

Felting Vulvas:

A Hands-On Educational Workshop



WORKSHOP TODAY:

- 1) Instructions on needle felting
- 2) You will gather supplies you need
- 3) While you create, I will tell you about the evolution of felting vulvas
- 4) Discussion of your experience today

GATHER:

- 1) A piece of foam
- 2) A felting needle ---
CAUTION! Very sharp!
- 3) A piece of fabric for the
backing - with or without a
pre-drawn image –
Sharpies available
- 4) Printed images of vulvas
for inspiration
- 5) A few colors of wool roving



Instructions:

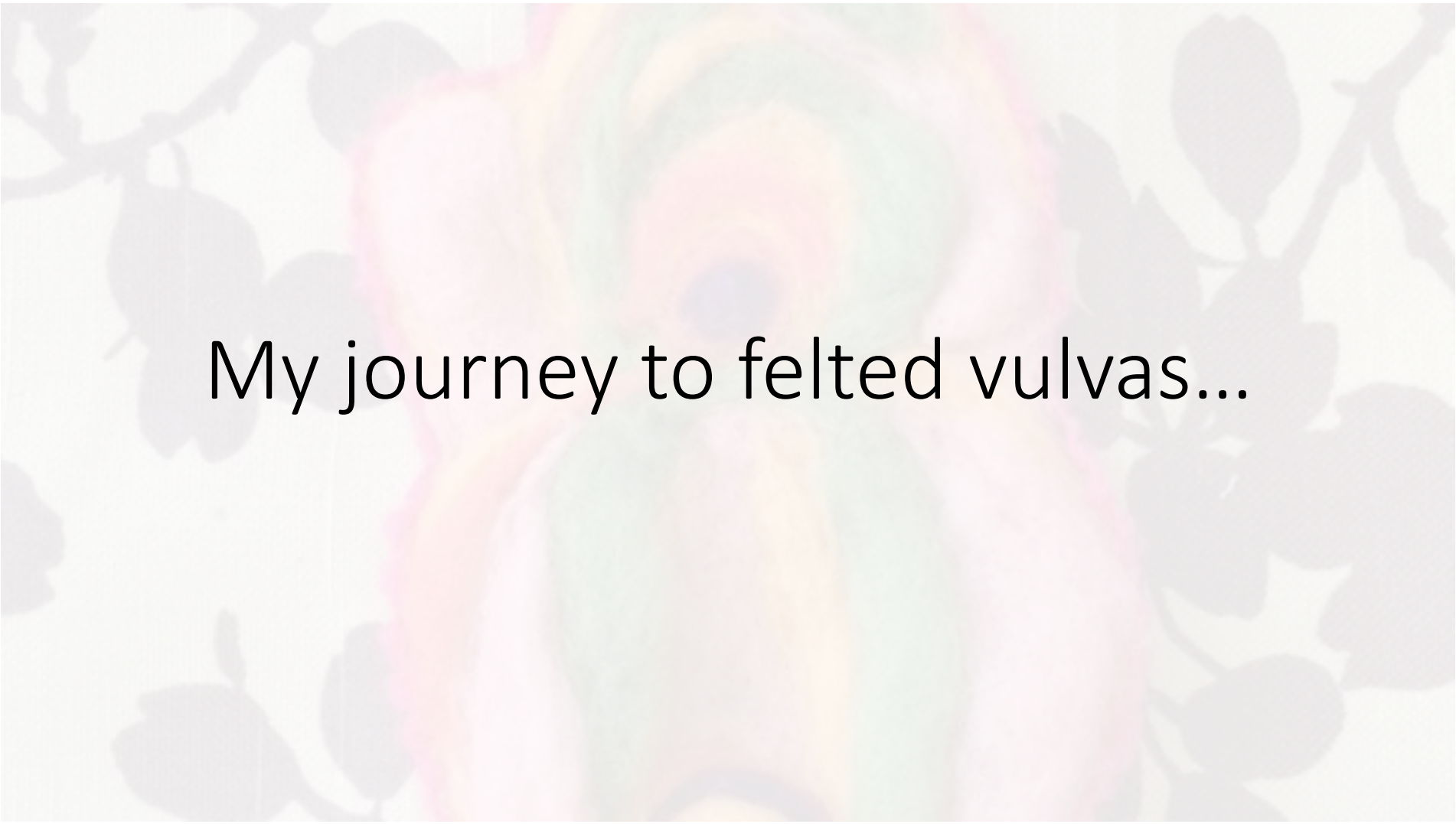
- Put the piece of fabric on top of the piece of foam
- Put some of the wool on the fabric
- Using the needle (and keeping your fingers out of the way!), gently poke the wool into the fabric
 - Only go into the foam $\frac{1}{4}$ "
 - Keep needle straight up and down
- Experiment - more or less wool, more or less poking
- Undo!
- No right or wrongs.

