

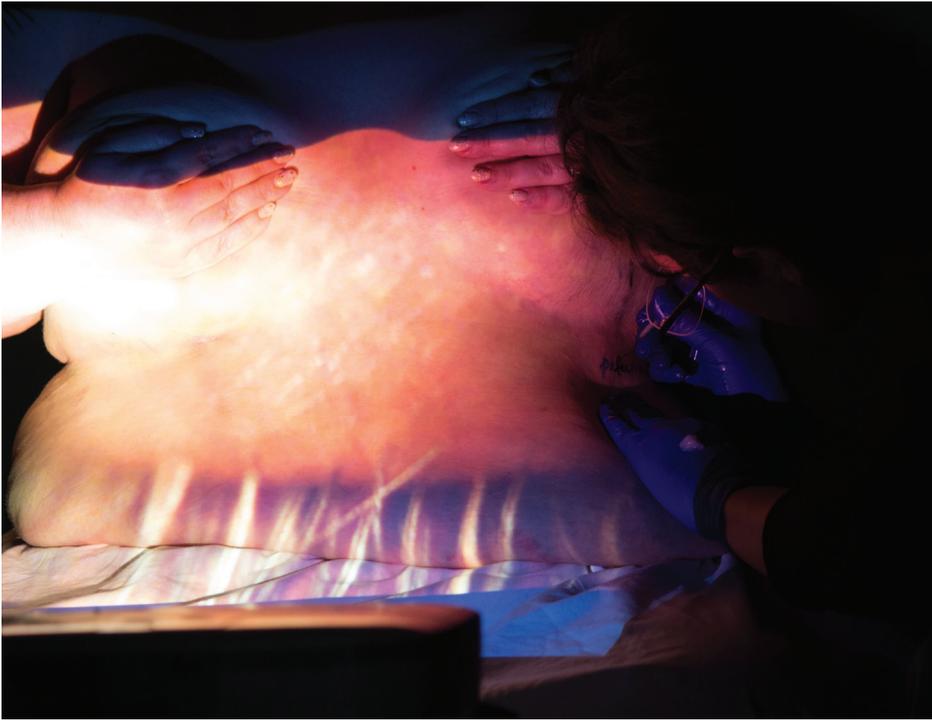
this
body
emits
energy

A text by **Kim Neudorf** on Cindy Baker's performance *perfect*
Presented in collaboration with Forest City Gallery's *in attendance* series

The following is a path of words on/about/alongside Cindy Baker's 2018 performative work during Forest City Gallery's 'in attendance' series. During the performance, artist Faith Patrick tattooed Baker's skin, while a loop of short video clips was projected upon her body.

sharp crowd sounds, the bluntness of voices, the nonsense of noise
Faith is tattooing Cindy
dark blue gloves, white cloth dampened with liquid, white sheet, grey laptop
rolling cart
Cindy supports herself
Faith works; tapping, tapping, tiny strokes with the tip
Cindy shifts
breathing
images
eyes
projected on Cindy's skin, belly, the underside of her breasts, her hands and forearms
staccato path of texture moving across texture
close-up of eyelashes, breathing
shudder of skin
scraping, breathing, pulling
gloves appear purple
eyelids blink
skin breathes as a projection on skin that breathes, holding still for skin that breathes
the camera chases
the time of blinking eyelids, the time of
blinking and shuddering and breathing, the camera is too slow, too clumsy
scraping, pulling across something
this eye, seen, emits energy, the image emits brightness, emits occlusion
a fan blowing
the words tattooed
Cindy looks, stretches
clear the path for the words, for the work
this body emits energy
this body, seen, emits energy
seeing this body, seeing creates energy
Cindy is listening, breathing
scraping, breathing, silent tattooing
this eye opens, rolls, looks left and right
eyelashes loll, droop, shudder, close, the camera is startled
this eye is heavy, tired, slow
the camera is rapid and shuddering
this eye emits energy by being seen so closely
eyelashes close, a flash of energy is emitted, this eye has captured something, snapped shut on something
a pathway of texture, a trail created by a path of texture
eyelashes create a path of energy, a texture path of energy
the sound of energy latches onto the breath, the texture of the path
this eye waits in its breath
breath is live
breath moving; the camera races after the time of breath
the heaviness of breath is the heaviness of eyes
the texture of traveling
Cindy's shadow supports her
Faith's administering
hands cover breasts
breasts are hands
Cindy's face in darkness
searching for a pathway for words, searching for a pathway for eyes
wheels across a smooth surface
jump to eyes
this eye sighs, breathes slowly
this eye looks and stares
the stare is the energy that pulses outward
the sigh, the breath, the yawn
eyelids stretch and close
hands are closed, fingers close together, eyelids close
Cindy looks at Faith, they nod to each other
the words are done

