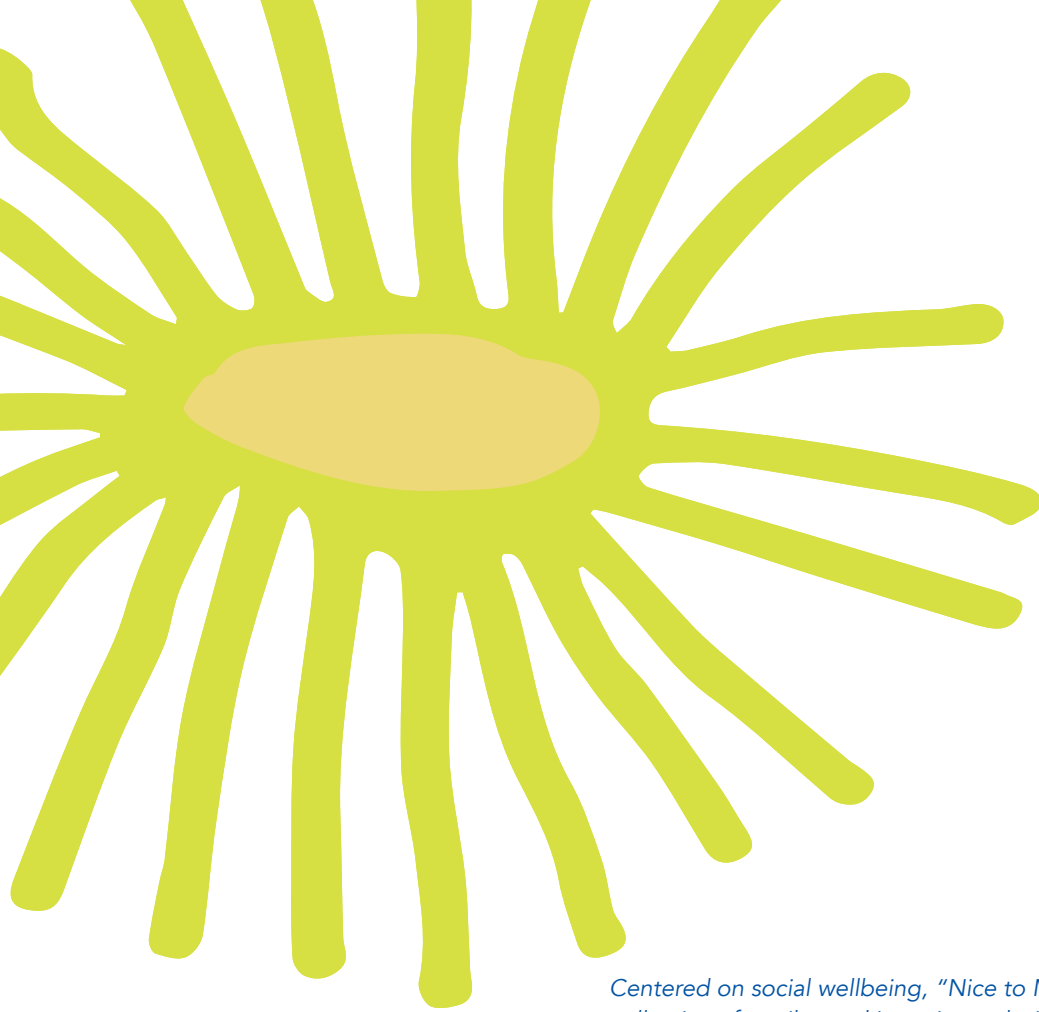


**NICE TO
MEET YOU.**

*stories of community and
wellbeing; told through
textiles.*



Centered on social wellbeing, "Nice to Meet You," is a collective of textiles and interviews, designed to foster a sense of connection and comfort in a pandemic world. Focused on print and repeat, the patterns are created using everyday items for mark making, each item specific to conversation with interview subjects.

Through conversation, print, and tactility, the collective tells the stories of each interviewee as not just a talented individual, but a builder of a community. The pattern repeats designed from each story is applied to reusable textile items that all foster connection, and further, social wellness.

The interview conversations, patterns, and final, usable textile objects, serve as a physical reminder of the power of togetherness; ultimately providing a sense of comfort, agency, and permanence through reusable textiles, allowing for these individual's stories to be retold through tactility.



JYOTI SHARAD:

THE CONCIIOUS COOK

Jyoti Sharad had always thought about hosting a weekly “supper club” out of her Grand Rapids home. As a mother, friend, sister, and an incredible hostess, Jyoti loves nothing more than to open up her home to those she loves. When gathering for a meal at Jyoti’s, one feels welcomed by not only the food, but her kindness, humor, and beautiful family. Through Indian cuisine and conversation, Jyoti has built a community larger than she ever could have anticipated; not to mention, in a global pandemic. In the spirit of comfort, connection, and trying something new, Jyoti’s Kitchen was born.

Totaling 754 members, Jyoti’s kitchen started in May 2020. Jyoti added her friends and family, but the page only grew from there. Friends added friends, and the story of Jyoti’s food and hospitality quickly spread across East Grand Rapids, and beyond. With speciality dishes — many native to Jyoti’s home, Lucknow, India— the page offers total connection to Jyoti and her culture, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is with this intention, that Jyoti not only safely brings delicious meals to people’s homes, she shares pieces of her identity and culture with each dish. Dishes that bring comfort to Jyoti, her husband, and children, now provides the same comfort to 754 others. Jyoti Sharad built more than just a Facebook page, she built a community.



“The line outside the house... the people coming to pick the food up, was amazing... nothing like I had expected. And all of them, I knew all along.”


ON COOKING FOR COMMUNITY:



Jyoti shares her cultural identity through her weekly menus. That thoughtfulness inspires page members to come back, week after week.

