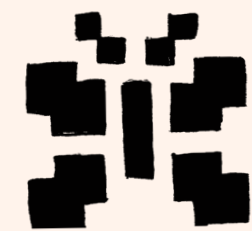


Every
Burburbs
is yours

Proposal



Every Butterfly is Trans is a collection of clothing and visual art pieces that considerately celebrate and ornament the trans body. Hand-sewn and printed pieces with custom illustrations and type elements will make up a single unified collection, with the intention of romanticizing and representing the trans experience through my personal lens as a trans masculine individual — viewing the trans body as high art, and therefore high fashion.

The trans experience is as unique and amorphous as every individual who finds themselves in its swath. The typical representation is one coated in strife and hardship, but no trans person wishes or wants to be cis. This misconception stems from the fact that all media depicts trans people as self-loathing and hopelessly working to become something they “weren’t born as,” which is simply not the case. Our main blight is that we want to live in a society that bends and molds itself around the reality of our existence, instead of the reverse. Trans people’s bodies especially are always the topic of conversation by those that don’t know us, policed and unnecessarily confined into arbitrary restrictions that occasionally alter with the times. The major mediator that determines to the public what and who we are, both to our advantage and disadvantage, is clothing. Fashion can both restrain and liberate the body, and has been a means of doing so for much of human history. But, as a culture we are under the guise that we have to bend, twist, shrink, and contort our bodies to fit the clothes that we desire. What we wear, especially as trans people, is essential to both expressing our gender identity (or maybe lack thereof!), but also our general tastes and interests as people in society. Though clothing can be used to perpetuate stereotypes and binaries, it can blur them in the same ways. The fashion industry is undeniably problematic, but has also been a means for queer people to gain a recognition for their experiences and expertise unlike any other art form. If there’s anyone who knows how to ornament the body, it is trans women of colour! Through my own unique lens as a trans masculine person, I hope to build onto the legacy of those in my community that have come before me, and take matters into my own hands in terms of making clothing for my body and my loved ones.

Through the use of found fabric and garments, I hope to be able to tailor, alter, and construct new pieces of clothing that will make up the bulk of my collection. Via my prior experience with digital technology and the printing facilities at PNCA, I’ll take full advantage of my access to the Digital Print Studio, as well as the screen printing department and sewing machines, through the kindness and generosity of friends willing to share their wisdom! A typical fashion collection is about 12 outfits, so I plan to make multiple pieces that can be mixed and matched, within the reality of my technical abilities. By using my design experience the pieces will be marked and “branded” (for lack of a better term) by my own visual elements as per illustrations and type. Therefore, I will also plan to screen print onto some garments, to ensure a variety of styles ranging from the well fitting, graphic shirt as well as the “high fashion” looks of shaped and body sculpting wear. This will allow for a range of accessibility in both prices and bodies — I hope to be able to sell or give away some pieces on the day of my thesis defense. Because there is no one way to present as a trans person, the collection will be a highly personal reflection of my interests and tastes, because I believe that for something to be inclusive it doesn’t necessarily have to appeal to everybody. I do not wish to make pieces similar to the “unisex” or “androgynous” styles of capitalist companies that attempt to please everyone and end up being bland, monochrome, utilitarian items that seem to have the goal of making everyone look the same. I’m interested in many colours, bright graphics, organic shapes, and showing skin that makes the wearer feel desirable — above all, to themselves. Many of these ideas are currently popular, as current fashion trends look onto our nostalgic past of loud and bold self-expression through our clothes,

and I want to see how I can morph and play with those concepts into something that echoes the values that are so important to me. Keeping in tune with the materiality of the clothing pieces, I would love to make a physical lookbook or printed matter of some sort that the audience will be able to take away from the initial “fashion show” of the thesis defense. This will likely look like a zine or poster of both the progress sketches, illustrations, type, as well as any photographic documentation.

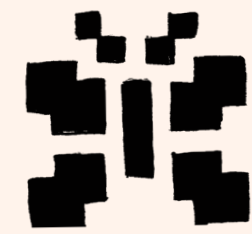
The next semester will be spent finalising a typeface built from my own stylized handwriting, as well as various graphics and illustrations that live harmoniously within a system that will make up the imagery of this first collection — so called *Every Butterfly is Trans* because it has always been a comfort to me that bodies in nature can change as dramatically as that of a caterpillar to a butterfly, and they have both always fascinated me in their miracle of metamorphosis as well as in their colours and appearance. I plan to emulate the organic shapes of their anatomy, as well as play with the visuals of jolly caterpillars and angelic butterflies that made up so much of my visual intake and language as a child up to modern day. In my attempt to blend the nostalgic with the contemporary, I hope to be able to touch the hearts and bodies of those that can sympathize their shared experiences with mine. With the help of experienced friends who make clothing as their existing practice, I will learn the processes necessary for measuring, cutting, sewing, shaping, and fitting my own clothing, from both found fabric and anything else necessary sourced from sustainable manufacturers. I’ll also use my prior experience and knowledge to design graphics to be printed both via silkscreen and inkjet digital printing, as well as traditional graphic design to design any posters, zines, or publications that I would like to include with the showing. My thesis will require my collaboration with my community and those who have greater experience in what I’m trying to do, both to lend me their bodies for modeling, their time, and their knowledge.

As mentioned prior, it’s important that I acknowledge those who have come before me in making nonbinary, transgressive clothing, especially the trans femmes of colour who have made leaps and bounds of progress in an industry so unforgiving. Pierre Davis, founder of the genderfluid No Sesso clothing brand, has always made it her mission to make clothing for people of every shape, size, and identity. A Black trans woman, she made history as the first trans person to have her work appear down the catwalk during New York Fashion Week. Her vision continues to be the foundation of every aspect of No Sesso’s initial conception - namely having only POC models walk her work, and remaining nonbinary in all designs, with the intention of anyone being able to wear them. Gogo Graham, another trans femme POC has also had her work featured on such esteemed runways, while maintaining that any and all clothing is for anyone. Her most recent collection entitled, “Sissies Pay Me to Tell Them What to Wear” is her first time using the term “menswear” - solely because she believes cis men will be more inclined to experiment and wear something that is “catered” to their identity. She has been making experimental, upcycled fashion, specifically intended for trans women, since she came out herself. Disappointed with the way traditional clothing is intended for only certain cis bodies, she took matters into her own hands, and her work translates into a love letter to trans sisterhood - giving much of it away for free to her dear friends. With this recent collection, she’s looking to have some cis men open their wallets to her, as well as expand their horizons on what they can wear. I am especially inspired by Graham’s debut of her 2016 Spring/Summer collection, in which she dressed her friends and had them walk through the crowd of a hotel lobby, in a casual, but elevated celebration of trans womanhood. In a similar light, I would love to be able to clothe my beautiful trans friends, and throw a party in which my work, alongside my community and their adorned bodies are given the same attention and reverence.

Being the sort of person I am, I feel compelled to make all artistic and designed pieces in my life myself, and I've admired the craft and design of clothing for long enough to want to do it! I would love for my wardrobe to be as intentional and well designed as the artworks I hang on my wall. And, because I am part of a greater marginalized community, I know it's important to use my creative work and platform to take up spaces for trans people, and I also simply just want us to be talked about more in culture, especially fashion. Even besides that, the commercial fashion industry is failing most people with its arbitrary, flawed system of production and sizing. Clothing and its raw, self-evident use for self-expression throughout human culture is a beautiful thing that I want to be more involved in contributing to! By offering my unique perspective on gender and the body into the conversation, I hope to widen the scope for people to view and appreciate trans people, in our own words and on our own terms. As mentioned prior, there is no one way to be trans, and I'm aware that my lived world views have their own set privileges and variants compared to other trans lives. I don't claim to be any overarching representative of what it means to look, feel, or be transgender, or even trans masculine. My ideas of what looks good or flattering are unique to my body, and I am basing my designs on what makes me happy and comfortable, while also taking influence from those who have had similar ideas and motives. Personally, I know that I need to create something that is tangible and interactive — I love that clothing is designed for the body and used by people to express everything from their gender to their favourite band. It's a human desire that has transcended culture and time for thousands of years, and maintains an enormous aspect of our daily life. To be able to create something that even despite other's opinions, I can wear and view myself as artistically as the piece that was crafted with such intention, feels incredibly satisfying and ratifies my artistic practice as well as my place in the greater community!

At the very least, I hope to spur a greater conversation about trans people and the beauty of our bodies and the way we choose to decorate them. I can't imagine doing a project about anything other than my identity — my work has to be incredibly personal for me to be passionate about it, and I feel compelled to force others to think, consider, and view the trans body in an esteemed and admirable setting such as that of a thesis defense! For the sake of my personal practice as well, I would like to use this chance to experiment and learn about myself and my own interests, to see if this collection is something I would like to potentially further expand upon in the future, post graduation. Feeling beautiful and making other trans people feel empowered through their reflection and way they feel, is enough to push me out of my trodden territory into a new realm of possibility, community, collaboration, and love of design. My academic journey has taken me to artistic spaces and mediums that a few years ago I would have never thought to be my reality, but now that I've created them I can't see myself without. I'm excited to feel empowered by the ability to create something that I can adorn myself in, as well as share with others and connect through our shared experiences and interests. Being trans is a gift, and the trans body is a miracle of metamorphosis to be celebrated.

Abstract



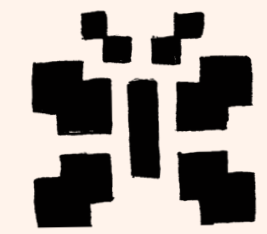
Every Butterfly is Trans is the synthesis and blurring of boundaries between art/craft/design by graphic design student Rudi Szilvasy. Using screen printing, crocheting, illustration, photography, and, of course, traditional editorial design, they looked into undoing and demystifying ideas of gendering and ungendering clothing in both a personal wardrobe as well as from community outreach. The title and graphic imagery take their inspiration from both cultural and personal ques as well: we think of butterflies as a very literal symbol of transformation, often from the perspective of an awkward little caterpillar to the objectively more beautiful butterfly. If anything, this project looks at the in-between: the chrysalis and its place of healing and more perpetual transformation, as opposed to a clear cut start to finish.

To do this, Rudi recalls the internet as the protected garden in which ideas and questions about gender identity are able to be seeded and grown safely, in the often private way that is necessary. We see the internet then used as a gathering space for trans communities, and a vehicle for gathering much of the imagery for this project via social media and Google Forms.

Taking collected original illustrations from trans people all over the world, Rudi then looks more intrapersonally to solve problems of gendered clothing manufacturing and consumption that leave little space for outliers in bodies or identity. To do this, the unlikely miracle of crocheting falls into his lap, and carries him down a drastically new path of fiber art that doesn't feel too far off from the caterpillar building its chrysalis.

