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The Pussyhat Project: Texturing the Struggle for Feminist Solidarity

By Katja May¹

Abstract

This article moves beyond binary conceptions of the Pussyhat Project as “good or bad activism”, or indeed as good or bad feminism (Zouggari, 2018, p. 1). Instead, I use the concept of texture as a lens through which to trace the different threads that have shaped and continue to shape the Pussyhat Project and its reception, while simultaneously paying attention to the entangled nature of these threads. Attending to the different textures of the process of making as well as the finished object serves to question or, at least, complicate dominant narratives and concepts of feminist solidarity, protest and craft. As such, my analysis gives texture *to* the Pussyhat Project and the Women's March, while, at the same time, making visible the unevenness in the feminist struggle for liberation and affective solidarity. In addition, it gestures towards how this texture can become a means to position people closer towards a grounding of feminist practice in affective solidarity based on dissonance rather than an overcoming of difference that silences the experiences of queer and transwomen, women of colour and women from the Global South.

Keywords: textile crafts, feminist solidarity, activism, Women's March, texture, Pussyhat Project

Introduction

An average size pink knitted hat with a wide cuff area followed by stockinette stitch with two pointed ‘ears’ on each side of its upper end graces a white milliner's bust in a large glass case in the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in London. The catalogue identifies it as a “Pussyhat worn at the Women's March in Washington on 21 January 2017”. It entered the collection of the V&A only a couple of weeks after said Women's March as part of the museum's Rapid Response Collecting activities which aim to “engage in a timely way with important events that shape, or are shaped by design, architecture and technology”. The hat is further described in the catalogue as “a global symbol of female solidarity and the power of collective action” (Victoria and Albert Museum, n.d.). Yet, when on 21 January 2017 hundreds of thousands of protesters, the majority of which were women, wore their fluffy pink hats at the Women's March in Washington or at one of its satellite marches across the world, the hat and the initiative linked to it, the Pussyhat Project, had already been subject to a series of criticisms on social media, in the press, and in scholarly circles. Indeed, the coverage and discussion then and thereafter have been marked by a polarisation that has come to characterize the Women's March as a whole.

In this paper, I attempt to move beyond binary conceptualizations of the Pussyhat Project as “good or bad activism,” or indeed as good or bad feminism (Zouggari, 2018, p. 1). Instead, I

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use the concept of texture as a lens through which to trace the different threads that have shaped and continue to shape the Pussyhat Project and its reception, while simultaneously paying attention to the entangled nature of these threads. According to art critic and historian Julia Bryan-Wilson, “to textile politics is to give *texture to politics*, to refuse easy binaries, to acknowledge complications: textured as in uneven, but also [...] as in tangibly worked and retaining some of the grain of that labor, whether smooth or snagged” (2017, p. 7; original emphasis). As such, Bryan-Wilson is also committed to dismantling common hierarchical conceptualisation of textile practices that often define them as craft and, thus, as inferior to so-called high art. Avoiding restrictive binaries of good/bad or high/low, she advocates for a context specific analysis of textile handicrafts in order to not only “give texture to politics”, but also to the material practices that accompany different forms of feminist politics and activism.

Inspired by this critical trajectory, my analysis gives texture to the Pussyhat Project and the Women’s Marches as well as the politics of the feminist struggle for liberation more broadly. I trace the connection between the process of making a Pussyhat and the routes along which the finished hat travels as it is worn to a protest march and in its role as the visual icon for what, to this date, has been the largest protest march in US history. As a result, I suggest, to view Pussyhats, and by extension the Pussyhat Project, as a texture that makes visible the unevenness of the feminist struggle and those who labour on its behalf. The hats and the project form a texture against whose surface communal and individual bodies are shaped in public as well as in intimate everyday spaces while, at the same time, permeating the boundaries of these supposedly distinct spheres. The act of making a hat as well as the object itself become active mediums through which to create meaning on the level of the individual as well as the community guided by hopes of social transformation and women’s liberation.

