

MOTHER HOOD IN THE ART WORLD

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To Alma, for being all the meaning

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Introduction

The need to discuss motherhood in the art world has not diminished since 1960. As artist Mimi Smith declares,

At the end of the decade of 1960 it was hard for women to be taken seriously as artists. It was harder for a woman who was married and had children. Worst of all was to make work about it! It is still very difficult for women artists today if they have children and use them as subject matter in their work, maybe harder than it has ever been.¹

The issue seems more alive than ever, as artist Tracey Emin caused a major scandal in late 2014 when she declared that “there are good artists that have children. Of course there are. They are called men.”²

The current research has emerged from this scenario and counts with a strong personal inquiring component as I am myself an artist new to motherhood. The text collects pioneering positions by mother artists in the 1960s and 1970s. Questions that have guided this research are:

How did the first “mother artists” deal with motherhood? How were their questions and reassurances represented? How has the reception of artworks depicting motherhood changed over time? What role has motherhood played in the course of the art market? Can this thus be read as a symptom of the economic system that contains it, namely neoliberalism? How do these representations change geopolitically?

We have decided to refer to these women artists as “mother artists” aware of the historical problematic nature of this term. The word “mother” has been rejected by women artists who have children, as this definition has been widely associated in Western cultures with ascription to tradition and patriarchy, and has been directly synonymous with the reduction of women to their role as reproducers.

Similarly, motherhood was given a negative meaning, as expressed in the film “Animal Mother - Human Mother”(1998) of Helke Sander. In Germany, for example, motherhood was an essential part of Nazi propaganda, and even in the 1960s and 1970s the word “mother” was immediately associated with fascist ideology and in this way made taboo.

In the following text, we will highlight artworks by women artists who are mothers and who, through their work as well as in their personal lives, defy the norms of patriarchal motherhood and patriarchal art. These works have challenged the norms that still restrict and oppress women.

Our view strongly incorporates Andrea O'Reilly's ideas about care work - the work that mothers do - as a practice that must be recognized as fundamental to our political and personal well-being.³

Our goal is to examine the foundations of the feminist movement that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, in which feminist women, seeking emancipation from patriarchy, made the questioning of having children the norm.

We will thus focus on the silenced position of women artists, disregarding the numerous examples of the representation of motherhood by male artists as well as by women artists who chose not to have children.

Our understanding of the subject of motherhood in the art world considers motherhood as a subject that should be carried out primarily by mothers, a turn in history because our voice in it has been silenced. There are many examples of male and female artists without children depicting motherhood. They work closely together to reinforce the invisibility of women, devaluing maternal and artistic work.

At the same time, in the art world, the decision not to have children is associated with a firm belief that it will have a negative impact on the artist's career, see the case of Marguerite Gérard, to name just one, while in many cases child-rearing is judged harshly.

The current scenario is the result of an economic dynamic in which a differentiable object

1 Skrzynski, Jackie “Finding the Balance” In Epp Buller, Rachel (2012) *Reconciling Art and Mothering*, Ashgate Pub Co p. 189

2 <http://news.artnet.com/in-brief/tracey-emin-says-female-artists-cant-have-kids-126940>

3 O'Reilly, Andrea (2008) *Feminist Mothering*, State Univ of New York Pr

responsible for precarious living conditions cannot be discerned, as Deleuze and Guattari put it: "the bourgeois is more utterly enslaved than the lowest of slaves"(...) "I too am a slave"—these are the new words spoken by the master."⁴

In this context, while women have found a suitable environment to become independent and thrive economically as never before, for many others, also depending on their geographical location, a more regulated economic environment is still needed in which they can finally find the necessary and sufficient conditions to thrive.

The hedonistic position that insists on not raising children, the position of not having children out of ecological obligation, and the pessimistic vision of our general political and economic future are the other side of the current economic dynamics and can be described as a major challenge in changing the relationship between workers and buyers necessary to sustain production systems.

However, we will not discuss here the general problems of child-rearing, as we do not want to delve into the many complex reasons for deciding whether or not to have a child.

Instead, we will focus on a political dimension of motherhood and problematize the current economic dynamics from this perspective.

The few examples of female artists who have carved out a place for themselves in the art market by depicting motherhood are due to the fact that these artists chose not to have children. For example, the work of French painter Marguerite Gérard from 1785 to 1825, in which she depicts progressive maternal genre scenes, or the Impressionist North American painter Mary Cassatt (1824-1926), to name a few.

Regardless of her support for her nephew and family, Marguerite Gérard did not experience motherhood herself because "perhaps she realized how much it would have affected her career."⁵

In contrast to Gérard and Cassatt, Jewish and French artist Chana Orloff is an early example of the complexity and adversity faced by artists depicting motherhood.

Orloff's statement "in order to be a successful female artist a woman must also experience motherhood,"⁶ would have put off many artists of the Parisian circle to which she belonged.

Chana Orloff produced sculptures addressing motherhood at the beginning of the twentieth century that became very popular in the 1930s as they echoed the obsession about the subject in the interwar period, in response to the depopulation crisis.⁷

Her sculptures epitomize various moments between mothers and their children without portraying specific individuals -Fig.1-.

Many Parisian women artist rejected and even rebelled against the emphasis in pronatalism. Artists who Orloff depicted in sculptures like Claude Cahun and Anaïs Nin, among others, were known publicly as modern women and as sexually and economically liberated artist, but not mothers, and "it is likely that these women chose either not to have children or not to endorse Orloff's belief in a symbiotic relationship between mothering and artmaking."⁸

The context in which Chana Orloff emerged was the pronatalist scenario that feminists inherited as a norm in the 1960s.

In parallel, German artist Käthe Kollwitz sent her younger son to World War I with "flowers and a copy of Faust."⁹ After her son's death Kollwitz became skeptical about military honor and loyalty to the patria. Her initial contradictions began with the mixed feelings about the "criminal insanity" of war, which contrasted with the loyalty she tried to associate with the memory of her son.

Kollwitz's increasing anti-militarism led to her losing her teaching position and her studio, and she was also banned from exhibiting her works.¹⁰

4 Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix (1972) *Anti-Oedipus*. University of Minnesota Press. p. 254

5 Belnap Jensen, Heather (2012) "Modern Motherhood and Female Sociability in the Art of Marguerite Gerard". In: *Reconciling Art and Mothering*, Edit Epp Buller, Rachel, Ashgate Pub Co p. 18

6 Birnbaum, Paula J(2012) "Sculpting as a Modern Jewish Mother" In: *Reconciling Art and Mothering*, Edit Epp Buller, Rachel, Ashgate Pub Co p. 48

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid. p. 49

9 Ruddick, Sara (1989) "Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace", Beacon Pr. p. 159

10 Ibid.

In 1938, Käthe Kollwitz created a small sculpture titled "Tower of Mothers" (see Fig. 2), which depicts a circle of mothers protecting the children gathered behind them and embodies the maternal anti-militarist position that made her one of the world's most famous artists and a "heroine of feminist peace politics."¹¹

Another early work depicting motherhood while being a mother is Louise Bourgeois and her series of drawings "Girl Falling" which she begun in 1947. They will be analyzed along with the development of Bourgeois' work in the 1960s and 1970s.

These few artists took up in isolation what was being discussed on a larger scale by feminist artists in the decades between 1960 and 1970.

We will thus point out the positions that emerged from the feminist movement, as a result of the current of thought at that time. We will look at feminism as a multifaceted social movement that focuses on the way gender, as a social construction of male and female, organizes political, personal, and intellectual life.

Our approach draws on the ideas of Sara Ruddick¹² and assumes that the gendered division of work, pleasure, power, and sensibility harms women and also threatens women's abilities. The feminist individual thus becomes a ally, able to focus on the impact of gender in our lives and work to change the sexual and domestic arrangements that lead to oppression.

Following Andrea O'Reilly, we will consider feminism as a demand for equality and individual freedom of choice, as well as a recognition of women as autonomous persons. In summary, we are committed to gender equality, and we add that our understanding of feminism is to extend that commitment to a general, sensitive recognition of the injustices inherent in any traditional power structure.

Within this framework, in Chapter I we will discuss some artworks created in the decades between 1960 and 1970 as a reflection on the demand for a shift from motherhood to mothering, that is, from patriarchy to feminist mothering,¹³ by mother artists like Louise Bourgeois, VALIE EXPORT, Hackney Flashers, Susan Hiller, Mako Idemitsu, Kirsten Justesen, Tina Keane, Mary Kelly, Friedl Kubelka vom Gröller, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Lea Lublin, María Evelia Marmolejo, Feministo, Fina Miralles, Mother Art, Ree Morton, Laura Mulvey (and Peter Wollen), Anna Oppermann, Gina Pane, Ewa Partum, Elaine Reichek, Ursula Reuter Christiansen, Faith Ringgold, Martha Rosler, Ulrike Rosenbach, Niki de Saint Phalle, Zorka Saglova, Helke Sander, Mimi Smith and Annegret Soltau.

This text brings together existing literature on the subject, such as Rachel Epp Buller's "Reconciling Art and Mothering" (2012), Myrel Chernick and Jennie Klein's "The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art" (2011), and Andrea Liss's "Feminist Art and the Maternal" (2009). We also include excerpts from the catalog of the exhibition "Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution" (2007) by Cornelia Butler and information from online databases such as reactfeminism.org and clara.nmwa.org, as well as from the artists' websites, to name a few.

This research shows the vociferously absent positions outside the center of the art field. These are the positions that have already been well documented and are part of the literature and archives on the subject. What is still missing are positions by women artists of color from the "Global South." Maria Evelia Marmolejo's work was included here, although I could not confirm that she was a mother until years later. However, she has been living in Spain for a long time.

Following the discussion and analysis of these works, in Chapter II we will develop an approach to institutional critique by examining the role of motherhood in the art market and how this can be related to a broader critique of post-Fordist dynamics.

In Chapter III, we will briefly reflect on women's relationship to capitalism in its forms of post-Fordist production and neoliberalism, drawing primarily on the ideas of theorist Silvia Federici.

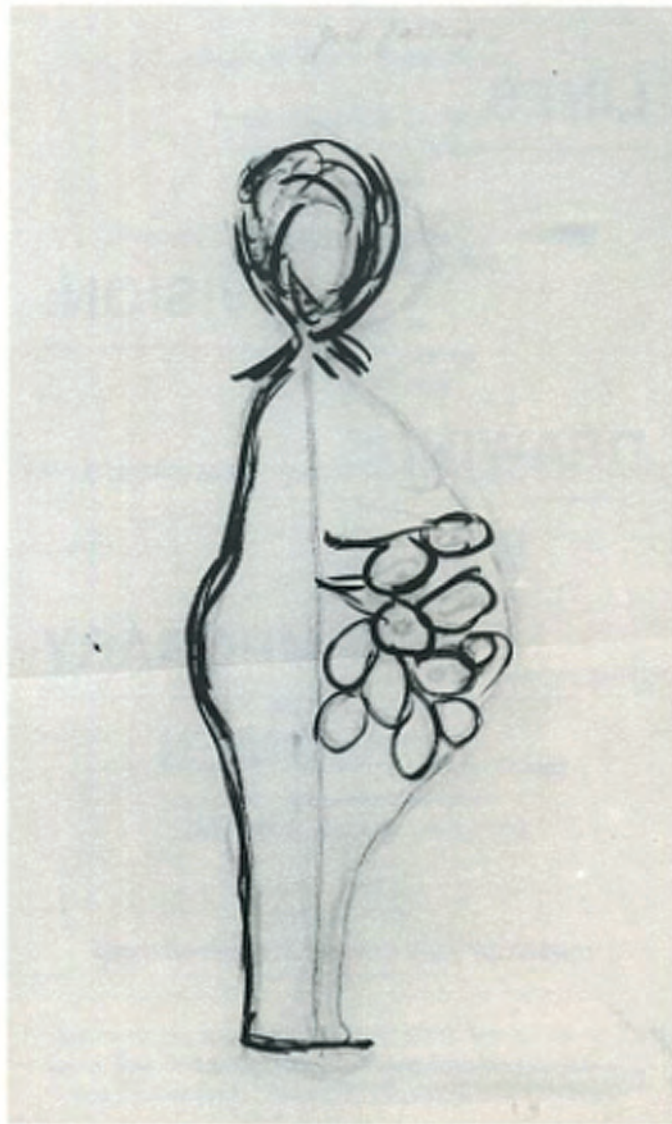
Finally, Chapter IV discusses how the old disadvantaged position of women in the web of economic relations has evolved into the contemporary phenomenon of migration, to which some works by women artists refer.

11 Ibid.

12 Ruddick, Sara (1989) "Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace", Beacon Pr. p. 235-236

13 as described by O'Reilly, Andrea (2008) *Feminist Mothering*, State Univ of New York Pr. p. 192

Chapter I. Motherhood Revisited



The French-American artist **Louise Bourgeois** had a complex relationship with feminism. She came into contact with feminism because all of her female relatives were “feminists and socialists- and ferociously so!”¹⁴ and she was considered a feminist even though she did not want to be.

In the early 1970s, she joined the burgeoning feminist art movement and feminist critics, although she was critical of the relationship between her gender and her work.

Bourgeois stated that “there is no feminist aesthetic. Absolutely not! There is a psychological content. But it is not because I am a woman that I work the way I do. It is because of the experiences I have gone through;”¹⁵ and she emphasized, “we are all vulnerable in some way, and we are all male-female.”¹⁶

Bourgeois’ work is all about relationships: as a mother, as a daughter and as a wife.¹⁷

The work “Girl Falling”(1947) -image above- illustrates the weight of maternity, multiplying like breasts, or phalluses or cysts, growing on a pregnant woman.

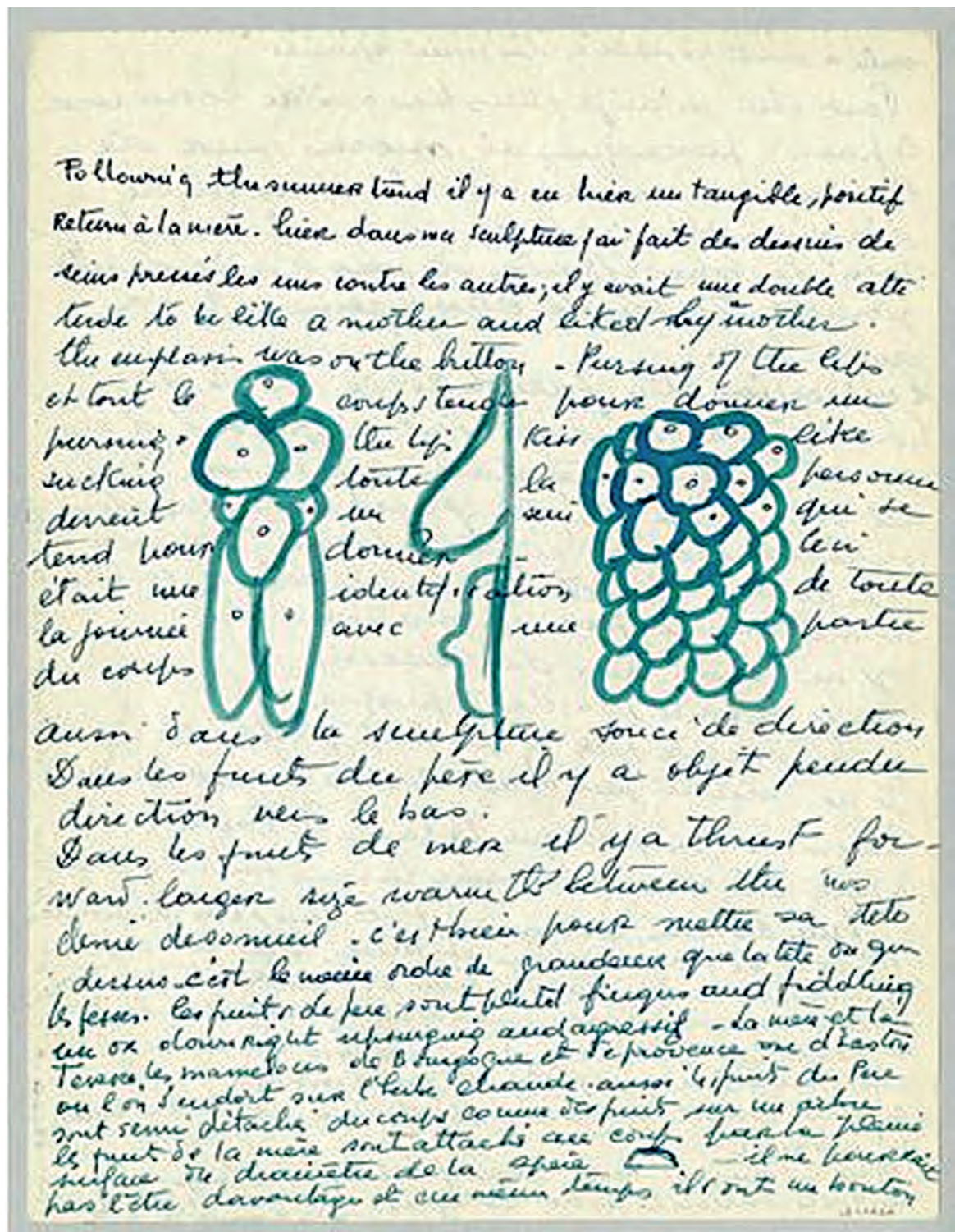
The drawing evokes the image of the wolf foster mother of Romulus and Remus.

14 Apud Butler, Cornelia (2007) *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, The MIT Press, Los Angeles. p. 220

15 Ibid

16 Ibid

17 <http://pastexhibitions.guggenheim.org/bourgeois/index.html>



Later, the form of "Girl Falling" (1947) reappeared in a "Loose Sheet" (1959) - image above- found in Bourgeois' apartment in the early months of 2010. The "Loose Sheet" is part of the strenuous analysis of her dreams, fears and desires that Bourgeois went through.¹⁸

18 <http://www.artbook.com/9781900828376.html>



In "Avenza"(1975) –image above-, which became part of "Confrontation"(1978) –below- "swelling masculinity and swollen femininity combined" according to the Sotheby's website is as "Bourgeois' hybridisation of gendered tropes plays to her ambivalent identification with motherhood and lasting discord with the father figure."¹⁹

The latex costume appeared as a three-dimensional reflection of the drawing "Girl Falling" from 1947.



Bourgeois directed the installation "Confrontation" and related performance "A Banquet/A Fashion Show of Body Parts" at the Hamilton Gallery of Contemporary Art in 1978.

In words of Bourgeois' assistant Jerry Gorovoy, "she choreographed the fashion show with people dressed in semi-transparent costumes made of latex with bulbous forms around (...) (The performance) was also about vulnerability and exposure,"²⁰ recalling the works of Kirsten Justesen "Circumstances Objects"(1971) more precisely the transparent torso filled with eyes; as well as the partially transparent womb-dress of Mimi Smith "Maternity Dress"(1966), which will be discussed later.

Viewers of Bourgeois' performance were assembled by art historians, scholars, critics, and others and asked to sit on the boxes and watch others model costumes with shapes that resembled body parts. In addition, viewers were asked to confront themselves in front of the others. According to Bourgeois, they had to "face how limited and uninteresting they are. And every one of us has to do that in front of everybody else. At that point we have grown up."²¹

In the performance, Susan Cooper sang "She Abandoned Me" stressing the abandonment suffered by an elder person by his/her children, which according to Bourgeois "is just the opposite: it is the abandonment of the very young child by the elders."²²

Bourgeois reflects in this way on this feeling she experienced when her sitter left her because she "was not interested in me at all. She was interested in sleeping with my father."²³

Later Bourgeois' work would further explore the early form of "Girl Falling"(1947) like for instance "Nature Study"(1984-1994), "Spiral Woman"(1984) and "She-Fox"(1985).

From another perspective Bourgeois' series "Maman"(1999) or "Mother" reflects on motherhood through an ode to her mother.

In her words:

20 <http://pastexhibitions.guggenheim.org/bourgeois/index.html>

21 Ibid.

22 Butler, Cornelia (2007) Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution, The MIT Press, Los Angeles. p. 220

23 Ibid.

She was my best friend. Like a spider, my mother was a weaver (...) Like spiders, my mother was very clever. Spiders are friendly presences that eat mosquitoes. We know that mosquitoes spread diseases and are therefore unwanted. So, spiders are helpful and protective, just like my mother.²⁴

In the late works "Femme Maison"(1994), "The Woven Child"(2002), "The Reticent Child"(2003), "Arched Figure"(2004), "Femme"(2005), "The Family I"(2007), "Pregnant Woman"(2008), as well as in the series "Do Not Abandon Me"(2010) -a collaboration with Tracey Emin-, Bourgeois dealt, among other things, with the theme of motherhood.

In 2011, one of her works titled "Spider"(1996), sold for \$10.7 million, setting a new record price for the artist at auction and the highest price for a work by a woman.²⁵

In Austria there are only two mother artists who created bodies of work addressing motherhood during the decades of 1960 and 1970. They are VALIE EXPORT as well as Friedl Kubelka vom Gröller. This reduced number of female artists that reflected on the subject can be understood in words of the Austrian artist Renate Bertlmann, who said in a private interview that:

Of course, (the topics of motherhood) were intensely discussed in the seventies, especially for female artists, because most of them had to make a decision: art or child. Both were nearly impossible because they were responsible for raising up their children, as male consciousness concerning taking over it on a partnership basis did not exist, and neither paternal leave. What to do then, when you find out that you need for your art 24 hours a day and also 24 hours a day for your little child?

For this reason Bertlmann produced the performance "Pregnant Bride in the Wheelchair"(1978), in which, as she put it:

I wanted to express the powerlessness and helplessness which [the situation above] can evoke. The bride (bound through the upcoming marriage) and the mother (bound through the unborn child), finds herself in a wheelchair, desperately seeking help from her surrounding, feeling incapable to find a solution for herself. Finally the urge for self-fulfillment gets so strong, that she delegates the responsibility of her child back to the society which is forcing her to act like that. The child is given birth symbolically at the end of the performance and the bride leaves the room.

Another reason why female artists generally do not engage in motherhood -which is later regretted by some and not by others-, overrides private life, or more precisely, that artistic career comes with a particular constraint. As Bertlmann describes:

Concerning my private situation I never excluded the idea of having a child because I had a partner who was very supportive. But as I was always working very obsessively, totally absorbed in my artistic work and there was obviously not enough physical, mental and emotional strength and disposition left over for getting a child.

24 <http://www.tate.org.uk/about/press-office/press-releases/tate-acquires-louise-bourgeois-giant-spider-maman>
25 <http://www.economist.com/blogs/prospero/2012/05/post-war-artists-auction>

Within the context described above, the renowned artist **VALIE EXPORT** approached the subject of motherhood in the actions "HOMO METER II"(1976), "Invisible Adversaries"(1976), as well as in the film "Menschenfrauen"(1979).





In "HOMO METER II"(1976) EXPORT tied a loaf of bread to her belly and offered passersby on Vienna's Mariahilferstrasse to cut off a slice with a bread knife.

With this action "the artist investigated elementary questions concerning fertility, publicity, and privacy, vulnerability, motherhood, birth, and transience, and stands in the context of the discussion regarding feminist theory and practice."²⁶

The action took place twice, once with VALIE EXPORT alone - see the photos above - and a second time with actresses, of whom a video was produced.²⁷

The action series "HOMO METER II"(1976) resonates as a critique of the mother who, forced by social pressure, gives away her entrails.

26 http://www.kunsthaut-bregenz.at/presse_valie_export/Presseinformation_EXPORT_E.pdf, Retrieved 30.10.14

27 http://www.valieexport.at/en/werke/werke/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=2085&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=81&cHash=c662acfbfc, Retrieved 30.10.14



The film "Invisible Adversaries"(1976)²⁸ is about destroyed identities and the wounds and deformations of our body as a result of societal forces.²⁹

At a certain point in the film, a woman cuts the head off of a living fish, as well as tries to cut a living rat, a little parrot, a turtle and a beetle, elements that appeared every time replaced by the different groceries she has just brought in a bag.

When the woman puts the milk in the refrigerator, a baby appears inside the fridge.

The surrealistic appearance of a baby in the fridge, whose body is under treatment to shape correctly –should it be formed within the norms of human physical appearance?– also appeals to the role of the woman as a mother who shapes beings, but likewise compels to ask what kind of mother would

28 An excerpt is available in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SB5sp8AcD-I&index=51&list=PLsK8MLCXRBrgezEZYm8xbMcngbRQH0RU2>

29 http://www.valieexport.at/en/werke/werke/?tx_ttnews%5Bpointer%5D=27&no_cache=1&sword_list%5B0%5D=unsichtbare&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=1997&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=190&cHash=cf2abfbf7d

forget her child in the fridge, opening many other questionings: Had she forgotten her baby in the refrigerator? Why then the lack of surprise at the sudden presence of the baby in it? So is this vision a (recurring) hallucination? Is the baby one more of the living creatures she could damage in her feverish crisis? Does she question the presence of the baby?

