

Hate Speech in Threads: Stitching and Posting a Resistance in the *Tiny Pricks Project*

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On February 24, 2020, former president Donald J. Trump tweeted the following: “The Coronavirus is very much under control in the USA. We are in contact with everyone and all relevant countries. CDC World Health have been working hard and very smart. Stock Market starting to look very good to me!”¹ The first sentence of this tweet was then shortly after re-posted on the Instagram account @tinypricksproject, this time in red thread on a blue and white surgical mask worn by an elderly person [Fig. 1].² The tweet is stitched on a mask, an object that has become indispensable since the COVID-19 pandemic, that acts as a textile canvas. The stitched words reach deep into the mask, thus rendering the object useless; an act akin to the words of Trump, who insisted that the virus will disappear “like a miracle.”³

(Insert Figure 1 about here)

The piece is part of a project called *Tiny Pricks Project* created and curated by artist and activist Diana Weymar.⁴ Initially, the project’s aim was to collect as many stitched Trump quotes as possible by the next presidential election in 2020 and has become the “largest textile Trump protest EVER with over 3600 Tiny Pricks and over a thousand participants globally.”⁵ It started on January 8, 2018, when Weymar stitched her first piece, an excerpt from Trump’s tweet from January 6,

2018.⁶ “I am a very stable genius” is embroidered in yellow thread on top of a brown cloth displaying an embroidered bouquet of flowers, a needlework piece made by Weymar’s grandmother in the 1960s.⁷ Weymar collects, curates, and exhibits artworks made by her and by other artists from all over the world.⁸

The quotes alongside ornamental images are carefully stitched on selected fabrics. The statements often feature tweets, thus the digital form becomes a tactile form. Weymar then photographs the textile artworks and creates a post on her Instagram account, rendering the tactile form digital again. Sometimes the artworks are photographed in a particular setting or in a particular ‘assemblage’ in which other objects enhance the embroidery’s statement or give it a different twist. Although the tactile is digitalized, the ‘tactility’ nevertheless persists through the audience’s “immersion” that triggers memories of haptic experiences.⁹ Posting the artworks also means that the artworks are now more widely accessible. People can like and comment on them with words and Emojis, tag friends, follow the individual artists, be inspired, and create new embroideries. The project is thus, in this sense, cyclic and creates both a material and a digital archive.

While the project has received considerable media attention from the *New Yorker*, *Vogue* and the *Financial Times*, among others, it has not yet been explored in detail in a scholarly context.¹⁰ It is the aim of this article to show the project’s potential as a primary source that opens up topical

and crucial questions on new digital forms of resistance. Resistance is here understood as a critical engagement with Trump's sexist and racist tweets, rendering them visible and tangible, and as an act of talking back through needlework and Instagram. Trump's use of Twitter was unprecedented for a president (and presidential candidate before). Unsurprisingly, his tweets engendered new forms of resistance such as the *Tiny Pricks Project*. This article takes a closer look at two artworks that creatively engage with two of his tweets in order to shed light on the different *modus operandi* of the project. One piece elicits resistance through the embroidered forms, using text, image, and textile as a means to expose and counter this hate speech and to make visible a community of 'resisters.' The other concentrates on the photographed objects in connection to the needlework and engenders resistance through the different media's layers of irony.

Art historian Janet Berlo notes that the mobilization of needlework for political ends has a long history in the United States; the *Tiny Pricks* project builds on the legacy of many generations of needleworkers. Before and during the American Civil War, for example, women showed their political alliances by giving names such as "Radical Rose" (in which each flower had a black center) or "Union Star" (showing support for the Union army rather than the Confederate one) to quilt patterns. Even earlier, supporters of the abolishment of slavery gave each other needle cases with abolition slogans printed on the covers, including women's suffrage and abolitionist speaker

Sarah Grimke's well-known words, "May the point of our needles prick the slave owner's conscience."¹¹ In this sense, it is also worth mentioning Judy Chicago's mixed media needlework installation *The Dinner Party* of the late 1970s, which reinserts mythical and historical women into history.¹² This "Craftivism,"¹³ a term coined in 2003 by Betsy Greer "to designate work that combines craft and activism," is visible in the *Tiny Pricks Project* but also in 'yarnbombing'¹⁴ or the famous NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt.¹⁵ In addition to reading such 'textile politics' as a way "to advance political agendas," Julia Bryan-Wilson suggests using 'textile' as a verb and argues that "to textile politics is to *give texture* to politics, to refuse easy binaries, to acknowledge complications."¹⁶ This materialization of politics and their complexities is visible (and tangible) in the *Tiny Pricks Project*.

The example in figure 1 illustrates the project's intermedial dimension as it uses thread, mask, photography, text, and Instagram. The embroidery artworks are highly intermedial objects. Because of their final digital form, however, it is helpful to speak of 'remediation' in the sense that "[n]o medium . . . can . . . function independently and establish its own separate and purified space of cultural meaning."¹⁷ Although this means that "all media are mixed media,"¹⁸ heuristically speaking, it is nevertheless fruitful to analyze media according to their affordances and limitations.¹⁹ A

'medium' is the channel through which a message is 'mediated' and as such entails "technical channels" (for instance television) but also "spoken language, writing, painting, the human body, bronze, oil watercolor, and even fabrics."²⁰ Of course, media are "conventionally perceived as distinct,"²¹ however, their "material and operative restrictions" only allow for a playful border-crossing, "an 'as if' of the other medium."²² As such, this article analyzes each medium separately and in their playful crossing of media borders.

In addition to the intermedial approach, the article takes seriously what Eugenie Brinkema calls "a thinking from form."²³ Brinkema defines form as that which points "both to a minor showing -- mere appearance, a visible, outward shape or display . . . -- and to the specifying principle of some thing, an inward kind or an essential type."²⁴ She terms this "specifying principle" as "a determining and shaping active principle."²⁵ The artworks illustrate this outward shape and at the same time they are actively forming conceptions. In this sense, form shapes and arranges as well as it contains and confines. The article uses Brinkema's methodology foremost as a starting point, an incentive to look more closely to 'form' and will mainly focus on quick-to-recognize shapes such as state lines, the profile, or the ideographic heart.

Using this approach together with an intermedial lens, this article pays close attention to each medium and their border-crossings as well as to forms and their ordering principles in their process of meaning-making. In a first

step, the relationship between textiles and the digital will be sketched out in order to better understand what the *Tiny Pricks Project* does. In a second step, two close readings will shed light on how different media constitute different meanings and engage in a playful and interventionist way with Trump's tweets.

The Digital and the Material: Transient Tweets and Tactile Textiles

The Dictionary of Needlework entry on 'stitches' reads: "the word is used not only to denote the manner by which one fabric is connected to another; or embellished by another, but by which thin threads are joined together, so as to make a material more or less solid."²⁶ In this vein, stitching can be seen as a form of making something that is fragmentary and fleeting -- an experience or a thought -- into something material and solid that then can serve as a testimony. This idea of needlework as a means to transform the transient immaterial into the enduring solid is heightened in the *Tiny Pricks Project*. Although the digital is, in its physical reality, material too, it is nevertheless in its conceptual state often linked to ephemerality and immateriality. Lay people hardly think about the microscopic physical reality of digital data storage nor do we think of the physical institution where our data is saved on large servers when we talk about, for instance, "the Cloud."²⁷

The terms 'tweet' or 'Twitter' as a sound made by a bird or a secret passed on orally suggest a fleetingness in the form of "inconsequential chirpings."²⁸ The fact that the list of tweets is presented in an order that prioritizes the newest adds to this ephemeral quality: "In a sense, ephemerality was built in. For its first few years, Twitter contained no search, so stepping back in time meant manual scrolling."²⁹ Since its humble beginnings in 2006, Twitter has increasingly become news-oriented and less intimate. Functions such as the @ or the # allow for the organization of topics and communities within this vast digital space. However, from the beginning, users have controlled their function and purpose. Twitter constantly changes with new users (as well as with new owners and CEOs).³⁰

