterdam and asked us to do more.

Program:

El Javier B — vinyl set

Edison Ponteira — capoeira performance

Tamboreiras de Rotterdam — drums performance

Nando Silva, João Ortet and Teresa Bouwman — live band

MF Andrade — vinyl set

Brig.Draws — painting exhibition

Moqueca de Banana — food made by Faroffa

[In transparent paper]

[The first edition already carried the logic I work with in the workshops: creating an environment where different forms of cultural knowledge are present at once, where participation is invited rather than performed at, and where the boundary between host and guest is kept deliberately soft. The street as extension of the living room. The living room as extension of the community that was being created].



Street during 1st FAROFFA, 14th of July 2024, at home



Street after 1st FAROFFA, 14th of July 2024, at home

2ND FAROFFA

15TH OF SEPTEMBER 2024, AT HOME

The second edition was also in our living room. This time we already knew more or less what to expect, but every FAROFFA proves itself to be different. The programme is never the same, we try to bring different things to eat, different genres to listen to, different cultural performances.

This edition we cooked Cachupa, a Cabo Verdean dish made with different kinds of beans, sweet potato, cabbage, cassava and cooked corn. On the outside of our house, the group Sima nós é só nós performed Batuco. Batuco is an intense percussion rhythm from Cabo Verde where the drums are cloths wrapped around the thighs, with call-and-response singing and a dancer at the center of a circle. Batuco is made to communicate, to tell stories and it is now a symbol of resilience and a way of preserving culture. Because of its empowering nature and sensual hip rotations, it was actively suppressed and forbidden by Portuguese colonial authorities. Sima nós é só nós tell this story and explain why they play, inviting the audience to try the rhythm and dance.

Inside our house Sai Rodrigues exhibited his illustrations and products on that day. Sai is a Cabo Verdean and Rotterdam based artist and his illustrations bridges memory, Cabo Verdean identity in contemporary expression. Zé Antonio, who runs Barbershop Neves in West Rotterdam, gathered some friends and performed coladeira live for us in our living room. It was hypnotizing to hear them playing. The crowd got really quiet and mesmerized by the music. DJ Tavares and Afroboticismology played vinyl sets. It became important to capture these moments, so we asked a friend, Sam Nobili, to take pictures of the day.

Program:

DJ Tavares — vinyl set

Afroboticismology — vinyl set

Sima nós é só nós — Batuco performance

Zé Antonio & friends — live coladeira

Cachupa — food made by FAROFFA

Sai Rodrigues — illustration and Polon exhibition

[In transparent paper]

[Batuco is itself a pedagogical form: it teaches through participation, through the body, through call and response. The story Sima nós é só nós tells performing is an act of contextualizing cultural knowledge for a new audience. Learning about resistance through witnessing it performed is different from reading about it. This is the kind of transmission I am interested in: embodied, present, inseparable from the experience of being in the room].



*Zé Antonio & friends performing live coladeira at 2nd FAROFFA,
15th of September 2024, at home*



Participatory Batuco Performance at 2nd FAROFFA, 15th of September 2024, at home

5TH FAROFFA

12TH OF APRIL 2025, AT DE ZOLDER

This was the first FAROFFA completely open to the public outside our house, in collaboration with Osas Aghaku and Puck Peltenburg from Studio De Zolder. They started, like us, making events that bridge art and music at home: in their attic. This evolved into having a space in West Rotterdam that creates intimate gatherings where people from all backgrounds can connect and enjoy art, music, food, and culture. Around 150 people attended our first fully public event.

For vinyl DJs we asked Bart, Mamademba and MF Andrade. Edison Ponteira, together with other capoeiristas, danced capoeira in the street. Pedro Pimentel, Júlio Pimentel and their father also joined the roda de capoeira. During the afternoon, Mariana Santos, part of the MEiA cohort, facilitated a Fuxico workshop. Fuxico is a traditional Brazilian handmade textile craft where scraps of fabric are cut into circles, stitched around the edges, and gathered to form colorful, puffy flowers. Fuxico is also the Portuguese word for gossip, small talk, the passing of stories between people. Mariana taught participants to make fuxicos and encouraged them to write secrets, thoughts, and information inside the fabric circles before stitching them closed. Share created a beautiful painting where those fuxicos were placed and became a travelling art piece where we bring to several other FAROFFA editions. During the evening, Pedro Pimentel led a percussion session open to whoever wanted to join. Pictures from the day were taken by Anne Kære. We saw new faces, familiar faces, children playing, people connecting and sharing, dancing and eating.

