



Rachel Burke *Thanks for Nothing*

1 – 14 February

Side Gallery

Curated by Laura Brinin





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Rachel Burke

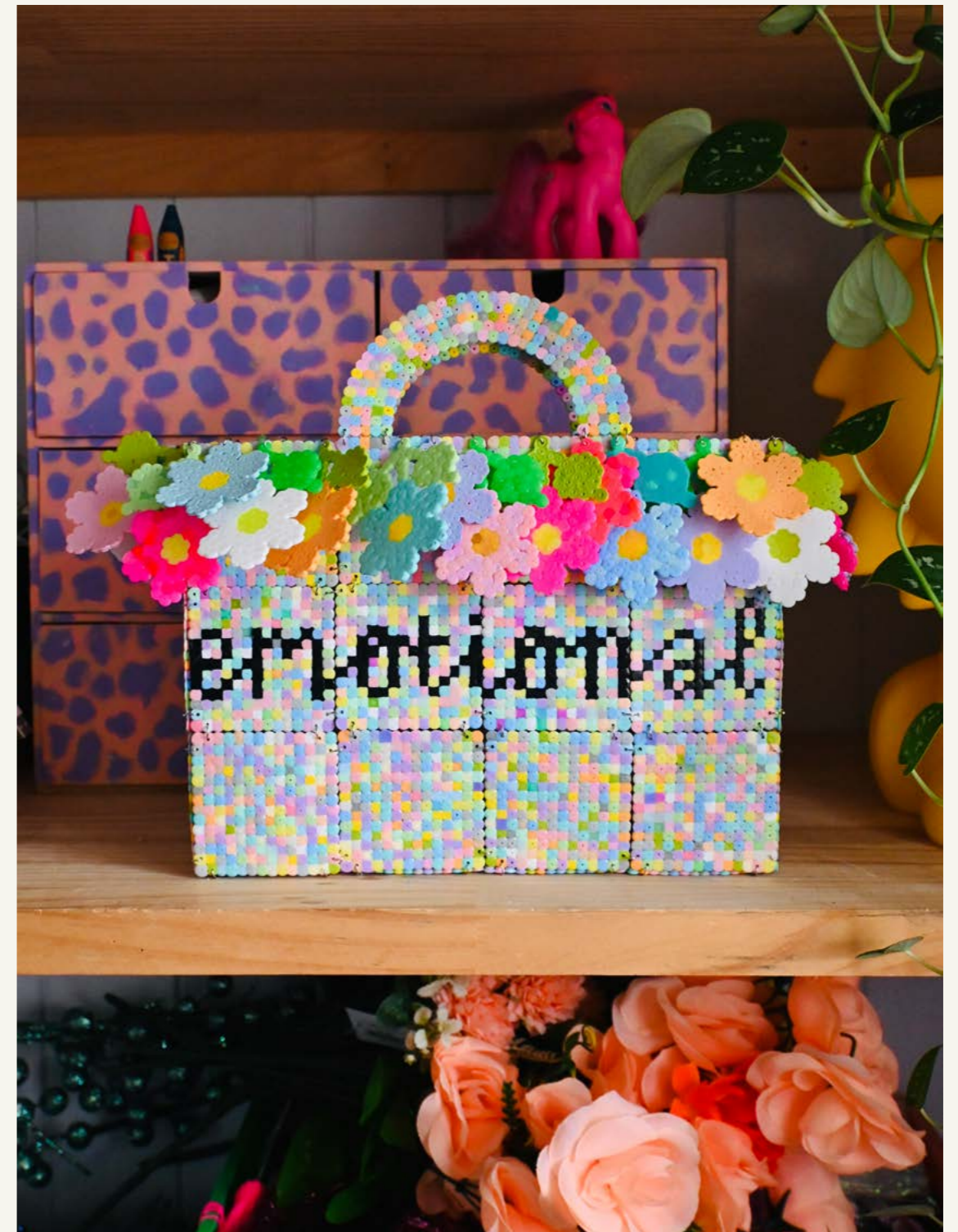
Rachel Burke is a multidisciplinary artist and designer based in Meanjin/ Brisbane, Australia. Burke's process driven, performative work moves between wearable art, sculpture, contemporary painting, and installation to navigate themes of identity, memory, and obsession. Her practice re-imagines the mundanity of the everyday through ornamentation and transformation of the ordinary. Using nostalgic, colourful materials centred in craft and play, these artworks serve as 'portals' for personal introspection and transcendence, highlighting the complicated tenderness and frailty of memory.

Rachel has exhibited her work in gallery spaces across Australia, recent solo exhibitions include: *Pla Pla*, Small Works Gallery (2023), *Garden of Gratitude*, Brisbane Powerhouse, (2021), *Apomowish*, Hawthorn Arts Centre, (2021), *Cute Tomb*, Saint Cloche Gallery (2020), *APOMOGY*, Redlands Art Gallery (2019), *The Little Mermaid*, Hamer Hall (2019), *Tinsel Town*, Analogue Gallery (2017), *The Magical Mundane*, Fortitude Valley Mall (2016), *APOMOGY*, Enough Space (2016). Recent group exhibitions include: *Question the Space*, Walker Street Gallery (2024), *City in the Sun*, The Museum of Brisbane (2021-2022), *The F Word*, The Print Bar (2019), *Wonderwall*, Adderton Gallery (2019), *Wonderland*, The Australian Centre of the Moving Image (2018), *Yen Female Art Awards*, GAFFA (2016).





Rachel Burke



04

Thanks for Nothing



Artist statement

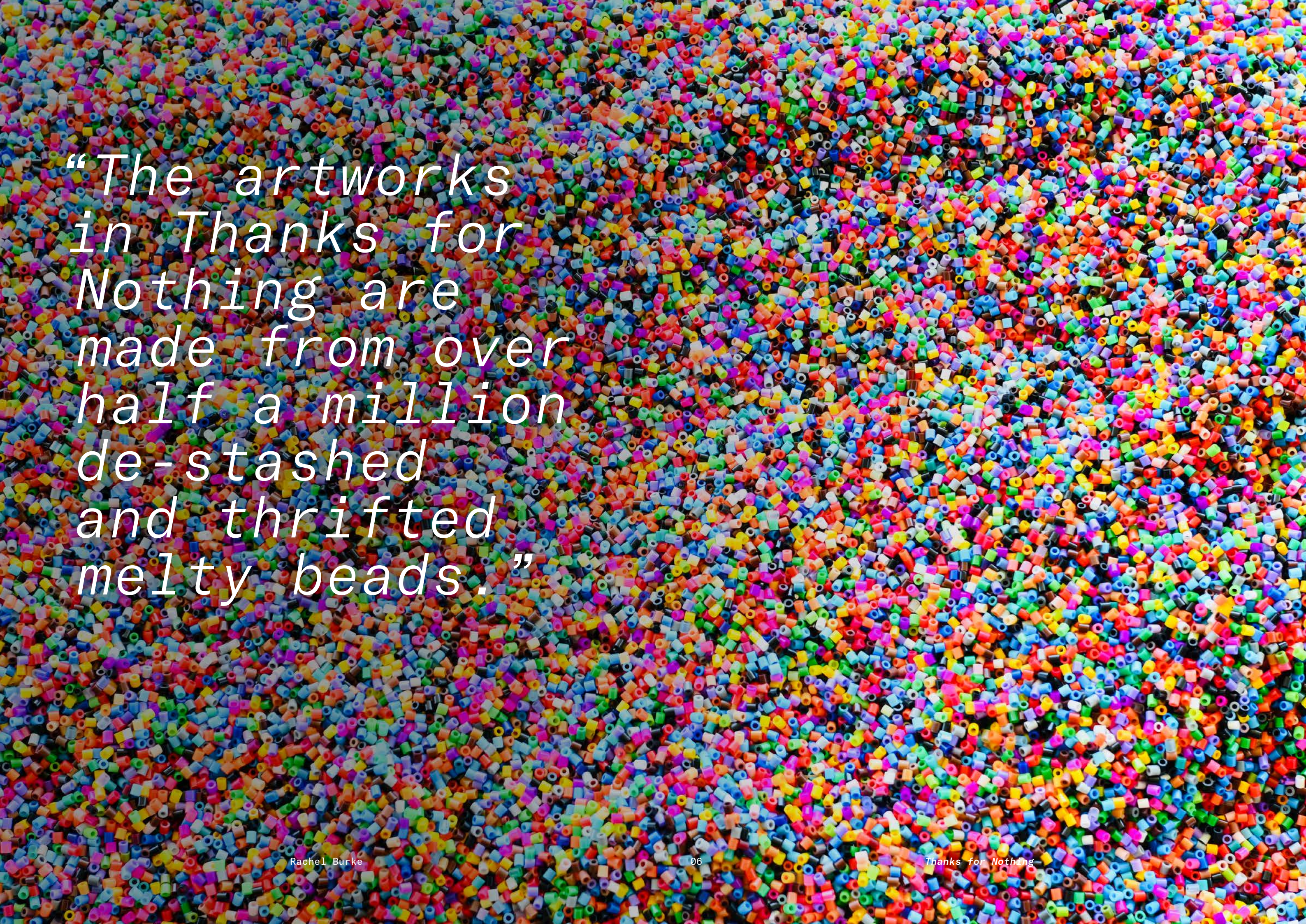
Thanks for Nothing is a body of work born out of a recent personal experience of recurrent pregnancy loss over a 12-month period. Created with over half a million de-stashed and thrifted melty beads, these works capture fragments of conversations, clinical language, and my own reflections. The process of obsessive, repetitive creation became both a refuge and a mode of healing, allowing me to confront and process my grief and transform it into something tangible.

Each piece within the collection reflects aspects of my journey, including the often-unspoken phrases, platitudes, and scripted responses I received — or even repeated myself — in the isolating aftermath of my losses. In this work, the act of creation became a way to process that isolation, to understand my trauma, and to give physical form to my emotions that would otherwise remain unspoken or forgotten.

The use of melty beads carries deep personal significance, symbolising a pivotal moment in my experience while offering a meditative and repetitive process that facilitated healing, reflection and catharsis. Inspired by the domestic motifs of vintage quilts, patchworks, tea towels, and cross-stitches, panels are linked with jump rings, connecting memories in a way that mirrors the interwoven nature of loss, grief, and isolation. My use of the bag as a form reflects a recurring desire during this time to place my emotions and experiences somewhere else while I took the time to recover. The bags serve as an attempt to physically contain and hold the weight of these emotions, creating a delicate space where complex and conflicting feelings can reside.

Through this process, I have sought to own and share my experiences and aim to transform the strange and invisible feelings of loss into something tangible.