In this context, the baby is viewed distantly as a biological being that belongs in the refrigerator, which points to the complex role of the mother that contradicts cultural expectations of the "good mother."

Andrea Liss points in this direction to the abuses of celebrated motherhood and thus to the neutralization of women in the form of the "good mother" that still takes place in "postfeminist" culture:

There is no other body so cruelly and poignantly posed at the edges dividing the public and private realms. The issue may still be so silent, too, because of the uncertainties surrounding the issue of sacrifice related to women in a supposedly „post-feminist“ culture. The dilemma becomes, indeed, how to speak of difficulties and incomparable beauties of making space for another unknown person without having those variously inflected and complex experiences turned into clichés of what enduring motherhood is supposed to be.³⁰

As well as in the case of Kirsten Justesen who similarly addressed the subject of the "bad mother" by depicting a baby in a pan, Andrea Liss analyzes:

(...) tyrannical moves occur in the propaganda where the diverse complexities are so flatly neutralized that the (feminist) mother finds part of herself being dumbly celebrated as the paradigm of domesticity and compliance to the limits of passivity in the (perverse) name of patriotism, especially if that public mother has stepped too far out of her assigned place.³¹

But also the displacement of the baby as edible material is a provocation related to the witch myth that was used during the crisis of feudalism in the XVI and XVII centuries in European pre-capitalist societies to wear down the forces of women and force them to adapt to the new economic system.

As described in Silvia Federici's "Caliban and the Witch" (2004),³² one of the feminine powers to be combated was free control over contraception, which met the reproductive needs of the labor force that early capitalism pushed for.

As a result, women were prosecuted in large numbers, and a greater number were executed for infanticide than for any other crime, since witchcraft was considered a charge that also applied to infanticide and other violations of reproductive norms.³³

It is known that during the colonial enterprise some indigenous women in the Andes committed suicide and killed their male children as a way to prevent them from going to the mines and out of disgust for the mistreatment they began to suffer at the hands of their male relatives,³⁴ becoming for all these reasons the main enemies of colonialism and thus were turned into "witches".

In this way, the crimes of mothers against their own offspring depicted in EXPORT and Justesen's work draw attention to the constantly ignored reasons that have led women to harm their children and behind which lies a long tradition of precarious living conditions.

30 Liss, Andrea (2011) "The Body in Question: Rethinking Motherhood, Alterity and Desire" In: The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art. Editors Chernick, Myrel and Klein, Jennie. Demeter Press. p. 73

31 Ibid.

32 Federici, Silvia (2004) Caliban and the Witch. Autonomedia. New York.

33 Ibid. p. 88-89

34 Ibid. p. 230



The 1 hour and 48 minute film "Menschenfrauen"(1979) is a continuation of the criticisms EXPORT has always made of women's living conditions, as well as the anxieties characteristic of women's lives that have been a recurring theme in EXPORT's work.

By including scenes of difficult relationships both in the workplace and between men and women, the film also describes the ups and downs of motherhood.

For example, a mother argues with her son, and while the deterioration of their relationship is visible, a flashback describes the sweet work of caring for her son as a child, full of promise of a beautiful future. In the present, the almost hysterical mother complains about the hard work she must do to stay with her now-grown son. In another scene, her belongings are taken to pay off the son's debts.

In this way, a flashback depicts the legal battle she has waged to obtain custody. In court, another woman has lost her daughter to her husband, an engineer, because she is a student.

In the scene, a male judge is also represented by the image of a tape recorder projected into a television to describe how his talk about women is so repetitive that it could be played from a record. In contrast, the mother is assigned a female judge who conversely, denies all father's arguments, eventually granting the mother custody of the child.

Finally, the mother tries to commit suicide because she is so sad that "a woman without children cannot understand".

On the other hand, the element of denial of motherhood is also present in VALIE EXPORT's work, being a constant in the feminist philosophy of the sixties.

In "Menschenfrauen" (1979) a character declares:

Wenn die Frau eine Frau ist, dann nur als Mutter.
 Wenn die Frau nur Frau ist, wenn sie Mensch ist,
 aber andererseits als Frau kein Mensch ist,
 dann wird die Frau zum Menschen,
 wenn sie keine Mutter mehr ist.

The excerpt translates to English: "A woman is just a woman if she is a mother. If the woman is just a woman, if she is a human being, but if on the other hand she is not a human being as a woman, then she becomes a human being, if she is not a mother anymore."

EXPORT's work strikes the retina in a way no other artistic work seems to do in relation to female living conditions. Her shocking representations stay inside, and grow like an implanted egg of dissatisfaction. This seems to be EXPORT's trademark since at the age of twenty VALIE EXPORT had two children, only to divorce her husband right after and return to art school in Vienna to continue devoting herself to art.³⁵ It is known that VALIE EXPORT left her children in upper Austria with their aunt in order to study at the Höhere Bundeslehr- und Versuchsanstalt for Textile Industry, Department of Design.



Hackney Flashers was a collective that emerged in England in 1974 out of the initial group the Photography Workshop.

The collective was named after Hackney, then a working-class neighborhood in East London.

In the Photography Workshop Jo Spence and Neil Martinson sought women photographers to participate in a project on „Women and Work“ for Hackney Trades Council (pictured above), continuing to document issues of work and domesticity, primarily through photography, while also creating an archive of images on class and gender.

One of their mission statements was "to encourage the photographic recording of personal, group and local history by people themselves, with or without the assistance of professional photographers,"³⁶ as their work called for equal pay and educational opportunities, alternatives to marriage and families, safe contraception, and free daycare nursery.³⁷

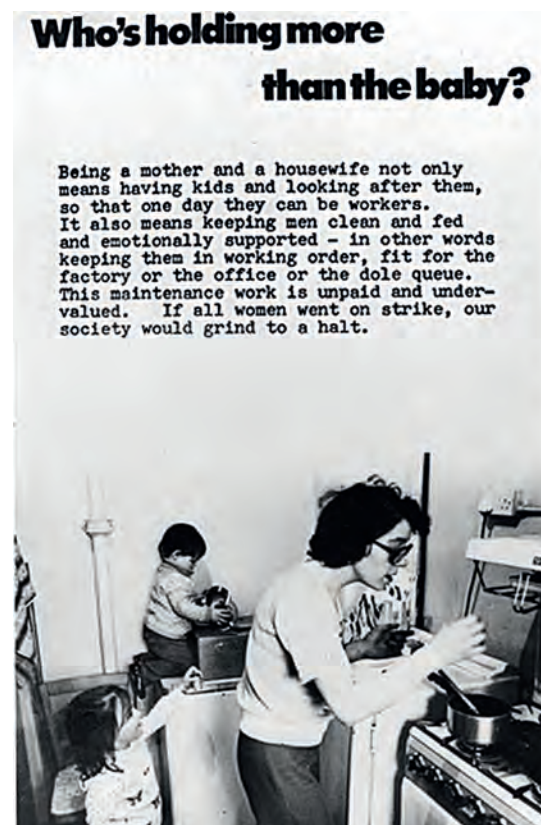
35 Mei Ling Sarin. Valie Export Biography. http://people.wcsu.edu/mccarneyh/fva/E/VExport_bio.html, Retrieved 30.10.14

36 Battista, Kathy (2013) *Renegotiating the Body: Feminist Art in 1970s London*. I.B. Tauris, New York. p. 115

37 <https://hackneyhistory.wordpress.com/2013/06/21/the-hackney-flashers/>



In the Hackney Flashers exhibition on childcare "Who's still holding the Baby" in 1978 - poster is the image above- the panel "Who's holding more than the baby?"(aprox. 1974) was produced -image below-. In it, the important role of housewives in capitalist society is explained:



“Being a mother and a housewife not only means having kids and looking after them, so that one day they can be workers.
It also means keeping men clean and fed and emotionally supported
–in other words keeping them in working order, fit for the factory or the office or the dole queue.
This maintenance work is unpaid and undervalued.
If all women went on strike, our society would grind to a halt”.



For this exhibition was also produced the panel “Who is holding the baby?”(1978) –image above-, describing the situation of working women:

You’ve tucked the kids into bed...
slipped into something simple...
taken your Valium...
and you’re waiting for him to come home...
mustn’t be late for the evening shift at the bread factory

This description of the worker is placed next to the ad for a nail polish. In order to work, she also needs to invest time in herself and look in a certain way that is appropriate for the job.

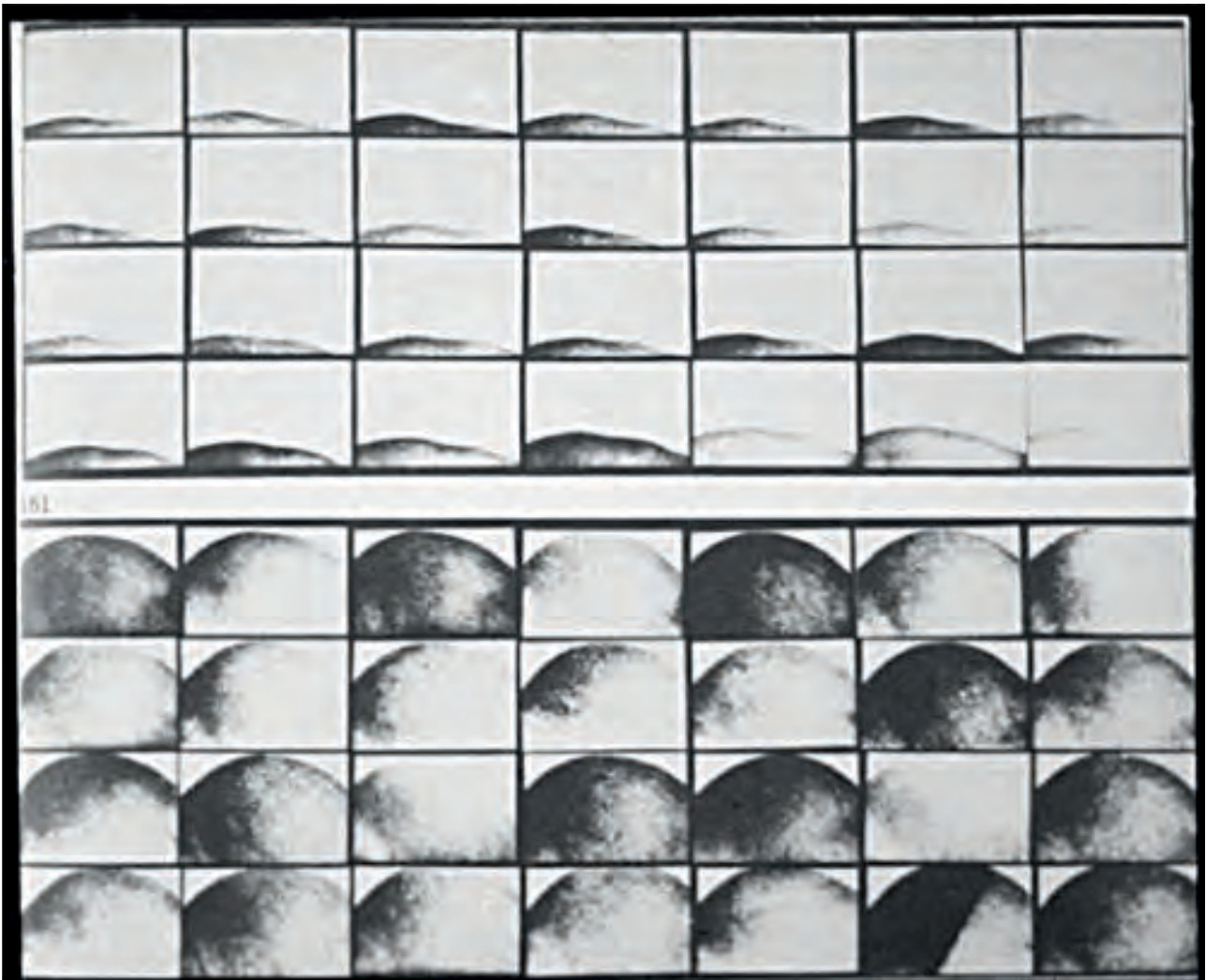
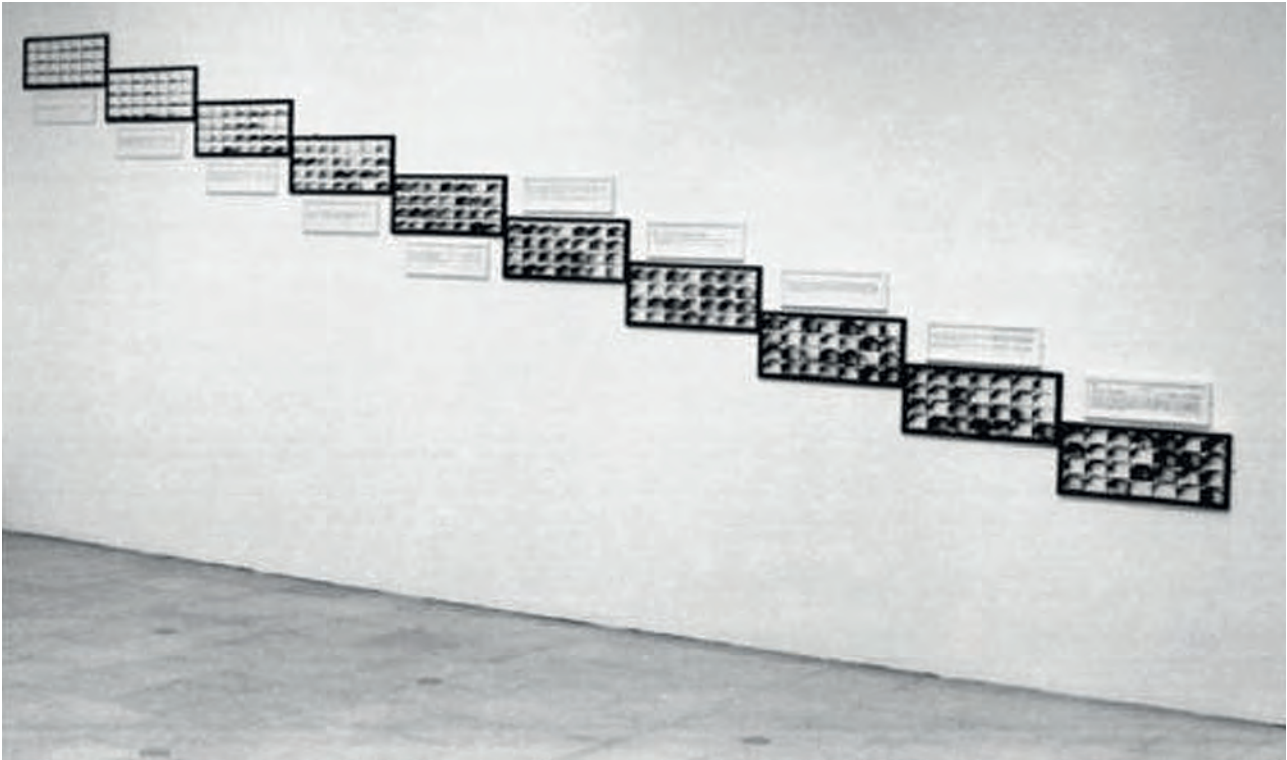
The materials for “Who’s still holding the baby?” consisted of lightweight and laminated boards and posters ideal for use outside of galleries. The posters “ Who’s holding the baby... and often alone,” referred to women in a wide variety of circumstances who must stay at home to care for their children without any support from their husbands. These women were also absent from government policies.

"Who's holding the baby... and Where" shows the difficulties women with children have in accessing affordable rent. It shows the urge to solve the precarious living conditions of women. German filmmaker Helke Sander has taken up the same theme. Sander's work is discussed later in this chapter.



Another work by the Hackney Flashers is "Working Lives"(1980), which continues the research begun by the collective in the 1970s.

Members of the group were Ruth Barrenbaum, An Dekker, Terry Dennett, Helen Grace, Sally Greenhill, Liz Heron, Gerda Jager, Michael Ann Mullen, Maggie Murray, Neil Martinson, Jini Rawlings, Christine Roche, Nanette Salomon, Jo Spence, Arlene Strasberg, Sue Treweek and Julia Vellacott.



North American artist **Susan Hiller** produced the piece "Ten Months" in 1977-1979 in London, in which she photographed her body daily during the ten months of her pregnancy.

At a time when pregnancy was not considered a subject for art, Hiller did not intend to create a work of art; she was "just trying to keep a record of the internal and external changes of that period."³⁸

According to the theorist Andrea Liss the role of women is complex when it comes to the "patriarchal discourse [that] has coded pregnancy as that which should not and could not be seen,"³⁹ simultaneously forcing to hide the passion and sexuality that produced the child while declaring it a sentimental subject.

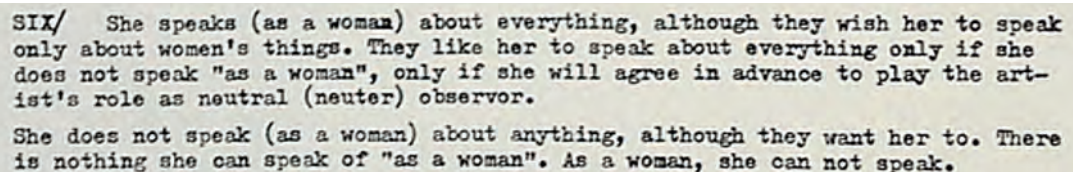
In this scenario Hiller breaks the taboo by exhibiting her pregnant belly in her photo series after she has cut off the rest of the body.

What appears to our eyes in the middle of the 21st century as scientific and already common photographs, was recalled quite differently by Hiller thirty years before:

I was told by someone important in the art world that with this work I separated myself
by joining the feminists and that I ruined my career.
But who cares? I had a substantial track record.⁴⁰

At the same time the Installation "Ten Months" counts with ten texts, the first five are located under the first five groups of descending pictures and the five texts that follow are arranged above the series of images.

In this written analysis that accompanies the daily images are Hiller's reflections on the self and art. In the fifth text, for example, she writes that "she now understands that it is perfectly possible to forget who one has been and what one has accomplished."⁴¹ And ends: "Continuing the piece requires great effort."⁴²



SIX/ She speaks (as a woman) about everything, although they wish her to speak only about women's things. They like her to speak about everything only if she does not speak "as a woman", only if she will agree in advance to play the artist's role as neutral (neuter) observer.
She does not speak (as a woman) about anything, although they want her to. There is nothing she can speak of "as a woman". As a woman, she can not speak.

In text number six, which is in the same vein as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Hiller states that "She speaks [as a woman] about everything, although they wish her to speak only about women's things (...) As a woman, she cannot speak."⁴³

In a broader approach, Spivak's ideas remark the radical invisibility suffered by women of the so-called Third World. A reasoning that is also pointed out here, as the representation of motherhood in the art world seems to be done by a majority of white artists, as we will discuss later using Faith Ringgold as an example.

This text aims to bring such works together with those of women artists of color from the Global South, following the idea expressed by Myrel Chernick and Jennie Klein that:

[Some contemporary] artworks have challenged the representation of motherhood as an institution that is primarily white, middle class, young and heterosexual.⁴⁴

38 "Susan Hiller on her Work" Apud Liss, Andrea, *Feminist Art and the Maternal*, 2009. pos. 261 Kindle Edition

39 Ibid. pos. 272. Kindle Edition

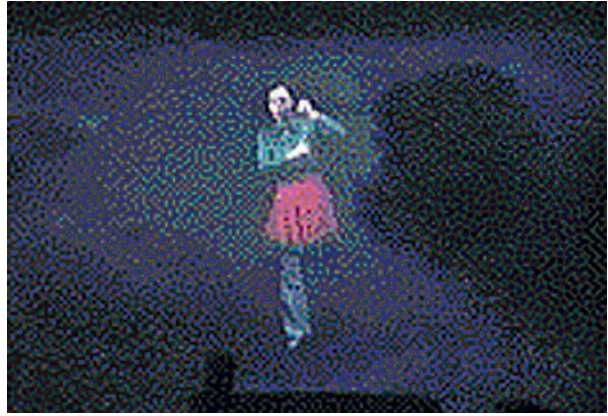
40 Ibid.

41 Ibid. pos. 288

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid. pos. 288-293

44 Chernick, Myrel and Klein, Jennie (2011) "Maternal Metaphors II" In: *The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art*, Demeter Press. Editors Chernick, Myrel and Klein, Jennie p. 257



Japanese artist **Mako Idemitsu** has produced a series of films in which she criticizes the patriarchal aspect of her culture. In "At Any Place"(1978) the artist describes the oppression of housewives and relates it to the trivialities of their duties. In the work, a woman takes care of the children, mops the floor and prepares dinner, pantomimed by Japanese dancer Yoneyama Marnako.

The dancer's movements are accompanied by changes in the background such as clouds, sunsets, and bonfires, in a manner that appeals to Japanese rather than Western sensibilities.

Idemitsu's work continues to show the problematic nature of motherhood, as in the film "Hideo, It's Me, Mama"(1983) , in which Idemitsu addresses the replacement of human interaction by television, as well as the not uncommon fact that mothers place their children's lives above their own.

In the film, a woman places plates of food in front of a television showing images of her son, and shouts something to the television while simultaneously taking care of it.

As analyzed by Cornelia Butler,

The woman states that she "only lives for (her son)," revealing her identity and worth as dependent upon her work at home and underlining the artist's contention that "video and children [are] now being used as substitutes to fill the emptiness of the lives of many Japanese house wives."⁴⁵

More recent works such as "Kiyoko's Situation"(1989) and "Koe, Act like a Girl"(1996) address the theme of Japanese women struggling to be artists while also grappling with their roles as mothers and wives. Themes that Idemitsu looks at from an intimate point of view and in this way expands the cultural roles of women.



Danish artist **Kirsten Justesen** has created work from a gender perspective in her quest to formally approach the female body. Justesen's work on motherhood began with her "Event"(1969) where she reproduced her pregnant torso in 4 natural size glass-fiber sculptures embedded with printed matter, family photographs, photocopies, plastic flowers, gauze, and leather.



PUSSY-POWER 1969-70



PUZZY-POWER Poster 1971
Silkscreen a.p.
100 x 70cm



PUZZY-POWER 1971
Vacuumpressed PVC

Justesen subsequently produced the poster series "Pussy Power"(1969-1971), which depicted a pregnant woman, and in this way linked the power of the mother and the idea of the goddess with a feminism that was only theoretically concerned with these themes.

In 1971, Justesen additionally translated the formal reflection of the posters into a three-dimensional PVC sculpture.

Kirsten Justesen used her own body to create a work that "constitutes a tale about a woman's body."⁴⁶ Her work is a monument to her body, which is getting fatter and thinner, or pregnant. It is just at hand for her work. Her body is her tool, her surface and an icon for the human female body, with which she represents her personal history and fights against traditions and conventions.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 252

⁴⁷ Interview at <http://channel.louisiana.dk/video/kirsten-justesen-my-body-my-gaze>, Retrieved 30.10.14

To avoid the expressions that a face entails, Justesen mostly uses a body without a face, treating the body, as she says, as “a temple, a pedestal, or whatever.”⁴⁸

Her work consists of the powerful recognition of a female gaze on her own body. As she says: “of course art history is full of naked women, but this one is the artist herself. Good. We are getting forward.”⁴⁹



“Circumstances Objects”(1971) points in the same direction as “Event”(1969). The series of 10 vacuum-pressed subjects in clear PVC measuring 50 x 40 x 26 cm assesses the symbolic weight of motherhood as the transparent pregnant torsos are filled with preconceived notions of motherhood and femininity from the optics of social conventions. Furthermore, the series has to do with vulnerability and exposure, as already mentioned with the work of Louise Bourgeois. We will deal with this aspect later with the work of Mimi Smith.

The torsos are filled with elements like, for instance the image of a nurse taking care of two babies in a stroller “TVILLINGER” or “Twins” in English; as well as another torso contains silicon baby shoes. This is the case of “VINTERSTØVLER” or “Winter Boots”. Toy heads are found in “KINESERBØRN” or “Chinese Children”; a grater is embedded in “ØJNE LØBER I VAND” or “Eyes Run in Water”; a white wig is part of “UFØDT LAM” or “Unborn Lamb”; a table cloth belongs to “RØDE PRIKKER” or “Red Dots”; as well as eyes are placed in “SUTTEFLASKER” or “Baby Bottles”; a red ball in “KUGLE” or “Ball”; and a cake with a baby on it in “KRANSEKAGE-BABY” or “Rim Cake- Baby”.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.



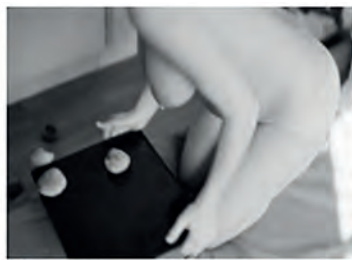
BODY CIRCUMSTANCES #1



BODY CIRCUMSTANCES #2

"Body Circumstances"(1973) continues the study of the pregnant body, this time treating it in all its rawness.

