

dis assembly: Collaborative Rituals with an Autistic Artist

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses a conversation with the author and Estée Klar, the founder of *dis assembly*, Klar's autistic son, Adam Wolfond, mentors Chris Martin, Ellen Bleiwas, and Jessamyn Polson. *dis assembly* is a neurodiverse art collective for creation and relation in Toronto, Canada. Because public education in Canada typically does not provide supported/facilitated communication for non-speaking autists, this collective is ground-breaking in its experimental work with neurodivergent people. *dis assembly* highlights the need to honor the autistic ritualized use of objects and the environment as a valid and significant art form. The collective, therefore, re-imagines new forms of art, communication, interdependency, relationship, and community.

KEYWORDS: Autism, Neurodivergence, Ritual, Collaboration, Relation, Artmaking, Language

Rituality, like ritual, performs a shift in register that opens the way for new modes of becoming. Is rituality also capable of generating a shift in kind that opens the everyday object to its more-than? (Manning, 2016, p. 42)

This article discusses a conversation on Zoom with the author and Estée Klar, the founder of *dis assembly*, Klar's autistic son, Adam Wolfond, mentors Chris Martin, Ellen Bleiwas, and Jessamyn Polson. *dis assembly* is the neurodiverse art collective for creation and relation in Toronto, Canada, which was established in response to the lack of access for neurodiverse students in Canadian public education. This collective is ground-breaking in its experimental work with neurodivergent people because it highlights the need to honor the autistic ritualized use of objects and the environment as a valid and significant art form. Klar identifies as neurodivergent and Wolfond calls himself a non-speaking "man of autism." *dis assembly* consists of ten neurodiverse and neurotypical youth and adults who create art, poetry, social gatherings, and education. The collaborators intend to redefine the meaning of neurodiversity as fundamentally relational, and re-form policy, practices,

and architecture that have been extensions of neurotypicality¹.

This article is composed of several sections: first, I describe the insights that have emerged from the relationship between Klar and her son Adam; second, how *dis assembly* is an art studio that is finding new ways to live and work with autists; third, I include the conversation among the main actors of *dis assembly*; and finally, I contextualize how this conversation has meaning for art education.

Klar and Wolfond

Klar and Wolfond have invited me into a process of research and writing that emerges through conversations that align with their resistance to preconceived outcomes. Their resistance to preconceived outcomes also operates in the studio where Wolfond makes art and poetry with his mother and his mentors. This process is ceremonial in that tasks are performed in ritual-like repetition. The performance of art usually includes found objects, toys, sticks, and yarn, which are often woven together, unraveled, and then woven again. Klar noticed early that,

"avoidance" used in behaviorist-speak was a dance that needed to be understood within this relation with both the human and non-human. That is, various lures or movement "rituals" needed to be completed before Wolfond could step out the door. (E. Klar, personal communication, December 12, 2021)

Adam needed the time to complete rituals before he could, for example, step through a door. Doors are challenging for Wolfond because they present a transition, an opening of new space. Rather than "avoidance," Klar observed that his rituals were resistance to behaviorist goals that normalize autistic movement—that want to walk Wolfond at a normalized pace through the door. Doors and other phenomena in

1 Klar (2020) explained in her doctoral dissertation the exclusion of neurodiversity in Canadian public education as the reason for founding *dis assembly*: "This work happens because of exclusion; because there is no support other than segregation for autistics other than professional, institutional and pharmacological. Adam has had limited access to school, and we created The A Collective in Toronto so that he would have access. It is only recently, after finding a school principal who accepted Adam's way of communication by typing, and his movement needs, that he was accepted to high school that delivers the Ontario ministry curriculum. He attends half-time because schools continue to adhere to the neurotypical architecture and temporal measures (although the rubric is slowly being shifted by Adam's presence). The rest of his time is spent creating—with poetry, art and homework at *dis assembly*. We think deeply of the requirements imposed on us both to share ourselves, our thinking, our "knowledge," which has become this work (p. 98, footnote 71).

the physical world are not assumed in *dis assembly* to be barriers to socialization, but rather used as autistic relation to the world.