Rachel Burke with
Chats 2025
 Melty beads
 140 x 99 cm
 \$7800

The background of the entire page is a dense, colorful mosaic of small, multi-colored beads. The beads are in various colors including red, blue, green, yellow, purple, and orange, and they are arranged in a way that creates a large, abstract, organic shape that resembles a heart or a similar form. The text is overlaid on the left side of this mosaic.

*“The artworks
in Thanks for
Nothing are
made from over
half a million
de-stashed
and thrifted
melty beads.”*

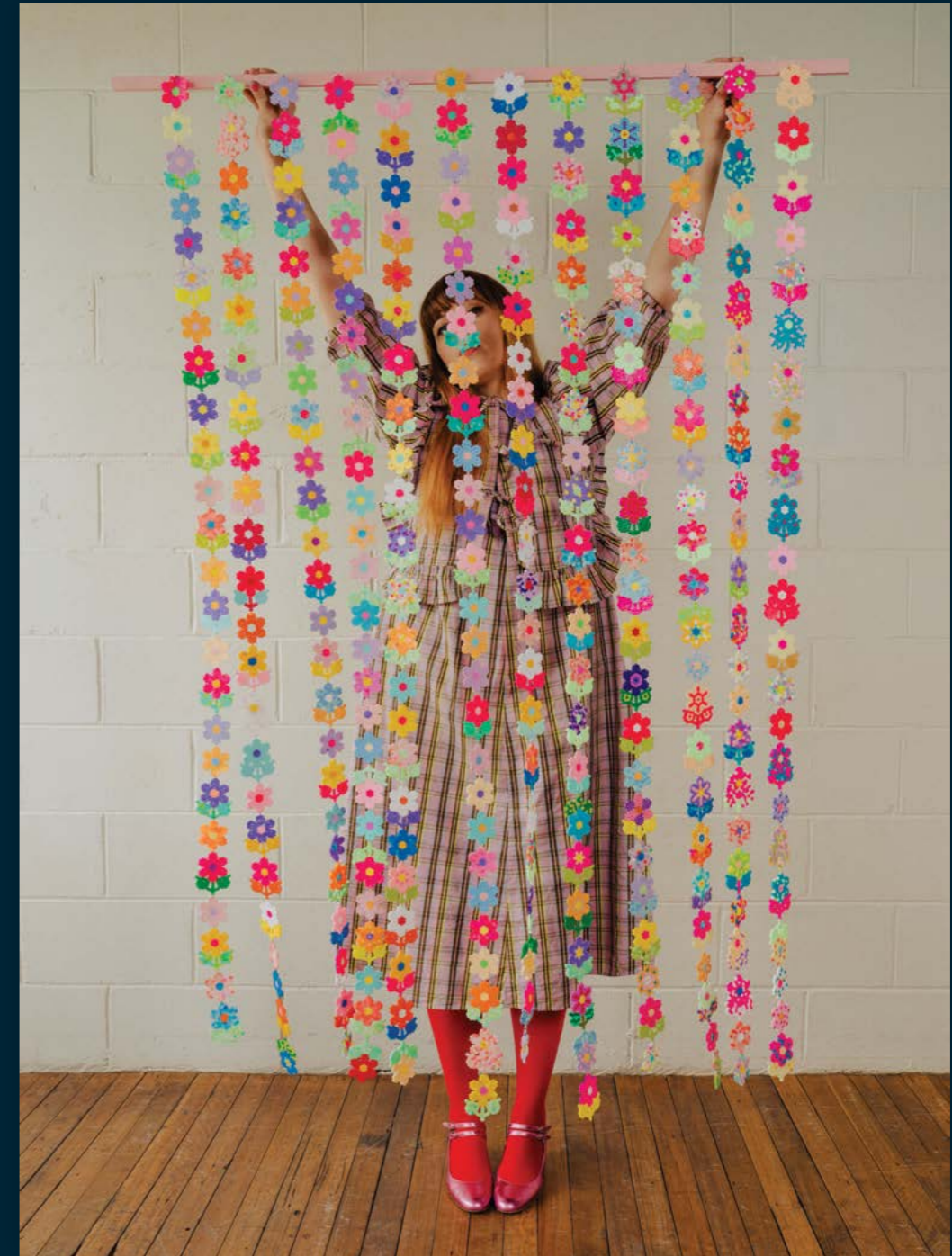
Thanks for Nothing

by Rachel Parsons

You might think you know Rachel Burke. Perhaps you're among the 200,000+ followers of her Instagram account, @imakestagram, showcasing her signature tinsel, tulle, and pompom couture alongside DIY crafts like pipe cleaner crowns, trash vases, and disco shoes. Or you may have seen one of her creations donned on a red carpet or mainstage; I'm thinking of Cate Blanchett at the 2024 AACTA awards in head-to-toe pink tinsel, topped with an oversized polka dot bow (iconic and just the right amount of too much). Since establishing her first brand, Yellow Cake, Burke has been anything but idle or one note (she is also an author and artist). She has a recognisable public persona alongside a

successful multidisciplinary career. In our social media-obsessed world, Burke has managed to exhibit both herself and her work in a single space. She has found her superpower in being authentically herself.

But not all is glitter and pompoms for Burke. Running through her oeuvre of excess and kitsch is a commitment to radical honesty, to expressing her personal stories and lived experiences through the things she makes. Yes, these experiences include immense joy, love, inspiration and whimsy; they also include loss, grief, vulnerability and trauma, and it is personal trauma that has been the impetus for Burke's most recent body of work, *Thanks for Nothing*. After experiencing a "year of loss" that included multiple miscarriages and the death of her beloved sausage dog Daisy, Burke engaged in a year of obsessive making as both a coping mechanism and to combat the silence that surrounds (women's) issues that no one wants to talk about.



Rachel Burke with
Daisy Veil 2024
Melty beads
150 x 119 cm
\$3360 (full set of 12 strands)

Many artists, and I would argue especially female artists, have used their work as a mode of processing and translating both physical and psychological trauma.

Frida Kahlo's many self-portraits project a lifetime of tremendous pain and loss. At the age of six, Kahlo was struck with polio, and later, at age 18, she was in a horrific bus accident where she suffered numerous injuries. These included a broken spinal column, collar bone, ribs, and pelvis, 11 fractures in her leg, and an iron handrail punctured her abdomen and uterus. Consequently, between 1931 and 1934, Kahlo had three miscarriages. Her relationship and marriage with artist Diego Rivera was turbulent. Kahlo taught herself to paint during her lengthy, bedridden recuperation period after the bus crash: Kahlo's parents set up an easel and a mirror above her hospital bed so she could paint self-portraits. Over her lifetime, she portrayed herself again and again, simultaneously exploring, questioning, and staging her identity and translating the most fraught episodes from her life, including her physical pain and emotional distress, into art. Through her work, Kahlo attempted to make sense of and find some relief from and even beauty in her suffering, "The most powerful art in life is to transform pain into a healing talisman. A butterfly is reborn, blossomed into a colourful party!"

Louise Bourgeois created sculptures, installations, drawings and prints revolving around themes of the unconscious, sexual desire, the body, and motherhood, mainly influenced by traumatic psychological events from her childhood, especially her father's infidelity, domestic aggression and

her mother's early death. Bourgeois' personal visual language, portrayed spirals, spiders, cages, medical tools, and sewn appendages to symbolise the feminine psyche, beauty, and psychological pain, using her trauma as raw material in the creation of her emotionally charged artwork. She was not afraid to depict taboo subjects or shy away from the abject; for her, an artist's integrity was not diverging away from the truth, "an artist can show things that other people are terrified of expressing."

My Bed (1999) by Tracy Emin is still one of the artist's most revered and reviled artworks. A process of directly making art from life, the work consists of a bed, rumpled and stained sheets, piles of junk, empty bottles of vodka, dirty slippers, cartons of cigarettes, a pair of panties soiled with menstrual blood, a container of birth control pills, condoms, etc. The work is so 'real' that a museum guard mistakenly tidied the installation, thinking it had been vandalised. *My Bed* gives the viewer immediate and intimate access to Emin's life during a time of debilitating depression. The work is autobiographical, confessional, and vulnerable and speaks to the female body and mind as it fails to live up to polite social and even self-expectations. All of Emin's work draws from her personal experience, and most acknowledge trauma, poverty, rape, abortion, relationships, and death; everything is up for grabs, and Emin seems to hold nothing back. Over the past three decades, her work has been captivatingly candid, brash, shocking, tender, and heartbreaking. For Emin, making art has been an act of survival, resilience and acceptance, "I've killed my shame; I've hung it on the walls."



Little Miss Carrier bag 2024
Melty beads
34.5 x 28.5 cm
\$720



Emin's work especially inspires Burke, and there are a number of observable similarities from their shared use of language, the adoption of materials and techniques that may be understood as feminine, crafty or low-brow, and catharsis that both artists feel through the process of making. It may feel befuddling to reconcile Burke's dopamine-infused fashionista persona as being aligned with the deeply layered and sometimes brutally confronting work we expect from Emin, but don't be fooled; pretty can be a trap.

The artworks in *Thanks for Nothing* are made from over half a million de-stashed and thrifted melty beads. While melty beads were used briefly as a therapy activity for the elderly in the 1960s, they are recognised mainly as a children's game or craft activity for creating colourful pixel art. It is not surprising that Burke would use melty beads in her work; they join tinsel, wool, pipe cleaners, recycled

The many faces of No 1 2024
Melty beads
7 x 7 cm
\$120

cardboard and glitter as the standard craft-based materials that Burke is generally drawn to. What is different in this instance is their deeply personal significance. After being told by her Dr that she would be miscarrying for a second time and to expect a relatively minor physical effect (the equivalent of a standard period), Burke found herself in the melty bead craft aisle of a store, feeling the in no way insignificant physical and emotional impact of losing a pregnancy. This became a key moment of trauma for Burke, yet it was also the place where she found a means for processing her grief, shame and anger. Melty beads presented a tool for healing. Through the labour-intensive and repetitive action of compiling words and images from melty beads, Burke could zone out, creating a mental safe space to reflect on and process everything that had happened to her and everything she was feeling. Like Kahlo, Bourgeois and Emin, Burke translated her trauma into her artwork, navigating her vulnerability and coming out the other side, ready to talk about it all openly and loudly.

In a series of colourful and cutesy handbags, Burke inscribes words and phrases like "little miss carrier", "empty", "emotional", and "old". The text announces various states of being that Burke experienced during her year of loss, giving what would be well-meaning friends and acquaintances a clue to how she is feeling. The work finds humour and is even light-hearted, in the vein of laughing so that you don't cry.

Handbags often function for women as a kind of security blanket or shield, something to hold in front of you in public situations (somewhere to stash your pepper spray). Symbolically, baggage speaks to the unspoken mental and emotional load one carries with them; physically, bags provide a cavity, an internal space, a womb.

