

## **Dissecting a Complicated Symbol:**

### **Adopting a Scientific Method to Examine the Tailored Shirt**

curated by Noah Pica

#### **Curatorial Statement**

In the years I have witnessed Winnie work through her 100 tailored shirts, a methodology has emerged. It first begins with an analysis and dissection of the shirt at hand, then a reformation of its primary components. The dissection differs from shirt to shirt, characterized by delicate slicing along the fabric's pinstripes or analysis of all areas that have wear and tear. The focus on dismantling the patriarchy guides the project as a whole; however, Winnie always responds to the specificities of the tailored shirts in front of her. Her working system has formulaic moments that create a through line between the works, but she always sits with, notices, and respects the personal histories of each object.

The scientific method has been a co-conspirator in Winnie's endeavor, working with her to create a structured approach. First, Winnie observes each shirt, analyzes its form, and asks the question "how can I best dismantle and reconstruct this garment?" She hypothesizes that a few chosen techniques – whether that be slicing the fabric or embroidering onto its existing form – can work towards dismantling the patriarchy. Next, experiments take place: she tries out these techniques on the shirt, identifying key successes before tackling the whole piece. An analysis follows, where she identifies which techniques work best and brings them into future pieces for a re-test – one must always confirm their findings. Each shirt is archived with its assigned number and documented, with her conclusions being reported to Instagram for public access.

When Winnie approached me to curate a space within her show, I felt strongly that her methodology for making needed to be at the forefront. How can we amplify this project's adjacency to the scientific method? After brainstorming with Winnie, we decided to make the environment as forensic as possible, pulling from the highly characterized visualizations we see on television hospital tables and criminal investigation shows. We limited the number of shirts to two, focusing on the methodology for this exhibit rather than the impressive quantity of the project – the sheer amount of work would become evident in other spaces throughout the exhibition. The potential for the space to feel like a set felt exciting, so we leaned in. Two metal surgical tables serve as the forensic surface for the shirts, and an excess of metal spotlights become spectators whose eyes never glance away from the shirts. The shirts lay limply on display, waiting to be observed, analyzed, and tested. The shirts become proxies for

ourselves – those of us who feel that wearing the tailored shirt is like wearing the wrong uniform. Are we the ones on the table, who get observed, poked, prodded, and inevitably used for testing?