Finally, all the garments are documented and adorned by trans friends from Rudi's own community, before going off to their contributors after this thesis show. The lookbook takes all of the semester's work and preserves it in a lasting and thoughtfully designed printed medium that can be reproduced time and time again, to preserve and spread the joy and significance of this place in time for long after the defense's end.

Thesis Oral



Hello everyone and thank you for being here today ☺ I know it has been a hectic week and I'm so honored to be bringing it to a close with all of you! My name is Rudi Szilvasy and I've spent the past few months putting together a body of work to share with you all! I've been studying graphic design here at PNCA, and have been interested in the way design can be so interdisciplinary and applicable to different mediums, practices, and "careers". I would say I come from a "fine art" background - my mother and her parents painted porcelain in Hungary for companies that were once suppliers for some of Europe's elite - so I was raised with a very specific idea of what art is beautiful. It was to my surprise when I was recommended by the faculty that illustration wasn't the only route my creative impulses could take! Since then I've been in a steady push and pull process of how to combine my love for drawing and making things through traditional mediums and playing with computers to push those ideas even further - a constant cycle of hand → technology → and back again into something to be held!

My beginnings in making art can also be credited to my mother, and I'm fortunate that she is also artistic in that it was always encouraged of me to pursue in a way that wasn't necessarily bogged down by the need to find a more respectable career, as is often the case of immigrant families. Being creative and drawing especially were my favorite things to do as a child, and I've never grown out of it, especially as I've used my art to navigate and cope with the adversities of growing up and reckoning with my transness in the safety of my sketchbooks and paintings. Unfortunately, you will find that my own mother cannot be here today because she has no clue of all the trans antics I've been up to, especially this past semester, but she remains encouraging of all the artwork I let her see nonetheless. I find it important to call that reality into focus, because although my blood family can't wrap their heads around all the ways I think and feel, I still feel like all my important family members are here today :)

The phrase, "Every Butterfly is Trans", came from something my partner once said in passing, I think probably while drawing butterflies. It instantly clicked with me, and seemed to synthesize everything I was attempting with a thesis project: taking an experience as personal as my childlike wonder for the metamorphosis of a butterfly, and being brave enough to materialize it and present it to an entire community that has held me in my developing adolescence.

Being trans has evolved from something that felt like a divine punishment to something that is a miracle and a gift from the God that I cursed for making me this way before. My very conservative and classically Eastern European religious upbringing doused me in plenty of shame and insecurities for a lifetime. As I've distanced myself from these traditional ideas of family, I've delved myself into the chosen families that hold me to this day, namely the trans friends and acquaintances that continuously remind me of my validity and ability to not only survive, but prosper, thrive, and celebrate myself in a way that was only ever taught to me as selfish. To that sentiment, I can now say that even in self-serving acts you can be conscious of those around you and actively working to make the world a better place for them as well. I believe this is especially possible when working with others to make your dreams a reality, and taking other's views and desires into account when working to build the utopia you each wish for yourselves and future generations.

My dream is a little droplet in comparative oceans of social change, I'm sure, but the fact that I have an audience here today listening to my words rings true to the fact that a butterfly's wing flaps have an impact, and that I'm not alone in my thinking that working towards making each day easier, prettier, and better for yourself doesn't mean there aren't others inspired and alongside you and there to support you in those endeavors, because it's what we all want for each other and ourselves as well.

With this project I attempted to create a visual representation that synthesized all these things I love and hold dear, while also challenging myself to learn a new medium that I had no prior experience in, to make what I felt was the most appropriate actualization of this project: clothing and apparel. It was important to me to be in complete control of the production process, especially because of the tools made accessible to me at school as well as the support of friends. As I will touch on later in my speech, garments have been something that have held me literally throughout my life, as they do for every person, and my relationship to the clothes I wear have always been directly tied to how I feel or what I'm experiencing.

Every Butterfly is Trans stemmed from this desire to apply art, craft, and design into something that feels like it encapsulates everything I stand for as an artist - that if I died and only had one project left, this would be a worthy magnum opus to be remembered by. Of course, that sentiment comes from my naivety as an artist who has yet to step into the post-grad world - the end of art school is not the end of my artistic career, but it can feel that way when I've been in school since I was 4 years old!

Identity is so important and intriguing to me, and I'm a big believer that incredibly personal work will always resonate with an audience (especially the right one) because of our universal humanity as well as shared experiences among minorities. It felt only right that I use all this time on a project that speaks to my transness and involves collaboration with my community of friends and other trans people in a very direct way that I feel is lacking! Where else can I have the excuse to have such complete control and freedom to build a "brand" or visual identity (for lack of better words), as well as the platform via a big art school project to get my point across? Every Butterfly is Trans allowed me to do a little world-building and extrapersonal daydreaming in a unique balance of communal representation and self expression, to create something that not only looks as cool as I want it to, but also has some sustenance behind it all - which I know I echo many of my professors in saying.

This is my love letter to transness, but also myself! I have a lot of difficulty taking up space and talking about my work or myself, and by involving other people I care about in this project, it has forced me to put my insecurities aside to ensure that this project turns out well and that I speak to it in a way that elevates everyone involved and treats it like the respectable artwork that it has become ☺

Of course, anything I make will be coming from my experiences and personal point of view, and my ideas will vary from even someone with very similar experiences to me. There's few things that are both as personal and culturally significant to self expression as the clothing and accessories we choose to cloak our bodies in, so I felt inspired to go down the road of garment design to give my ideas an appropriate medium and vessel, and quite literally use the body to express and represent itself.

I put quite a load of pressure on myself in coming up with the guidelines for this project, because it's very easy for me to want to be ambitious, but also quite hard on myself at the same time. Often being the only trans person in a space, then also making this project about transness, gave me the subconscious pressure to ensure that I represent these people and their artworks in a way that, even when taken out of context, would be "good" representation.

Needless to say, as a sort of compromise with myself, I felt I would be satisfied at the end of this project and at the end of the day as long as I learned a new skill and took my artistic practice down a new road I had considered before but never felt ready to pursue. Originally, the goal was to teach myself sewing and make my own garments that way, which was an apt challenge all within itself. With plenty of learning curves, I was off to a pretty slow start at the beginning of the semester in terms of the actual making, which was incredibly frustrating because I felt so full of ideas, but had so little time to make them, while also juggling the most course credits I've ever taken (lol)! So it was out of that bit of procrastination and stress relief that I began to take on a different craft to satisfy a need to be making (and succeeding!) at something. Probably as a sort of ripple effect from TikTok, my roommate Mazey (hello!) helped me in learning crocheting where my own frustrations and stubbornness got me stuck. In retrospect, it was a very queer situation: two trans people who live like chosen family teaching and learning with each other a craft that was never taught to them as children, using it as a time to bond, destress, and further their creative practice and make things for themselves in an anti-capitalist process. We were both able to slow down and learn an entirely new craft in a different medium than what we are used to, which has of course become a common method of artmaking during these past years of quarantine. At the time I didn't think crochet would evolve to be one of the major practices to make up my thesis, but looking back on it, it was a comically convenient thing to make its way into my life at just the right time.

In any case, I was able to wrap my head around crocheting much easier than sewing, perhaps for its more intuitive, freeform style of building things out of raw materials - and I started doing it more often. When I would try to sew something after having completed a crochet project, I found it wasn't hitting the same spot that I had hoped for when taking on this challenge of garment construction. Of course, I was ill-prepared to go in and make a whole clothing line from scratch as I had originally dreamed - but I also wasn't enjoying the process as much as I had hoped. It's difficult to try and take on something like this as a new skill with the expectation of making it into a grand project to present at the end of a few short months, and the pressure was getting to me. However, crochet was relieving the stress I was building up - it was something I could do anywhere, reclining in bed or at a desk, with the simple materials of yarn, my hand, and a crochet hook. And, it was giving me results that I could immediately wear or gift to my loved ones, and see them enjoying it as accessories to their wardrobe. I realized that for the sake of this project, it was also touching on the concepts I wanted to address more accurately as well: crochet is incredibly low impact on the environment, and it has a rich history as many crafts do in being a femininely gendered task that is now often used in minority (especially queer) spaces for community building and creative making for the sake of relaxing.

As I did more sitting and working with the craft, I realized one of the reasons I enjoyed it so much was because it gave me another layer of control, not only because it was easier to understand than sewing, but also because selecting the yarn to use feels like even more of a raw and organic process than what I was trying to achieve with my reused fabrics.

My experience as a visibly queer person makes for my own uniquely complicated relationship to clothing in its own context entirely. It's been a unique situation with COVID especially, because with just the power of a mask I can change how people treat me. If my mask is on people see a young woman and men will catcall me, but with my mask off I'll get even more obvious stares and the occasional yell from a man from their car - especially when I'm with my partner - and my time outside becomes a wavering scale of which experience I'd rather risk. It makes me even more aware of the small things that we do everyday, regardless of our identity, that can literally change the way we go about our day and how it will go. I'm thinking about clothing all the time in this way, but also out of love - clothing is designed in and of itself, and when we get dressed we're often designing our body and its perception in the greater world.

This is definitely what drove me to work with garments in some way - and if there's anything I've started to learn about myself, it's that I don't know how to do things in moderation - I like to go all in or else it feels like not enough. So, while one portion of this project was to consider how we wear garments and what they say about us, especially our gender, I was also doing the bulk of my research last semester in the gendering of clothes, both its past and its future. It was out of that area of thinking that I began to be more interested in making garments myself, for myself; because if you want something done just right it often means taking the matters into your own hands. And of course that's what I'm all about! In my thinking I also knew that although I might be making garments that feel quite personal, especially because they are tailored to my body, they would still have been made by a trans person with trans experiences, and that is already something lacking from ready-made clothing and the fashion industry to begin with.

Every Butterfly is Trans was always my attempt to reach trans people outside of myself, especially because of that community building idea that has been so important to me. Feeling that sense of alienation from my family, my parents especially, only added on to the feelings of social alienation felt in a cisnormative world and an upbringing totally sheltered from queer people. The independence gained from the privilege of being able to move away from home and forge my own path in a new city, as well as to attend art school, opened up all the doors and opportunities I was seeking in meeting new people, especially one's like me! Although it's been a difficult journey, and making friends is hard anywhere, I'm proud and so blessed to say that I've been able to build lasting relationships with trans people, and some days to even be exclusively surrounded by them - imagine that! The euphoric feeling of waking up beside a trans lover only to step out of my bedroom into a household also filled with trans people is a dream I wish for every trans person, especially young kids not unlike my past self. All the strength and safety that that support has provided me with made it so that I wanted Every Butterfly Is Trans to feel like a lasting homage to those relationships I had made, as well as a step outside of my little bubble into the greater world - using art and the internet as a vehicle for something that could be bigger than me. And, of course,

every artist hopes to inspire another, as I have also been inspired by other trans people creating inclusive and exclusively trans spaces especially through creative mediums and outlets. My wish for this project was to add to that world, and encourage other trans artists to do the same - even if it just means making art about their transness outside of the very negative light it is often illuminated by. I have finally come to the place where I can confidently say I genuinely believe to be trans is a blessing, and my goal has been to pass that sentiment along!

