

I will wait for you until 2025

Sophia Cai

"I will wait for you until 2025" is a curated selection of merch, memorabilia, and fan-made goods related to the Kpop mega-group BTS, drawn from my personal collection.

Since 2019, I have been a member of the BTS fandom, also known collectively as ARMY (aka "Adorable Representative M.C. For Youth"). From 2020 – 2022, while others were baking sourdough bread or finding new at-home hobbies, I was scouting Facebook marketplace and eBay to collect BTS merch. For me, this collection has always been connected most closely to BTS' music, message, and their growth as individuals, and the objects displayed here encompass that range.

As a curator and collector, I see my 'BTS shrine' as a declaration of my love and devotion to the group, but also an unashamed celebration of the ways that my life has changed because of my experience as a fan. The title of the work refers to the year when the 7 members of BTS are expected to complete their mandatory military enlistment in South Korea, and will reunite with ARMY.

– Sophia Cai, February 2023

List of objects

	For everyone	For ARMY
1. Official BTS Light Stick (or "ARMY Bomb") special edition, with fan-designed decals by <i>This Magic Shop</i> and wrist strap by <i>Shiinapop</i>	<p>An essential item for every ARMY is a BTS light stick (or "ARMY Bomb"). Light sticks are common in K-pop, and display unique characteristics that identifies different fandoms. The main function of a light stick is to be used at concerts but also to create unity between fans.</p> <p>To date, there have been four versions of BTS light sticks and the one displayed here is version 4: <i>Map of the Soul Special Edition</i>, which was unveiled on April 14, 2020. This special edition light stick has Bluetooth compatibility, allowing for a range of colours and hues to accompany particular BTS songs live in concert.</p>	<p>This was the light stick I took with me to Las Vegas for my first BTS concert in 2022. Little did I know it would be one of their last concerts before their hiatus from group activities until 2025, making this experience even more special. Seeing the 'purple ocean' for the first time with my own eyes is something I will never forget.</p> <p>The decals here represent two things: one of my favourite songs <i>Spring Day</i> and one of my two biases: Chimmy/Jimin. I also wanted to represent OT7 through the wrist strap, which references <i>We Are Bulletproof: Eternal</i>.</p>

* Also see number 37.

<p>2. Official BTS x SK Telecom tin badge with Suga</p>	<p>BTS were brand ambassadors for the telecommunications company SK Telecom from 2016 – 2018. Acting as brand ambassadors is a common part of an idol’s job, and the list of brands that BTS have promoted is plentiful and include Samsung, Hyundai, Samsonite, Coway, Chilsung and more. Most recently, the band were brand ambassadors for Louis Vuitton. Since 2023, individual members Jimin and Suga are brand ambassadors of Dior and Maison Valentino respectively. Their appearance at Paris Fashion Week earlier this year caused a frenzy for fashionistas and fans alike.</p>	<p>I don’t usually collect BTS collaboration merch, because it feels like I’m just paying money for advertisements, but Mint Yoongi, need I say more?</p> <p>I still think about that moment when we found out that we were collectively duped as a fandom, and it was just hair <i>chalk</i>.</p> <p>But Mint Yoongi lives on in our imagination forever, and longer than any hair product can naturally last.</p>
<p>3. Fan-designed Melbourne BTS ARMY cup sleeve for Jimin’s birthday event, 2022</p>	<p>Cup sleeve events are fan organised events usually held in celebration of a K-pop idol’s birthday or major milestone (such as a group’s anniversary) at cafes or tea shops. The name ‘cup sleeve’ refers</p>	<p>This cup sleeve was designed by my friend and fellow Jimin lover, Jess. It features the iconic ‘Unicorn Jimin’ look from Butter era, along</p>

to the paper sleeve that you put around a drink, which are designed by fans and typically feature a picture of the idol/group with other decorative artwork. Fans usually receive a free cup sleeve for every drink they purchase from the venue. Cup sleeve events started in South Korea, but are now hosted around the world in countries including Australia. In Melbourne, multiple cup sleeve events for different groups may be held on one single weekend.

with angel wings as is appropriate for the literal angel of Bangtan.

