

Maxwell Cloe So this, you said this is your thesis project, right? So tell me a bit more about *Patch Work*. How did this come together?

Sarah Jenkins: Yeah, so this project was the combination of all of my sort of research and thinking, and even just like the oral histories and all of the work I had been doing about coal mining specifically, but also thinking about other types of labor that is also simultaneously happening at the same time. So particularly thinking about like unseen labors or labor within the home. So you know, whether that's like more traditional women's work. So that's where the like thread and the tea and the quilting needles and things come into the project. I came into grad school doing drawing. So I had a lot of drawing materials. and so that's kind of partly why, again, just the idea of using what I have around me. I used charcoal and cardboard and just things that I have, right. to make these little systems. And so the idea with this series is thinking about the visuals. Of coal mining, thinking about the ideas of drawing, thinking again about unseen labor, I'm using a mix of charcoal and coal slag. So this beautiful sparkly stuff is coal slag. I was also thinking about like, open-pit mining as well. There's an open pit imagery that shows up later, So, this was sort of the combination of that. The whole series kind of started, when I was reading a story, I'm going to blank on the author aren't I, I can email it to you later if it doesn't come to me. He's like actually a knitter he's like a sort of famous knitter. But anyhow, he grew up in a place called Smock, Pennsylvania in a coal mining family. And he was telling a story about his grandmother who wanted to learn to sew. So she asked her parents over and over again for a needle and thread so that she could start practicing and they didn't have any extra supplies to give her, but eventually they gave her a needle in white thread and she reused the needle and thread so many times that the thread turned black. So then I was thinking about "Oh, how could I make thread turn black?" That was like one of the questions I asked myself. I was also thinking about just like different sort of binaries, if you want to say in work, like I was thinking about the idea of like, "what is considered clean work or dirty work," "what is considered, what work is seen and what is not seen," things like that. And this, of course that we're looking at now is like coal tipple, inspired by coal tipples. I drove by one on the way to school every day, there was an operating coal mine on the way to school. You could watch the coal just like shimmer down the side of this tipple. So I was thinking a lot about that. This is video, the rest of the pieces are stop motion. I shot it at 24 frames per second, which is very, very time-consuming way to shoot animation. That frame rate. So 24 photographs per second. And so the reason I was doing that was because I wanted the pieces to feel kind of mechanical or filmic. I wanted to try to erase the. The idea or hide the idea that I was actually intimately touching these objects, like literally thousands of times. So again, going back to this idea of unseen labor, like if your grandmother repairs your shirt for you, she might spend hours sewing it. Right. And you might not even notice that she doesn't tell you, like, there's this idea of the intimacy and the sort of care that goes into a certain type of work that may or may not even show up in the end. And so, I was thinking about that at the time.

MC: Very cool. And you installed it in like one big installation?

SJ: Yeah. So at the time it was six monitors, for my thesis exhibition, but then I edited it together for a single channel viewing. and so that I could share it. And so that it could be in a theater or film festival or whatever it may be.