Twitter's term "watching," which was later replaced by "following," also adds an impersonal dimension: "'you're not dealing with them personally, you're dealing with what they've put out there.'"³¹ This comment points to the seemingly removed responsibility a Twitter user assumes in regard to their tweets and the "out there" illustrates that the tweet is visible by a wide-reaching audience. Through the function of retweets, the @, and the twitter thread this distance is heightened and is suggestive of "eavesdropping."³²

In the *Tiny Pricks Project*, Instagram (as well as galleries) serve as spaces to prevent Trump's tweets from falling into oblivion. Instagram, owned by Facebook ('Meta Platforms'), is a social media platform that works slightly

differently than Twitter. Featuring the word 'instantly' in its name, this social network focuses on video- and photo-sharing that in turn fosters a social exchange through the like, comment, and follow functions. Users can post photographs or videos on their profile page. There are options to link these posts with people and places with a tag option as well as to topics with the help of the hashtag. Filters can be used to alter the media. The photos were initially restricted to the form of a square analogous to the Polaroid (which was also the company's first logo); since 2015 these restrictions have been loosened. In the feed, the posts feature the like, comment, and send functions below the photo or video: "The space for captions, hashtags, likes and comments underneath the Instagram image in its own way acted as the digital realization of these annotations [on the white space below the photo of a polaroid]."³³ On a user's profile, the posts are arranged in a row of three, creating a polished, curated grid comparable to a digital gallery or album.

The story function enables Instagram users' uploaded content to be visible for twenty-four hours. Although this gives Instagram a kind of ephemerality similar to platforms such as Twitter, there is the option to save stories that then appear below the user's profile and can be named and arranged according to an overarching aesthetic by creating icons. This again creates a mini-gallery or mini-album. Since its beginnings, Instagram has tapped into "[t]he aesthetics of nostalgia" through the polaroid form and the retro filters

(for instance, filters that simulate old film photographs displaying scratches, film edges, etc.).³⁴ Instagram also follows a mode of immediacy and ephemerality; however, its organizing functions, aesthetics, and link to analog media add an archival, museum-like quality.³⁵

The textile artworks posted on the Instagram account of the *Tiny Pricks Project* result from a process in which the digital text (a tweet) becomes textile text (the embroidery) becomes digital text (the Instagram post). It is thus not unimportant to note that text, textile, and the digital share affinities. "Text" and "textile" have been closely connected in terms of their etymological root and their material histories. Texts, just like textiles, can tell a story visually and tactilely.³⁶ This affiliation is further visible in the digital field where textile metaphors like "the world wide web" or "Twitter thread" are prominently featured. Such material metaphors serve as means to make abstract things like the world wide web more tangible and perhaps put them in a more positive, 'cozy' light. Although textiles and the digital appear as contrasts at times, it should not be assumed that they are inherently oppositional. Birgit Schneider argues, for instance, that weaving can be closely linked to the digital in terms of its thread structure and grid pattern "rendering it akin to a raster pattern composed of pixels."³⁷

The digital format, however, often allows hate speech to go unchecked. The mass of tweets posted daily makes it difficult to detect, delete or adequately react to violent and

abusive language. Responses of former Twitter staff (among others from former Twitter CEOs Dick Costolo and Jack Patrick Dorsey) illustrate how poorly this issue has been dealt with: "We love instant, public, global messaging and conversation. It's what Twitter is and it's why we're here. But we didn't fully predict or understand the real-world negative consequences."³⁸ This issue has only recently begun to be dealt with more systematically, leading to the suspension/deletion of Trump's account on January 8, 2021 after the storming of the capital by white supremacist Trump supporters.³⁹ Before and during his presidency, however, Trump's tweets were instrumental in spreading racist, misogynistic, and other violent and discriminatory content.⁴⁰

The digital is not exclusively associated with negative ideas, as digital platforms enable the production and storage of knowledge, forge connections between people from around the globe, and give subcultures – such as 'Black Twitter' or LGBTQIA+ activists on Instagram – a space to inhabit.⁴¹ It is also a tool for activism that goes hand-in-hand with real-life activism happening in the streets as the famous hashtags #blacklivesmatter or #metoo illustrate.⁴² However, with Elon Musk in charge of the platform, the future of Twitter as a space for alternative, critical voices hangs in the balance.

The act of stitching Trump's tweets can be seen as a form of resistance. It seeks to talk back to Trump's abusive digital statements, to provide a physical account of this, and to form a political community.⁴³ Although the project makes use

of both the tactile and the digital, what stands out is that the practice of stitching and exhibiting it (on Instagram or in a gallery) takes much longer and more effort than the original sending out of the tweet. The embroiderer sits with Trump's words for hours: "'If you think about the care that goes into embroidering and the waiting, and the sitting with the words -- it means you have to be present.'"⁴⁴

The act of stitching can be seen as an "outlet for feelings of anger, fear, and sadness"⁴⁵ and a duty to record and to show that in fact people do notice that violent statements are not only made by a real person but a head of state: "Like, where were you the moment you heard him say *this*, and you thought, *Oh, no, no, no, no*. That's not possible...That he's our *President*. In that sense, I think of it as a memorial too – like when you see the Vietnam Memorial, the multitudes is what hits you."⁴⁶ By comparing the mass of stitches she has received to the mass of names visible on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Weymar connects the tweets to violence and the act of stitching them to the etching of the names, an act of grief and an act to commemorate the victims of this violence in a community of people from all over the world.⁴⁷

The USA as a Patchwork Quilt: Countering "Send Her Back" with Salām

(Insert Figure 2 about here)

This embroidery artwork made by the Instagram user @metgodshesblack (a podcast, artist, and activist group) is composed on a white rectangular fabric.⁴⁸ At the top, the words "Send Her Back" are embroidered in capital letters and quotation marks. The artist used multiple threads with different colors to make the letters pop out. On the right, just below the last letter of this phrase, the year "2019" is stitched in multiple colors but in a smaller font. In the middle, two images overlap. There is the face of a woman in profile with a patchwork headscarf. Her lips are red, her facial expression is calm and determined. She is looking ahead. The scarf, which we can identify in the artist statement and in conversation with the other images as a *ḥijāb*, consists of various pieces of red, white, and blue fabrics with different patterns. In the background, the outline of the state of Minnesota is stitched in green thread. The state's form at once circles her on the left but also cuts through her *ḥijāb* on the right. Below, Arabic writing is embroidered in gold. The text by the artist reveals that it is the calligraphy of "*salām*" which translates to "peace" in English. At first glance, the flag in the lower left corner looks like the flag of the USA. However, the blue rectangle does not depict fifty stars but only one five-pointed star. We know from the comment of the artist accompanying the image on Instagram that this represents the Somalian flag -- a white star on a cyan background.

"Send her back" emerged as a chant after Trump wrote the words "go back" in a tweet thread on July 14, 2019 in which he attacked four Democratic Congresswomen of color, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, Ilhan Abdullahi Omar of Minnesota, Ayanna S. Pressley of Massachusetts and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan. All were born in the USA, except for Omar who was born in Somalia and came to the USA as a refugee when she was twelve years old.⁴⁹ Trump wrote that they came from "countries whose governments are a complete and total catastrophe, the worst, most corrupt and inept anywhere in the world (if they even have a functioning government at all)" and instead of "viciously telling the people of the United States, the greatest and most powerful Nation on earth, how our government is to be run," they should "go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came."⁵⁰

The entire tweet is inherently racist, using problematic racial stereotypes such as the notion of the corrupt and 'uncivilized' non-Western nations coupled with highly charged language such as his use of the word "infested" in connection with the governments he refers to. He later used this particular term again in a tweet concerning Maryland's seventh congressional district which encompasses most of the city of Baltimore and which is home to a Black majority, thus connecting 'infested' with Black people.⁵¹

"Go back" were the words used in the original tweet. These were then transformed into a chant at Trump rallies using the words "send her back." In its word structure, this chant is

similar to the “lock her up” posted on Twitter by Trump concerning Hillary Clinton that was also turned into a rallying cry in Trump’s presidential campaign. This work of embroidery takes up the transformed version, the chanted version, allowing the piece to talk about “Her,” here Ilhan Omar, and thus literally puts a face to the targeting of Trump’s racist statement and the racist chant.⁵² Moreover, in the form of a chant, it conjures images of a mob mentality and conceptualizes the person as an object that can be “sent back.”