Following Imani Perry, I understand feminism as more than a theory or a means of analysing social structures. Instead, it is a “critical practice” that serves to unpack the multiple layers of domination related to patriarchy in a way that also gestures toward an undoing of these structures (2018, p. 6). Similarly, I regard needlework crafts and their intimate history with women’s work and femininity as such types of critical practices that provide people with the opportunity to consider how unequal flows of power within society are “constituted [and sustained] by infrastructures, institutions, communities and practices” (Ratto & Boler 2014, p. 1). More so, these practices also include the possibility to change and reshape the oppressive systems and structures they expose. Through investigating the Pussyhat Project as an instance of such critical feminist making, I am able to attend to how the different textures of the process of making as well as the finished objects serve to question or, at least, complicate dominant narratives and social concepts of feminist solidarity, protest and craft. In addition, I manage to trace how they can function as a tool to position people closer towards a grounding of feminist practice in affective solidarity.

This framework allows for the meaningful critiques of the project to be used generatively to orient people towards “another politics”, as defined by scholar and activist Chris Dixon. This politics aims to avoid polarizing discourses while attempting to figure out “how to work in the space between our transformative aspirations and actually existing social realities” (2014, p. 8). The Pussyhat Project is unique in this context in that it allows for the examination of a variety of threads that come together to form a material and immaterial affective texture that creates a multi-fibrous meshwork of meanings. As such, this research also contributes to wider genealogies of feminist politics, epistemologies of activism and social movements as well as the history of textile crafts.

The Pussyhat Project: Knitting Anger, Discontent and Solidarity

The election of Donald Trump as 45th President of the United States of America came as a great shock and disappointment to a large part of the Democratic support base in the US and to liberals across the world (Singh, 2016, n.p.). Particularly feminists feared the devastating effects his administration might have on women's and human rights, specifically reproductive rights, LGBTQ+ rights as well as immigration legislation. These feelings of fear, frustration and the need to somehow respond to the election results inspired Teresa Shook in Hawaii and Bob Bland in New York to suggest on Facebook a women's protest to be held the day after Trump's inauguration. Both suggestions immediately gained a broad support base online which prompted the two women to team up and to lay the foundations for what is now known as the Women's March on Washington with hundreds of satellite walks in other US cities and across the world (Tolentino, 2017; Nicolini & Hansen, 2018). It is estimated that around four million people worldwide marched on the day (Waddell, 2017; Lopez Bunyasi & Watts Smith, 2018). At the same time, many more who were unable to physically be present at a march, for example for financial, health or scheduling reasons, remained in solidarity with the marchers.

It was out of the impossibility to personally be at a march due to a debilitating injury, that around Thanksgiving of 2016, Jayna Zweiman, together with her friend Krista Suh, launched the Pussyhat Project to "provide people who cannot physically march on the National Mall a way to represent themselves and support women's rights" (Pussyhat Project, 2016). They conceived the now iconic pink hat with the two cat-like ears as a means to demonstrate solidarity with the marchers by making such a hat and gifting it to a marcher. That way, those unable to attend could still demonstrate a material presence at a march in the form of a hat. In addition, Suh and Zweiman were inspired by the wish to empower marchers through "a unique collective visual statement [...] which will help activists be better heard" (Pussyhat Project, 2016). Their vision was a "sea of pink hats" at the National Mall and at the sister marches, well aware of the power of images and the speed at which they spread thanks to new digital technologies (Suh, 2018, p. 71; Pussyhat Project, 2017). The fact that both were novice knitters but had managed to produce this basic hat in a short amount of time under the guidance of an experienced knit store owner, convinced them that others would certainly be able to do so as well (Suh, 2018, p. 72). As a result, they partnered with said local LA knitting store owner and an artist to create accessible knitting, crochet and sewing instructions for the hat and began harnessing the internet and social media to publicize their initiative (Suh, 2018, p. 124).

The project openly embraces the spirit of contemporary craftivism, that is craft plus activism, which regards the time and effort invested into making something as a sign of one's dedication to a particular cause (Greer, 2014; Corbett, 2017). Suh explains:

if it was too easy, people wouldn't feel that they were really doing something meaningful [...] Challenge will add meaning and purpose, which will inevitably draw people in, and those will ask others to be involved, and so on and so forth. And in this way, movements are born. (2018, p. 125)

Indeed, the initiative soon became so popular that knit stores had trouble re-stocking the bright pink color that the pattern called for (Fielding, 2017: n.p.). The day of the women's march, Suh and Zweiman posted on the project's website that their goal had been achieved - "we created a sea of pink!" - together with an aerial shot that showed thousands of marchers wearing pink hats (Pussyhat Project, 2017, n.p.).