In *The Many Faces of...* series, Burke has created 28 pixelated faces that express a spectrum of emotions. The number 28 is symbolically important, representing Burke's standard menstrual cycle. The work reads like a menstruation diary, a standard for many to record daily notations of their emotional and physical state. "How are you feeling today?" 😊

In my conversation with Burke, she speaks about periods of mania she experienced, frantically taking pregnancy tests, the volatile highs and lows, the inadequacy of the medical profession's ability to acknowledge and support the individual's experience as they traverse the happiest and most tragic moments of their lives. Yes, these are common occurrences that women universally face, but when it is your turn, it can feel so intensely your own and so overwhelmingly isolating.

Burke's anger towards the medical system's treatment of women is an undercurrent throughout the exhibition. The title work, *Thanks for Nothing*, alludes to their downplaying of the reality of her situation as someone who had lost multiple pregnancies. Burke was told that she could still travel, fly, exercise, and live her life. She trusted the advice she was given yet continued to have miscarriages and still has no medical explanation as to why. She felt she was being gaslighted, managed, and patronised under a cloak of kindness and platitudes. At the same time, her own body failed her. We are told (brainwashed) that pregnancy is the most natural thing in the world and the ultimate goal for a woman, and yet, despite all the effort and care, Burke's body did not live up to its end of the bargain. Irrationally, but also commonly, Burke felt shame in herself and her body in light of its perceived failure. In making this work, Burke, like

Emin, recontextualises her loss and shame, making it visible and creating space for trauma that society tells us not to talk about.

During the same period, Burke's dog Daisy passed away. As a fellow obsessed dog mother, I can fully relate to the immense desolation one feels when losing a pet. No other love we experience is as effortless and easy as the love we share with animals, and no grief is as uncomplicated and pure as when we lose them. *Daisy Veil* speaks to this particular grief. Taking the form of a beaded curtain, the work evokes a shroud or portal, something that guards or transports through memory.

All of this in melty beads.

The work's aesthetic is quintessential Rachel Burke: colourful, crafty, feminine, pretty. And why not? Despite all that she experienced during her year of loss, Burke is still the same person, and she applies the same lexicon of visual language to this work. For Burke, the colour of grief isn't black; there is space for humour and beauty within trauma. The hidden thing under the seductiveness of plastic colour and whimsy is her personal experience laid bare and made tangible; it is in this space of open vulnerability where real and vital conversations may flow. It is not an easy thing to be so open and honest, especially in such a public way, but it is only through talking about these issues and bringing them to the foreground that we have any hope of inciting change and making things better.

Rachael Parsons



Rachel Burke



Rachel Burke with
Chats 2025
Melty beads
140 x 99 cm
\$7800

Left
Chats (detail) 2025
Melty beads
140 x 99 cm
\$7800





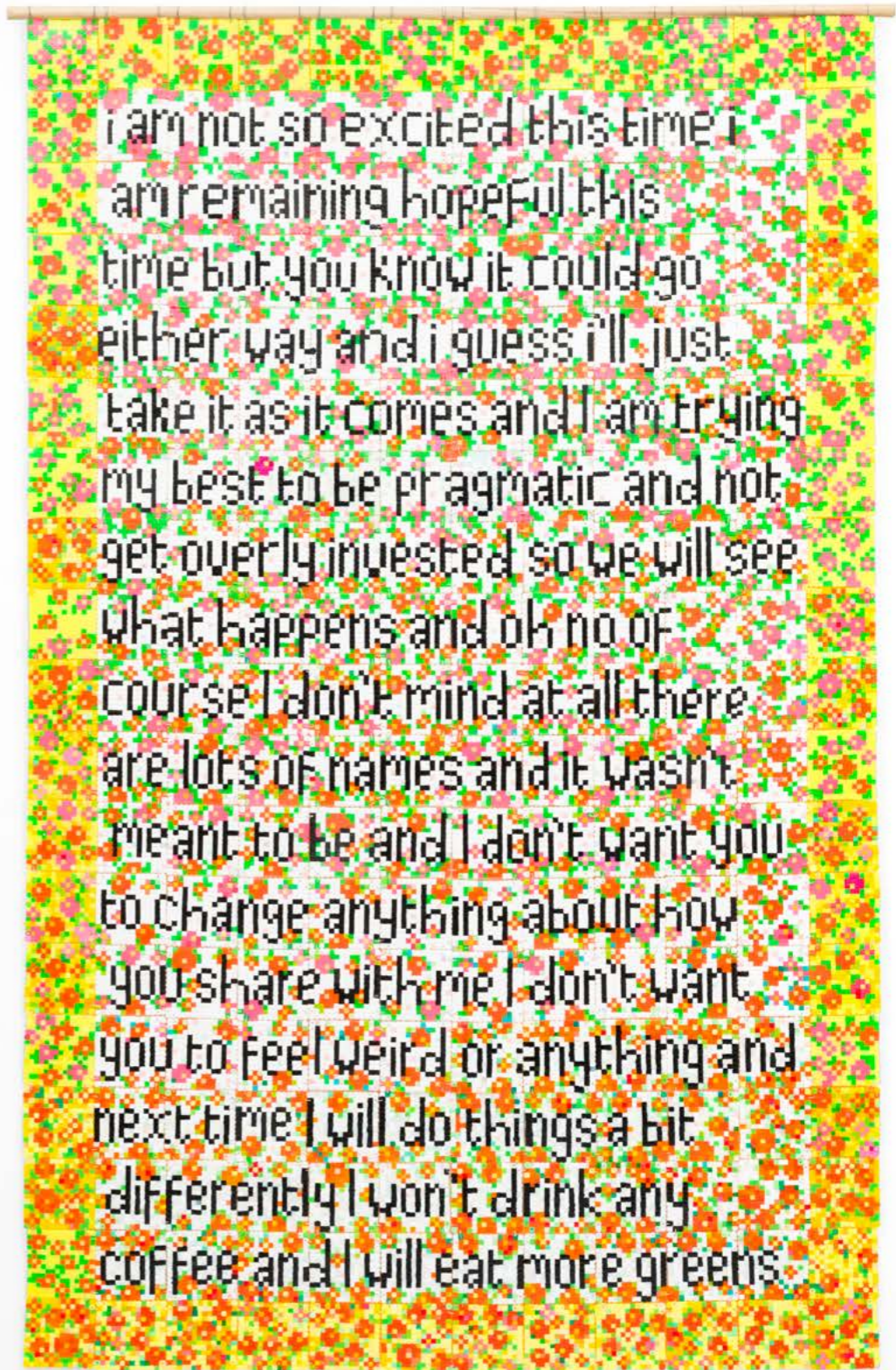
Page 11
Many Many Many Feelings (detail) 2024
Melty beads
110 x 56 cm

Many Many Many Feelings 2024
Melty beads
110 x 56 cm
\$ 3500



Rachel Burke

Left
Script (detail) 2024
Melly beads
133 x 84 cm
\$7500



Above
Script 2024
Melly beads
133 x 84 cm
\$7500



Very Anxious, Ready for Snacks 2024
Melly beads
76.5 x 62.5 cm
\$2200

“In a series of colourful and cutesy handbags, Burke inscribes words and phrases like “little miss carrier”, “empty”, “emotional”, and “old”. The text announces various states of being that Burke experienced during her year of loss, giving what would be well-meaning friends and acquaintances a clue to how she is feeling. The work finds humour and is even light-hearted, in the vein of laughing so that you don’t cry.”





Little Miss Carrier bag 2024
Melty beads
34.5 x 28.5 cm
\$720
Left: Front; Right: Back



Happy Sad Bag 2024
Melty beads
35.6 x 29 cm
\$720
Left: Front; Right: Back



Empty Bag 2024
Melty beads
35.5 x 35 cm
\$720
Left: Front; Right: Back



Old Bag 2024
Melty beads
20.5 x 28.5 cm
\$450
Left: Front; Right: Back



Emotional Baggage 2024
Melly beads
27.5 x 28 cm
\$580
Left: Front; Right: Back



Shit Bag 2024
Melty beads
29 x 29 cm
\$550
Left: Front; Right: Back



Hello Bag 2024
Milty beads
28.5 x 29 cm
\$450
Left: Front; Right: Back



Above
Daisy Veil (detail) 2024
 Melty beads
 150 x 119 cm



Right
Daisy Veil 2024
 Melty beads
 150 x 119 cm
 \$3360 (full set of 12 strands)

Daisy Chain
 Melty beads
 150 x 5 cm
 \$280 per strand length

Rachel Burke

“The work’s aesthetic is quintessential Rachel Burke: colourful, crafty, feminine, pretty. And why not? Despite all that she experienced during her year of loss, Burke is still the same person, and she applies the same lexicon of visual language to this work. For Burke, the colour of grief isn’t black; there is space for humour and beauty within trauma.”





*Thanks for Nothing,
speckle with green* 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680

