

PHOTO ESSAY

Quilt: A Material Representation of Pandemic Communication

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I constructed this quilt to mark the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic. The bright spring colours represent this transitional season when the snow begins to disappear, and the vibrant flowers of spring pierce their tight petals through the earth, looking for the sun. This quilt marks one year of social distancing. A year spent working remotely, muting and unmuting, waiving at our computers. A year of communicating with one another through screens, each encased in our individual black, pixelated boxes. One year without hugs and kisses from our loved ones. Thankfully, digital communication platforms such as Zoom have allowed us to stay connected. Zoom allows us to spend time safely together; however, physically distant, untouching, and intangible we are to one another.

Quilts are the antithesis of the digital world. These material objects are meant to be held, touched, and wrapped around our bodies, keeping us warm and comforted. In this project, I sought to create a material representation of our digital meeting spaces. A cozy material object that could bring physical contact and comfort to our new and potentially alienating mode of communication. To create the quilt, I used Debra Grogan's (2018) pattern titled Hugs and Kisses. Each



of 32 half square triangles arranged to create two contrasting shapes, one representing hugs and the second kisses. The total effect of the pattern does not become apparent until all of the blocks are arranged. The cheerful patchwork top is surrounded by two borders, one black and the second a silvery grey. Once I completed Grogan's pattern, I overlaid the patchwork top with black sashing. In quilting, sashing refers to strips of fabric that are sewn between blocks on the quilt top. These four lines of sashing obscure the design, interrupting the interlocking hugs and kisses. The sashing represents the interruption of physical touch required to flatten the pandemic's curve and simultaneously recreates Zoom's recognizable grid pattern. The black strips of sashing are superficial, sewn with wide basting stitches on the quilt top's surface; they are not embedded into the patchwork design. Thus, they can be easily removed. However, once removed, evidence of this sashing will persist over time as the individual puncture marks and traces of black thread will leave a lasting record of their existence.

REFERENCES

1. Grogan, D. (2018). Hugs and Kisses Quilt Pattern. The Quilt Factory. <https://www.thequiltfactory.com/hugs-and-kisses-quilt-pattern/>



Kristie Serota is a PhD candidate in Social and Behavioural Health Sciences at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto, Canada. She earned a master's degree in Applied Social Psychology from the University of Guelph where she studied the use of public deliberation as a tool for engaging citizens in democratic decision making. Her current research uses narrative approaches to explore the social, legal, and ethical aspects of medical assistance in dying (MAiD) bereavement. Her research interests include critical qualitative methods, creative analytic practices, and feminist bioethics.