4. Official BT21 Cooky keyring, purple edition

** Also see number 8, number 15, number 25, number 29,*

Co-created and designed by Line and BTS, BT21 are 8 characters that represent the different members of BTS with unique designs. BTS played a key role in designing and conceptualising the backstory of each character. In addition to 7 characters for the 7 BTS members, an 8th character representing ARMY was also included. Cooky is a pink rabbit that

BT21 but make it borahae. I actually bought these plush for the purpose of including in this exhibition. (Hello, tax write off).

Hybe could sell a purple rock at this point and I would buy it – especially if it came with photocards aka ‘special paper.’

number 34, and
number 35.

is described as 'brawny' and represents
the youngest member Jungkook.

5. Official BTS Run CD,
Japanese Pony Canyon
LP jacket edition

Don't let the size fool you, this is a CD
packaged in a LP-sized jacket. 'Run' was
the lead single from BTS' album *The
Most Beautiful Moment in Life Pt. 2*
(2015). The Korean version of the song
was released on November 30, 2015,
and the Japanese language version of
the song and music video was released
in March 15, 2016.

'Run' is an energetic dance-rock song
about persisting, despite obstacles. I like
to think it represents something of BTS'
journey as artists and performers over the
last decade.

'Run' is one of my favourite songs
by BTS, and the first of their music
I heard and loved back in
2015/2016. I remember watching
the video clip, which shows the 7
members running through Seoul,
Jin the only one at the time with a
driver's licence and therefore the
only one able to drive the pick-up
truck. I wish I became a fan back
then (if only I didn't gatekeep
myself due to my age).

6. Official Proof
Exhibition photocard
holder set with acrylic
holder keychain and

In celebration of BTS' anthology album
Proof released on 10 June 2022, an
accompanying exhibition was held in the
cities of Seoul, Busan and Tokyo. The

Proof is a bittersweet era. I
remember the excited cheers of
the crowd in Las Vegas when BTS
teased the upcoming album at the

Map of the Soul: Persona album photocard

exhibition included highlights from BTS' history, and included themed merchandise that chronicled their discography. I have included the album photocard for *Map of the Soul: Persona*, which was released in 2019 and was my first BTS album as a fan.

end of the concert. But as the official end of their 'Chapter 1' activities, I can't help but feel mixed emotions. 2025 doesn't seem that far away though, does it?

7. Fanmade Crochet Jimin doll, Boy with Luv MV outfit

A 'bias' describes a fan's favourite member within the group. It's accepted to have a bias, as long as you don't solely like that member at the detriment of other members (also known as a 'solo stan').

I have two biases: Jimin and Suga. In this display I tried to include objects that represented them both, as well as the group as a whole (or 'OT7' – one true seven). This doll was hand crocheted by me in the style of Jimin's appearance in the music video for 'Boy with Luv' in 2019, the moment I became an ARMY.

As a pink lover, is it any wonder that Boy with Luv era Jimin was my entry into the world of BTS proper? Something about seven men dressed in all shades of pink, singing sweetly about love, captured me completely. It might also have something to do with the fact that I got married in April 2019, and this song came out shortly after. One day I want to make crochet dolls of all 7 members from this era.

<p>8. Official BT21 Chimmy keyring, purple edition</p> <p><i>* Also see number 4, number 15, number 25, number 29, number 34, and number 35.</i></p>	<p>Co-created and designed by Line and BTS, BT21 are 8 characters that represent the different members of BTS with unique designs. BTS played a key role in designing and conceptualising the backstory of each character. In addition to 7 characters for the 7 BTS members, an 8th character representing ARMY was also included. Chimmy is a yellow dog that is described as 'pure-at-heart' and represents the dancer and vocalist Jimin.</p>	<p>If I had to pick a BT21 bias, it would be Chimmy no doubt. A choice made easier by the fact that I am a dog lover through and through (which is funny, considering my biases are the two 'cats' of BTS: Jimin and Suga).</p>
<hr/> <p>9. Official Proof Compact edition CD accordion postcard</p>	<p><i>Proof</i> was released on 10 June 2022 in two versions: a standard edition weighing a hefty 1.9kg, and a compact edition. While both album versions contained the same track list and 3 CDs each, the compact edition had less photobooks and heavy inclusions. This accordion postcard included in the compact edition gives a visual overview of the history of BTS' entire discography,</p>	<p>There's something about seeing BTS' album art in little squares, lined up next to each other, that fills me with joy. In early 2020 during one of Melbourne's many lockdowns, and when I was socialising almost exclusively through the realm of <i>Animal Crossing</i> on the Nintendo Switch, I created a BTS basement for my</p>

starting from their debut album *2 Cool 4 Skool* released on 12 June 2013.

avatar where I imported some fan made pixel art of every BTS album cover and displayed it proudly on my virtual wall. This makes me think of that.

