

## Why I made this archive

- I think I have social anxiety. I constantly feel like I fumble through whatever's expected of me as a social creature. I wanted to study solitary lifestyles because they are simultaneously my biggest fear and my stupidest fantasy. I wanted to see if learning more about people who were/are alone would give me any insight into my own loneliness.
- The moments in my life where the universe has felt the most real and right and cool have happened when I've gone off on my own. Which is really frustrating because I want to be alive with other people. Why can't I be the most alive I can be with other people??? This question made me curious about solitary lifestyles. I wanted to see if I could find more about the conversations that pop up around that question reflected in the lives of hermits and recluses.
- There's always a voice in my mind that tells me I should walk off into the woods and never return. This also made me curious about the lives of hermits, many of whom walked into the wilderness.
- I wanted to understand whether or not my loneliness was a strength I could hone or a weakness to be eradicated or something cool from the mysterious Column C.
- The benefits and effects of solitude have always been a mixed bag to me and I get anxious over whether or not solitude should be embraced or worked through. It's one of those things that can be a positive or a negative depending on who you ask.
- The "depending on who you ask" was what I wanted to investigate. Ergo, social reclusion, hermits, ascetics, anchorites, etc.

## Difficulties

- I had a lot of stress regarding getting an interview. I didn't know any experts on hermits or social reclusion. I didn't know anyone personally who had known a hermit. I sent an email to a scholar named Coby Dawdell, who wrote some articles on English hermits. I also sent an email to some neurologists hoping I could interview them about the neurological effects of solitude. I didn't really get anything productive out of these emails, and ultimately just felt like I had wasted their time and mine. Eventually, I was able to successfully reach out to a professor at my university, who knew a lot about this anchoress named Julian of Norwich. That interview was so scary. It felt like a conversation with extra rules, and I wasn't familiar or used to these rules. It wasn't too scary once we got going, but if you listen to it, you can tell there was some awkwardness there. I have a hard time listening to the interview because it sounds so awkward and stilted to me. Thinking about it makes me cringe.
- The grading behind this project stressed me out. I wasn't ever sure if I was doing enough or doing too much. I didn't have a good sense of how my nonfiction professor graded.
- I had some difficulty with the creative writing part of the project. I wanted to show myself through the presentation of my information, and I enjoyed showing myself through the presentation of my information. But writing creatively meant that I had to step up to the plate and tell people what I thought my research meant. I had to synthesize! And that's! So! Gross! It was really scary and hard to push through. And I didn't know what I was doing most of the time. I still don't think I'm anywhere near an expert on my topic. Or even the existential question of being alone. I feel too young, too

sheltered, and too confused to make anything worth reading. So it was hard to make work despite all of that.

- There was some burnout too. Essentially, I got sick of hermits pretty quickly and sick of juggling my archive with other class projects. I got pretty sick of college in general.

There was at least one week when I didn't work on the archive at all. I remember getting a B in an exam and thinking, "I shouldn't have wasted so much time learning about anchorites. I shouldn't have wasted so much time playing spider solitaire and tetris. I shouldn't have wasted so much time making my website pretty." And there were a lot of feelings of laziness and guilt and procrastination and resentment that made it hard to engage with my project at times.

- THERE'S JUST SO MUCH INFORMATION! There's so much I still don't know about Buddhism and anchorites and hermits and solitude and Jainism and HTML and thrushes and EVERYTHING! THE WORLD IS SO BIG! And it was hard not to feel bad for not knowing everything, even though I knew I didn't have too.

- This project was an insane learning experience when it came to my coding. The first line of code I had ever written was written about a month before I started my archive assignment. I decided to present this project via handmade web design because I wanted to challenge myself and see if I could actually do it. Sometimes this challenge was really awesome (I was super proud of myself when I got the animation to work) and other times it was really stressful. There were times when I genuinely considered scrapping the whole website and doing something physical. But I'm glad I stuck with it. I'm really proud of this site.