clear the path for the words, for the work



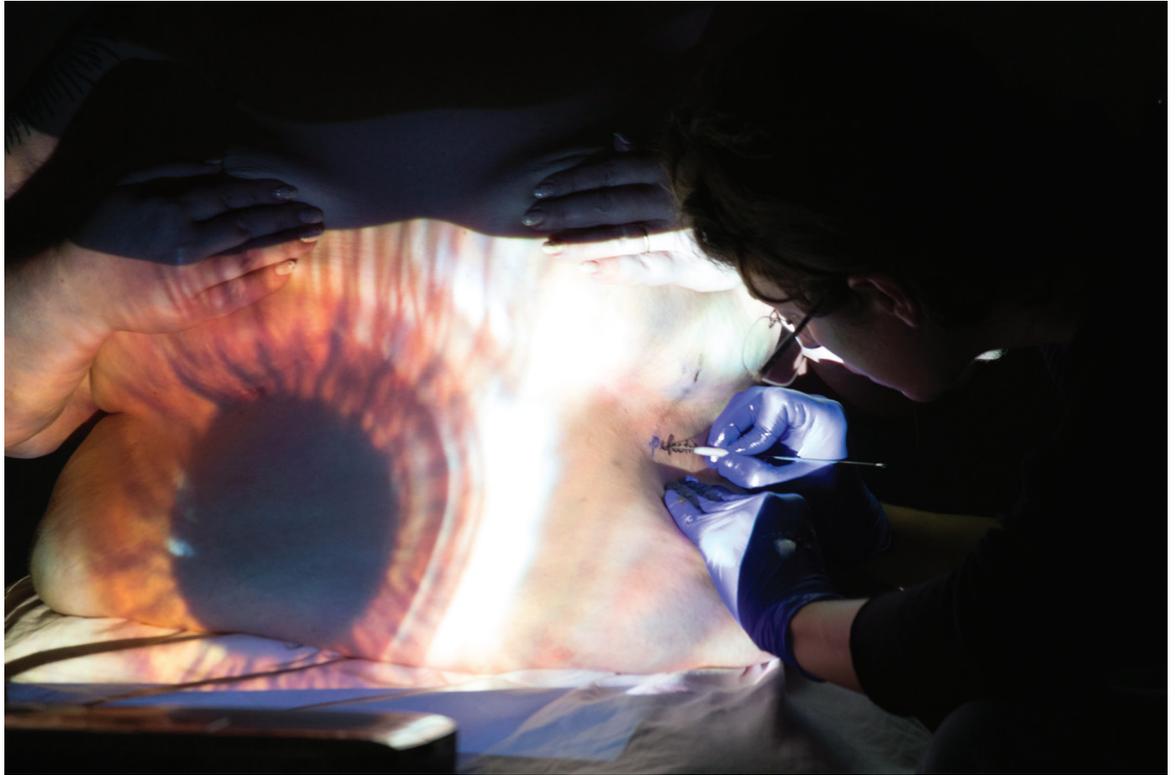
Cindy Baker, *pefect*, 2018. Forest City Gallery, London ON. Photo Credit: Eeva Siivonen

The loop of video clips is based on Baker's experiences through and during a mental health crisis. During the video, she is using breathing and mindfulness strategies to calm herself down. Intensely close and closed-in on her eyes, her skin, and her breathing, the affect is of being pulled down while constantly being made to move.

“her eyes,
her skin,
and
her breathing”

The word tattooed on her skin during the performance is like a marker of this time, of being further on, of being in another state of being. The tattooed word “pefection”, a deliberate misspelling of “perfection”, dislodges itself from straight-forwardness, from a clear path towards perfection, while in close proximity to that same aspiration of ‘health’.

“ the sounds of friction and effort - texture against texture - become the feeling of being a body ”



As Baker's body becomes both a screen and a surface for words tattooed on skin, the projected sounds and images take on the

role of physical, mental, and emotional time. As the camera moves across a lattice-like pattern in the video, the sounds of friction and effort - texture against texture - become the feeling of being a body, the artist's body, a path for images and words. Close-up images of eyes, skin, and eyelashes become close-up images of Baker's body in real time. Her body is at a different speed than the speed of the camera, resisting its nervous, rapid searching. Her body in the space, as a screen, as a surface for the work of tattooed words, radiates an awareness of the eyes of the audience. These multiple temporalities - and the empathetic contagion of being with and alongside - shifts Baker's projected, breathing body-time into audience-time and audience-body.

