Crafting Together: Finding Meaning and Connection Through Handwork with

Chapter 1 - Crafting Together: Finding Meaning and Connection Through Handwork with Melanie Falick

Crafting Together: Finding Meaning and Connection Through Handwork with Melanie Falick - Okay. Hello, everybody. Welcome. Wow, over a hundred people right out of the gates. Welcome, welcome. Okay. We're gonna just let people file in. I know everybody, it always takes a few minutes for people to find the Zoom link right as we're starting and get their access and everything. So get comfy, get your beverage, settle in. I'm here with Melanie Fallick, our special guest today. Probably some of you know who she is and some of you are maybe meeting her for the first time. But while you're settling in, we would love for you to open up the chat so you can see at the very bottom of the screen there, there is a chat button that opens up your chat for you. And if you could let us know. What is our question, Melanie? - What are you making? - What are you making? And this could be, it doesn't have to be right at this moment. It could be. What - Yeah, - These days. - What are you making these days? What project are you - What - Did you just finish? What are you working on at the moment? What are you planning soon to start soon? What are you dreaming of making? - Yes. Ooh. Air and sweater spinning yarn. All right, two fiber people here. Yes. Oh my gosh, look at this list piling up. Pocket. - Pockets. - I love it. Oh my gosh. It's just like flying by before my eyes. All right, we're, we're definitely over-indexing here on the knit and crochet folks. You're in the right place. In the presence of a legend of the fiber community, Melanie Fallick here. I know. So oh, this is so cool. And this is, this is all going to come back in our conversation today, why we are asking you what you are making. But first, I'm going to go ahead and start things off. I think, I think we've got a good group of people in here. And just for everybody's reference, if you need to leave early for any reason, there, there will be a recording that goes out later and you can watch it later too. So so don't panic if you have to jump off or come in and out. This will be available later. In the meantime, welcome. Welcome to our Creative Bug Live event. We love to do these events. Sometimes when we do live events, we're doing a project. Sometimes it's more on a, a thought or a process. And today it's sort of all of the above. I'm so excited to have our guest today, Melanie Fallick, join us. Melanie actually, she is no stranger to me. Melanie and I go, go back very far. In fact, I, I would even go so far as to say Melanie was and is my mentor. We, we got to work together when I think I was in my 20s, so a million, billion years ago. And I got to work with Melanie at SDC Craft ST - and which was her imprint Melanie Falick Books working on all of the incredible craft books that she used to work on. We worked together for six years on those books. One of the coolest times in my life. And you know, Melanie, she's an independent writer. She's an editor. She's a creative consultant. Lifelong maker, of course. Probably a lot of you know her from some of the books that she's written. This one right here, Making a Life is one that. What year did it come out, Melanie? - Came out at the end of 2019, right before COVID. - 2018. Beautiful book. In - 1919. - 2019. That's right. And then also has written Kids Knitting, Weekend Knitting, Knitting in America. Over 525,000 books in print. So a lot of of books out there and over a very long career. As I mentioned, she, publishing director at STC Kraft, Melanie Fallick Books published books by Natalie Chanin, Kay Fassett, Nora Gone, all the greats. And then these days Melanie, you are the creative director and editor for Modern Daily Knitting Field Guides. And I know you you've edited the Coco Knit Sweater Workshop and Yoga of Yarn by Liza Laird. So you're definitely keeping busy these days. And your most recent thing that you're doing is the f - being a featured star in Knit Stars 11. Keeping very

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busy. As I understand, they were just at your house filming. And that's coming out this October? - It's in the fall. I don't know the exact date. - Okay. So stay tuned. We're gonna put some links in here so you guys can check, check out Melanie. So we've been talking for quite some time about wanting to get together and do a live event. And I think one of the things that you really have so much knowledge in and so much, done so much research and have thoughts about is sort of this question of why we make and just what it means to be a maker and a human and kind of the evolutionary reasons for why we make. And I think a lot of the people here understand that making is very important, but maybe don't understand why it's important or why other people don't understand how it's so important to them. So I, I, you know, with that being said, I want to hand this over to you and you can get us kicked off here. - Okay. All right. Thanks, Leanna. And Leanna talked about some of the books that I worked on, but she played a huge role in the success of all the books that we did. - We - Had a good - Time. We - Cranked - Out some classics. - Yeah. So the first thing we're going to do, if you brought the optional materials, then you have strips of fabric between a quarter and a half inch long I mean, wide of different lengths. And this is just going to take a minute and you're not going to exactly know why I'm showing you this, but it is going to become clear. So if you have the fabric, take two strips and just tie them together at one end. And we're going to make what's called fabric cordage or, you know, cordage is basically string. So I'm going to put my shorter length on the right. I don't think it really matters, but basically you have two strips. I take the one at the right and I twist it. Oops, doesn't want to twist. Counterclockwise. And I bring it behind the other one so that the other one is now on the right. And I twist it and bring it behind. Now the first one is on the right. And you keep going and you want to twist it pretty straight, pretty tightly if you can. And it's more than one twist. Like it's sort