Program:

MF Andrade — vinyl set

Bart / DJ Tache — vinyl set

Mamademba — vinyl set

Edison Ponteira — capoeira

Pedro Pimentel — percussion session

Mariana Santos — fuxico workshop

Moqueca de Banana served with rice, farofa and vinagrete — food made by FAROFFA

[In transparent paper]

[The fuxico workshop brought together everything I am interested in: textile as a carrier of story, making as a form of connection, the intimate conversation that becomes possible when hands are occupied. The double meaning of the word fuxico (craft and gossip) captures something I keep returning to: that making together and talking together are not separate activities. One enables the other. This is also the logic of the Mutual Mending workshops: the stitching is not the point. The conversation the stitching makes possible is].

7TH FAROFFA

12TH OF JULY 2025, AT OASE IN COLAB WITH NSRT

On the 12th of July we had our first anniversary celebration at OASE Rotterdam, in collaboration with North Sea Jazz Round Town - a fringe festival of the renowned NN North Sea Jazz Festival. It was a very special edition: the first time collaborating with a festival and performing in a larger venue. Throughout the day, 350 people were present.

For the afternoon program, Tamboreiras de Rotterdam and Sima nós é só nós performed. El Javier B, Wes, MF Andrade and Sanne Margarita played vinyl sets. Ripa na Tulipa, the samba-band, played in a roda de samba format with musicians in the center, audience surrounding them, no stage, no separation between performers and public. This way, there is no stage, the crowd is highly involved in the songs and they can create a very high energy concert. For the evening we expanded the program for the first time, inviting Sam Who for an afterparty. Michel and I played a funk set together for the first time. Baile funk, a Brazilian rhythm I am deeply fascinated with for its cultural, historical and social layers.

For food, it was also the first time we expanded the menu beyond one dish. We served coxinhas de jaca (deep-fried snacks filled with jackfruit), pão de queijo (cheese bread) and bolo de milho (corn cake with doce de leite frosting), with Cachupa as the main dish. The menu was written entirely in Portuguese, a conscious choice, so that people would ask what the dishes were. That question became a conversation about the food and its cultural context.

Program:

MF Andrade — vinyl set

Wes — vinyl set

El Javier B — vinyl set

Sanne Margarita — vinyl set

Ripa na Tulipa — samba band

Tamboreiras de Rotterdam — drumming performance

Sima nós é só nós — Batuco performance

Sam Who — set at the afterparty

Baile do FAROFFA — set at the afterparty

Cachupa served with spicy tomato sauce, pão de queijo, coxinha de jaca and bolo de milho with doce de leite frosting — food made by FAROFFA

[In transparent paper]

[Writing the menu in Portuguese is a deliberate pedagogical gesture. It creates a small moment of unfamiliarity for people who do not speak the language: and in that moment, an invitation to ask, to be curious, to receive an explanation that carries the story of the dish alongside its ingredients. Food as cultural transmission does not require a lecture. It provokes questions and interesting exchanges when someone is willing to answer it].



Tamboreiras de Rotterdam at 7th FAROFFA, 12th of July 2025, at OASE



FAROFFA community singing along with Ripa na Tulipa, 12th of July 2025, at OASE

8TH FAROFFA

19TH OF SEPTEMBER 2025, AT UEB

The eighth edition was at Urban Espresso Bar, a café loved from the neighborhood in West Rotterdam. Lots of regulars and we are part of them. We cooked vegetarian feijoada with rice, farofa and vinagrete de banana. We made a program where DJ Andre (a regular of UEB as well) and DJ Tavares (family of UEB) were playing vinyl records together. They have an age difference of at least 45 years apart, but united by the same love from Cabo Verdean music. We made a stage in the corner of the street and there Paulo Bouwan and Sofia Nakou played voice and acoustic guitar. They played an assembly of music from Cabo Verde and Brasil (in brazilian portuguese and crioulo) which was very interesting for creating the connection between the cultures. Júlio Pimentel from juggling percussion did a performance at the corner of the street as well, bringing together people that were passing by to participate in a percussion jam session. The energy of people playing together is something very special. Some people were perhaps for the first time touching some of the instruments - from estrangement to curiosity - it is possible to see little by little people feeling part of a group when playing together. That continued into the afterparty in collaboration with ANDA Eletronix, who mix electronic music with live percussion. Thalita D'Amore played a baile funk set.