The hat design itself addresses the concerns of the marchers and the reasons for the organization of the protest in various ways. The project's website states: "the name Pussyhat was chosen in part as a protest against vulgar comments Donald Trump made about the freedom he felt to grab women's genitals, to de-stigmatize the word "pussy" and transform it into one of empowerment, and to highlight the design of the hat's 'pussycat ears'" (Zweimann, 2018, n.p.). The hat is a reference to the infamous Access Hollywood recording in which Donald Trump said that as a celebrity he was at liberty to grope women without their consent (Blumell, 2019). By calling the hat a Pussyhat as a humorous gesture towards its design and the term pussycat, the project also aimed to reclaim the term 'pussy' from its derogatory usage not only in relation to female genitalia but also with regards to "the feminine", a term that is still regularly associated with weakness, inadequacy and irrationality (Compton 2017, n.p.; Zweimann, 2018, n.p.). Similarly, according to Suh, the colour pink was chosen precisely because of its connotations with femininity and how, by extension, pink becomes "a code for women" and, as such, "is considered a little bit frivolous, girly, weak, soft, [and] effeminate" (as quoted in Compton, 2017, n.p.). Wearing this hat as part of a women's protest, for Suh and Zweiman resembles an act of reclamation in which "the symbolism is all about 'pussy power'" (Compton, 2017, n.p.).

The Project soon gained in popularity and Pussyhat collection points were arranged all over the country as well as meeting points ahead of the start of the march to outfit protesters. Yet, right from the beginning, the initiative also received criticism from all sides of the political spectrum with regards to the design and name of the hat as well as the project's overall vision. The name and its association with female genitalia came under attack on social media, and in the mainstream press for being transphobic by reducing women's identity to female genitalia (Derr, 2017; Compton, 2017; Gentile, 2018; Shamus, 2018; Richardson, 2018; Boothroyd et al., 2017). The name of the hat was seen as a recourse to biological essentialism which premised women's identity on their reproductive organs thus excluding transwomen without a vagina from defining as women (Derr, 2017; Brewer & Dundes, 2018). Conservatives, on the other hand, have shown outrage at the perceived vulgarity of the hat. A yarn shop owner in Tennessee, for example, refused to sell pink yarn to customers wanting to create a Pussyhat. Elizabeth Poe, the shop owner, justified her position in a Facebook post saying that,

the vulgarity, vile and evilness of this movement is absolutely despicable. [...] As [...] a Christian, I have a duty to my customers and my community to promote values of mutual respect, love, compassion, understanding, and integrity. The women's movement is counterproductive to unity of family, friends, community, and nation. (as quoted in Andrews, 2017, n.p.; Levenson, 2017, n.p.).

Later Poe reportedly told a newspaper that she was not against the women's movements in general, but against its methods of protest: "I'm not trying to throw stones at this movement. I'm just telling you we've lost our sense of social decency in this nation" (as quoted in Andrews, 2017, n.p.). As journalist Travis M. Andrews claims, Poe's language and justifications are "reminiscent of that from other store owners who adopted similar policies" albeit on different issues such as bakeries and wedding outfitters refusing to cater to same-sex ceremonies (2017, n.p.).

In addition, the popular outrage about the supposed vulgarity alongside critiques of biological essentialism taps into a long history of cultural discourse in which the vulva resembled the abject, i.e. that which is to be feared and consequently to be policed, namely women's sexuality (Gentile, 2018). At the same time, however, the vulva is crafted as a symbol of empowerment in

discourses of “feminist reappropriation of the materiality of women’s bodies” (Zouggari 2018, p. 1). Such discourses, on the other hand, have been critiqued for their similarity to those by advocates for biological essentialism (Clarke, 2016; Jenkins, 2013; Gentile, 2018). However, I suggest that the Pussyhat also cleverly juxtaposes these positions against each other by placing that which supposedly makes women irrational and by extension inferior to men - the vagina - on the head, the body part commonly associated with reason and consequently superiority.² Thus, humour, or what Majken Jul Sørensen calls humorous political stunts, that is “a performance/action carried out in public which attempts to undermine a dominant discourse” should not be ignored in analyses of the Pussyhat Project (2016, p. 202). In order to question dominant discourses through humour, activists make use of “an incongruity that causes at least part of the audience to be amused” while others interpret it as offensive (Sørensen, 2016, p. 203).