Justen's body does not hide the imperfections, while her makeup reminds us of a pantomime actress. In the pictures, her studio looks like a kitchen, a meat market or a slaughterhouse.



#5



#4



#2



#3



#1



#6



#8



#7



#9

Also, in the work "Imaginations and Conjurations"(1971) the same "actress" hidden behind the pantomimic make up, prepares bread with her breast milk in no particular order and is also shown waiting, performing a ritual over her pregnant belly and clumsily transporting the small pieces of bread until they fall off the tray.



Another work created in Justesen's studio is "Torso" (1973), where the depicted torso stands next to the model in a series of photographs that are sometimes provocative and call for comparison of the connections between representation and matter and sometimes romantic representations of the embrace of pregnancy and its physical changes.



FLASKEN/ THE BOTTLE 1974



Dragt / ROMPER SUIT 1974



BLE / DIAPER 1974

"Prairie Images"(1974) reproduces a photograph of two children under a tree in three different circumstances: over a baby bottle, in "The Bottle", over a diaper in "Diaper", and over a baby body suit, in "Romper Suit."

Together, the series articulates the arduous work of the mother hidden behind the idealized image of happy children.



LANDSKABET



MED KOLDT BLOD



MADONNA #1



DANMARKSBILLEDE



MADONNA #2



FLASKERNE



BABYEN



TALEN

The silk prints "Housewife Images" (1974-1975) translate the world from the point of view of a mother, who is not exempt of asphyxiation and madness. An example of this is "Med Koldt Blod" or "Cold blood" in English, where dead birds, as well as a bird in a cage, stand together with a blinded woman and her baby. Or "Flaskerne", or "Bottles" in English, where the buildings of the urban landscape are replaced by baby bottles. In "Babyen", or "Baby" in English, a baby lies on a pan. Is he/she going to be fried? The shocking image recreates the idea of the "bad mother" who is mean to him/her and even proceeds to eat him/her for lunch. This aspect is similar to the one discussed with the work of VALIE EXPORT.



GLIMTVIS / BY GLIMPSES #1 1978



GLIMTVIS / BY GLIMPSES #2 1978

Finally, Justesen's work "By Glimpses #1 & #2"(1978) speaks of the artist as a mother in the difficult search for balance between children and her art.

In #1, the c-print depicts a monstrous bust of polished stone standing alone in a courtyard, accompanied by laundry, a sandbox, photographs, and toys.

In #2, a clay bust is sculpted and the courtyard is chaotically filled with children of all ages.



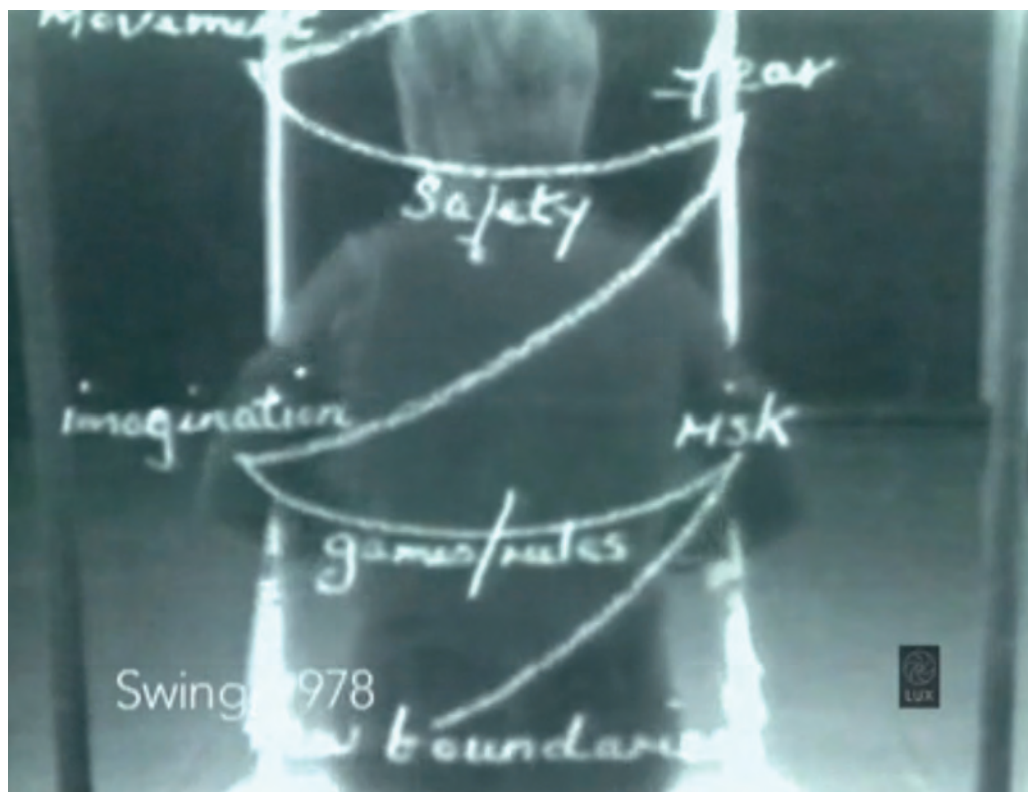
The early work of British artist **Tina Keane** focuses strongly on children and play. In her work, her daughter is the protagonist of performances such as "Shadow Woman"(1977), "Swing"(1978), "Clapping Songs"(1981), "Bedtime Story"(1982) and "Demolition/Scape"(1983).

The action "Shadow Woman"(1977) was originally conceived during Keane's journey to Scotland isles and the artist was impressed by the image of the passengers on a boat casting shadows on the water below them. As a metaphor for time's passing, Keane's daughter Emily participated in the performance "where a hopscotch pattern was chalked on the floor."⁵⁰ A poem about the passage of time was written in each square, such as:

50 Battista, Kathy (2013) *Renegotiating the Body: Feminist Art in 1970s London*. I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltda. New York. p. 118

The shadow of my daughter
 Becomes the shadow of life
 As I will become the shadow of hers
 As my mother
 Grandmother and
 Great grandmother.

From child to adult
 From hopscotch to maze
 From girl to woman
 From tale to labyrinth of time⁵¹



In "Swing" (1978), Keane uses a large children's swing set up in front of three monitors on which black-and-white footage of a solitary swinging figure is superimposed with a chalk sketch of the pendulum's motion. In an analytical tone, this sketch reads as follows: "up/down/up, high/low/dream, inspiration/reality/fantasy, movement/safety/fear, imagination/game//rules/risk, new boundaries."⁵²

The repetitive swing increasingly diffuses the screen to white light. In the video, Keane highlights the video's proximity to painting and drawing,⁵³ techniques she used in the past that were replaced when the new video techniques allowed her to have her daughter with her, while the new language gave the artist great pleasure.⁵⁴



In the 20-minute video performance "Playpen" (1979), eleven women—from an infant six months old to an 82-year-old woman—were asked to sit in the playpen for two minutes and be left to their own devices without instruction.

According to Keane, the tape was originally recorded for a performance in which she sat in the playpen with a mirror and a static camera. By manipulating the mirror, the audience's reflection was transferred to the monitor. At the same time, the recorded video was shown on another monitor.

Keane describes "Playpen" as follows:

The relevant verses of the 'Suzy' song are interspersed throughout the tape, overlaid on the original soundtrack of afternoon TV, women's and children's voices, and one voice giving camera direction. The high camera angle gives an 'adult' point of view, the extent/limitation of the zoom and aperture echoes the restrictions on the occupants of the playpen.⁵⁵

This video recording of a live situation in Tina Keane's studio was integrated into later live performances, including one at Franklin Furnace in 1981. In this performance, Keane herself was in the playpen, filming the audience with a mirror while "Playpen" played on an additional monitor.⁵⁶

52 video available in http://luxonline.org.uk/artists/tina_keane/the_swing.html, Retrieved 30.10.14

53 Bowring, Belinda (2005) http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/tina_keane/

54 From the interview with Tina Keane, Retrieved 30.10.14 https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=275672934205&video_source=pages_finch_thumbnail_video, Retrieved 30.10.14

55 <http://www.cinenova.org/filmdetail.php?filmId=317>, Retrieved 30.10.14

56 <http://www.reactfeminism.org/entry.php?l=lb&id=74&e=a&v=&a=Tina%20Keane&t=>, Retrieved 30.10.14



"Clapping Songs"(1981) is a video made of slides, in order to isolate and emphasize the action in which two girls sing traditional clapping songs. In Keane's words: "the songs are extremely funny, but with a double edge -particularly 'Susy', which illustrates, with a high degree of irony, a woman's life from the cradle to the grave."⁵⁷



A final work by Keane in which she reflects on motherhood is "Bedtime Story"(1982), in which the story of Bluebeard unfolds as a model for tales that reveal the dangers a woman faces in her pursuit of knowledge. The 16-minuteraises the question of how attitudes are often imprinted on our subconscious from an early age through children's stories.

57 http://www.luxonline.org.uk/artists/tina_keane/clapping_songs.html, Retrieved 30.10.14

The most famous work dealing with motherhood, created in the 1970s, is "Post Partum Document," a 139-part work created between 1973 and 1979 by North American artist **Mary Kelly**. The work consists of an exhibition as a display, as well as conferences and the subsequent publication of a book in 1983.

The seven sections of the work - Introduction and Documentation I through VI - are composed of an interwoven collection of traces, diagrams, objects, and texts, as well as a "set of theoretical discourses, to which the "Subject" of the Document intertextually refers."⁵⁸

According to theorist Juli Carson, conceptual art practice, the women's liberation movement, and the field of semiotic-psychoanalytic film theory converge in the work.

Kelly was initiated into Conceptualism while attending St. Martin's School of Art in London from 1968-1970 and found that it fell short in examining subjectivity and sexual difference.

Thus, housework and "femininity" were positioned as viable "systems analysis" in Post-Partum Document (1973-1979). However, Kelly also adhered to the ideas of Joseph Kosuth by grounding her production as a conceptual artist in the fundamental question of the nature of art, and in this context she made a commentary that later came to be called institutional critique.⁵⁹

The Women's Liberation's Movement was foundational of Kelly's "Post-Partum Document"(1973-1979).

Mary Kelly belonged to the Women's Liberation's Movement in England, participating in the History Group which edited the magazine "Shrew" in 1970, which debated a number of ideological sites "ranging from the Left's ambivalent relation to women's liberation, the media's spectacularization of feminine sexuality, to the apparent contradiction between "feminism" and Freudian theory."⁶⁰

Mary Kelly's approach to semiotic-psychoanalytic film theory is related to the fact that, in Kelly's words, "it was the context of feminist film theory that actually gave more impetus to the way ideas developed in my work than perhaps the fine art context."⁶¹

This is true both of Mary Kelly's early cinematic experiments, such as the film "Night Cleaners" (1975), produced as part of the Berwick Street Film Collective, and of her collaborations with filmmakers Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen. Their works intertwined and conditioned each other.

In this respect, in a conversation with Laura Mulvey, Kelly recalls asking "Why can't an artwork be like a film, why can't it be drawn out, perhaps serialized, and the spectator be drawn into it in a way that creates the space for a critical reading?"⁶² This is how the eventual serialization and final form of "Post Partum Document" works, as well as the elements of real time and documentation were likewise brought from Kelly's approach to semiotic-psychoanalytic film theory.

From the many layers of Kelly's work, the most radical aspect consisted in speaking about motherhood from the first person and inside the art field and of female representation. In Carson's words:

The mother's role (...) doubled for that of the artist, allowing the "subject of inquiry" to incorporate both an analysis of the artist-as-mother's perception and unconscious reiteration of "patriarchal" structures within the discourse of childbirth and child care, as well as the "problematic" related to iconic representations of the woman's body within art practice.⁶³

As well as with Susan Hiller's work, "Post-Partum Document"(1973-1979) produced a national scandal within the North American press, regarding the "museum deeming "dirty nappies" art."⁶⁴

59 Carson, Juli (1998) Re-Viewing Mary Kelly's Post-Partum Document. Documents, New York, Fall p. 45.

59 Kosuth apud Carson, Juli (1998) Re-Viewing Mary Kelly's Post-Partum Document. Documents, New York, Fall p. 43.

60 Carson, Juli (1998) Re-Viewing Mary Kelly's Post-Partum Document. Documents, New York, Fall p. 55

61 Kelly, Mary (1996) Imaging Desire. MIT. United States. p. 29

62 Ibid.

63 Carson, Juli (1998) Re-Viewing Mary Kelly's Post-Partum Document. Documents, New York, Fall p. 50

64 Carson, Juli (1999) "Schicht für Schicht – Post-Partum Dokument freilegen, Mary Kelly im Gespräch mit Juli Carson", In: Rereading, Post-Partum Document, p.60

The vivid scenario of women's struggles to liberate themselves from the traditional roles that subjugate them in domestic labor led Kelly's work to be sharply criticized by feminists in the 1970s, as her work "de-pictorialized (...) the spectacle of the maternal experience itself, [which] alienated women from the cause of liberation."⁶⁵

"Post Partum Document"(1973-1979) began when Kelly, Mary Kelly's son, was an infant and ended when he began to develop speech and entered school.

The work establishes the active role of the mother in the mother/child relationship, in contrast to Freud's psychoanalytic concept, which considers the mother as passive.⁶⁶ Moreover, the work adhered to Lacanian psychoanalysis, in which the imaginary "is the space in which the infant lives in the maternal realm, before language, as opposed to the Symbolic, where the child accesses language and moves into the patriarchal world,"⁶⁷ as described by the theorist Andrea Liss.

As Juli Carson explains:

This is what Kelly took up in the Document, interested in how the subjectivities of the mother and infant, reciprocally imbricated within a psycho-sexual linguistic structure, could be indexically represented (both formally and semiotically) in place of a conventional portrait or artwork.⁶⁸

In "Introduction" to "Post Partum Document" -following image 1- Kelly inscribed four wool vests that her son had recently outgrown with Lacanian diagrams, thus giving shape to an ironic pseudoscientific language that lent seriousness to the work and invited the viewer to read a critique only between the lines, while its solemnity made it acceptable.

But Kelly was also protective in her depiction of women, as Liss points out:

Kelly's strategic employment of indexical rather than mimetic representation was deeply related to this necessity to shield the mother from further harm. This strategy was part of interconnected debates in British feminism in the early 1970s that focused on the uneasy status of representing women's bodies.⁶⁹

Although "Post Partum Document" is primarily based on the indexical representation of the relationship between a mother and her son, the cover of the book breaks her self-imposed rule of mimetic representation, as Kelly poses on it with her son sitting on her lap.

When asked about the contradiction of using a photograph for the book, Kelly replies that she has a strong sense of humor, playfulness, and irony, as this image, she says, was "always meant to parody the Michelangelo Tondo".⁷⁰ -following images 2 and 3-

65 Carson, Juli (1998) *Re-Viewing Mary Kelly's Post-Partum Document*, Documents, New York, Fall. p 55

66 Apud Liss, Andrea (2009) *Feminist Art and the Maternal*, University of Minnesota Press. Kindle Edition pos. 385

67 Liss, Andrea (2009) *Feminist Art and the Maternal*, University of Minnesota Press. Kindle Edition pos. 391

68 Carson, Juli (1998) *Re-Viewing Mary Kelly's Post-Partum Document*, Documents, New York, Fall. p. 46.

69 Liss, Andrea (2009) *Feminist Art and the Maternal*, University of Minnesota Press. Kindle Edition pos.529.

70 Ibid.



Image 1



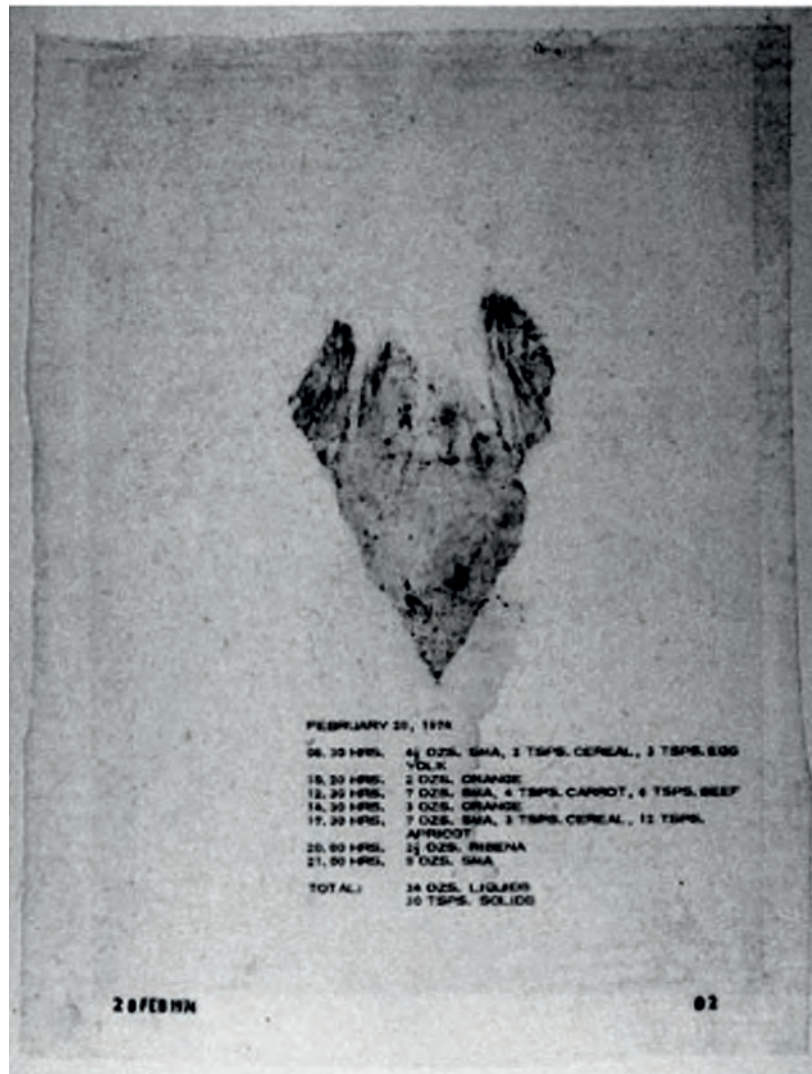
Image 2



Image 3



In addition, Kelly produced another project with mimetic features while working on "Post-Partum Document"(1973-1979), "Primapara, Bathing Series"(1974). It is a series of close-ups of her son in black and white, which also focuses on the active work of the mother in caring for her child.



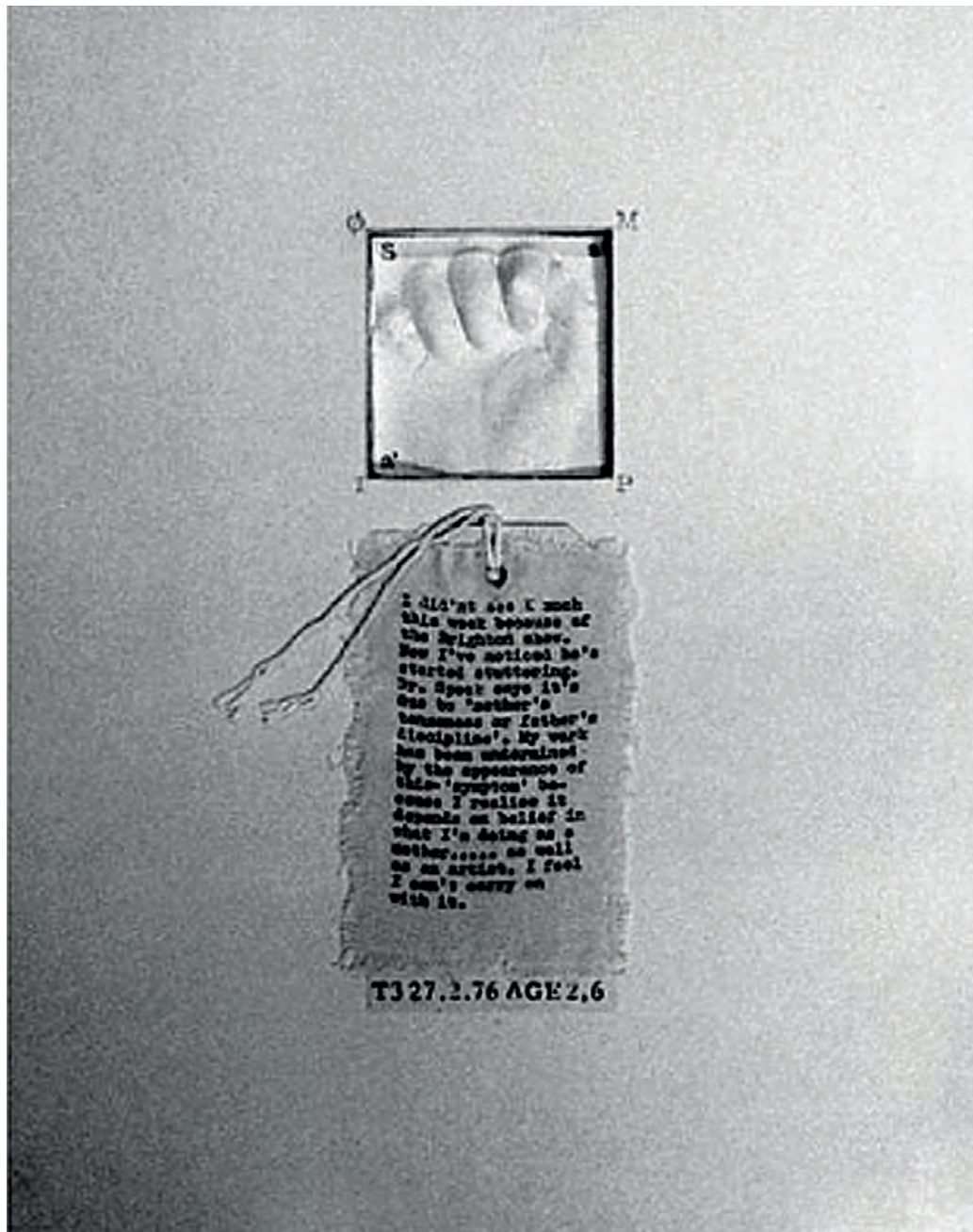
February 7, 1974

09.45 hrs.	5 1/2 ozs. sma, 4 tsps. cereal, 2 tsps. egg yolk
10.30 hrs.	2 ozs. orange
13.15 hrs.	4 ozs. sma, 5 tsps. carrot, 1 tsp. beef
15.00 hrs.	2 1/2 ozs. ribena
17.00 hrs.	5 1/2 ozs. sma, 2 tsps. cereal, 8 tsps. apple
20.00 hrs.	1 1/2 ozs. water
21.30 hrs.	7 ozs. sma
TOTAL	29 ozs. liquids 23 tsps. solids

The first series of "Post Partum Document"(1973-1979) is "Document I: Analysed Faecal Stains and Feeding Charts"(1974), in which the mother measures and records the baby's food intake and the exact time of administration.

Charts and dirty diapers are displayed in the series.

The artist made this first documentary over a period of three months, and while it describes the obsessive caution, or fear, of the mother introducing the baby to solid food, her direct approach was interpreted as too crude and shocked the public.



"Documentation IV: Transitional Objects, Diary and Diagram"(1976) documents the separation anxiety Kelly faces when the artist must work away from home.

In "Documentation IV" Kelly placed a mold of a newborn's hand above each work, which are "indexically markers of presence and absence."⁷¹

For Kelly,

Probably the most profound discovery from a theoretical point of view, if I could claim anything like that, is found in "Documentation IV", where I describe something like the fort-da game for the mother, that is, how she tries to conceptualize the child's absence. First she hangs on –"you're still my baby"– then she lets go –"you're so grown up now."⁷²

71 Ibid. Kindle Edition pos. 446

72 Kelly, Mary and Morgan, Margaret (2007) "On Love, Politics and Fallen Shoes: Margaret Morgan in Conversation with Mary Kelly". In: The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art (2011) Editors Chernick, Myrel and Klein, Jennie. Demeter Press. p. 24



Each artwork is a triptych in "Documentation V: Classified Specimens, Proportional Diagrams, Statistical Tables, Research and Index" (1977). The left side displays objects Kelly's son found in her garden and offered to her as a gift. The middle section shows a representation of the gift in a Lacanian diagram, and the third section consists of medical drawings of the woman's reproductive body, also with a Lacanian diagram.⁷³

In Kelly's words:

Documentation V was a hard one. He would bring me a snail and say, "Do you have a hole in your tummy?" I couldn't figure it out. What did they have to do with each other? Finally I juxtaposed the questions and the specimens with a kind of non-answer in the form of a diagram representing a full-term pregnancy and a list of medical terms.

(...) But what that meant in my universe, I guess, is that he was finding out that I didn't have the phallus; in other words, I wasn't this powerful person who could meet all his demands, and in fact, I probably was going to be demoted once he put me in the social order of things! And that did happen. You know, at school they asked him what his father did and he said, "He's an artist." But when they asked him what his mother did, he said, "I don't know."