In this imperative sentence structure, the person is sent “back,” thus implying that she came from a place she is supposed to go “back” to. Coupled with the comment in the original tweet -- an embedded aside -- that the USA is “the greatest and most powerful Nation on earth,” the tweet is highly supremacist. It creates an “imagined community” to which white Americans naturally belong despite their own immigration history.⁵³ This differentiation made in Trump’s tweet brings to mind that the concept of citizenship, especially in the context of *jus soli*, does not solely depend on a legal status but that *practices* of citizenship are just as important, allowing only some people to be granted full access to rights, privileges, opportunities, and recognition.⁵⁴ This tension is further expressed in the images, namely in the patchwork *ḥijāb*, the Minnesota border outline, the word سلام (*salām*), and the combined Somalian and American flag.

The *ḥijāb*, which the public has come to associate with Ilhan Omar, allows the viewer to identify her as the concrete target of Trump's racism. As one of the first of two Muslim women (the other one being Rashida Tlaib) to serve in Congress, Omar represents the large – but still very much discriminated against – Muslim community of the United States. Omar is the first person to wear a *ḥijāb* in Congress.⁵⁵ The *ḥijāb*, defined as “a head-covering and . . . a particular style of dress considered modest and Islamic,” has a rich and complex history that cannot be explored here; but what comes to bear here is its association with Islamic and Muslim identities and that certain headscarves are banned in some spaces and even whole Western nations.⁵⁶ Whether as a head-covering or as the particular style of dressing, the Western world still largely does not accept *ḥijāb* and still very much ‘others’ it.⁵⁷ The fact that Omar is the first person to wear one and the racism she experiences as a consequence thereof, speaks for itself.

In contrast, the quilt, here represented in the patchwork design of the *ḥijāb*, is “iconic in [the] American heritage;” a quintessential object of heritage.⁵⁸ This status in American society “makes it thus an excellent medium to discuss and negotiate differently conceptualized notions of identities, histories, and forms of citizenship in the USA.”⁵⁹ The patchwork design further alludes to the flag of the USA. The use of patchwork in combination with a red, white, and blue color scheme further denotes the idea of the U.S. as a

patchwork of different states -- just picture the map of the USA with its many state borders -- but also as a patchwork of different people with different cultures, belief systems, and identities. The patchwork *ḥijāb* exposes and questions the "imagined community" of the U.S. This is further emphasized in the artist's statement embedded in the caption of the post:

Ilhan Omar is a black, Somalian-American, Muslim refugee who came to the United States seeking a safe haven, looking forward to creating what will be her 'American Dream.' She worked hard, not just for her community, but keeping in mind the well-being of all of us. The obstacles she has faced on her journey to the US is something many of us could not imagine. So, to have a group of people comfy in their foggy bubble, attempt to intimidate her is weak and hypercritical. She has every right to be here and to contribute what she can to the betterment of this nation.⁶⁰

The statement mentions another quintessential idea of the American imaginary, namely the "American Dream." The concept has its origins in the nineteenth century when many European immigrants emigrated to the USA and has been associated with "upward mobility in American society and its supposed attainability through hard work, humility, and cultural assimilation."⁶¹ The concept has a long and certainly problematic history. Nevertheless, it continues to be a

ubiquitous reference. The artist makes clear in this statement what is at stake: the “right to be here and to contribute,” clearly rebuking Trump’s tweet and subsequent chant. Making use of these signifiers of American patriotism -- the American Dream, the flag, and the quilt -- in combination with the *ḥijāb* and Arabic writing, questions and subverts what it means to be American. In contrast to the old-fashioned idea of the “melting pot” where an immigrant in the end fully integrates into mainstream U.S. society, the quilt suggests a fragmentary whole where each block remains distinct from the others but together they form a beautiful pattern.⁶² Thus, its form does not propose assimilation but a parallel and united existence of different cultures.

This parallel existence is further explored in the stitched Arabic word سلام (*salām*). Stitched in Arabic calligraphy the word is not identifiable to non-Arabic speakers. This use of a language spoken and written among a large population within the United States as well as across the world also makes the viewer aware of the hierarchies implicated in the representation of languages. The embroidery illustrates hateful, racist English words alongside the Arabic word for peace. The word is also part of the common greeting *اَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ*, *as-salāmu ’alaykum*, which translates to “peace be upon you” and as such can also simply mean a friendly, if formal, “hi.”⁶³ In terms of its form, the calligraphy is stitched in golden thread, and in comparison to the tweet with its uneven letters, سلام exhibits elegance and, together with its meaning,

power. "Send Her Back" is countered with a greeting instead of a goodbye.

Further forms used by the artist are the state borders and the profile. Both are outlines. Omar's face is in profile and encircling her is the outline of the state of Minnesota where Omar represents the fifth district in Congress. An outline is "[t]he (real or apparent) line or lines defining the contour or bounds of a figure for a viewer."⁶⁴ It is the "border line" and "the shape of the thing thus defined."⁶⁵ Omar's face in profile is contained within the drawn borderline but the right part cuts through her *ḥijāb*, a gesture we can read as violent and freeing at the same time. The cutting through is disruptive, an invasion, but the line does not only mark a separation but also an escape; she is at once part of, and still escapes, the borderlines. Omar speaks not only for her district but for many Americans who identify with her as a young woman of color, as an Arabic-speaking person, and as a Muslim. The borderline reminds the viewer of the form of a state and its boundaries, marking an "inside" versus an "outside."

Alongside the form of the state, Omar's profile expresses "bravery, focus and determination" as the artist writes.⁶⁶ Her red lipstick is a striking feature we recognize from other images of Omar.⁶⁷ The lipstick suggests femininity in a field where the performance of a patriarchal and toxic masculinity (as displayed in the extreme of Trump's behavior) has for centuries been the norm. Using this marker for Omar and other

women in politics coupled with the words “bravery, focus, and determination” adds an intersectional reading in which Omar, as a Muslim woman, faces and resists misogyny and racism within a predominantly white, male political setting.

The use of the silhouette in art has a long history; Pliny the Elder’s tale of a Corinthian maid who traces her lover’s shadow on a wall, and from this shadow her father makes a sculpture is just one example. The drawing of the line and making of the sculpture signify in this story the presence of absence.⁶⁸ This materialization of an absence -- a negative or non-entity -- is not the same in the embroidery but the metaphor is still pertinent: it is the materialization of a person who constantly and openly faces a kind of racism that tries to erase its subjects and is hard to grasp, thriving in a digital age where words are short-lived, unregulated, and threaten to vanish in the abundance of digital words and images.⁶⁹

Another image on the embroidery is the flag, one that has the dual signification of the U.S. and Somalia. This fusion reflects Omar’s identity. The mixed flag design thus distances itself from the nationalist and supremacist notions of Trump’s original tweet. Instead, in a globalized, postcolonial world with large migration flows, the notion of a patchwork flag remains a potent symbol. The American flag as an object of pride and patriotism is imagined differently here. Together with the word سلام and the breaking free from borderlines, the textile artwork counters nationalist and isolationist politics

with a politics of patchwork where distinctly different patches work together in unison.