of one turn of the fingers, you're sort of pinching it and then it twists. And you're just going to keep doing that. And as you sure know, if you do knitting or sewing or crocheting, anything with yarn or thread, it's the twist that gives strength to - - Actually reminds me a lot of hair. Like I, I would do this with my hair. - Yeah. - Yeah. - Yeah. And I do think it's sort of a natural instinct, you know, when you have like grass or stems of things, you start twisting them together. And you can make cortage out of all sorts of grasses and barks. You can do it with leaves, like the leaves of a, like an iris, those long leaves, or corn cob. You can do it with the stuff you pull off. It's like mask. Anyway - Anything with trips. And you would do it with raffia that you can just buy at the craft store and it, it sort of turns out more like string. But so I'm going to just show you, I'm not at a point where I start a new one, but I'm going to start a new one just so I can show you. So let's pretend that this is shorter than it is and it needs to be replaced. I take another piece and I overlap it with a tail and I just work it in. So now I'm working. I've got this extra piece here, which shouldn't, is kind of long, but I just work with the tail and the new piece at the same time. And that overlap, which I think it should be about an inch or so just to be safe, inch or maybe two inches you know, helps it to stay in place. And then as you decide that you're done or you're finished, you can just make a knot in the end if you're just done for today or you're done for forever. You've made your, your cord and you just put a knot at the end and then you can choose whether you want to treat these overlaps as decoration or if you want to cut them off. So here's just some other cordage that I made a while ago. So you see it's, I can pull on it. It's really strong. And cordage or string goes back very, very, very far in our history. And that's what I'm going to explain in more detail as we go along. But I invite you to make your cordage while you watch this. Certainly there is neurological evidence that when our hands are busy, we're able to concentrate more fully. I definitely find that hand work helps me to concentrate. It also helps me to calm my nerves. - Yeah. Creative bug, we all know that if somebody is making something during a meeting, it's actually the

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highest compliment because it means that they're actually sitting there listening to you and not not looking around at their browser and checking email or, you know, doing something else. It actually in, in our world is a sign of of attention, keeping your hands busy. - Right. And, - And I think - brain open. - Yeah. Sort of like in a woman's world. I mean, not that there aren't men that do this, but I think when I worked for companies where there, you had meetings and there were a lot of men, I think there was some discomfort around like coming in and working on your knitting. But when I worked for companies that were like more women, it was completely acceptable, which is interesting. - We get it. - So I'm gonna, now that you guys, I hope you're all successfully making your cordage. And I'm gonna share my screen and start my presentation. Oops. Let's see. One second. - And feel free, everybody if you look at the bottom of the screen, you'll see the react button down there. And feel free to use those. Those are, you know, if you, if you are liking what you're hearing, feel free to share some hearts or thumbs ups or something's resonating. And also feel free to use the yay, there's some hearts. Use the meeting chat here if you have questions as you go, or if you, you would like Melanie to elaborate on anything that she's saying. We'll have a chance at the end to do a Q&A if you all have some questions or observations you, you'd like to share. So please feel free to make this an interactive space. - Okay. All right. So as Leanna said, we go way back. So I've been lucky enough to spend the better part of the last 30 years working in the creative handwork community, both personally and professionally. And I've been able to spend time with and collaborate with makers around the world. Throughout this time, I've always seen hand work as a lens through which to learn about people and cultures past and present to learn about myself and to learn about women's lives in general. Because as we know, when we look back at history and still today, a lot of what women have contributed has been undervalued and even unrecorded. So from the beginning, I was also interested in both what we make and why we make. And today I'm going to present my ideas about what and why. And why after all this time and thought, I believe so strongly that hand work is deeply connected to our wellness as individuals, communi- community members, and citizens of the planet. So to begin. Uh-oh. Okay. There we go. All right. So I ever started since I started knitting in my mid - 20s and then wrote my first book, Knitting in America, I've been thinking about the impulse to use hands to make things as our evolutionary inheritance. It's literally in our DNA, not just to make purely utilitarian things, but to make the ordinary extraordinary, to add beauty, care, and meaning to life's basic necessities. Of course, in the past, hand work was literally a means of survival. Shelter, clothing, tools, all the objects in the human world that didn't occur naturally were handmade. Hand work was the original technology. And for the longest time, I wanted to create a visual timeline to show the evolution of hand work alongside machine work. And I struggled to figure out how to do that effectively until I asked AI to help me. And this is what AI came up with. Now, I feel like I have to go off on a little bit of a tangent and, and just say something about the biases, the bias of AI. I wanted to show hand work toolmaking and human evolution. I asked a few questions. I asked it to create a timeline. And it came up with this timeline with three men. I don't know if it's supposed to be the same man or three different men and one woman. I'm not, you know, that sort of shows a bias there that AI thinks somehow that men were more prominent in our evolution than women, which is not true. And it also made them look like kind of the Holland. We had celebrity version of early humans. - I think, I think they found Zena maybe. Yeah. - Yeah. So in any case, this image traces the last two and a half million years of human evolution. So we go from the, what we call the first human homoobylus, which is Latin for handy, skilled, or able person, to homo erectus, which is 1.9 million years ago, and that's the upright human. And then homo sapiens, which is considered the modern humans. And homo sapien. And that was