Then I started to think about the mother as the "Real Other", the unrepresentable supplement that breeds the object a as Lacan says. No one occupies this position, but it's the site of many projections.⁷⁴

73 Ibid. Kindle Edition pos.471

74 Kelly, Mary and Morgan, Margaret (2007) "On Love, Politics and Fallen Shoes: Margaret Morgan in Conversation with Mary Kelly". In: *The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art* (2011) Editors Chernick, Myrel and Klein, Jennie. Demeter Press. p. 25

Kelly
 KETTY BDP
 KI
 KETTY BDP
 KETTY
 BDP

(age 4.5) B IS FOR BALLOON. This is the
 first letter he has constructed with the
 express purpose of writing a surname with-
 his surname. He draws 'p' and carefully
 adds 'j'. Learning to write 'Bartie' has also
 sorted out his backwards 'p' and the up-
 side down 'a'. B IS FOR ALLIGATORS
 BUSTING BALLOONS. B IS FOR BEARS PLAY-
 ING BAGPIPES IN A BAND. GOODNIGHT
 LITTLE B. BERTIE BULL FINCH BASSET BOND

April 29, 1976: Now Kelly is at school all day. I
 insisted that he was ready to stay for school during
 the week. He said Kelly was quite happy and I had to admit it
 did seem to be true so far. When he comes home I try
 to ask him what he does at school, what he has for
 lunch, but he's usually not very forthcoming. He's in
 such a hurry to change his clothes and go out to play
 withennie. They've become very good friends. Once he
 said he didn't think he needed a mummy and daddy
 because he andennie could live together and look
 after themselves. He brought home some flash cards
 which seem to take the place of our 'a-b-c' sessions
 and he keeps a little notebook at school which I can
 go and look at from time to time. Things have definitely
 changed, and so quickly. When I said Goodnight when
 he'd already left for school, he said 'well, yes, yes' &
 'Goodnight now'.

4.5.76



The documentation of the separation experienced by Kelly continues in "Documentation VI: Pre-writing Alphabet, Exergue and Diary"(1978). This time, the mother acts as archaeologist, studying her son's acquisition of writing.

At the time of the sixth documentary, in Kelly's words, "when he wrote his name (...) I felt I couldn't go on. I thought: he's the author of his text now –a kind of superstition that to pursue this would be madness."⁷⁵

As mentioned earlier, the greatest value of Mary Kelly's "Post Partum Document" (1973-1979) is that it no longer approaches motherhood as an observer, but from Kelly's relationship with her son Kelly Barrie. The mother comes this way out of silence. Following the psychoanalytic explanation of both the mother's silence and her desire to speak, an excerpt from "Post-Partum Document" (1973-1979) reads:

The construction of femininity as essentially natural and maternal is never finally fixed but forever unsettled in the process of articulating her difference, her loss. And it is precisely at such moments, that it is possible to desire to speak and to dare to change.⁷⁶

On the other hand, the repetitive elements in each of the series of "Post Partum Document" (1973-1979) reinforce the solemnity of Kelly's approach to the subject of motherhood.

Although a parody, the work echoes a rather strong critique that has given Kelly's work not only a position inside art history, but also the status of one of the most seminal references for artworks dealing with the subject of motherhood in the decades between 1960 and 1970.

In 2008, Mary Kelly and her son Kelly Barrie created a collaborative installation for the Sidney Biennial in which Barrie superimposed Kelly's Super-8 film of her pregnant belly, "Antepartum" (1973), with his video recording, "Astral Fields" (2008).

⁷⁵ Kelly, Mary and Morgan, Margaret (2007) "On Love, Politics and Fallen Shoes: Margaret Morgan in Conversation with Mary Kelly". In: *The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art* (2011) Editors Chernick, Myrel and Klein, Jennie. Demeter Press. p. 24

⁷⁶ Kelly, Mary (1979) "Excerpts from Post Partum Document" In: *The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art* (2011) Editors Chernick, Myrel and Klein, Jennie. Demeter Press. p. 45



Friedl Kubelka vom Gröller took a picture of her daughter every Monday for 18 years in “Lebensportrait Louise Anna Kubelka” (1978- 1996) or in English “Portrait Louise Anna Kubelka”. The photo series began on October 21, 1978, when Louise Kubelka, daughter of Friedl and Peter Kubelka, was born in Vienna.

This act of “Monday photography,” as her daughter Louise called it, is part ritual, part performance, part obsession, which the catalog for the 1998 exhibition at the Fothof Gallery turned into a book. The book was entitled “Friedl Kubelka: Portrait Louise Anna Kubelka”.

In the work, which consists of 52 photographs, we see the span of 18 years in which Susan Sontag’s ideas about parenthood took on a new dimension. In the words of Sontag:

Cameras go with family life. According to a sociological study done in France, most households have a camera, but a household with children is twice as likely to have at least one camera as a household in which there are no children. Not to take pictures of one’s children, particularly when they are small, is a sign of parental indifference, just as not turning up for one’s graduation picture is a gesture of adolescent rebellion.⁷⁷

In this way, Kubelka’s obsessive work describes the accelerated time that passes through the nostalgic maternal gaze.

Moreover the work depicts a not always happy daughter, cases on which the maternal authority appears to have been applied. The series thus raises the question of whether the artist, as a mother, had the right to control the daughter’s personal image.

This “collaborative” work was questioned by Louise: “I have asked myself whether my mother had the right to use me as an object in this way.”⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Sontag, Susan (1977) *On Photography*, Penguin, London. p. 5.

⁷⁸ Apud <http://5b4.blogspot.co.at/2008/08/portrait-louise-anna-kubelka-by-friedl.html>, Retrieved 30.10.14

Additionally, Louise explains:

When I look at this child in the process of growing up, I see a person who is too serious. Although I know my mother wanted to avoid the artificial cheerfulness of common photographs, I think she should have depicted me true to my respective moods.⁷⁹

On the positive side, however, Louise recognizes the value of her mother's initiative:

(...) Had she waited until I had been able to make that decision for myself, my life portrait wouldn't exist.⁸⁰

The book also depicts a troubled mother-daughter relationship, according to a review of the book:

By the last year, the 18th, only 12 images appear in the first few months until finally the ritual is broken.

(...)This project is about the tight flow of time but more importantly for me, it is tainted with melancholy once the gaps in the grids start to appear. The bond implied by the structure shifts as most parent/child relationships will, and the silence of those gaps make it apparent that Louise has created a life apart from her mother. This series seems to be one mother's way to resist that change. An act of anticipated desperation presented as art.⁸¹

I asked Kubelka vom Gröller for an interview for my research, to which she replied:

Dear Claudia Sandoval Romero, I am sorry to have you made waiting for my answer and now I have to answer "no". Coming back after three months and working heavily in photography and filmmaking, working up to fulfill what I had to dismiss and doing new work... I can't spare the time. But at this time of my life on top of that I am not anymore interested in these questions myself but can foresee that it is important for you.
I am sorry, sorry and wish you the best for your work and future

Friedl Kubelka

79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles' work since the mid-1960s has essentially been about the care and maintenance of natural and psychological life systems, and the recognition of the undervalued labor of the people who keep these systems alive.

Laderman Ukeles' early production addresses the labor associated with motherhood, which evolved into her maintenance art projects.

Her concern has always been to call attention to the devaluated work of workers who remain invisible, and from her earliest projects Laderman Ukeles linked the work of the nameless in public spaces with the private domestic labor of women. Ukeles' "appeal was to give a sense of humanness and worth to the nameless".⁸²

Her interest in exploring the subject of motherhood began when she was pregnant with her first child in 1968 and her sculpture teacher announced: "Well, Mierle, I guess you know you can't be an artist now."⁸³ To which she thought: "'What are you talking about?' I wanted to be a mother; it was a great blessing. But I was in a panic that it meant I couldn't be an artist."⁸⁴

And much like Susan Hiller, Ukeles manifested:

Through free choice and love, I became pregnant. I had a child by choice.

I was in an all-out crisis.

People only saw me as a mother. The culture had no place for me. There were no words for my life. I was split into two people: artist and mother. I had fallen out of the picture. I was in a fury.⁸⁵

For this reason Laderman Ukeles wrote the "Manifesto for Maintenance Art"(1969) in one sitting, in which she differentiates the male approach to art as "Death Instinct: separation, individuality..."⁸⁶ and her Maintenance Art as "The Life Instinct: unification, eternal return, the perpetuation and the maintenance of the species."⁸⁷

Part of the Manifesto reads:

(...) housewives = no pay. Clean your desk, wash the dishes, clean the floor, wash your clothes, wash your toes, change the baby's diaper, finish the report, correct the typos, mend the fence, keep the customer happy, throw out the stinking garbage, watch out- don't put things in your nose, what shall I wear, I have no sox, pay your bills, don't litter, save string, wash your hair, change the sheets, go to the store, I'm out of perfume, say it again-he doesn't understand, seal it again-it leaks, go to work, this art is dusty, clear the table, call him again, flush the toilet, stay young.⁸⁸

82 Liss, Andrea (2009) *Feminist Art and the Maternal*, University of Minnesota Press. Kindle Edition pos 604

83 Ibid. pos 639

84 Ibid. pos 645

85 Ibid. pos. 649

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid. pos. 656



Laderman Ukeles' Manifesto was published with four photographs in which she stages domestic labor. In "Maintenance Art: Dusting a Baffle" Ukeles cleans a shower curtain.



Depicting motherhood through a dirty nappy like Mary Kelly, the photograph above is also part of the manifesto. It is "Maintenance Art: Rinsing a B.M. Diaper".



In addition, as part of the manifesto there were the photos of “Maintenance Art: Mopping the Floor” and finally, “Maintenance Art: Pregnant Woman Cleaning a Chicken Foot”.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles breaks the taboo and dares to declare art an ordinary activity. As she explains in her manifesto:

(...)Everything I say is Art is Art. Everything I do is Art is Art. I am an artist. I am a woman. I am a wife. I am a mother. (Random order.) I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking, supporting, preserving, etc. Also (up to now separately) I do Art. Now, I will simply do these everyday things and flush them up to consciousness, exhibit them as Art.⁸⁹

89 Ibid pos. 662



In the same vein, the series of ninety-five untitled contact prints framed together, "Maintenance Art Task: Dressing to Go Out/Undressing to Come In"(1973), depicts the equally repetitive and exhausting activity of caring for two young children in winter.

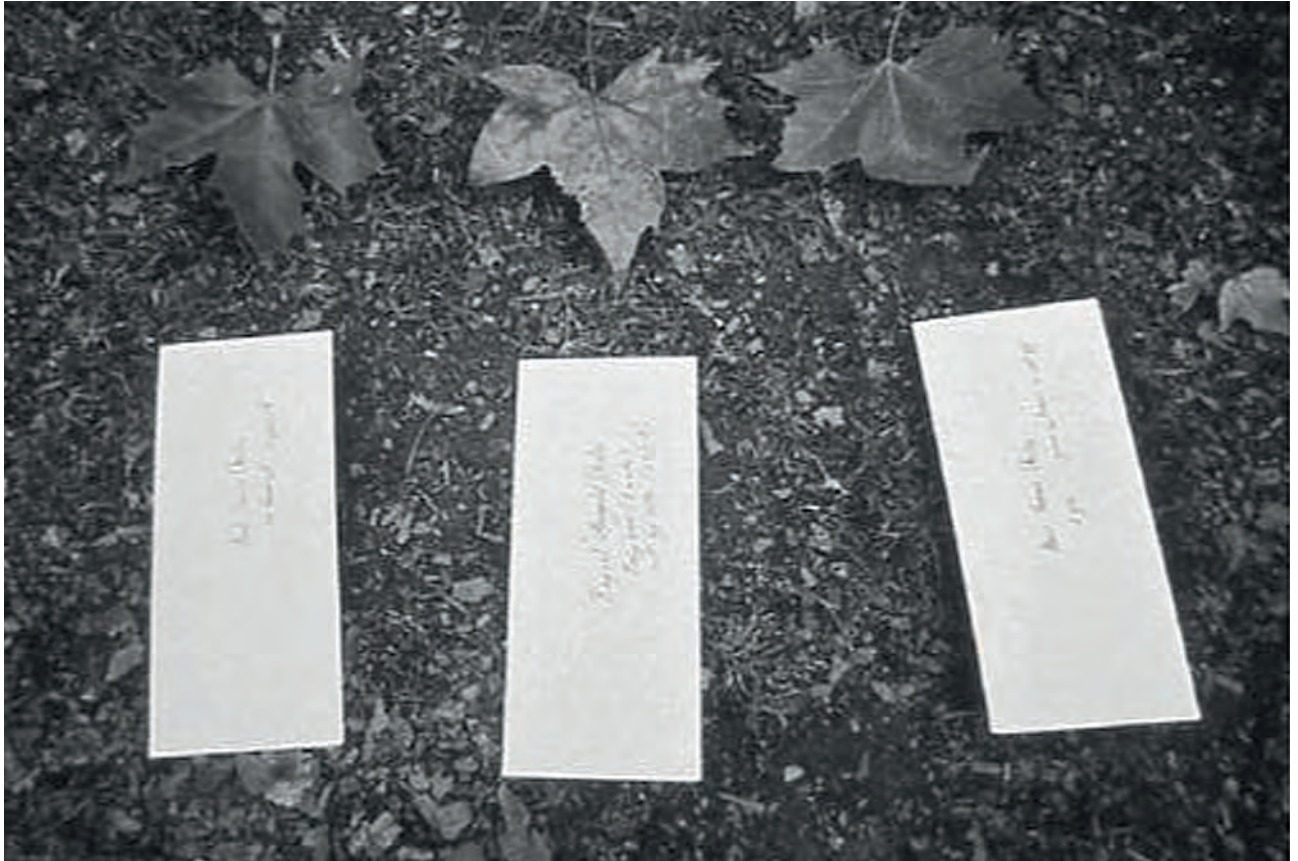
In the performance at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, "Some Kinds of Maintenance Cancel Out Others, Keep Your Head Together- 1,000 Times, or Babysitter Hangup-Incantation Ritual"(1974), Ukeles repeated the following "procedure" about 500 times:

1. Begin: Call New York long distance & ask babysitter if babies (3) are o.k.? o.k.
 2. Hang string back and forth across full length of gallery (30ft.).
 3. Read each set of statements out loud on each page.
 4. Scamp each page with Maintenance Art Stamp.
 5. Clip it to string.
 6. Move on to next identical page.
 7. Fill up whole space with words and sheets, move up the stairs and outside to boundary of I.C.A.- street.
 8. If I say it enough times, (maybe) it will come true.
 9. Call N.Y.C. and ask babysitter if children are o.k.? o.k.
- END⁹⁰

Mierle Laderman Ukeles and Mary Kelly find in the theme of separation anxiety a common field in which to produce their work.

In her performance, Ukeles gives shape to a ritual in which she does not distance herself from reality when she describes her deep conflict with leaving her children behind in New York while she travels to Boston for a show. Just as Mary Kelly described her fears when she had to work outside her home, leaving baby Kelly behind.

90 Ibid pos. 707-711



In both approaches, the element of repetition plays an important role, which for Ukeles is an almost spiritual one.

In her way of mourning the separation, Ukeles hopes that if she repeats the question of whether the children are okay and the babysitter's answer often enough, that is, 500 times, "o.k", "it will come true."⁹¹

In "Fall Time Variations III, Children's Piece: Time Stop (Tree Droppings- The Leaving Home of the Leaves)" (1974), Ukeles projects separation anxiety into the future. -picture above-

In the piece three fallen leaves represent each of her three children. In a ritual that connects the burial with the promise of the future, the artist calls out the married names of her children and brings in an envelope the leaves with soil and hair of their children, to bury them and in this way release the grief at the thought of her children leaving.

Reflecting on this piece, Ukeles said she was thinking about her children leaving her, as she did to her mother: "I think it's one of the hardest parts of being a mother, their leaving. The tree lets the leaves go."⁹²

Ukeles' poetic and mystical approach is evident in her work in the form of vulnerability, as in her words:

A feeling of vulnerability and interdependency is what my art is all about, and that's a religious position, to feel that and say that it's okay to be vulnerable and dependent.

It's actually wonderful.⁹³

91 Ibid pos. 715

92 Ibid. pos. 767

93 Ibid. pos. 779



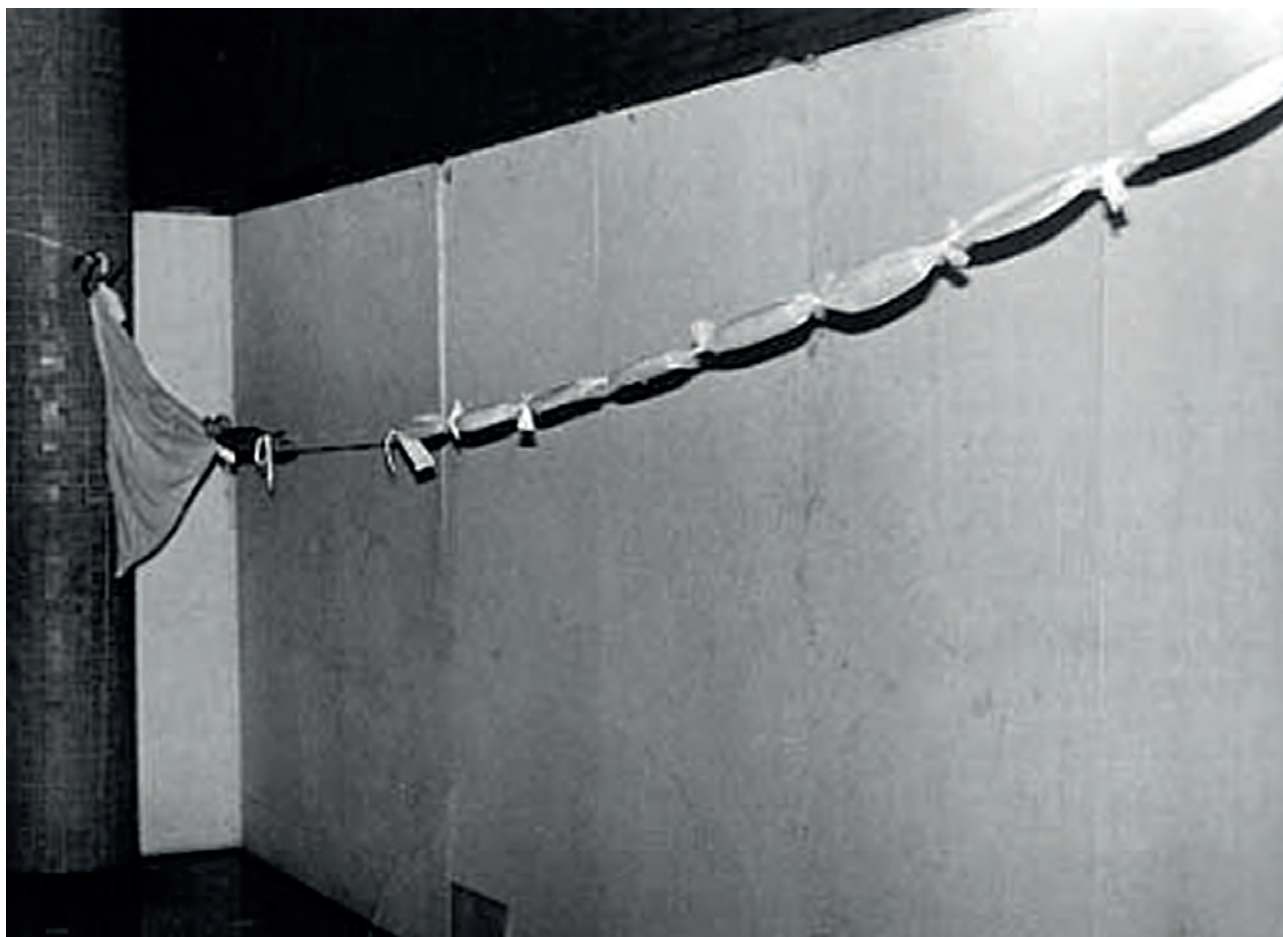


"Mon fils" (1968) by Argentine artist **Lea Lublin**, or "My son" in English, is a radical invitation to the audience to observe the artist nursing her seven months old son Nicolas throughout the exhibition at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.

The performance follows Lublin's concern to integrate daily life into the museum, not to place art above life, and in this way to connect her identities as artist, woman, and mother.⁹⁴

"Mon Fils" is one of the first performances of Lublin; in it "art, daily life, motherhood and conceptual and political issues were all combined in Lublin's performative displacing of domestic labour to a museum."⁹⁵

94 Butler, Cornelia (2007) *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, The MIT Press, Los Angeles. p. 262
95 <http://www.reactfeminism.org/entry.php?l=lb&id=219&e=t>, Retrieved 30.10.14



From another perspective, Colombian artist **María Evelia Marmolejo** has created a series of works on motherhood since 1979. “Tendidos”(1979) , or “Hangings” in English, was produced for her semester final exam and consisted of a clothesline of used and clean sanitary napkins tied together.

As a repetitive element in Laderman Ukeles, Justesen and Kelly, in “Tendidos”, a cloth nappy was placed at the end of the line. The whole line hung from a butcher’s hook, which stands for a political approach to the subject of motherhood lived in territories where life is an unsure right: “Marmolejo produced this work in protest for the brutal torture and rape—often with metal objects—of peasant and university women, sometimes pregnant, by the Colombian Army.”⁹⁶

Similar to Kelly, Marmolejo’s work was not recognized as art, and the artist was forced to leave art school.

In the 1980s, María Evelia Marmolejo created a radical body of work in which she used placenta to cover herself in her performances, as in “Anonym 4” (1982), and in which she cut herself and drew with her blood in 1979, as in “Anonym 1” (1981).

Marmolejo also used her menstrual blood directly from her vagina to print on the walls of the San Diego Gallery, Bogotá (1982), and in “Residuos II” (1984), the artist inserted a fetus into a compressed bag, along with a used sanitary pad, which she installed with other bags of organic material,⁹⁷ bringing together inquiries about artistic materials and methods, but mainly about femininity, motherhood, violence and ecological destruction.

⁹⁶ https://www.artnexus.com/Notice_View.aspx?DocumentID=24747

⁹⁷ Ibid.

The spirit of art as a domestic activity in England in the seventies, from which the **Feministo** group emerged, was captured by Monica Ross in the following idea:

...and we went out in the streets with buckets and flyposted the posters we'd silkscreened during the night on Phil Goodall's kitchen table and pegged up to dry next to the socks and the nappies.⁹⁸

Monica Ross also participated in the group Feministo, which began in the mid-seventies as a postal correspondence between Kate Walker and Sally Gallop, friends who could no longer see each other because Gallop moved to the Isle of Wight. Gradually, the network expanded to include 25 women between the ages of 19 and 60. These women told of their isolation and exclusion from artistic and urban circles, and most of them lived the answer: "2/3 of all art students are women, but where do they go when they leave?"⁹⁹

Feministo refers to a word play "female manifesto". Some members of the group were Su Richardson whose work includes "Nappy Sandwich", a reflection on the unequal distribution of domestic labor among the female sex, as well as "Crochet Breakfast" and "Crochet Table". Other members of the collective were Monica Ross, Phil Goodall, and her initiator Kate Walker.

Kate Walker began with the idea of "Postal Events" as it was "the only kind of art that we can produce, while the Children's T.v. is on."¹⁰⁰ She first used the household waste, supermarket packages, cartons, etc. to produce the "Packaged Ladies".