The pink colour of the hat has also come under attack for being white-centric and racist as it has been interpreted as suggestive of female genitalia as naturally pink which excludes women of colour. This critique in particular resonates with more general critiques of the Women’s March and its agenda as primarily white and mainstream feminist lacking inclusivity and intersectionality (Lopez Bunyasi & Watts Smith, 2018; Moss & Maddrell, 2017; Brewer & Dundes, 2018; Boothroyd et al., 2017). These apprehensions voiced by organizers from Black Lives Matter among others, reflect “concerns that white feminists lack motivation to prioritize issues that disproportionately affect Black communities” (Brewer & Dundes, 2018, p. 50; Richardson, 2017). Indeed, Sierra Brewer and Lauren Dundes’ research shows that a number of women of colour believe that for many white women the march simply provided an outlet through which to voice their disapproval of the election as opposed to “a way to address social injustice disproportionately affecting lower social classes and people of color” (2018, p. 49; Banet-Weiser, 2018). Further, drawing on Lauren Berlant’s work, one could argue that the election of Trump and the Women’s March as a response to it are an example of how “the genre of crisis can distort something structural and ongoing into something that seems shocking and exceptional” when, in fact, it is part of everyday life for many (2011, p. 7). Misogyny and racism are certainly not new problems for the US nor indeed for any of the places where satellite marches took place, yet, the election of Trump and the public social acceptability of hate speech that arguably accompanied it was perceived as a huge shock and surprise by many white liberals in the West (Brewer & Dundes, 2018).³

For many people of colour, on the other hand, this was no surprise, nor indeed a sign of crisis, but officially confirmed the structural racism and white privilege that they experience to various degrees throughout their life as part of the material and affective texture of a structurally racist society (Fanon (2008 [1952])). The peaceful atmosphere of the women’s marches with no arrests nor any direct clashes with police that have been recorded can indeed be viewed as a further manifestation of white privilege because for many white women the march appeared to be a ‘fun’ experience of protest and direct action (Brewer & Dundes, 2018; Walker Bynum, 2017). Their whiteness, and in many cases heteronormativity, enabled them to “march freely” whereas Black Lives Matter protests which are primarily attended by people of colour invariably “encounter police in riot gear” (Ramanathan 2017, n.p.; Lopez Bunyasi & Watts Smith, 2018). As such, the marches also echo ongoing debates about participatory citizenship, accessibility to the public sphere and, consequently, about who is heard (Ratto & Boler 2014, p. 14; Bryan-Wilson, 2017, p. 270). In addition, critics like *Washington Post* writer Petula Dvorak (2017) argue that the Pussyhat

² I would like to thank Vinita Joseph for pointing out this connection.

³ The same phenomenon can be observed in reactions to the Brexit vote in the UK and the rise of right-wing populism across Europe (Seidler, 2018).

Project and the generally peaceful and fun atmosphere of the marches served to diminish the radical political potential of the protest. As such, its playfulness and connotations of cuteness, craft and homemade comfort supposedly “undercut the message that the march is trying to send” (Dvorak, 2017, n.p.). Though Dvorak is not clear about what this message is, she appears convinced that having anything playful or fun would be detrimental to any protest’s effectiveness; a position that resonates with critiques of the use of humour in relation to political protest and social movements (Sørensen, 2016).

However, I contend that the Pussyhat Project and the Women’s March faced particular scrutiny on all levels primarily because they were women-led and made use of a stereotypically feminine practice, namely knitting. As such, critiques of the protest and the Pussyhat Project as too playful and, consequently, as too feminine replicate a long cultural history in which femininity, women’s work and craft have been dismissed as irrelevant within a society in which patriarchy is the overarching structure (Parker, 1984; Bryan-Wilson, 2017; Perry, 2018). In addition, it echoes positivist approaches to measuring the effectiveness of a protest or social movement in terms of, for example, countable policy changes (Dean, 2016, p. 25; Kauffman, 2017, p. 13). Indeed, media analysis shows that for decades, feminist activism and protest were negatively framed by mainstream media and their actions were delegitimized (Nicolini & Hansen, 2018, p. 2; Banet-Weiser, 2018). Part of this strategy includes the instant dismissal of a feminist movement’s potential effectiveness by claiming that in order for a movement to be successful it needs to be united around a single issue connected to concrete demands (Dvorak, 2017).