This patchwork metaphor brings us to the last aspect of the artwork: its textile material. Textile is evoked in the artwork five times: in the flag, the *ḥijāb*, the patchwork, in the overall medium of embroidery (out of which the former images are made), and the cloth onto which the embroidery is stitched. The cloth is identified as a handkerchief by the artist; when looking more closely, we find ornamental embroidery at the very top, an ornate embellishment in white, often featured on handkerchiefs. Whereas a handkerchief is often folded into a square, this one is laid out, unfolded. Through this common image that is interrupted here, the form evokes the notion of an unfolding in its literal sense as well as in its figurative sense of “revealing” and “making clear.” It acts as a screen on which the resistance in thread is revealed.

Moreover, I would argue that cloth, more than any other medium offers a tactile immersion: we know what it’s like to touch textiles as they surround us (literally) every day and thus prompt our reaction to touch it, to engage with it bodily. Here, we want to feel the stitches, we want to trace the letters and forms. A handkerchief is an object with which to wipe away tears, thus evoking a very bodily and emotional connection. Similar to the Vietnam Memorial or the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt as objects of grief and commemoration, this work of art points to the grief of the

numerous victims of racist hate speech, pointing to racial grief and melancholia.⁷⁰ The form of the handkerchief also prompts us to think about folding it up into a square we could neatly tuck back into our pocket. This malleability of the material allows the different forms to touch each other, to be folded and scrunched up and to be extended again, thus, once more, blurring boundaries.

In contrast to this tactility stands the digital in the form of the tweet and the form of Instagram onto which the artwork is posted. Instagram allows other users to respond to the artwork, be inspired, and find more information on it through the artist's statement and the tagged artist whom one can now follow. In addition, the artist can respond to comments, thus allowing for a conversation to take place.

In @metgodshesblack's artwork, the racist tweet and chant "send her back" is stitched prominently at the top of a white handkerchief. This racist message is brought into a conversation with the patchwork metaphor visible in the hybrid flag, the patchwork *ḥijāb*, and the word سلام as a friendly "hi" that exists alongside the racist "goodbye." The profile of Omar, who transcends state boundaries, is mirrored in the textile medium, a medium that can be folded and stretched. And finally, the hateful digital words first transformed into a stitched message is in this composition posted again online where a community engages with the piece in a supportive way; a community of resisters that resonates with many different people but particularly with women is created.

Swatting Flies and Body-Toning: The Suburban Housewife's Walkout

(Insert Figure 3 about here)

Diana Weymar's "Desperate Housewives, swatting at flies," an assemblage of embroidery and various objects arranged in a photograph, illustrates how the photograph posted on Instagram becomes the final 'artwork' and how each medium adds layers of irony. As Linda Hutcheon writes, irony is a "strange mode of discourse where you say something you don't actually mean and expect people to understand not only what you actually do mean but also your attitude toward it. [...] Irony has an evaluative edge and manages to provoke emotional response in those who 'get' it and those who don't."⁷¹ In this piece, it is the Instagram post that is key in its engagement with Trump's tweet. The words "the suburban housewives will be voting for me" are stitched onto a white fabric which is cut out in the shape of a heart. The stitching is done in a dark green color and on the upper left corner of the heart there is another heart embroidered in the same color with the initials "DT + SH" inside. Weymar has surrounded the embroidery with a Jane Fonda "Fitness Walkout" audio cassette, a SONY Walkman, an old bottle of furniture polish, and four fly swatters in pastel colors. The objects are arranged on top of an apron that features yellow, white, and blue flowers with green leaves on a white and light blue background.

The text “the suburban wife will be voting for me” is taken from Trump’s tweet sent out on August 12, 2020: “The ‘suburban housewife’ will be voting for me. They want safety & are thrilled that I ended the long running program where low income housing would invade their neighborhood. Biden would reinstall it, in a bigger form, with Corey Booker in charge!”⁷² The program Trump cancelled was initiated during Barack Obama’s presidency and aimed to fight housing discrimination, an issue inherently tied to the long history of racial segregation in the USA. In the tweet, Trump posits that under Biden this program will be re-installed (which, in fact, it was, however, in an improved, less bureaucratic form on July 31, 2021).⁷³ Trump posits African-American Senator Corey Booker (New Jersey) as the person overseeing this project.

Trump’s tweet draws a distinction between upper- and middle-income families and poorer ones in which the former are threatened by an ‘invasion’ of the latter. However, in this understanding of “suburbia” not only class but race plays an essential role. It is not only the program he mentions that makes this tweet racist but the term “suburban housewife” itself brings to mind the 1950s and 1960s when the prevailing ideology dictated that white middle-class families lived outside cities and that husbands went off to work while wives were responsible for the unpaid domestic labor. As with his “Make America Great Again” slogan, he taps into a white supremacist mythic history and ideology in this tweet.

His use of the word "invasion" and connecting it to a Black senator at the time when Biden announced former Senator Kamala Harris as Vice-President (the first Black and Asian American woman to hold this position) illustrates this racist imagery further. Trump has used the term "invasion" frequently, most often when talking about undocumented immigrants crossing the southern border. The word's literal meaning is "the action of invading a country or territory as an enemy; an entrance or incursion with armed force."⁷⁴ Whether it is in its literal or figurative sense, the idea of an incursion underlines the image of an inside and an outside, separating the two classes and for that matter also races. Within this rhetoric, Trump also repeatedly used the words "infestation" and "contamination" (see his tweet regarding the city of Baltimore), deploying a white supremacist vocabulary that can be traced back to U.S.-Americans' reactions towards Chinese immigrants in the nineteenth century.⁷⁵

Trump's tweet is not only racist but also sexist as it refers to a gendered lifestyle of the 1950s and 1960s under which many women suffered. Betty Friedan's influential book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) details this oppression. Friedan's observations are not unproblematic, particularly in terms of their generalizations and neglect of the race issue of "suburbia." bell hooks points to this in her *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1988): "[Friedan] did not discuss who would be called in to take care of the children and maintain the home if more women like herself were freed

from their house labor and given equal access with white men to the professions."⁷⁶ hooks identifies the massive gaps in Friedan's book while also noting that her work "remains a useful discussion of the impact of sexist discrimination on a select group of women."⁷⁷

In a reaction against this outdated and sexist image of the white suburban wife, many women who live in suburban areas created Facebook groups where they voiced their disagreements with Trump's rhetoric and his firm belief that they will vote for him. Using a group name like "'Suburban Housewives' Against Trump" and a profile picture of a 1950s/60s cartoon of a stereotypical housewife, some groups appropriate the trope of the suburban housewife in a self-ironic tone similar to the *Tiny Pricks Project's* Instagram post.⁷⁸ This ironic tone serves as a means to resist Trump's sexism and, through its oversaturation, reminds the viewer of his pervasive misogyny.

A statement that best exemplifies Trump's blatant misogyny is "grab them by the pussy." This violent and vulgar statement was recorded on tape in 2005 when Trump was talking to former TV personality Billy Bush.⁷⁹ In the work of art in figure 3, however, when we only look at the text, isolated from its author and context, we cannot detect any explicit sexism or misogyny. It is through the background information of Trump's view of women, the historical context, the artist statement and the ironic tone mediated through the other objects and the form of the heart that we recognize "suburban housewives" as sexist and racist.

The embroidery features Trump's tweet in green thread. The stitching imitates an outmoded style of ornate handwriting, thus conjuring nostalgia. Nostalgia is concerned with selected, subjective and often imagined ideas of the past and can be abused for political reasons, creating a false image of "home" that needs to be guarded at all costs.⁸⁰ This use of nostalgia is not unproblematic as Trump's evocation of the 1950s in his rhetoric shows. Instrumentalizing a white middle-class-inflected nostalgia, Trump created a political myth that is inherently racist and sexist.

The form of the ideographic heart in the cloth onto which the tweet is stitched in the "DT and SH" embroidery adds a further ironic note. Usually, it is the initials of two people in love carved into a tree, or scribbled on a wall; it is a gesture we identify as corny and romantic. Here we recognize them to stand for Donald Trump and Suburban Housewife. Connecting this confession of love to Trump's tweet further emphasizes the ironic tone of the composition. This is even more the case because the heart embroidered onto another heart stitched to an apron provides an oversaturation of a love confession.