## Research and methods and process

- Most, if not all, of my research I got through books from the library(!), my university's digital repositories, academic journals, marginanalia.nu, wikipedia: the free online encyclopedia, youtube, google, google scholar, and hermitary.com (shout out to hermitary.com)
- I would child-pose it up on a white, fuzzy carpet in my room and skim through my computer and my books. I had scraps of lined paper and printer paper where I'd write my notes. Then I'd type up everything I wrote down on my neocities site.
- I also did a lot of my research and design while I was working as a student assistant. I work at one of my university's libraries, and that gives me access to this really awesome Dell. Since working at a library can be pretty slow most days, I spent a lot of six hour shifts just banging out my archive.
- I learned HTML and CSS through a Linkedin tutorial, my dad (the super awesome web designer), and google.
- I found out about Neocities about a month into working on my archive. Someone who I follow on Tumblr mentioned it, and the moment I looked into it I realized it would be the perfect way to present my website!
- I really enjoyed the sites I found through Neocities. They fill my soul as an aspiring librarian and human being.
- At first I thought about doing a comic for my creative project, but then I realized I could delve into my subjects more dynamically and fluidly if I used the pseudo-interview shtick. The pseudo-interview shtick also came about because I was frustrated with how

many dead ends and mental blocks I was running up against. I felt like an idiot trying to communicate with things that couldn't talk back to me, so I decided to utilize that frustration vis-a-vie creative expression.

### Why a personal website?

- A personal website is typically not made with the intention of making a product.
- A personal website is typically made with every intention to share who the designer is.
- When you make your own website, you are in every part of the creation process. It's less like putting things in a scrapbook and more like making your own paper from scratch, binding it in your own way, and then filling it in with whatever you want.
- The realm of personal websites—and Neocities in particular—is tremendously niche and that's exciting. You feel like a bug surrounded by other bugs all living under the same rock.
- The craziness of the Internet leaks everywhere in the realm of the personal website.
- When you look through Neocities, you feel the presence of a bottomless pit of humanity and human expression.
- A personal website is anonymous, but also insanely personable. A personal website is full of personality, but who may never know who the person behind it is. For these reasons, it felt like an appropriate medium for a project on hermits.

- There is no shame in the realm of the personal website. It makes you realize how full of shame other, more popular corners can be. Sometimes this lack of shame kind of sucks, but other times it's really beautiful.

Art made in a community built on anti-corporate, anti-product values and lacking in shame can be really wonderful art. Or at least the kind of art I typically prefer.

Making art on your computer can be a very lonely experience, but you make it with every intention of sharing yourself with other people. And when you get into those spaces, you can see how others have put themselves out there too.

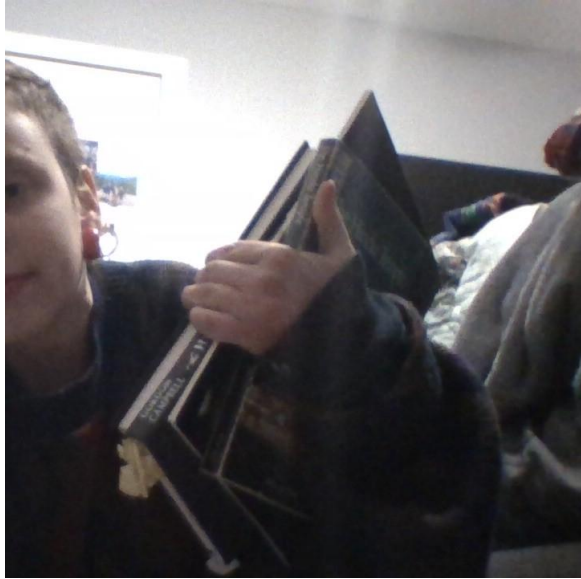
It's communicative and it's lonely. It's community-oriented and individual. It's you at your computer and it's everyone else at their computer too. It's really beautiful, and it drew me in for many of the same reasons I was drawn to hermits.