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been about 300,000 years. And homo sapiens translates from Latin to wise or knowing human. I'm, I feel a little doubtful about how, how wise we are these days, but in any case, that is the translation. These names trace the progression of human becoming each building on what came before. Read together, they tell a story about the development of our bodies, minds, and societies. Humans defined by what the hands can make, humans defined by how the body moves through the world, and humans defined by how the mind understands. So now we have another AI-generated image. This one is a timeline showing the progression from handmaking to the industrial age to the current high-tech era. And although it's broken up into thirds, it's important to look at the bottom and see like hand-making era 2.5 million years ago, industrial revolution 250 years ago. So as you can see, as humans, we've relied on our hands and handmade tools for much longer than we've relied on our machines. In fact, I did the math. 250 years is 0.01% of 2.5 million years, or humans have relied on their hands rather than machines for 99.99% of their history. So it shouldn't be surprising that we carry that in our DNA, that we, it is a generic inheritance, the instinct to use our hands. So the fact that using our hands might calm us or it might help us to concentrate makes perfect sense. Now we get to tool-making because we know that early humans all these hundreds of thousands of years ago, like the first thing that we're, is believed that they were making was tools. But historians typically, historians typically cite making of sharp objects as the earliest example of tool making. And so when I asked AI about it, it generated a timeline full of sharp objects that could be used to pound, cut, scrape, or kill, like flints, axes, harpoons, arrows. In fact, most of the tools included in this AI-generated image are weapons. Yet still, there is another perspective. There is another theory about tools in earm - early humans, and it's called the Carrier Bag Theory of Evolution. And it suggests that containers for carrying likely innovated by females were among the most important early technologies. And this theory was introduced in the 1979 book by Elizabeth Fisher called Women's Creation: Sexual Evolution in the Shaping of Society. Fisher wrote, "The invention of the container can be seen as fundamental in the evolution of a large-brained two-legged human being. It freed the hands for gathering and provided temporary storage for food such as nuts and fruits. Moreover, the concept of the container was essential in the development of the infant sling." So among the possible earlier carriers, according to Fisher, was folded leaves, eggshells, gourds, or for transporting a baby, slings made out of vine's hair or animal skin. And Fisher's theory really makes sense. Our early ancestors were hunter-gatherers, mostly living in temperate climates on vegetarian diets. Wouldn't they have wanted a secure way to gather and safeguard forage resources such as seeds, nuts, berries, and a way to carry their babies leaving their hands free for daily work? And then once they began moving across long distances, it seems likely they wanted portable storage. Oops, sorry, I went the wrong way. So in 1986, the author, Ursula K. LeGuin, wrote an essay actually about Fisher's carry harrier bag theory and storytelling that really resonates for me today. LeGuin wrote, "We've heard it. We've all heard about the sticks, spears, and swords, the things to bash and poke and hit with. The long hard things, but we have not heard about the thing to put things in. The container for the thing contained. That is a news story. That is news. And this perspective feels like such a relief and a revelation to me. It recenters care, community, and life-sustaining work, much of it likely done by women back then and today. So there is not much historical evidence of early carrier bags since they were made out of materials that degrade over time. The items in this, these photos are not historical artifacts, but it is possible that early humans use similar natural materials gathered from their environments for their own carrying needs. On the left is a basket that I made using grapevine that I gathered in my yard. And on the right is bind weed that I pulled off my peony plants and used to bind baskets. And over time, I've realized my impulse to make by hand is linked

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to my innate desire to feel competent and safe and to move slowly. I don't need to make baskets or forage for binding material for survival, but I feel good when I create these things, when I can create utility and beauty with my own body and mind. And this feels especially important today as we live in this tech-driven reality that moves so fast and delivers so much information that it's easy to feel overwhelmed and anxious. So here on the left, you have basswood fiber, which is the inner bark of the American linden tree. And on the right, you have cortage that I made using the basswood fiber. And this is something that I can imagine our early ancestors might do. And this is related to the fabric cortage that many of you, I think, made at the beginning of this presentation. And it's all to say by doing that, you are carrying on, I wouldn't say a tradition, but carrying on a skill, an early technology that has been crucially important in our development. And. Oh, sorry. Let me just back say it. Okay. And I just wanted to add that AI didn't include cortage in the first timeline that I requested. But when I asked about cortage specifically, it did acknowledge that archeological evidence exists