Cindy Baker, *perfect*, 2018. Forest City Gallery, London ON. Photo Credit: Eeva Siivonen

shudder of skin
scraping, breathing, pulling

“ she is expected to perform as though her body is something to overcome, as something that should be perceived as consumable and relatable within a program of normativity. ”

In a public talk at the University of Alberta in 2017, Baker spoke of 'taboo bodies' as "bodies which are failing to live up to 'our' or Western society's expectations...because they're fat, disabled, non-white, visibly queer...which fail to live up to contemporary neoliberal expectations of health and productivity." She spoke about ways in which her fat body is read by these standards of 'health' wherein she is expected to perform as though

her body is something to overcome, as something that should be perceived as consumable and relatable within a program of normativity. As an artist working in performance, the "trap of performing productivity" is to show evidence of working the body towards a goal of exhaustion; to prove one is "working hard" as an artist. To fail, to show a body that is failing, to fail to be healthy and productive, is to be read as taboo.



Cindy Baker, *Crash Pad*, 2018. dc3 Art Projects, Edmonton AB. Photo Credit: Tanya Harnett



Cindy Baker, *Crash Pad*, 2018. dc3 Art Projects, Edmonton AB. Photo Credit: Stephanie Patsula

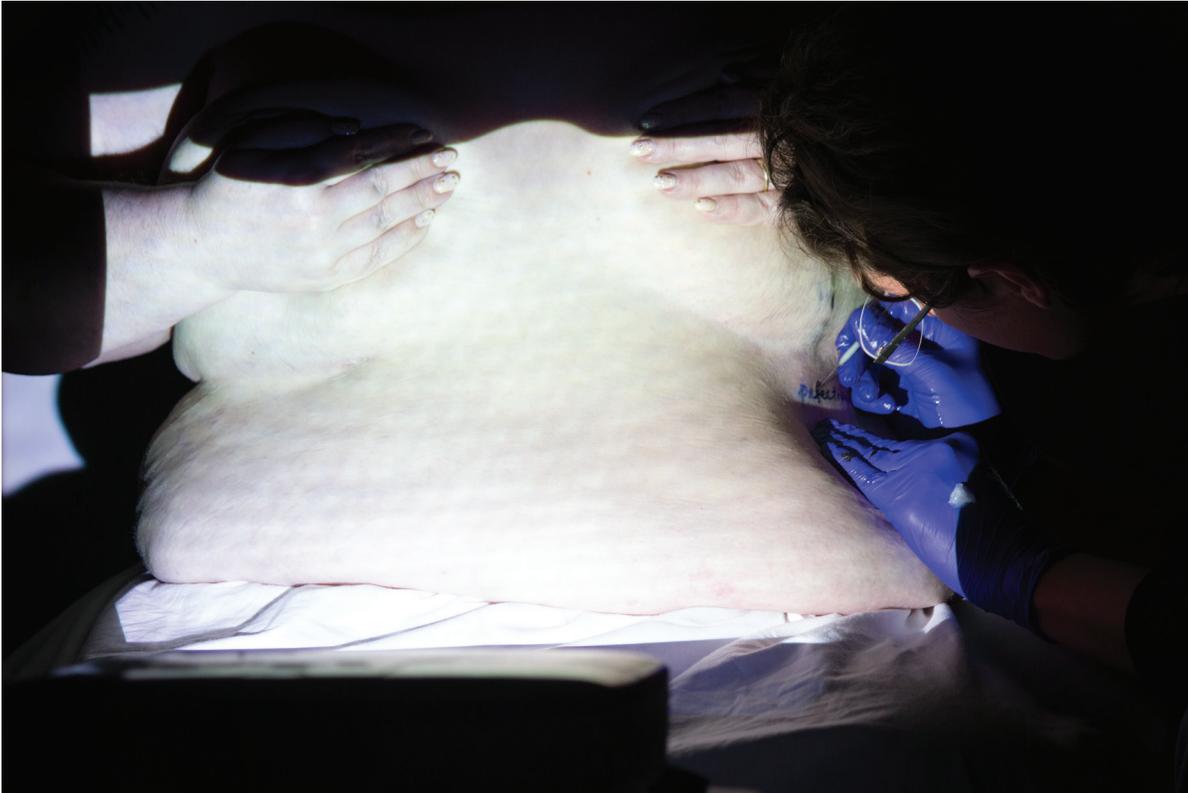
“ the work
is created
between
artist and
audience ”

For Baker, to perform can be about “specific and subjective identity”, where the work is created between artist and audience in a “dialogue that creates moments of empathy.” In her recent 2018 performance ‘Crash Pad’, the ‘work’ of performance over time also means taking care of her body while alone and with others. As she rests, she appears un-productive, non-performative. The sculptural bed upon which she rests is meant to resemble the shiny plastic and soft white curve of a blister-packed pill, like the pills she relies upon and takes as part of her physical and mental health routine. Her presence with others on the bed mirror the drawings of couples ornately patterned across a blanket and opposite wall, which show the bodies of women - fat, naked and semi-nude, able-bodied and differently-abled - lying and sitting on beds together, in wheelchairs, using canes, walkers, prosthetics, taking medication, being together, and caring for their and each others' bodies. As Baker cares for herself, wakes and moves, takes the medication she needs, and shifts to find better positions for rest, she is doing the real, embodied ‘work’ of performing, which includes the real-time relationship she has with her body in and around performance.