Adam might need to hold a toy while he walks to school. He taps his toy like an echolocation, creating a rhythm to walk.... Like affect itself, the toy is more than itself. It is colour heard as music, eyes that stay still (so he can look at them), a calming transitional object, a way to tap through space to “line my pace.” (Klar, 2020, p. 5)

At *dis assembly*, Klar (2020) and her staff transform autistic ritual and repetition into artmaking. Repetition in neurodivergent artmaking is not pathologized as “disordered and disorderly, requiring segregation and expert treatment” (p. 54), but it’s enacted as a way of discovering new forms of community, relation, and communication. According to Erin Manning (2016), “What rituality does is activate. It does so outside of systems of value imposed on it from elsewhere: rituality is considered a practice precisely because it is capable of inventing forms of value emergent from the ritual itself” (p.45). The imposition of external systems of value that Manning speaks about are embedded in the mainstream of art, medicine, education, and society. Klar and Wolfond have made me more aware that I, and many non-autists interested in autism, have been writing to a neurotypical audience, thus reinforcing neurotypicality. Often, the result is what Klar (2020) describes as recognition without value because “it requires us to change or explain ourselves” (p.137). Wolfond’s ritualization of objects and his use of poetic language drives the collaborative. In an intentional reversal, neurotypicals enter the world of the autistic rather than the reverse expected in public education, which pathologizes autistic ritualized movement, language, and patterning.

In this “neurocultural intermingling” (Savarese, 2016, xiv), mother and son share in each other’s neurobiology, “thinkingfeeling” together on the multifarious ways of expression and communication, which enables other ways of understanding and interacting with what we have traditionally referred to autism as non-relational and unaware. The conflation of thinkingfeeling places us in the middle of the event which is relation. Significant is this shift from thinking about mother-son, researcher-autistic, environment-body as separate, and how this has traditionally enacted therapeutic practices of curing autism, and also, hierarchical ways of interacting with autistic people. This process shifts the manner of research creation, away from negative comparison towards experimental, processual and creative work without the bias of pathology or the pressure of outcome. (E. Klar, personal communication, January, 2021)

Ultimately, artmaking’s ability to inhabit the liminal in-between spaces becomes the driver that reinvents communication among divergent minds. In the following section, I describe the philosophy of *dis assembly*.

dis assembly

At *dis assembly* we are not interested in independence for its own sake, as autistic non-speakers know innately the need for, and our connectedness to each other and the world. There is no false performance as the independently-speaking neurotypical body. There is only collaboration and relational *agencying* (the gerund suggests intrarelational movement), as non-speakers will not conform. (Klar & Wolfond, n.d., para. 11)

Rather than the traditional programmatic nature of community art centers, in *dis assembly* the collaborators and events become the art itself. Neurodiverse art making is discovered in each changing and moving process. Wolfond asks, “how does art think with neurodiversity?”... if not through movement? (as cited in Klar, 2020, p. 83). He continues, “My art thinks about movement to give people ideas of how I don’t always answer in words” (p. 176). Klar and Wolfond examine the movement of repetition in art, not as an involuntary or obsessive act, but as having distinct identities and meanings in each iteration. Kanner (1943) made doctrine the notion that autistic repetition is monotonous and mechanical and, thus, repetition as pathology has rarely been questioned. Klar and Wolfond coined the neologism *stimvention* in opposition to neurotypical vocabulary that pathologizes the artistic act of ritualized repetition. They experiment with the repetition of simple acts in the studio, such as sweeping the floor, tearing paper, or pouring water, which Klar explains brings both aesthetic and relational interactions that shift and magnify the activity by disrupting our habitual sense of space and movement (Klar, 2020). Wolfond has been making water “stim” paintings, as he calls them, since he was a youngster, as well as collecting, patterning, pacing objects, and poetry as resistance to the pathology paradigm. With the support of *dis assembly*, he invents and reconfigures learning spaces and ways of relating within them (see Figure 1).

Without the space and time to explore and improvise, or the ability to leave and escape, we would be confined to tables, chairs and clocktime—a disabling constraint that gives reason for systemic exclusion of autistic people—as the body must be present and perform in the same time. (Klar, 2020, p. 98)

A chair is an unproductive and menacing learning space for Wolfond, while pacing, dancing, and lying is more conducive to artmaking. Learning from non-speakers also changes the speaking person’s

priorities of language that obligates us to live by the clock, to anticipate outcomes, to get something done.