From the very beginning, however, the Women’s March was not a single-issue protest, but marked by a multiplicity of reasons and concerns that made protesters take to the streets ranging from reproductive rights, healthcare and police brutality to outrage about Trump’s sexist comments and disappointment about Hilary Clinton’s election loss (Lopez Bunyasi & Watts Smith, 2018; Brewer & Dundes, 2018; Moss & Maddrell, 2017; Banet-Weiser, 2018). This phenomenon, I suggest, is reflective of a history of struggles around unity and feminist solidarity from first wave feminism to the contemporary moment. The feminist movement has always been marked by the co-existence of different feminisms with different and, at times, conflicting agendas, in the same way that its members have been brought to it for a variety of reasons (hooks, 2000). The organizers of the Pussyhat Project appear to have been aware of the different motivations of the marchers and have embraced this phenomenon as a means to start conversation across different issues and to develop intersections between them. Knitters were given the opportunity to print a simple paper template on which they could write a note about what inspired them to support the protest and mention issues that are deeply important to them. This form could then be attached to the finished hat which would be gifted to a protester who by extension would then be able to read about these issues.

In response to the critiques directed at the initiative and many of which were revived when the first anniversary of the Women’s March approached with some organizers going so far as asking attendees to refrain from wearing a Pussyhat, the project published a statement on its website in January 2018. In this post, “inclusivity, compassion, creativity, personal connections, and open dialogue, all to further women’s rights and human rights” are identified as the founding principles of the project (Zweimann, 2018, n.p.). The statement then goes on to address the separate points of concern, reiterating the reasons for the project and the design, but also stressing the importance of these critiques. Subsequently, the critiques are embraced as an invaluable “opening for discussion” and in her role as co-founder of the Pussyhat Project, Zweiman states:

some have interpreted pink hats with cat ears as white women's vulvas. Not all women have pussies. Not all pussies are pink. Our intent was and always will be to support all women. We hear some of you saying that this symbol has made some women feel excluded. We hear you. We see you. (Zweimann, 2018, np)

As the critiques of the Pussyhat Project and the Women March show, such an open discussion is certainly needed, because feminist solidarity between women cannot be taken for granted based on women's shared gender identity. Instead, as Akwugo Emejulu argues, feminist solidarity must be actively developed and practised "through individual and collective action". In addition, it "requires tough conversations about how white women simultaneously benefit from white supremacy whilst experiencing gender and class discrimination" (2018, p. 272). Feminist solidarity is premised on the recognition of the textured nature of feminist solidarity as a critical concept and a critical activity. Such practices demand reflection as well as an active commitment to unpicking the fundamental weave of North American and Western European societies with the intention to assemble it anew while being conscious of personal positionality and privilege.

So rather than dismissing the Pussyhat Project as "bad activism" or as an instance of what Banet-Weiser calls popular feminism concerned with visibility rather than substantive social change (2018), I argue that it can act as a texture, or "a zone of entanglement [to which] there are no insides or outsides, only openings and ways through" (Ingold, 2016, p. 106). This texture functions as a catalyst to having these "tough conversations" on personal and communal levels, face to face with friends, colleagues and strangers; on social media, in the mainstream press and in academia. To avoid a falling back on reductive binary discourses, dissensus and discomfort must be embraced as part of these conversations (Diangelo, 2018). Indeed, due to its entangled nature, texture actually invites an engagement that avoids polarizing positions by attending to the web of relations of its entangled properties (Stewart 2007; Sedgwick 2003).