Kate Walker's "A Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife" depicts Feministo's principle of making works from whatever materials are available at home. –Image above–

98 Apud Battista, Kathy (2013) *Renegotiating the Body: Feminist Art in 1970s London*. I.B. Tauris, New York. p. 109

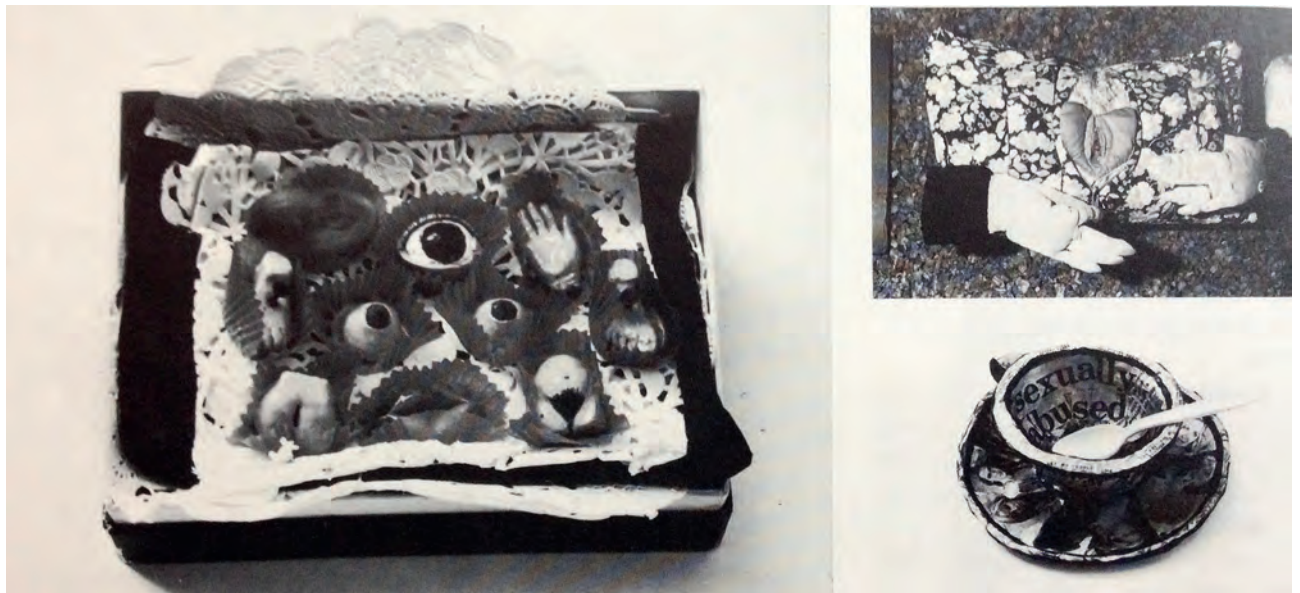
99 Richardson, Ross and Walker Apud Battista, Kathy (2013) *Renegotiating the Body: Feminist Art in 1970s London*. I.B. Tauris, New York. p. 109

100 Bierther, Ursula (1977) *Künstlerinnen International, 1877 – 1977*. NGBK. Berlin. p. 282



Another Kate Walker's work is "Self Portrait"(1976), which consists of a passport photo mounted on the diary in which she documents her daily life:

"Housework until 5.30 and then SLEEP until children's breakfast at 7.30 ouch! SLEEP again 11.00-1.00" while her eyes appear in the photo one open and one closed.



Walker's work "Keep Smiling" consisted on a box of homemade chocolates shaped like lips and vaginas, among other things.

Feministo's works were made in a small format to fit in mailboxes as they were sent from one artist to another, and they were light enough to make shipping cheap.

Phil Goodall wrote in this context that "women's lifestyles tend to contain small time-scales, brief moments –we need flexibility to deal with the tiny important moments that children, friends, lovers, present".¹⁰¹

In the late seventies, Feministo evolved into a major traveling exhibition that was shown in various public spaces in the UK, most notably the ICA in London, where the reviews were rather harsh. All that remains is the documentation of the work or the memory of it, because these works were not intended to be exploited commercially. They returned to their owners and were "stolen, some fell apart and some were thrown away,"¹⁰² as Walker commented.

In a critique of some of the works shown in the exhibition "Künstlerinnen International" or in English "International Female Artists" in Berlin in 1977, it says: "Women's daily life is shown: housework, children, sexuality, work of love and love of work. The suffering in it. The whole insecure existence of women. All these little pieces together show a harsh picture of the female artist as a housewife."¹⁰³

Feministo is considered "perhaps the first large-scale, collaborative work to relocate artistic production from the studio to the domestic space."¹⁰⁴

101 Apud Battista, Kathy (2013) *Renegotiating the Body: Feminist Art in 1970s London*. I.B. Tauris, New York. p. 110

102 Ibid. p.112

103 Kaiser, Monika (2013) *Neubesetzungen des Kunst-Raumes. Feministische Kunstaustellungen und ihre Räume, 1972-1987*. Transcript Verlag. Bielefeld p. 149.

104 Ibid.



Fina Miralles' work "Standard"(1976) reflects on living conditions in post-Franco's Spain. In the performance "Standard", which took place at Gallery G in Barcelona, Fina Miralles sits tied to a wheelchair, exposed to the slide projection of images of an older woman dressing a girl in a room, with all the rituals and manners of traditional Spanish femininity. Also included in the projection were images from advertising and fashion depicting the female condition. The norms imposed by gender disciplining are thus violated on the girl's body.¹⁰⁵

105 Aliaga Juan Vicente (2009) Orden fálico. Edit. Akal España. p. 267



Mother Art is a collective of artists mothers who met in 1974 through their involvement in the Woman's Building in Los Angeles.

Laura Silagi, one of the participants in the Feminist Studio Workshop at the Building, was shocked that an institution supposedly founded on feminist principles was actually dismissive of mothers and children:

While there was support for art dealing with certain issues, support for those of us, both lesbian and heterosexual, who had children was totally lacking. In fact, we faced overt hostility when it came to the subject of motherhood and children.¹⁰⁶

To show how contradictory the decade of the 1970s appeared, an important imperative of feminism was that "women's bodies were sacred because of their connection to nature, the goddess, and a prehistoric matriarchal society."¹⁰⁷ Birth was a central part of the celebration of the female body, but in reality the child itself was not part of the celebration.

As with Mierle Laderman Ukeles, it is said that Judy Chicago, one of the founders of the Women's Building who created a large-scale tapestry series about births, told another artist, Helen Million Ruby, that she had to choose between her children and her art, believing that she was merely stating a fact rather than giving an ultimatum.¹⁰⁸

Inside the artist's studios of the Woman's Building dogs but no children were allowed,¹⁰⁹ to which the group Mother Art responded placing a playground, "Rainbow Playground"(1974), in front of the building, in the parking lot.

his first installation addressed the lack of support women experience within and outside the art world, as well as the contradictions between motherhood and feminism.

Mother Art's membership has changed since its creation. Early members included Christy Kruse, Helen Million, Suzanne Siegel, and Laura Silgali. Gloria Hajduk also worked with the collective for the intervention in the Women's Building, as well as Velene Campbell Kessler joined the group for "Laundry Works"(1977).

Nowadays the group is formed by Deborah Krall, Suzanne Siegel and Laura Silagi.

106 Apud Chernick, Myrel and Klein, Jennie (2011) *The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art*, Demeter Press. p. 1

107 Ibid. p.2.

108 Ibid.

109 Liss, Andrea (2009) *Feminist Art and the Maternal*, University of Minnesota Press. Kindle Edition. pos. 175





The second project of Mother Art for the Woman's Building was the organization of the exhibition "By Mothers" in 1975 with the intention of showing that motherhood was a legitimate subject for feminist art.¹¹⁰

The second exhibition, "By Mothers" in 1976, the same year Adrienne Rich's influential publication *Of Woman Born* was published, was intended to show both positive and negative aspects of motherhood. In its call for submissions, Mother Art urged people to explore "the pain, anxiety, anger and guilt of mothers" together with "the delight, the strength, the care in nurturing."¹¹¹

Silagi characterized them as "grotesque, not sentimental... ironic... opposed to anything romanticized... humorous, although some of them are very sweet."¹¹²

For the exhibition Gloria Hajduk created "Application for Prospective Mothers", a series of thirty questions as if they were applying for a job.¹¹³

110 Chernick, Myrel and Klein, Jennie (2011) *The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art*, Demeter Press. p.2

111 Apud Movarec, Michelle (2011) "Making Room for Mommy" In *The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art*. Chernick, Myrel and Klein, Jennie. Demeter Press. p.155

112 Ibid

113 Ibid

Initially Mother Art focused on giving mother artists greater visibility, and in a second phase the group used the mother as a trope to examine women's devalued contribution to society.¹¹⁴

Their project "Laundry Works"(1977) is a series of site-specific performances in Laundromats throughout Los Angeles. In the performances the group hung art and poetry, and discussed the labor involved in domestic tasks with women who visited the site to do their laundry.

The action's Laundryworks pamphlets asked twelve questions, such as, "What in your life could the different cycles of a washing machine (soak-wash-rinse-spin-dry) be compared to?" or "do you ever have the urge to put an obnoxious child through a short rinse cycle?" and "when you look inside of a machine before putting in your clothes, what do you expect to find?"¹¹⁵

In this way, the performances, which were shaped by the rhythm of the machines' washing cycles, pointed to the particular time distribution of domestic labor in which women were embedded. The always rushed time of the performances, reduced to a single wash and dry cycle, recreated the lack of time for working mothers and aimed to discuss the issue within the artistic scenario for women artists.

The project was funded by a California Arts Council grant of \$700. This was referred to by former Governor Ronald Reagan in an article published in the Los Angeles Time in 1978, in which he pointed out the waste of government funds.

"Mother Art" responded to the ex-Governor statements by performing "Mother Art Cleans Up the Banks" and "Mother Art Cleans Up City Hall", "where the artists dusted and scrubbed these buildings, simultaneously creating commentary on real fiscal waste and articulating the powerful bonds between women's domestic and public spaces."¹¹⁶

In the words of Michelle Movarec, "if I have learned anything from the members of Mother Art, or feminists of the 1970s in general, it is that I must exploit (...) contradiction (as a mother), not avoid it."¹¹⁷

The Mother Art group continued to work on the debate about war, women's homelessness, and the devastation of women's bodies through illegal abortions throughout the 1980s.¹¹⁸

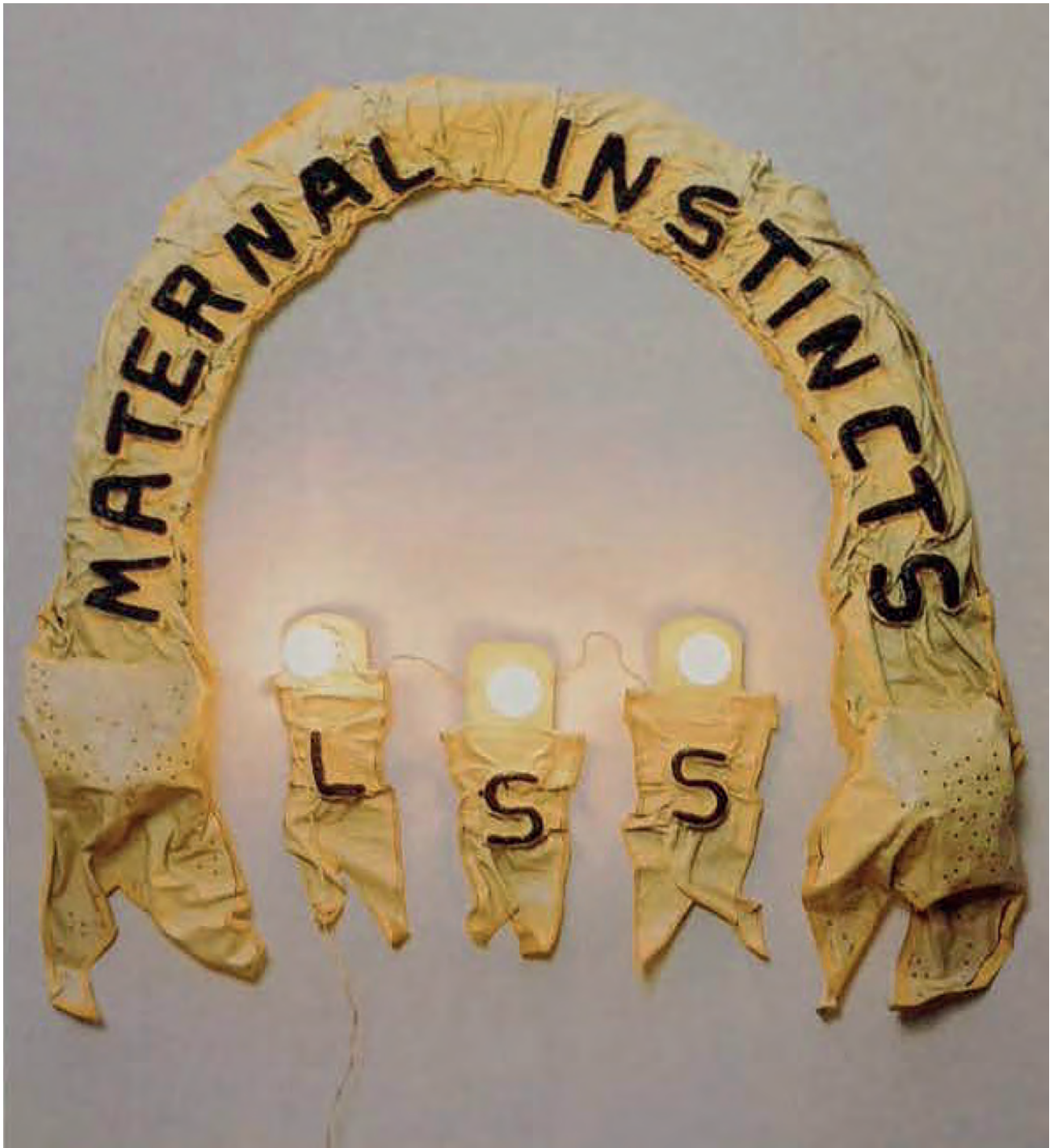
114 Ibid

115 Ibid p. 155-157

116 Liss, Andrea (2009) *Feminist Art and the Maternal*, University of Minnesota Press. Kindle Edition. pos. 181

117 Movarec, Michelle (2011) "Making Room for Mommy" In *The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art*. Chernick, Myrel and Klein, Jennie. Demeter Press. p.159

118 Liss, Andrea (2009) *Feminist Art and the Maternal*, University of Minnesota Press. Kindle Edition. pos. 169



North American artist **Ree Morton**'s artistic career began late in life. After training as a nurse and devoting her life to her husband and children, she earned her master's degree in fine arts in 1970 and was accepted into the Whitney Museum of American Art's Contemporary American Sculpture Annual that same year.

In "Maternal Instincts"(1974) a banner of cellophane with the title of the work forms an arc over three flags containing the first initials of the names of her three children, illuminated by three light bulbs.

Morton's anti-monumental oeuvre, however, celebrates the intimacies of daily life in a tone that can evoke a children's party or a small town's parade.



Feminist theorist **Laura Mulvey** and filmmaker Peter Wollen produced the film “Riddles of the Sphinx”, London, 1977, in which Mulvey theorizes the concept of the phallic gaze in relation to film.

In the form of an essay, the film features various languages, such as Mulvey’s reading on feminism, as well as the description of Louise’s life with a constantly moving camera, and in addition a colorful experimentation with images of a woman on a trapeze, written reflections at the beginning of each section, and at the end of the film a golden mercury-like liquid is reunited with another part in the middle of a blue labyrinth.

In the first of the seven sections, Mulvey connects motherhood to the role of the sphinx. In her words:

To the patriarchy the Sphinx, as a woman is a thread and a riddle.
We live in a society ruled by the father, in which the place of the mother is suppressed.
Motherhood and how to live it, or not to live it, lies at the roots of the dilemma.
And meanwhile, the Sphinx can only speak with a voice apart, a voice off.

In another section, a single mother, Louise, is shown with her daughter Anna and at work, facing the struggles of the working mother in the late 1970s. With a continuous 360-degree camera pan, the viewer is immersed in an unstable and ever-changing world.

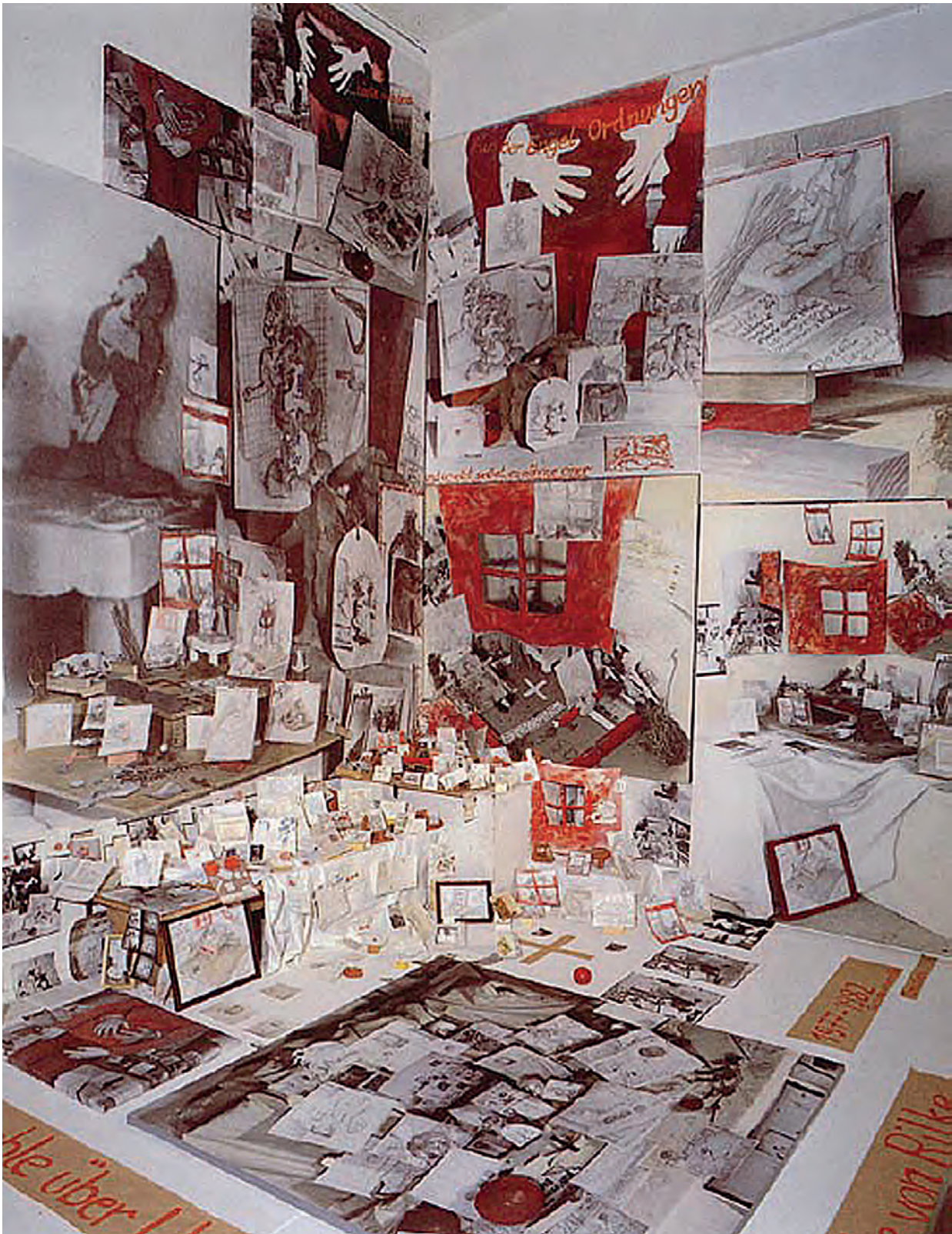
At minute 42 Louise asks in voice off:

Should women demand special working conditions for mothers? Can a child-care campaign attack anything fundamental to women’s oppression? Should women’s struggles be concentrated on economic issues? Is domestic labour productive? Is the division of labor the root of the problem? Is exploitation outside the home better than oppression within it? Should women organise themselves separately from men? Could there be a social revolution in which women do not play the leading role? How does women’s struggle relate to class struggle? Is patriarchy the main enemy for women? Does the oppression of women work in the unconscious as well as on the conscious? What would the politics of the unconscious be like? How necessary is being-a-mother to women, in reality or imagination? Is the family an obstacle to the liberation of women? Is the family needed to maintain sexual difference? What other forms of childcare might there be? Are campaigns about childcare a priority for women now?

In the shape of a poem, another scene reflects on Louise’s life at Anna’s bedtime. The minimalistic poem is heard in a voice off over similarly minimalist music:

Distressed. Strained. Nesting. In the nest. Comfort. Effort. At the breast. At rest. Resting.
Take leave. Take moss. Be close. Be clasped and cleft. Be close. Nesting. Acquiesced.
Memory. Mystery. Dispossessed. Depressed. Trusting. Make cross. Make grieve. Morose.
Subject to conquest. Object to incest. Nesting. From the nest. Blood. Brood. From the breast.
Caressed. Hurting. Bleeding. It was obvious. It was as obvious as oblivious. Brooding.
It was plain. Be close. It was as plain as it was pain. Make love. Make grieve. Marries.
Mother’s and another’s. Mysteries. Nesting. “If only I hadn’t minded”, I used to say,
but I did mind very much. I minded more than very much. I minded more than I could ever have
dared. Mind the door. Mind the glass. Mind the fire. Mind the child. I never minded the warmth.
I minded the need. “It was needed to have minded”, I used to say, but was it needed to have
minded more than very much? More than I could ever have dared?

“Riddles of the Sphinx”(1977) is an iconic film about motherhood because it brings together many theoretical as well as aesthetical references regarding feminism and motherhood. For example, in one scene, Louise’s ex-husband asks her to watch a film he edited in which Mary Kelly reads about the problems she is having with her son going to nursery school.



German artist **Anna Oppermann** created an extensive series of "Ensembles" from 1968 until her death in 1993. Her reflections on gender she depicted in her work led to her initially being criticized as a "mediocre painter of sterile, domestic still lifes."¹¹⁹

119 Vorkoeper, Ute (2007) Anna Oppermann: Revisions of Ensemble Art. Hatje Cantz Stuttgart and Vienna. p. 14

In her work, Oppermann dealt not only with gender issues, but also with the complex relationship between art and the market, as in the works "MSSVO- "Make Small, Straightforward, Vendible Objects!"(1979-1992) and "Gesture of Pathos –MLCOPD- "Make Large, Compelling Objects that Demonstrate Power!"(1984-1992), which was presented in its complete form at Documenta 8 in 1987, a decade in which her work was widely exhibited.

In the many layers inside or outside the photographs, the many pieces and texts of Oppermann's Ensembles, contrary to an invasion to the spectator, he or she finds the freedom to wander freely and look for meanings in the concrete abstraction of Oppermann's open proposal.

The chaotic form of Anna Oppermann's Ensembles constitutes an accurate description of the maternal condition, in which orderly mess reigns, and whose spontaneity cannot be reproduced outside life itself, as later attempts to re-exhibit Anna Oppermann's work have shown.

In this regard Ute Vorkoeper discusses in "After 'The Death of the Author'. On Re-installing Anna Oppermann's Processual and Open Ensembles"(2006)¹²⁰ about not only the difficulty of dealing with the many elements on reinstalling Oppermann's work, but also openly discusses her problems with the small parts of the ensemble and the lack of documentation on how to assemble it.

In result, the installation led to a more ordered, reconstructed version of the Ensemble "Embraces, Inexplicables, and a Line of Poetry by R.M.R"(1977-1992) that the curator and her curatorial group arranged in 1993 at the Sprengel Museum in Hanover, where they covered an area approximately 430cm high by 660cm and 500cm wide with 18 suspended photo canvases and approximately 500 small pieces discharged onto the floor.¹²¹

For Vorkoeper: "our reinstallation in the end was a bit too clean, too proper. Nevertheless, everybody was quite happy because nobody had thought before that reinstallation would work at all."¹²²

The Ensemble "Embraces, Inexplicables, and a Line of Poetry by R.M.R"(1977-1992) deals directly with motherhood as well as with the role of women, pregnancy, immaculate conception, the breast and nipple, and other themes, as Herbert Hossmann describes in his index of Oppermann's Ensembles.¹²³

In "Embraces"(1977-1992), a multiplied photograph of an embraced pregnant belly is placed next to few red tomatoes, some red paper windows, as well as some tape crosses; all inside and outside photographs, and also different abstractions of a woman holding or embracing (a baby?) and plenty of written notes. All very reddish, like a view from inside the womb and like the altars to African Orishas that Oppermann's work seems to evoke with the common white tablecloth.

Oppermann's ensembles are not intended to impress anyone. The freedom of her language comes from her self declared position of outsider, which in this way represents a positive acceptance of dualisms and oppositions, and this furthermore works as an accurate representation of mothering in its struggle to reconcile the various selves of the mother by resisting the imposition of the "master discourses"¹²⁴ of the patriarchal institution that demands clarity and certainty of mothering practices. Both in a conscious motherhood and in Oppermann's work, trial and error find their place.

In the Ensemble "Embraces"(1977-1992) Oppermann quotes the first lines of Rainer Maria Rilke's Duinese Elegies:

120 Vorkoeper, Ute (2006) "After 'The Death of the Author'. On Re-installing Anna Oppermann's Processual and Open Ensembles". Available in http://www.deponat.de/data/gent-vortrag_11_2006.pdf. Retrieved 10.01.2015

121 Warnke, Martin (1998) A Digital Order of Things. In Wedemeyer, Carmen "Umarmungen.../Embraces..." Stroemfeld/Roter Stern. Edition Lebeer Hossmann. p.38.