Artistic and autistic repetition

Repetition exists in the mainstream artworld made popular by artists such as Marina Abramović and Andy Warhol. Although art historians speculate that Warhol had Asperger's syndrome, his art was celebrated for its inventive originality (Rodas, 2018). Klar and Wolfond study such artists. For example, Abramović (1998) wrote, "You can start with any object and create an energy field around it again and again through ritual...because repetition of the same thing over and over again generates enormous power" (p. 35). Julia Miele Rodas (2018) compares autistic repetition with repetitive writing in literature to make the same point by using authors from the canon, such as Gertrude Stein. She explains that the slight differences in each of Stein's phrases creates new concentrations and meanings in sound. Because of neurotypical authority, readers engage with the unexpected, disruptive, and digressive rather than questioning its validity. Like Rodas, I question why autistic expression is pathologized as obsessive and unintentional, while similar expressions in the visual arts and literature are celebrated as high art. And, like Rodas, I suggest that autistic expression is not only valid but also a necessary aspect of culture.

Before meeting Klar and Wolfond, my interest in what is distinctive about the autistic "self" led me to question the neurotypical absoluteness of "I" and its fixed boundaries that belie the innumerable influences that make up an identity (Wexler, 2016). Neurotypicals cling to the notion of "self" as a way of solidifying the illusion of identity as uninterrupted, linear, and meaningful. As such, neurotypicals unconsciously Other the neurodivergent autistic to preserve their experience of identity. As Rodas (2018) suggests, autistic language disturbs and disrupts the linearity and order of conventional neoliberal thinking and communication. Almost categorically, autistic writing is absent the "I," which suggests a qualitatively different, possibly deeper, connection with the world. Therefore, I reinterpret the negative diagnostic notion of the absence of self (Frith, 2003) in autism as a positive one. I suspect that autistic artforms express a different story about the world, possibly because artists are not guided by the persistent narration that is interpreted as self.



Figure 1: Adam working with Ellen Bleiwas.

At *dis assembly*, Klar and Wolfond collaborate with poet Chris Martin, visual artist Ellen Bleiwas, and Assistant Director/Educator Jessamyn Polson on studio projects that become art exhibitions (see Figure 2). I was introduced to Martin, Bleiwas, and Polson at our first conversation on Zoom, which helped illuminate how each of us who come from different and related fields, engage in collaborative processes. As the "outsider" researcher, I abandoned my prepared questions as more important discussions emerged. This abandonment became a metaphor for the methodology to which the art collaborative is committed: discarding pre-conceived notions of outcomes artists and researchers expect to find. Martin opened our conversation by acknowledging the multiple voices that have influenced his work. It is effectively this philosophy of relationship that has made *dis assembly* a model in radical collaboration. In the following, I share excerpts from our conversation.



Figure 2: *dis assembly* exhibition, 2021.

Our Conversation

Estée: Some of the core questions we have, have to do with independence and agency that even in the facilitated communication community are still rampant: the “we must teach independence.” I find myself feeding into that sometimes because there’s so much pressure: that folks need to prove their intelligence, prove their agency, and I want to dive into that deeper as a parent and as a facilitator to that space that no one wants to talk about. Adam wants to write his own book and there’s the constant erasure of the facilitator, or support, in the world, be it if you’re disabled or not.

Alice: My interests are in language development and how we evolved with language, and who we think we are as independent selves neurologically. We [neurotypicals] have concepts of ourselves that we don’t question on a fundamental level, and autism invites us to question those assumptions about who we are as independent selves. Are we really independent selves, or is it an illusion?

Estée: I’m particularly interested from the proprioception² and aesthetic sense that I can no longer separate these concepts. When we talk about these concepts, we talk about them as separate, and I see them very much enmeshed in the way that Adam is writing.

Alice: And I think that’s why these conversations are important because it’s so easy to fall back into concepts and theories.

Estée: This is the opportunity, when Adam talks about languaging³ and when we’re merging practices with art and learning and collaboration and poetry.

Chris: I’ve been thinking about these same concepts in perhaps a more devotedly amateurish way, but thinking about song as a kind of protolanguage, and song as inherently a shared language practice especially in Indigenous and hominid cultures, and the ways in which I have identified for a number of years as a chorus and a poet, and I love the way we’re practicing that chorus through *dis assembly* in singing together.

