

Artist Statement

I am inspired by the critical possibilities of the sewing machine. As a maker, who makes and remakes, I seek a public reimagining of human connections across geographic borders to address the interconnections of labor rights and climate change. I create spaces for cultivating deeper understandings of solidarity and collective power. My interest in labor rights stems from histories of Jewish activism in the garment industry, my family history as immigrants and activists and the role of the sewing machine in these stories.

The works in this exhibition are all comprised of used clothing. Used clothes are potent materials with which to scrutinize our overconsumption, careless discarding, and tolerance for the labor conditions under which our clothes are made in the first place, but also to contemplate that things could be different.

Much of my work in this exhibition envisions alternatives through the act of remaking – a metaphor of the need to create just and sustainable systems. I encourage people to become more aware of where our clothes come from, to take responsibility to consume less, and to apply pressure to corporate clothing brands to treat workers fairly. The concept of “solidarity” encapsulates my ideas about the work we must do to ensure workers have safe workplaces, are paid fairly and are allowed to form and join unions.

Rachel Breen