

Jen Smith: *Take Care*

September 18—October 24, 2020



Jen Smith

In This Together, 2020

Cotton muslin totes, remnants of *Mother Cloth* (2016); inside each tote: hand-sewn fabric mask from *Mother Cloth*, cutlery set repurposed from Full Moon Pickles, Inc., cotton bandana, stress support tincture (oatstraw, skullcap, ashwaganda, and lavender in gluten-free alcohol), seed bomb (soil, clay, native California wildflowers), herbs from Amanda Eicher's garden, self-addressed and stamped envelope for Liberated Arts Collective

Overall: 84.5 x 157.5 in (215 x 400 cm); each tote: 16.5 x 14.5 in (42 x 37 cm)

JS4

Jen Smith with Liberated Arts Collective: *Take Care*

In our age of global pandemic, social unrest, and police brutality, what is care and who is it for? How might the exchange of something handmade interrupt the isolating mediations of our ubiquitous screens and reconnect us with our experiences and feelings, as well as to each other?

At the end of May, Smith found herself making care packages for her family. Along with masks she made and mailed to them, she sent donations to different mutual aid organizations in their honor. *Take Care* extends this premise to a broader public: an exchange of caring through civically engaged correspondence.

Around the same time, Liberated Arts Collective (LAC), a group of artists impacted by incarceration and institutionalization, was working on their zine *HOW TO SURVIVE A QUARANTINE: Getting Un-Stuck When You're Stuck Inside*. Part toolkit, part love note to young people struggling to rise out of the system, *HOW TO SURVIVE* bridges the widely familiar isolation of stay-at-home orders and social distancing with the stresses experienced by incarcerated people in lockdown. To this end, *Take Care* creates a means to distribute physical copies of the zine as well as a handmade personal note to folks currently on the "inside." As one member of the Collective said of a colorful postcard she received while incarcerated, "That person gave me back 'purple.'" Even the most ordinary connection can puncture the isolation and provide comfort.

A limited edition of 100 muslin totes containing care packages spell out "in this together" in English, Spanish, and Korean—a nod to Commonwealth and Council's surrounding neighborhoods. Each includes a fabric face mask (made from remnants of Smith's *Mother Cloth*, centerpiece of her previous exhibition with the gallery), cutlery kit, tincture and tea for reducing stress, and California native flower seeds. In an exchange of care for care, anyone wishing to receive a package is asked to write a postcard to someone on the inside, and buy them a copy of *HOW TO SURVIVE A QUARANTINE* through the Collective. All proceeds are split between LAC and the incarcerated individuals whose work appears in the zine. Additionally, the artist requests documentation of this process (screen grab of donation; pics of front and back of card)—which LAC will make into a second zine, further expanding their support for incarcerated artists and writers.

[Link to purchase *HOW TO SURVIVE A QUARANTINE*](#)
[Liberated Arts Collective](#)

Jen Smith is a feminist, artist, musician, and small business owner. Credited with coining the term "Riot Grrrl," Smith has played music halls, street protests, and squats. She has made posters, zines, albums, cabarets, clothes, and food in collaboration with and for her community for 25 years. Her formal artwork continues to draw from these influences. She received her BA in American Studies from University of Maryland, College Park, and MFA from University of California, Irvine. Her catering business, Full Moon Pickles, is located in East Los Angeles.

Liberated Arts Collective (LAC) began in 2016, through the shared vision of multi-disciplinary artist Veronique d'Entremont and formerly-incarcerated artists Manuel Barrios, Dennis Durbin, Paul Macias, Walter Wilson. Through LAC's emerging collaborations, d'Entremont continues to co-create healing spaces with and for individuals whose lives have been impacted by incarceration and institutionalization, with participating artists and writers such as Ra Avis, Akina Cox, Sir James Bailey, Veronica De Jesus, Mitsuko Brooks, gloria galvez, Cole M. James, Olga Koumoundouros, Kate Kershenstein, Maria Maea, Kavior Moon, Jasmine Nyende and Paul Woods, and has organized an LAC group exhibition at Ochi Projects, Human Resources Los Angeles, and Beyond the Bars UCLA.