Texturing the Feminist Struggle for Solidarity

Contemporary knitting activists (and knitters in general) often find themselves in the position to define their activism against a long genealogy, or texture, of feminist protest as well as the wider history of textile crafts and femininity (Clarke, 2016; Newmeyer, 2008; Fields, 2014). Indeed, there appears to be a need to repeatedly texture, that is, to make uneven, the representations of these genealogies and histories (Pentney, 2008; Bryan-Wilson, 2017). As Emanuelle Dirix suggests, it is important to note amidst all the talk about histories of knitting and its so-called contemporary revival, that knitting, "in fact, never went away" (2014, p. 92). According to Joanne Turney, "knitting is something that everyone is familiar with: it is everywhere" (2009, p. 1). As a result, in its ubiquity, it allows for people to have different connotations about the practice, the makers, as well as the finished objects from manufactured knitwear on display in department stores to knitted gifts for newborns and so-called yarnbomb installations in urban spaces. What is in flux with regards to knitting are the representations of knitting and their currency in popular media outlets as well as with regards to the audiences at which these representations are directed. For Turney, the "familiarity" and ordinariness of knitting have all too often resulted in an inattention to the practice and its objects in scholarly as well as popular discourses (2009, p. 1). For example, in case of the 1980s Women's Peace Camp at Greenham Common in the UK, the visibility of women knitting in the camp and the fibre installations on the airbase fence were arguably part of

the reason why officials and the public at first dismissed the protest as unimportant and ineffective (Titcombe, 2013; Harford, 1984).

However, this complex or textured nature of textile practice may also be what lends it efficacy as a potential tool of subversion (Robertson, 2011). To avoid binary and reductive definitions of the practice that regard it either as a traditional manifestation of femininity or as expressions of feminist empowerment that echo postfeminist choice rhetoric, Beth Ann Pentney suggests to regard knitting and needlework practices as “part of a continuum model” (2008, np). This model allows for a more nuanced reading that avoids hierarchical categorizations while acknowledging that in the same manner that neither women nor feminists are part of a homogenous group, neither are knitters (Turney, 2009, p. 3). Bryan-Wilson similarly conceptualises textile practices as a generative means to explore everyday life beyond binary categorizations of inside or outside, or, for example, of home versus public. Textile practices are imbued with cultural significance because they are part of human experience from the moment a baby is wrapped in a hospital blanket to the cloth that lines the inside of a casket (2017, p. 34). Yet, the meaning of the practices is not fixed and context specific. As such, what resembles a form of feminist protest to some women is certainly not a universal recipe for global feminist activism. Knitting as a political practice is always grounded in the specific textured structures of oppression in which it invariably takes place. As one participant in a study about an activist campus knitting club at a large US university states: “Crafting is a luxury that many women cannot afford” (Springgay, Hatza & O’Donald, 2011, p. 60); it requires the luxury of time to commit to a project and learn the skill as well as the financial means to purchase yarn. Furthermore, the positionality of the maker and the raced and classed histories along which she travels play a role in the way that her knitting practice is considered a politics (Black, 2017). Therefore, Shannon Black asks for an acknowledgement of the full complexity of the Pussyhat Project as a textile craft-based initiative that,

encourages activism that is at once accessible and multi-scalar, functioning at the personal (i.e. making and/or wearing hats), community (i.e. the exchanging of hats [and, I would add, the making of hats together in groups]), national (i.e. wearing and making hats at the Women’s March), and international (i.e. the making and wearing of Pussyhats at various marches throughout the world) levels, cultivating relationships and promoting participation in the spirit of political activism and change. (2017, p. 702)

Certainly, the impact of the networks created as a result of the project remains unknown and is difficult to be determined. Yet, it is useful to follow their trajectories and to consider instances of breakdown as well as of sustainability in the context of the complexity of a shared feminist politics of solidarity. As Black argues, “who participates in these (craft) actions reveals deeper and more complicated race and class-based hierarchies at play, hierarchies that can influence how the struggle for the rights of some individuals are privileged over the struggle for the rights of others” (2017, p. 704). To knit and wear a Pussyhat, to participate in a Women’s March, and/or to be supportive of the initiative are tangible as well as intangible ways of joining the feminist struggle for liberation. They resemble different means of engaging “from within in the very process of the world’s continual coming into being and [...] contribute to its weave and texture” (Ingold, 2016, p. 83). As such, they can also serve to refocus the conversation about feminist solidarity away from fixed sets of discourses that privilege the narratives of white, cis-gendered women in the Global

North towards intersectional frameworks that allow for difference in experience and embrace dissonance.