Rachel Burke

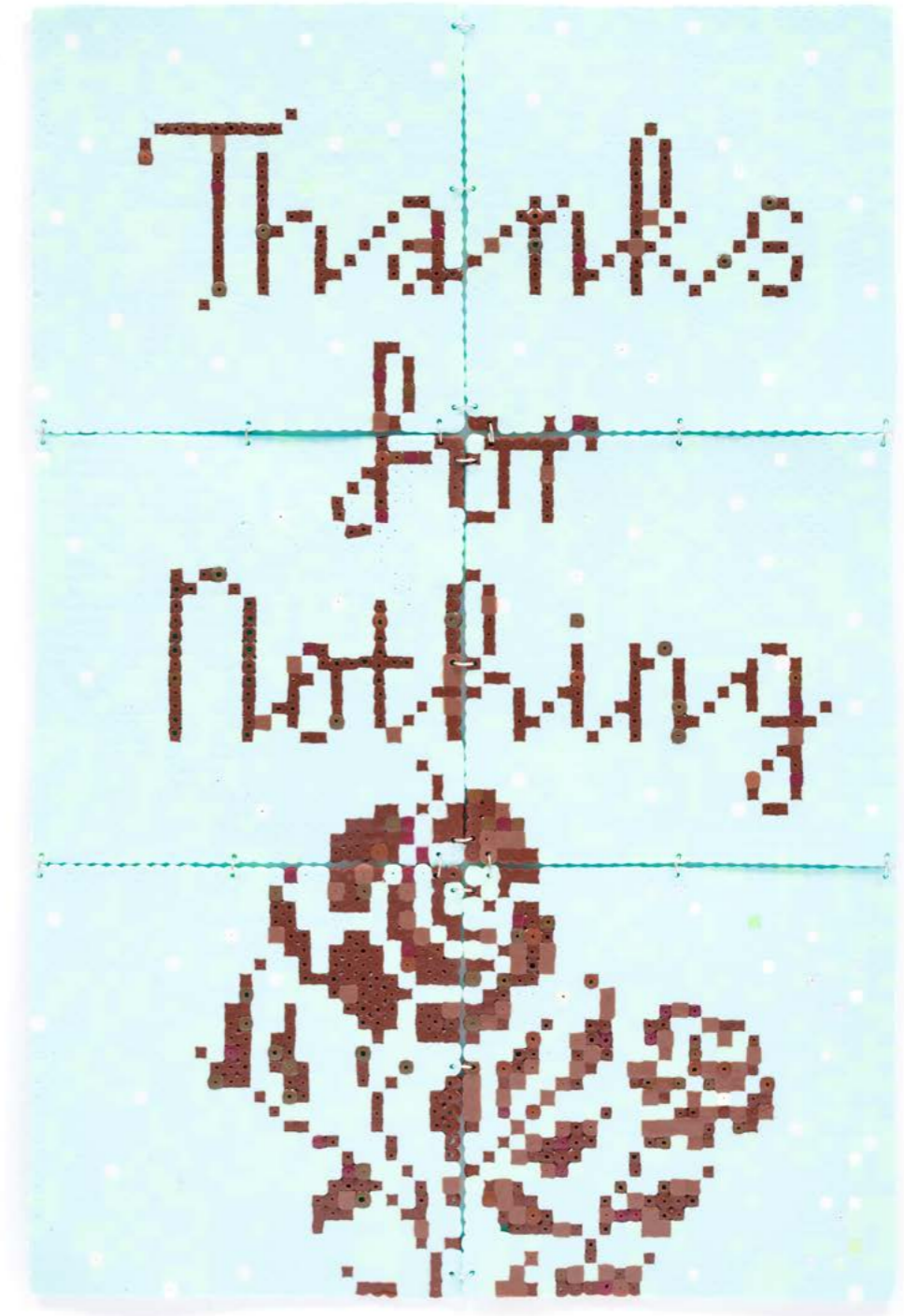


*Thanks for Nothing,
rainbow patchwork with red* 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680

Thanks for Nothing



Thanks for Nothing,
blue speckle with lemon 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680



Thanks for Nothing,
bright blue with brown 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680



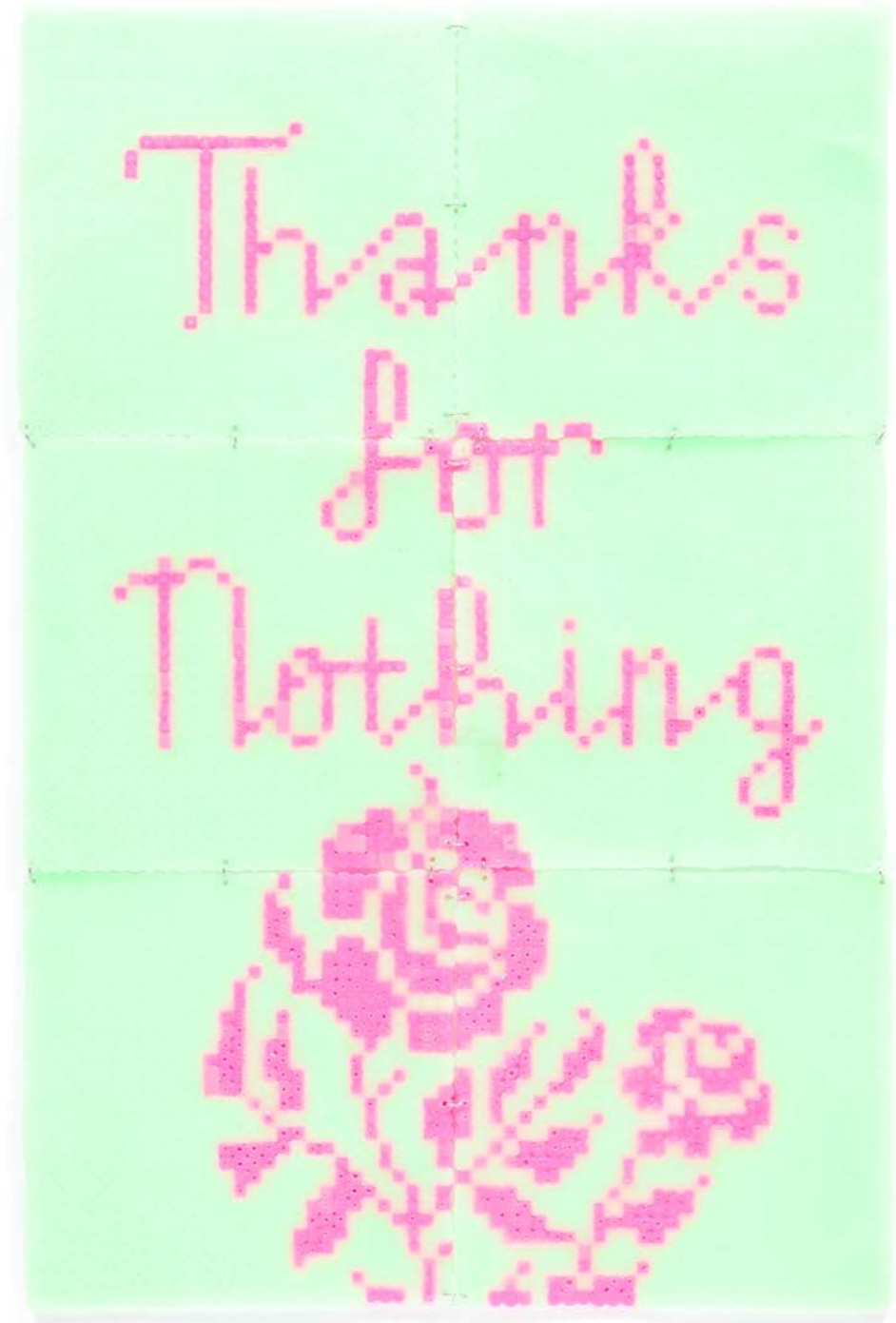
Thanks for Nothing,
rainbow swirl with black 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680



Thanks for Nothing,
hot pink with pale green 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680



Thanks for Nothing,
sprinkles with black 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680



Thanks for Nothing,
pale green with hot pink 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680



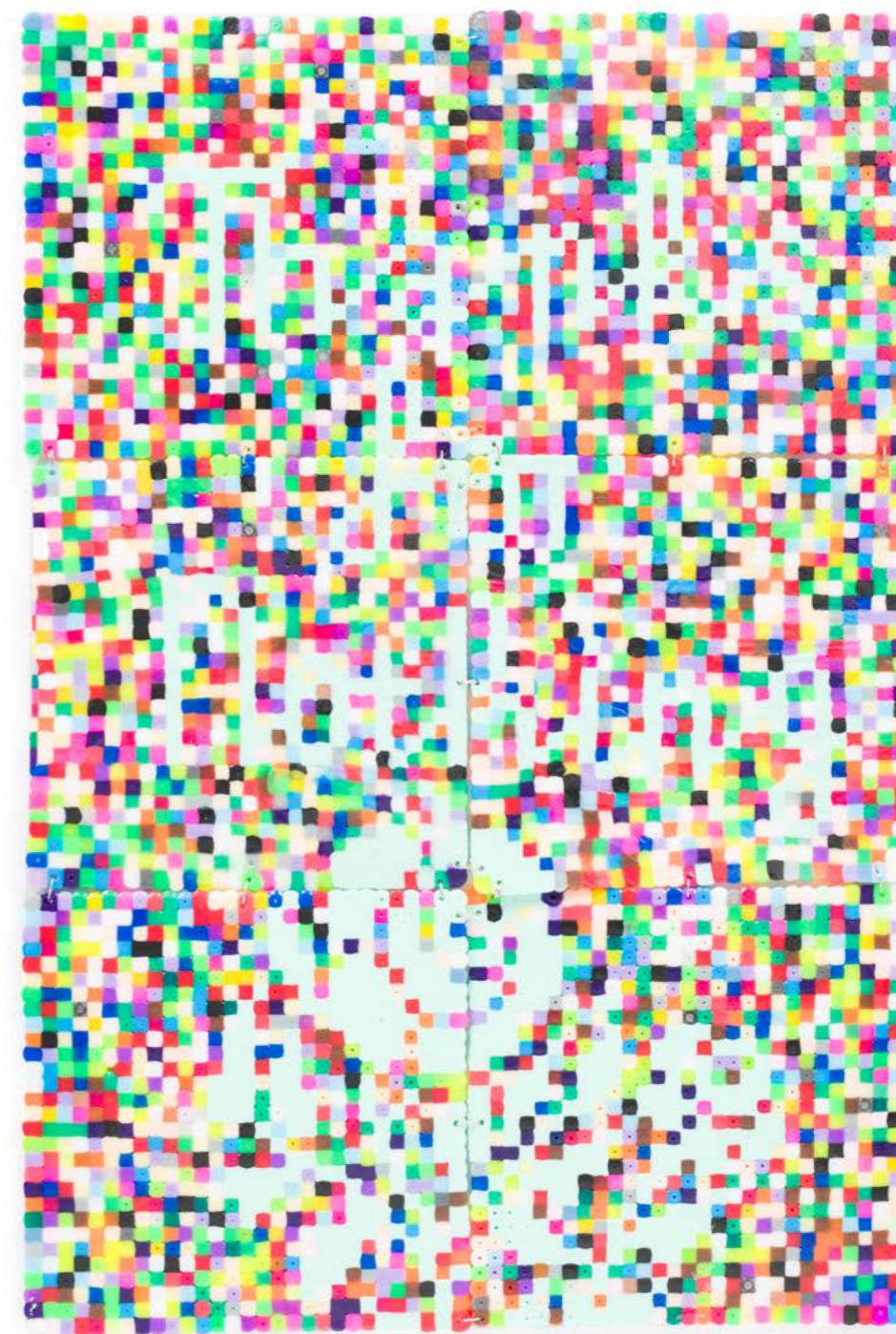
Thanks for Nothing,
lemon with dark blue 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680



Thanks for Nothing,
lemon check with orange 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680



Thanks for Nothing,
blue with coral 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680



Thanks for Nothing,
rainbow speckle with pale blue 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680



Thanks for Nothing,
orange with aqua 2024
Milty beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680

