

11. Sheryl Spencer: Tailored to Empower

Tailored to Empower is a multi-media installation and performance work by Sheryl Spencer created in 2026.

The artwork unfolds across two tables arranged in an L shape with one side running along a window and the other jutting into the gallery space. The work is primarily a performance and what is left in the gallery offers traces of what happens during the performance.

The two tables are covered in off-white linen fabric and are dotted with assorted materials and equipment for sewing and mending clothing. A white serger and a sewing machine to join and finish fabric, large cone-shaped spools of thread in many different colours, designed to sit securely on a serger while it's in use. An ironing mat covered by a piece of off-white linen marked with a grid for easy measuring, a small stack of coiled notebooks, a disheveled, flexible butter yellow measuring tape in a rumpled pile.

At the end of the table that juts into the gallery space, a sign prompts visitors to write or draw on fabric stretched across the table, to imagine and then share how their clothing might better suit and support their bodies. Nearby, a vintage dress form is wrapped in linen fabric. Over the course of the exhibition, Sheryl will dress this form further by sewing together pieces of the fabric where visitors have sketched their ideas or written about their experiences reflecting on how their clothing might better support and align with their bodies.

Along the window are pattern pieces, fabric scraps, drawings, notes, and other documents that trace how garments might be designed and tailored for and by the bodies who wear them.

If you are visiting the gallery on a Friday between 11:00 am and 2:00 pm, Sheryl is likely sitting at her table, where she welcomes visitors into conversation about how their clothes might better support them. Sheryl may be speaking with a visitor, designing something with them, or mending and tailoring a piece of clothing that has been left for her.

About the artwork and artist:

Tailored to Empower is a performance work and installation centred on mending, altering, and tailoring of adaptive clothing within the gallery space. The work echoes previous projects where the artist held the tender opportunity to alter garments to comfortably maneuver a colostomy bag, to fit a prosthetic breast after a mastectomy. The project is centred around the belief that the things we use daily, such as our clothing, should work with our bodies to support and empower them.

Bodies and bodily concerns are unique and personal, and the things we put on them should be equally unique and supportive. The installation portion of the artwork includes objects required for tailoring and personalizing garments. These items will accumulate and change over the

course of the exhibition as the artist takes up mending projects in conversation and collaboration with visitors.

Sheryl will be present at the gallery to discuss and complete alterations every Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., while the exhibition is open.

Sheryl Spencer is an interdisciplinary artist. Her artistic practice explores themes of femininity, inherited expectations, personal reflection, and introspection. Through tactile processes incorporating combinations of printmaking, fiber, and stitching, her work reflects on mending, repair, and emotional labour.

The next artwork in the exhibition is located outside the McMullen Gallery in a window space near the gallery entrance. To find this window space, follow the wall on the left, leave the gallery, and then turn to your left again.