The Origin of the World by Gustave Courbet
Oil on canvas 1866 www.musee-orsay

GATHER:

- 1) A piece of foam
- 2) A felting needle ---
CAUTION! Very sharp!
- 3) A piece of fabric for the
backing - with or without a
pre-drawn image (Sharpie
if desired)
- 4) Printed images of vulvas
for inspiration
- 5) A few colors of wool roving





My journey to felted vulvas...

Craftivism

The practice of using craft for activism, primarily for social and political change.



Craft & Chat

Lauren Leone & Michaela Kirby

- Combined Craftivism and Art Therapy for Social Action
- Provided a safe place for students to gather, engage with fiber arts, and find empowerment through craftivism and discussion of critical women's issues.



Craft and Chat experience



Themes:

- Sexual Health
- Reproductive justice
- Consent



Human Sexuality in Clinical Practice – Master's course







Clit Chat
meets
Survivor Quilt Project

Fiber Arts Studio

- Began with a small group of women meeting once a month to talk about how to create a safe community to talk about sexuality while we worked with fiber
- Our “incubator group”



Somerville Open
Studios – May 2016





Many aspects of women's sexual experience and sexuality are silenced and unnamed in our culture. The vulva, the term referring to women's external genitals, is often mistakenly referred to as the 'vagina', the more acceptable term in our culture. In fact, the vagina is related to heterosexual intercourse and procreation in contrast to many parts of the vulva – the clitoris and labia, for example – which are related to women's sexual pleasure.

The misnaming and unnamng of women's genitals is parallel to the process of silence around teaching women about their bodies, specifically the aspects that function solely for women's sexual pleasure.

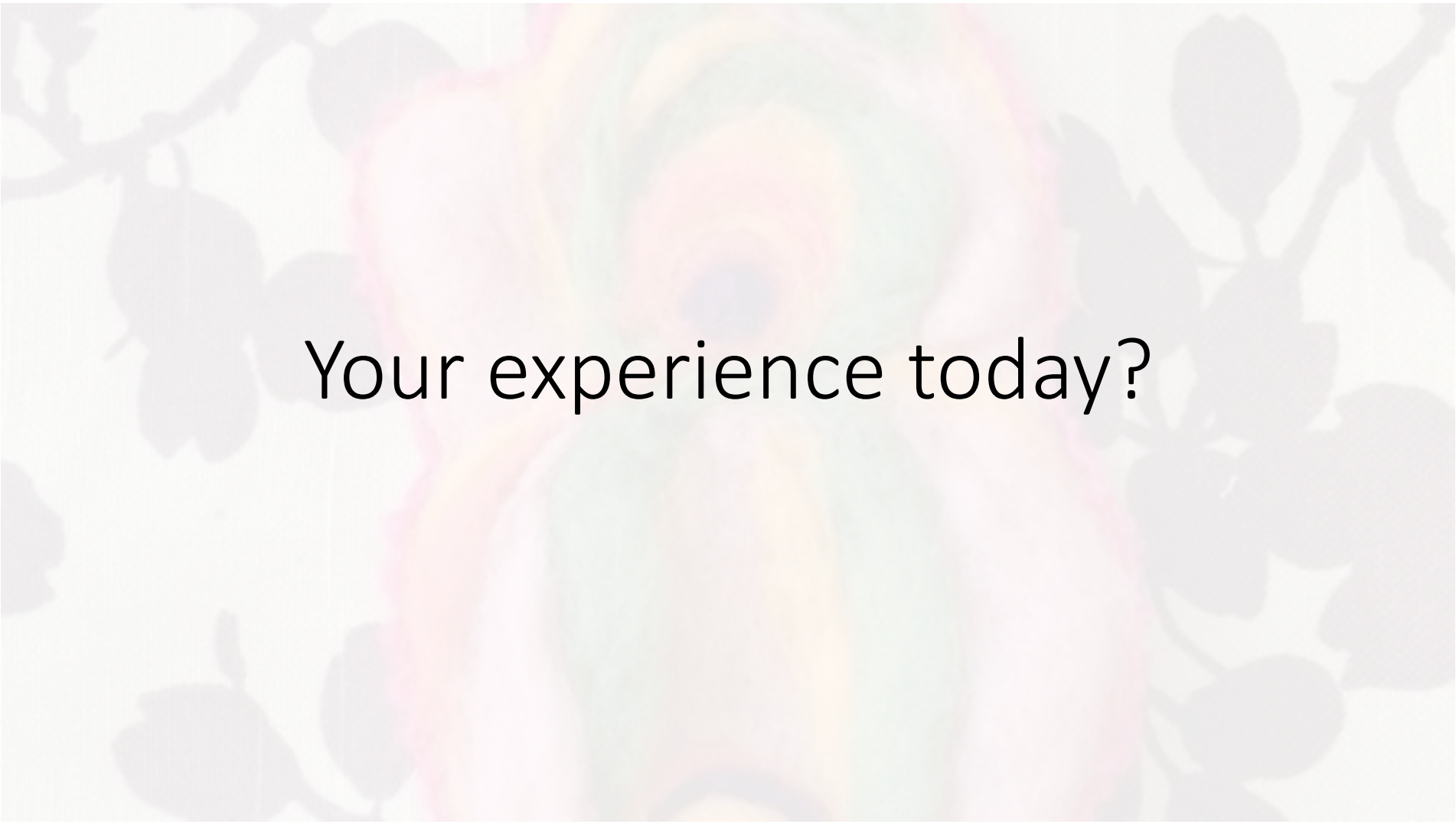
In the spirit of naming in order to reduce shame and to reclaim – or perhaps claim for the first time – we have been sharing our experiences about our sexuality in community while creating vulva images using wool felting techniques.

