

TENSION

by kristi wong

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This zine was created to walk visitors through my first solo exhibition at Slice of Life Gallery in July 2026, and later updated to add photos in August 2026.

TENSION explores the wonder and grief of contradictory neurodivergence, and existing within and without the binary. Creeping webs of hyperfixations and dead ends of analysis paralysis; texture and structure that forms, informs, and un-forms. Parts of an ongoing life, told through textile, fibre, and metal.

FEEL

Cotton yarn, lambswool yarn, anodized aluminum jump rings, copper wire, nail polish

The term “masking” in neurodivergent individuals refers to their ability to be perceived as neurotypical, by hiding their more divergent traits. This can look different for everyone, like finding more subtle ways to fidget, or altering speech patterns and other behaviour. I grew up as an Asian girl in the White-majority suburbs, which shaped a lot of my external and internal expectations. Like many others in my field (lol, late-diagnosed eldest daughters as just one subsection), I got *really* good at masking, and it’s difficult to deconstruct that conditioning when you realize you’ve been gaslighting yourself your entire life. When it gets really drastic, you start to wonder if you really know who you are (cue the am-I-also-autistic part of the equation).

Even after beginning to understand more about how my brain functions and letting some of the mask go, it’s incredibly difficult to shake something I’ve been doing all my life. Just a couple months ago, during a conversation about mental health, someone said to me, “You know, if you hadn’t told me you were feeling that way, I never would have known. You’re smiling and always seem very happy.”

This piece aims to capture some of that concept: colour, noise, texture, but it’s not representative of what’s actually going on inside. The flipside of this visual work is the invisible “everything”.



TAKING IN THE LAUNDRY AT POPPO'S HOUSE

Vintage silk/viscose yarn, paper, oil pastel, gouache, clothes pins

One of the longest memory landscapes that lives on in my mind is my grandparents' house in Port Coquitlam. We lived with them for a time, and visited at least once a week up until my grandpa's health started declining. They didn't own a dryer, at least that I can ever remember, so all the laundry was hung up on the back deck. That's basically all it was ever used for because the clotheslines stayed up year-round.

The poem (shown in full on opposite page) went through several iterations, but the current form best distills some of my feelings and ruminations around intrusive thoughts, as well as trying to encapsulate some of the experience of living inside a Hyperactive mind.

way up high on the back deck, my brain-voice tells me to slip through the gaps in the railing. yeah right! i'm too big! the hug would squeeze too tight, even if it might be kinda nice. and i'd prob'ly fall flat, like so flat, like we learned last week in science about sediment and fossils. maybe that's how some dinosaurs died: falling all the way down off their high rocky decks, with no one around to pick up their bones, lying like pancakes until they turned into sandwiched stone. the kitchen towels stack in the basket with their raggedy edges and i think about pointy rocks and caves and how lonely bats must be in the dark. maybe mum and dad are lonely at work. do they love me? do i love me? will sailor moon and tuxedo mask ever get married? i don't want to get married. i don't want to get married, and have kids, and drive them to their popo's house, and go to work in dark caves, like bats, or parents.

i pick off the wooden pegs and the line jumps like it's angry because i want to be angry, swinging the stiff laundry. i want to go fast, make the lines jump higher with the speed of my picking. i want to race against the wind that swings the laundry without me, but then it blows and cools my face and tries to sway me, too, like the rocking chair in koong koong's room. i breathe in deep and loud to smell the wind, the laundry, the sky. i listen to koong koong's pear trees whispering to each other, and soak up light like a sun-sponge. i run my fingers over the smooth braided nylon line and pluck it like a big guitar string, imagining the twang moving through my body, out, and out, and out, like waves, or a river, waterfalling, endless. i open my hands to drip drop pegs into the empty rice bucket by the door. there's still more laundry to do.