Rachel Burke

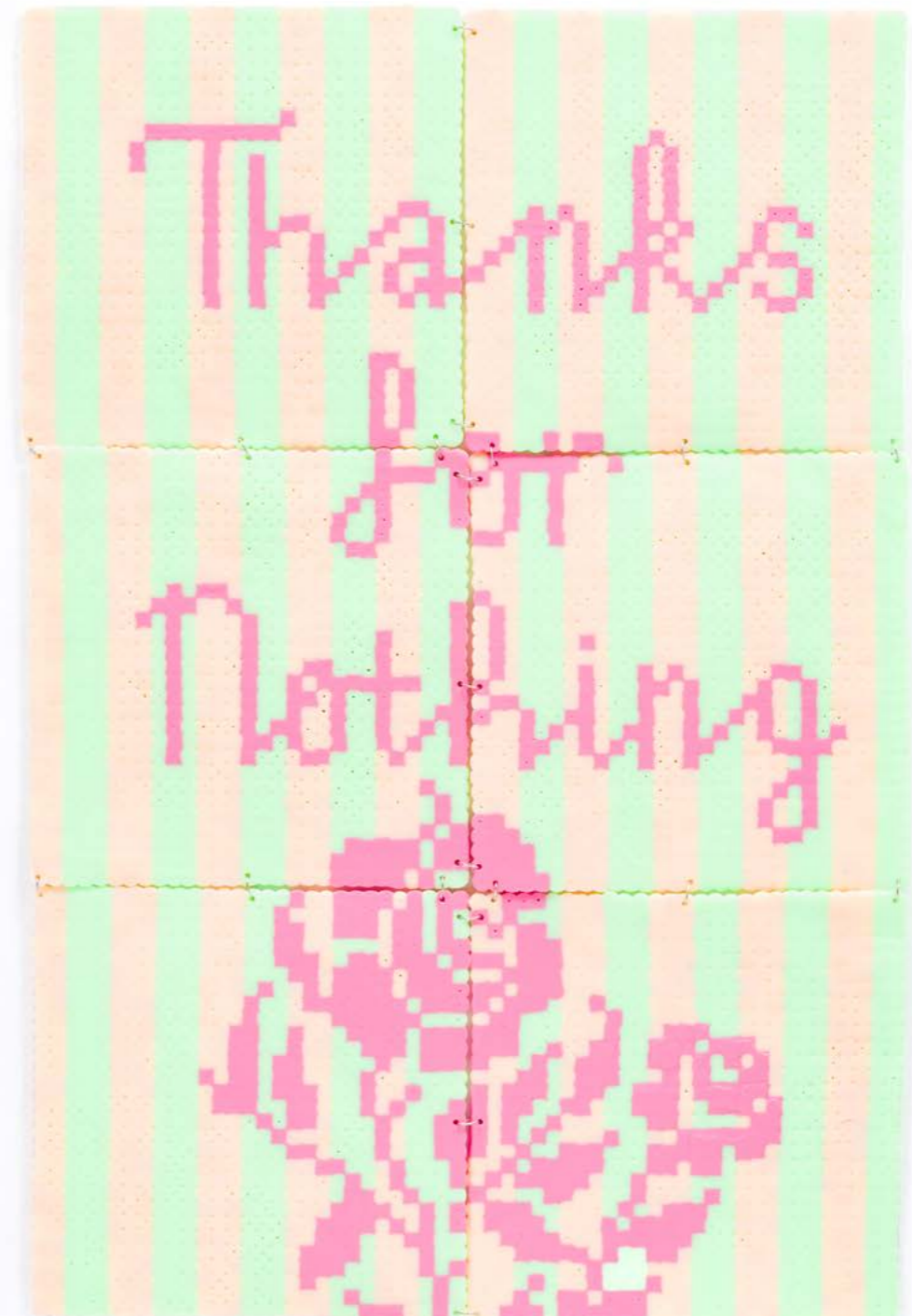


Thanks for Nothing,
pink and mint check with grey 2024
Milty beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680

Thanks for Nothing



Thanks for Nothing,
hot pink check with yellow 2024
Melty beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680

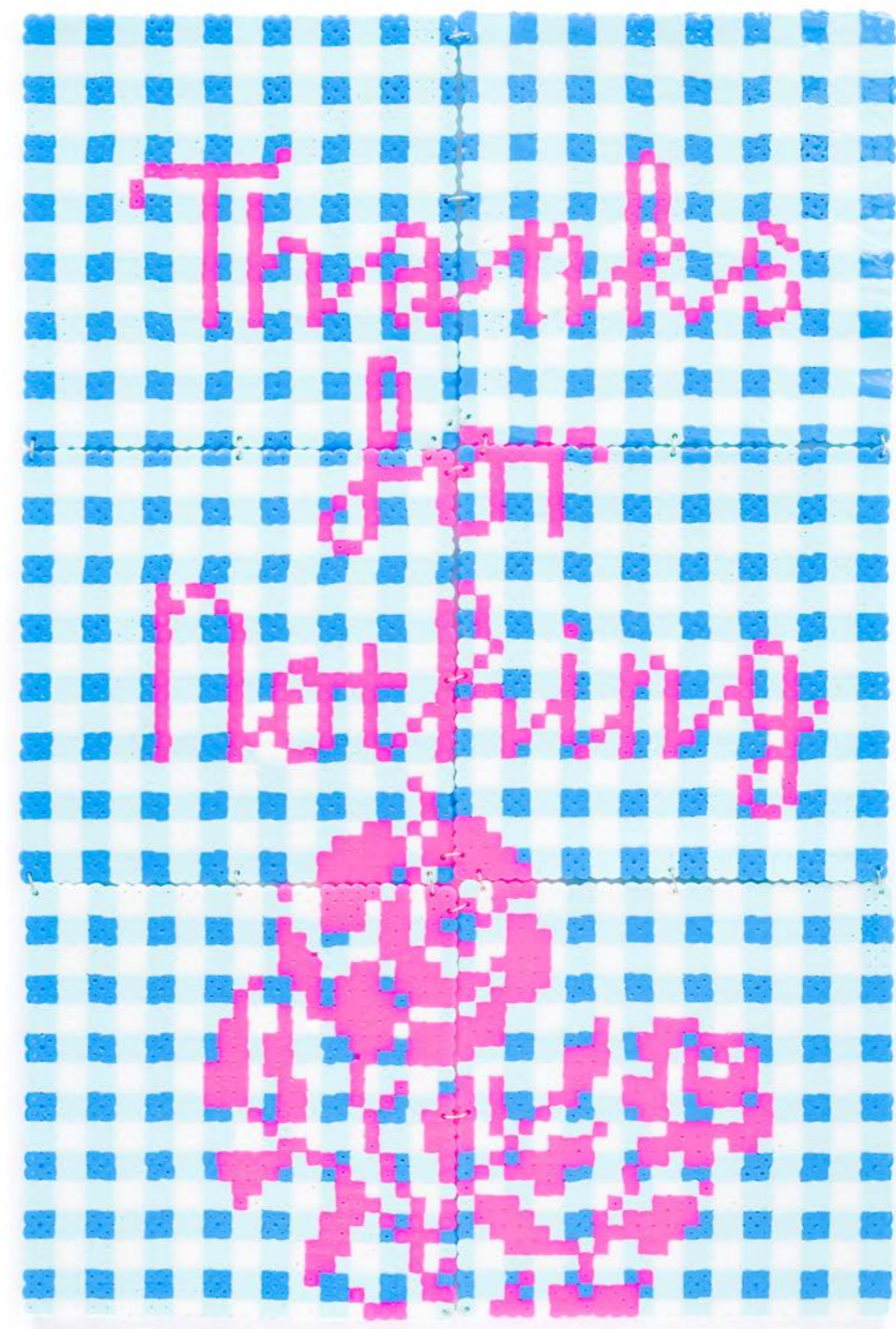


Thanks for Nothing,
peach and mint stripe
with hot pink 2024
Melty beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680



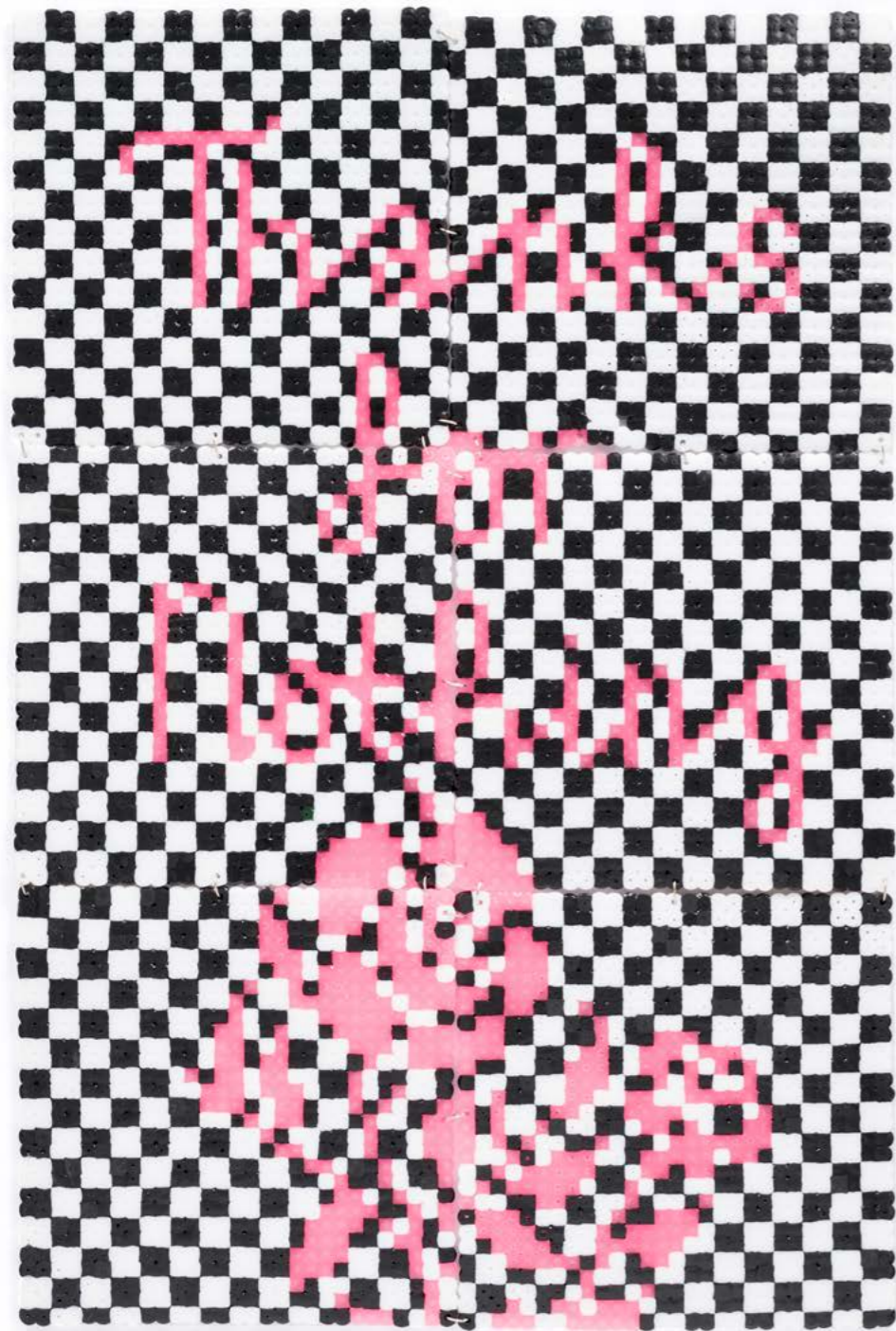
Thanks for Nothing,
yellow with black 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680

