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The back of my hands tell more tales than the lines on my palms. Mostly (and possibly, most visibly) they bear the cracks, the blood, the semi-healed/still healing/still raw bruises from washing compulsively.

In college a boyfriend pointed out that whenever I am overwhelmed, I rest my head on something – my hand, a nearby shoulder, a desk, a dog... I do it ALL day long and never realized it.

vastness encourages a
rummage through my beard

yeah I just started scratching this spot because it gets insanely itchy and I can't help myself when I'm high



Clean my nails
Scrub with a toothbrush
I'm everywhere and stuck



my tongue pressed up into and around my top
teeth until they leave indents







The feeling is always the same
When I console,
When I try to soothe.
Peach-like fuzz runs below my belly button.

I used to ride on crowded trains and walk to work every day. In the past, it irritated me to get bumped, but I miss it in a weird way.

Is it even there? Admittedly not as well-defined as I would like. Not conventionally masculine in a world of dying and undying gender normalities. Shuffling between deciding not to care and acknowledging that it never truly leaves. Affirmed by a subconscious urge to touch. Unaware at first, of course. "It's okay, you can always get an implant," she said to me at age thirteen. Instant complex. Thanks Mom. A beard instead: less extreme. I guess I'll wait it out.

my belly endures as if to taunt me over the chubby-
kid past I can't escape

a woman can't ever breathe because she's
concerned with her pinky nail

thank god i have little fingers



two towns over a world away and I have passed
the time tucking hair behind my ear imagining
how your cartilage might curve against my touch
how it holds my voice you've been condensed
to a screen this whole time will you still hear me
oceanic when I can finally touch that ear my face
to your neck will you hold me like a shell catching
water under full moon



Have you ever examined your birth marks?
I have one on my inner thigh
blotchy, taupe, silky when wet.
It resembles— less cherry more lychee.

Remove fingers from chin, mouth falls open.



The place on my scalp where the partition begins



my IBS, a sign of
the messages
greats and
great grandparents
wanted me to know.

my hips: constantly bearing the weight of my
body, womanhood
too big or small for those jeans I bought last year
just right when they lead me to follow the music
melting with just the right touch

The secret to perfect brows is to tuck into the oil behind your ear.



How quickly my fingers
fly to my mouth, graze my philtrum,
pinch the skin of my bottom lip,
I am my own lover, old and
familiar.

I run my fingers through my hair when I am stuck in traffic, the same way my Dad does.



I trace the ridges of ink on my left arm,
in particular the vine across the bicep, the prickly
pear next to it, and the word "this," on my forearm



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1	08:23 01/08	22:33 03/15	EDT	Angela Miskis	Queens Village, NY	.jpeg
2	21:07 01/22	16:42 03/15	SAST	Shiksha Dheda	Johannesburg, South Africa	.docx
3	19:43 01/27	19:43 01/27	PST	Patricia Reed	Seattle, WA	email
4	18:49 01/28	13:07 03/15	PST	Nat Evans	Seattle, WA	email
5	11:19 01/31	11:19 01/31	PST	Jake Slagle	Seattle, WA	Facebook
6	12:24 02/02	12:24 02/02	PST	Joey Largent	Seattle, WA	.pdf
7	18:15 02/05	18:15 02/05	PST	Kyle Griesmeyer	Seattle, WA	.jpg
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Objects in response to
the place on your body you find
yourself touching

Call to reaction released
2020 / 12 / 11

Initial deadline
2021 / 02 / 10

Extended deadline
2021 / 02 / 17

Staff

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Jeevika Verma, Editorial Lead

direct object began as an open field. Jocelyn shared it with Jeevika and Peiran in an email on September 15, 2020. Over the following months we broke ground and built a book as a home for thoughts. Each thought would live in its own space, but would converse—through walls and windows—with the reader and each other.

For Issue 1, we asked the public to submit objects in reaction to a central idea. This idea concerned the body as a site (see left). We had become obsessed with our relationship to our bodies, which had been strained by distance and isolation. We wanted to know how other people were relating to themselves. We asked for submissions to be literal and singular (one photo, one video, one drawing, 100 words of text, one piece of mail). And our audience sent us reactions that were intimate and instinctual.

The 35 objects are arranged not by curation, but by chronology. Each is self-aware and finds its own space within the structure. Each lives beyond its originator's control and tests the strength of the structure's walls. Do the objects fight each other? Do they let each other breathe? Do they maintain their honesty and independence?

As we built this book, we felt ourselves dissociate from our bodies, as well as our presence in the project. We thank everyone who shared their reactions and allowed them to live within the paper walls of this book, and we look forward to housing more of you in the future.

Until next time.