* Also see number 32

10. *On BTS: Pop Music, Fandom, and Sincerity* by Lenika Cruz, published by Atlantic Editions, 2023

Lenika Cruz is the senior editor at *The Atlantic*, where she writes about culture. In 2019, she wrote her first piece on BTS, titled '*I wasn't a fan of BTS. And then I was.*' In it, Lenika charted her experience coming to the fandom as an adult, something that deeply resonated with in my own journey as a fan working at the intersection of art and culture. I have really enjoyed reading Lenika's writing on BTS since; her review of RM's *Indigo* was one of the best pieces of music writing I've read. It feels really special to have someone who can write from the position of both a fan and a journalist.

I had a fan girl moment and wrote to Lenika via email once, which is when I found out she was also a Yoonmin bias. I bought a second copy of this book so I could display one here, and keep one at home to read in the meantime.

<p>11. Official BTS <i>Permission to Dance On Stage Las Vegas</i> Photo S/S T-shirt</p>	<p>This t-shirt was part of the official merchandise sold at the <i>Permission to Dance On Stage</i> concert in Las Vegas. It features an image of the members on the front, while the back displays each of their handwriting.</p>	<p>An experience I will not forget is lining up for merch at 4am before the first day of the concert. Did I need to do this to buy what I wanted? No. Did I do it anyway? Yes. It was all part of the concert experience, I told myself.</p> <p>I prepared myself by bringing a floor cushion from Daiso. My friends and I ordered food from McDonalds once they opened their breakfast menu at 5am.</p>
<p>12. Official Japan BT21 Baby headband</p>	<p>This headband includes all 7 BT21 characters, to represent all members of BTS. Fans can also buy headbands with just one character to signify who their bias is at a fan event or concert.</p> <p>I wore this headband to the recent screening of BTS' Busan concert Yet to</p>	<p>Shooky – they always do you dirty. At least he is next to Chimmy.</p>

Come in the cinemas to signify my love for all 7.

13. Fanmade Love Yourself glitter enamel pin

Love Yourself was an album series by BTS from 2017 to 2018, which also marked the band's fourth era. The series comprised of one video release and three albums which followed a traditional Asian storytelling format: beginning, development, twist and conclusion. The three albums, titled *Love Yourself: Her*, *Love Yourself: Tear* and *Love Yourself: Answer*, told a story of falling in love, break up and heartbreak, and ended with an affirmative message of self-love and acceptance.

Beyond the albums, the message of *Love Yourself* was also expressed by BTS through their UNICEF 'Love Yourself' campaign, and also formed the theme of the speech given by BTS leader RM at the UN General Assembly in 2018.

This pin was one of the first pieces of BTS merch I bought back in 2019. Like many other fans, I really resonated with the message of *Love Yourself*.

I wore this pin on my first trip to Seoul that year as a 'baby' ARMY. I call myself a 'baby ARMY' because why else would I travel to a city without concert tickets, because I did not know how to navigate a Korean ticketing websites? I still had a great time.