Trump firmly believes and declares in a commanding tone that the suburban wife will vote for him. This relationship between the imaginary white 'suburban housewife' and Trump, however, is not entirely false. In the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections, a large proportion of white women voted for him compared to a much higher number of women of

color voting for the Democratic Party's candidate.⁸¹ In this sense, the heart gains a double-meaning: it is used in an ironic tone to signal that this is not a love relationship and it exposes the paradox of voting for a sexist, woman-hating presidential candidate. In the comments on the Instagram post, some female Instagram users stated that they think many women in their suburban neighborhood will vote for him while others expose his sexism again with irony: "Yeah, 'Suburban Housewives' are definitely a monolithic group. Jeez."⁸²

The heart-shaped embroidery is stitched on an apron that once again evokes the past. Its ruffles and floral pattern suggest the 1950s and 1960s.⁸³ In addition to the hearts and the font which evoke a general sense of nostalgia, the objects each add a more specific meaning. The apron serves as a background on which the objects and the embroidery are displayed and at the same time is an object that evokes the stereotypical image of a housewife. To have Trump's sexist message embroidered as a love note onto an apron – the ultimate stereotypical signifier of this image – exposes the sexism but also makes use of it to counter and subvert it.

Similarly, the furniture polish called "Old English" is associated with the mid-twentieth century, too. The word "old" in the product's name underlines this historicity, but it is also the ornate font, the dark brown and yellow color combination on the label as well as the residue of furniture polish visible inside the see-through plastic bottle that give it an air of "antiquity"; an object long forgotten in the back

of an elderly person's cleaning cupboard. The furniture polish, together with the fly swatters and the apron, all evoke an outdated image of housekeeping.

The fly swatters bring to mind Trump's use of the word invasion: the houseflies "invade" and disrupt the domestic peace. The swatters' pastel colors give this violent purpose a cutesy note. They also make us think of a pointless, repetitious, never-ending task. Together with the fly swatters, the furniture polish brings up the stereotypical image of a (white) middle-class suburban housewife from the 1950s or 1960s busy tending to everything inside the house.⁸⁴ This is amplified in the embroidery, an art form that has been underestimated and considered an occupation for idle hands by a patriarchal culture for centuries. In truth, care work is fragmented, repetitive, and highly laborious; a stark contrast to the ideologically manufactured image of the suburban wife happily chasing after flies and polishing furniture in her flowered, frilled apron.

In contrast to the evocation of the 1950s and 1960s, the Jane Fonda audio tape - its case displaying the actress, activist, and fitness guru dressed in a pink sleeveless shirt, blue leggings, white gym shoes, and a pink wrist-sweatband - and the black and yellow SONY Walkman evoke the 1980s. Fonda and her aesthetics were formative during this decade and the SONY Walkman was the quintessential revolutionary tool to listen to music cassettes on the go or while exercising to a Jane Fonda tape. Her best-selling VHS tape "Jane Fonda's

Workout" (1982) became central to her aerobics empire and the home video industry.⁸⁵

Although her transformation from radical protestor in the 1960s and 70s to fitness guru in the 1980s seems like a stark contrast, her fitness empire was still politically motivated: "She filmed 'Jane Fonda's Workout' in order to further her causes, with all the profits going to the Campaign for Economic Democracy, a political action committee (PAC) she co-founded with her husband at the time, Tom Hayden."⁸⁶ Moreover, her workout routine also helped her cope with her eating disorder, enabling her "to build healthier habits."⁸⁷ Fonda's home workout project can certainly be read in this context as political, healthy, and empowering, however, it is also part of a capitalist system that (re-)produces an ideal image of the female body. As such, its inclusion here provides another facet to the stereotype of the suburban American housewife of the past few decades.

In this sense, the cassette may also bring up a stereotypical, sexist image of the "stay-at-home wife" who is bored (similar to Friedan's housewives in the 1950s and 60s) and who tries to adhere to a patriarchal ideal of beauty. In this image, the woman is placed inside the domestic sphere, much akin to Trump's image of the "suburban wife." This stereotypical image is quickly countered in Jane Fonda's persona as well as in the title of the cassette "Jane Fonda's Fitness *Walkout*" (emphasis mine). A walkout is "a strike, especially one called at short notice."⁸⁸ The fitness music

cassette's title is essentially calling a strike and a very much gendered one at that similar to the Facebook groups. As a gendered object -- it was mostly women who used Jane Fonda's aerobic routines -- the title acts almost as a secret message, a technique we often find in textile artworks, one of the most famous example being the myth of Philomela in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (CE 8).⁸⁹ The cassette illustrates the complexity of sexist images, it adds to the ironic tone through its context and its secret message, and it reminds us of the necessity of critically investigating the history and persistence of individual sexist perceptions.

Looking more closely, however, we notice that inside the Walkman there is a different cassette, "Vangelis -- Chariots of Fire -- Music from the Original Soundtrack." The movie *Chariots of Fire* (1980), with the same-titled main song, is based on the real events of the Olympic Games of 1924 when two British runners each win a gold medal. The instrumental song "Chariots of Fire" became iconic and has been used widely as a theme for TV shows, movies, commercials, and sporting events.⁹⁰ More importantly, however, because of its high recognition factor, it has been adopted for comedic effect, particularly in sketches using a slow-motion effect. This wide parodic use of the song further underlines the absurdity of Trump's sexist image of women.

The *Tiny Pricks Project* is rich in intermediality, making use of text, image, textile, and the digital as well as here in Weymar's work of art additionally referring to audio and

film. The assemblage of these media in the form of an Instagram post entitled “Desperate Housewives swatting at flies,” making a clever reference to Marc Cherry’s famous TV series *Desperate Housewives* (2004–12), expose Trump’s sexist and racist rhetoric. Each medium adds a further layer of irony to unravel. Through their intermedial constellation, they cross borders: digital text becomes textile text and image, and the textile artwork and the objects become digital image and text.

Stitching and Posting a Resistance: Intermedial Textile Artworks in the Digital Age

In an increasingly digital world where conspiracy theories are quickly and easily circulated and tech giants dominate major communication channels, an ethics of responsibility is more than ever at stake. It is vital to engage with digital hate speech, particularly because of its ephemerality. It is exactly this short life cycle to which the *Tiny Pricks Project* constantly adapts and reinvents itself. The project creates a material and digital archive that seeks to work through and challenge racist, sexist, and other discriminatory statements with the help of text, image, textile, the digital, and other media.

The first piece by @metgodshesblack (figure 2) centers around the racist “send her back” chant and the tweet behind it. It shows Ilhan Abdullahi Omar in profile, giving us a concrete face to the targeting of Trump’s racist statement: a

brave, resilient figure who faces and resists racism and sexism. The outline of state borders, at once encircling and cutting through her, illustrates the tension between the inside versus outside rhetoric of Trump's "imagined community" and her home for which she serves as a Congresswoman. She transcends the boundaries, however, as she is a person with whom many people in the USA identify, particularly the underrepresented Muslim community.

The patchwork *ḥijāb* suggests a quilt-like community in which different blocks of people work together and form a unison. The hybrid flag, fusing aspects of the Somalian and the American flag, underlines this idea and emphasizes that we live in a postcolonial, globalized world. The elegant Arabic word سلام , as a friendly "hi," counters the "send her back" stitched in a big, clumsy font. The white handkerchief as a tactile and malleable medium in an unfolded form reveals the resistance to Trump's racism which is expanded in the form of the Instagram post where a community of resisters gather and support one another.