Jyoti notices regulars coming back for her food — and company — each week. She has made many friends that she regularly keeps in touch with. Each night after orders go out, she waits in anticipation for comments on her Facebook page about her customer's reactions to the dishes. Jyoti notes this type of cycle offers friendships that the typical restaurant setting doesn't.

“Everybody likes to learn new things. It adds a sparkle to it. when you go to a restaurant you don't always get a comment. People are in and out.”

A collage of six white takeout containers filled with Indian food. The containers are arranged in a grid-like pattern. The top row shows two containers: the left one has a red curry with a fried item and a green chutney, and the right one has a red curry with a green chutney. The middle row shows two containers: the left one has a white rice and a green chutney, and the right one has a white rice and a red curry. The bottom row shows two containers: the left one has a white rice and a fried item, and the right one has a white rice and a red curry. The text is overlaid on the middle-left container.

"The admiration you get from people appreciating your food...that's my gift; it feels good."





“When I introduce dishes, I also try to add something new, something from my city, related to the culture, or to the festivals going on.”

Even in what initially seemed like the most challenging of circumstances, Jyoti’s Kitchen continues to thrive, and friendships form around her dishes, hospitality, and family. As Jyoti prepares to cater holiday meals for a number of families (she made over 10 orders of 3 course meals each day over the week of Thanksgiving), she reflects on her connections made in the page. She realizes many of the people who she regularly sees picking up their orders are ones who she never knew, but were always around. Almost as if waiting for just the right moment to connect, and show appreciation for Jyoti’s home cooking and culture.

THE PRINT











**JYOTI'S
KITCHEN**





JYOTI'S
KITCHEN

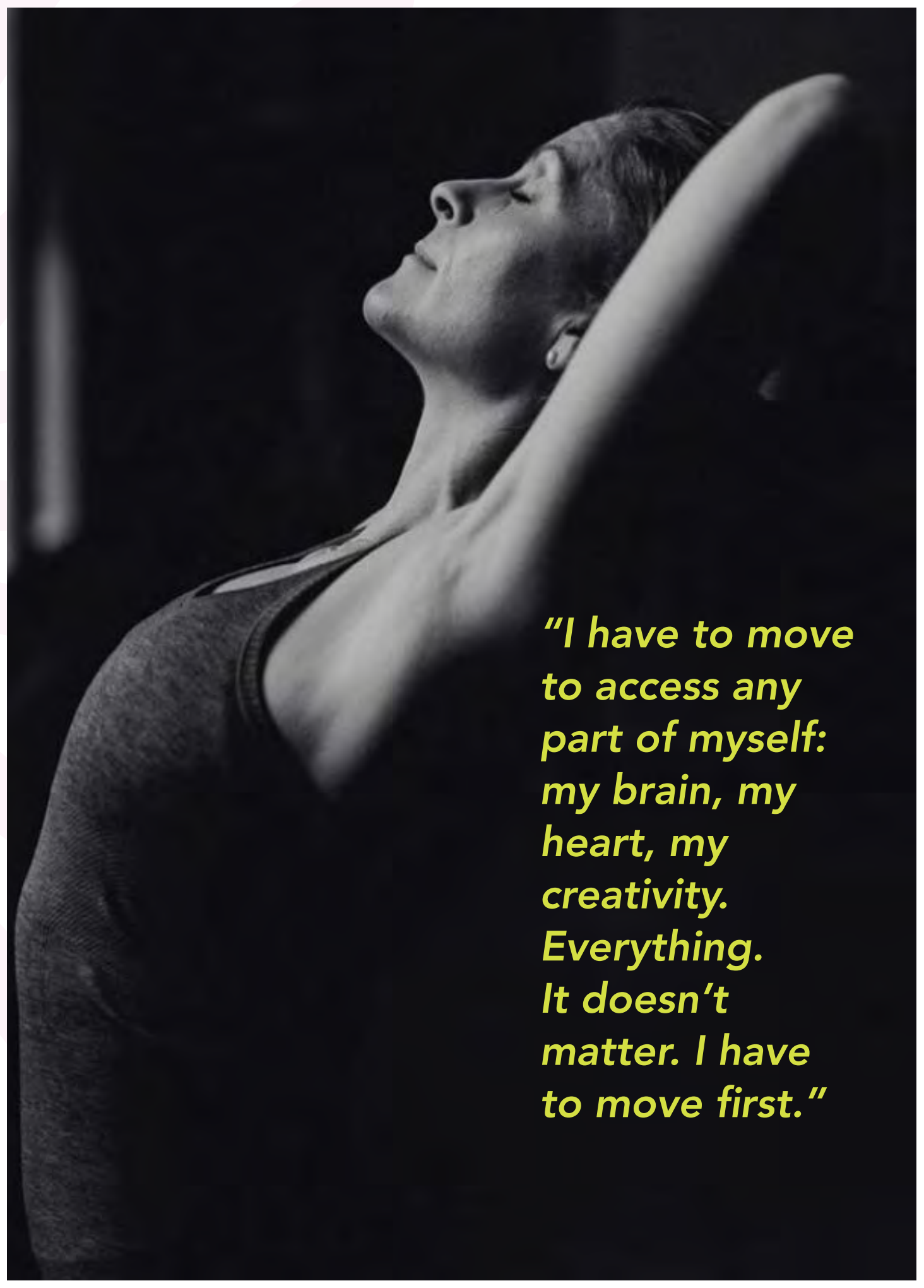




DANA LEE: DANA CHRISTIAN LEE **EMPATHY EMBODIED**

Although it is not apparent, Dana Lee has not practiced yoga her entire life. After suffering postpartum depression, divorce, and loss of three friends to suicide, Dana was trying to find her place in the world; and a space to heal. At age thirty one, a friend recommended she take up yoga. The practice completely shifted her world, healing her mind and body from previous trauma. Through this very spiritual and physical practice, Dana shows up for herself, her family, and other community members, in both Grand Rapids, Michigan and Petaluma, California.