Estée: *dis assembly* is about the concept of something emerging, and we capture it at its peak and then we let it disassemble again in the way that processes always work.

Alice: Chris, I’m really curious about your meaning of “chorus.” Did you mean that there’s a chorus within you, or did you mean that you are with others in a chorus?

Chris: When my first book was published, I had a listing in the back where if I was going to be honest about how I was writing I would have to include the voices that were present with me: whether it was the voices I was listening to or the philosophy I was reading and trying to integrate them into the poems themselves. And the poems were catapulted into being by particular phrases as they often are with poets. And as I’ve evolved in my second book, I’ve actually listed it as “the chorus” in the back. So, anyone whose language kind of became enmeshed in the poems that I was presenting became part of the chorus.

Alice: The reason I ask is because in the book I wrote, *Autism in a Decentered World*, I suggest that as individuals we are like a chorus. The idea started when I was in my car listening to a science program

2 Proprioception is often called the sixth sense because of its ubiquitous but unconscious bodily awareness of position in space and the motion of our muscles, tendons, and joints. See Oliver Sacks, 1999, “The Disembodied Lady” in *The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat*.

3 “Languaging” is a word that Wolfond uses to explain how he conceives moving, relating, thinking and feeling in the world. (<https://www.Estéerelation.com/pandemic-work>).

on NPR, and Paul Broks was on, a neuropsychologist whose thinking is hallucinogenic, internalizing all the people who he's worked with, with all their different kinds of brains. His writing merges fiction with non-fiction, and his belief is that we are telling a story about ourselves, that we are writing the fiction. I stopped my car and started writing notes. I thought, this is exactly what I'm looking for.

Chris: I love the research that's coming out now. In *How to Change Your Mind*⁴, by Michael Pollan, he talked about severe untreatable depression, and if you look at brain activity it looks like all the activity is happening in one area. And it turns out that it's in the area of the brain where you tell the story of who you are. And the more you get depressed, the more you can't escape that singular story. And when people take psychedelic mushrooms, their brain activity is allowed to fly around everywhere. The more our stories embrace neurodivergent thinking, and expand past singular narratives, the more we can appreciate how we are not only enmeshed into difference, but also bring that difference into ourselves as perforated thinkers, then the healthier our brains will be.

Estée: The one thing I'm trying to get away from is brain-centrism. Many people refer to autism as brain difference. I think that we can't escape that we are not just entrapped in our bodies, and I think that's what psychedelics enable us to do, is to move outside of our bodies. And then Nick Walker⁵ had clarified somewhere that "neuro," in terms of neurodiversity as I am thinking of, that it's going to be this ever-shifting concept, it's not this monolithic concept. The ideas are going to continually shift as we expand our thinking. But neuro is the nerves of our body, it's not just located in the brain. Because of that concept of the brain, we've had so much difficulty with the attachments to intelligence, cognition, functionality, and so on.

Ellen: It's such a great time to be opening that up and critiquing that. I've definitely seen the shift even in visual arts discourse and the way that people are thinking about it, like the shift from the "I think therefore I am" paradigm to a more haptic one.

Jessamyn: I wanted to pick up on something you were saying Chris, that relates, not necessarily to the visual arts aspect but as a former dancer. It's not that there is a self that has been permeated by difference, but that the self is brought into being through the chorus. I think that's what you were getting at, and if we are thinking of neurology, we need to think about technology and cyborgs. We are not just brought into being by our relationships with each other, but we're also brought into

being by our relationships to technology, to the world, and to objects, and ritual to some extent as well, but this way in which we are, to borrow Marshal McLuhan's image, like an inside-out turtle, brought into being through those relationships with one another and things.

Chris: Adam, your notion that those objects, that you're constantly open to "the beckon," that those objects are going to be calling you. And you know that, that's just a given of walking and moving through the world.

Alice: I think that the self is more fluid, it's not one thing, and I think language is connected to this notion. Chris, you were telling a story about depression. We're always telling ourselves a story, and we connect those independent stories together to make a consistency of self. But that's just a way to survive, by telling ourselves this one continuous story. And what stopped me in my tracks is that I thought, that's what autism must be. That notion that without growing up with verbal language you're not covered in that veil of an imaginary self. And that's why it's hard to relate to the rest of the world because everyone else is living in that fiction.