122 Ibid.

123 Hosmann, Herbert Apud Vorkoeper, Ute (2007) Anna Oppermann: Revisions of Ensemble Art. Hatje Cantz Stuttgart and Vienna. p. 248

124 Kaplan Apud O'Reilly, Andrea (2008) Feminist Mothering, State Univ of New York Pr. p. 123

Who if I cried, would hear me among the angelic orders? And even if one of them suddenly pressed me to his heart: I should fade in the strength of his much stronger existence. For beauty's nothing but the beginning of terror which we, barely able to endure, actually adore, because it so serenely disdains to destroy us.¹²⁵

In the poem, there is a general reference to the act of embracing as one's own defeat by the beauty and strength of the other, which is addressed in reference to the "angelic orders" but also constitutes the image of the mother comforting her child and his ultimate joy at being destroyed by her embrace.

The photographs of the Ensemble "Embraces"(1977-1992) were made in collaboration with Martin Kippenberger, and the Ensemble draws on Oppermann's time at the Villa Romana, Italy, during the years 1977 and 1978.

As described by Herbert Hosmann, Oppermann's Ensembles follow the thematic categories of the situation of an artist, wife, and mother of a young child in the late 1960s; as well as positions in the world and relationships with other people (like being an outsider, love, friendship, enmity, career); portraits of colleagues and friends; the specific conditions of being an artist as well as the economic, social, and psychological preconditions of making, selling and communicating art; and finally, the rigorous aesthetic, philosophical, and intellectual inquiry.¹²⁶



Image 1

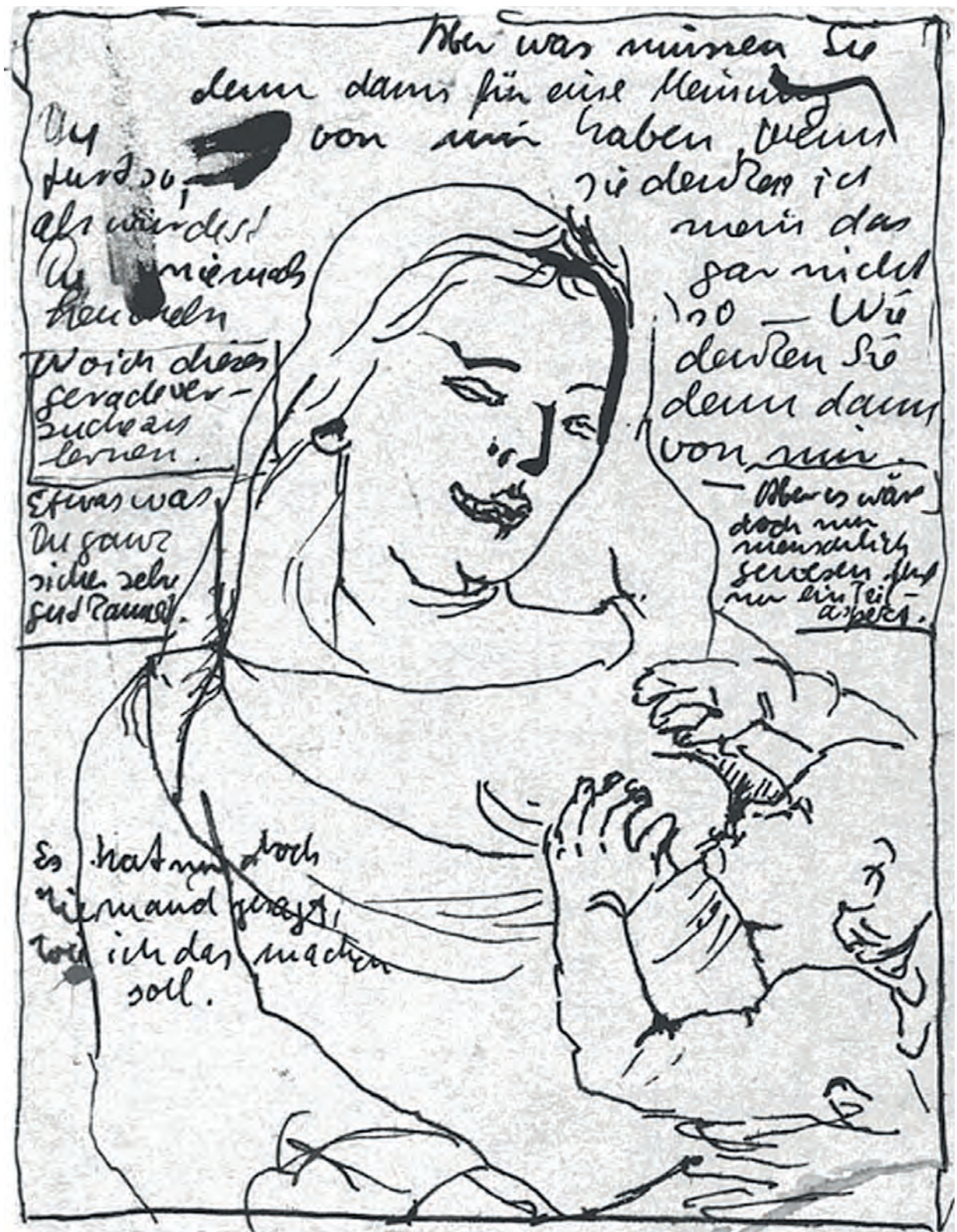


Image 2

Some of the maternal sections of the "Embraces"(1977-1992) are a photo of Oppermann pregnant –image 1 above-, as well as a photograph of the couple Filliou –image 2 above-.

125 Ibid.

126 Ibid. p. 241



Moreover, the drawing of the snow-white marble Madonna del Latte, that in Oppermann's words "smiles while nursing her fat, greedy, demanding child, but one also sees a little bit of the evil sharp teeth of a predator (or am I imagining that?)."¹²⁷ —Image above—. This interpretation deepens the complexity of the theme of motherhood and its contradictions, which is ultimately represented in Oppermann's artistic work.



Image 1



Image 2

Finally, there is a repeating element, namely an anonymous clay figure resembling a person holding another figure (a baby?). Both are faceless and genderless. The embraced figure is Botticelli's "Venus," cut from a postcard and presented with her back to the viewer. –Image 1 above–

In the drawn version of the clay figure –Image 2 above– it is possible that the handwritten addition on this drawing refers to R. D. Laing's book "Knoten" that is multiple times quoted. In the book Laing states: "Jack wants to devour his mother and be devoured by her". In the same direction Oppermann's writing reads: "fear of being devoured".¹²⁸

Anna Oppermann's Ensembles additionally draw on esoteric themes such as Castaneda, angels, devil, hell, sin, crucifixion, altar, adoration, blasphemy, immaculate conception, temptation, sacrificial and blessed lamb, and meditation.¹²⁹

The inclusion of such subjects enriches the many layers of her inspiring work, as they provide a glimpse of the beliefs that were prevalent in the seventies, just as they did for Nikki de Saint Phalle, whose work will be discussed later.

128 http://www.uni-lueneburg.de/hyperimage/HI_Umarmungen/#a2_3_1/

129 Hosmann, Herbert Apud Vorkoeper, Ute (2007) Anna Oppermann: Revisions of Ensemble Art. Hatje Cantz Stuttgart and Vienna. p. 241-258



Another work dealing with motherhood is "Discours Mou et Mat"(1975) or "Soft and Dull Speech" in English, by French artist **Gina Pane**.

In the 22:23 minute video, Gina Pane enters a gallery dressed typically in white and wearing sunglasses. The audience waits after dodging a motorcycle blocking the gallery's entrance.¹³⁰ In the room a series of elements are displayed such as boxing gloves, a motorcyclist helmet and a brass knuckle.¹³¹

In the following six scenes, the artist slips into different roles: the protective figure of the mother, the trauma of separation at birth, the alienation of the newborn baby from its mother, as well as closeness, intimacy and desire. All the while, Pane handles the objects with a kind of poetry, lending them symbolic value through the repetition of her movements, the inclusion of music, the reading of texts and the projection of slides.¹³²

On the other hand Gina Pane explored in her performances the element of self-infringed cuts, through which she expected to awake society from a lethargy that strongly affected women.¹³³

The incisions made with razor blades in the tongue and lips mark the impossibility of speaking suffered by women who are Pane's privileged receptors.¹³⁴

The work of Gina Pane represents the rebellion against the social domestication of the body. At the same time, Pane showed that the contact and loving relationship between mother and child can be suffocating for the offspring, as it was also discussed in the work "Embrace" by Anna Oppermann.

Gina Pane's homosexuality was openly assumed. For this reason, we feel it was important to include her approach in this study, as Pane represents an early queer perspective on motherhood.

In 1975 Pane declared that the mother symbolized constriction, suffocation and death, demonstrating her discomfort in face of the sacred traditional family, which on another level was a common demand of the gay movement, also represented in Pane's work. Pane is the only case of a female artist in this collection who did not have children. The decision not to have children still needs to be examined in terms of gender diversity, especially in the historical context of the 1960s and 1970s.

130 Hosmann, Herbert Apud Vorkoeper, Ute (2007) Anna Oppermann: Revisions of Ensemble Art. Hatje Cantz Stuttgart and Vienna. p. 241-258

131 Hosmann, Herbert Apud Vorkoeper, Ute (2007) Anna Oppermann: Revisions of Ensemble Art. Hatje Cantz Stuttgart and Vienna. p. 241-258

132 <http://www.reactfeminism.org/entry.php?l=lb&id=227&e=t&v=&a=&t=maternity>, Retrieved 30.10.14

133 Aliaga Juan Vicente (2009) Orden fálico. Edit. Akal España. p. 270

134 Ibid.

Significantly, Gina Pane's work is consistent with what Adrienne Rich noted in the introduction to the 10th anniversary of her book "Of Women Born"(1976), regarding the substantial number of homosexual women hiding in heterosexual marriages in the 1960s and 1970s.

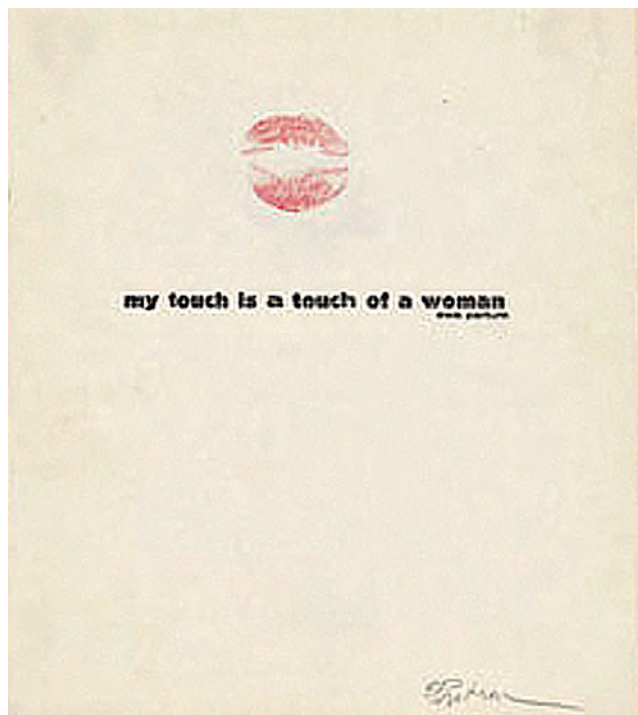


Image 1

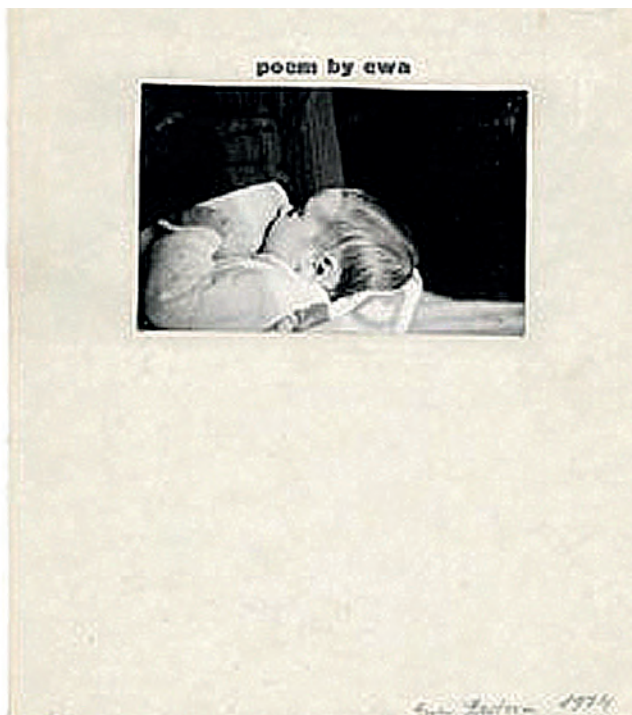


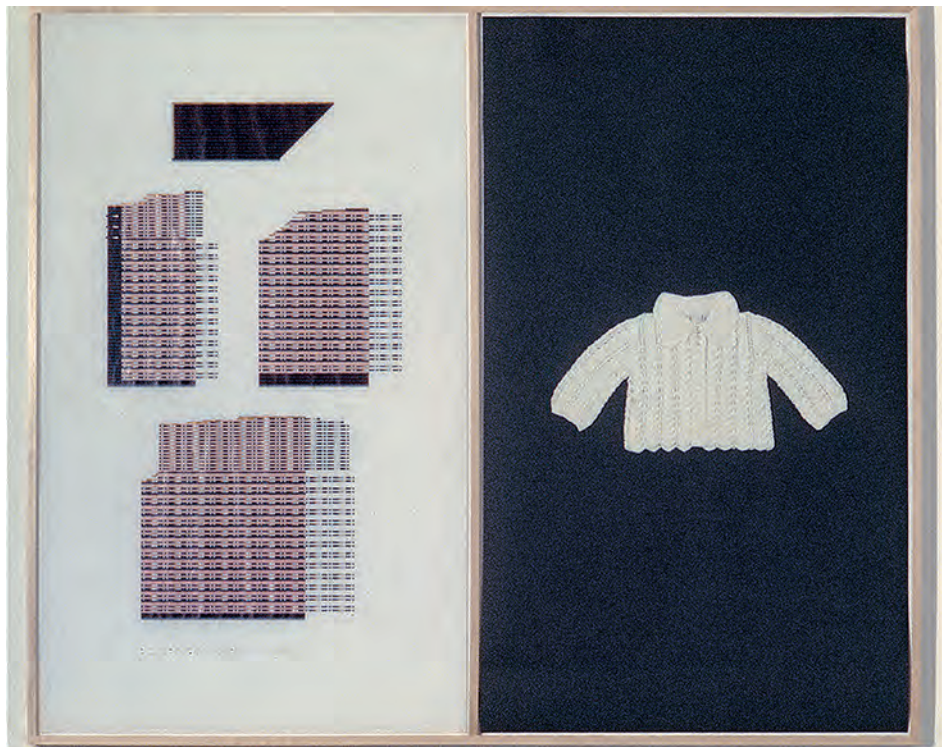
Image 2

Polish artist **Ewa Partum** counts among her concrete poetry the work "Poem by Ewa" (with Baby Berenika)(1974). –Image 2 above–

Partum's early works were meta-poetries in which she spilled letters on paper in public urban spaces, and her motto was "an act of thought is an act of art."¹³⁵

In her desire to create a new language for art and construct a transparent expression, Partum inscribed motherhood into the realm of matter for art with "Poem by Ewa" (with Baby Berenika)(1974) which came from her personal life, as the photograph corresponds to her baby Berenika, who was born the year the visual poem was created.

135 Knaup, Bettina and Stammer, Beatrice Ellen (2014) Re.Act.Feminism # 2. Verlag für Moderne Kunst Nürnberg, Live Art Development Agency London. p. 288



Another artist who depicted baby clothes in the decade of the 1970s to illustrate demanding maternal labor was **Elaine Reichek**. In her series “Laura’s Layette”(1975-1976), Reichek places two canvases side by side, with complex diagrams on the left instructing the knitting of the tiny piece on the right.

The series depicts everything the artist’s daughter, Laura, wore on her way home from the hospital. Reichek’s early work is a formal question about the line, which is translated here to the thread.

In the artist’s words the three-part work “is connected to an infant’s growth and development”.¹³⁶



In “Direction/Translation/Operation”(1979), the development of a child is depicted through the different mittens it wears at each stage. The series describes one of the earliest stages of primate development through the “operation” of learning to grasp, which is initially absent, as the child increasingly learns to grip with the thumb, eventually using all fingers.

Moreover, the series insists on the invisible and complex work of the mother behind the culturally assumed simplicity of childcare.

136 http://elainereichek.com/Project_Pages/16_EarlyKnit/EarlyKnittedWork.htm



The work of German artist **Ursula Reuter Christiansen** was influenced by and embodies the feminist slogan “the personal is political”.

In the film “The Executioner”(1971) Reuter Christiansen tells the story of a woman whose life is transformed by marriage and childbirth. According to the database of women artists Clara,

Though she was highly criticized for her portrayal of the woman as a victim of the traditional patriarchal ideal of femininity, Reuter Christiansen was using her own experiences as a new mother and wife to comment on social realities.¹³⁷

According to Doris Berger “when it was made the film was read as a counterpoint to activist feminist, although (the artist) was herself involved in feminist groups.”¹³⁸

As in many of Reuter Christiansen’s work from the period, the film combines mythological symbols linked to the artist’s own life, in order to universalize the female experience.

In the film, the main character is played by Reuter Christiansen pregnant of her second child depicting her loss of freedom. At the same time, the film points to the contradictions of female power concerning in relation to its connection with nature and is an exhortation to women to take their lives and history into their own hands.¹³⁹

137 http://clara.nmwa.org/index.php?g=entity_detail&entity_id=1691, Retrieved 30.10.14

138 Apud Butler, Cornelia (2007) Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution, The MIT Press, Los Angeles. p. 286

139 Ibid



Image 1

To include North American artist **Faith Ringgold** in this text acknowledges the lack of women artists of African descent working on the issue of motherhood.

Although it is known that Black Power considered feminism as part of their cause, a more comprehensive mapping is needed to recognize what female black artists have produced on the subject of motherhood.

In this vein, the experience of motherhood by women of the Global South, which is different from white, middle class, young and heterosexual, was kept silent. It was simply not even part of the conversation. The center of the art field does not contain these positions. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's asks about this absence:

Can the subaltern speak? What must the elite do to watch out for the continuing construction of the subaltern? The question of "woman" seems most problematic in this context. Clearly, if you are poor, black, and female you get it in three ways.¹⁴⁰

Ringgold's presence on this list does not alleviate the impression that the topic of motherhood in the art world has been formalized through positions held by white women. Hers constitute an exception.

In 1970, Ringgold expressed an interest in feminism, motivated by a maternal approach as she wanted to help her "daughters, other women and (her)self aspire to something more than a place behind a good man."¹⁴¹

140 Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty (1987) "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In: *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Editors Nelson, Cary and Grossberg, Lawrence. Univ of Illinois Pr p.294

141 Butler, Cornelia (2007) *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, The MIT Press, Los Angeles. p. 288



Image 2

That same year, Ringgold and her daughter organized the group Woman Students and Artists for Black Art Liberation to protest war, sexism, and racism.

In 1971, Ringgold created a large mural that was installed at the Women's House of Detention on Riker's Island on New York. As part of her artistic work, Ringgold also published a series of acclaimed children books, like "Tar Beach"(1988) and "My Dream of Martin Luther King"(1995).

However, in Ringgold's late works like "A Family Portrait"(1997)–Image 1 above- and "Moroccan Holiday"(1997)–Image 2 above- the subject of motherhood is clearly reflected.

"A Family Portrait"(1997) depicts the miscegenation of North American families, and in an accompanying text to "Moroccan Holiday" (1997) Ringgold explains:

Being here with you Marlana, my darling daughter, is a true Moroccan holiday. I have just completed these paintings of four great men in our history. A gift for you, my love, to celebrate our women's courage. Had I been born a man I would have been just like them. It is their courage that will not allow me to be a victim, Marlana. Never be a victim, Marlana. Never never, Marlana.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Cameron, Dan et al. Faith Ringgold's French Collection and Other Story Quilts - Dancing at the Louvre. University of California Press: Berkeley, California, 1998, p. 115



North American Artist **Martha Rosler** produced in 1975 the work "Semiotics of the Kitchen", in which she illustrates the alphabet with kitchen utensils when they are present, and thus for the letters U,V,W,X,Y, and Z, instead of showing a tool, Rosler gesticulates.

At the beginning of the six-minute video¹⁴³ there is a slow, strange mood in the host of this "cook show" that evolves to violence when it is the time for the "Fork", the "Ice Pick" and the "Knife".

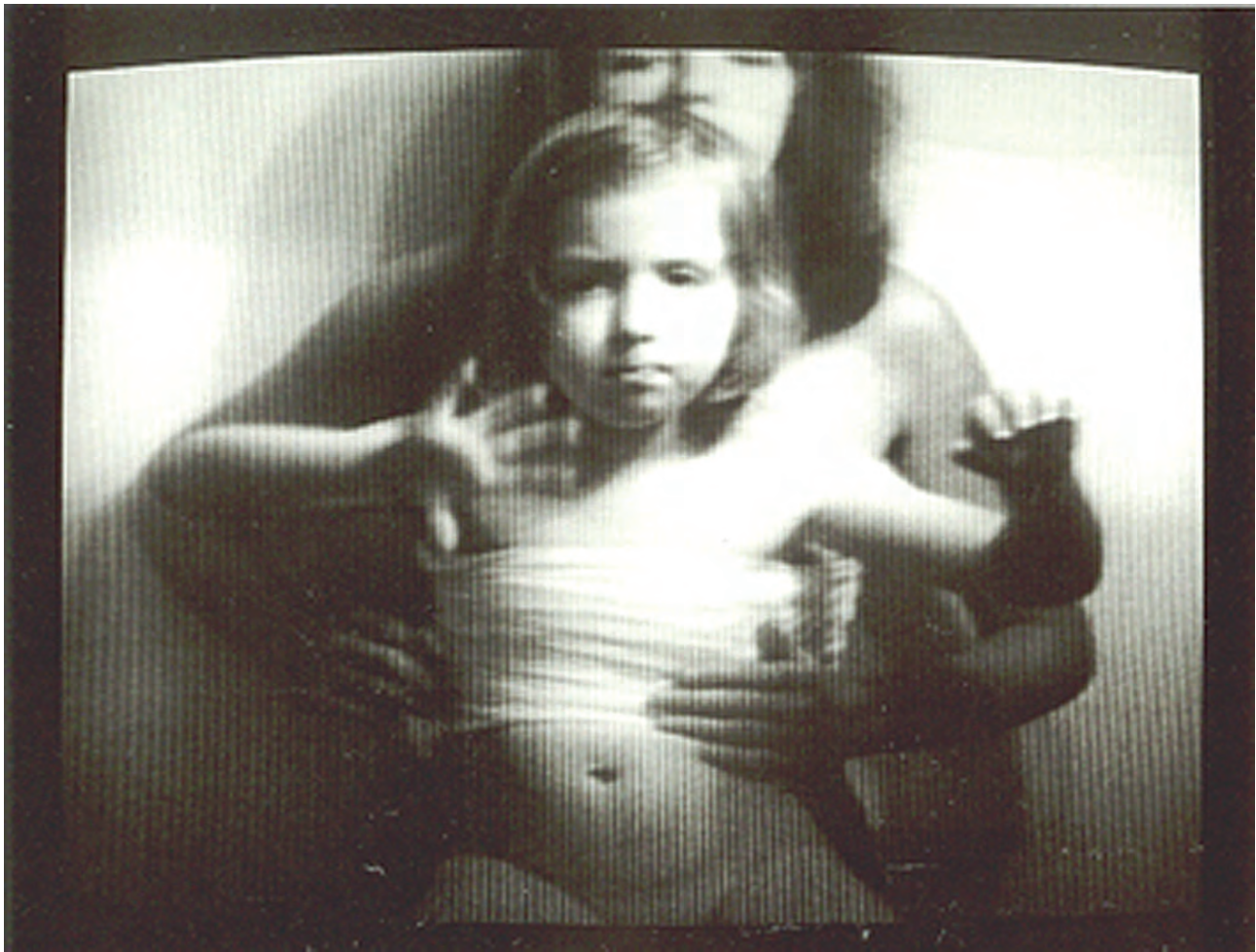
With the "Ladle", the "Spoon" and the "Measuring Implements" the instruction regarding the use of the utensils consists in throwing the food away silly or violently, or simply out of frustration.

As with the "Opener" an exaggerated force begins to be applied to the utensil.

At the end of the video, the host's final gesture comprises an almost provocative question to the audience: "Yes, and?"

Although Rosler is known to be a mother and a strong feminist, it is known that she does not like to take part of the mother-artist section, because she does not want to be classified. However, her work is a good example of the many that analyze the element of the kitchen, which is a direct reference to motherhood.

143 Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zSA9Rm2PZA>. Retrieved 02.01.2015



Since the 1970s, German artist **Ulrike Rosenbach** has created an extensive series of works dealing with the relationship between mother and child.

