

I WAS ALREADY EVERYTHING

*What happens when we rediscover our lost fragments,
and put them all together in the same room?*

KRISSY TEEGERSTROM | Statement

I WAS ALREADY EVERYTHING is a series of capes, each representing a fragmented part of self lost through trauma or societal conditioning. Through symbols and motifs, I am able to tell the truth about my childhood trauma, **exploring themes of grief, rage, loss, alienation and abuse**. Some fragments are dark and difficult, and some are not, but each fragment was lost to me until I began therapy in 2020. That painful process of truth-telling gave me back parts of myself that I didn't realize were mine all along. We are born whole. What happens to us, especially when we are powerless, is what creates the fragments.

The inspiration for this exhibition came to me all at once, in a vision. I wish to uplift and inspire others, so at first I did not want to create art around my own darkness. I sat with this vision for a long time before I arrived at an agreement that enabled me to move forward: Each cape needed to be beautiful in its own way, even if it represents something devastating. Nature provides a great example of how even decay can be beautiful. **With that goal in mind, I knew I could tell the whole truth in each cape without censoring myself.**

Capes are often worn by those who are transforming - becoming invisible or supernatural - so they are a perfect vehicle to represent life-altering experiences. During therapy, as I revisited and rewired memories via EMDR, I felt I was time-traveling and battling invisible demons in order to rescue myself. I have achieved great growth and healing through reckoning with the unseen.

I made each cape entirely with secondhand materials. The slow discovery of fabrics and notions is its own collaboration with providence which ends up informing the final designs. Even the tools I use are secondhand, down to my 1948 Singer Featherweight sewing machine. It is a pleasure to utilize cast-off materials, because we are never throwaway people. We need each fragment in order to become whole.

All my life I have been on a quest to know what it's like to feel safe and loved and seen. By sharing the skeleton of my story and revealing my own fragments, I hope to achieve a higher purpose which is to open a window into the experience of trauma through the lens of post-traumatic growth. I invite the viewer to think about what their own fragments might be, why they were lost, and how they might be reclaimed. Discovering and reintegrating our fragments is a brave and beautiful step on the journey to self-acceptance and self-realization. **We journey to the underworld and return with our own inner treasure.**

In 2021, I worked on this exhibition at three artist residencies: Bale Creek Allen Gallery, Rule Gallery, and Laity Lodge. I will share *I Was Already Everything* in artist talks, a book, and additional showings. The next exhibition is in Marfa, TX, July 4-10, 2022.