going back about 40,000 years. And there is strong inferential evidence that fibers were twisted for strength much earlier, possibly 120,000 years ago. So in this slide, you're seeing the title of a article that I found online about the story of spring. And I'm just going to. There's a lot of words here. I'm just going to read them to you because it, it's really mind-blowing when you think of the impact that string has had on our lives. It is, as the subtitle says, possibly far more important than the wheel in the pantheon of inventions. And this is how it begins. On its own, a stray thread cannot accomplish much. But when several fibers are twisted into yarn and yarn into strands and strands into string or rope, a once feeble thing becomes both strong and flexible. A hybrid material of limitless possibility. A string can cut, choke, and trip. Can also link, bandage, and reel. String makes it possible to sew, to shoot an arrow, to strum a cord. It has helped us develop shelter, clothing, agriculture, weaponry, art, mathematics, and oral hygiene. Without string, our ancestors could not have domesticated horses and cattle or efficiently plowed the earth to grow crops. If not for rope, the great stone monuments of the world, stonehedge, the pyramids of Giza, the Moahia of Easter Island would still be recumbent. And I looked that up. Recumbent means still lying down, not upright. In a fiberless world, the age of naval exploration would never have happened. Early light bulbs would've lacked suitable filaments. The pendulum would never have inspired advances in physics and timekeeping. And there would be no Golden Gate Bridge, no tennis shoes, no Beethoven's fifth sympathy, fifth symphony. Okay. So up until the Industrial Revolution, everything I've described, cordage, containers, textiles, tools, they were all made by human beings at a human scale based on available natural materials and needs. For over two million years, this is how humans survived and found meaning through work. And then very suddenly in historical terms, in the late 18th century, the Industrial Revolution rewrote the rules. Production moved from homes and small workshops to factories. A constant effort to increase efficiency, consistency, and speed in order to deliver higher profits often hurt both workers and the environment. And producing and consuming goods to maintain constant growth became the foundation of modern industrial economies. This transformation obviously brought opportunities and conveniences. It also changed our relationship to work, materials, time, and the environment in ways that continue to shape how we live today. But the story doesn't stop there. Just as the industrial revolution reshaped how we make, how and why we make things, the digital revolution shifted much of our work connection and creativity from physical spaces into digital ones and to machines that can act with minimal human intervention. And now with the dawn of artificial intelligence, we are once again renegotiating what it means to create and contribute. AI can extend our capacities in remarkable ways as it did when it helped me to visualize these timelines, but it also begs the question, is making by hand still important? And this

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is the question at the heart of my book, Making a Life, Working by Hand, and Discovering the Life You're Meant to Live. And in this book, I profile makers who have rejected the status quo, taken agency over their lives, brought their hands on creativity to the forefront of their lives, and in the process are defining success on their own terms. And I loosely organize this book into five chapters based on what we stand to gain aside from skills and objects when we make things by hand. And I'm just going to flip through pretty quickly, just show you the five chapters. I'm not going to go into detail about what you're seeing in the pictures. So chapter one, we make to remember. We make to remember our ancestors and their skills, how to live in sync with nature, and how to access the creativity and curiosity that came to us so naturally as children. Chapter two, we make to slow down, easing our pace rather than trying to adapt to the speed of machines in order to ground ourselves, quiet and focus our minds, enjoy our lives, and safeguard our environment. Chapter three, we make to connect with others past and present. Chapter five, we make to find. Ooh, sorry, I skipped one. Chapter four, we make to feel at home in our spaces in our own skin. And then finally, chapter five, we make to find our voice to express our ideas and emotions. So that brings us back to that original question. What are you making? The mo - this is the most common question we tend to be asked as makers. Second most common, how long will it take? I would like to propose a new way of answering this question. So if I'm asked to be accurate, I might say, "Well, quite literally, I'm making a sweater or a bag or a sock. But in reality, I'm making much more. I am making warmth. I am making comfort. I am making connections. I am making peace. I'm making time. I'm making beauty. I'm making joy. I'm making love. And I'm making sense. I am making a good life, and hopefully I will be doing this for a very long time. I'm not proposing that we reject technology, which is here with us whether we like it or not. I am proposing that it's in our best interest to prioritize hand work in order to stay connected to the embodied intelligence that has guided us for millions of years. So in conclusion, after listening to these ideas, I hope you feel inspired. Remember the impulse to make things reflects a genetic muscle memory. Embrace that in Embuls, enjoy it, and share it with others. It's also worth remembering that the messages we commonly receive about what matters in our modern world, power and domination, efficiency, speed, productivity, economic growth, and the consumerism required to maintain it, they are part of a single prevailing narrative and based upon limiting biases. There are other stories available to us, stories that are kinder to people and to the planet, and that reflect different values and ways of knowing. Often, we have to seek them out intentionally, just as Hai had to look beyond the familiar story