Weymar's artwork (figure 3) functions differently. The photograph posted on Instagram features various objects positioned alongside the embroidery that depicts Trump's racist and sexist tweet, which is countered in an oversaturated, ironic tone. The ornate stitching, the double use of the ideographic heart as well as the objects that evoke the 1950s, 1960s, and 1980s bring to mind romanticism and nostalgia with a white, middle-class inflection. The

photographed apron, furniture polish, and fly swatters signify an outdated, stereotypical image of the “housewife” who spends her days cleaning and swatting flies.

The corny objects, colors, and the heart, together with Trump’s misogynistic background, achieve an ironic quality with a double meaning: on the one hand, it is clear that this “relationship” between him and the “housewife” is paradoxical. On the other hand, many white women voted for him in the 2016 and 2020 elections. This underlines the racist tone of the tweet and again accentuates Trump’s “imagined community” that needs to guard its borders against people of color. As depicted in the piece on Ilhan Omar, what is at stake is the right to belong, to live, and contribute wherever one wants to.

The Jane Fonda cassette and Walkman recall the 1980s and another stereotypical, sexist image of the stay-at-home wife who spends her days getting back in shape. Fonda’s background quickly counters this and along with the title “Walkout” communicates a resistance. Because Jane Fonda’s cassettes are gendered, like embroidery, the word reads as a secret message. Vargelis’ *Chariots of Fire* underlines the whole assemblage with an ironic auditive tone. The use of multiple media that dissolve in the digital media is the perfect example of remediation and, together with @metgodshesblack’s work, showcases the rich creative potential of intermedial textile artworks in the digital age.

Trump cunningly used social media to spread dangerous misinformation and hate speech during his presidency. In May 2020, these false claims, also connected to the voting processes, began to be flagged by Twitter, and after the storming of the Capitol by white supremacists on January 6, 2021, his account was permanently suspended "due to the risk of further incitement of violence."⁹¹ This ban led him to create his own social media platform, TRUTH (Truth Social). Now, with Musk in charge of Twitter, the ban imposed on Trump, among other blocked accounts, has been lifted. In such times, activist art projects like the *Tiny Pricks Project* are integral to the archiving, exposing, and countering of misinformation and hate speech and, ultimately, to the formation of a community of creative resisters.

Acknowledgement

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¹ Chuck Jones, "Four Charts Comparing Trump's Vs Obama's Stock Market Returns," *Forbes*, February 29, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/chuckjones/2020/02/29/four-charts-comparing-trumps-vs-obamas-stock-market-returns/?sh=7384885a3552>.

² Tiny Pricks Project [Diana Weymar] (@tinypricksproject), "The Coronavirus is very much under control in the USA," *Instagram*, February 25, 2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/B8_sZoInLuv/.

³ Daniel Wolfe and Daniel Dale, "'It's going to disappear': A timeline of Trump's claims that Covid-19 will vanish," *CNN*, October 31, 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2020/10/politics/covid-disappearing-trump-comment-tracker/>.

⁴ Pop psychology, building on Freud's notion of the importance of the phallus, suggests that men with feelings of inadequacy about their genitals feel aggression towards women and a need to compensate for their alleged sexual inadequacy. Thus, the term "Tiny Pricks" for this activist artistic project has a double meaning: it refers to the feelings of inadequacy that lurk behind aggressive and defensive misogyny, as well as to the motions performed by the needleworker: it takes thousands of tiny pricks to make an embroidered work of art.

⁵ Diana Weymar, "desperate times, creative measures," *Tiny Pricks Project*, <https://www.tinypricksproject.com/the-project/>.

⁶ Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), "...Actually, throughout my life, my two greatest assets have been mental stability and being, like, really smart," *Twitter*, January 6, 2018.

⁷ Weymar, "desperate times, creative measures."

⁸ Currently, it is mostly Weymar who makes new embroideries and re-posts older pieces made by other artists and herself. Diana Weymar, personal correspondence with author, January 19, 2023.

⁹ This kind of 'tactility' deconstructs the mind/body duality and reminds us of "the fundamental connectedness and cross-

domain interaction between cognition and experience." See Nina Zschocke, "Tactility," in *Textile Terms: A Glossary*, eds. Anika Reineke, Anne Röhl, Mateusz Kapustka, and Tristan Weddigen (Emsdetten: Edition Imorde, 2017), 250.

¹⁰ Anna Russell, "Stitch 'n' Bitch for the Trump Era," *New Yorker*, July 15, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/07/22/stitch-n-bitch-for-the-trump-era>; Catherine Scott, "Lingua Franca Celebrates its Tiny Pricks Collaboration with a Sidewalk Show," *Vogue*, June 13, 2019, <https://www.vogue.com/article/lingua-franca-tiny-pricks>; Marianna Giusti, "How embroidery became a political power player," *Financial Times*, May 30, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/52a6cfb7-0dbf-4e7d-9767-9462cddcf005>.

¹¹ Janet Catherine Berlo, personal correspondence with author, November 29, 2021. See also Pat Ferrero, Elaine Hedges, and Julie Silber, *Hearts and Hands: The Influence of Women and Quilts on American Society* (San Francisco, CA: Quilt Digest Press, 1987), 15, 72.

¹² Judy Chicago, *Embroidering Our Heritage: The Dinner Party's Needlework* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1980).

¹³ Bryan-Wilson points to the growing body of websites and how-to guides with defying patterns (such as curse words), and, in general, to the increasing perception of embroidery as a 'subversive' artform since the beginning of the twenty-first century. She emphasizes that recent books adorn themselves

with titles like *Subversive Cross Stitch* (2006) but often fail to pay tribute to Rozsika Parker's influential 1984 study *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*. Parker's study was groundbreaking in tracing the gendering of needlework in Western culture and shedding light on the construction of femininity, embroidery as art, and the potential of needlework to act as a form of resistance against the confining notions of femininity. See Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Fray: Art + Textile Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 25.

¹⁴ For instance: Mandy Moore and Leanne Prain, *Yarn Bombing: The Art of Crochet and Knit Graffiti* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2009).

¹⁵ Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), xvii.

¹⁶ Bryan-Wilson, *Fray*, 7. For a discussion on contemporary textile arts see Janis Jefferies, Diana Wood Conroy, and Hazel Clark, eds., *The Handbook of Textile Culture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016); Jessica Hemmings, ed., *Cultural Threads: Transnational Textiles Today* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020); Maria Elena Buszek, *Extra/Ordinary: Craft and Contemporary Art* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011). See also Charlotte Vannier, *From Thread to Needle: Contemporary Embroidery Art* (Berkeley, CA: Gingko Press, 2019) for a selected survey of international contemporary embroidery art.

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- ¹⁷ Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 55.
- ¹⁸ W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 95.
- ¹⁹ The term 'affordances' was first coined by American psychologist James J. Gibson in his article "The Theory of Affordances," in *Perceiving, Acting, and Knowing: Toward an Ecological Psychology*, eds. Robert Shaw and John Bransford (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1977), 67–87. I refer here to Donald Norman's *Design of Everyday Things* where he defines affordances as "the perceived and actual properties of the thing, partly those fundamental properties that determine just how the thing could possibly be used. A chair affords ('is for') support and, therefore, affords sitting. A chair can also be carried. Glass is for seeing through, and for breaking." See Donald A. Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things* (New York, Basic Books, 1988), 9.
- ²⁰ Gabriele Rippl, "Intermediality and Remediation," in *Handbook of Anglophone World Literatures*, eds. Gabriele Rippl, Birgit Neumann, and Stefan Helgesson (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 209–25.
- ²¹ Irina O. Rajewsky, "Border Talks: The Problematic Status of Media Borders in the Current Debate about Intermediality," in *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality*, ed. Lars Elleström (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 62.

