

Summary Report to Faculty Development Committee

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Faculty Development Grant Project

Project Title

Quilting the Fragments of Freedom: Ritual, Resistance, and the Sacred Act of Making

Project Overview

This Faculty Development Grant supported the development of an interdisciplinary research and creative project centered on quilting, later articulated more precisely as piecework or patchwork, as a ritual practice of Black resistance, healing, and liberation. The project examined textile-making as a living archive through which histories of Black survival, memory, and spiritual resilience are preserved, activated, and reimagined.

Rooted in the lineage of Black creative resistance, the work approached making as both meditation and defiance, an insistence on wholeness in the face of historical and ongoing fragmentation. Through large-scale textile works, video performance, and sound-based installations, the project investigated how materials, labor, memory, and ritual operate together as embodied research methodologies. Central to the project was an ethic of care that honors ancestral knowledge, collective memory, and the transformative possibilities of creative labor.

Rationale and Significance of the Project

This project emerged directly from my ongoing work as a Black artist, educator, and scholar committed to examining memory, generational trauma, and healing through interdisciplinary studio practice. I proposed this project in response to a desire to deepen my engagement with textile traditions and performance-based rituals as critical tools for historical reflection and communal care.

As the project developed, the language intentionally shifted from *quilting* to *piecework* or *patchwork*, a conceptual move that more accurately reflects the realities of fragmentation, repair, and reassembly that define both Black history and contemporary Black life. Piecework provided a powerful framework for understanding how Black histories have often survived not through complete narratives, but through fragments preserved in domestic traditions, oral histories, sound, and embodied memory.

The project also aligns closely with Lincoln University's Mellon III: Black Freedom Studies initiative by positioning creative practice as a form of scholarly inquiry. It contributes to institutional goals by demonstrating how art can function as research, pedagogy, and community engagement simultaneously.

Project Activities and Outcomes

Creative Outcomes

- Development of five large-scale piecework textile tapestries exploring Black memory, survival, and liberation
- Creation of two video performance works integrating gesture, ritual, and historical reference
- Integration of sound-based installations and sonic rituals, including sound baths designed to support reflection, rest, and renewal

Research Activities

- Engagement with archival materials and historical imagery
- Incorporation of oral histories and narrative research
- Experimentation with fiber techniques, mixed media processes, and digital technologies

Professional and Community Engagement

- Participation in residency critiques and artist talks
- Facilitation of research discussions and shared reflections on Black textile traditions, performance, and sound as maps of freedom
- Development of professional networks with artists, curators, and cultural workers

What I Learned

Through this project, I learned that making can function simultaneously as methodology and medicine. The physical act of piecework revealed that fragmentation is not a failure of history, but a condition that Black communities have long navigated with ingenuity and care. The seams themselves became sites of knowledge, holding evidence of rupture, intention, tenderness, and return.

The project also affirmed the importance of slowness and ritual as forms of resistance. The repetitive labor of stitching, combined with sound and breath, challenged dominant academic and artistic cultures rooted in urgency and productivity. This process reinforced the value of rest, attentiveness, and embodied presence as legitimate and necessary research practices.

Additionally, engaging archival research alongside sound and material deepened my understanding of memory as something that exists not only in documents, but within the body. The project strengthened my belief that art can serve as a bridge between scholarship, spirituality, and communal healing.

Perhaps most importantly, I learned that the work does not conclude with the production of objects. Liberation, like patchwork, is ongoing, relational, and collective, unfolding through dialogue, teaching, and shared witnessing.

Impact on Teaching and Pedagogy

This project has profoundly shaped my teaching philosophy and classroom practice. It reframed teaching not as the transmission of technical skills alone, but as an act of care, witnessing, and intentional space-holding.

The methodologies developed during the project, piecework, slow making, sound meditation, and reflective writing, have been incorporated into my courses at Lincoln University, particularly *Intermediate Drawing* and *Introduction to Painting*. These approaches encourage students to view making as a way of thinking, processing, and engaging complexity.

Through this work, I learned that students respond most deeply when process is valued alongside outcome. Allowing space for experimentation, uncertainty, and reflection fosters deeper critical engagement and reduces fear of failure. I also learned that my strength as an educator lies in modeling vulnerability and presence, inviting students into research as an evolving, human process rather than a fixed result.

Takeaways for Other Instructors

A key takeaway for other instructors is that material practice can serve as a powerful pedagogical bridge between history, theory, and lived experience. Whether through textiles, drawing, sound, or writing, making allows students to think through complexity rather than simplify it.

Rigor and care are not oppositional. When classrooms intentionally incorporate reflection, embodiment, and attentiveness, students engage more fully, intellectually, creatively, and emotionally. These approaches support inclusive learning environments where students are encouraged to bring their whole selves into the process of inquiry.

Future Directions

Moving forward, this project will continue to expand as both an artistic and scholarly research trajectory. The completed and in-progress works will be developed into a cohesive exhibition framework suitable for galleries, museums, and university spaces. The modular nature of the installation allows the project to adapt to diverse architectural and community contexts.

Pedagogically, the research will remain integrated into coursework and student workshops at Lincoln University. The project will also support future lectures, publications, and collaborative community-based initiatives that position creative practice as central to Black Freedom Studies.

Rather than concluding with the residency period, *Quilting the Fragments of Freedom* continues as an evolving practice, one that understands liberation not as a fixed destination, but as something continually stitched, revised, and carried forward.

Conclusion

The Faculty Development Grant provided essential support for sustained research, experimentation, and reflection. This project strengthened the integration of my creative practice, scholarship, and teaching, while contributing meaningfully to Lincoln University's mission of equity-centered research and community engagement.

I am deeply grateful for the committee's support and look forward to the continued growth, dissemination, and institutional impact of this work.