Please feel free to respond to these ideas and this quilt on the green quilt in the hallway and/or to join us in felting your own piece to add to our vulva quilt.









Your experience today?

The art process:

- Looking/Seeing in a different way
- Active engagement
- Form that is reflected back to you

Participants in The Vulva Quilt project:

“When I was trying to create an image of my vulva, I was trying to organize in my mind ‘What is this?’ ‘How does it relate to the rest of my body?’ I kept trying to remember that this is normal, this is what women have, but I could not create one that was organized because I had never known what it was or what it looked like until this process.”

Participants in The Vulva Quilt project:

A friend invited me to join a group of female artists to create art and engage in discussions around women's sexuality. I was unsure what to expect and was a bit uncomfortable with the topic but embraced this safe space to explore female sexuality. I was excited to learn the technique of felting. I approached the drawn image of the vulva with a bit of disconnection. Through this process my relationship within myself shifted; I noted how I was experiencing a new fluid energy where it had once felt more blocked."

Participants in The Vulva Quilt project:

"Each week before entering the building where our group meets, I sit in my car and wonder: why am I part of this group? At times I'm embarrassed and confused by the subject. Sexuality for me is twisted and hidden and I do not recognize it in myself. I have learned to avoid it and fear it. I am grateful to be part of this group because I want to experience sexuality as having a peaceful place in my being."

Resources and suggestions:

Pick up the Resources Handout



Guiding principles

- Give choice
- Give permission

Contacting Michaela Kirby

mkirby@lesley.edu

Or

MichaelaKirbyATR@gmail.com

Poem from Mesopotamia 2500 BC

This song is holy.
Let me tell you where
I am coming from.
My vulva is
the power place
a royal sign.

I rule with vulva power
I see with vulva eyes
This is where
I am coming from.

Fit me out
with my vulva
I live right there
In this soft Slit
I life right there.

My field wants hoeing
This is my holy word.

Hillel, R. (1997). *The redemption of the feminine erotic soul*. Maine: Nicolas-Hays.

References

- *The Origin of the World* by Gustave Courbet (1866). Retrieved from [http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/search.html?no_cache=1&zoom=1&tx_damzoom_pi1\[showUid\]=2406](http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/search.html?no_cache=1&zoom=1&tx_damzoom_pi1[showUid]=2406)
- Hillel, R. (1997). *The redemption of the feminine erotic soul*. Maine: Nicolas-Hays.

The Origin of the World by Gustave Courbet
Oil on canvas 1866 www.musee-orsay