### Photos and Video!

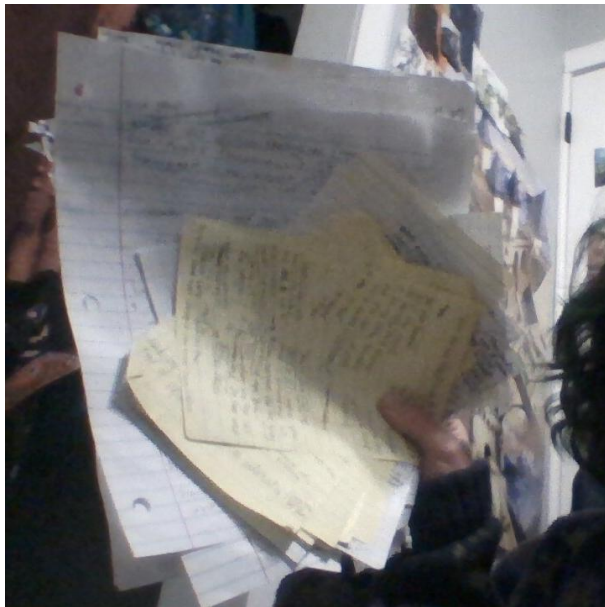
Video tour of my neocities account:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1\\_TgocUt2l67I\\_5vyWUJ7os7XS-MKRDLG/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_TgocUt2l67I_5vyWUJ7os7XS-MKRDLG/view?usp=drive_link)

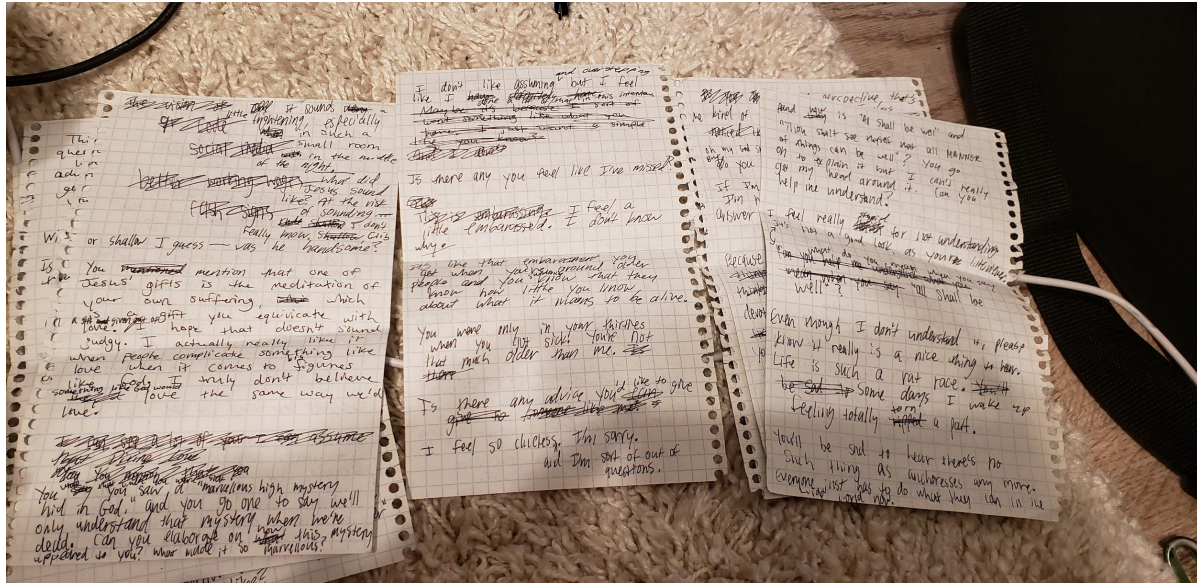
Some of the books:



Some of the notes:



Some pages of my “Julian Interview” rough draft:



The work space:

