



*Rituals* a short, silent, looping video is projected onto the opposite wall. By far the most self-evident of the works in the series, in the video the artist's body is made visible to us as she documents the activities that have both consumed and transformed her lived reality. Yoga mats stretched out before the video invite us to participate in Kozma-Perrin's experience: to be both witness and companion in the experience of healing. On the left side of the split-screen we see the artist in a variety of peaceful settings, frequently outdoors, sitting in quiet meditation. She is visible in her entirety and seems composed, serene. By contrast, the right side of the screen presents a series of clips shot indoors depicting the artist's fragmented body as she toils through the onerous daily routines associated with pain management. The contrast of interior and exterior settings, coupled with images of corporeal wholeness and fragmentation suggests something of the Cartesian dualism that underpins most pain theory and treatment, begging the question: Where do we experience pain? In our minds or in our bodies?

Only once in the exhibition does the artist attempt to express something analogous to her state. The artist has described *Muscles, nerves, and helplessness* as a response to the question "what would it sound like if your body was a nerve?" A single pair of headphones introduces us to a looping digital audio track, nearly two minutes in length. The track transports us to the state of hyper-awareness that can come from being in pain. The vacuous ring of pain is punctuated by shrieking chirps. Nearly intolerable at its crescendo, the low tones of a cello give way to the hush of air in an empty room, the sound of breathing, the soothing rhythm of waves on a shore. This soundtrack of pain occurs in the isolation of headphones, but also in the public setting of the gallery. The manifold nature of our experience with Kozma-Perrin's work is a constant consideration of what is private and subjective, and what is public and universal.

Like many artists before her, Kozma-Perrin's attempts to translate the experience of pain is bound from the beginning to fail. But *Out of the Current* is not really an exhibition about conquest, certitude, or closure. Through this body of work Kozma-Perrin embraces the futility of her situation and the strength she has found in vulnerability. In her words, "vulnerability in the end is not just about allowing oneself to be susceptible to physical or emotional harm, but rather being open to unmapped changes in life."

- Laura Schneider, 2017

Tara-Lynn Kozma-Perrin is a contemporary First Nations Artist residing in Abbotsford, BC. She has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of the Fraser Valley, and has been the recipient of a number of residencies, public art commissions, and awards.

Left: Tara-Lynn Kozma-Perrin, *Rituals*, 2017, One channel digital silent video (with yoga mats).

## Out of the Current

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Front cover: Tara-Lynn Kozma-Perrin, *Muscles, nerves and helplessness*, 2017, digital audio file (1 min 54 sec).  
Inside Image 1 (left to right): Tara-Lynn Kozma-Perrin, *Reflections*, 2017, vinyl lettering on exterior windows. Inside Image 2: Tara-Lynn Kozma-Perrin, *Life is a struggle in which sorrow leads to defeat*, 2017, latex hand-painted wall text.  
Inside Image 3: Tara-Lynn Kozma-Perrin, *Performance: Reflections*, 2017. Inside Right: Tara-Lynn Kozma-Perrin, *Rituals*, 2017, one channel digital silent video (with yoga mats). All Photography by SITE Photography.



Out of the Current  
Tara-Lynn Kozma-Perrin



## Out of the Current

*"...this radical isolation in the unshareable experience of pain is also a definitive mark of our human subjectivity; this vulnerability to the experience of pain defines us all."*

- John Russon, excerpted from the essay *Haunted by History: Merleau-Ponty, Hegel and the Phenomenology of Pain*

The experience of pain takes us "out of the current," bracketing us off from the regular rhythms of life. Though humankind has a vast and sophisticated range of scientific and expressive tools at its disposal, we lack the ability to truly understand and communicate this phenomenon. Some of the most recognizable depictions of this subject—works by artists such as Frieda Kahlo and Edvard Munch—have attempted to convey the experience through figurative representations that distort the human likeness in the throes of anguish. Though descriptive, the physical representation of the pain of others remains superficial: the perceptible symptom of invisible turmoil below the surface.

The struggle to understand the pain of others has been central to artistic pursuit, not just in order to make a spectacle of it or in aspiration of a more accurate depiction, but because humanity is collectively moved by the empathic urge. As the opening quotation aptly points out, the isolation and interiority of the body in pain is matched by its commonality as part of the human experience. Put another way, pain is both subjective and abstract, while being simultaneously universal and substantial. There is not a person living that has not had the experience of pain.

In *Out of the Current*, Abbotsford artist Tara-Lynn Kozma-Perrin shares her experience with undiagnosed chronic pain. As a young woman, this sudden change had consequences on every facet of her life. In this suite of four multi-media works the artist denies figuration, relying instead on more oblique artistic vocabularies: sound, text, and video, to develop expressive analogies for the arc of pain. These works evade the possibility of spectacle. Far from theatrical, they are intentionally stark and discomfoting, even analytical. Though Kozma-Perrin's focus is on the embodied, internal, and isolated nature of pain, this stirring series of intimate glimpses into her life

also attends to the human capacity for compassion and empathy. From the parking lot, visitors encounter lilac-purple vinyl text on the gallery's exterior windows. The text reads: I took you for granted. I was selfish, impatient, frustrated, and one sided. I endured pain and guilt as I lost my sense of purpose. The words are arresting in their boldness and candour, so rarely do we encounter such disarming statements of remorse. These short phrases are excerpted from a letter that the artist wrote to her husband, from which the title of the exhibition was also drawn, in which she atones for the changes in her behaviour brought on by her condition and acknowledges the damaging impact on their relationship. The repercussions of chronic pain take a toll on the mental health and relationships of sufferers, and in this instance the artist's private missive becomes a public act of catharsis.



The full letter reads:

*"I took you for granted as I no longer saw the things you did for me or your gestures of love. I stopped thinking of You and Us but rather Me and I. Without you and your unending love and understanding, I would have never been able to reflect on myself and move through the storm. I was selfish, impatient, frustrated, and one sided. I endured pain and guilt as I lost my sense of purpose. Yet through it all you held me tight when I needed and left me when deep in thought, and as I pulled myself out of the current you were there lending a helping hand."*



Inside the gallery, a museum vitrine is illuminated in an otherwise dark corner, providing an ancillary element to the text-based piece. Like a donation box for deep secrets, the artist invites visitors to express an apology, a reflection, or a secret, on the slips of paper provided. Kozma-Perrin petitions her audience to participate in a collective unburdening of anger, shame, loss, or regret, offering to read these contributions anonymously in a public performance on the final day of the calendar year.

The artist frequently employs text as a tool to give shape to the immateriality of her physical and psychological experience. Before the onset of her condition Kozma-Perrin was learning calligraphy and hand lettering. When she began experiencing chronic pain it severely limited in the scope and scale of what she could accomplish. Nevertheless she has continued to use it as an exercise to remain productive as an artist and as a distraction from her condition. A large, hand-lettered wall mural in the same purple hue used on the exterior of the building reads "Vulnerability," a concept that the artist has returned to time and again in expressing the transformational impact of her illness. Typographically, the piece has much in common with hand-painted advertisements of the mid-twentieth century and might just as easily read "Blowout Sale" or "Everything Must Go!" As in sign painting, Kozma-Perrin's work is trying to persuade us of something: perhaps it is simply to let go and offer ourselves up. However, straightforward it may seem, its title *Life is a struggle in which sorrow leads to defeat* suggests that the work is as much about persistence as resignation. To paint this word onto the wall represents a significant achievement for the artist, given that the simple act of calligraphy was once unbearably painful for her. In much of Kozma-Perrin's work what at first appears capitulatory may also be an act of revelation or personal triumph.