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- ²² Rajewsky, "Border Talks," 63.
- ²³ Eugenie Brinkema, "Form," in *A Concise Companion to Visual Culture*, eds. A. Joan Saab, Aubrey Anable, and Catherine Zuromskis (Hoboken, N.J: Wiley Blackwell, 2021), 262.
- ²⁴ Brinkema, "Form," 261.
- ²⁵ Brinkema, "Form," 261.
- ²⁶ S.F.A. Caulfield and Blanche C. Seward, *Encyclopedia of Victorian Needlework: Dictionary of Needlework*, Vol. 2. (New York: Dover Publications, 1972), 462.
- ²⁷ See Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).
- ²⁸ Richard Rogers, "Foreword: Debanalising Twitter: The Transformation of an Object of Study," in *Twitter and Society*, eds. Katrin Weller, Axel Bruns, Jean Burgess, Merja Mahrt, Cornelius Puschmann (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), xii.
- ²⁹ Rogers, "Foreword," xv.
- ³⁰ See Jean Burgess and Nancy K. Baym, *Twitter: A Biography* (New York: New York University Press, 2020). As this article is being peer-reviewed, Twitter has been bought by the wealthiest man in the world, Elon Musk, who has used the platform in the past to spread misinformation (for instance regarding COVID-19) and to express increasingly Trumpian opinions. See Kevin Roose, "The Shift: Twitter, Once a Threat to Titans, Now Belongs to One," *New York Times*, October 29, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/29/technology/musk-twitter-legacy.html>.

³¹ David Sarno cited in Rogers, "Foreword," xv.

³² Burgess and Baym, *Twitter*, 52.

³³ Tama Leaver, Tim Highfield and Crystal Abidin, *Instagram: Visual Social Media Cultures* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2020), 50.

³⁴ Leaver, Highfield, and Abidin, *Instagram*, 53.

³⁵ For a discussion of how Instagram influences the art world see Lachlan MacDowell and Kylie Budge, *Art After Instagram: Art Spaces, Audiences, Aesthetics* (New York: Routledge, 2022).

³⁶ Diana Mary Eva Thomas, *Texts and Textiles: Affect, Synaesthesia and Metaphor in Fiction* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 3.

³⁷ Birgit Schneider, "Digitality," in *Textile Terms*, 71. See also Stephen Monteiro, *The Fabric of Interface: Mobile Media, Design, and Gender* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017). In addition, see Elaine Reichek's large body of embroidery artworks. Reichek is interested in the physical manifestations of and the influence of digital technologies on writings in her embroideries. See her exhibitions *Sight Unseen* from 2016–19 or *Between the Needle and the Book* from 2020.

³⁸ Jack Dorsey cited in "Toxic Twitter: A Toxic Place for Women," Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2018/03/online-violence-against-women-chapter-1/>.

³⁹ Trump has filed for reinstating his account October 01, 2021, and the new owner and CEO of Twitter, Elon Musk, has

restored the account as promised. Adela Suliman, "Trump asks court to force Twitter to reinstate his account," *Washington Post*, October 2, 2021,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/10/02/trump-twitter-ban-court-filing/>; Roose, "The Shift."

⁴⁰ Moreover, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter were used to "manipulate public sentiment about the American elections both through traditional posts as well as paid advertising" in the 2016 presidential elections. See Leaver, Highfield, and Abidin, *Instagram*, 33.

⁴¹ Burgess and Baym, *Twitter*, 8. More recent studies have focused on Twitter's ability to establish bonds and networks and have worked towards 'de-banalizing' Twitter. See Rogers, "Foreward," ix–xxvi. This effort has also resulted in archiving tweets in the Library of Congress. Notably, the Library of Congress stopped archiving all tweets in 2017 in order to focus only on selected tweets that are "thematic and event-based, including events such as elections, or themes of ongoing national interest, e.g. public policy." See The Library of Congress cited in Laura Wamsley, "Library of Congress Will No Longer Archive Every Tweet," *NPR*, December 26, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/12/26/573609499/library-of-congress-will-no-longer-archive-every-tweet>.

⁴² Burgess and Baym, *Twitter*, 67–77.

⁴³ This idea of the needle as a political pen that can be used to stitch political messages and bring people together has a long history. See Heather Pristash, Inez Schaechterle, and Sue Carter Wood, "The Needle as the Pen: Intentionality, Needlework, and the Production of Alternate Discourses of Power," in *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles, 1750–1950*, eds. Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 13–29.

⁴⁴ Diana Weymar cited in Russell, "Stitch 'N' Bitch for the Trump Era."

⁴⁵ Cait Munro, "How One Artist Is Using 'Tiny Pricks' to Spark an Anti-Trump Movement," *Refinery29*, September 24, 2019, <https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/diana-weymar-tiny-pricks-project-anti-trump-art>.

⁴⁶ Diana Weymar cited in Munro, "How One Artist."

⁴⁷ This form of resistance, act of commemoration, and expression of grief is also visible in the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt. See Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997); Peter S. Hawkins, "Naming Names: The Art of Memory and the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt," *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 4 (Summer 1993): 752–79; Charles E. Morriss III, ed., *Remembering the AIDS Quilt: Rhetoric and Public Affairs* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011).

⁴⁸ See their podcast on Spotify: "the podcast is a collection of recorded testimonies full of triumphs, life lessons and motivation encouraging POC empowerment, enlightenment and reflection. The participants of the podcast are multifaceted women of all ethnicities, religions and political backgrounds. They are continuously voicing the gratitude for their past while celebrating the value of building their future." See Met God She's Black Podcast, "About," Spotify, <https://open.spotify.com/show/4qN4xtBg8ste0FFGGoaVDOz>). The names listed on Spotify are Sherrie and Majella Mark. The post on Instagram however only mentions (and tags) the podcast account @metgodshesblack. Therefore, the tagged account will be used as the artist's name in this article.

⁴⁹ This group of progressive Congresswomen is also known as 'squad,' a term which Ocasio-Cortez first used in an Instagram post showing the four women sitting at a table with microphones in Washington, D.C. titled "Squad." on November 13, 2018, shortly after winning her seat in Congress. See Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (@aoc), "Squad.," *Instagram*, November 13, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BqGTlEPBXXD/>.

⁵⁰ Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), "So interesting to see 'Progressive' Democrat Congresswomen..." *Twitter*, July 14, 2019, <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1150381394234941448?lang=de>.

⁵¹ Wilborn P. Nobles III, "Trump calls Baltimore 'disgusting ...rodent infested mess,' rips Rep. Elijah Cummings over border criticism," *Baltimore Sun*, July 27, 2019, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/politics/bs-md-pol-cummings-trump-20190727-ghty2yovtvfzfcjkeau7wm5zi-story.html>.

⁵² This is revealed in the artist's statement as well as in the figure, as Omar is the only person from 'the squad' who wears a *ḥijāb*.

⁵³ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism Revised* (New York: Verso, 2016).

⁵⁴ See Lawrence D. Bobo, "An American Conundrum: Race, Sociology, and the African American Road to Citizenship," in *The Oxford Handbook of African American Citizenship, 1865 Present*, eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Claude Steele, Lawrence D. Bobo, Michael C. Dawson, Gerald Jaynes, Lisa Crooms-Robinson, Linda Darling-Hammond (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 19–70.

⁵⁵ Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Glorified and Vilified, Representative-Elect Ilhan Omar Tells Critics: 'Just Deal'," *New York Times*, December 30, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/30/us/politics/ilhan-omar-minnesota-congress.html>.

⁵⁶ Fadwa El Guindi, "*ḥijāb*," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World Vol. 2.*, ed. John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 399.

⁵⁷ Guindi, "ḥijāb," 399.

⁵⁸ Janet Catherine Berlo, "'Acts of Pride, Desperation, and Necessity': Aesthetics, Social History, and American Quilts," in *Wild by Design: Two Hundred Years of Innovation and Artistry in American Quilts*, eds. Janet Catherine Berlo and Patricia Cox Crews (Seattle: International Quilt Study Center at the University of Nebraska in association with University of Washington Press, 2003), 9.

⁵⁹ Malaika Sutter, "To Couple the Beauty of the Place and the Harsh Realities of Its Racist History: Piecing Together African American Citizenship in Faith Ringgold's *Flag Story Quilt* and *Coming to Jones Road*," forthcoming.