Program:

DJ Andre — vinyl set

DJ Tavares — vinyl set

Paulo Bouwman and Sofia Nakou — live music

Júlio Pimentel — juggling percussion performance

Júlio Pimentel and FAROFFA — live jam

ANDA Electronixs LIVE (Ferré, Samwho & Ceciel Moyano)

MF Andrade — vinyl set at the afterparty

Thalita D'Amore — set at the afterparty

Inezgane Records — set at the afterparty

AFØ & DJ Ghost — set at the afterparty

Feijoada served with rice, farofa and vinagrete de banana, pão de queijo and bolo de milho with doce de leite frosting — food made by FAROFFA

[In transparent paper]

[The percussion jam that begins with strangers and ends with a group playing together is what I also try to create in the Mutual Mending workshops: a situation where people move from unfamiliarity to participation through a shared physical experience. No prior knowledge is required. The body finds its way in. From strangeness to curiosity: it is possible to feel part of a group when making something together].



Participatory Jam session at 7th FAROFFA, 19th of September 2025, at UEB



Júlio Pimentel juggling percussion participatory performance, 19th of September 2025, at UEB 95

10TH FAROFFA

18TH OF APRIL 2026, AT DE ZOLDER IN COLAB WITH MOMO

The tenth edition was in collaboration with De Zolder and Motel Mozaïque, an annual multidisciplinary arts and music festival that has been part of Rotterdam since 2001. We were excited to be part of a festival that brings so many artists to Rotterdam. Around 200 people attended throughout the day at our event.

MF Andrade and Wes played vinyl sets. In the kitchen, we cooked Cachupa, pão de queijo and bolo de milho. Grupo Flor de Esperança danced Mazurca - a traditional dance and music style that travelled from Poland to Cabo Verde through sailors, where it evolved into Cape Verdean cultural heritage with gentle violin and warm guitar. The group performed two songs and then invited the crowd to join. It was beautiful to see people of different ages, backgrounds, and cultures trying the style for the first time and having fun.

It was also the first time we had a film screening with a Q&A. We invited director Nuno Boaventura Miranda, who chose to screen his debut film Kmêdeus. The film tells the story of an eccentric character on the island of São Vicente in Cabo Verde, seen by some as a madman and by others as an artist. Through dance, music, carnival and memories of Mindelo, the film is a poetic exploration of Cape Verdean identity. People gathered, ate popcorn, and watched together. Afterward, Nuno joined a conversation about the film, about Cape Verdean identity, and about what it means to make and share that work outside its original context.

The day closed with a percussion workshop led by Krmen, a percussionist who gives Batucada classes at a Brazilian music school in Rotterdam. Batucada is an Afro-Brazilian percussion style rooted in Salvador da Bahia, a city deeply shaped by African heritage. Krmen brought instruments, taught and coordinated the group so we could play together. In that format, language was less necessary than listening to the beat, to each other, to the body.

Program:

MF Andrade — vinyl set

Wes — vinyl set

Grupo Flor de Esperança — Mazurca performance

Nuno Boaventura Miranda — Kmêdeus film screening and Q&A

Krmen — percussion workshop

Cachupa, pão de queijo and bolo de milho with doce de leite frosting — food made by

FAROFFA

[In transparent paper]

[The Mazurca invitation, the film screening and conversation, the percussion workshop: three different formats of cultural transmission in one afternoon, all operating through participation rather than spectatorship. The percussion workshop in particular worked through the same principle as the Mutual Mending workshops: learning by doing, with the body as the primary instrument. Sometimes words are not necessary to teach. Experimentation, listening and connecting with the body can be more important than language or written form].



98 Participatory Mazurka performance at 10th FAROFFA, 18th of April 2026, at De Zolder



FAROFFA community participating at Batucada workshop at 10th FAROFFA, 18th of April 2026, at De Zolder 99

FAROFFA

FAROFFA is not a workshop. It does not have a script, a guided meditation, or a feedback sheet. It does not produce the kind of documentation that academic research usually recognizes as evidence. Over two years and ten editions, across living rooms and parks and galleries and bars and festival stages, something has accumulated: a community, loose and open, that recognizes itself through shared experience. People who came the first time not knowing anyone, and came back the next time with people they wanted to bring. People who danced for the first time to a rhythm they had never heard. People who asked about a dish they could not name and left knowing something about where it came from.

For my research, FAROFFA is where several arguments become lived rather than proposed. The idea that food is a form of cultural transmission happens at the event. The idea that embodied, participatory forms of cultural encounter can create connections across difference is not a hypothesis at FAROFFA. It is visible in the person who joins the percussion jam without knowing how to play, in the couple who learn the first steps of Mazurca together, in the children

drawing on a street in Rotterdam on a Sunday afternoon.

It is important to mention that Michel and I built this together. We are co-producers at FAROFFA and the project is inseparable from this wish of recreating a feeling of home (what that entails for both of us individually and together) and sharing it with others. FAROFFA is also where I understand my own role most clearly: as cook, as cultural producer, as someone who creates the conditions for something to happen and then steps back to let it happen. I do not stand at the front of FAROFFA. I am in the kitchen, at the door, beside the food table, or somewhere in the crowd. The event does not center me. It centers the gathering. That is the pedagogy I try to cultivate: a creation of a space in which people can encounter each other, plural ways of knowing, encounter cultures that are not their own, and find that the difference does not need distance.



Stage of the 7th FAROFFA, 19th of September 2025, at UEB



Stich remains from Mutual Mending at FAROFFA, May 2026



Stich remains from Mutual Mending at MEiA, October 2025



Stich remains from Mutual Mending at MEiA, March 2026

Stitching it together

Throughout this research, I have been trying to name something that resists naming. A quality of connection that emerges when people are willing to be in the same room with difference, to stitch alongside it, to eat beside it, to find the conditions that make the vulnerability of sharing something of themselves less scary, more welcoming.

Mutual Mending, FAROFFA, cooking did not begin as a coherent body of work. They began as practices that I was not aware how they gathered. How they mend. For a long time, I was not sure they belonged together, or what exactly they were saying when placed side by side. This research gave me the red thread. It helped me understand that these three practices were always asking the same question: how to build, even temporarily, a space where belonging across distance is possible.

Naming this has changed how I understand my own position as an educator. I came into this research with a set of instincts and sensibilities I could not fully articulate. I knew I was drawn to circles on the floor rather than chairs in rows, to the moment when someone's hands are busy and their guard softens and they begin to speak from somewhere more honest, to how people listen to each other better when they have the opportunity to share their identity through material, through

metaphors, through exercises. What I did not yet know was how to call this a practice, how to trust it as a form of knowledge production. Now I recognize them as methodological choices, as ethical positions, as the inheritance of three people who taught me before I reached any institution: my mother, who showed me that education is something you claim actively; my grandmother, who showed me that making is relational; my grandfather, who showed me that knowledge built through the body and through attention is entirely valid, accumulated through experience rather than text.

Holding these figures alongside the theoretical frameworks I encountered during this period, what emerged was a clearer picture of what I am doing and why. The circle, the meditation, the personal question before the physical act, the food as gesture of care and conductor of culture. I learned them by doing, by testing, by watching what happened when I changed something, by sitting with what did not work and asking what it was asking of me. Now I look at a garment being stitched and I see a negotiation between two people about what it means to be changed by contact with another. I look at a room where people are eating together and I see sharing of joy as a bridge to identity.

The research also showed me where it

can still expand. I am a very observant person. I notice what happens in the room, if someone is comfortable with having interference with their clothing or not, how participants of FAROFFA feel about the event and who returns to next editions. However, I have been documenting mostly from my own perspective, and the practices are co-created. Mutual Mending, FAROFFA, cooking: none of these happen without the people who show up. Their presence, their decisions, their refusals, their words are part of what makes knowledge in these spaces. I want their voices in the research, as co-authorship of what these encounters produced. This is something yet to work on, and I find myself genuinely excited for it. Each practice still has depth to go. The documentation can be richer, the testimonies more present, the formats more refined. There is more to understand about what happens when the group knows each other versus when they are strangers, about what food carries in each specific context, about how the cultural meanings of stitching shift depending on who is in the room.

What I carry forward from this research is a stronger sense of my own practice and a renewed confidence in the forms I have chosen. I never felt as connected to what I am making as I do now. There is something satisfying I have never experienced before: arriving at the end of a research

process and finding that the question has become more specific rather than resolved, that the work has become more yours rather than more finished.