Adam (typing): I think that the always language thinks through the body and the way pace is rallying the way of relation with the world and the way I learned language is the letters that calmed me and I don't know but I knew I could read in the way I could see colors as language.

Estée: I think Adam was picking up what you were saying [Alice] about language and how people learn language, and Adam learned language on his own before he could walk.

Alice: Adam, when people are talking, what is that like, as far as hearing and seeing?

Adam (typing): I think that the talking sounds paced to the languages people say is like always lucky chance of catching like amazing water that slips through my hands.

Chris: I think the play of chance and the tossing of language, so many times it's just in the transactional language that you see out there in the world, it's just that people don't understand what they're catching, or how much they can catch. And I love that about the way we collaborate. We try to catch as much as we can and throw it back.

Estée: I think that's the concept of *dis assembly*: it crests, we capture something, and then we let it go, and it was kind of like this comment I made about the previous work that preceded what we were trying

4 Chris is referring to Michael Pollan's (2018) book, *How to Change Your Mind*.

5 Nick Walker identifies as a queer, transgender autistic author and educator. He is a professor of psychology at California Institute of Integral Studies. See <https://neuroqueer.com>.

to do, is really important for what we're trying to do. Because Naoki⁶ said once, which really stuck with me, that he needs to shape the words so that neurotypicals can understand him. So, there's this onus on autistic people to be grammatically correct, to shape sentences and experiences that neurotypicals can understand. We need it to be the other way around. And Adam made that comment: "I expect that other people will read towards my way of writing." So, there's this reversal I think is really important, and that's why the arts are super important to experimentation. We're starting to call it "ways."⁷

Chris: I also love the ball of thinking you've been using, Adam, and this is like a game of catch with a ball. Like you catch the ball, and then your hand makes its own kind of imprint on it, shapes it briefly, and then you look at it and say, "Oh, I didn't think about that." So, the ball keeps changing as it gets thrown.

Ellen: It also makes me think a lot about dance, like the dance of relation, maybe not even that one person is coming into another person's language, but like entering into a space of dancing together. I think what I love about the dance analogy is that it's not a clear thing that's trying to be communicated.

Alice: I think about my own ability to take in a constant stream of language. You know, my mind is wanting to go somewhere else, and I have to keep getting it back. I wonder if we're meant to do that with each other. I mean, that's how education is set up, or at least it was: someone in the front of the room and talking for an hour, and you know, how much of that do you catch? I actually have to admit that unless someone is acting out what they're saying, being very animated and emotive, I lose it immediately, almost within the first few minutes.

Chris: And that idea that if this ball of thinking is actually on water on some level, then you catch it, but you have to hold it or it's going to slip through. If you throw it back, you might maintain some of it before it all slips away.

Alice: So, it's a constant dialogue.

Chris: And yet I'm super curious and interested in the way a non-speaker is full of this intense receptivity. And the ways that I've learned from my students is about how they learned about language, like this intensely active receptivity. Any language, or the patterns of it especially.

⁶ Estée Klar is referring to Naoki Higashida, the autistic artist who wrote *The Reason I Jump: The Inner Voice of a Thirteen-Year-old Boy with Autism*.

⁷ Wolfond refers to "ways" as "the wanting ways," which is also the title of his book of poems, published by Milkweed, 2022. He also refers to "ways" as answering the atmospheres.

Adam (typing): I think that I am fond of ball thinking and I am loving the idea of unraveling the sometimes pool of water that can disintegrate and open the way that people think about autistics, and I want to say that I offer more ways the language can move.

Chris: In that piece in the image we were using, I think that the metaphor that was kind of missing was that it's also like a ball of yarn, that this yarn water [see Wolfond's poem "Yarn Water" below] is traveling along, and as you throw it the string remains, the string is left behind so it's creating those networks of thought.

Adam (typing): Yes, I think that the way of string is landing but good ways inspire the movement, the presence of atmosphere is a part of the thinking body.

Estée: This reminds me of the experiment we did with string many years ago, it may be on youtube. I was drawing the relationships that Adam and I were playing with Therabands and string in 2016, and Adam was walking around the apartment tethered to the string, but the strings were like tendrils behind him, and the string was then like the map left behind the movement.