of weapons and conquest to discover the carrier bag theory of evolution. And sometimes we can do good by discussing these alternate perspectives, engaging in new conversations, and sharing our skills like we are doing here today. Thank you. - Thank you, Melanie. That was very cool. And I can tell by all these hearts flying up on the screen that other people enjoyed it too. I think for everybody, myself included when, when you first shared this with me, I think the, the carrierbag theory is definitely an aha moment that seems to resonate with, with people. - I can say though, if people are interested in it, the book that it came from is a real heavy lift to, to read. But if you Google the carrier bag theory of evolution stuff will come up. And if you do that with Ursula Kay LeGuin, her essay is really, really wonderful. - Yeah. And - About like her interpretation of that. And, and really just like this, you know, feminine perspective on evolution and this idea that like, that we don't think about. Like we, when we, we read about evolution, it's always like when I first started before I asked AI to do it before, you know, I would come up with these pictures of like men in loin class with like pounding things. But then you have to think like the women were there and certainly they were having babies because that's how we evolve. And how did they carry their babies and do their work? They had to

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carry them in - Something. Right. And so much of life was just figuring. It wasn't just figuring out how to defend yourself. It was figuring out how to survive every single day. - Yeah. And all of that was done with your hand. - Yeah. It - Wasn't all about destruction. - Exactly. And one other thing that I think is, is interesting that, you know, we've talked a little about a little bit, and, and you actually talk about a lot in your book, Making a Life. And particularly in your interview with Ellen, I'm gonna say her last name wrong. - I always say it wrong, so you, you do - It. Mayaki? - Yeah, something like that. I get the, I don't know how to do it with the emphasis on the right syllable. Okay. - I'll put the, I'll put her name in the chat so people can, can Google her. Yeah. She's super interesting. But I think the, the kind of secondary question is, okay, we understand maybe why we are genetically predisposed to making things and the usefulness of making. Why do we make them pretty? Yeah. Like why do we, why is it important to us to make these things look good? - Well, that's the idea of making the ordinary extraordinary. And that's how we show that something is important to us. So if, I mean, it, it can be as simple as you're having guests come over and you put flowers on the table or it's somebody's birthday and you decorate the cake or you wrap the gift a certain way or there's a, a ritual, like a, a wedding where you wear certain clothes or, you know, First Communion or bat mitzvah or whatever it is. And you, you eat certain food, you wear certain clothes, you play certain music. And all of that is a way to show that it's important. - That, - You know, this day isn't like every other day. - Yeah. And and I know Ellen, she, she kind of identifies it as artifying, so making things that you care or one cares about special. Yeah. - And her idea is that, you know, that is a human instinct and that art is not something that's like for the lucky few. That we're all following a particular instinct to do this. Some, we feel it more strongly than others, but that it's not this special thing that's separate from most of us. It's part of all of us. - Yeah. And I love this, this quote from Ellen in, in your book where she says, "The, the psychological losses of not artifying can be likened to a vitamin deficiency. You may not know that you have it, but once you learn that you do and rectify it, you feel so much better." So really meaning that, you know, if you are moving through life not making things and not kind of making the ordinary extraordinary, and then one day you kind of wake up to that, you realize, "Oh my gosh, I feel so much better now that..." - Yeah. And I think that the way our culture is where there's so much emphasis on doing things that are going to make money or doing things that we're already good at. Kids, like there, you know, there's, I don't think you could find a kid who wouldn't know how to like play with Play-Doh or play with Legos, you know, or do finger painting. I mean, it just comes really naturally. But then as we go to school, as we sort of function in society, people say like, "Oh, you're good at this, you're good at that." And then we kind of like end up siloed. And like, these are the people that were good at art. But that's really unfortunate because then we sort of think, oh, that's not for me. And we kind of, there are people who just push it out of their, their, their realm of possibility. But there's just so many times when I've been with people who are not, don't define themselves as makers, but they're in a situation, you know, maybe it's a social situation where everybody's weaving potholders or everyone's painting or whatever. And there's just, you see that feeling of like, oh my God, I made this. Yeah. Which is so special and so gratifying. And I always just try to encourage people and share skills and make it clear that it's, this isn't for the chosen few, that everybody has talent and, and that being good at something is relative and, and really not the most important thing. - Yep. It I, I think we've all been in the room with friends or you know, various acquaintances when somebody has just said, "Oh, I'm not creative. I, I, I couldn't also - Oh, that - Makes me cringe when people say that. - I know. I'm, I'm like, what happened to you somewhere along the way where somebody just kind of said," This is not for you. "Um, and, and took it away. And I, I do think, you know, there, that does happen to a lot of

