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Texts by Nic Wilson for the exhibitions:

OVER THE EDGE//TOE THE LINE

by Kasia Sosnowski

&

Ellie

by Claire Ellen Paquet

at

Neutral Ground ARC  
Sept. 25 – Nov. 13, 2021



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“Feels over reals”  
- Natalie Wynn



“It’s a little bit funny, this feeling inside”  
- Sir. Elton John & Bernie Taupin



These texts were assembled for the exhibitions OVER THE EDGE//TOE THE LINE by Kasia Sosnowski and Ellie by Claire Ellen Paquet.

Both artists work through clustering and multiplicity to probe the anxieties, contradictions, and comforts of being a living body.

Whether through colour, form, or process, both artists work with repetition, subtly modulating what an action (such as the manipulation of clay or the arrangement of popcorn) can mean. They work through ideas and objects that are multivalent, simultaneous, autonomous, and interdependent.

Following this shared spirit, to which my own practice is deeply indebted, I have collected fragments

Content Warning - discussions and descriptions of self-harm.

that sit between their work, like the imaginary lines connecting points in a constellation.



The English term ‘porcelain’ is derived from the Old Italian word porcellana (known in English as a cowrie: a small sea snail) due to its visual similarity to the tiny creature’s glistening shell. Throughout the globe, the shell has been used as currency in its purest form: a material plucked from the world and wrapped in meaning and power. Here these snails and their shells find themselves in a precarious relationship to protection. The shell is meant to protect the vulnerable goo of the cowrie, but the human lust for this opulent treasure puts them squarely in the crosshairs of extraction.



## HARDCORE ANXIETY

I don't miss the tightly packed crowds or near-compulsory drunkenness, but what I do miss about seeing live music (particularly hardcore) is witnessing something constantly on the edge of its own demise.

The collision of speed, shitty equipment, and haphazard levels of technical proficiency that typify most of my favourite live music, bring with them an indiscernible mixture of excitement and anxiety. I like when someone flips the beat, a disagreement between where the stress falls, when some players are emphasizing the 1 and 3 and others the 2 and 4.

This confusion and misalignment can tear a song apart; smearing, distorting, and devolving music into shambolic clots of sound. Knowing it

can happen keeps you on the edge of your self, leaning into the speed. When it happens, you feel yourself going to pieces with the players—a new way of being together by falling apart.



I'm not sure why, but I have naturalized the idea that feelings are inside of bodies and bubble up to the surface: tears, cum, vaginal fluid, pee, the extra-pungent sweat of anxiety.

It probably has something to do with the Eurocentric idea of a soul and its vessel. To bare one's soul is to 'open up' emotionally. Consciousness is on the outside, like a skin holding us in (Freud's ego). Negotiating psychic sensations like emotional distress through the physical body can bring a dangerous kind of focus. Self-injury transforms pain into a more socially acceptable kind of injury—one visible as a bruise or a cut.

The repetition of eating is both soothing and tedious. When food comes in plentiful multiplicity, I relish the repetition. The hand passing between bowl and mouth, the grinding of teeth and the churn of swallowing. On another level, I sometimes crumple, before the unending task of both preparing food and consuming it. The punitive repetition of writing lines on a chalk board meets the pulsing piano chords that make up "Strings of Life." The stroke of self pleasure meets the realization that desire can never be extinguished, only temporarily satiated.




## REPLICA MINI FENDI BACKPACK

I instinctively move my bag to the front of my body in art spaces. After multiple confrontations with varying degrees of rudeness, I have learned to perform this gesture of awareness when entering galleries, if only to signal that I get it. I will maintain an acute awareness of my surroundings and the way my body moves through them.

While wandering through one of the seemingly endless Warhol retrospectives that pass through the walls of major institutions, I heard a middle-aged security guard tell a young woman to put her small backpack on the front of her body. I heard her respond with a slightly incredulous “Why?” and remembered my own early resistance to this demand. I admire this small resistance in young gallery-goers.



The surveillance of these spaces usually makes me feel like my body is an unpredictable, dangerous, and ridiculous thing I need to keep in check. An ostrich on a leash.

The imagination that stokes this policy might go something like this: a person walks into a gallery and is enraptured by all of the beautiful things therein. They turn to take in the next spectacle and their small backpack knocks a priceless treasure off of its ledge, shattering on the marble floor, or shattering the marble floor, or shattering another priceless object.  Some catastrophe put into motion by a replica Mini Fendi backpack and the willingness to put something precious close to the edge of a table. In actual fact, most things are in cases, behind thick glass, or surrounded by metal stanchions.

## REPEAT AFTER ME II

As much as one wants to believe they are in control of their actions, I suspect that many of our behaviours are caught subliminally rather than cultivated consciously. This is why advertising works and why Instagram is so depressing. Harder still is that fact that knowing this can rarely extinguish the impulse to copy, imitate, or recreate something we see others doing, even if it is destructive or harmful. Each glimpse of another human in action could bring you closer to the edge of self-annihilation—some are just farther from the edge than others.



When I look at a thoughtfully composed image or a haphazard one. When I look at myself looking at myself on a phone screen. When I see an image of someone get cut and I instinctively grab that part of my own body. When representations of the ‘real’ trade places with the real—when the value of images of bodies eclipse the value of those bodies. When I imitate pornography during sex. When I see a drag queen embody Beyoncé. When I look at pictures of my dogs while they sit at my feet. When I watch YouTube videos of food being prepared while I eat dinner alone. When you can’t see the line as you approach it but know for sure when you are on the other side. When containment is inevitably breached. When an image leaks out and when I wonder where ‘out’ begins and an image ends.

## WHEN I LOOK AT MYSELF LOOKING AT MYSELF

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Sounds resemble rain on the sidewalk.  
Water drops for miles before it clicks  
on the surface of a puddle.  
But not in life.

Recorded for posterity, the click so  
close it feels like it's happening  
In the centre of your head, deep in  
your brain.  
The old part where lizard cradles the  
ape  
And the ape cradles back.

Water explodes violently out of a  
kernel.  
Water is banished from pressed mud  
with heat.  
Tears mix into sweat, mixes into rain,  
mixes into pee.

Cautious water held in—out of fear or  
misplaced respect.  
Grape juice in a Dixie cup as the blood

of Christ.  
A rose window. An artificial lake. A  
smooth, back-lit surface.

Small things arranged on a shelf.  
A bedside tabernaculum.  
A map of places you have cried, all  
across this small blue dot.



## REPEAT AFTER ME III

John Cage said that “If something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, then eight. Then sixteen. Then thirty-two. Eventually one discovers that it is not boring at all.” Marilyn Arsem has said, on several occasions, that “there is something on the other side of boredom.” I believe this to be true, but I have not found the words to describe what that something is. I think it might be something you need to sit with yourself.

KASIA SOSNOWSKI graduated with honours from the University of Lethbridge with a combined BFA in both Art History & Museum Studies, and Art Studio in 2014. She has recently been accepted as an MFA Candidate at York University where she will pursue ceramics and sculpture in Fall 2021.

CLAIRE ELLEN PAQUET is an artist, writer, and garment-maker based in Tiohtià:ke/Montréal. She holds a BFA from Mount Allison University and an MFA from Concordia University. She is preoccupied with coping, and with the reality that some things are nicer to hold than others.

NIC WILSON is an artist and writer based on Treaty Four Land in Regina, SK.