Way up high on the back deck, my brain voice
tells me to slip through the gaps in the railing
"You right"; I'm too high the way would require
too tight a turn it might be kinder me, and I
probably fall flat on my flat, like we learned last
week in science about the meat and bones. Maybe
that's how some dinosaurs died. Falling off the way
to pick up the high rising deck, with all the way
toward into the water. I like the perspective until I
turn into sand which is the water. I can't stand
in the bushes with the water. I can't stand
about being rats and their raggedy tails. They
must be in the dark among trees and leaves. I
think at work, do they love me? I think
with "Sailor man and dead rats" I think
I don't want to get married. I don't want to
get married and have kids. I don't want to
papa's heart and love. I don't want to
work in dark caves, and drive there to see
like bats, caves.
Or parents.

I pick up the wooden posts and the lime pump like laundry I want to be angry, bringing the effort with the sense of my picking. I wait to race against it blows and cross my face and tries to swing me, so, then deep and had to smile she said, the laundry, the dog, other, and each up right like a dancepartner. I run my fingers over the rough twisted nylon line and think I like a big guitar string, imagining the heavy moving through my body, out, and end, and open my hands to slip drop dogs into the swirling river backed by the door. There's still more laundry to do.

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it's angry because i want to be angry, swinging the stiff
laundry. i want to go fast, make the lines jump higher
with the speed of my picking. i want to race against
the wind that swings the laundry without me, but then
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i listen to koong koong's pear trees whispering to each
other, and soak up light like a sun-sponge. i run
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endless. i

A COUCH IS A HOME

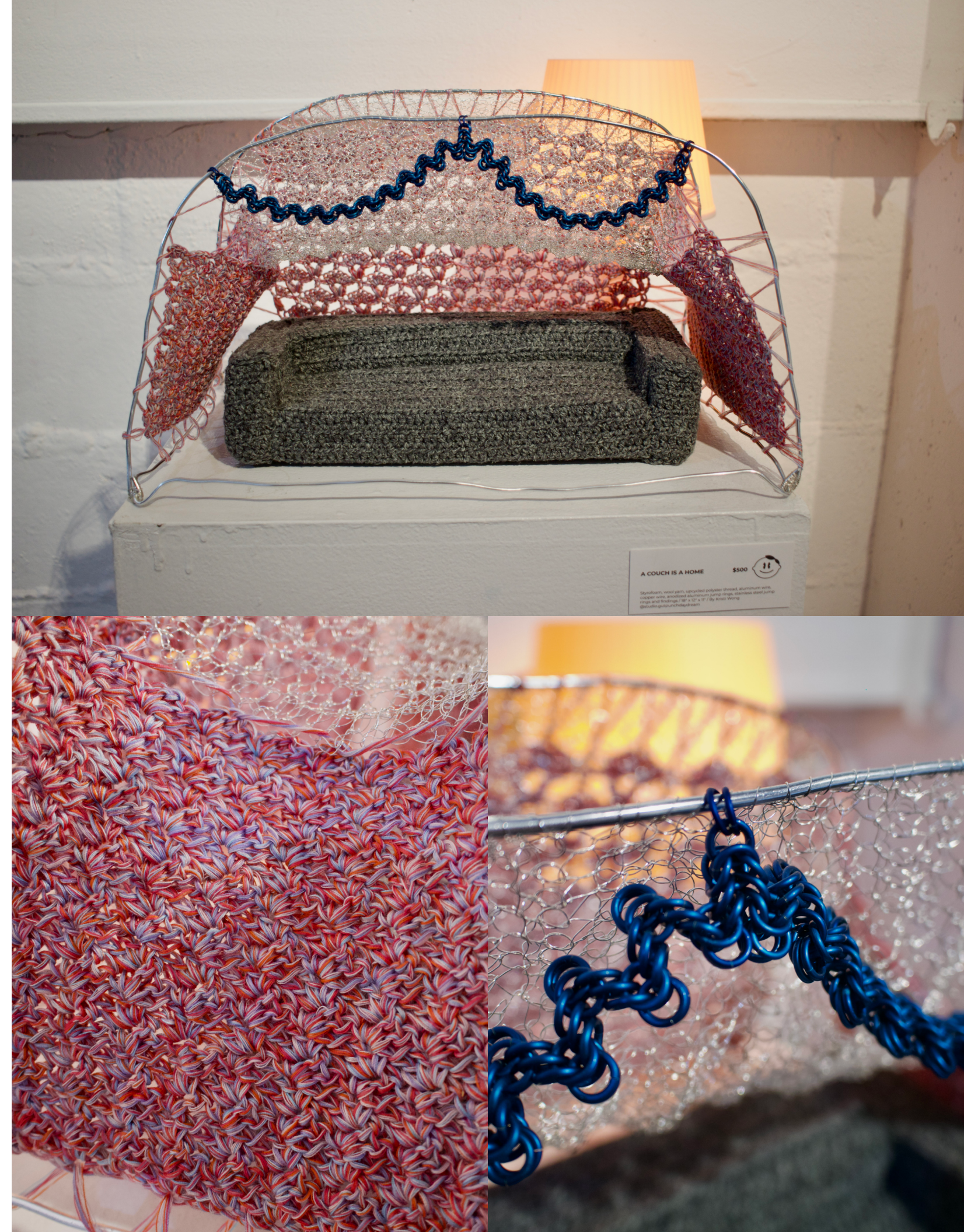
Styrofoam, wool yarn, upcycled polyester thread, aluminum wire, copper wire, anodized aluminum jump rings, stainless steel jump rings and findings