<p>14. <i>when your worries are swamps you imagined</i>, Official BTS Butter album (cream version) painted by Annabelle Kingston for the project <i>Butterful Moments in Life</i>, 2021</p>	<p><i>Butterful Moments in Life</i> was an art project I curated in 2021, where I invited 7 Australian-based artists (and their collaborators) to paint and customise their own version of the Butter album by BTS. This was inspired by the YouTube video where the members of BTS each decorated their own albums.</p>	<p>What else was I going to do with the 20+ Butter albums at my house that I bought for photocards? This was a really fun project to work on from home during the pandemic, as I was able to mail and receive each album back from each artist through the post.</p>
	<p>The resulting albums were auctioned via Instagram in 2021, with 50% proceeds going to the artists and 50% to PS Mutual Aid. I bid on this album by Annabelle Kingston via proxy bid, and am very glad it's part of my collection.</p>	<p>My friend Maria and I also met through this project, as she bid on and won another album. We ended up going to Las Vegas together, and I also invited her to be part of the public programs for this exhibition.</p>
<hr/> <p>15. Official BT21 RJ keyring, purple edition</p>	<p>Co-created and designed by Line and BTS, BT21 are 8 characters that represent the different members of BTS with unique designs. BTS played a key role in designing and conceptualising the</p>	<p>RJ remains the most popular BT21 member and I'm not surprised. Apparently in Japan they make more plush versions of the more popular characters, which might</p>

* Also see number 4, number 8, number 25, number 29, number 34, and number 35.

backstory of each character. In addition to 7 characters for the 7 BTS members, an 8th character representing ARMY was also included. RJ is an alpaca that is described as a 'kind, loving, foodie' and represents the vocalist Jin.

explain why Shooky always sells out faster.

RJ vs Wottee though, whose side are you on?

16. Official *The Most Beautiful Moment in Life Pt 2* (peach version), signed by all 7 members of BTS

The Most Beautiful Moment in Life Pt. 2 was the fourth EP by BTS which was released on 30 November 2015. It was part of the 'Youth' era of BTS, also known as 花樣年華 or the HYYH series.

This promotional signed album was purchased from the secondary resale market. The members always sign albums in the same order, starting from the top left going clockwise: Jin, RM, Suga, Jimin, Jungkook, J-hope, and V. BTS' early signed albums are distinctive for their detail, but as they got more busy and signed more albums, the signatures have simplified over time.

When I was planning for this exhibition, I thought long and hard about what signed album I would display. In the end I settled on this one for the practical reason of I have other OT7 signed HYYH albums so I wouldn't miss this one too much while it was away from home.

HYYH signs are for me, a happy medium that still shows enough individual details.

17. *BTS Global Official
Fanclub Army
Membership card,
from the 9th term
ARMY Membership kit
(2022)*

I have been a card-carrying member of the official BTS fanclub since 2019. I intend to be for as long as the fanclub exists.

For an annual fee, fans can register as an official member. For an additional cost, fans can also purchase a membership kit, which has a different theme each year and includes a physical card as pictured here. Since 2020, another option called the “ARMY Membership: Merch Pack” has been offered for sale, which includes 4 merch boxes per annum at a higher cost.

One of the main benefits of an ARMY membership is having early access to concert tickets. This is particularly useful as concert tickets can sell quickly.

With this card in my possession, I like that I can say “I’m a card-carrying member of the BTS fan club.”

I would put this in my wallet, except that I consider this a collectible item, so instead I double sleeve it and put it in my photocard binder.

<p>18. Official <i>BTS, The Best</i> Japan Fanclub Pre-order benefit Acrylic Standee</p>	<p><i>BTS, The Best</i> was the second Japanese-language compilation by BTS, released on 16 June 2021. The album contains all of the group's Japanese-language releases since 2017, as well as a new single "Film Out."</p> <p>It is very common in the K-pop industry for groups to release Japan-language version songs because of the large fanbase in Japan.</p>	<p>It is often said that Japan gets the best BTS merch, especially through their Japan fan club. This is also the reason I am now very familiar with using Japanese proxy buying websites, and my PayPal includes multiple transactions in yen.</p>
<hr/> <p>19. Fanmade 'Yoonmin talisman'</p>	<p>A photocard talisman is used by a fan to increase the odds of manifesting their bias photocard from an album or DVD. This talisman was made for me by my friend to help me increase the odds of pulling a Jimin or Suga photocard.</p> <p>The use of red ink on yellow paper is modelled after <i>bujeok</i>, a traditional Korean talisman. The yellow paper of</p>	<p>As a Jimin bias, he never seems to come home in my random photocard pulls. I tend to pull Suga a fair bit, as well as V. Hopefully this talisman will help change those odds!</p>

bujeok was believed to ward off evil spirits, while the red ink was said to represent auspiciousness and good luck. Today, many fanmade versions of bias talismans can be found on the Internet.