Rachel Burke



Thanks for Nothing,
blue check with hot pink 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680

Thanks for Nothing



Thanks for Nothing,
black check with coral 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680

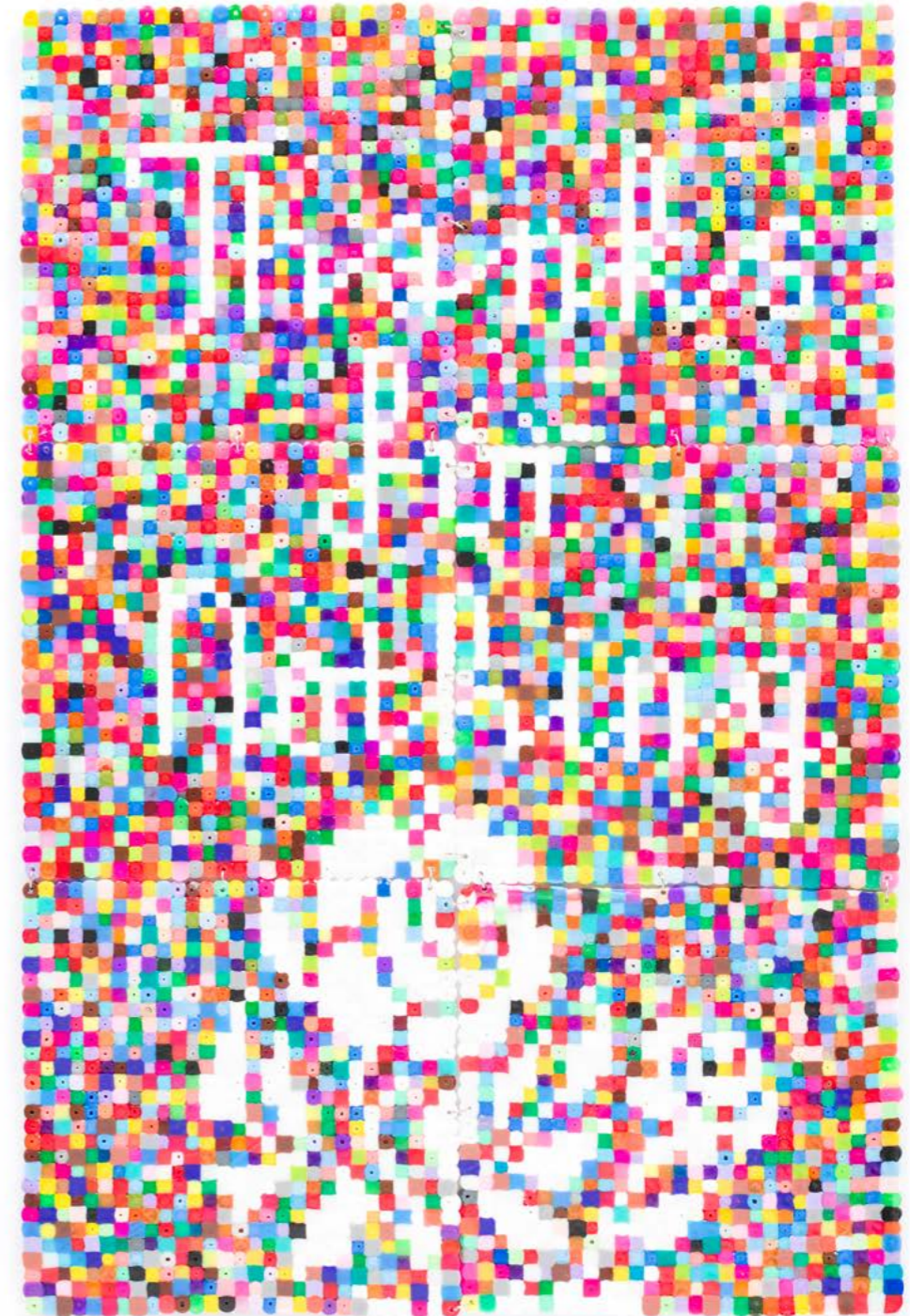


Thanks for Nothing,
rainbow confetti with blue 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680



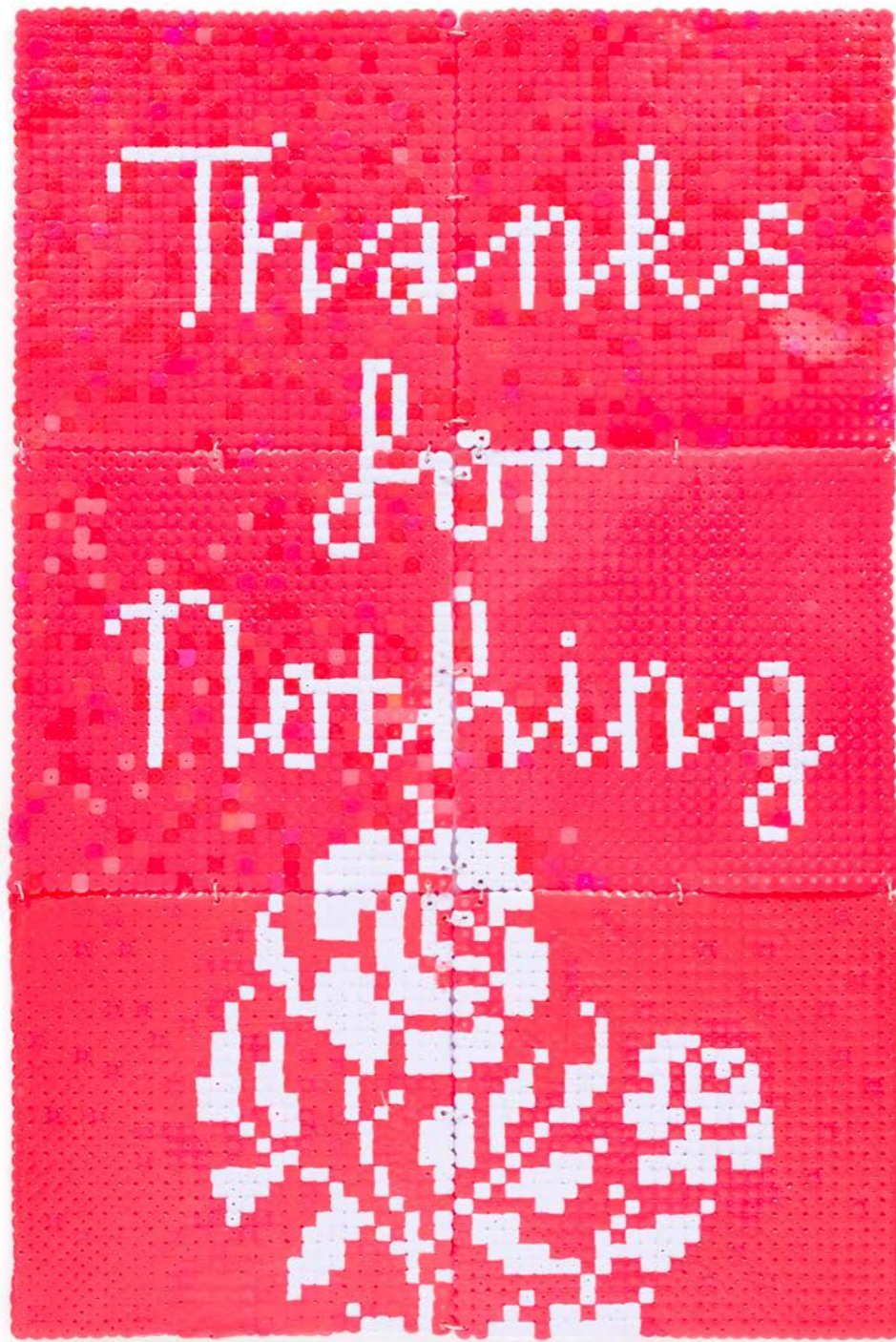
Thanks for Nothing,
pink with white 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680

Rachel Burke



Thanks for Nothing,
rainbow speckle with white 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680

Thanks for Nothing



Thanks for Nothing,
coral with white 2024
Milty beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680