What I have been trying to build, in needlework gatherings, in kitchens and in living rooms transformed into dancefloors, is something that honours a kind of knowing that lives outside institutions: a pedagogy of encounter, situated and embodied, that creates the conditions for something to happen and then let it happen. Knowing accumulated through presence, attention, repetition, and care.

Each practice, in its own way, has been an exercise in dissolving the distance between me and you, between us and them, between what is familiar and what feels foreign. Stitching onto each other's clothing asks people to negotiate a shared border. FAROFFA invites people into a culture that is not theirs and invites them to feel at home in it. Cooking carries a story into a room full of strangers and asks them to taste it. None of these practices erase difference. They make it possible to be close to it, to remain there long enough for the borders to blur.

And something does shift. It lives in what remains: in the red thread still worn on a sweater months after the workshop ended, in the memory of sitting outside with the table moved into the garden, in the way two

*strangers leaned against each other
while stitching and laughed at what
they recognized in each other's stories.
The distance between me and you,
which this research has been circling
around from the beginning, does not
disappear. It becomes something you
can reach across. Something you can
stitch through.*

The thread continues.

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To MEiA teachers who built an environment where exploration was possible, where not-knowing was encouraged, where negotiation was made with care. I was constantly encouraged to believe in my findings and it was life transforming.

To my peers at MEiA. The most precious findings of these last two years was sharing this learning trajectory with you. You are extraordinary educators and amazing people who I feel honored to have you my colleagues.

To my friends who helped me on this journey and taught me that connection is not lost over distance. To the friends who helped me build a home and, for some time, lend me theirs when I was looking for one.

To people who attended FAROFFA and left with a smile on their faces. To Michel, who started this project with me and continues to believe in making it happen together.

To all the people who participated in my workshops, tried my dishes, listened to my stories and told me new ones. Knowledge comes through them.

To Araci and Maurilho.

Thank you.

appendix

meditation script

Workshop Overview - Stitching on each other
sitting on a circle - make it cozy (2 min)

“Hi everyone, I want to ask for us to make a circle on the ground. I hope that we can make this environment as cozy as possible, so I have these pillows and cushions to put on the ground.

intro (2 min)

I am here to share an introduction of my practice. I am not sure if everyone knows my trajectory until this course, but I think it is important to contextualize. I first studied Fashion Design in Brasil- mainly because of the colors, texture, shapes - the creation side of clothes was very interesting to me. Although, the school - and fashion in Brasil - was very commercial driven, too much about trends and “serving the market”, satisfying a consumer need. It was not what was interesting to me. I came here to study critical fashion practices, where I found a way to see fashion not only as a trend following eurocentric norms and fulfilling a commercial purpose. I started to understand more as a social and cultural phenomenon. I could then give more names to what interested me in clothes - or garments. The question about why we wear the clothes we wear was a fascination.

close eyes: what makes you feel you? (3 minutes)

Take a moment to find a comfortable position. Whether you're sitting or lying down, let your body feel supported. Close your eyes, and bring your attention inward.

Take a deep breath in... and let it out. Breathe in again, slowly and deeply... and let it out, releasing any tension.

Now, let your mind settle. Picture yourself some hours earlier on this day. When you got out of bed and were getting ready to come to this building, to this class.

Think about when you were getting dressed - and the choices you made.

Maybe after getting a coffee, brushing your teeth or making breakfast.

I would like you to remember what textile element / garment / piece of clothes you chose to wear today that made you feel yourself. That made you look at the mirror and think that you were somewhat satisfied with your construction of yourself.

It might be because this piece is from a colour you like, a material you like,

something that makes you feel good or comfortable.
something flattering.
something that puts evidence to a part of your body.
something that hides certain parts of your body.
or something you got from someone

That one textile piece that you choose this morning to help construct your authentic self - makes you feel you.

Now, open your eyes.

Do you have the item? can you briefly sharing what is that
>>>>> sharing round.

theory part

I want to read a small paragraph that talks a bit about fashion and its role in authenticity. This text was written by Anja Aronowsky Cronberg the editor of Vestoj - “The Journal of Sartorial Matters” in 2017.

- construction of the Self - read the text
I think about clothes as a way to differentiate ourselves and also to reflect where this necessity comes from. It is often seen as a “theater of manners”, as futile. But it can actually be seen as a play of power.