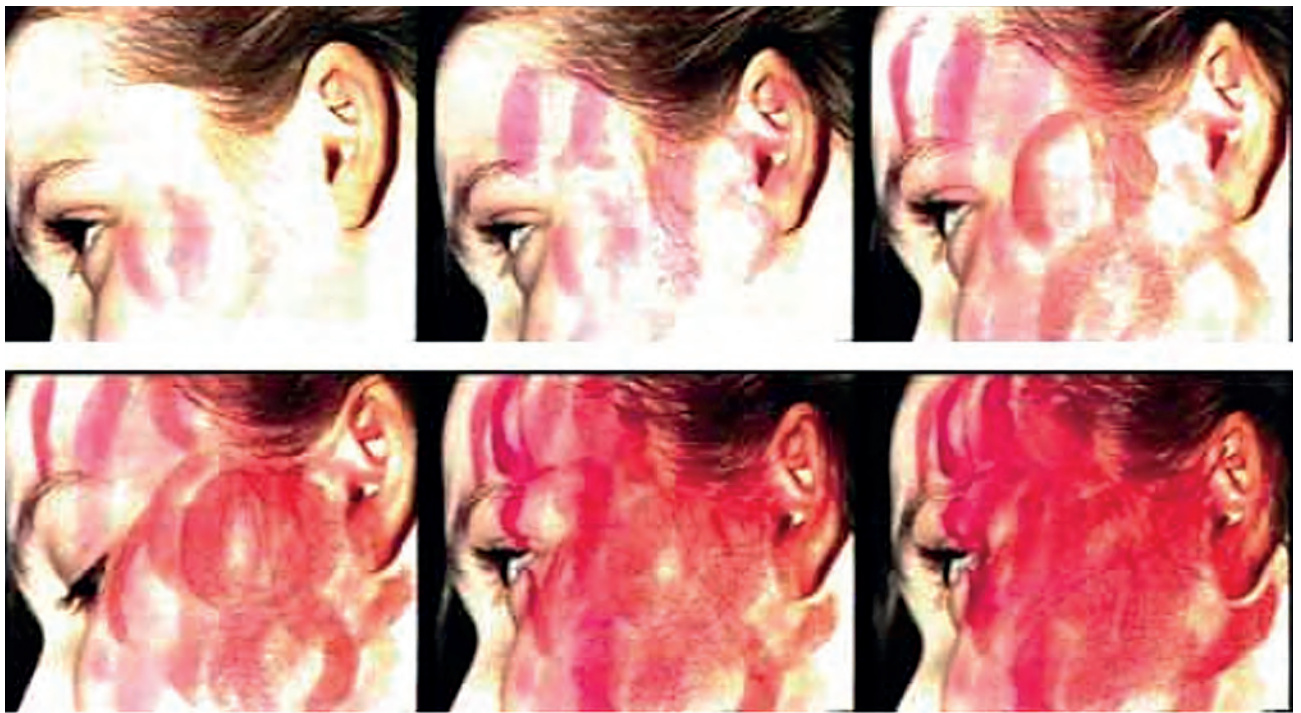
About the first work with her five years old daughter, "Wrapping with Julia"(1972), Rosenbach affirms:

My little daughter sits on my lap. Accompanied by the musical sounds of breathing,
I tie us together with transparent gauze bandages. We are in any case inseparably joined.¹⁴⁴

According to the online database Re.Act.Feminism "interweaving, symbiosis and the blurring of boundaries, but also control and restriction, are important themes"¹⁴⁵ in "Wrapping with Julia".

¹⁴⁴ Cameron, Dan et al. Faith Ringgold's French Collection and Other Story Quilts - Dancing at the Louvre. University of California Press: Berkeley, California, 1998, p. 115

¹⁴⁵ <http://www.reactfeminism.org/entry.php?l=lb&id=135&e=t>, Retrieved 30.10.14



Another work by Rosenbach that deals with the theme of motherhood is the four-minute video "Mutterliebe"¹⁴⁶ –Mother Love-(1977). The work reflects on the immeasurable maternal love and its marks. For the journalist Kirsten Eisenberg the video-installation shows a mother who repeatedly kisses her daughter until she opens up a wound on her cheek.¹⁴⁷

The passive and tolerant attitude of Julia, whose only movement is the natural blinking of her eyes, combined with the proximity of the camera and her close-up image, creates an almost suffocating effect in the video. She is the victim of her mother's affection and artistic work.



This series also includes the performances "Salto mortale"(1978) -images next page- as well the video "Kleine Stücke für Julia" or "Small Pieces for Julia"(1979). -Images above-

146 http://www.ulrike-rosenbach.de/index_01.htm, Retrieved 30.10.14

147 http://www.doublebind.de/presse_aviva.php, Retrieved 30.10.14



In "Salto Mortale"(1978)¹⁴⁸ photographs of women from different social standings hang from the ceiling. A circle of salt lies on the floor, divided by a reflective foil. The surface of the salt is broken up by the artist's skirt as she swings over it in a trapeze.

The element of the trapeze is also explored here like in Laura Mulvey's film "Riddles of the Sphinx"(1977) and remains close to the swing of Tina Keane in "Swing"(1978). Even though the infantilization of women is one of the greatest struggles of the feminist movement, the use of the swing gives new meaning to the symbolism here, as it speaks of motherhood, that is, in relation to a child.

In the 30-minute performance, Rosenbach holds a camera that captures swinging images.

In the background, in front of the photographs, Rosenbach's daughter observes.



The work "Narzissen Scheiden Weg"(1980) –image above- deals with the subject of separation between mother and child, a subject also addressed by Kelly and Laderman Ukeles.

148 Video available in <http://www.li-ma.nl/site/catalogue/art/ulrike-rosenbach/salto-mortale/385>, Retrieved 30.10.14



The series of works dealing with the relationship between mother and daughter is concluded in 1981 with "Wechselfrau im Spiegelbild" or "Changing Woman in Reflected Image" in 1981. The catalogue of the performance reads:

It's about growing and changing to another lifetime. The young girl stands on the threshold of womanhood, the mother on the threshold of mature woman. The artist marked the transformation by smearing a huge mirror surface with opaque grease. The daughter sits on the floor before it and writes with the same fat a quote about growth from "Alice in Wonderland" on a large round mirror. Scratching noises that associate the ambivalence of mirrors and ice accompany the action.¹⁴⁹

The performance draws attention to the social imperative to stay young as a woman and thus always be available to men, which means to be always ready for consumption. At the same time, the mother is contradictorily expected to give up her place to the teenage daughter, and is sent to the background to disappear.

149 Rotermund, Meike (2012) *Metamorphosen in Inneren Räumen*, Universitätsverlag Göttingen. p. 162



After suffering a severe nervous breakdown, in 1962 French artist **Niki de Saint Phalle** began making three-dimensional female figures in 1962, continuing until 1965.

Out of a desire to enter a "more interior feminine world,"¹⁵⁰ these "Nanas"(1965-74) take the form of voluptuous women in suggestive positions, colored with vivid polyester or papier-mache.

In 1966 Saint Phalle installed a sculpture at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm. This monumental reclining "Nana" was 28 meters long, 9 meters wide and 6 meters high and is called "Hon" (the Swedish pronoun, "she").¹⁵¹ The sculpture took the form of a pregnant woman lying on her back with her knees raised. Through the vaginal opening, one accessed a variety of entertainment options such as a Planetarium in the left breast, a milk bar in the right breast, which was also equipped with a kinetic sculpture that smashed empty bottles. In the left arm was a small movie theater where Greta Garbo's "Luffarpetter" was continually screened, and in the left leg was a gallery of fake paintings. On a band around the right leg was painted: "Honi soit qui mal y pense" that was in use in 1348 and translates "shamed the person that thinks evil of it."¹⁵² The installation counted with a terrace atop the belly, and a head filled with a moving brain. For Saint Phalle, as for many visitors, "Hon" represented the return to the Great Mother.

However, as discussed in relation to Anna Oppermann's work, while the ethic of back-to-nature of the time was the beginning of environmentalism, the discourse on Mother Earth that Nikki de Saint Phalle

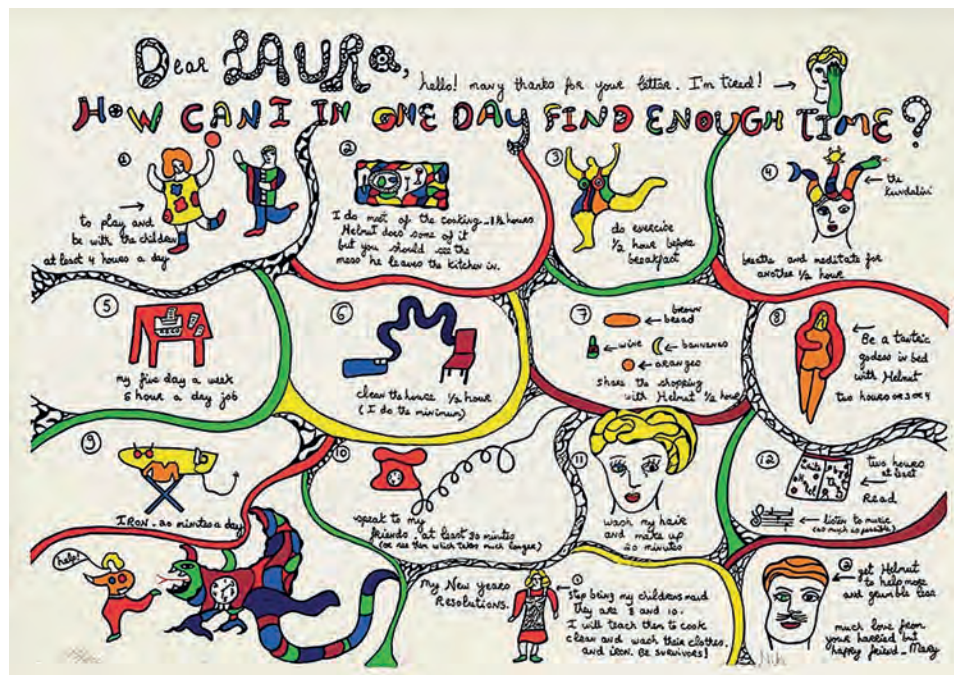
150 Butler, Cornelia (2007) *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, The MIT Press, Los Angeles. p. 293

151 <http://www.nikidesaintphalle.com>, Retrieved 30.10.14

152 Butler, Cornelia (2007) *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, The MIT Press, Los Angeles. p. 293

approached remained in the frame of the hippie movement of the 1960s and 1970s and later evolved toward esotericism.

Saint Phalle's late work seems to reflect the folklore of the sixties and seventies and found its place in decorative sculptures and thematic parks.



On a much smaller dimension, Niki de Saint Phalle addressed the subject of the relationship between mother and child in one of her serigraphs "Dear Laura, a letter" (1982) of 52 x 73,3 cm. The serigraph points to the hurried life of the artist and the lack of time for her children. "Dear Laura, a letter" (1982) is an answer to a letter Laura wrote, asking her mother for more time.

The serigraph reads:

Dear Laura. Hello. Many thanks for your letter. I'm tired. How can I in one day find enough time?

1. To play and be with the children at least 4 hours a day
2. I do most of the cooking 1½ hours. Helmut does some of it but you should all see the mess he leaves the kitchen in
3. Do exercise. ½ hour before breakfast
4. Breathe and meditate for another ½ hour
5. My five day a week 5 hour a day job
6. Clean the house ½ hour. I do the minimum
7. Have bread, wine, banana, orange. Share the shopping with Helmut ½ hour
8. Be a tantric goddess in bed with Helmut. Two hours or 3 or 4
9. Iron. 20 minutes a day
10. Speak to my friends at least 30 minutes (or see them which takes much longer)
11. Wash my hair and make up. 20 minutes
12. Two hours at least read. Listen to music (as much as possible)

My new year's resolution:

1. Stop being my children's maid. They are 8 and 10. I will teach them to cook, clean and wash their clothes. And iron. Be survivors!
2. Get Helmut to help more and gamble less.

Much love from your harried but happy friend-Mary



Zorka Saglova created the work “Laying Napkins near Sudomer” in 1970, in which the artist laid out approximately 700 napkins to form a triangle on a grass field near Sudomer, the site of an infamous Hussite battle in 1420. The action referred to local folklore relating how Hussite women spread pieces of cloth on a marshy field to obstacle the spurs of the Roman Catholic cavalymen as they dismounted, making them easy targets for the Hussite warriors.¹⁵³

Beginning in the late 1960s, Saglova was one of the first artists to work in the landscape outside Prague, carrying out actions with her friends, many of whom were part of the artistic underground in then Communist Czechoslovakia.¹⁵⁴

In “Laying Napkins near Sudomer” the artist uses the pictorial language of her paintings based on geometric forms and uniform color fields. But she also deals with domestic and mostly feminine activities transferring them to a public place charged with historical references.¹⁵⁵

On the other hand the intervention approaches the struggles of the mother and wife to achieve a less powerless position. The element of the napkins could therefore easily be replaced by the controversial element of diapers used by artists such as Mary Kelly, Mierle Lederman Ukele and María Evelia Marmolejo.

In her performance, Saglova recreates the complex and contradictory relations woven between motherhood and war as described by Sara Ruddick in “Maternal Thinking. Towards a Politics of Peace.”¹⁵⁶ According to Ruddick, there are two main positions in the relation of mothers with war.

The first is “women’s politics of resistance” in which women embrace their cultural role as mothers in charge of their children, like the “Kinder, Küche und Kirche” (Children, Kitchen and Church) groups that served the Nazi military state when Nazi women joined together to mourn the lost of their sons.

153 <http://www.moca.org/landart/>

154 Ibid.

155 Knap, Bettina and Stammer, Beatrice Ellen (2014) *Re.Act.Feminism # 2*. Verlag für Moderne Kunst Nürnberg, Live Art Development Agency London. p. 288

156 Ruddick, Sara (1989) “Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace”, Beacon Pr. p. 222-244

Today in Chile, a women's organization led by the wife of dictator Pinochet celebrates "feminine power" through loyalty to family and fatherland.

In Dorothy Dinenzstein's words, this has been described as:

The absurd self-importance of his striving has been matched by the abject servility of her derision, which has on the whole been expressed only with his consent and within boundaries set by him, and which has on the whole worked to support the stability of the realm he rules.¹⁵⁷

But even in this first group there is a resistance movement, such as the Argentinean groups "Mothers" and "Grandmothers" from the "Plaza de Mayo" and the Chilean women's group that united against the military dictatorship, especially against the kidnapping, imprisonment, torture and murder of the "disappeared". These groups carried out actions such as marches in which they wore white scarves with the names of the disappeared, placed candles and always carried the picture of their lost relative. In Chile, women chained themselves to the steps of the capitol, formed a human chain to the Lonquén mine where a mass grave was discovered, and occupied a stadium where the disappeared were present before being tortured and killed.¹⁵⁸

For Andrea O'Reilly these women acted from a feminist viewpoint, although for them feminism "connoted women who spurned tradition, bashed men, acted like men, or maybe even wanted to be men, but in any case their demands for equality had to do with upper-class women."¹⁵⁹

The fact that these women did not identify themselves as feminists opens up a new discussion about feminism. This and the lack of an archive of women's artistic production from the Global South will be discussed in Chapter III.

The second position of women in relation to war is "feminist politics" in which the gendered division of life is questioned, but also a feminist women's militarist politics takes place. Here the feminist soldier heroine "may be most perfectly represented by a young woman with a baby in her arms and a gun over her shoulder."¹⁶⁰

Similarly, in Ruddick's second feminist position, as in "women's politics of resistance", feminism shifts the balance of maternal militarism "from denial to lucid knowledge, from parochialism to awareness of others' suffering and from compliance to stubborn."¹⁶¹ This can transform maternal practice into a work of peace as, in her words "to be a feminist mother is to recognize that many dominant values –included but not limited to the subordination of women– are unacceptable and need not to be accepted,"¹⁶² thereby extending maternal nonviolence to all areas of life.

Saglova's work, from this perspective, exemplifies the role of mothers throughout history and in the context of war, as Intervention describes the role of women as active supporters of war, while raising the question of the promise of birth that violence destroys.

157 Ibid.p. 224

158 Ibid.p. 227-228

159 O'Reilly, Andrea (2008) *Feminist Mothering*, State Univ of New York Pr. p. 220

160 Ibid.p. 235

161 Ibid.p. 236

162 Ibid. p.238



German filmmaker **Helke Sander** addressed extensively the subject of motherhood in relation to precarious working conditions. When Sander found herself back in Germany with her son Silvo Lahtela and could not find a job, she decided to study filmmaking at DFFB.

In her aim to address women's conflicting double roles at home and in the workplace Sander produced the seminal 1 hour and 34-minute film "Redupers" or "The All-Around Reduced Personality"(1978), in which she interprets the role of a photographer in the midst of the hurricane where her career as an independent artist, her personal life as a single mother and artistic work collide.

Although the film received several international awards and remained in theatres for a long time, it proved difficult to establish a continuous filmmaking career. Sander was not alone among female directors in thinking that success tended to be punished by project rejections rather than being followed by new filmmaking opportunities. The ratio of finished to projected film concepts remained, despite many international awards, at a comparatively low 1:6.¹⁶³

In the first ten minutes of the film, Edda, the main character, shows the impossibility of making a living as a photographer, as her expenses exceed her incomes:

She must earn at least 3000 marks a month to live modestly.

Her expenses: Rent, 550 marks. Telephone, circa 200. Voluntary health insurance, 197. Voluntary minimum pension, 40. Electricity and water, 150. Car, 300. Miscellaneous payments, 45.

Stationary, 70. Photographic equipment, circa 500. Advanced tax payment, 120.

Total, 2172 marks. Last holiday two years ago. Sick-pay, none.

163 <http://www.helke-sander.de/biography/>

Sander embodies the difficult situation in which women artists find themselves in today's world.

With a lower income compared to our male colleagues, as described in the film, how the prize awarded to Edda and her female colleagues was reduced to less than half just because they were women; another problem that the film confronts is the constant abuse typical of the creative fields where an unclear gift economy prevails, resulting in Edda's images often being published without a credit and therefore without payment. This is a situation that Edda has not been able to directly defend herself against.

In the film, Dorothea, Edda's daughter, is not the only child present. There is also Tarzan, the son of another photographer colleague of Edda.

Among other difficulties described in the film, Sander uses the presence of the children to illustrate the abyss that divides mothers from single women and not only inside Edda's group: it is impossible to leave the children alone when the father cannot take care of them. The mother is in this situation the final receptacle of this ultimate responsibility, because she is the lightning rod of aggressions when children are present in situations where they are not allowed.

With no small amount of bitterness and black humor, Edda and her single colleague without children steal and eat Tarzan's candy when his mother takes him upstairs, after a discussion about Tarzan's surprising presence.

Another example of the inconvenience of family life in relation with work is the emblematic scene in which Dorothea, in the first five minutes of the film, does not want her mother to go to work.

At the end of the scene, Dorothea is left with her mother's scarf, which she would not let go in order to persuade her mother to stay.

In the same direction, the film ends with the voiceover: "We don't always notice the times we live in. So we go forward, bit by bit. Feet on the ground, head in the clouds", as otherwise without any of these conditions we would not be able to go on.

Edda and Dorothea meet by chance on the street, each on the way to her life. Edda gives Dorothea a piece of bread and they continue their way without having more time for each other, heartbreaking.

In the film, the films "Invisible Adversaries" (1976) by VALIE EXPORT, "Film About a Woman Who..." by Yvonne Rainer and "The Executioner" (1971) by Ursula Reuter-Christiansen are quoted, which breaks the documentary tone of the film, as they are shown simultaneously on a newspaper that Edda picks up to read and rest from her exhausting work. The quote is announced as, "Obsessed with everyday life as seen by other women."

Sander's viewpoint on the life of a woman working in the creative field in West Berlin seems too close to our present time: social insecurity, loneliness, bitterness, the constant question of whether one wants to play an obscure role in relation with sexual favors, abuse, silence, projects that has to deal uncritically with their context if intended to be granted, in sum, precarious working conditions for mother artists.

On the other hand, Sander's filmography has continued to insist on the female condition and the problematic treatment of motherhood during and after the decades of 1960s and 1970s in Berlin.



Such is the case of “Aus Berichten der Wach-und Patrouillendienst nr 1.”(1984), or “From Reports of Security Guards and Patrols Services”, which is a modern Medea of precariousness, as the 11- minute film shows a mother in her fight for an affordable apartment where to live with her two children. In the film the woman and children climb to the end of a crane’s arm and threatens to jump if she does not find a solution by evening. The film was based on a report of security guards.

The same is true for the late films “Muttermutter-Muttermensch” or “Animal Mother - Human Mother”(1998) and “Mitten in Malestream” or “In the Middle of the Malestream. Disputes on strategy in the new women’s movement”(2005), in which motherhood is thematized, either during a series of interviews as in “Animal Mother - Human Mother”(1998), or in “In the Middle of the Malestream”(2005), in a panel discussion documenting the issue.

“In the Middle of the Malestream”(2005) is about the discrimination against women in the sixties and seventies due to the fact that they were mothers, because it was fascist to identify as mother. The term had to be changed to “women with children”. In the panel is stated how during the emergence of feminism in Germany it was allowed to talk about abortion, but not about having children. Motherhood was considered unattractive and old-fashioned, which led to today’s birth strike phenomena.

In the film the question is asked: What would be so bad about disappearing as a species? To which we answer that it would be a response to unbearable living conditions, not that we had reached our best evolutionary stage.

The seductive idea of disappearing as a species has been dreamed up by plenty of authors from Tolstoi to Otto Weiniger, but also by the Colombian writer Fernando Vallejo and others.

This proposal appears sexy, as it has cooperated with the denigration of the labor of care and with the misogyny that women have ultimately internalized.

To this we add that this perspective can be as well an installed effect of the bourgeoisie, since the family relationship, in the sense of Marx, has been transformed into a purely monetary relationship,¹⁶⁴ and this nihilistic approach to life encloses the danger of denying the political struggle for a better life by denying life itself.



Image 1



Image 2

In her works “Maternity Dress”(1966) -Image 1 above- and “Knit Baby”(1968) -Image 2 above-, North American artist **Mimi Smith** deals with the subject of motherhood from two different perspectives.

For Smith “Maternity Dress” was produced as she was pregnant and thought “it would be great to watch the children growing inside.”¹⁶⁵

On the other hand, the dress is an abstraction of the pregnant body, with the transparent semi-sphere reserved for the belly, which speaks not only about the delicate state of the fetus in constant exposure to dangers, but also about the fragility of the pregnant woman, who is constantly the target of discrimination. The works of Louise Bourgeois and Kirsten Justesen also point in this direction, as has already been mentioned.

During her second pregnancy, Smith produced the “Knit Baby Kit”(1968), believing that anyone, even men, could knit themselves a baby. The knitted baby was the same size as her son when he was born and included instructions.