During winter break, an idea that initially started as a side thought to my overall thesis began to take an even larger shape of the concept as a whole. I knew I wanted to collaborate with people because it would feel odd to be creating something embodying this idea of trans representation without involving trans people other than myself! I was inspired by the potential of Google Forms and the ways I've seen it used for personal projects - Leah Maldonado's "Merged Life" to name one - and decided that would be a good outlet for asking for other people's participation and gathering their "content". I sat with the title of my project Every Butterfly is Trans and thought about how simple it would be to ask other trans people in my life to give me a drawing of their interpretation of a butterfly - this symbol of transformation, of course, but also something that has always brought comfort and beauty to me both as a child in the garden and as an adolescent considering the fluidity of nature within the context of my identity. The internet has also been like a secret garden to me: providing me with the language and communities that I would fall within, so it made sense for me to return to the internet in reaching out to other trans people who were willing to undergo in this experiment with me, and lend me their time, story, and artwork to create something visual and tangible for us to not only gaze upon, but wrap around our bodies quite literally!

So, I made a nice looking carousel for Inst*gram to be shared, and called for any trans person who so desired to follow the link in bio to a nice little Google Form where they gave me their name, address for shipping, maybe a tidbit about why they love their transness, and of course: a simple, single color illustration of a butterfly that would translate appropriately into screen printing. In return I promised them a shirt that would take their artwork, as well as those of all the respondents, and combine the design into a lovely little tribute to our shared transness and participation during this small place and time. Thus, each participant could expect a nice shirt (roughly in the size of their choosing) to arrive in the mail after my thesis show. Screenprinting, as incredibly satisfying as it is, is not my strong suit - so this portion of the project became more time consuming than originally intended. But there was a lovely amount of responses that encouraged me to consider this part of the project more thoughtfully than a side concept, and I continued to play with this idea of collaboration as much as I could.

Amidst all the excitement of something larger than myself, there was still the aspect of garment making that I wanted to tackle. As I mentioned earlier, sewing slowly fell out of my radar and crocheting took its place - a little later than I would have hoped, but such is the nature of art and ambitiousness in an academic timeline. So, swapping the idea of sewing clothes for myself and others, I had to sacrifice quantity for quality - crocheting is a slow process, and I'm also a person who has other things they have to do in order to live! I decided if I could make a whole outfit for myself, I will have achieved my goal of this body autonomy I was seeking. I also wanted to ensure I wasn't using new materials - I tried my hand at buying new yarn, but for the quality I was seeking it would be more expensive than I wanted, plus Portland has the wonderful

resource of Scrap - the reused and recycled creative material store - which had always been a place for me to obtain second hand materials and objects, especially in my first year living here in downtown (yuck!). It worked out perfectly that I was able to go there and gather yarn on several occasions - the unpredictable selection made it so I didn't get overwhelmed in colour or texture options, and the varying sizes of the yarn thickness and length created an organic variation in what I was working on.

When I first began crocheting, as I am with most new skills, I wanted to make something with a quick turnaround time and usable results, so I started with learning different patterns for hats and bonnets. I soon realized that crocheting has a very fluid and malleable workflow, and it's very easy to riff off existing patterns to make them your own as need be. Adding straps wherever you desire, adding in colors, and also sewing pieces together to create protruding edges or interesting silhouettes are just the tip of the iceberg in what is possible, and I was surprised with how easy it was to pretend to know what I'm doing, and have the end result turn out even better than you'd expect. After making some headwear just for fun, I jumped on the opportunity to evolve this into the missing piece of my project - a complete outfit.

I then started with making the skirt - developed from a pattern for pants, they quickly became shorter than what I thought it would be because of the nature of yarn stretching and contracting. I'm interested in subverting the skirt as an ungendered clothing item anyway, so it made sense to make it into something that seems more fit for a semi-formal occasion! Skirts have also become another one of those psychologically heavy garments I've begun to wear happily for the first time in my life in the past year or so, and I'm so glad I've been able to expand my wardrobe thanks to my own changing sense of self in a way that feels next to magical.

I started working on the vest before the skirt was even done - and one of the many things I love about crocheting is it's something I can do in a park in the sun, which I was fortunately blessed with during its work time. I decided to use a much finer yarn for the vest, because something that brings me that coveted and fleeting sense of gender euphoria is the sight of my bare chest, and I didn't feel the need to cover it up completely. I also enjoyed the delicate process as it was built - something like a spider weaving its web or a caterpillar building its chrysalis. Slowly, it became a soft garment for me to wrap myself within, without necessarily hiding the things that indicate where I've come from and what I've done to get here. Once I'd sewn the final touches - the little pearlescent buttons - I finally felt that sense of completion I had been searching for. Seeing this delicate, wearable art object as it hung from a clothing hanger felt like the epitome of what I had been trying to achieve with this project all along. I had made something by myself, for myself, and I had had my hand make every single stitch that now gently enveloped any body that was within it.

Sometimes it's difficult to still be excited about something that starts to eat away at your sleep and thinking, but in the end all that yarn became something I can wear today - even without hesitation! All the different textures of yarn rub against my skin and give me an awareness in my own body, and the hundreds of stitches that make up its form remind me of all the episodes of TV watched and late nights spent listening to music next to my sleeping partner.

Finally, all I had left to do was bring what I saw in my mind's eye to the material world, which required some form of documentation. This part of my project would not have been nearly as fun if not for the wonderful

people I get to call my coworkers at FISK! I'm incredibly grateful to have been able to use their basement photo studio and camera to play around in and invite some lovely people to model for me. I want to thank my friend Jake's willingness not only to model, but for their constant advice in understanding garments and crafts especially from a very DIY perspective. Their illustration also became part of the front of the collaborative Every Butterfly Is Trans design! I also want to thank my roommate Mazey, my friend Chance, and of course Adrian for modeling my work and giving me a little slice of their busy lives to participate in this project with me. The lookbook was another element of this project which would not have been possible without the collaboration of others, and of course also required the input of other trans people to bring to fruition what I've been talking about all along!

For the lookbook, I went back to some of my ideas about how the internet literally influenced and aided my transition, as well as my coming-of-age as it has for much of my generation. For that reason, I wanted to go beyond the Y2K aesthetics that are in resurgence right now, and take advantage of computer editing and graphics to visualize the digital world in the way I see it: a safe haven and almost ethereal cyber landscape in which your image doesn't necessarily have to reflect your physical body directly - allowing us to fly, time travel, and explore the world from our room. But I didn't want to distort reality too much, just brighten and soften it the same way partners see each other through a romanticized lens. I wasn't just thinking about the blue light from my computer screen while designing the book, either. You'll find that the type that isn't my own is the Nintendo pixelated typeface, made especially for their Pictochat interface that was present on the earlier Nintendo DS systems. Even for a pixel typeface, which are often so clunky or monospaced, I have even childhood memories of dragging the letters around and playing with them to create comics and poems in the built-in chatrooms. Before I was old enough to have private access to a computer (outside of the computer room!), I had my Nintendo to play games on when I couldn't sleep. The comfort of the two double screens illuminated my face with the pixelated representation of my little friends that I could always rely on when there was nobody at school to talk to. Now, as I desire to get away from the glare of my laptop, I'm also recalling the original digital screens that made me fall in love with the way I could use pixels to create images, and release them onto the internet to be potentially seen by anyone.

And, of course, the lookbook is more than just pictures of the clothes I made this semester! It's that final, "published" representation I've been wanting to see all along. After getting all the garments done that I could manage, it was like a mini celebration of the work done to be able to see my friends wear them, and for them to allow me to photograph them! The lookbook also acts as a final end product that synthesizes all the craft work into a lasting piece of designed, printed matter that will be a souvenir of this thesis show as well as all the work that made up these past months of my life, even when all the garments go their separate ways. It's not only an object to remember this process by, but also a relatively accessible zine that can be reproduced and redistributed countless times to whoever desires a copy. Designing and printing publications has also been one of my favorite applications of design, and what inspired me to pursue it academically in the first place. Where every other step of this project has often felt like a big step out of my comfort zone, using InDesign is like second nature to me at this point, so it was a nice way to finish out this project with something I can be confident within its whole process - while still stepping into new territory with its production and printing and binding a book that looks and feels exactly how I'd imagine.

During my proposal research and thus throughout much of last semester, I was especially diving into the few trans fashion designers that have carved out a name for themselves in mainstream media and culture, and I analyzed the way their work gendered and ungendered clothing to suit the way they critiqued our culture's codes and binaries. Pierre Davis of her brand No Sesso and Gogo Graham who has styled the likes of runway models like Hunter Schafer are both trans women of color that have fashion design backgrounds and have exceptionally instigated conversations around gendered/ungendered clothing, especially through a trans lens. Looking into their art and the communities they work with fanned the flames for my desire to enter this world of beautiful people making beautiful things to be worn. But I'm not like them! Not yet. I'm just a little guy with a laptop and some yarn, and although I don't know how to make things look marvelous on a body, I know how to wake up, be trans, wear clothes, and make things look nice on paper. So making the lookbook was the way that I comprehended all this information in a fashion context, no matter what I did end up eventually making.

This project has taught me that I have plenty of ideas, and that it doesn't have to end here! I've been told dozens of times - to my relief - that thesis is not the end all be all of my artistic career; which sounds silly to say, but that's the sort of hole I find myself getting into when getting overwhelmed by the reality that I will no longer be a student, and will have a whole BFA under my belt! I'm excited to pursue the idea of garment making and design even more in my artistic practice, as well as to be able to crochet now whenever I want, and make whatever I want! I also don't want this to be the end of my pursuit of learning to sew, and would love to take the time and flexibility after graduation to invest in understanding it more and work with those who have more experience in it!