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us at, when we're kids and we kind of carry that with us. You know, I've, I had a choreographer, by the way, tell me, like, I could not dance when I was 10 years old. And I went on for many years believing I could not dance. I have gotten over that. I can dance. But it is funny how, like, those things stick with you when you're young what people, what people tell you you can and can't do. And I think that, I think that in particular at least in my world a lot of women tend to deprioritize creativity at, at lots of life ages, you know, whether that's, you know, a woman who is starting out her career and is devoting a lot of energy to that, or starting a family, or maybe caretaking for somebody in their family, maybe an older adult. A lot of, as the priorities get kind of sorted out, a lot of times creativity is one of the first things to go. Yeah. When in reality, creativity is possibly the thing that is going to get you through. - Yeah. I mean, I always say it's up there with, like, eating well and exercising, you know, that it's just some kind of creative expression, whatever works for you. Is really crucial to our, our wellbeing. - Yeah. And scratching, I mean, to me, it's really validating to know that my desire to be in that space and to have the thing in my hands and when I feel itchy because I haven't, it's it's my biology. I mean, this is like something really deep inside of me that that I am not speaking to, that I am, like, repressing if I am not doing that thing. Yeah. I, I was telling Melanie before we came on that I had, I had just cut up all my fabric today to do the cordage for this event, and then my kid came in when I was in a meeting right before this, and he saw the pile laying there and just said, he said, "Can I play with this?" And I didn't want him to because I had just cut it up for this event. But I also so appreciated that he just saw the raw materials there and just couldn't resist it. And he got out scissors and tape, and he just started to weave it all together in some crazy way. And I thought, "Well, there you go. That's human evolution right there. That's his kid brain coming in and just he can't resist picking it up and turning it into something." And - Is there, is there anybody who. I mean, tell us in the chat if you need me to, like, explain how to do the cordage again. I'm, I actually, to calm my nerves, I'm gonna continue to make my cordage. Has anybody indicated that they needed help? - I think there were a couple people who missed it, but if you want to hold it up and do one more, just one more quick twisty lesson, that could be helpful. Okay. - I'll start with a new piece. So, so you're just going to start with two pieces of fabric that are not the same length because you don't want to run out at the same time, and you're going to tie them together. Like that, just make a knot. Then you have two strands. Grab the one on the right and twist it counterclockwise, and then bring it behind the one on the left so that the one on the left is now on the right and repeat over and over and over. And sometimes with this fabric, you know, it, it doesn't want to twist and you can just you can use your spit to wet it on your finger, or you can have a little cup of water next to you and just wet your fingers. If you weren't watching, I would probably use the spit technique. But I use my cordage a lot to wrap gifts. I've also used it to like hold plants in the garden. And I also just, it's a fun thing, you know, if you're on the phone. I mean, I always like to have like a project that I can work on while I'm talking on the phone or a Zoom call or whatever. And you know, sometimes I do that and I make a mistake right away because it required too much of attention. But then the cordage, I'll never really make a mistake. It's so low, low skill or low, what's the word? Like there's not a lot that can go wrong. And I'm gonna just cut this in because I wanna show you the people who didn't see it before or anyone who didn't get it. So if you run out of one of them, like you see how my, this one is running low? So I, I moved it over to the right. I'm not quite sure why I did that. I just felt like I wanted to. Okay. Now I know. I took a new piece and I'm overlapping it over the old piece, but I'm leaving a little tail up here. So you see this is overlapped here, and then I'm just gonna twist the new one with the overlapped one. So it's gonna be a little bit thicker where I have an extra strand. And, and I just keep going. And when you wanna

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finish or you wanna just pause, you simply make a knot at the end the way you made a knot at the beginning. And you can pick it up later or you can use it for whatever you wanna use it for. But - - I'm cruising through mine. I've, I've got a good foot and a half going now. I like this. I've just been able to listen to you and and make things, so. - Yeah. - I've got some rope to show for myself at the end. Yeah. I wanted to people are writing the most amazing things in the chat about just kind of their experience with with making within their, within their families, within their lifetimes. And so thank you all for sharing so much. And, and we haven't, you know, I'm, I'm just curious what your take is on it. But you know, some questions about kind of, I guess, the irony of using AI in a presentation that's about you know, so much about the handmade. And what a funny time we're living in, right? Like, and - Well, and - I think that, you know, it's really, it's just reality. Like certain things, like, are really helpful. AI can do certain things, a lot of things really well, but that doesn't mean that we should, like, stop using our hands or, or, you know, we can you know, we could go out for dinner or we could get things at restaurants every night, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't cook, you know, in the same way that we can drive places, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't walk. So I just think it's really important to remember that this is really important and important for our health and emotional health for sure. And that that we should send out that message to others because not to proselytize, but to really invite people to join us and to really make it clear why we do what we do. And you know, like, yeah, sure, like, you want a blanket or you want a quilt or you want a basket. But if you just wanted that, you know, we could just click a few buttons and it could be delivered to our door in some cities this