Chris: I can't wait for us all to get together in the *dis assembly* space with a huge ball of blue-green yarn and throw it to each other as we dance around, and eventually start to integrate a scissor and start to undo parts of it as we get tangled.

Estée: And what you'd be surprised is, that's the concept of the enabling constraint.⁸ But when we get into that studio what we discovered was that something else emerged that we didn't expect. Remember that Ellen? We had the sticks laying neatly and all of a sudden, I threw them around and a different movement started [see Figure 3]. What was your experience of that?

Ellen: One of my dearest memories from that day was what arose from tension, from things we were going about in our own different ways. Adam, one of my favorite moments that day was when I was into the sticks that you were dropping, and I was following your trail and picking them up. I was wrapping them, and I got the sense that you weren't super into that. I felt there was a tension between what I was called to do and what you were called to do—and I noticed how what we're called to do doesn't necessarily have to be the same. In collaboration we don't have to pretend to always be wanting the same

⁸ "We use 'enabling constraint' as the loose parameters of the beginnings of an idea. So we are, say, exploring 'repetition' in an artistic gestural way, this usually leads to something else that arises during the experiment" (E. Klar, personal communication, December 4, 2021).



Figure 3: Screenshot of the video *S/Pace*, 2019. “I want to think with sticks. Thinking with sticks is like thinking with eager, open space” (Wolfond, *S/Pace*, 2019).

things. There are naturally differences and perhaps we can appreciate that tension.

Estée: In that last scene when we incorporated that poem,⁹ Chris about extending the choreography, I could see the invisible path Adam was making in that room with all of the sticks luring him or calling him. We were talking about calling and answering, flying and landing, and so all I see is a map and I see that movement. And other people who come from a neurotypical perspective would say this is wandering, this is doing nothing, right?

Chris: What would be interesting to think about is, is that a map to the territory itself? What is that a map to?

Alice: I wonder Adam, do you think you see movement where other people don't?

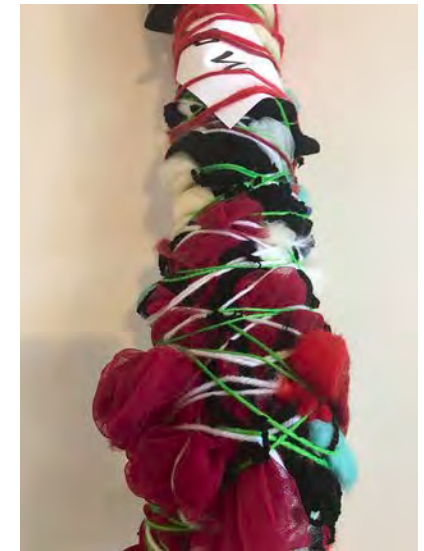
Adam (typing): Yes, I see the objects in the world always moving, so please, in this concept of perception understand that to land my thoughts in typing needs the mom and the Jessa, the important co-pilots in the atmospheres of moving things.

⁹ Klar is referring to the video called *S/Pace* (2019). It can be viewed here: <https://www.Estéerelation.com/media>.

Alice: So, catching thoughts that are always moving, how do you catch them?

Adam: (typing) I carry catching weight of words rallying the conversation heavy in words with the slower time of typing but I can always think fast.

Estée: He carries the log with the wrapping that we did with the sticks. We didn't disassemble this one [see similar wrapped sticks, Figures 4 and 5].



Figures 4 and 5: *Wrapped Sticks*, Adam Wolfond and Estée Klar, 2021.

Conclusion

It is important that we regard movement as expression with just as much regard as we do the writing. We do not privilege the supposed “intellectual” activity of writing over artistic activity and question the entire construction of intelligence as a humanist hierarchy. (Klar & Wolfond, n.d., para. 12)

Movement is one of the several interrelated threads discussed in the conversation above. Other concepts were languaging, relation, ritual, and repetition. Since the conversation was spontaneous, many themes

were bounced like the metaphorical and literal ball that captures Wolfond's attention. Synesthesia is the blending of the senses that many autistics experience. Words have shape, objects have movement, and sound has color. With this experience, it is impossible to separate sensory information into categories. Perhaps movement might serve as a system under which all events in Wolfond's life occur, the constant movement that neurotypicals can't see, but what is actually happening in the world (according to physics).