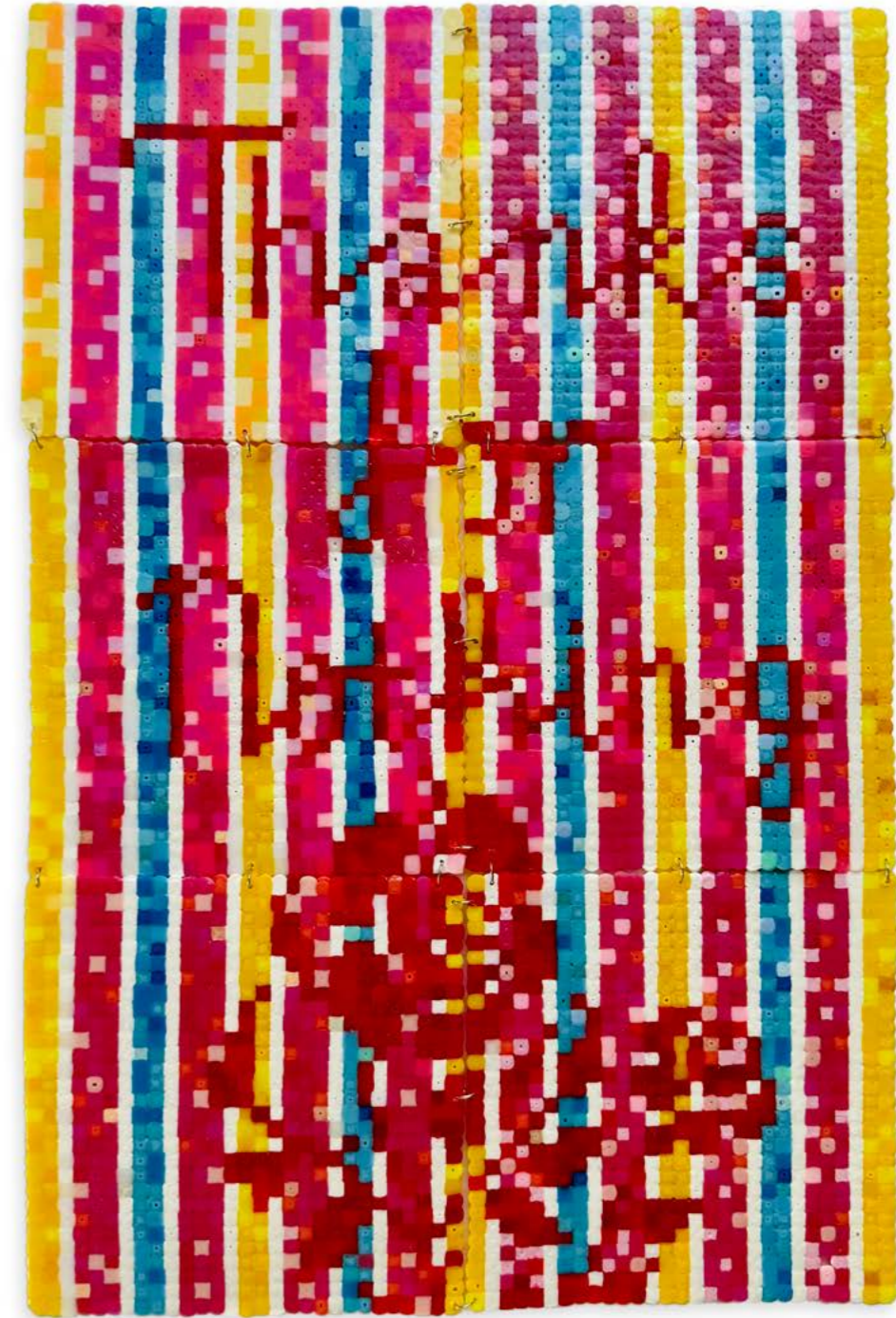


Thanks for Nothing,
pink with red 2024
Milty beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680



Thanks for Nothing,
rainbow stripe with black 2025
Melty beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680

Rachel Burke



Thanks for Nothing,
multi stripe with red 2025
Melty beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680

Thanks for Nothing



Thanks for Nothing,
speckle with dark green 2024
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680



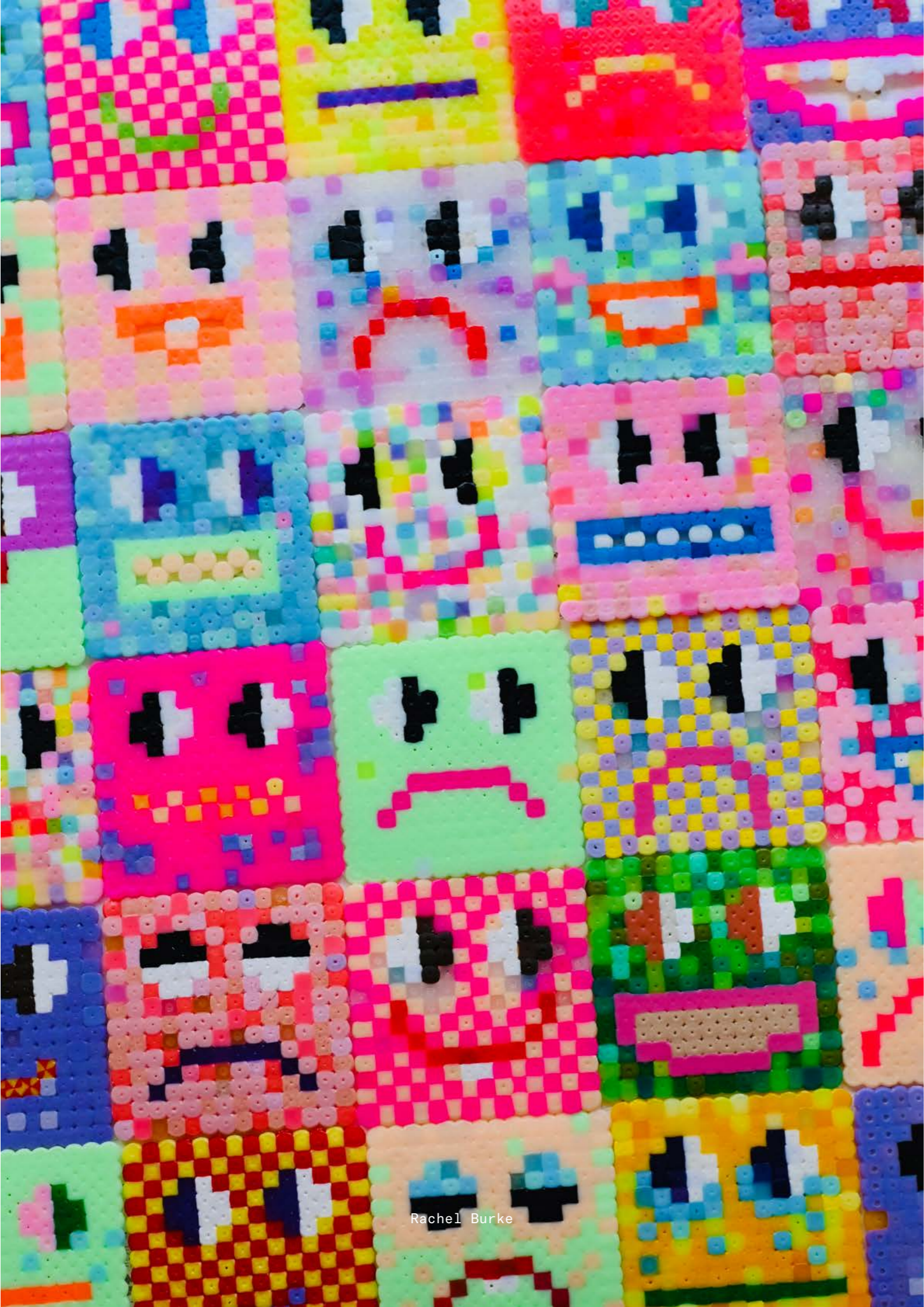
Thanks for Nothing,
confetti coral with yellow 2025
Melly beads
43.5 x 28.5 cm
\$680



Rachel Burke



I made something 2025
Melly beads
75 x 75 cm
\$2200



Rachel Burke

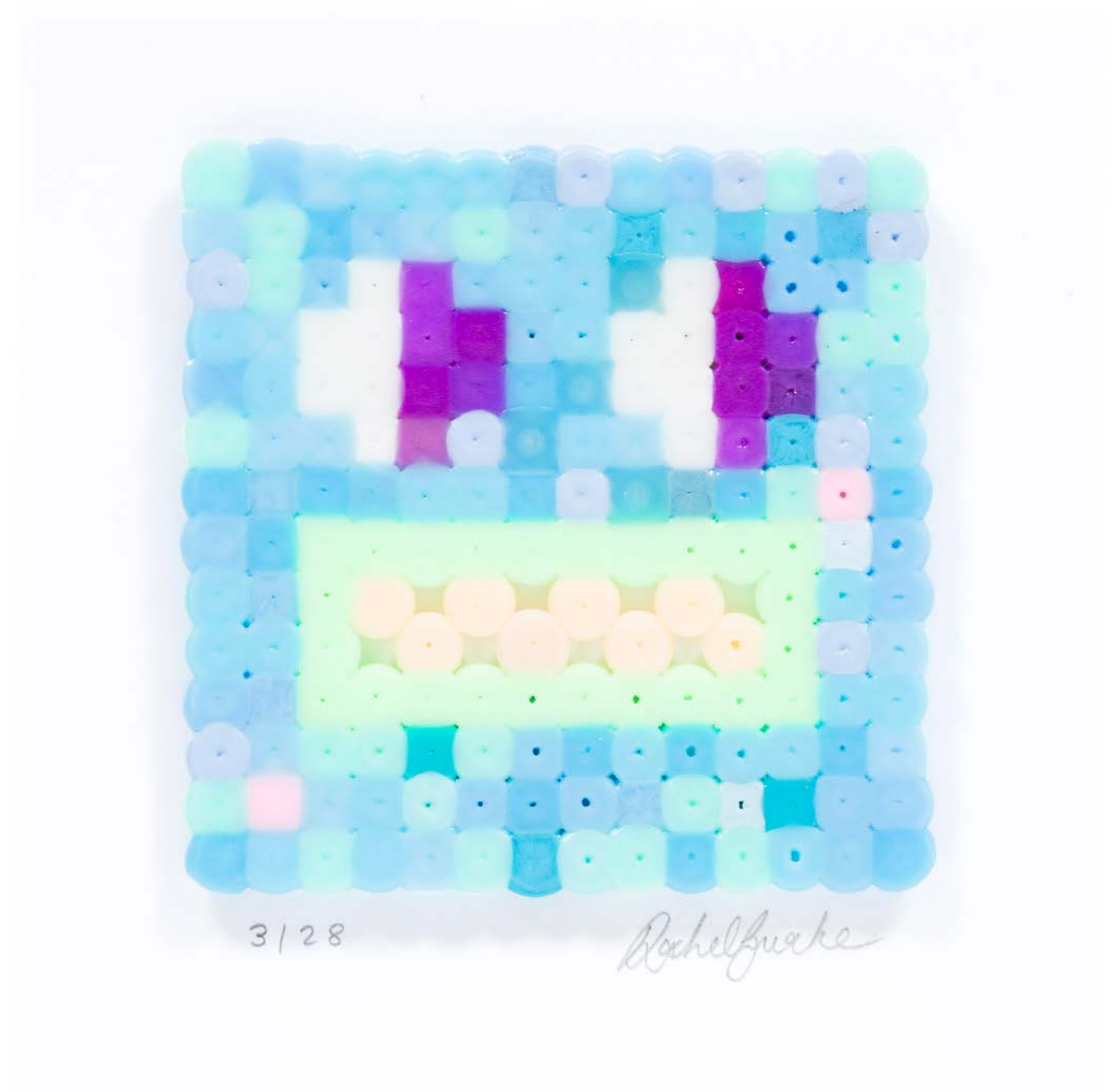


The many faces of No.1 2024
Melty beads
7 x 7 cm
\$120



The many faces of No.2 2024
Melty beads
7 x 7 cm
\$120

Rachel Burke



The many faces of No.3 2024
Melty beads
7 x 7 cm
\$120

Thanks for Nothing



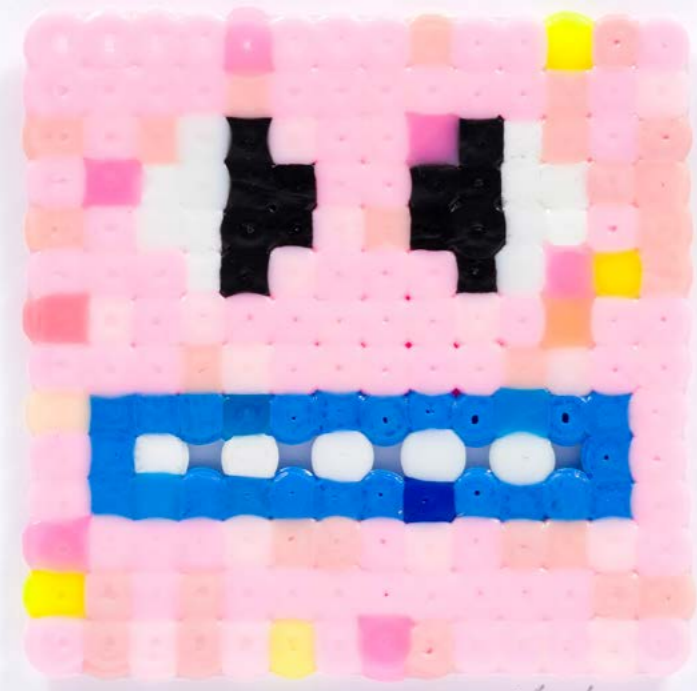
The many faces of No.4 2024
Melly beads
7 x 7 cm
\$120