20. '#casualfan', fan letter as curatorial essay for the exhibition *Sincerely Yours*, 2022

In 2022 I curated a group exhibition across the two neighbouring galleries Arts Project Australia and West Space at Collingwood Yards. *Sincerely Yours* brought together a wide range of contemporary artists to explore the intersection between fandom and art practice, and the different ways artists and audiences engage with objects or subjects that inspire fannish love and devotion.

An exhibition zine was specially produced and designed for the exhibition, which contained newly commissioned fan fiction texts by four writers, as well as my curatorial essay in

To clear up any misunderstanding, I want to state for the record that I use the term *#casualfan* ironically. I acknowledge that the breadth of my activities as a fan (as collector, curator, writer, researcher and more), is far from casual. However, I'd also like to acknowledge that there is nothing wrong with being a casual fan, and perhaps I would have more hours in the day for housework and life admin if I spent less hours committed to 7 Korean men and their artistry.

the form of a fan-letter to Min Yoongi aka Suga of BTS.

The research that informed this exhibition also influenced my forthcoming book chapter in *BTS The Critical Anthology* (Duke University Press) where I write about curating and fandom as dual practices rooted in care.

* Also see number 21 and number 40.

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21. Fanmade 'Casual Fan' embroidered patch by Sweet Fury Co. This is an embroidered patch made by my friend Jess after with the phrase 'Casual Fan' embroidered across the front. This phrase is one I've been using ironically for the past 4 years to describe my experience as a BTS fan. I've also used the same phrase on an enamel badge, and the title of a curatorial essay (see number 20). It also forms the bio description of my BTS-focused Instagram account @yoonmin.days. See above
- * Also see number 20 and number 40.

22. Fanmade 'Good Boy Jimin' print framed in gold

On Episode 106 of *Run BTS!* (the variety web series starring BTS), each member undertook a photo shoot challenge. This photo of Jimin was taken by Jungkook on set, and while it was not part of the official photoshoot for the episode, it made a lasting impression on BTS and fans. Suga referred to this photo as Jimin's 'Rookie actor' pose.

The staff of *Run BTS!* surprised the members by including a gold framed version of this portrait at the end of the episode as a prize. Suga was the winner, and the framed portrait was eventually hung up on the walls of Hybe's artist lounge where everyone could see it. This is how it appeared in the background of live videos by BTS and other groups for a short while.

For a short time, the photo of this print hanging up in Hybe's artist lounge was my Zoom teaching background. None of my students got the in-joke, or if they did, they didn't tell me.

One day I'd like to have a large life-size version of this portrait hanging in my home – but for now I'll settle for this.

<p>23. Fanmade ceramic BTS logo made by Annabelle Kingston, 2022</p>	<p>The iconic BTS logo depicts two trapezoids facing each other, as if suggesting a portal or doorway. The matching logo for ARMY depicts a mirrored image of the trapezoids. This logo has been used by BTS since 2017.</p> <p>From 2013 – 2015 the BTS logo featured a black bulletproof vest, in reference to the Korean translation of their band name “Bangtan Sonyeondan” or “Bulletproof Boy Scouts.”</p>	<p>I’m not one to usually wear logos or branded items in my wardrobe. It’s the same reason I won’t get BTS merchandise that is focused purely on the logo – like the premium BTS logo for desktop display. However, I do really love this ceramic piece given that it was made by a friend, in pastel colours that match my aesthetic no less.</p>
<hr/> <p>24. Official BTS Hybe Insight Mic Badge set, inside a museum exclusive Mic Badge case</p>	<p>On May 2021, BTS’ company Hybe opened the Hybe Insight Museum at its company headquarters in Seoul. The museum, which commemorates BTS alongside other groups by Hybe, includes interactive installations, behind-the-scenes footage, and other displays themed on Hybe artists. It also hosted</p>	<p>I really love this item in my collection, and was glad I was able to get it even if I paid resale price for the mic badge case. I’m glad I decided to collect all 7 mic badges, because they look great together. My only complaint is I wish Jin’s badge was pink.</p>

contemporary art exhibitions by international artists.

These mic badges and case were purchased through a proxy buying service from the museum gift shop. The mic badges are in the same colours as the microphones used by the members of BTS while on tour. Each mic badge came with 1 of 3 random photocards.