As Dana initially was unable to access yoga classes and studios during her own period of struggle, she realized that accessibility, affordability, and exclusivity were huge problems in the yoga world. This realization prompted her to start her own non profit: Embody. Embody serves all, regardless of race, class, gender, or financial standing. It aims to help people from all walks of life gain access to the mental and physical peace and wellness that come from yoga. Through weekly classes, journaling, and other events, Dana has built a community of acceptance and empowerment through Embody, and the art of yoga; sharing with others the same healing she found for herself.



"I have to move to access any part of myself: my brain, my heart, my creativity. Everything. It doesn't matter. I have to move first."



ABOUT EMBODY:

“At Embody, we took away what comes up and creates controversy almost all the time, which is money. A lot of people that can afford yoga, come to it for a specific reason. But, a lot of people who can't afford it, don't feel like they belong there because they are not worthy of the practice. I strip away all of the excuses. So, at the end of the day, if you don't show up, I can't make you show up. I create this access and this enthusiasm, and this becomes a way of bringing people together meaningfully. The key here is consistency. If it is not consistent, people can't depend on it. If they know they don't have access to it, they're not gonna think they're worthy of it.”

“Everybody has breath and everybody a body. Everybody's got problems, and everybody's got talent. Value and worth. So when you bring a bunch of people together that are just really honest about that, it creates a very accepting non judgemental, no stigma space, where people can really do their work and they can share or not share.”

“They start to get those sparks of hope. And then, people are so transformed that they begin to bring other people in. They become better parents, better workers, better citizens; they vote their values, they shop their values. The connection created is people taking care of each other, from whatever background. Everybody rallies behind a purpose.”

“We spend time together and humanize this thing called life. We all come together to give back. That is really important. To give people personal agency. We are all here, and we all have this human need to belong and give back.”

“Belonging and giving back. If you can fulfill those two needs, I think you’re onto something hot. That’s what we did at Embody. We built a community of people who care about each other, that care about their families, and their communities. So, it becomes this flywheel of perpetual good. You feel better, you do better, right?”

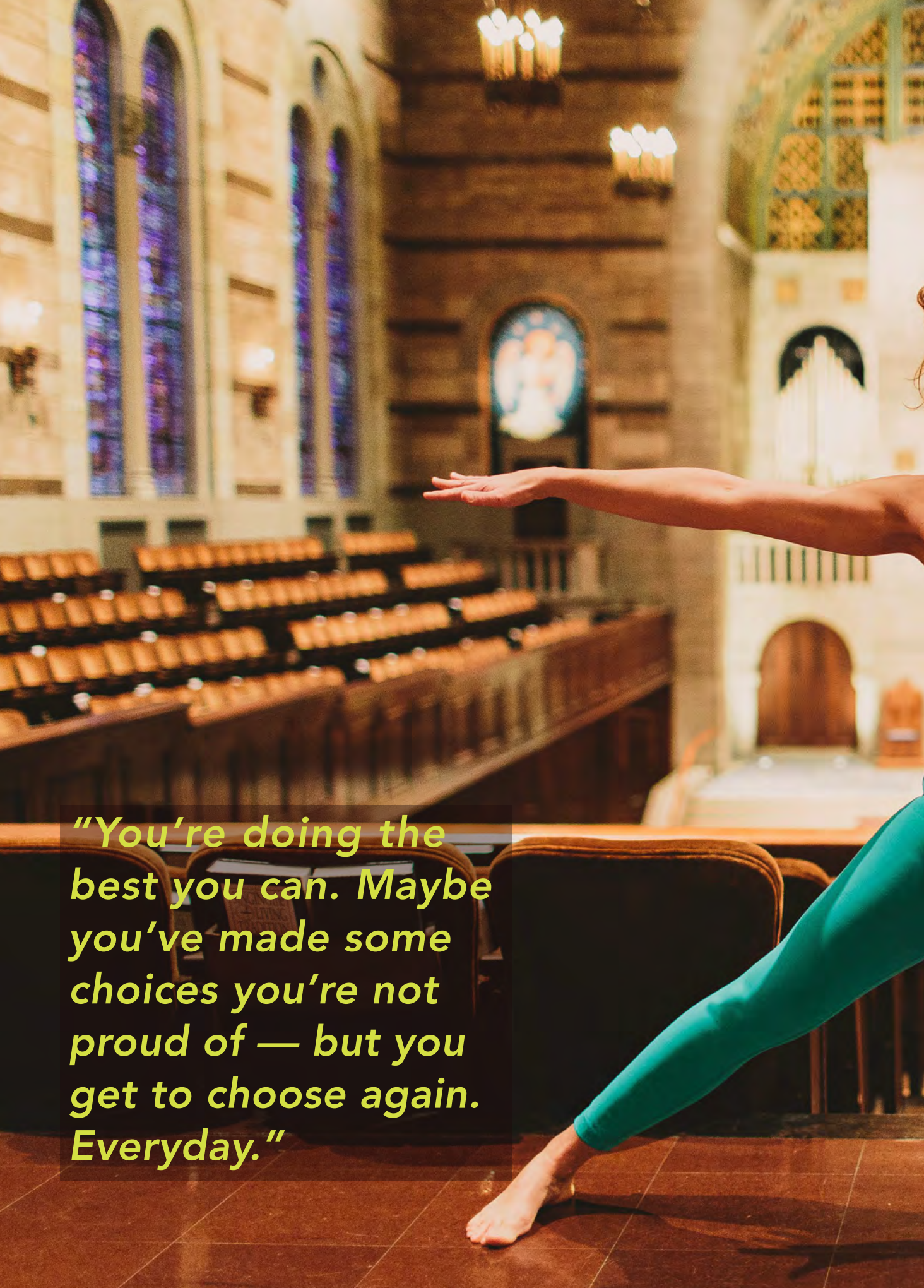
“That’s how that ability to connect started. It’s not just the yoga and the mindfulness. Because you can go to any yoga studio and sit your butt on a mat, and leave. This is different. People come early, there’s music, there’s tea, there’s conversation. And after, there’s always decompressing, or talking about what’s up next, or if somebody had a birthday, or a baby. It’s kind of like a family.”