⁶⁰ @metgodshesblack cited in Tiny Pricks Project (@tinypricksproject), "Send Her Back Artist Statement," *Instagram*, August 9, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B08NifjHFMn>.

⁶¹ Andrew W. Kahrl, "American Dream," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern World*, ed. Peter N. Stearns (New York, Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁶² The melting pot metaphor was first used in the USA by St. Jean de Crèvecoeur in his "Letters from an American Farmer" (1782) in which he depicts American society as a mix of different cultures "melted into a new race of men" emerging as a homogenous society through the act of "leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners." See J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, "From Letters from an American Farmer," in

The Norton Anthology of American Literature, ed. Nina Baym (New York: Norton, 1979), 660.

⁶³ Wensinck and Kramers, *Handwörterbuch des Islam*, 634.

⁶⁴ "outline, n.," in *OED Online* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/133739?rskey=q9c6wF&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.

⁶⁵ "outline, n.," in *OED Online*.

⁶⁶ @metgodshesblack, "Send Her Back."

⁶⁷ In the context of the digital, the profile also evokes facial recognition technologies and how they are inaccurate and racially biased. See Alex Najibi, "Racial Discrimination in Face Recognition Technology," *Harvard University Science in the News*, October 24, 2020, <https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2020/racial-discrimination-in-face-recognition-technology/>.

⁶⁸ Cynthia E. Milton, "Artistic Silhouettes," in *Memory*, eds. Philippe Tortell, Mark Turin and Margot Young (Vancouver: Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, 2018), 105.

⁶⁹ In a different line of thought, the artist Kara Walker uses stereotypical silhouettes, "double negatives," in her famous cut-outs. See Lisa Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 59.

⁷⁰ See David L. Eng and Shinhee Han, "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia," in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. David L.

Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 343–71; Sara Clarke Kaplan, “Souls at the Crossroads, Africans on the Water: The Politics of Diasporic Melancholia,” *Callaloo* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2017): 511–26.

⁷¹ Linda Hutcheon, *Irony’s Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 2. Irony does not necessarily have to provoke laughter, but it can be defined as a type of humor. As such, it is important to note that Instagram, Twitter or other social media platforms are spaces where humoristic content, such as the meme, is recurrently produced and consumed. See Delia Chiaro, *The Language of Jokes in the Digital Age: #like #share #lol* (New York: Routledge, 2018); Anastasia Denisova, *Internet Memes and Society: Social, Cultural, and Political Contexts* (New York: Routledge, 2019); Camilla Vásquez, *Language, Creativity and Humour Online* (London: Routledge, 2019). In terms of feminist online humor, Jenny Sundén and Susanna Paasonen write that it “exists, but its general visibility is not high.” In fact, “the most visibility in the feminist initiatives [they] explore tend to be white and, for the most part, middle class and heterosexual.” They point to the crucial questions of “whose laughter becomes heard and who gets to laugh in the first place.” See Jenny Sundén and Susanna Paasonen, *Who’s Laughing Now? Feminist Tactics in Social Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020), 3, 7.

⁷² Emily Goodin, "'Donald, your racism is showing': Cory Booker hits back at Trump claim 'the suburban housewife' will vote for him because he ended low income housing programs and trolls president with jab at spelling mistake," *Daily Mail*, August 12, 2020, "<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8619625/Donald-Trump-claims-suburban-housewife-vote-latest-attack-Biden.html>."

⁷³ Tracy Jan, "HUD to reinstate Obama-era fair housing rule gutted under Trump – minus the 'burdensome' reporting requirement," *Washington Post*, June 9, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2021/06/09/hud-biden-fair-housing-rule/>.

⁷⁴ "invasion, n.," *OED Online* (New York: Oxford University Press), <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/98930?redirectedFrom=invasion>.

⁷⁵ Ben Zimmer, "Where Does Trump's 'Invasion' Rhetoric Come From?," *The Atlantic*, August 6, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2019/08/trump-immigrant-invasion-language-origins/595579/>.

⁷⁶ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 1–2.

⁷⁷ hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 3.

⁷⁸ Megan Sheets, "Thousands of 'suburban housewives' mobilize against Trump in Facebook groups after President boasted he'll get their vote," *Daily Mail*, August 16, 2020, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8632987/Suburban->

housewives-mobilize-against-Trump-Facebook-president-promised-win-vote.html.

⁷⁹ The tape was obtained by *The Washington Post* and transcribed by Penn Bullock for *The New York Times* in 2016. See Penn Bullock, "Transcript: Donald Trump's Taped Comments About Women," *New York Times*, October 8, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/08/us/donald-trump-tape-transcript.html>; Alexander Burns, Maggie Haberman, and Jonathan Martin, "Donald Trump Apology Caps Day of Outrage Over Lewd Tape," *New York Times*, October 7, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/08/us/politics/donald-trump-women.html?module=inline>. It is a popular statement used by *Tiny Pricks Project* participants.

⁸⁰ Svetlana Boym defines nostalgia as "a yearning for a different time – the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams. In a broader sense, nostalgia is a rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress." See Svetlana Boym, "From 'Nostalgia and Its Discontents,'" in *Collective Memory Reader*, eds. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 452.

⁸¹Molly Ball, "Donald Trump Didn't Really Win 52% of White Women in 2016," *Time*, October 18, 2018, <https://time.com/5422644/trump-white-women-2016/>.

⁸² @deborahmdodge cited in Tiny Pricks Project

(@tinypricksproject), "Desperate Housewives," *Instagram*, August 13, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CDzS-nHHJ00/>.

⁸³ It is interesting to note that Sundén and Paasone observed that "much feminist humor trades in popular imageries (advertisements and illustrations) of the 1950s and 1960s [...] combined with sarcastic, ironic, political, or absurd captions." See Sundén and Paasone, *Who's Laughing Now?*, 5.

⁸⁴ It is critical to note here that this image is not only problematic in terms of sexism but also in terms of class and, more generally, privilege.

⁸⁵ Fonda is a fascinating person, whether it is through her presence on her many social media channels, as a highly successful actress of the past six decades (she garnered two Academy Awards in the category "Best Actress" and stars in the popular Netflix comedy series *Grace and Frankie*) or as a political activist protesting the Vietnam War – putting her under surveillance by the FBI, CIA, and NSA – and the Iraq War, among other issues, and as an environmental activist and feminist. See "Jane Fonda," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 1, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jane-Fonda>; Hairston, "Jane Fonda: My Convolutated Journey to Feminism," *Lenny Letter*, December 8, 2017, <https://www.lennyletter.com/story/jane-fonda-my-convolutated-journey-to-feminism>.

⁸⁶ Jacqui Palumbo, "Remember when Jane Fonda revolutionized exercise in a leotard and leg warmers?," CNN Style Online, February 26, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/jane-fonda-workout-remember-when/index.html>.

⁸⁷ Palumbo, "Remember when Jane Fonda."

⁸⁸ "walkout, n. and adj.," *OED Online* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/225272?rskey=DrwmdN&result=2&isAdvanced=false>.

⁸⁹ Philomela, after being raped, mutilated and left silenced (her tongue cut out) by her sister's husband, Tereus, weaves her story into a web as a secret message for her sister. The term 'secret message' also brings to mind James C. Scott definition of "*hidden transcript*" as "discourse that takes place 'offstage,' beyond direct observation by powerholders." See James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 4.

⁹⁰ Patricia Bauer, "Chariots of Fire," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 6, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chariots-of-Fire>.

⁹¹ Bobby Allyn, "Twitter Flags President Trump's Tweet For The 1st Time," *NPR*, May 26, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/05/26/862838470/twitter-flags-president-trumps-tweet-for-the-first-time?t=1635598860357>; Kate Conger and Mike Isaac, "Twitter Permanently Bans Trump, Capping Online Revolt," January 12, 2021,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/08/technology/twitter-trump-suspended.html>.