25. Official BT21 Mang keyring, purple edition	Co-created and designed by Line and BTS, BT21 are 8 characters that represent the different members of BTS with unique designs. BTS played a key role in designing and conceptualising the backstory of each character. In addition to 7 characters for the 7 BTS members, an 8th character representing ARMY was also included. Mang is a masked creature that is described as a 'mystery dancer' and represents the rapper and dance leader J-hope.	I love Mang's design, and in particular his heart shaped nose – which reminds me of J-hope's heart shaped smile. However, as the only BT21 character depicted facing sideways rather than front on, sometimes Mang has the unfortunate predicament of being a character who looks like a cyclops in a hat. (See the recent BT21 Japan Tatton range to see what I mean).
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** Also see number 4, number 8, number 15, number 29, number 34, and number 35.*

<p>26. Official BTS Proof Collector's edition first press poster</p>	<p>On 29 August 2022, Hybe made a surprise announcement detailing the limited release of a Proof Collector's edition album. The impressive edition included a 564 page hardcover book with new detailed interviews, 3 CDS, 7 premium photos, 7 AR cards, 7 lenticular postcards, and two sets of member photocards. It also came with a hefty price tag of nearly \$400 before shipping (which was a further \$200 due to the weight of the item).</p>	<p>Did you know that paying in won on the Global Weverse shop is cheaper than paying in USD? You usually save 5-10% by doing it this way, which, on an item of this high cost, made a notable difference.</p>
	<p>The first press edition of the collector's edition, which sold out in less than a day, included a special PVC photocard (random 1 of 7), as well as this mini poster. I love the colourful concept of this poster.</p>	<p>I still remember the fan discourse about the high cost of the album, with some fans proclaiming it was too expensive, and others defending the price by comparing it to collector's editions by other groups. Having received it and seeing the inclusions, I regard this as a special part of my collection. I actually bought two – one which I've kept bubble wrapped in its original box in my wardrobe, and one that I have out on display.</p>
<p>27. Fanmade 'Otsukare' enamel pin by Eglitars</p>	<p>'Otsukare' was a song debuted by BTS members Suga and J-hope at the Official</p>	<p>I want what Sope have.</p>

Japanese Fanmeeting vol 3 in 2016. Otsukare means 'thank you for your hard work', and was a phrase used by the members of BTS prior to 2016. The song is a fan favourite, pairing a dynamic duo (affectionally known as 'Sope' in the fandom), with an infectious dance performance. This enamel pin, designed by Eglitars, captures some of the radiant joy of that stage performance.

28. Official BTS Memories 2019 DVD pre-order benefit group photocard	BTS have released a 'Memories' packages every year since 2015. These photobook and DVD packages look back at the highlights of BTS' activities for the past year and include plenty of behind the scenes content. The most recent <i>BTS Memories 2021</i> , released in 2022, contained more than 8 hours and 40 minutes of content.	Did I really buy another copy of a DVD I already own for special paper? Yes. As a Yoonminer, this photocard is very special to me because it's one of the few pieces of official merch that exist with an Agust D and Serendipity Jimin concept.
29. Official BT21 Tata keyring, purple edition	Co-created and designed by Line and BTS, BT21 are 8 characters that represent	Even in the BT21 Universe, the 95ers are soulmates. I really love

** Also see number 4, number 8, number 15, number 25, number 34, and number 35.*

the different members of BTS with unique designs. BTS played a key role in designing and conceptualising the backstory of each character. In addition to 7 characters for the 7 BTS members, an 8th character representing ARMY was also included. Tata is an alien that is described as a 'an off-the-wall, curious soul', and represents the vocalist V.

Tata's design, and I would say he was my first BT21 bias.

30. Fanmade 'What would Namjoon do' embroidered patch by Sweet Fury Co.

This is an embroidered patch made by my friend Jess with the phrase 'What Would Namjoon Do' embroidered across the front. Kim Namjoon aka RM was the first to join BTS' line up, and he continues to play an important role as a band's leader in supporting and guiding the other 6 members.

One of the reasons I have such a deep attachment to Bangtan is because of their values. As the leader of the group, Joon represents qualities that I wish to also model, and this patch expresses my deep respect and admiration for the man.