And while I was researching if fashion is an active agent in creating the self - it is also creating “the Other”. I stumbled upon a concept that talks about this -the creation of me versus The Other. and that is Otherism.

- otherism

Otherism is this differentiation that happens between the “self” and what is left. The “me” versus “you”. The “us” versus “them”. It is when people separate themselves based on things like race, religion, gender, culture, nationality. And for me, it is then what explains how racism, sexism, xenophobia happens. It is reducing someone to a subaltern category because of its differences.

It happens on a micro scale and a systemic one. I think everyone has already felt othered - and already othered someone.

close eyes:

I would like to ask you all to close your eyes again.

Take a moment to breathe deeply again, and let your mind settle a bit.

Picture again the moment you saw yourself in the mirror with this piece on.

Remember this favorite piece of the

day. Your favorite piece of the day.

Do you remember how the fabric feels?

How are the stitches of the pieces of your clothes? The line that holds the pieces of your garment together?

What color are they?

Do you know who this piece was sewed together?

Do you know who made the clothes?

Have you ever repaired it?

Do you remember the first memory of someone repairing any piece of clothes?

Who was this person?

When did you use a sewing needle for the first time?

embroidery experience

I'm going to give each one of you a needle.

I want to challenge you to dissolve a bit the borders between what's this construct between you and the other. Create a moment that this is not you vs me - but us.

The idea is that we can embroider on each other's clothes while we are wearing them - so you are going to embroider the clothes on the person on your left.

Please, remember that this is a common ground "creation" - You need to negotiate this space with safety.

Be mindful about not choosing sleeves or things around the arms - because you are going to need them to work on the intervention you are making on the other clothes.

how did you experience it? how did it feel being embroidered? How did it feel embroidering?

The Story of Feijoada with Vinagrete de Banana | Mari Cortez

Growing up in Brazil, rice and beans were on our table every single day. It's the national dish for a reason: simple, nutritious, comforting, and always present. My grandma lived with us when I was young, and she cooked fresh, delicious meals daily for me, my sister, and my parents. In the mornings, when my sister was at school, I would sit with her in the kitchen, watching her work while she told me stories about our family, about life, and about the magic that happens when you develop flavors with patience. She taught me that food carries love, and that every dish becomes better when you put care into it.

My uncle, her son, would organize days where he would cook feijada. He'd make a huge pot and invite all our family and friends. It was the first time I saw someone cooking in those enormous pans, filling so many plates, and connecting people through food. That feeling of community stayed with me.

Feijoada is a dish with deep roots in Brazilian history. It was created during the time of slavery, when enslaved Africans would improvised meals with beans and leftovers and transform it to something nourishing and soulful. Over time, feijoada grew from a food of survival into a symbol of resilience and creativity. Today it represents connection, celebration, and the blending of cultures that shape Brazil. The dish has always

carried this sense of warmth of bringing people together. When we started FAROFFA, feijoada was the first dish I cooked. Our house was filled with friends and family, and for the first time, I found myself behind those same big pots and pans. It reminded me of my grandma's kitchen and my uncle's feijoada gatherings and it felt incredibly special to carry those memories forward.

Traditionally, feijoada is not vegetarian, but I think this version is even better. It is comforting, and satisfying without feeling heavy. And to go with it, I make vinagrete de banana, a recipe I learned from my mom. She's very creative and loves to cook with fruit. The sweet-and-sour freshness of the banana vinaigrette pairs perfectly with the heartwarming flavors of feijoada.

I'm grateful to share this dish, rooted in my family's traditions and memories. I hope it brings you the same comfort and joy it has always brought to me.



Friends eating feijoada cooked for OASE Cantina, December 2025 , at OASE



Me holding the menu with Feijoada Story, December 2025 , at OASE

Mushroom poem

septmeber 2018

I'm not from the trees,

I'm from the ground.

When you first collect me

I come from earth particles from a particular land.

If you wash me with water,

my texture will be ruined.

I need some care to be handled.

I don't bend that easily.

You don't need a knife, they are rather sharp.

Just with a fork, or even with a spoon,

you can taste me

Bland? Little? Mushy?

Don't underestimate

I have all the flavours to be interesting.

Strong, sincere, simple and full of emotion

You are allowed to eat me.