“When you can take away the barriers, of money, and break down what you think something is supposed to look like, you’re onto good stuff.”

“I always considered myself to be a bridge to people outside my community. Like, let’s have a conversation about these things that we might not otherwise talk about. There’s this conversation that is less about achievement and more about belonging.”



“I call it the flywheel of perpetual good. You receive these healing tools — you feel better — you want to do good things in the world, so you come back to practice, and you live it.”

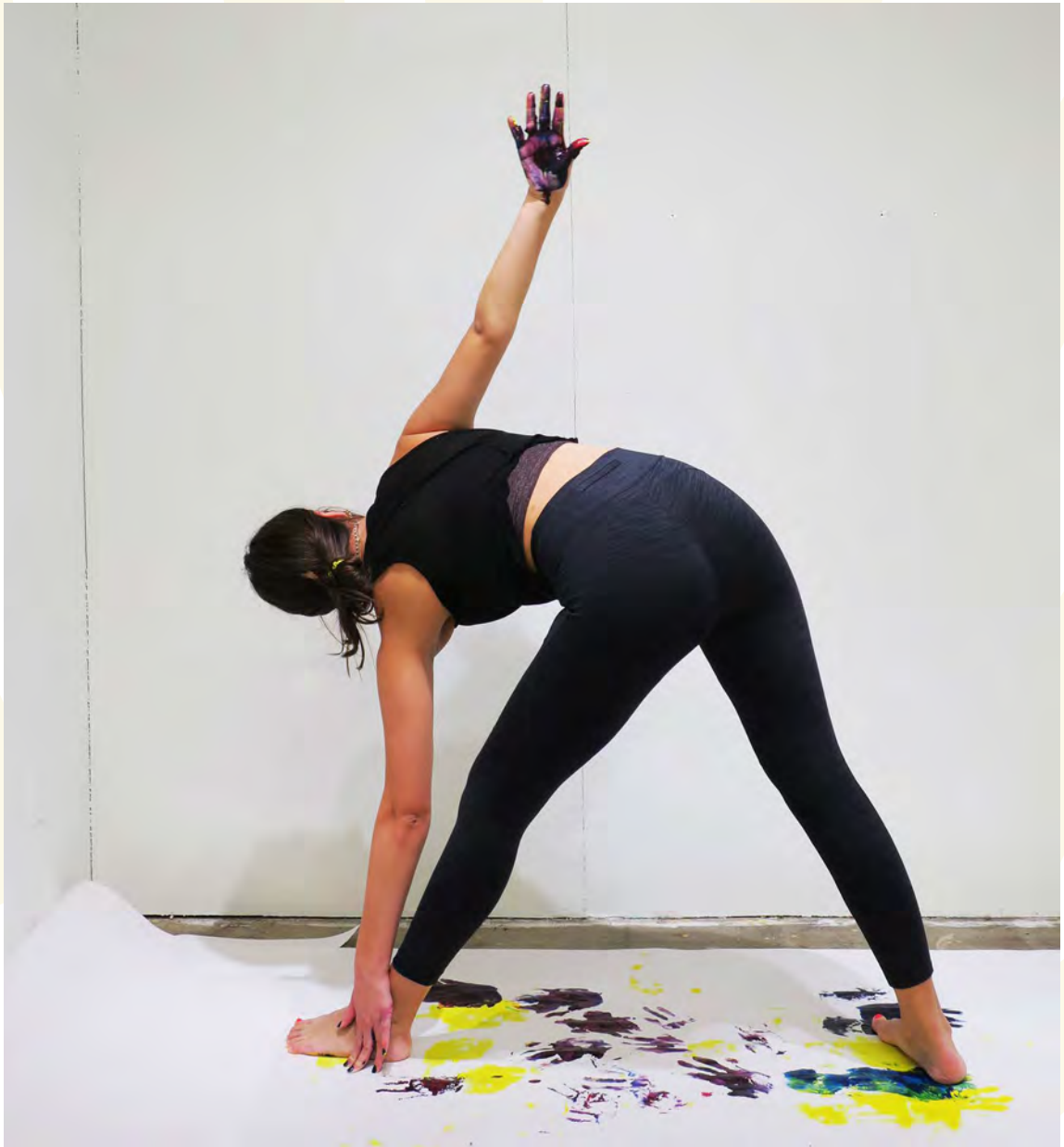
A woman in a teal leotard is performing a yoga pose in a church. She is standing on a wooden floor, with her right leg extended forward and her left leg bent. Her right arm is extended horizontally to the right, and her left arm is bent at the elbow with her hand near her head. The church interior features rows of wooden pews, stained glass windows, and a chandelier. The lighting is warm and ambient.