In the constant movement of Wolfond's world, how might neurotypicals understand the importance of objects? One reason might be that objects, as well as people, have agency and create invitations for dialogue and artmaking. Klar calls their artmaking "a map of movement: the arts supply the landing pad for the constant movement that is felt so deeply by Adam."¹⁰ In the conversation above and the poem below, Wolfond says "I see the objects in the world always moving..." Poet Chris Martin works with Wolfond's use of moving objects, as he described in our Zoom conversation, as beckoning, or in Wolfond's terminology "the beckon" that calls to him as he walks and moves through the world. Wolfond makes language accessible by transforming spoken words into objects he can see: "I learned language is the letters that calmed me...I knew I could read in the way I could see colors as language." Martin talked about "tossing language" back and forth. The concretization of language into a ball that could be received and sent back made poetry, like artmaking, a visual event. Water, the essence of movement, is also an association that Wolfond uses to "catch" words in space: "catching [words] like amazing water that slips through my hands." Then Martin affirms Wolfond by explaining that "people don't understand what they're catching, or how much they can catch." With intentional collaboration and intra-relation, they catch and throw back as much as they can. Martin throws the "ball of language" to Wolfond who imprints and shapes it with his hand (thoughts), and then throws a slightly different ball back to Martin. Wolfond explained in the conversation how he catches the weight of words as he rallies "the conversation heavy in words" with the help of his "co-pilots." In a similar way, Wolfond moving through the world is made visible by mapping his thoughts and movements with string, yarn, and sticks that he drops behind him, creating "networks of thought."

Poetry and art work together: both activate movement and movement is an expression with the environment, other bodies, and materials. Klar says, if everything is movement, then poetry is the language of movement. "The rhythm of poetry of pure movement/pacing, entering into the worlds and rooms, intimacy and the other ways of movement, as art does," (mapping activity as attuned to those movements). Autistic poetry, if that's what it can be called, serves the purpose of turning

10 The quotes from Estée Klar in the Conclusion are from an unpublished paper we are authoring.

the non-visible and abstract world into concrete ritualized objects. Words become pattern, sound, rhythm, and movement that lack syntax and logical sequencing, which is typical of autistic thinking but also the nature of poetry. Poet Ralph Savarese (2015), whose son DJ is an autistic poet, notices that many autistics will crossover from sensory knowing to interpretative knowing and, therefore, the neurotypical and neurodiverse poet can find common ground.

Klar, Bleiwas, and Martin flip the neurotypical perspective of movement and repetition on its head, recasting neurodiverse thought as valid modes of perception and being. They examine the artistic and poetic nature of repetition as a series of invitations to explore materials, objects, and words. Like autistic repetition, artists and poets know that each iteration is new. Something different is discovered in each encounter: The experience of community, relation, movement, and communication that emerges from the object and its repetitive, ritualized use renders the object into more than it is, more than its substance, "less object than stand-in for the unfathomable force of the not-yet" (Manning, 2016, p. 43). The "not-yet" that Manning speaks about is how occupation with the object transforms time into a recurring now, and at the same time, transforms the object from form to immanence.

Yarn Water is from Adam's words that Chris Martin pulled from our conversation.

Yarn Water¹¹ *Adam Wolfond*

Talking sounds paced
to the languages people
say is like always lucky
chance of catching
amazing water that slips
through my hands.

I am ball of packed thinking
and I am loving the idea
of unravelling the ball
in a pool of water that can
disintegrate and open the way
that people think about autistics
and I want to say that I offer more
ways the language can move.

The way of string is landing but
good ways inspire the movement

11 "Yarn Water" will be included in Wolfond's book of poems, *The Wanting Way*, to be published by Milkweed Editions fall 2022.

if the presence of atmosphere is
the part of the thinking body.
I see the objects in the world
always moving so please in this
concept of perception understand
that to land my thoughts in typing
needs the important co-pilots in the
atmospheres of moving things.

I carry catching weight of words
rallying the conversation heavy
in words with the slower time
of typing but I can always think fast.

Martin supported Wolfond in making a provisional "wind" of the poem (winding is Wolfond's term for lineation), which was then subject to further rewinding-by Wolfond and others-at later editorial stages.

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