

Casey Carsel

January 19, 2023

Davis Street Drawing Room

Dear Anne,

I hope this letter finds you well. I'm now back in New Zealand, and finally in possession of a little space and time to put some words on the page about my experience at the Drawing Room. As you know, a few days after my visit, I left for a farming fellowship in California. While I was shoveling shit, caring for goats, and aerating soil in my best casual attire, I spent a lot of time thinking about the sumptuous laces and delicate fabrics I had met at your house, the ways we handled them with such love and attention, sometimes only with our eyes.

On the farm, I was throwing myself around so much. Two of my older pairs of pants ripped within a week of each other. As I traveled between the present, sweaty moment, and the gentle, contemplative atmosphere of the Drawing Room, I began to wonder, what does it mean to care for a fabric? What does it mean to preserve it? What does it mean to wear it out?

When I returned from the farm to my then-home and sewing machine, I repaired all the holes in my clothing. I sewed tight grids of reinforcement around the holes, too, a topography of their history, an amulet against their foretold future. On a few of its tables, the Drawing Room showcased similar repairs. There, you and Sofia lifted layers of pristine handkerchiefs to reveal lower planes of similar items of various stages of disintegration. Holes were sometimes mended, sometimes left in their decay. I held my breath. It felt like time travel, the future of all my things laid bare, entropies preserved for love, contemplation, viewing pleasure.

I've also been wondering what it means to memorize something. On the farm, we learnt through doing, carving the memory of composting, for example, into our bones. That muscle memory is resting inside me now, but in this moment, what I remember best is the image of warm steam rising from the piles as they disintegrated in the brisk morning air. I wonder if I'll remember my favorite overalls at the end of their life by what they looked like in photos or a mirror, their texture against my leg as I dug a broad fork in into the soil, or their weight in my hands as I folded them after washing.

In the Drawing Room, one witnesses a cloth and holds all the lives it has lived up to this point, sometimes knowing, sometimes not; sometimes touching, sometimes not; sometimes unfurling, sometimes not. Out in the world, I do much the same at a much lower, often subconscious pitch. I think the Drawing Room was a primer in tuning myself further in to the textiles that surround me – tuning into the life cycles, the details, the processes. I wanted to thank you for that.

This is the first letter I've ever written you, and will probably be the last – I feel very aware of how the form changed my sentence structure and wording from ever before I put this pen on this paper, when the words were still typed and held on a screen in draft. I still wanted to use this medium, though, to leave a classically archivable trace of these thoughts – something more from my hand than an email, scratched with a pen that's running out of ink on a surface that's been mashed together from raw matter to sit in a cupboard for years, imperfect, worn, folded and unfolded. Chosen and unchosen and re-chosen. Something for the archive anyway.

I hope these words can be a small part of the expansive unfurling you've set out on in this project. I'm back in town in April, let's catch up if you're around. Until then, all my best, Casey.

Transcribed from a handwritten letter on 3-hole punch lined paper
Received in the Evanston mail by Anne Wilson on January 19, 2023

From: Casey Carsel
207/103 Symonds Street
Grafton, Auckland 1010
New Zealand

Dear Anne,

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Casey

From: Casey, Casey
207/103 Symonds Street
Grafton, Auckland 1010
New Zealand



Carried by
19 JAN 2023

To: Anne Wilson
1302 Davis Street
Evanston, IL 60201
USA