31. Fanmade Bangtan Pearl Necklace by Grl with Luv

This fanmade necklace features a faux pearls, and a gold plated charm with the word 'Bangtan' for BTS. There is a whole community of artists and designers who

Being a BTS fan has influenced my fashion and accessory choices. The reason I like this necklace is because it is a subtle fan reference,

make BTS inspired merch, which can be found on Instagram, Etsy, and more.

yet wearable enough to match with a range of outfit choices.

32. Official Proof Compact edition CD

Proof was released on 10 June 2022 in two versions: a standard edition weighing a hefty 1.9kg, and a compact edition. The 3 CDs of *Proof* contain 3 new tracks, as well as a disc of previously unreleased demos including my favourites: an instrumental demo of 'Seesaw' and official studio recording of 'Tony Montana feat. Jimin'.

I might be biased, but CD 3 of *Proof* is my favourite. I bought the Astronord CD player for the sole purpose of listening to CD3 as most of the tracks were not available digitally.

You can listen to all 3 CDs through the wall-mounted CD player next to this display case.

I still maintain that Hybe would make so much money from fans if they also released a *Proof* CD player at the same time – since many fans bought (or rebought) a CD player for the first time.

* Also see number 9

33. Official *House of BTS Pop Up* wristband

This wristband was a freebie given out to visitors to the *BTS Pop Up: House of BTS*. This pop up shop was first held in Seoul at the same time as the *Speak Yourself: The Final* concerts in late 2019. While I didn't manage to get concert

The *House of BTS* pop up was my first time encountering many BTS fans in one place. I remember thinking 'you never walk alone' while queueing with hundreds of other ARMY, who were all there for

tickets (see number 13), I did manage to visit the pop-up. After lining up for too many hours to count, I have to admit I almost left empty handed because nothing I really wanted was in stock. At least I have this wristband.

the same purpose as me. I have since learnt the art of lining up for BTS merch at multiple locations and venues (see number 11).

34. Official BT21 Shooky keyring, purple edition

Co-created and designed by Line and BTS, BT21 are 8 characters that represent the different members of BTS with unique designs. BTS played a key role in designing and conceptualising the backstory of each character. In addition to 7 characters for the 7 BTS members, an 8th character representing ARMY was also included. Shooky is a brown cookie that is described as a 'mini prankster', and represents the rapper Suga.

It is still very confusing to me that there is a cookie named Shooky, and a rabbit named Cooky in the BT21 line up.

** Also see number 4, number 8, number 15, number 25, number 29, and number 35.*

35. Official BT21 Koya keyring, purple edition

Co-created and designed by Line and BTS, BT21 are 8 characters that represent the different members of BTS with unique designs. BTS played a key role in

I actually bought my first BT21 plush in 2018 before I became a proper fan or even knew what member of BTS they each

** Also see number 4, number 8, number 15, number 25, number 29, and number 34.*

designing and conceptualising the backstory of each character. In addition to 7 characters for the 7 BTS members, an 8th character representing ARMY was also included. Koya is a blue koala that is described as a 'gifted sleepyhead', and represents the rapper and leader RM.

represented. I bought a Koya keychain from my travels to Hong Kong because I thought he was cute. That Koya keychain now lives with my Joon-biased friend Sienna.

36. Official BTS Memories 2021 Suga photocard, inside a deco toploader

'Deco' is a popular activity for Kpop fans of all fandoms. Using stickers, washi tape, and other items (such as resin or acrylic charms), fans decorate albums, photocard binders, toploaders (a plastic photocard holder) or acrylic frames to add a personal touch to their collection. Think of it like scrapbooking, but with a Gen Z appeal. Deco is so popular that BTS released their own official 'Deco Kit' in March 2022 with member stickers and more.

In an effort to curb my growing BTS collection, I decided to give deco a go. It appealed to me because of the low cost and the creativity. Little did I know that having a hobby within an existing hobby meant I just ended up with more things: I now have a binder just for my growing sticker collection.

This deco toploader was made by me inspired by Suga's known love of

tangerines. It includes fanmade stickers depicting Suga holding and eating the orange fruit, as well as other themed stickers from my collection.

