





DEAR FRIEND,

I wonder what you're doing now.

I wonder if you're somewhere kissing someone, or looking into someone's eyes, maybe talking about art or love.

I kissed someone yesterday. We had been walking along the coastline of the city and sitting at the corner table of a neighborhood pub until it closed. We were standing awkwardly on the street saying goodbyes. After some seconds of silence they asked if we should kiss, and I replied: *Do you mean now?* I have no idea why I said that. So awkward! Maybe I was nervous about taking that step, even though I knew we should just decide to do it. I realised I should say yes and said it and leaned on them and they leaned back and our lips touched. They were probably feeling nervous too, because their lips were a bit tight. I believe my lips were quite soft and moist, haha, at least I hope so. I love soft lips.

It was scary to kiss, and I think I was counting seconds rather than being in the moment, but I felt relieved afterwards. I don't know what'll happen with this person, but I reckon in a dating context it's good to kiss as soon as possible, just to test how it feels. But first kisses are never too good, are they? Do you remember your best first kisses? I don't. I just like it if they last looooooong and get better every second. Every kiss is a new chance for a better kiss. Getting to know someone by kissing is great!

I wonder if you feel your lips with your tongue or teeth when you paint. I wonder if you imagine moving your tongue on the canvas. I'm thinking of that piece you painted with your whole body, "made love" to the painting, and the painting was "making love". I'm using quotation marks because I feel a bit weird using the expression "making love". I think sex is something other than an act of love—it's an act of enjoyment and play and mutual exploration. But I remember you talking about making love when talking about the work, and I was left thinking about the love we have for our work. I'm thinking we both really love our work.

Many of the artists I know are kind of *married* to their work. They have an intense (maybe even pretty toxic?) relationship with their practice. They dive so deep into it that human relationships can never reach those depths. I'm not as invested in my work as I am in my romantic relationships. I'm always thinking of desire and crushes and interpersonal dynamics and feelings and commitment in relationships, and when I work I make art about those processes too. But I guess if my work focuses on those topics, then I'm working almost all the time, haha (well, who isn't these days).

Would be interesting to know what you've been reading lately. I recently finished Jessica Fern's *Polysecure*, and I totally recommend it if you're at all interested in attachment theory. It's basically about how our attachment styles affect our relationships and how we can navigate loving relationships with a sense of security, specifically in the context of nonmonogamy. If you're not familiar with the concept, attachment styles are formulations that help us understand how our previous emotional experiences influence our relationships. Attachment theory is usually centered in very early childhood, focusing

on the impact made by our relationship with our primary caregiver, but Fern highlights the influence of other local communities and culture as well with a "nested model of attachment and trauma". For me, as a queer person, it's been interesting to think about the feeling of not fitting into society's norms, about the experience of being an outsider, and how that experience has affected my attachment behaviour.

The book introduced a thought about attachment I was super excited about: that one could kinda decide one's attachment figures, the people you have an attachment bond with. I realised I always sought attachment whenever I had feelings for someone, and it usually led to heartbreak. So I wanted to test it out. I was seeing someone and told them I had previously been quite anxiously attached to people I had fallen for, but wanted to try to be more conscious about my attachment. I told them I planned to ask for availability for an attachment bond. They said: *But isn't it a bit too late to ask if you already have feelings for someone?* I said I didn't know but wanted to try. It failed completely. My preoccupied attachment started coming to the surface as soon as I developed feelings. They didn't want anything serious and I couldn't do casual, as I was already fiercely seeking an attachment bond with them, meaning I expected them to be available, responsive and emotionally engaged, when in fact they weren't. I got burned once again. :(Yeah, so I don't suggest trying that. I've come to the conclusion I don't really understand what *casual* means in terms of relationships. Is it about not having feelings? TELL MEEEEEE

My friend just posted a "spiritual journey" quote on Instagram saying something like we shouldn't get attached to the people or things we love, but instead "let beautiful connections pass through without attachment". I keep coming back to that thought, over and over again, realizing I haven't been practicing that. I think in the realm of work it's easier to love freely. Like after our studio visit, I felt a nice connection with you but didn't feel the need to be in constant contact with you. I trusted our conversation and connection would continue and keep growing over time without forcing it. I hope you feel the same way.

Anyway, thanks for reading. Would love to hear your thoughts if you have time to write back.



WITH LOVE, AS
ALWAYS,
SAARA HANNINUS