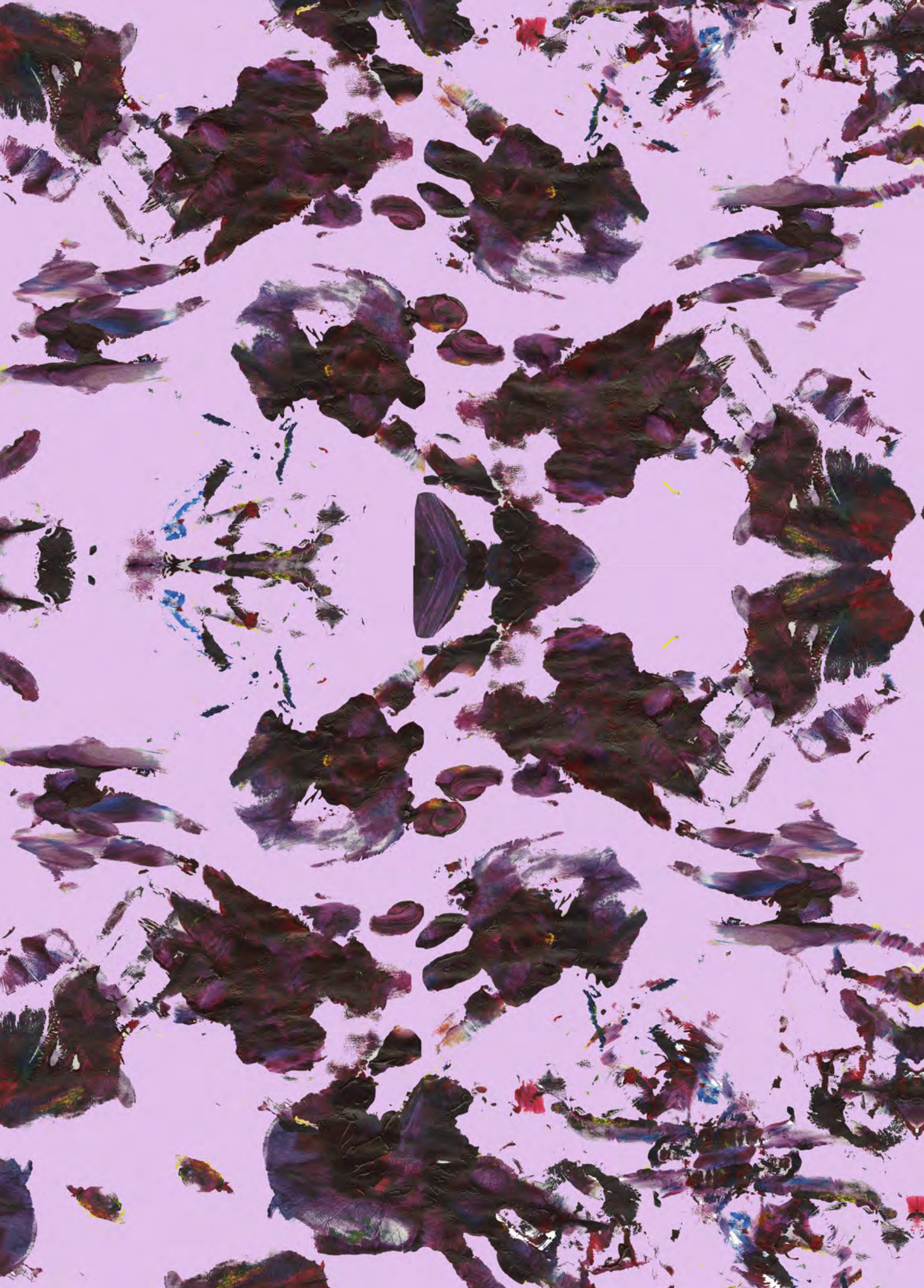
"You're doing the best you can. Maybe you've made some choices you're not proud of — but you get to choose again. Everyday."

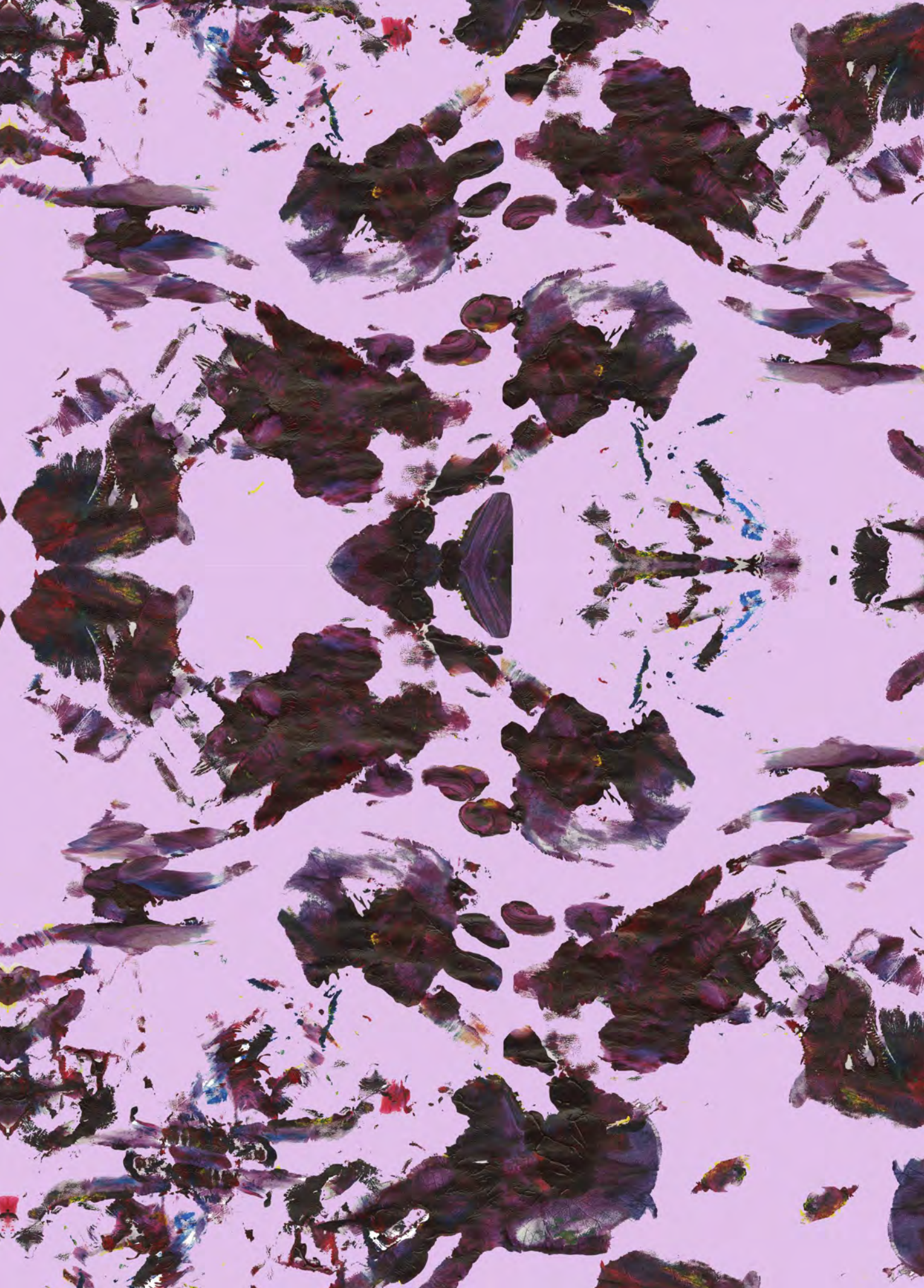


THE PRINT



















MEGHAN NAVOY

meghan navy
SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

Starting with her Etsy shop "A Wool Story," Meghan Navoy had always been passionate about textiles and fashion. Meghan started the rooftop natural dye garden while she was a student studying textile development at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City, and her love for botanical colors has only flourished since then. After relocating to Detroit, Meghan started her own sustainable textile studio and business, Rosemarine Textiles.

Using all natural materials and sustainable practices, Meghan, and Rosemarine Textiles, have become a household name in Detroit and across the country. From homegoods to apparel and accessories, Rosemarine Textiles offers comforting colors, environmentally conscious materials, and guaranteed handmade, quality products. As a small business owner, creative, and member of the Detroit neighborhood, Meghan's story offers many layers of community, however, the most notable is the connection between Meghan's practice and the natural world.

"I always wanted to be able to sustain myself doing my own creative work."





ON RUNNING A SMALL BUSINESS:

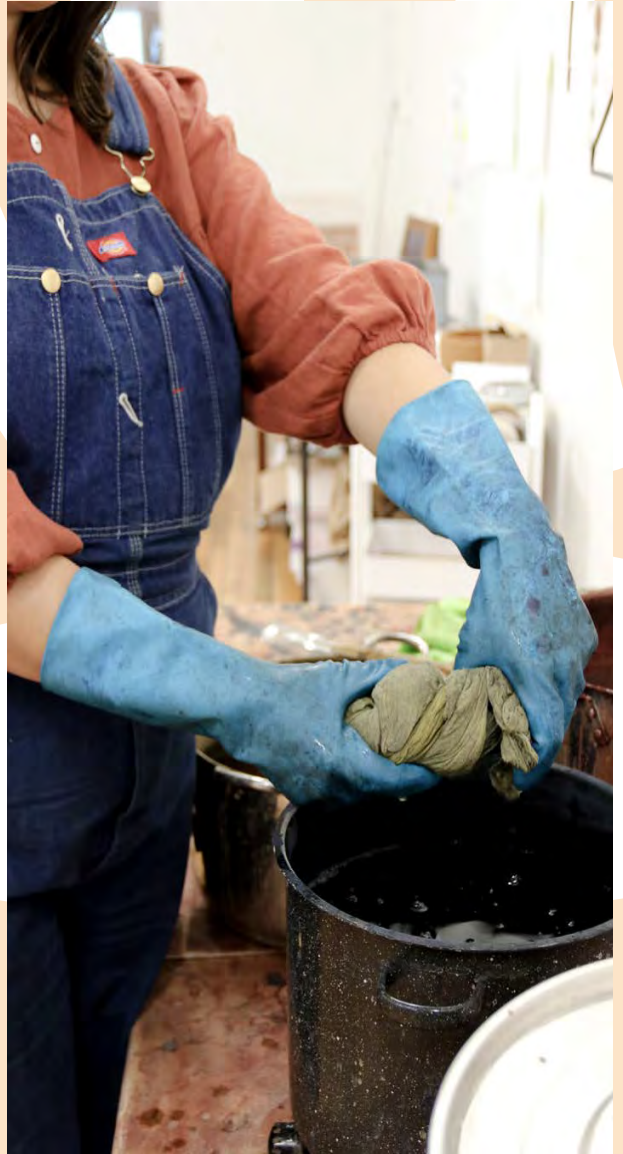
"I definitely am so grateful. Almost all of my close group of friends are creative small business owners. We all understand what the others are going through. One of my friends makes jewelry, my other friend makes ceramics, another is a weaver. We all have our own community in that way. But also, it's really cool to have workshops in non-Covid times, and to connect with people who are both my customers, and who are interested in learning more about the process. I started teaching indigo workshops, and dyeing with food waste in 2015-16. I made zines to help customers recreate their own organic indigo vat, and other food waste dye projects."

"I work a lot with stores, so I have relationships with those people and stores all across the country. Especially when you are talking to them and getting feedback about what their customers are saying. One thing I want to do more this year is direct to customers. So I'm more in touch with the people, and the actual end customers."

"When I first started I did more wedding and interior and special event types of things and then I slowly migrated into more accessories, based on people's feedback. I didn't even have the idea to make bandanas, it was actually Diana's idea. I wanted to carry napkins, and she asked me if it was okay if she sold them as bandanas in her shop, and I was like, 'oh I never even thought of that!' And now it's one of the most popular items that I offer. So, I'm always listening to people's feedback."



“There’s definitely a lot of community between vendors. There is so much community between other creative makers”



“I get an idea and I have to just work on it. I have to see where it goes. You just never know what will come of it.”





ON RESPECTING THE PLANET:

"I lived in New York and there's a lot of trash there. I saw the repercussions of trash in bags on the street everyday. Then, learning about the waste and toxicity of the fashion and textile manufacturing industry was really encouraging to me to be more sustainable. I also was really into being vegetarian and learning about animal testing when I was in middle school. It sort of just grew from there. My interests started with animal testing, but now lean more into human rights."

"I think people are really interested in the plant dyed aspect because on the tags I write what dye I use for each color. When I, say, dye with avocado skins and pits, people are like 'What? That's so crazy!'"

"Dyeing is super water intensive. So I try to do whatever I can to recycle the water, or reduce my water use. I never dump the water out. I just keep reusing the same dye bath, adding more dye to it, over and over again. Because otherwise I would just be dumping out tons of water and just refilling the pot everyday."

"It is important to me to work with plant based materials. Wellness to me is more about just using more natural materials, and attempting to use all of the materials that I have, and to create as little waste as possible, so I'm not polluting the waterstream with dye."

"I follow a lot of B Corp principles, which are ethical and sustainable business guidelines, so I just look at some of the things that they outline and apply it to my own practice."

"So, I keep my money at a local bank, instead of with a giant, evil bank. I use a local black owned bank for my business, and then almost everyone in my supply chain is a woman owned business, or an independent small business. So that's really cool, because my business has helped perpetuate all these other small businesses."

"I live pretty much a zero waste lifestyle in general, and I have for the past seven or eight years. It's just what I do."

Sustainability in Meghan's Studio:

- Using all natural fibers.
- Using food waste as dyes
- Using 100% plant dyes
- Conserving water & electricity
- No wasted fabric in cutting
- No paper towels used for cleaning
- All recycled toilet paper
- Studio composting & recycling
- Vinegar & castile soap for cleaning
- Shared studio space
- All recycled paper mailers
- Paper and cellulose based tape
- Recycled newspaper wrapping in shipping boxes

Meghan's Sustainability Goals:

- Rain water catchment for dyeing
- More hemp production
- Switching to organic cotton
- Compostable mailing labels
- Less overall water usage



THE PRINT















DIANA MARSH

Diana Marsh
VINTAGE FLARE

Starting as an online vendor of jewelry and antiques in Brooklyn, New York, Thistle & Bess, and owner-curator, Diana Marsh knew she would always return to Ann Arbor. She stumbled upon her current Kerrytown storefront by chance, and immediately knew it was perfect. Since opening five and half years ago, Thistle & Bess has become a local treasure.

As an avid collector of antiques, artist's work, and jewelry, Diana's shop is a melting pot of one of a kind, beautiful things. Regularly hosting workshops, and events, Thistle & Bess offers more than just handmade wonders to the city of Ann Arbor, it offers a community, and a place to gather and share appreciation for precious things.



“One of the main purposes of opening my store was to support and carry the work of artists I admire and respect.”



ON THE ANN ARBOR COMMUNITY:

“An initial kind of hope was that the shop would be a community gathering space where we could have things like workshops and connect with people. In the age of online, that was a nice special thing that we tried to do a lot of when we opened. I think over time we’ve stayed pretty true to that vision; we’re celebrating five years, or we did this past summer, so it’s been five and half years in Kerrytown, Ann Arbor.”

“Immediately upon moving to Ann Arbor I felt a really wonderful community feeling here between artists, shop owners, and customers. People are so willing to work together and collaborate.”

“There’s this kind of vision of the collective good for all of us; like if we’re lifting one another up then we’re all succeeding. I instantly started collaborating with a lot of different makers and business owners, and people in the Detroit community making things, and I felt like it was a really wonderful, supportive, collaborative community. That’s something that I really love.”

"I have really good relationships with the people whose work I carry, and I think that's what sets me apart from a lot of other places."



AN APPRECIATION FOR THE HANDMADE:

"All things are handcrafted by skilled artists who are doing great things; we have aligning values with environmental and social outlooks on things, so people whose values align with mine. So it's supporting those artists and bringing those to my customers. I feel like our customers really are wonderful and have been extremely supportive continually through our business, and I think our customers are, again, people who appreciate the curation of goods that we have and appreciate handmade and specialty items."

"Our customers like knowing who owns the store and like knowing who they're going to see when they are coming in, and I've built a lot of really lovely relationships with my customers over the years. So it's this strong community. When you come to Thistle & Bess, you know who from our small staff who you're going to see behind the counter. Sometimes I joke it's like, 'Cheers! You can come have a conversation about your dog or your kids.'"

"We carry a lot of really beautiful goods that have specific meanings; we want them to be special to people, especially as we're selling more of the fine jewelry; we want things to be passed down from generation to generation. I think it's important to know that a real person made an item. People associate really positive wonderful memories with the physical piece of jewelry."

"Especially if it's a one of a kind good, whether it's art you hang on your wall or a piece of antique jewelry where who knows if I'll ever be able to find one like it again, I am so happy when they go home with people who are going to love and appreciate them. So yes, I am connected to those pieces. We try to find things that are different and that are special that you won't necessarily find everywhere else."

"I pick things that I personally would want to buy and that I love, and that I hope that other people like them. I've always struggled with, 'oh this seems to be popular right now, should I bring it in the shop even if I'm not that crazy about it?' and I've decided if I'm not crazy about it and I don't love it then it shouldn't be in my shop. So I try to not necessarily follow trends per say, and try to follow my gut and just buy things that I really love and think are special and hope that other people will see the value in it."



“We’re all trying to contribute to make things a little better, and if that means you bought a new candle or pair of earrings and that gives you a slight amount of joy, then it’s worth it.”



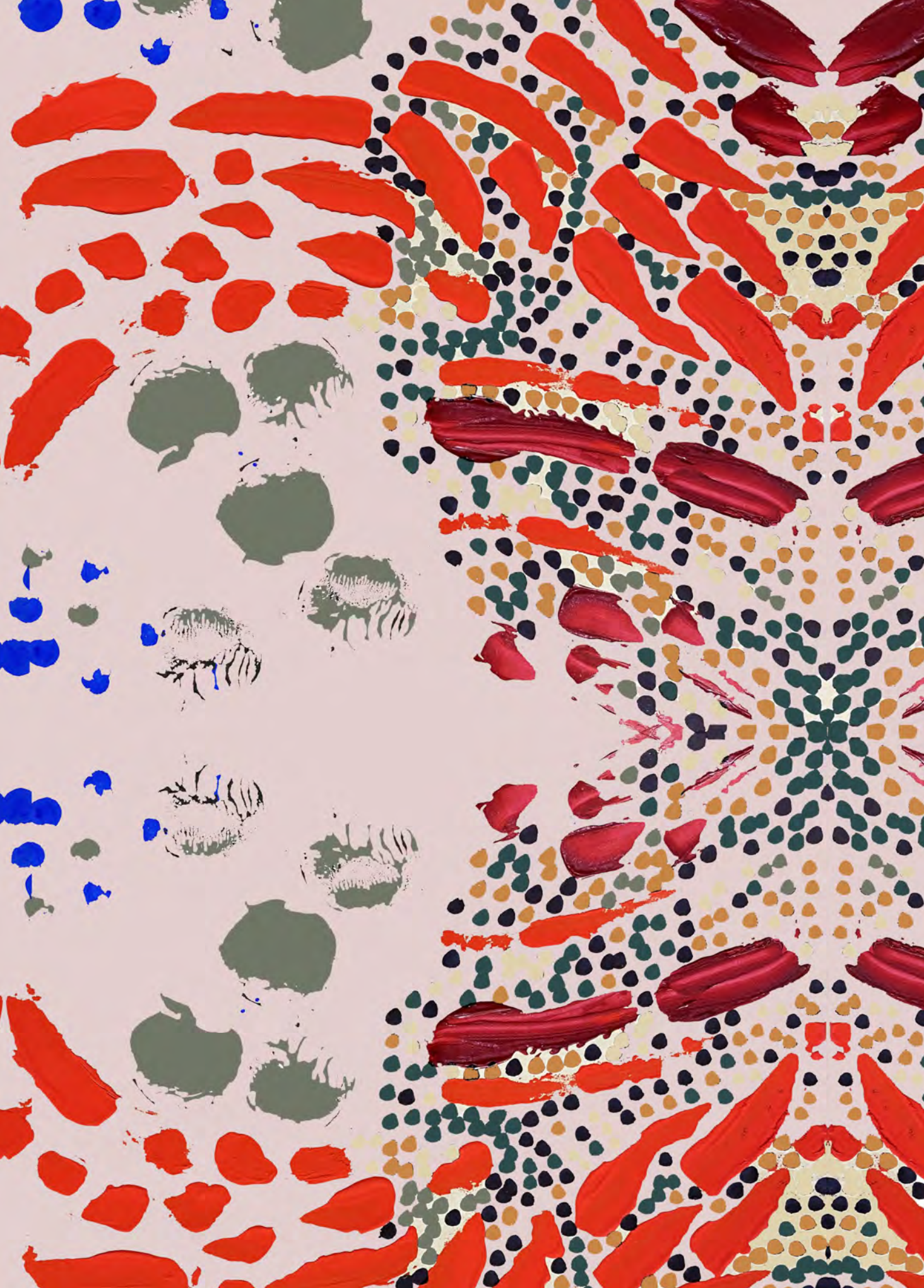


THE PRINT













FROM THE DESIGNER:

When considering where I would take my thesis in summer of 2020, I had no idea what to do. As both a designer and journalist, I knew that I wanted to tell some sort of story. And I felt like after four years of growing into a designer and person, the story had to be something really powerful. I didn't even know what exactly I was going to talk to people about, so I started with an old friend, Jyoti, which led me to Dana, Meghan, and Diana through other various connections.

As I talked to each woman, I was pleasantly surprised to see the connections they shared to each other. Jyoti and Dana are both from my home town of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and cross referenced each other in interviews, while Diana and Meghan are both connected to Ann Arbor and Detroit; Diana even carries Meghan's textiles in her shop. I didn't know or plan this when I talked to them. It naturally unfolded as I explained the project to each interviewee.

Making each print was an extremely cathartic experience for me as a designer. I chose the items and acts of printmaking intentionally: Takeout boxes, yoga poses, iterating a natural dye process, and earrings. These are physical symbols of each woman's talents. The conversations taught me new things, and, whether reconnecting — or meeting for the first time — I felt that this particular process reflected my growth from beginning to end of college. I had interacted with each woman throughout different phases of my life, which I didn't realize in the moment, but looking back, how beautiful that they are all a part of my last creative project in college? Jyoti and Dana being from my hometown made me nostalgic to high school, growing up, and moving from Grand Rapids to Ann Arbor, Diana made me reminiscent of slow Ann Arbor summers, working in her shop, and swimming in the Huron River. I met Meghan for the first time for this project, and I think her practice reflects newness and a space I am leaning into as both a designer and human in the world.

So, although I started the process with no idea of where it would go, looking back at an academic year's worth of work, it feels right. If you take anything away from these stories and textiles, it's that women can do anything, and everything eventually works out. These are sentiments I know I needed to hear this year, and ones I will carry on after college. I'm proud of "Nice to Meet You." It's about care, about love, about friendship; in more ways than one. It is a collection of the stories you want to hear in a global pandemic, stories of perseverance, generosity, genuine good. Ones that can now live on through pattern and textiles.

MARGARET SHERIDAN