this body emits energy

Through time, looping, and repetition, the exchange of energy between performer and audience begins to loop back on itself. The interior space of skin and breath projected upon Baker's body becomes exterior, becomes a space for the work of words. The audience's bodies project and emit

another energy, emitting an occlusion of Baker's presence in what they project. Baker's body, seen, emits another energy, a wave of energy that stretches the surface of occlusion, holding still for an audience that sees and projects. For an audience whose looking becomes the time of breath.



Eyelids create a seam across Baker's body, a body that waits. The seam-body captures something, snaps shut on seeing. A flash of energy is emitted as the texture of sighs and breath. A shared jump to eyes that pulse outward. A shared energy pulses outward, a living breath. This eye waits in its breath.

Cindy Baker, *perfect*, 2018. Forest City Gallery, London ON. Photo Credit: Eeva Siivonen

“a wave of energy that stretches the surface of occlusion”

Biographies

Cindy Baker

Based out of Lethbridge and Edmonton, Alberta, Cindy Baker's practice is informed by a fierce commitment to ethical community engagement and critical social inquiry, drawing from queer, gender, race, disability, fat, and art theories. Baker's research-based practice moves fluently between the arts, humanities, and social sciences, considering context her primary medium. She works with diverse materials and techniques from the low-craft to digital fabrication and performance, emphasizing the theoretical, conceptual and ephemeral aspects of her work. Baker's practice draws from two

decades of experience in community-based art, as well as extensive volunteer work in art and queer communities; she has worked in non-profits throughout Western Canada, including AKA Gallery (Saskatoon). Baker holds an MFA from the University of Lethbridge where she received a SSHRC grant for her research in performance and the body. She has exhibited and performed across Canada from Open Space in Victoria, BC to Eastern Edge in St. John's, NF, and internationally in cities including Los Angeles, CA, Minneapolis, MN, Richmond, VA, and Kuopio, Finland. Baker is represented by Dc3 Projects in Edmonton.

Kim

Neudorf

is an artist and writer based in London (ON). She completed her BFA from Alberta College

of Art and Design in 2005 and her MFA from Western University in 2012. Neudorf attended the Optic Nerve Thematic Residency at the Banff Centre for the Arts in 2005, and in 2011 she was named one of 15 semi-finalists in the 13th RBC Canadian Painting Competition. Her writing and paintings have appeared most recently at Support project space, London (ON); DNA Gallery, London (ON); Paul Petro, Toronto; Franz Kaka, Toronto; Forest City Gallery, London (ON); Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre, Kingston; Evans Contemporary Gallery, Peterborough; and Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto. In the Fall of 2014 she curated balloon / portal / starres / fiends at DNA Gallery, an exhibition of works responding to a short story by Donald Barthelme.

Acknowledgments

This publication was produced in conjunction with London Ontario Media Arts Association's series Broad Topics: A Matrilineage of Media. This is an intersectional series presenting artist talks with additional screenings, performances, and workshops featuring regional, provincial, and national Canadian femme-spectrum media artists. Cindy Baker's *perfect* performance was presented in collaboration with Forest City Gallery's *in attendance* series, which took place over the summer of 2018. Broad Topics has been produced through the generous support of Canada Council for the Arts and Ontario Arts Council.

Essay: Kim Neudorf

Project Programming and Coordination: Christine Negus

Design: Jessica Negus

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LOMAA



FOREST CITY GALLERY
ARTIST-RUN CENTRE

Forest City Gallery (FCG) is an artist-run centre founded on artistic autonomy with a commitment to excellence in programming exhibitions and events that reflect and address recent developments in cultural production. FCG

serves to foster and support contemporary art, promoting dialogue amongst local, regional, and international arts communities. FCG represents artists of all disciplines and career levels with a focus on emergent artists and practices.

London Ontario Media Arts Association (LOMAA) is a regional, emerging non-profit, artist-run organization focused on the exhibition of alternative and experimental time-based and media art. With an emphasis on progressive contemporary Canadian practices, LOMAA supports the presentation of local, national, and international artists in the areas of moving images, performance, new media, and sound art.

LOMAA is situated on the traditional land of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Lenape, Huron-Wendat, and Attawandaron peoples who have longstanding relationships to the region of Southwestern Ontario and the City of London. We would like to recognize the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America) to the development of Canada. LOMAA does not see this as a resolution but merely a step in the continued process towards decolonization, with much work ahead.