So, I'm disabled. It's an identity marker I'm still having trouble feeling like I can claim, even though I can no longer deny I mentally and physically fit the term. Perhaps it's because of the symptomatic nature of what my body deals with; if I look or function well enough one day, it's not a totally unreasonable expectation for "normal" (woof) people that I'd be the same most of the time. As you might've already guessed: that's not the case.

At the moment, I'm living inside a hypermobile, neurodivergent human suit, which means my brain and body get real tired from very mundane things because they're both so bendy, so I spend most days on the couch.

I love my couch. She's great. Functionally, she's my studio, my place of comfort, and occasionally my bed.

Thank you, couch.



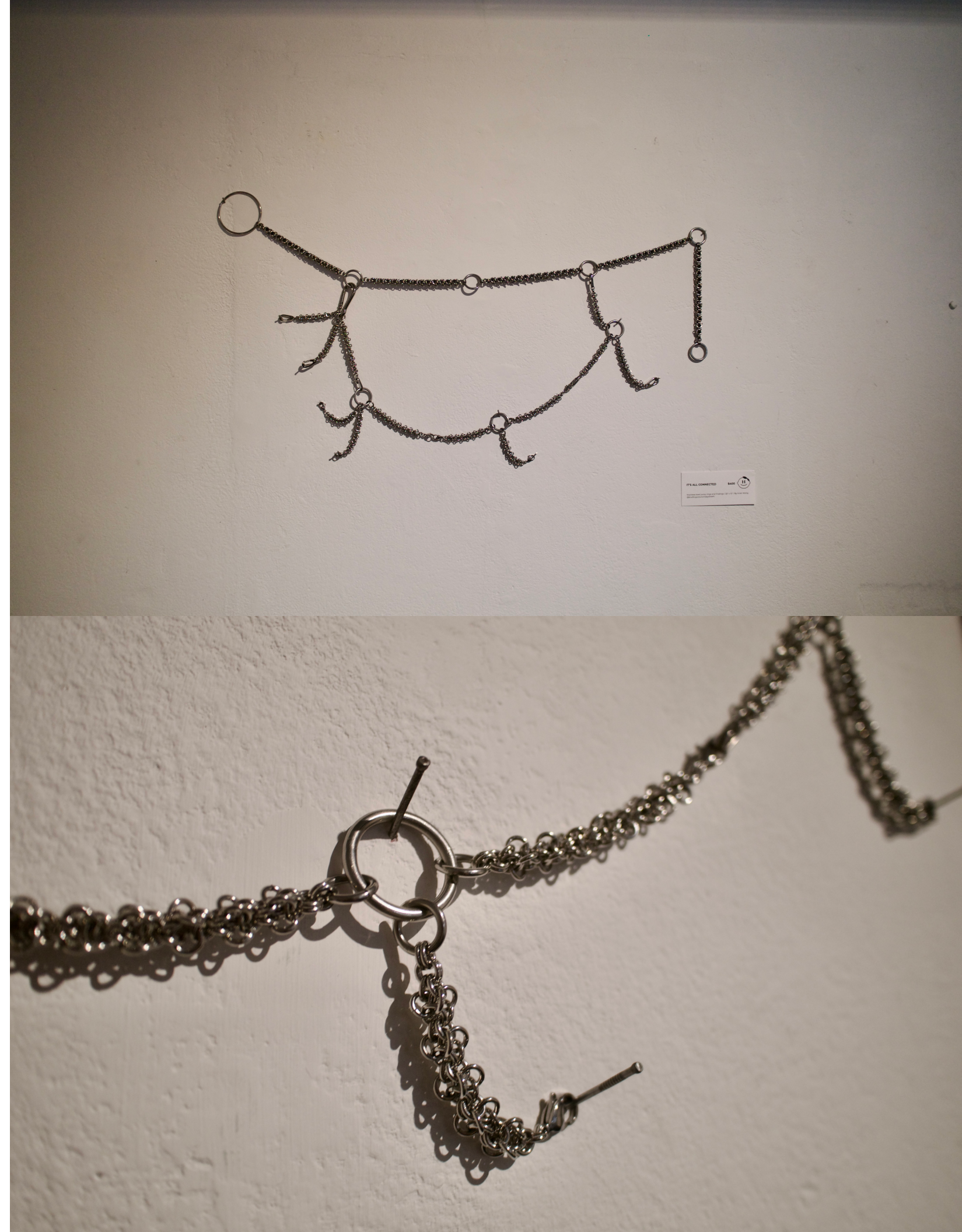
IT'S ALL CONNECTED

Stainless steel jump rings and findings

Listen, hate to say it, but the mind-body connection is real, y'all. Right now, the circles in my Venn diagram include hypermobility (gut issues, skin issues, joint issues, etc), ADHD-I, ASD, possibly endometriosis, etc etc etc

Every time I find something new about my body, I'm 100% that meme from *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* of the guy in front of his conspiracy board because IT'S ALL CONNECTEDDDDDDD!!