Rachel Burke



The many faces of No.5 2024
Melly beads
7 x 7 cm
\$120

Thanks for Nothing



6/28

Rachel Burke



7/28

Rachel Burke



8/28

Rachel Burke



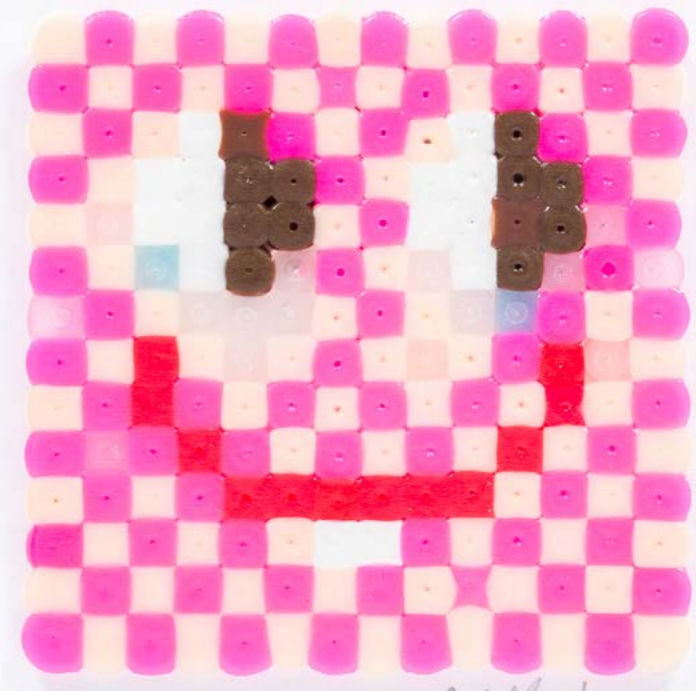
9/28

Rachel Burke



10/28

Rachel Burke



11/28

Rachel Burke

Top
The many faces of No.6 2024
 Melty beads
 7 x 7 cm
 \$120

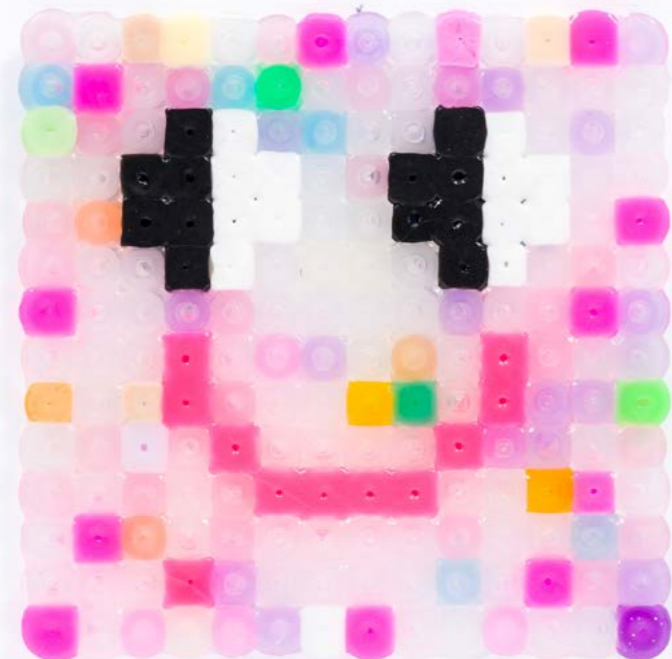
Bottom
The many faces of No.9 2024
 Melty beads
 7 x 7 cm
 \$120

Top
The many faces of No.7 2024
 Melty beads
 7 x 7 cm
 \$120

Bottom
The many faces of No.10 2024
 Melty beads
 7 x 7 cm
 \$120

Top
The many faces of No.8 2024
 Melty beads
 7 x 7 cm
 \$120

Bottom
The many faces of No.11 2024
 Melty beads
 7 x 7 cm
 \$120



12/28

Rachelburke



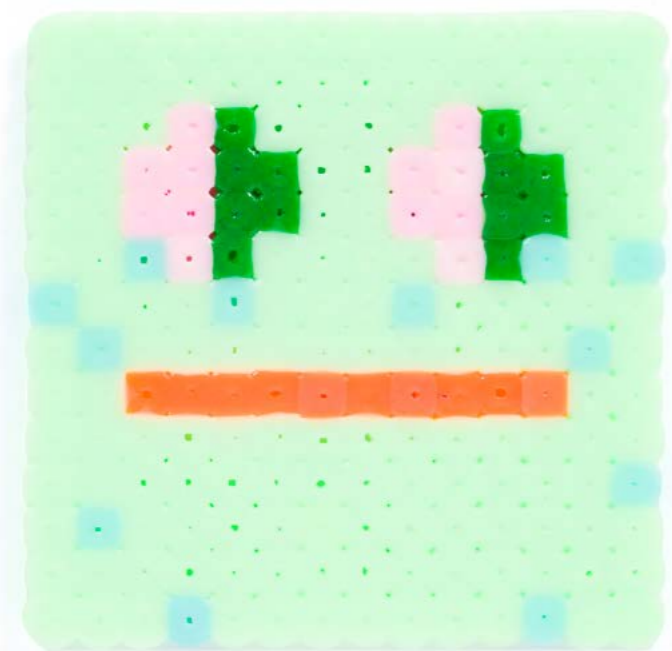
13/28

Rachelburke



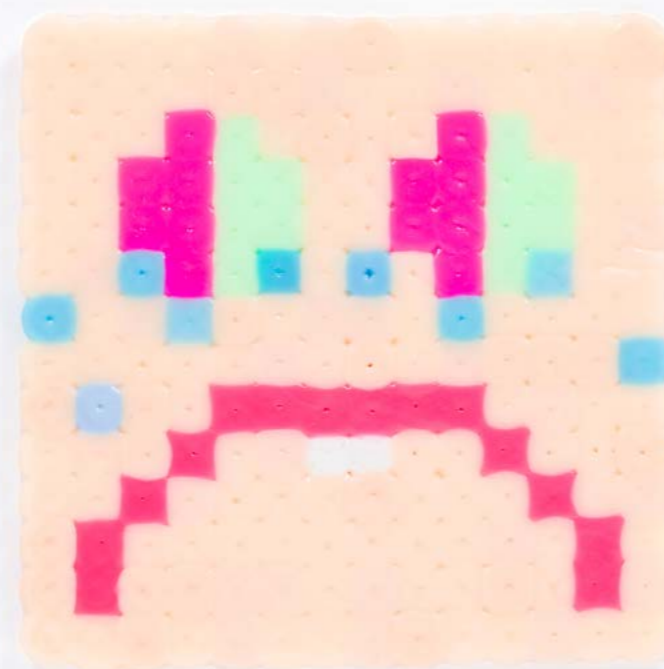
14/28

Rachelburke



15/28

Rachelburke



16/28

Rachelburke



17/28

Rachelburke

Top
The many faces of No.12 2024
Melty beads
7 x 7 cm
\$120

Bottom
The many faces of No.15 2024
Melty beads
7 x 7 cm
\$120

Top
The many faces of No.13 2024
Melty beads
7 x 7 cm
\$120

Bottom
The many faces of No.16 2024
Melty beads
7 x 7 cm
\$120

Top
The many faces of No.14 2024
Melty beads
7 x 7 cm
\$120

Bottom
The many faces of No.17 2024
Melty beads
7 x 7 cm
\$120



Top
The many faces of No.18 2024
Melty beads
7 x 7 cm
\$120

Rachel Burke



Top
The many faces of No.19 2024
Melty beads
7 x 7 cm
\$120

45



Top
The many faces of No.20 2024
Melty beads
7 x 7 cm
\$120

Thanks for Nothing



Top
The many faces of No.21 2024
 Melty beads
 7 x 7 cm
 \$120

Bottom
The many faces of No.23 2024
 Melty beads
 7 x 7 cm
 \$120

Top
The many faces of No.22 2024
 Melty beads
 7 x 7 cm
 \$120

Bottom
The many faces of No.24 2024
 Melty beads
 7 x 7 cm
 \$120



Top
The many faces of No.25 2024
 Melty beads
 7 x 7 cm
 \$120

Rachel Burke



Top
The many faces of No.26 2024
 Melty beads
 7 x 7 cm
 \$120

Thanks for Nothing



Bottom
The many faces of No.27 2024
 Melty beads
 7 x 7 cm
 \$120



Bottom
The many faces of No.28 2024
 Melty beads
 7 x 7 cm
 \$120



Rachel Burke

Thanks for Nothing

1 – 14 February

[View the exhibition online.](#)

Side Gallery

The Garden Studio
7 Emma Street
Red Hill
PO Box 515 Red Hill
Queensland 4059

info@sidegallery.com.au
0409 549 447

Gallery Hours

Monday & Tuesday by appointment
Thursday — Friday 10 am – 5 pm
Saturday 10 am – 1 pm

Stay updated by checking our website and social media for exhibition opening dates and times.
Instagram: [thesidegallery](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Yuggera [yug-a-rah]
Turrubul [tor-oo-bull]

We acknowledge the Yuggera and Turrubul people as the Traditional Custodians of the Country we live and work on at Side Gallery. We recognise their continuing connection to the land, waterways and skies, and thank them for protecting this region and its ecosystems since time immemorial. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all First Nations people, acknowledging too that they never ceded sovereignty of the land, skies and waterways.





Side Gallery