The reason I chose to work with garments for this project is because, as I mentioned briefly, clothing is an especially important form of self expression for people within minority communities. Personally, I can speak to how integral it has been throughout my trans childhood and coming-of-age, outside of the stereotypical trans narrative. Yes, I can say that as a child I experienced enormous discomfort around femininity, but I was also a painfully shy little kid that didn't like feeling like a dress-up doll that was the center of attention in the first place. Fast-forward to present day, and I find myself reclaiming the clothes that once made my skin crawl - I've literally gone back into my childhood closet and worn the things I hid away from myself for years! Because, I've found that after the help of modern medicine and the loving support of all the trans people I'm surrounded by, I don't feel the need to dress like a cis man and gain the approval of strangers to feel like myself. It also helps that some contemporary fashion trends are hyping up boys that wear dangly earrings, skirts, and in general take care of themselves (lol). As I've painstakingly garnered some self confidence and the ability to look at myself in the mirror, I've also given myself the space to experiment with clothing and even enjoy sticking out like a sore thumb on a limp wrist. (👉 no limp wrist emoji). As I get dressed for the morning, entirely aware that what choices I make will elicit a he/him or she/her, it's actually become more and more fun to play with people's perceptions (especially when they hear my voice), and I can have my much needed feeling of control, instead of letting the concept of "passing" control the way I live my life.

I know I'm not alone, and I know I have a privilege of being able to skirt by unnoticed as a perceived little white girl while so many trans femme people of colour fear for their safety in a much graver way, and that's why I feel so lucky to be able to take up this space, talk, and make art about being trans. It's a big can of worms that I can't possibly touch all the bases of, but I can speak to my own experience and make it look nice, too - which I know is kind of what our culture revolves around anyway.

So, while I don't claim to know about the entire plethora of what it means to be trans, I can make artwork that has trans people and their varying bodies within it, and at its bare minimum, representation is what is always lacking for any minority group - especially representation without something to buy at the end. While "gender neutral" clothing seems to be what businesses recognize is a trending topic, there is still an enormous lack of actual trans people making or wearing any of the things that we see in ads or even our daily life, and at the end of the day, our culture is nowhere near understanding how constructed our ideas about gender really are. But I'm not really making these things for cis people or our heteronormative society, and the last thing I need is for trans people to be commodified because it turns out we can be attractive to business and sold to. I really just wanted to make something by trans people for trans people, and to foster a safe space throughout its entire process. I take it for granted sometimes these days, but there was a time just a few years ago that I had not met another trans person face to face, and my heart ached to feel that sense of connection you can only get from people who understand what you've gone through, even if through their very own unique way. This little project gave me the excuse to work with trans people and talk about being trans both directly and indirectly, while getting to take advantage of my title as a graphic designer to carve out this little space of a trans utopia. Now, thanks to the art objects that have come to exist due to this project, Every Butterfly is Trans can continue to be talked about and thought back on after this presentation.

Throughout my "design education", I've always wanted to jump to more experimental or outsider applications. I see the interesting things that designers are doing today to push the medium into new and exciting territories, and I get a little carried away in trying to do something no one else is doing! Along the way I find things that really interest me, such as type design, and also find that I don't have to reinvent the wheel to achieve some of the things I admire most. For much of this project, to be honest, my thought process was especially motivated by how much of the design process I could take away from the screen, treating the computer more like a friend with healthy boundaries than a codependent partner. I like to draw, and I like to design in a relatively slow manner compared to the design grind, and I don't think that has to be an inherently bad thing. I got everything done in the end, didn't I? I'm definitely using typical design applications in the making of the lookbook, but inserting elements and people that aren't usually represented in mainstream media - in this case publications, but social media, too.

As I've mentioned prior, it was important to me that this project not only stand out from past work I've done and grant me the space to explore new mediums and skills, but also round out the concepts I've been interested in in the past and put a cap on my themes of combining and dissolving the differences between art/craft/design. I still feel new to the world of design, and most of it is exciting to me, so there's no one direction I've wanted to commit to in terms of pursuing design "professionally" or any one career I'm aiming for. I'm still happy to have been able to study art in the first place, and to have had the privilege to have been stressing over art projects over the past few years as opposed to anything else. To be considered for a job in any creative field would feel like a lucky opportunity, so I'm just happy to be here in the first place. After all, art in its purest form is something most of us began doing as children for the innate desire and joy to make something, and I feel like I'm always trying to harness that energy and thinking whenever things become overcomplicated.

I'm glad I was able to bring something like fashion into this thesis project, as I've slowly built up an interest and curiosity for its manifestation in our contemporary lives and how it operates in my daily routines. I'm very new to the world of fashion thinking and design, but garments themselves have had an integral role in my understanding of myself and fostering senses of confidence and ability to take up space. I know I have a long road ahead of me if I want to pursue it further, and that's why it was fun to dip my toes into the water with even just graphically screenprinting and crocheting for myself this semester.

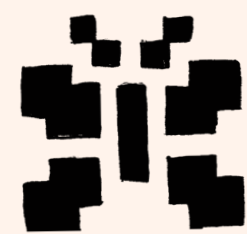
As my speech draws to a close, I hope all of you that came today can leave with a greater sense of awareness of everything you go through to be visible and perceived in public, and how these things don't necessarily have to be a bad or heavy thing. I believe it's all the more reason to take pride in yourself and to carry a lightness in your step that you've made it this far and are still able to express yourself in a unique way that cannot be commodified. It's also an opportunity to look around and be inspired by those similar to you or that may fall out of your usual expectations for yourself and what you can do, and to love your friends even more! Those people are what constitute a family to me, and I also hope that each and every one of you has lovely people around you to inspire and support you in working towards truly being yourself, in little ways every day.

Thank you so much for your time in listening and granting me this space to talk about myself and my work!!!! Again, I am so grateful for all those that have made this project possible in being what it is today, and I've learned a ridiculous amount these past months that further reassure me this was a worthwhile project to undertake. It was thanks to everyone's encouragement and participation that I didn't lose hope in myself or motivation in getting where I wanted it to be. Being vulnerable in this way makes me very anxious, but I feel the anxiety immediately lifted once I've made these sentiments and know that they've been heard. I've been blessed with a truly supportive network of peers from varying backgrounds throughout my time here, and I can genuinely say I've grown as much as an artist as I have as a person. I can't believe that I can say my lowest of lows today as an adult still feel like nothing to the lonely kid I once was, and my highest highs are even better than the daydreams I once had.

One of the final sentiments I want to leave you all with here today brings me back to that original Google Form that I had those 20 participants fill out at the very beginning of this process. Along with submitting to me their illustration, there was an optional question they could answer about what made them most happy to be trans. Of all the heartwarming replies, there was a generous amount that mentioned the beauty of being amongst other trans people, especially in romantic or close platonic relationships. At its heart I wanted this project to feel like a T4T relationship, a space founded and nursed in a symbiotic partnership amongst trans people in the most respectful and caring way possible, and it's that sort of love that I want to bestow upon you each today, whether it's something you specifically fall into or not.

Thank you <3

Midterms



The phrase, "Every Butterfly is Trans", came from something my partner once said in passing, I think maybe while drawing butterflies. It instantly clicked with me, even though it's a little nonsensical. But, what's to say we can't claim something for our own? People use the ugly duckling or the metamorphosis of a butterfly as a cliché coming-of-age metaphor plenty of times. What's to say we, as trans people, can't claim something so simple and comforting to be our visual identifier? Hetero and cisnormative society has used the language of fairies and flowers against us in history, but outside of their derogatory context, those things are symbols of beauty, purity, love, etc. Rainbows aren't enough for all of us - I want wings and iridescent colors.

Every Butterfly is Trans began as an attempt to take my self expression completely into my own autonomy, via learning how to make my own clothing. I tasked myself with the goal of learning to sew, as well as translating my body measurements to clothing - all while using recycled fabric I had from previously beloved garments. Throughout the term, however, I found myself gravitating towards a different method of garment construction, which I had recently learned and grown to love - crocheting. When I would go from crocheting to sewing, I found myself not quite as satisfied with the process. Although I admire sewing construction and would love to pursue it post-graduation, I've fallen in love with the way crocheting takes a very raw material (yarn) and translates it to an enormous variety of objects and garments through a range of pretty simple, repeated techniques. An added bonus, I must say, is the subconscious knowledge that crochet - in contrast to knitting - cannot be imitated by machine. It has led me down a new path of considering how important it is to me to resist capitalist ideals of increased production, and finding a practice that also operates in self care through a slow, meditative process, while also producing something I can wear.

Additionally, I enjoy the freedom crochet allows me in the entire process: from obtaining the materials of cheap, repurposed yarn, of which I have complete control in color and texture, as well as where I crochet, with just a ball of yarn, my hands, and a hook. I've been able to pick up the simple craft very quickly, and already have enough knowledge to sculpt garments that I like enough for everyday wear, along with how they adorn and compliment my body.

From the beginning of the project's inception, I knew I would need the help of my friends and fellow artists to bring it to fruition. A side idea, which highlighted this community-building concept, has taken a larger hold on my thesis as a whole, in such a way that it has given greater meaning to the trans community that I was hoping to shine a light on via my work in the first place! In the winter before the start of the semester, I prompted any trans person (via social media) to send me an illustration of their interpretation of a butterfly. In return for their contribution, I would send them a shirt printed with their design combined with that of others, free of charge, save for shipping! The wonderful responses I received also prompted me to reconsider the importance of this community concept. All these different beautiful butterflies made me wonder how, through just a couple dozen people, it was like we were creating a visual language for something as hard to pinpoint as transness. It led me to consider how and why building this community - alongside my own "selfish" goal of making my own clothes - was so important.

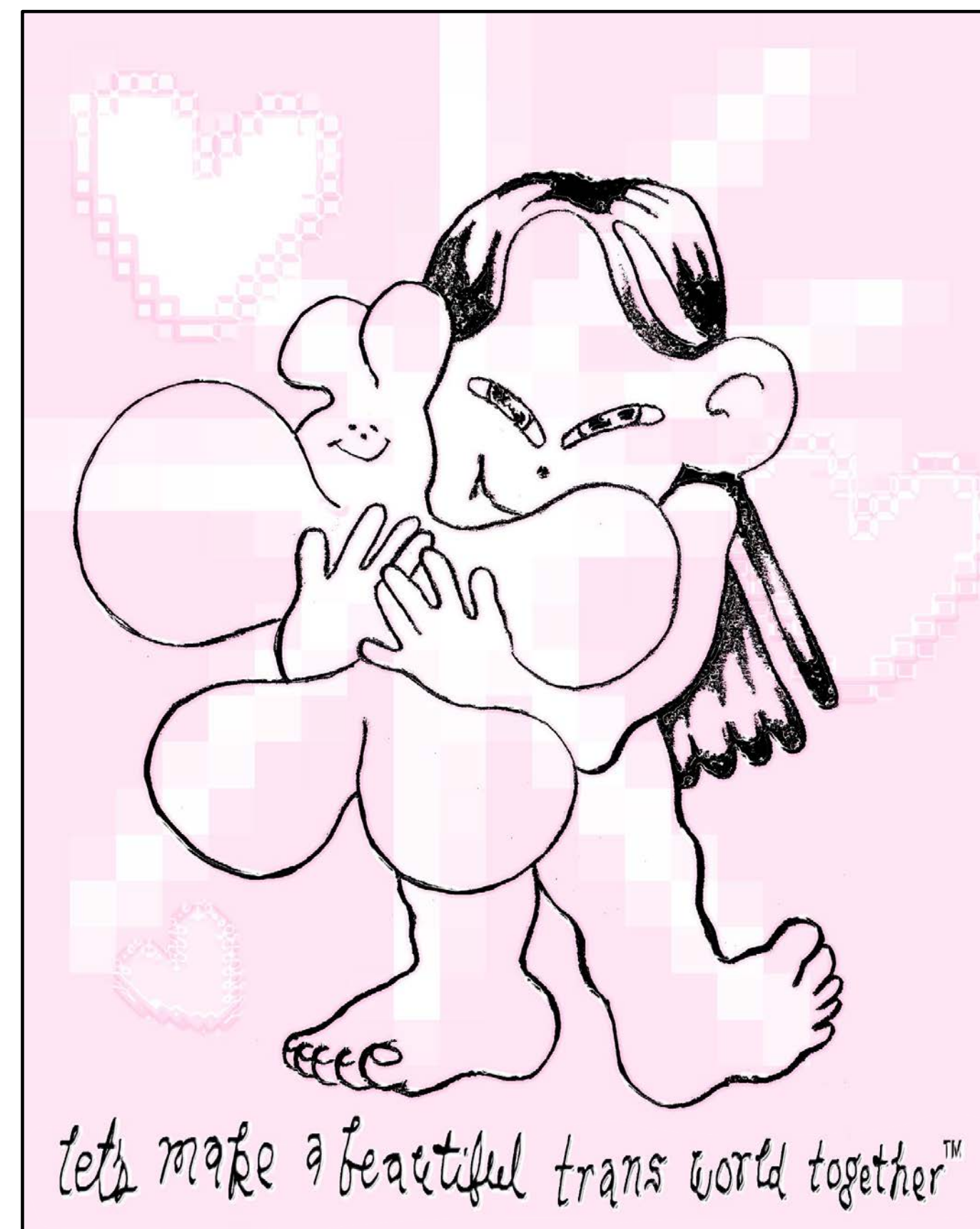
Even if my project were only about me making clothes for myself, it would be stemming from a desire to make the trans body - and thus clothes for it - a louder conversation in the art world (albeit it in an academic setting) and the world beyond. Especially as I near graduation, I'm hoping to devote the newly found time into communities that hold me and need me to use my privileges to create dialogues in spaces that will facilitate change. By making the effort to build both a communal project, as well as something that acts more personally, I'm hoping to spur conversations about representation for trans bodies as well as elevating it to an artistic status.

Currently, the bulk of the crochet pieces are headwear - good practice for learning different stitches, as well as wearable with any outfit, especially while it's still winter! As I've gained significant confidence with the technique of crochet, as well as using a variety of yarn, I'm excited for the prospective end goal: an outfit entirely hand crocheted. Therefore, the final presentation will display any other crochet garments as art pieces along with the collaboratively designed, screen printed shirts. I plan to be able to wear the outfit I made for myself, in a very direct and literal celebration and elevation of my thesis work, and of course, the trans body. Because the craft of screenprinting isn't my expertise, it's not likely I will have more than the planned 22 printed shirts - made specifically for those who contributed their designs. However, seeing as I'm a designer, and that the individual artworks (illustrations, crochet pieces, and all) deserve special attention and documentation, there will likely be a printed book highlighting the trans people and the drawings they contributed, as well as a functioning lookbook. Ultimately, I hope for the thesis defense to act as an immersive experience, and a fun evening for everyone who comes!

Q: How can I create clothing that intentionally adorns the trans body and represents transness?

A: By working with my community and having control over the production process!

Part 01: Community



If you like, I would love to hear about something or sometime that makes you happy to be trans!

i love the community! i love the feeling of when i notice new hairs or when my voice gets deeper or my adams apple seems more prominent. i love the feeling of when someone genders me correctly. i love when my grandma calls me my name even tho shes old and i never expected her to ever understand it. i love being t4t and i love loving other trans people. being trans is so beautiful!

1 response

I love everything about it except the shit cis people make up!!! being trans gives me a fun unique character arc that most guys could never dream of.....and a lifelong monopoly on transformation allegories! I love my trans disabled body and I get prettier every day !

1 response

I've made a few trans friends this year and they've really helped me come out of my shell and realize that being trans is not a burden. I am so happy that I get to experience life in this way and I would not change it for the

Every
Detail
is
Important

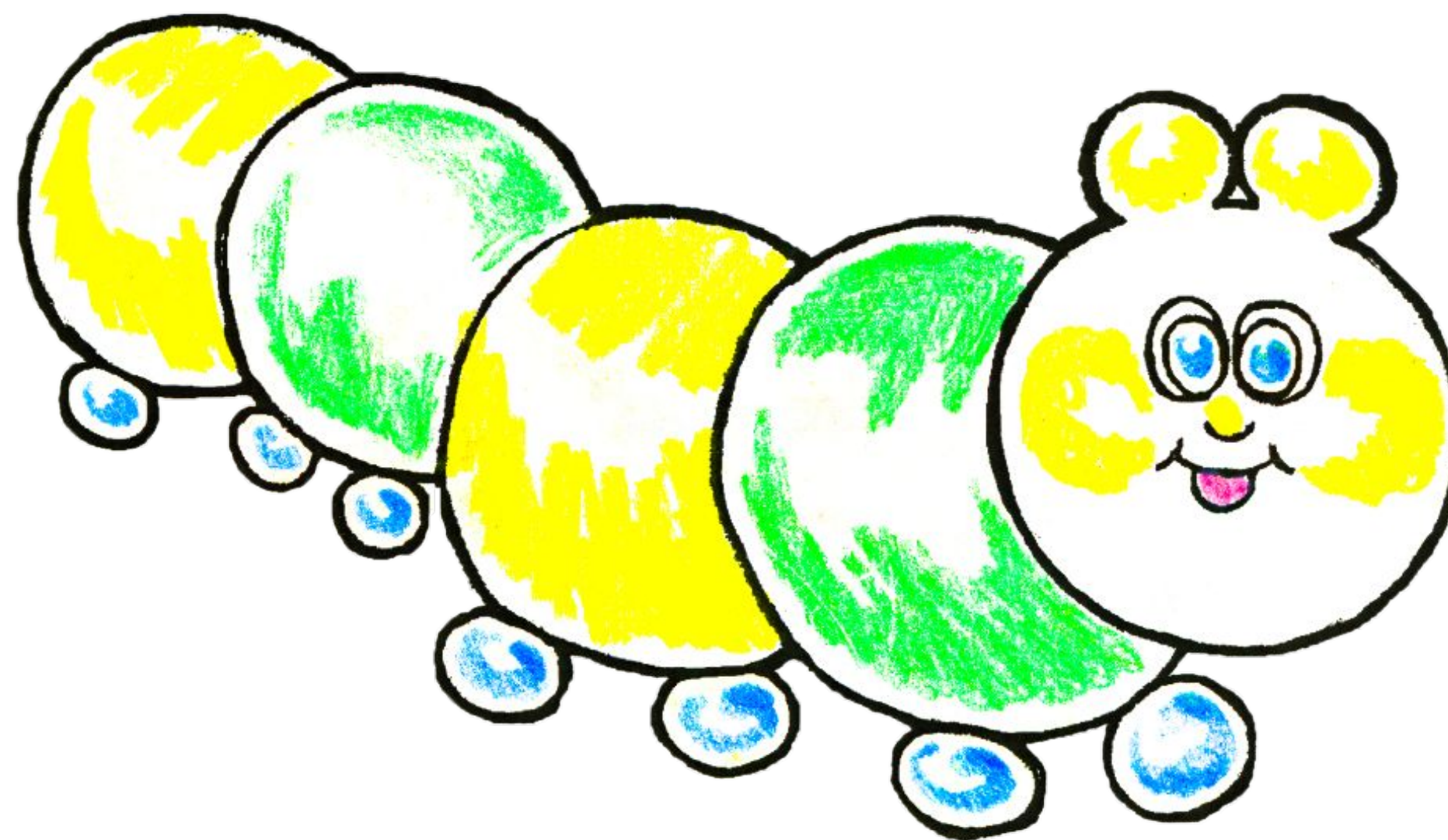
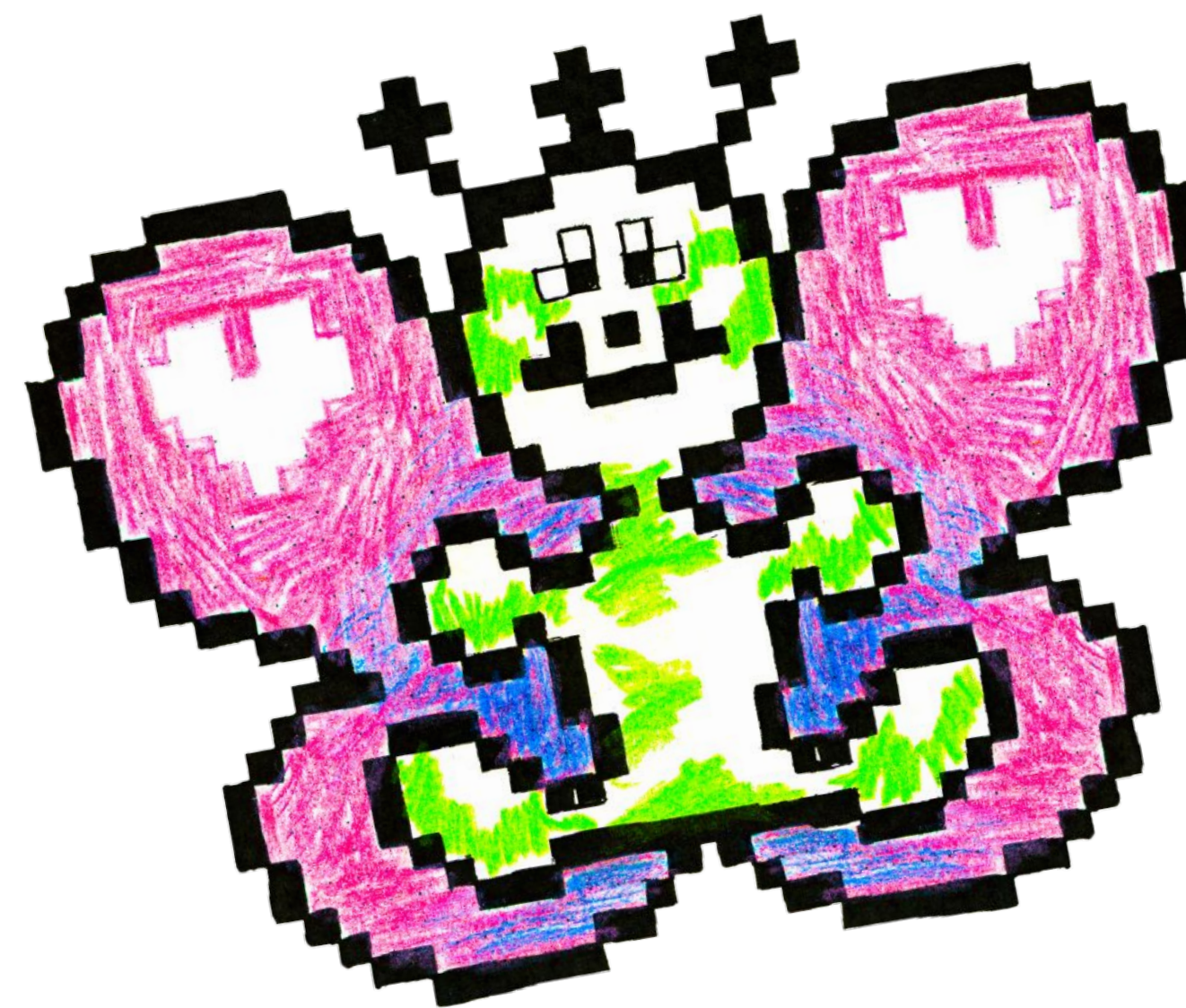
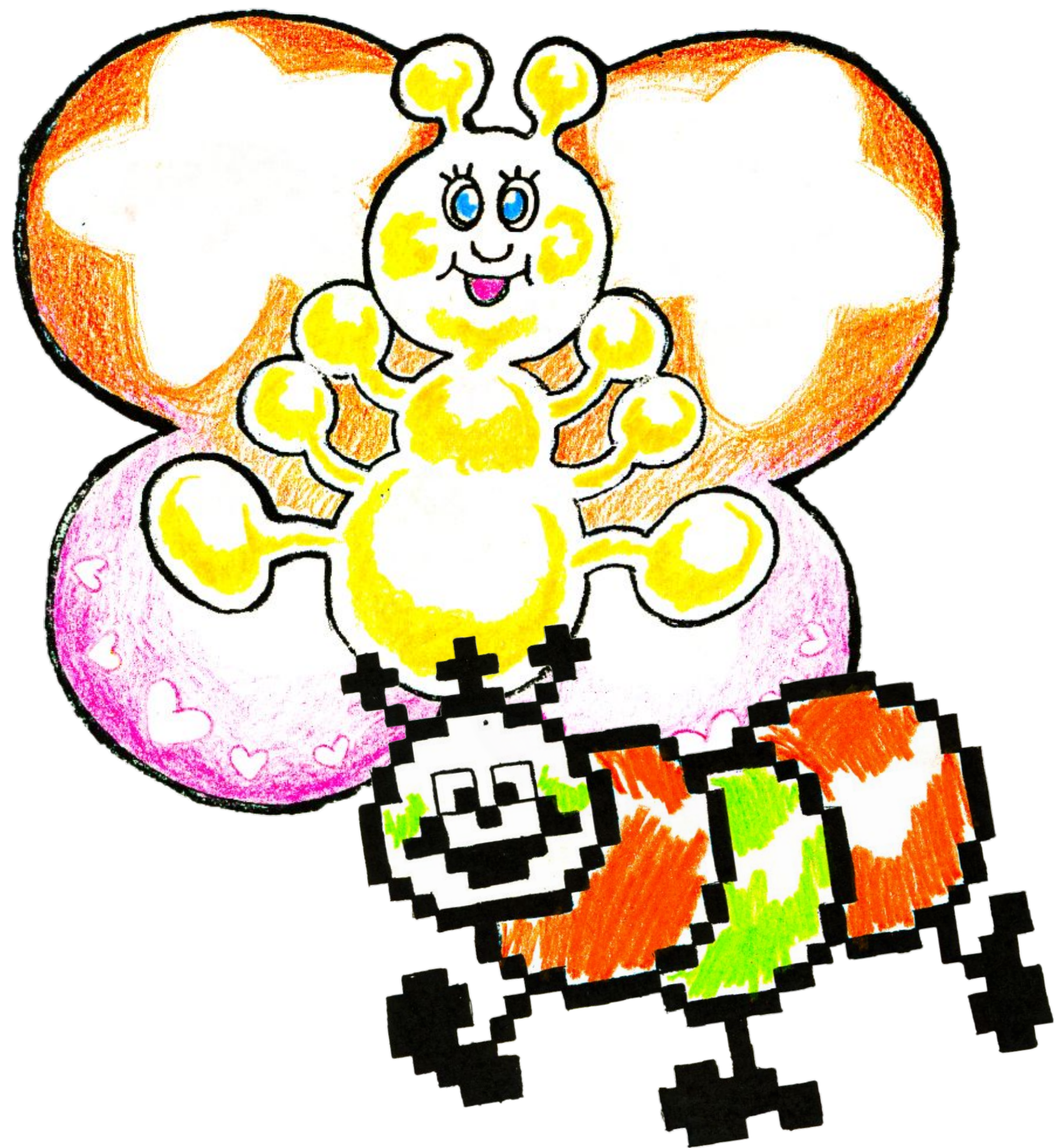






Part 02: Autonomy







I believe every butterfly is a traveler

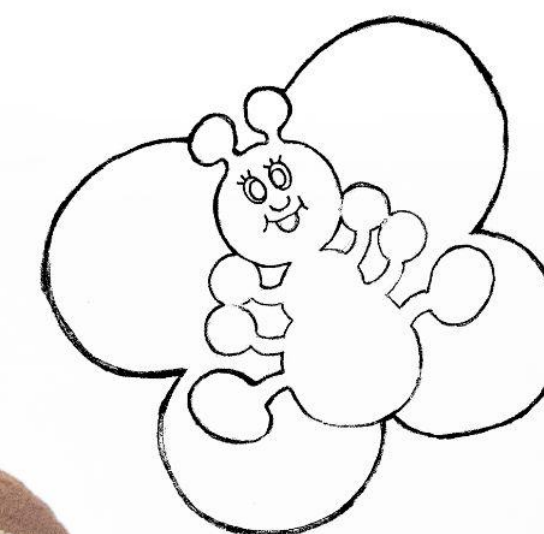


Name: Adrian Ficus Ochoa
Age: 22
Sign: Virgo
Loves: Ice cream, drawing, and being with friends. Hopes to have a bunny someday!



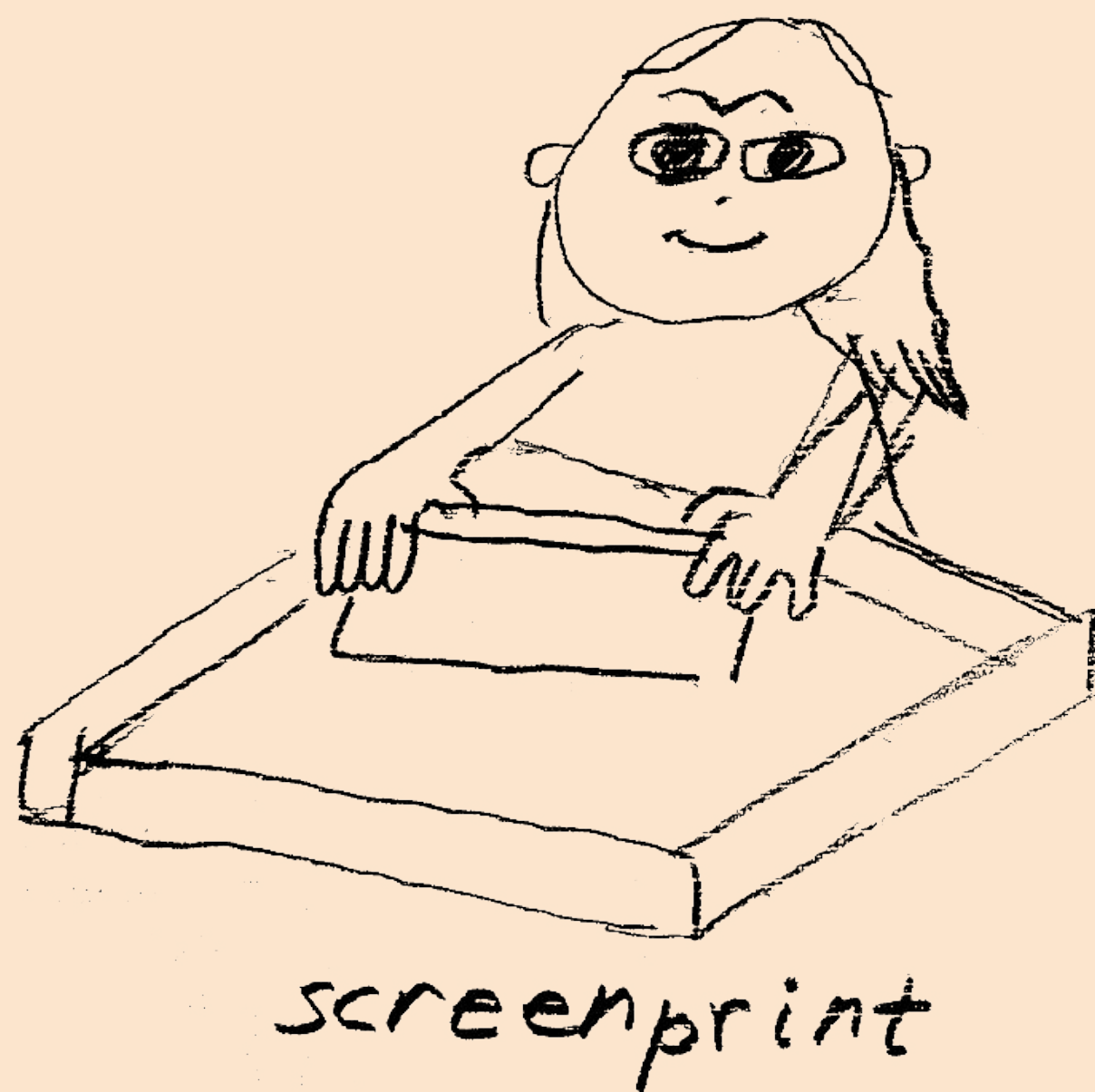
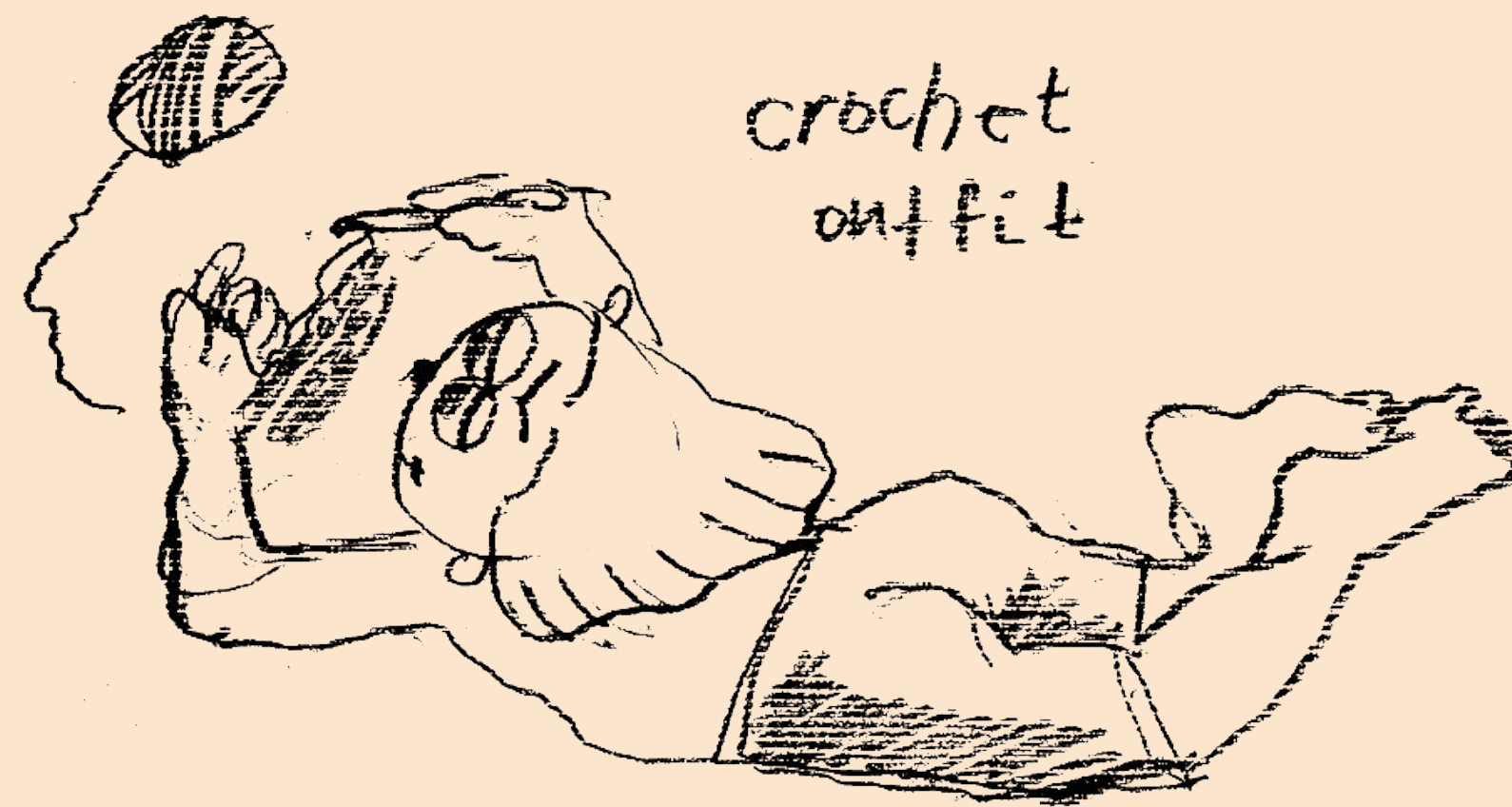
i believe every butterfly
is trans*

Name: Rudolf Laszlo Szilvasy
Age: 22
Sign: Capricorn
Loves: Chocolate and laughing
really hard! Wants to visit
tropical places someday and
have a little dog.



Next Steps

What's Left To Do!





plan +
set up
final defense



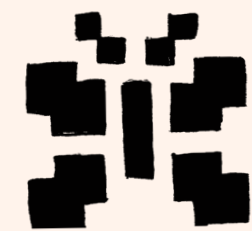
Rudi
wears an
outfit
he made

Feedback

Recommendations and advice for final presentation: Where should I hold the defense, especially since I want it to function as an event? What about sharing a space with a project similar in concept?

Is a lookbook the best solution, or should I make some sort of other printed media as documentation and as an artifact? Production recommendations for the lookbook?

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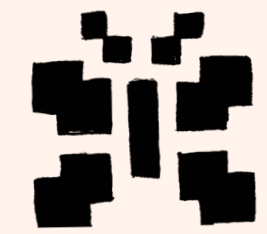
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Crochet Pattern Archive: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/16sDZlqZVxBsbbTKKoyVTfPRjdMijrIAa9efkm7Cc-bl/edit?usp=sharing>

Documentation

















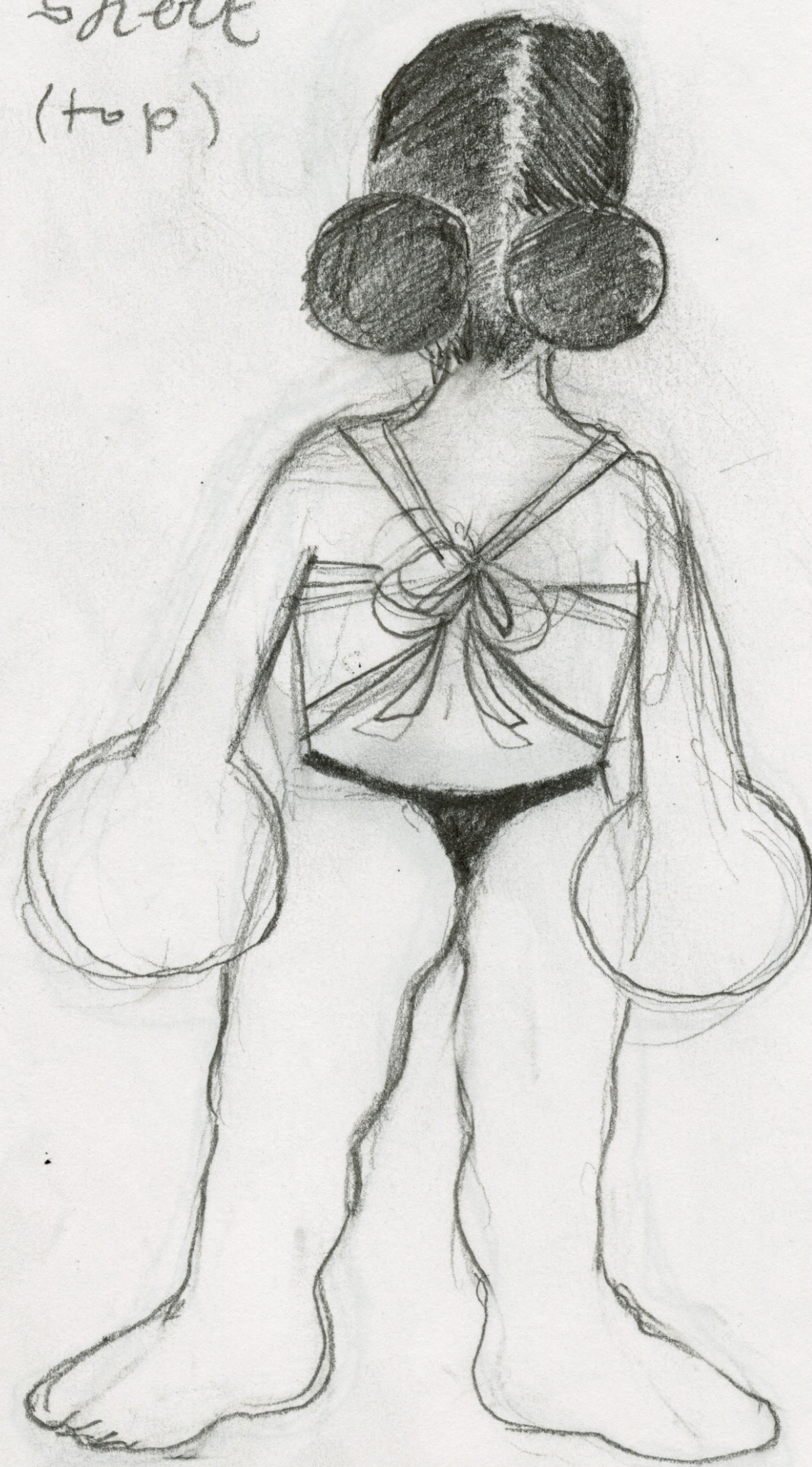
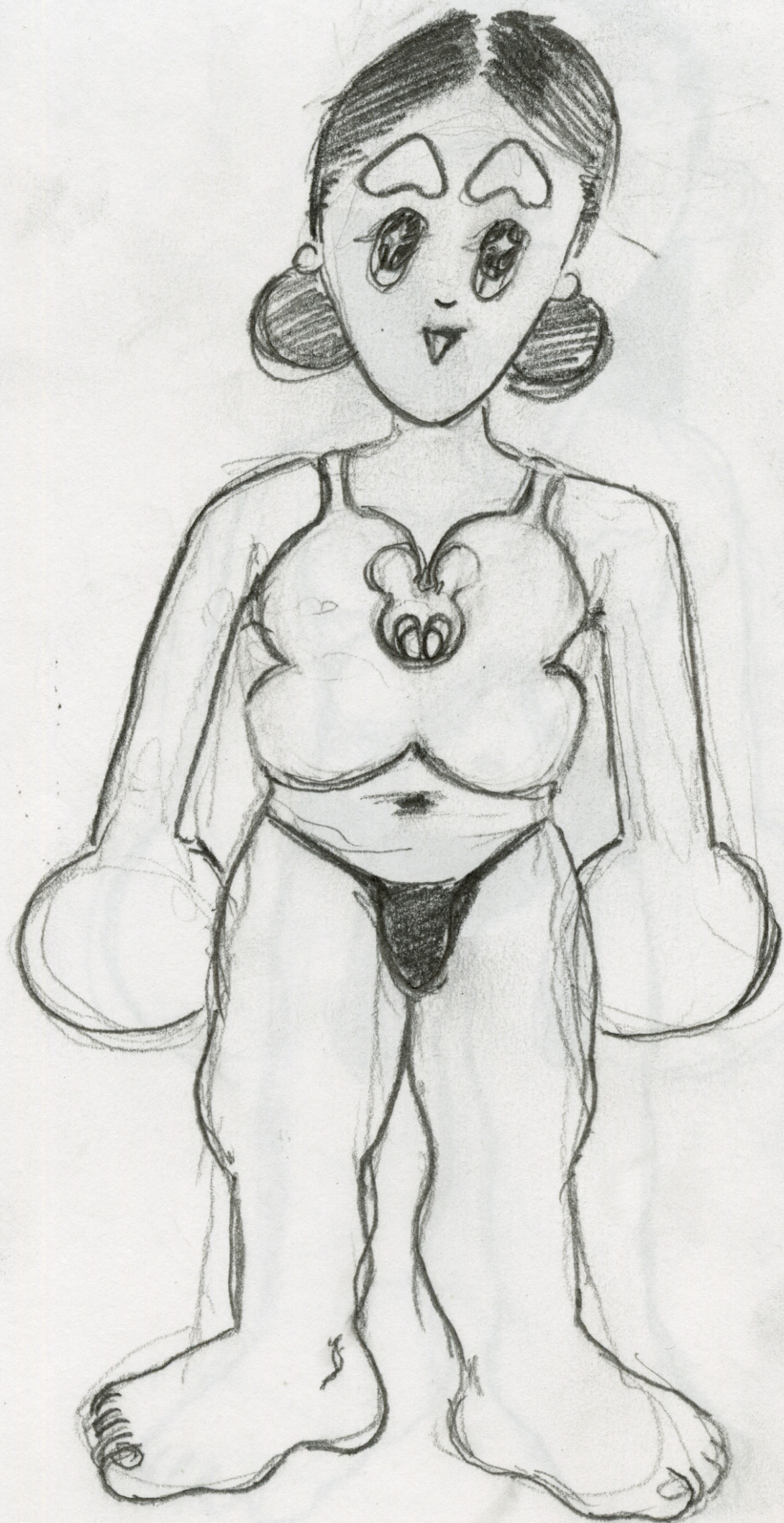


Thesis Journal



"Beepbe Butterfly"

short
(top)



thinking more about thesis..