In the case of the Pussyhat Project, this texture includes the experiences of the individual makers as well as the marchers. It embraces the different trajectories of personal discontent and forms of resistance that come together in a march. Further, it includes the many routes along which images of the marchers and hats travel as they are shared on social media and privately with family and friends. But it also includes the aftermath of the march as people return home and stuff their Pussyhats in the drawer before resuming their daily habits. However, people might also be forming new routines in response to their involvement in the Women's March and the Pussyhat Project, for example by joining an activist group or volunteering in a women's shelter. Or they might find themselves surprised by their public challenge of a colleague's misogynist comment, their new commitment to fight oppression or their unfamiliar empathy for the single mother across the street. According to Tal Fitzpatrick and Katve-Kaisa Kontturi, craftivist initiatives like the Pussyhat Project can serve to create "a greater extent of communality" because they can bring together individuals that would not necessarily be sharing a space together. In addition, they can make people more aware of their own positionality in relation to other bodies, and, more importantly, open themselves up towards these bodies "and to feel how their relation to other bodies is both constitutive and indispensable" (2015, n.p.). As a result, the focus is moved from one that aims to eradicate differences to one that explores how it becomes possible to exist in this state of dissonance and to organise for a more just future. The Pussyhat Project defines itself not as a context specific initiative that exists only in relation to the Women's March, but as "an ongoing movement that uses design to create social change" (Zweimann, 2018, n.p.). Like the Women's March the project is invested in fostering grassroots community activism through facilitating activist networks and encouraging more women to become community leaders and to run for political office (Pussyhat Project, n.d.). Indeed, with more women and people of colour elected into office in the 2018 US elections as ever before one could in fact speculate about the positive effect of the movement (Bialik, 2019) without attributing sole causality for these election results to either initiative.

Conclusion

The Pussyhat in the V&A's collection was knitted by Pussyhat Project co-founder Jayna Zeimann, and was worn at the original Women's March in Washington, D.C. Yet, the fluffy pink hat has long since gained iconic status beyond the specific context of the first Women's March on Washington and the Pussyhat Project. This article has attempted to move beyond the Pussyhat's iconic status that, according to the V&A marks it as "a global symbol of female solidarity and the power of collective action" (Victoria and Albert Museum, n.d.). Instead, I have considered the Pussyhat Project as a texture in the struggle for feminist solidarity in the women's liberation movement of the Global North, particularly in the context of North America and Europe. This texture is material, social, as well as affective. It includes the physical Pussyhats and the directions of travel they take as they are made, worn, preserved in a museum, stuffed in drawers or treasured as a personal keepsake from the Women's March. It is also made up of the affective ties that formed between feminists across the world in response to the project as well as the ties that ruptured because of it. I use the term texture not only to draw attention to above outlined entanglements, but to highlight, how attention to the social, material and affective allows for a *texturing of* the feminist struggle for solidarity. A focus on texture can bring to the fore the

entangled nature of different discourses and various forms of the struggle for women's liberation, which, while painfully ordinary for many feminists of colour and transwomen, have been systematically absent in mainstream feminist circles. As such, it becomes possible to move beyond the polarizing discourses that sparked in response to the Pussyhat Project and the Women's March, while, at the same time, recognizing the value of the critiques both initiatives have evoked.

As such, the Pussyhat Project has "political efficacy" because of its "ability to engage with diverse groups of people and provide them with a sustainable way of interacting, communicating, and taking action with one another" without the need for absolute unity and the smoothing over of dissonance (Fitzpatrick & Kontturi 2015, np). It is in this mode of bringing people together to explore and create the texture of a joint struggle for liberation that I locate the project's potential for fostering feminist solidarity. In particular, it serves to develop a feminist solidarity based on "feeling the desire for transformation out of the experience of discomfort" as opposed to visions of solidarity grounded "in a shared identity or on a presumption about how the other feels" (Hemmings, 2012, p. 158). Participants of the Women's March as well as the Pussyhat Project have acted - marched, knitted, or both - from individual and collective experiences of discomfort, for example, about the incoming Trump administration, police brutality, or reproductive rights. Yet, these experiences do not need to be shared by everyone as a prerequisite for collective action. This coming together based on difference and in acknowledgement of dissonance is also not a necessarily smooth process, as - to stick with the knitting imagery - stitches can be dropped, knots can form, and knitting can be unravelled. As such, however, the making, sharing and wearing of the hats provides a texture that mirrors "the present in all its ambivalence and complexity" (Pedwell, 2016, p. 3). Simultaneously, this texture also bears the potential for new entanglements that take into account the textured history of feminist politics and women's textile crafts in ways that explicitly refrain from binary judgements about good or bad activism as well as good or bad feminism.

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