afternoon. - Yeah. - But that's not all we want. We don't just want the thing. In fact, the thing when it arrives at the door, like, that's gives us like a really short burst of, you know, the, the hormones that make us feel like happy. But it's very short-lived because, you know, you open the box and you get it, and then usually it's like, oh, okay. And then what are you gonna do next? When you, when you use your skills and your, your ability to figure things out and your creativity to make something over the course of time, a short time or a long time, the satisfaction you get that, from that is a different kind of satisfaction. It's really like a groundedness and a feeling of comfort in, at least for me, comfort in my own skin, you know? Like I like to wear clothing I've made. We, my family, we eat off dishes that I made. You know, this time of year, we eat things from the garden that we grew. And those aren't things we talk about every day, but when we, when we like sit down for a meal, like it just makes me feel good to know that I made the dishes. And, and I think it feels good to my family to know that I made them. And you know, in truth, I could have bought dishes for a lot less money than I paid to like learn how to make them. But that wasn't the point. I had the absolute pleasure and struggle of learning how to do it. Through classes. And now I have these objects that are so useful every day in the same way that I, like I made my top by hand and I don't. It just feels really good. I always, I think it's a little bit like wearing lingerie. Like you know you have it on, but, and you might hold yourself differently and feel a certain way, but you don't announce it to the world. So like when your, your child is wearing mittens that you made or your, you know, your partner's under a, a blanket you crocheted or any of those things, there's just those moments of, of goodness that you feel like things feel right with the world. - Absolutely. Yeah. There, I have certain items of clothing. You know, a, a few years ago, I kind of set out to make my own wardrobe of sweaters. And I though this would take forever, but really in a matter of years I had, you know, like all of my dream sweaters. And I know I'll be wearing them forever. And, and I've made them classic and I've made them exactly as I wanted them to. And now I almost have too many sweaters. - I know. Well, what are you, now what are you knitting though? - Another sweater. Actually, I just, I just made some socks I gave to Courtney and and now I've

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moved on to a sweater. - Yeah. - Yeah. - Well, speaking of making, we were gonna show. I made a creative bug project. So part of my Knit Stars class is a capsule collection of triangle projects. And so I was really interested in triangles. And then I saw that Creative Bug had this bag project where the mesh was triangles. And I'm a beginner crocheter and I took this one on and it was a, it's free this week because everything's free on Creative Bug this week. - It sure is. - It's with Twinkie Chan, right? That's how you pronounce it?. And - - We're gonna put the link here in the, in the chat in case anybody wants to check out this crocheted market bag class. - Yeah. And I have to say, ever since I learned the container bag theory of evolution, I feel really like drawn to making containers. I actually started to learn to make ba - make baskets because I wanted to be able to carry my harvest from the garden into the house in something that I made. So I learned to make baskets and with that. And then this was advertised, it's kind of funny, as a market bag. And I think that was in the title. And then the other day you said something to me, Leanna, like, "Oh, you could like take it to the beach." And I was like, "No, it's for the farmer's market." - The market. - But you know what? It would be great for the beach. I just had it in my head. Like I imagined myself going to the farmer's market with my bag. - As advertised only for produce. Right. - Right. But, but again, like going to the farmer's market with my bag that I made, I don't need to tell anybody I made it, but I, it's like, I feel like I, I made my bag. I know. - I know. It's so cool. It's absolutely beautiful. And and I think probably a lot of people are going to want, want to make that. And one of the thing, cool things too on Creative Bugs, I know you had a question about the corners at the bottom and, you know, weren't sure about it. And you know, I, I do think one of the benefits of being a, on Creative Bugs that you can write a comment and say, "Help. I'm having a hard time." And one of our staffers will get in there and help you out of a jam. So it's, it's pretty full service that way and kind of a unique - Yeah, - Absolutely. I definitely took advantage of that feature. - Yeah. Yeah. So you, you all should too. And then, you know, be sure everybody to also look and see check out, check out Nitstar's season 11, because I think that that is going to be something truly special. If you want to talk a little bit more about what, what it is that you're going to be teaching. - Sure. Yeah. So my class is called The Maker's Way: A Roadmap to Joy. And it's really about the creative process and the steps that you can take to really look within yourself for inspiration. Personally, I find there's so much out there in terms of ideas. You know, I could just. Sometimes I think like, I should just take every Creative Bug class and you know, just do them one after another. But clearly we're getting influence from Creative Bug and from Instagram and from all sorts of other places and sources. And it can get really overwhelming. Like, I want this, I want that. It's like a kid in a candy store and like you, you kind of leave like a little sick to your stomach because you're just overwhelmed or maybe eating too much sugar. But and I, so I was like, I really want to look inside of me and see what I want to make. So it's really about the process of figuring out what you want to focus on and then working through that, following your own impulses. And the idea being that you don't necessarily always follow a pattern, although that's, there's nothing wrong with that. But the idea being that like a pattern is a little bit like GPS and you kind of get there, but if you had to do it again, you would sort of be like, "I, I don't know. I need the instructions. Like I - Need that - Voice to tell me to turn right or to left in 500 feet." But if you do it the old-fashioned way and you get some guidance and you do a little, you look at the map and you kind of understand, "Well, I'm heading north and I have to go for this amount of time and all of that stuff," that the next time you need to do something like that, that you will actually remember what you did and why you did it. And so this, again, you know, I said like I'm always been interested in what we make, but also why we make. And in terms of technique, you know, the idea of like, okay, I know how to do this increase or this decrease because the pattern