Fashion Show! how to put on

- queering the fashion show
- informalise, no catwalk?
- * just a party?
- isn't that where you're really enjoying the piece? the outfit?

o finding a space for a party

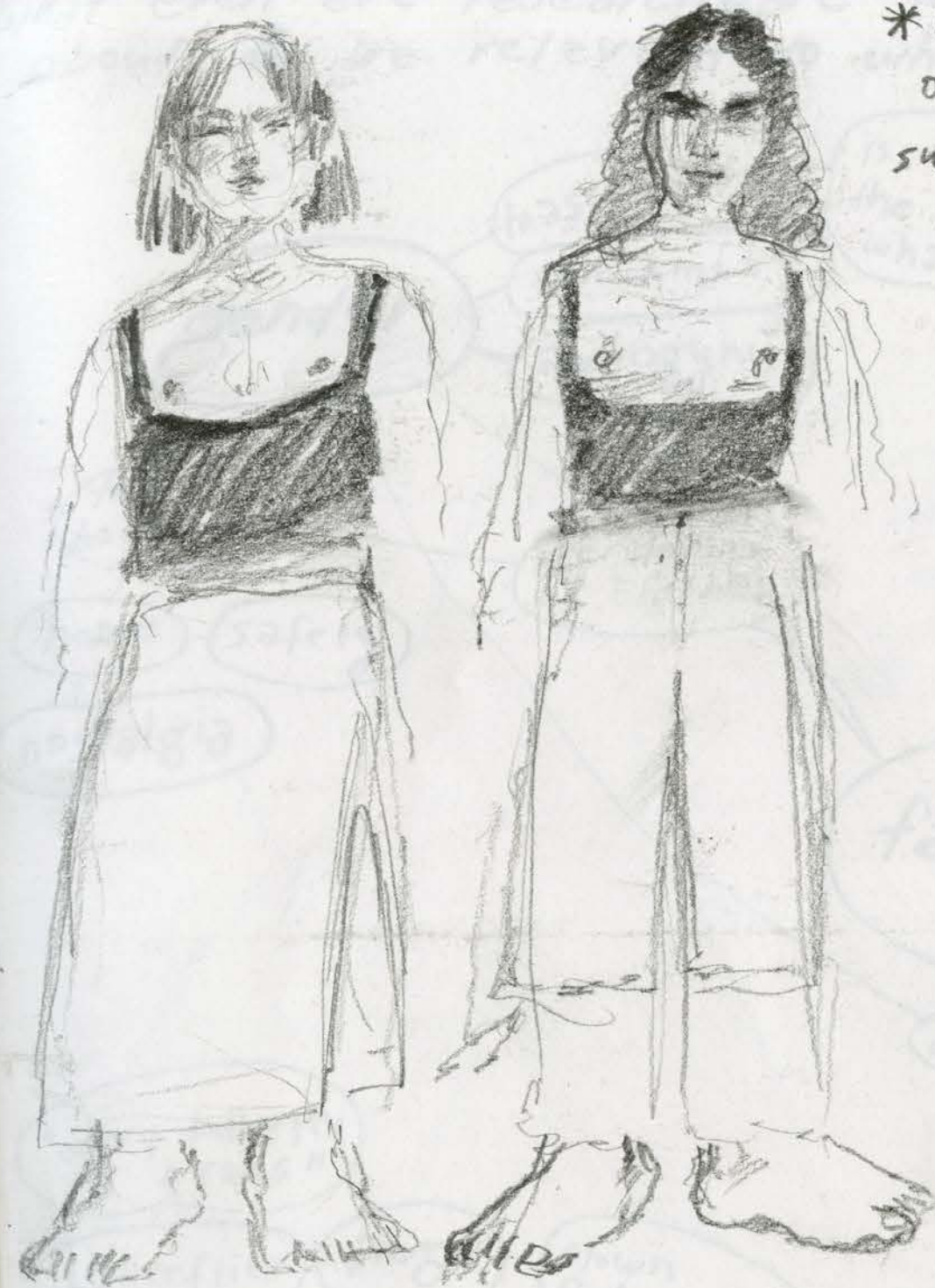
love, sweetness,
 kindness, safety,
 dress, gentleness,
 earnestness,
 femininity,
 silver, white,
 browns, blacks,
 neutrals
 orange, green, blue
 sky, blue, pink
 sky people.
 and bodies
 the white doggies &
 hills
 meadows & rolling hills
 and dunes & rough ocean



no straight lines!

homan@willamette.edu

if you want studio!



* how can I show off my top surgery scars? lol!

example of choice femininity

what's the history of that?!

fashion

culture

when people dress

pop culture influences

metamorphosis

beetles

shiny maps with red lines

Really lean into the
"all butterflies are trans" sentiment



Bob Mizer

"Queering the Queue"

T in LGBT is

trans bodies in queer media

How can I make a
clothing line that effectively
ornaments & celebrates
the trans body?

A clothing line
that ornaments & celebrates the trans body

DIY
screenprinted elements



Redi
is a friend
of mine

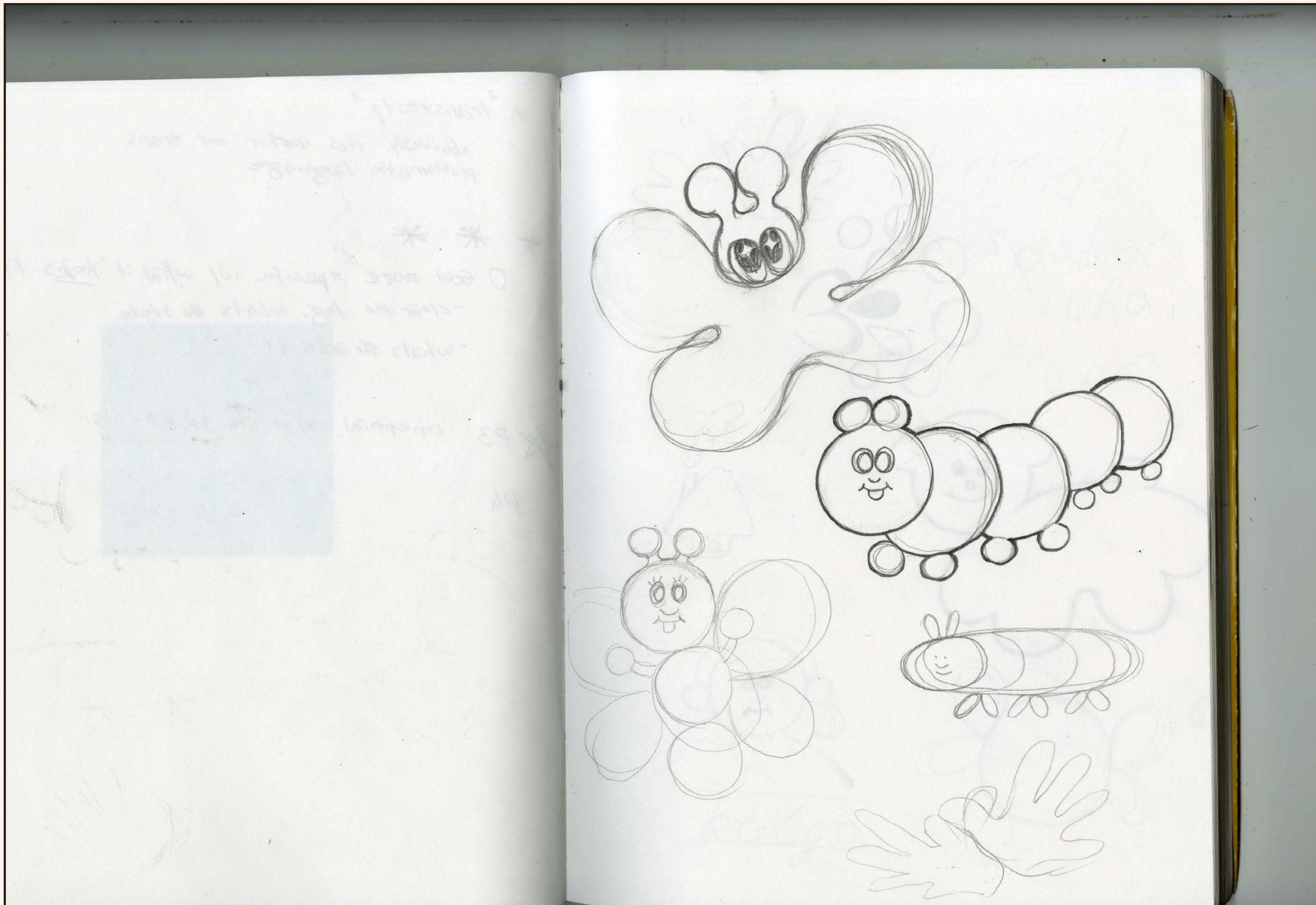
LoPke



making the clothes
work for me, not
vice versa

questions

- * gender in animals?
they swap that shit up all the time
- * what is masculine (clothing)?
feminine?
- * how do you make clothes??!
→ clothes that don't give you
dysphoria
→ are cool and accurately express
how cool you are
- * what kind of clothing is queer coded?
→ fashions & styles that originated
from queer people(s)?





Thank you...!!!