37. Official BTS Light Stick Keyring special edition

This keyring is a miniature version of the Official Light Stick SE version. While it does not have the same Bluetooth compatibility of the full-size light stick, it does still light up by pressing the power button.

I have nothing but positive words to describe this piece of merch. As a toy and plush collector, it is also the perfect prop size for photos.

* Also see number 1.

38. *BTS, Art Revolution* by Jiyoung Lee, English edition, 2019

BTS: Art Revolution is trailblazing book by Korean scholar Jiyoung Lee that considers the unique relationship between BTS and ARMY through philosophical and socio-critical analysis. One of the key points that Lee makes through the book is the way that BTS challenges oppressive hierarchical structures through a focus on 'horizontality' instead – which is achieved through BTS' musical message but also

Hearing Jiyoung Lee speak about her research was a highlight of my attendance at BTS: The Third Global Interdisciplinary Conference in Seoul. When you really think about it, academics are much like fans in the sense that they are often very committed to a niche area of interest and devote a lot of energy to it. This book was also a major inspiration for me to

* Also see number 20 and number 41.

the grassroots efforts of the ARMY fandom. Lee also draws on French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's concept of 'the rhizome' to consider BTS' and their online network to their fans.

combine my academic research and thinking with my experience as a fan.

39. Fanmade 'Daechwita' Kitty ceramic bowl and lid

On May 22, 2020, Suga of BTS released his second mixtape titled *D-2* under his other stage name Agust D. The lead single of *D-2* was 'Daechwita', which sampled the sound of Korean traditional military music and percussions. The music video for the title track featured the rapper in the dual role of a king and his double and was filmed at Yongin Daejanggeum Park, the largest historical drama set in Korea.

Both the king and double appear in the music video with a prominent scar over the rapper's right eye. This ceramic piece is inspired the music video and the straw hat worn by the double

This ceramic bowl and lid was made during a hand-pinching workshop with artist Pey Chi. I was determined to create a Kitty Daechwita, inspired by Yoongi's fan-given nickname of 'Lil Meow Meow.'

In the time between writing this text and the exhibition opening, Hybe announced an Agust D tour. I hope I can get tickets.

40. Fanmade hand knitted 'Casual Fan' beanie, with a custom embroidered patch

I knitted this beanie in 2020 inspired by the grey Acne Studio beanie that Suga often wore. After studying countless beanie patterns on Ravelry (the premier online knitting website), I decided to draft my own knitting pattern using brioche stitches and a series of calculated decreases at the crown. In place of the iconic Acne Studios face logo, I ordered some custom embroidery patches featuring a stylised cartoon of Suga's face. It's a very intertextual piece of knitting.

It would have been much easier buying the same beanie, but where is the fun in that?

The original plan in 2020 was to release the knitting pattern on the occasion of Suga's birthday. I've missed three of his birthdays now, but there is still time before 9 March 2023.

* Also see number 20 and number 21.

41. *BTS: The Third Global Interdisciplinary Conference* in Seoul, 2022, conference pass

In July 2022, I self-funded a research trip to Seoul to attend the third *BTS Global Interdisciplinary Conference*. There, I presented a conference paper titled 'Namjooning' In and Out of the Museum: the Contemporary Flâneur' that examined the cultural phenomenon of 'Namjooning' and its parallels to the

It was at this point, when I was writing an entire presentation about him, that I had to finally admit maybe Joon was my bias wrecker.

historical flâneur or observer of society. Named for Kim Namjoon (or RM of BTS), 'Namjooning' is a phrase used popularly by ARMY to describe actions commonly associated with the idol including the practice of contemplatively exploring nature to an art museum on one's own. I was interested in researching how the activity of 'Namjooning' might demonstrate the open boundaries of the ARMY fan experience beyond musicality and performance, and instead to expressions of self. This conference pass serves as a memory of that (tax deductible) research trip.

Key glossary

- BTS** (aka *Bangtan Sonyeondan*) is a South Korean boy band formed that debuted in 2013. The group consists of 7 members: RM, Jin, Suga, J-hope, Jimin, V, and Jungkook.
- ARMY** (aka *Adorable Representative M.C. for Youth*) is the name given to the BTS fandom. ARMY is one of the largest online fan communities, and work together to help promote BTS and their message.