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says, and I know how to do it, but why? And like, you know, there's a lot because my class, my project had to do with triangles, there was a, and a lot of them started at the point and got wider. There were like a lot of increases and a lot of ways to increase. And it really like humbled me to try to figure it out and really understand it as opposed to just doing it. So the classes, you know, you can follow along in what I did, but then also like a lot of prompts about identifying what you're passionate about and, and then, and really digging deep into that. And I think as a testament to it, I spent like a couple months knitting triangles. Like they're mostly, like they're like scarves or small shawls and things. And after we filmed the class, I just kept on knitting triangles and then I decided to make my triangle market bag. Because like once you're focused on something, you start seeing it everywhere. Like our noses - Are - Triangles and, you know, the rooftops are triangles and, you know, there's triangles in quilts and you just start seeing it everywhere. And so whatever you pick. So, and the idea being like when you do that, it's kind of like homeschooling yourself in your own kind of art school education and like iterating on an idea and following it deeper and deeper. But that process of like doing it from the inside out, I feel like is the maker's way, you know, and it is a roadmap to joy because you find your true self in there and then you create something. - Yeah. And that kind of discovery and innovation and like combining what other people have taught you plus your own intuition, I think is sort of where the magic starts to happen. Yeah. - And like there's nothing wrong with following a pattern. Like I'm still going to follow patterns for lots of things, but I think it's nice to like have something else where you're more experimental, that you're, and you really end up against, you know, you're, you know, up a, like against some stressful things like when you messed it up and like, you know, or not knowing. Like we tend to like want the pattern because we think the pattern's going to be right and then our result is going to be good. And we want that assurance because we're going to invest this time. But if you, the time and the process is the gift, that is the experience. And so just learning to be like, yeah, like this, I may make a mistake and I might need to start over or, but I'm going to learn through that process. And like what's the rush? You know, my mother always likes to keep her hands busy and then sometimes like she'll be working on it. She'll be like, "Oh my God, like this is, it's taking so long." And, and I, I've said to her like, "Well, why, like, I don't understand why you're complaining because as soon as you finish, you're just going to ask me to recommend another project." So- - So this one might as well take a good long time, right? - Yeah. Yeah. Like just getting away from that idea. I mean, of course, you know, like there are times when you're like, like I was ready to finish my back. I was - Definitely - Right. Maybe you're just like doing the same thing. Yeah. - Right. But then just willing, like when I messed up, being willing to just take it out and do it again and, and just feel okay about that. And, and it's hard, but I think it's, it's a muscle. And it's like, it's letting go of the resistance. And the resistance could be like, "I'm scared I'm going to mess up." My resistance can be like, "I don't know how to do that. I, for me, it's been sometimes like people think I'm so much better at knitting than I really am, and it's like embarrassing. And, but let, once you let go of that resistance, and I listened to this podcast with Ezra Klein and Pema Chodren. And what's that called? The one, the New York Times podcast with - Ezra? I know. I can't remember what it's called. I'll Google it. Anyway, - If you, Ezra Klein and Pema Children, but she talks a lot about this idea of resistance. And when you can just, like, there's lots of things like, oh, I'm rushing. Like, oh, I have to get dinner on the table. But like that feeling of rushing doesn't make dinner come on the table any sooner. It just makes the process of making dinner less pleasant. Yeah. And so again, like in our hand work we have, there's, there is still, you know, if we can let go of that during the struggles. - I know. And taking it back to our original presentation here, you know, you got to remember, somebody, somebody had to make that

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first sock. And you know, there was probably a lot of trial and error. Yeah. That first sock was probably just a tube, you know, that was seen at the end. Yeah. And they figured out the shaping and they figured out how to pick up the stitches and the heel needed to be reinforced. And, you know, that was a, a lot of socks, a lot of prototypes. And somebody, you know, probably lots of people participated in that process. And, you know, but that's half the joy. All right. Well, thank you so much, Melanie, for sharing all of this wisdom with us today. This has been so thought-provoking and interesting. And thank you everybody for joining us today. And so many of you for sticking with us to the end. The recording's going to go out to all of you in the next few days. And thanks again. Okay. All right. Bye everyone.

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