

Janetcore:

A Fashion/Materiality Index by Kendall DeBoer

I associate Dr. Janet Berlo with warmth, openness, kindness, and spunk. She's an inspiring and engaging interlocutor, a gifted teacher with an astounding breadth and depth of knowledge, and one of the most welcoming, generous people I've ever met. She feels like home.

I admire her exuberance, and am grateful to have a mentor who shares many of my own interests inside and outside of academics. We delight in the colors and textures of fiber arts; we marvel at the magic of materials, and we appreciate an unexpected, unconventional adornment. So, in the spirit of our mutual passions, I've chosen four significant objects to illustrate our special Kendall-Janet relationship.

- ① In early 2019, I had dyed my hair a bright coral pink and epoxied a giant conch shell to the back of my cell phone. Janet had been spinning her own yarn from alpaca wool. Imagine my surprise when Janet decided to dye some of her yarn a vibrant coral to match my hair, and made a fabulous pillow framing a picture of my face. I was ecstatic, elated, effusive.
- ② As Janet and I connected through independent study coursework and my years as her T.A., we bonded especially over a joint affection for early twentieth-century American quilts. Janet had amassed a gorgeous and extensive collection of quilt-stuff, ranging from immaculate, complete, and pristine quilts to piecemeal elements like quilt tops, squares, scraps, and cutters. She learned I sew a lot of my own clothes. During one of my visits to her home, she blessed me with a bin full of beautiful textiles that have since made their way into countless DIY outfits in my closet.
- ③ We love taxidermy... and I'm from Texas. One holiday, Janet gifted me her vintage armadillo purse. She told me she had owned that purse since 1977. It's one of my most cherished possessions.
- ④ Working in Janet's office, I'd see binders packed with tactiles, including a stash of her silk worm cocoons. Yet another generous surprise came in the form of bright chartreuse silk worm cocoon earrings with darling beaded tendrils, fashioned by Janet. These also remind me of tender and joyful moments making jewelry together with Janet in her home.