[ETA on Aug 6 2026: Mannnnny thank you's to Angel (@translantis) for gifting me with such beautiful and expansive observations during their visit - I referenced their likening this one to a constellation and the horse cave paintings every time I took people on a tour of the pieces, and it led to some really lovely and fun conversations.



THANKS FOR VISITING!

My name's Kristi, and I'm a queer, non-binary, neurodivergent writer and interdisciplinary artist of Chinese-Malay descent, currently living as a settler in "New Westminster" on the traditional, unceded, and unsundered territories of hə́ŋqəminə́m-speaking peoples on Coast Salish lands. I make chainmaille jewellery, accessories, ornamental pieces, zines and more. My creative work is informed by living inside an intersectional identity; following the joy, the heartbreak, and where attention and intention leads. I'm especially drawn to dissecting how late-diagnosed neurodivergence impacts my perceptions and perspective, and the importance of personal archive and documentation as validation for future selves (selves within/without; that we see ourselves in others, and vice versa, to connect across time, space, and other barriers). Other inspirations include mid-1800s Romanticism, the modern Hanfu revival, scary stories my dad told us as kids, and 2010s fanfiction culture (true millennial-coded yearning).

At present, I'm enjoying discovering parallels and methods of manipulation across chainmaille, knitting, and crochet.

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