

PATRICK CARROLL

Commonplacing

June 29 – August 5, 2023



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THE MEETING

JUNE 29 – AUGUST 5, 2023

In December of 2019, Patrick Carroll tracked down a domestic knitting machine, wanting to make clothes with words on them to let language rub between his body and the world. At the time, his father was suffering from a long illness; one symptom was aphasia, the loss of language. It's hard to see this as unconnected: the desire to embody language, catching words in a net, holding them close to your heart.

First he made a single knitted panel with four straps: a primitive tank top. It read "FRUIT" across the chest, which of course is a joke about being a fag wearing a skimpy shirt, but it's hard to stop there; one might think further about the juicy thing itself with all its attendant sensuality or laugh about the classic low-end underwear brand Fruit of the Loom. Any of these associations, and many more, might come to mind depending on context, whether encountered at a gay bar or a grocery store.

The next garment read "LOSS," knit in orange against a very pale gold. He figured out how to make sleeves, waistbands, sweaters, swimsuits. At first, each piece carried a single word: "SPIRIT," "FERVOR," "ETERNITY." Soon they grew into fragments of found or original language like "DEEP HUMILITY IS A STRONG BULWARK" or "PAUL VINCENT CARROLL 05-06-1953—02-24-2020." So the knitting was mourning, too.

The clothes were all designed to fit Carroll's own body. During the early days of the pandemic he started modeling them on Instagram. They are striking clothes, and he also happens to be gorgeous. The practice attracted horny, lonely queers in isolation around the globe. Soon the pieces were selling online. Each was a one-off, making it thrilling to spot them worn by different people in real life—"SINGING ACROSS CENTURIES" on the chest of an alpaca sweater worn on the ferry to Fire Island in late spring; "WONDROUS FRIENDSHIP" on wool bouclé briefs at Riis. I imagine them as a group, about four hundred and counting, enacting a sprawling lyric poem, always shifting order and relation wherever they are.

Human bodies are, famously, not rectangular. This puts us at odds with the basic structure of textiles, a conflict that clothing reconciles through complex geometry we live inside. The knitted surface is itself already so resonant with the human body, with skin and hair—we understand its tactility.

In 2022, Carroll started mounting pieces on rectangular wooden stretchers. Hung on the wall, they function visually like paintings but don't really *feel* like them. There is a lot of play with transparency, between the words and figures made by switching color and thickness of thread. Sometimes he's embedded smaller rectangles of thinner yarn, opening a window in the textile that light passes through, bouncing off the wall behind, producing an inner glow. One piece knits "JULIUS" in bright green across a dark but highly porous field, approximating the effect of a sign painted on the windows of the famous bar in the West Village.

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Presenting the knitting like more traditional art foregrounds the incredible delicacy of the way they're made—itsself an idiosyncratic adaptation of a labor intensive knitting process—and the poignancy of the gesture. The phrases are not applied to a surface, they *are* the surface; the words are suspended, dependent on everything surrounding them, with an almost heartbreaking contingency.

Often the phrases reference queer history, taking lines from a Frank Bidart or a C. P. Cavafy poem, for instance. These words, isolated and transformed, are always rendered somehow opaque, unmoored, or unresolvable though still precise. You might recognize the sources or not, which is itself part of the point, playing with the dynamics of recognition and legibility within queer culture.

A rainbow-knitted object that says “APOCRYPHA” lands somehow on the edge of the knowable. An unofficial record of gay sex life, maybe, but also of secret histories in a larger sense—of the personal, coded ways people have found each other across time by repurposing signs and symbols from the past, using them for their own ends.

—Jarrett Earnest, 2023

Patrick Carroll (b. 1990) Education: AB Comparative Literature, Princeton University; MFA Creative Writing - UC Riverside. Solo exhibitions: Goldfinch, Chicago, 2023, Giovanni's Room, Los Angeles, 2023, Fujiyoshida, Japan, 2023, JW Anderson's Men's S/S 2023, Milan, Italy 2022. Group exhibitions: Goldfinch, Chicago, 2023, Baader-Meinhof, Omaha, 2022, DaSilva Gallery, New Haven, 2022, RISD Museum, Providence, 2022, Flower Head, Los Angeles, 2021. Bibliography: "Knitting Poetry: Patrick Carroll in Fujiyoshida Japan" - amazinecuratedby.com, "Patrick Carroll" - Double Magazine #44, "Speculative Textile" - Shadowplay #3, "Patrick Carroll" - Gayletter #15

CHECKLIST

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1. *Robert Glück Quotes the Gospel of Thomas at Stories in Echo Park on the Evening of March 24th 2023*, 2023
polyester, mohair, nylon, wood, staples
11 x 13 x 1.5 inches

2. *Homocanon*, 2023
linen, silk, wool, wood, staples
12 x 13 x 7/8 inches

3. *Affinities*, 2023
linen, cashmere, wool, silk, wood, staples
8 x 13 x 1.5 inches

4. *Bridget Riley Scriptorium*, 2023
wool, cotton, rayon, mohair, nylon, nettle, linen, silk, wood, staples
24 x 19 x 7/8 inches

5. *Machine* 2023
rayon, lurex, silk, wood, staples
14 x 12 x 1.5 inches

6. *Stringfellow*, 2023
wool, cashmere, linen, silk, wood, staples
16 x 21 x 7/8 inches

7. *Bona Nochy*, 2023
mohair, silk, wool, lurex, wood, staples
14 x 16 x 1.5 inches

8. *Said Nijinsky*, 2023
silk, wool, linen, wood, staples
14 x 13 x 7/8 inches

9. *Julius'*, 2023
cashmere, linen, ramie, wood, staples
10 x 12 x 7/8 inches