Unfortunately, the artist miscarried and had two subsequent miscarriages. For this reason she embroidered “The Baby is Dead” on the little T-shirt of the “knitted baby.” By the time the “Knit Baby Kit” was shown the interpretation was a feminist comment on motherhood, as if “motherhood was dead.”¹⁶⁶

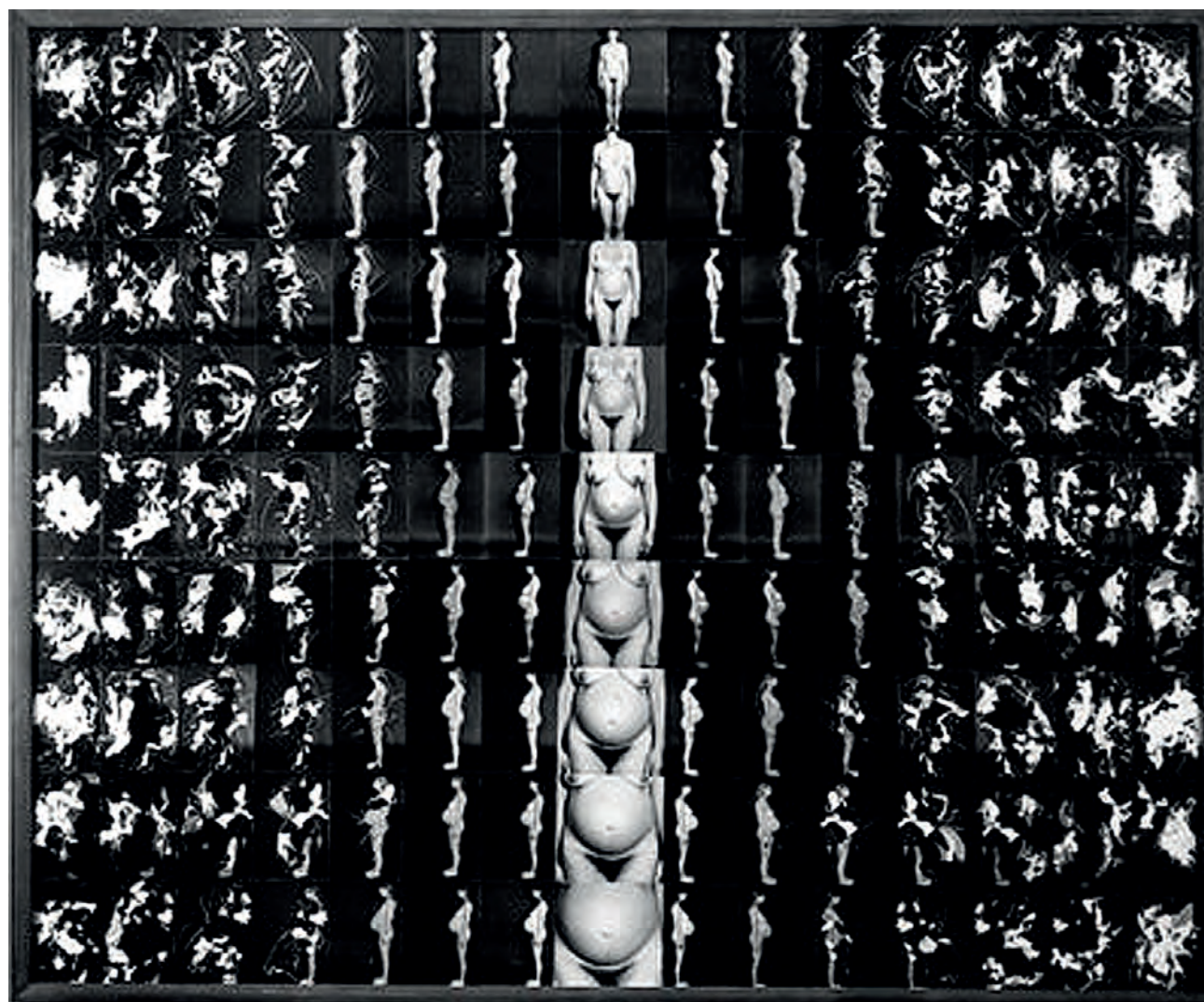
According to Smith, these works sometimes take decades to be understood, as she sees the position that mother artists occupy nowadays inside the artistic institution as deteriorated. For Smith:

(...) there is very little tolerance for mother-related art even among feminists, and when it is there, it is often said to be something else. Although there is some, very little is related to being a mother or becoming a mother. It is not considered smart or cool. Even historically the most painted maternal image, the religious one of the Mother and Child, was usually done by a man, and one of the women most known for painting mothers and children, Mary Cassatt, never had any.¹⁶⁷

165 Epp Buller, Rachel (2012) Reconciling Art and Mothering, Ashgate Pub Co, p. 184

166 Ibid.

167 Ibid.



German artist **Annegret Soltau** produced a series of photo etchings during the time of her two pregnancies. "Schwanger"(1977-1982), or "Pregnant" in English (above), was produced, because, in her words

My pregnancies in 1978 and 1980 became an important theme for me. This personal experience yielded pictures in which I once again used myself as a model, this time myself in the process of being pregnant. The fear that my role as a mother could jeopardize my life as an artist inspired me to create many photos and videos. At this point I was preoccupied with the question of how women combine creativity and motherhood.¹⁶⁸

The work comprises fifty-five images representing a body "literally reorganized by childbirth."¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, Soltau documented on video the changes her body underwent during her pregnancies.



In "Motherhood"(1977-1986) (above) Soltau stitches together pictures of her mother, her son, her daughter and herself by placing a transcendental context on the lineage, thus approaching motherhood from the perspective of our passing in time and the active labor of mothers in history.

168 <http://www.annegret-soltau.de/en/galleries/pregnant-1977-82>, Retrieved 30.10.14

169 Butler, Cornelia (2007) Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution, The MIT Press, Los Angeles. p. 306

In Germany, other artworks dealing with the subject of motherhood were present in the planned "Exhibition About the Situation of Women in Family and Society", which was banned in 1973 in West Berlin, as the Senator Gerd Löffler declared the exhibition "dangerous for young people."¹⁷⁰

Other examples of artworks reflecting on motherhood can be found in the exhibitions "Women Make Art"(1976-1977) at the Gallery Philomene Magers in Bonn,¹⁷¹ "Magna Feminism"(1975) in Vienna,¹⁷² and "Women's Exhibition XX in Charlottenburg"(1975) in Copenhagen.¹⁷³

Recent exhibitions, such as the itinerant "Radical Women. Latin American Art, 1960-1985" in 2017 and 2018, includes works by Barbara Carrasco, Beatriz González, Lourdes Grobet, Johanna Hamann, Lygia Pape, Marta María Pérez and Tecla Tofano.

In the following section we will list some mother artists who, after the decades of 1960s and 1970s to date, addressed the issue of motherhood and in this way insisted on not only opening a space in the White Cube for it, but furthermore participated in expanding the scope of female capacities.

Some Mother Artists from 1980 to Date

We will as follow list some of the mother artists that have dealt with the subject of motherhood after 1970, this is, the period of time subsequent to the artworks related in the previous Chapter.

In the decade of 1980 artists that have represented motherhood are (e.) Twin Gabriel and Ulf Wrede, Marian Kiss, Elisabeth Mackenzie, Rune Miels, Sherry Millner, Mother Art, Tyyne Claudia Pollmann, Polvo de Gallina Negra (Black Hen Powder), Aura Rosenberg, Blán Ryan, Judith Samen, Petra Seelenmeyer, Bettina Semmer, Lisa Steele.

In the decade of 1990 Iris Andraschek and Hubert Lobnig also developed a work on the subject of motherhood, as well as Camille Billops and James Hatch, Myrel Chernick, Renée Cox, Judith Hopkins, Jane Gallop and Dick Blau, Cheri Gaulke and Sue Maberry, M.A.M.A, Sally Mann, Cori Mercadé, Ellen McMahon, Catherine Opie, Ngozi Onwurah, Sarah Pucill, Gail Rebhan, Leslie Reid, and Barbara T. Smith.

The recent exhibition "New Maternalisms", which took place in Toronto, in 2012, curated by Natalie Loveless was dedicated to the subject of motherhood and included the works of Lenka Clayton, Cheryl Dunye, Regina José Galindo, Masha Godovannaya, Beth Hall and Mark Cooley, Alejandra Herrera Silva, Lovisa Johansson, Alexandra Juhasz, Courtney Kessel, Hélène Matte, Gina Miller, Jill Miller, Dillon Paul and Lindsey Wolkowicz, Christine Pountney, Marlène Renaud-B, Victoria Singh and Alice De Visscher.

As well as the decade of 2000 also count with examples of artworks produced on the subject of motherhood by artist like Tina Bara, Eva Bertram, Monica Bock, Mariola Brillowska, Zofia Burr, Nicola Canavan, Elinor Carucci, Katharina Cibulka, Christen Clifford, Patricia Cué, Carola Dertnig, Erika Devries, Rachel Epp Buller, Denise Ferris, (e.) Twin Gabriel, Judy Gelles, Judy Glantzman, Heather Gray, Rohesia Hamilton Metcalfe, Marlene Haring, Sibylle Hoft, Jenny Holzer, Youngbok Hong, Rachel Howfield, Caroline Koebel, Käthe Kruse, Laura Larson, Hanna Lentz, Jumana Manna, Ellen McMahon, Rune Miels, Margaret Morgan, Lindsay Page, Diana Quinby, Shelley Rae, Aura Rosenberg, Jenny Saville, Shelly Silver, Lena Šimi, Susanne Stövhase, Annelies Strba, Parisa Taghizadeh, Signe Theill, Sharon Thomas, Johanna Tuukkanen, Beth Warshafsky, Sarah Webb, Caroline Weihrach, Ute Weiss-Leder, Kate Wilhelm, Marion Wilson, Jennifer Wroblewski and Silvia Ziranek.

To this ever-increasing amount of artworks depicting and reflecting on motherhood we ask how one of the aspects that intersects it, such as its commercial aspect, has marked their reception, and what implications can be inferred from the general situation of women artists.

Following, we will contextualize the artworks produced on the subject of motherhood inside the art market.

170 Kaiser, Monika (2013) *Neubesetzungen des Kunst-Raumes*, Transcript Verlag, Berlin. p. 57

171 Ibid p. 128

172 Ibid p. 87

173 Ibid p. 93

Chapter II. Motherhood, the Others and their Market

The previously presented works from the decade of 1960 and 1970 question the legitimacy of motherhood as an object of art production.

Their reception was associated with not a few controversies related to the art market that continue to the present day. These relationships are discussed in the present chapter.

These women artists of the 1960s and 1970s were committed to declaring their private sphere as valid as any other political arena to be discussed in artworks in which the female world responded to the roles imposed on it by patriarchal society.

The scenario they were fighting was one in which a few years earlier, in 1955, less than 25 percent of married women with children worked outside the home; this changed rapidly over 15 years to 40 percent in the 1970s. For this reason, it was important to address the intimate realm of motherhood and homemaking, while other work already reflected on the difficulties of working and being a mother at the same time.

In this way, these series of works not only reveal the everyday lives of the artists, who are mothers themselves, but furthermore bring out of silence the invisible lives of many women and their inner conflicts. Their greatest achievement is that they have dared to speak from their own experiences and challenge the romanticized notion of motherhood presented by outsiders, giving themselves a voice in this way for the first time.

In the words of Mary Kelly:

Most women had children and their lives were totally determined by it, but if you look at art history, representations of the mother-child relationship were always from the point of view of an observer.¹⁷⁴

Although this representation of female domestic work was criticized as a conservative reaction to the women's liberation movement, their position pointed to a different problematic. The approach of these feminist mothers was to expand the spectrum of female agency and in this way consider that from a feminist perspective it is also possible to be a mother, and in this way insist on the need to rethink emerging positions.

The works previously discussed added and continue to add shades of gray to a polarized discussion in which, even today, having children seems to be synonymous with being traditional, patriarchal, and not seriously engaged in art.

According to Sharon Butler:

Women artists of the 1960s and 1970s gained exhibition opportunities and sexual freedom, but their political awakening only reinforced their disinclination to have children. At the same time, first-wave feminists recognized the importance of childbearing as a universal life experience that had been missing from male-dominated, Western art.¹⁷⁵

Most of the women artists presented in Chapter I held this position not only from a theoretical point of view, but also in their personal lives.

The works of contemporary mother artists, however, are still considered too personal for the galleries.¹⁷⁶

The reception of such works has not changed too much from the harsh criticism they initially received in the 1960s and 1970s.

In Butler's words, artworks depicting motherhood were not taken seriously:

174 Kelly, Mary and Morgan, Margaret (2007) "On Love, Politics and Fallen Shoes: Margaret Morgan in Conversation with Mary Kelly" In: *The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art* (2011) Editors Chernick, Myrel and Klein, Jennie. Demeter Press. p. 22

175 Butler, Sharon L (online) *Neo Maternalism: Contemporary Artists' Approach to Motherhood*

<http://www.brooklynrail.org/2008/12/artseen/neo-maternalism-contemporary-artists-approach-to-motherhood>, Retrieved 30.10.14

176 Skrzynski, Jackie. *Finding the Balance*. In Epp Buller, Rachel (2012) "Reconciling Art and Mothering", Ashgate Pub Co p. 189

The accepted wisdom among the first generation of feminist artists who disdained baby-making was that women who reproduce spend at least a year or two making idiosyncratic, excessively inward-looking “baby art” and then, if they are lucky, eventually get their wits about them and return to their previous, more serious work.¹⁷⁷

On the other hand, it has taken an astonishingly long time for motherhood to be considered a serious issue for feminists and feminist artists,¹⁷⁸ making it clear that that the personal is still political today.¹⁷⁹

Moreover, the works previously discussed embrace femininity with all its implications, bringing to mind the transcendental idea of our place in the world as a species, and thus insisting on the still existing need to politicize childrearing from a critical perspective, in contrast to the already existing use of motherhood as a means to control women.

Feminist mothers have, since the rise of feminism, insisted on the danger of putting career above personal life or not having a career at all. But even today, feminist mothers are assumed to be asking too much when they express their desire to have it all, i.e. to be a mother and to have a career, this is, to have a “good life” in the sense of Aristotle. It was not all that different in the art world.

As for the art market, the commodification of artworks has played a role that needs further analysis.

As Isabelle Graw explains, the art market is a phantasmagorical network market based on communication, which makes it difficult to explain, predict and control.

In Graw’s opinion, the art market is at the same time one of the most speculative branches of our contemporary economy, whose informality is reminiscent of mafia practices.¹⁸⁰

For a long time there was a long silence in the art market, as collectors and critics did not really seem to identify with the voice of women artists that had been raised for a long time.

A while ago, the highest price ever achieved by a work by a woman artist at auction, such as Louise Bourgeois’ “Spider” in 2011, was achieved. In this sense, journalist Jonathan Jones, explains that “The \$44 million for Georgia O’Keeffe’s work shows how little women artists are appreciated”, as this price is not even one-fifth of the price of Cezanne’s “Card Players”, which was bought in 2011 for \$259 million.

In Jones’ words:

I confess to this not in some agony of self-loathing, but just because, when we talk about art, we are discussing our deepest needs and natures – and if we are not, we’re just gossiping.

The market, too, is passionate – when someone pays out millions for a painting it is not a sombre investment but an act of love and self-discovery: a way to say who you are and what you believe in.¹⁸¹

The commodification of artworks created by mother artists depicting motherhood was alien to the art market in most cases as they seemed too soft and sentimental to the leading galleries.¹⁸²

Jones explains about the position of female artist in the art market as follows: “the reason there are no great female artists is, in short, because of men like me. Art criticism defines the lofty peaks of the canon and it is, let’s say, a macho trade.”¹⁸³

177 Butler, Sharon L (online) Neo Maternalism: Contemporary Artists’ Approach to Motherhood, Retrieved 30.10.14 <http://www.brooklynrail.org/2008/12/artseen/neo-maternalism-contemporary-artists-approach-to-motherhood>

178 Chernick, Myrel and Klein, Jennie (2011) *The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art*, Demeter Press. p. 2

179 Morgan, Margaret (2009) Apud Chernick, Myrel and Klein, Jennie (2011) *The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art*, Demeter Press. p. 232

180 Graw, Isabelle (2008) *Der Große Preis. Kunst Zwischen Markt und Celebrity Kultur*, DuMont Verlag, Köln. p. 65-67

181 Jones, Jonathan (2014) The \$44m for Georgia O’Keeffe’s work shows how little female artists are valued, Retrieved 25.11.14 http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/nov/21/44-million-georgia-okeeffe-how-little-women-artists-valued?CMP=share_btn_fb

182 Butler, Sharon L (online) Neo Maternalism: Contemporary Artists’ Approach to Motherhood, Retrieved 30.10.14 <http://www.brooklynrail.org/2008/12/artseen/neo-maternalism-contemporary-artists-approach-to-motherhood>

183 Ibid.

And of course, it's clear that the harsh scenario the artists are working on is just the tip of the iceberg, as artist Joan Snyder puts it: "The bottom line is that you don't have to be a mother or a daughter to be discriminated against in the art world... you just have to be a woman."¹⁸⁴
And Andrea Liss complements this idea as follows:

At stake in breaching this taboo and giving birth to a new provocation is recognizing that motherhood and women are passed over in the unacknowledged name of devalued labor, whether in procreation or artistic thinking activity, within a patriarchal scheme crafted to inflate supposedly male qualities of rigor and singularly driven creativity.¹⁸⁵

Liss draws attention to the fact that "public discussions of the dilemmas (faced by) artist-mothers involuntarily shield the "prolific artist" father who so graciously moves between the public and private realms."¹⁸⁶

While reconciling art and motherhood doesn't look all that different today than it did in the 1960s and 1970s, there are many recent examples of women artists who insist on balancing the two spheres of life, such as one prominent artist whose works about motherhood and childbirth are on view at the prestigious Saatchi and Gagosian galleries.

This is the case of Jenny Saville, who maintained her work as a blockbuster during the collapse of the economy in 2008, showing that a slight change could take place in the market, stemming from the long-standing struggles of women artists in the 1960s and 1970s.

Along with the fact that motherhood is nowadays a late event in life, Sharon Butler interprets:

The most important factor in elevating the status of baby art is that over the past decade or so, artists, including women, are achieving phenomenal success at much younger ages.

Many artists now already have considerable traction in the art world by the time they have kids. And when important female artists have babies, their baby art can't be dismissed by curators and furtively squirreled away in the flatfile.¹⁸⁷

For these reasons, today's discussion of the work of the pioneering collective of women artists of the decades 1960 and 1970 helps to give historical perspective to an issue that today should be considered part of the past. As Butler notes:

As the taboo fades, the capacity to bear children and raise a family are now recognized as a source of unplumbed, original material. We've come a long way, baby.¹⁸⁸

This is an optimistic interpretation, to which we would like to add that, despite the few successful women artists before 1960, the women artists of 1960 and 1970 did not experience the best possible reception of their works.

The few examples of success in the present do not necessarily mean that a bright future is ahead without fighting for it. As if women had gained all their rights through other than a long and sustained struggle.

In this regard, we will further analyze the complexity of the historical relationships between women and their economic environment in Chapter III.

184 Apud Liss, Andrea (2011) "The Body in Question: Rethinking Motherhood, Alterity and Desire" In: *The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art*. Editors Chernick, Myrel and Klein, Jennie. Demeter Press. p. 75

185 Ibid.

186 Ibid. p.74

187 Butler, Sharon L (online) *Neo Maternalism: Contemporary Artists' Approach to Motherhood*, Retrieved 30.10.14 <http://www.brooklynrail.org/2008/12/artseen/neo-maternalism-contemporary-artists-approach-to-motherhood>

188 Ibid.

Chapter III. The Capital Problem

The artworks on motherhood compiled in Chapter I are not limited to the artistic institution and thus are not related to its commercialization, as discussed in Chapter II. Above all, they represent a reflection on a broader structure in which the position that women occupy in society is revealed.

In the following chapter, we will deepen the issues raised in the previous works from the perspective of a historical critique of the relationship between women and capitalism.

In doing so, we will draw mainly on the ideas of the Italian-American theorist Silvia Federici. We will delve into the general history of capitalism and locate the origin of the condemnation of women to play a disadvantaged social and economic role.

The confinement of women to domestic work is the result of our degraded position in any economic system. Neither the greatest thinkers of capitalism like Marx nor contemporary thinkers like Negri and Hardt have paid attention to this aspect. In this way, women's work forms the lowest rung on the scale of precarity of the proletariat.

The origin of this misplacement lies in the early transition from feudalism to capitalism in the late Middle Ages. Between 1350 and 1500, an accumulation crisis forced European states to take measures to protect markets, suppress competition, and force people to work on imposed conditions. These conditions were registered as "work not worth the breakfast".¹⁸⁹

In response to this crisis, the European ruling class laid the foundations of the capitalist-world system during 1450 to 1650, in an attempt to "appropriate new sources of wealth, expand its economic basis, and bring new workers under its command"; in a process whose pillars were described by Marx as "conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, in brief, force".¹⁹⁰

Marx also describes in this initial process the chief moments of primitive accumulation, which consisted in

the discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, [of America], the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of black skins.¹⁹¹

Moreover, slavery was revived in Europe in the 15th century, giving the impression that the beginning of capitalist development was a "immense concentration camp".¹⁹²

This process required the subjugation of women to the reproduction of work-force and used the "Great Witch-Hunt" during the 16th and 17th centuries, as "most of all, it required the destruction of the power of women which, in Europe as in America, (was) achieved through the extermination of the "witches"". ¹⁹³

This way the women of the proletariat found the most radical differentiation from their male partners, whether in Europe or in America.

In Europe, families disintegrated in the process as young men left in search of job opportunities, leaving older women behind to fend for themselves. At the same time that records of the witch-hunt show "quarrels relating to requests for help, the trespassing of animals, or unpaid rents in the background of many accusations".¹⁹⁴

Women were more affected when the "land was privatized and monetary relations began to dominate economic life, they found it more difficult to support themselves, being increasingly confined to reproductive labor at the very time when this work was completely devalued".¹⁹⁵

189 Ibid.

190 Apud Federici, Silvia (2004) "Caliban and the Witch" Autonomedia. New York. p.62

191 Ibid. p.63

192 Ibid. p.64

193 Ibid. p.63

194 Ibid. p.72

195 Ibid. p.74

Their accumulation of capital became invisible, as their labor was mystified as natural and labeled as “women’s labor”.

In addition, women were excluded from many occupations and, when they worked for a wage they earned a “pittance” compared to the average male wage.¹⁹⁶

These changes culminated in the 19th century with the creation of the full-time housewife, which redefined women’s position in society, committing them to reproductive work but also increasing their dependence on men. In this way, the state and employers were able to use men’s wages as a means to dispose of women’s labor.¹⁹⁷

Most importantly, the separation of production from reproduction created a class of proletarian women who was as dispossessed as men but, “unlike their male relatives, they had almost no access to wages, thus were forced into a condition of chronic poverty, economic dependence, and invisibility as workers”.¹⁹⁸

During the 17th century more than one food revolt were made up exclusively of women¹⁹⁹ and women’s reproductive function became more tightly controlled by the European power structure as the increasing privatization of property created a new anxiety about the issue of fatherhood and women’s behavior. In addition, women were accused of sacrificing children to the devil in the “great witch hunts” of the 16th and 17th centuries, which continued until the end of the 18th century in Western Europe as in the American colonial plantations.²⁰⁰

European women faced the spread of prostitution as their only source of income from 1450 onward, and in the 17th century their occupations as midwives and brewers were reorganized, and they had to perform menial jobs such as domestic servants (accounting for one-third of the female labor force), farm laborers, spinners, knitters, embroiderers, peddlers, and wet nurses.²⁰¹

Even if the wife worked “side-by-side with her husband, she too producing for the market, it was the husband who now received her wage” since in England “a married man was legally entitled to his wife’s earnings even if the job she did was nursing or breast-feeding”,²⁰² which concealed her presence as a worker and subjected her to men.²⁰³

The always dark relationship between power and „capital“ has forced women to work without pay to maintain a general labor structure, while propaganda has helped to internalize our unpaid work as an act of love.

In this way, our hatred is directed at ourselves when we are against the observance of “love and care.”²⁰⁴

„Capital,” according to Silvia Federici, has managed to hide the unpaid work of women, which consists in keeping the families of the proletariat going, since women are the silent listeners of the oppressed worker, raising his children and mending his socks. Summarized in the words of Federici, “housework is already money for capital. (...) Capital has made and makes money out of our cooking, smiling [and] fucking.”²⁰⁵

If by the end of the 17th century a definition of women as “non-workers” was nearly completed,²⁰⁶ it was in the 19th century when the “modern family” was generalized in the working class, centered on the full-time housewife’s unpaid labor in England and later in the United States.²⁰⁷

In the same direction, David Staples observes that “women’s work and women’s labor are buried deeply in

196 Ibid. p. 75

197 Ibid.

198 Ibid.

199 Ibid. p.80

200 Ibid. p.87-89

201 Ibid. p.92

202 Mendelson and Crawford apud. Federici, Silvia (2004) “Caliban and the Witch” Autonomedia.New York. p.98

203 Ibid. p.98

204 Apud Federici, Silvia (1975) Counter-Planning from the Kitchen <https://caringlabor.wordpress.com/2010/10/20/nicole-cox-and-silvia-federici-counter-planning-from-the-kitchen/> Retrieved 09.12.14

205 Federici, Silvia (1975) Wages Against Housework <https://caringlabor.wordpress.com/2010/09/15/silvia-federici-wages-against-housework/> Retrieved 09.12.14

206 Federici, Silvia (2004) “Caliban and the Witch” Autonomedia.New York. p.92

207 Ibid. p.98-99

the heart of the capitalist social and economic structure.”²⁰⁸

This matter is illustrated in the work of the collective Hackney Flashers “Who’s Holding More Than the Baby?” (1978) where it is stated that the work of the housewife consists in keeping men “in working order, fit for the factory or the office or the dole queue.”

And this state of affairs has persisted to this day, as we still struggle to achieve a more balanced distribution of domestic and extra-domestic duties with our male partners, as the gender division of labor is considered natural both inside and outside our homes.

This way, the problem was then, and it still is, to bring this struggle out of the kitchen and bedroom into the streets, which art and its reflections on living conditions, strongly collaborate in doing so.

It is yet needed to collectivize a struggle as even today we are embedded in a patriarchal structure and this way “we might not serve one man, but we are all in a servant relation with respect to the whole male world.”²⁰⁹

The broader scope of this struggle is not to integrate into capitalist relations, since women have always belonged to them anyway, albeit in a precarious way, but to break Capital’s plan for women.

Under this plan, and contrary to popular belief, labor has not fully liberated women, as Federici criticizes: “the overalls did not give us more power than the apron; if possible even less, because now we had to wear both and had less time and energy to struggle against them.”²¹⁰

In this regard, the political reflection of Mary Kelly’s early work, *Night Cleaners* (1975), aimed to show that due to the gendered division of labor, the second shift of the women portrayed in the film began after they stopped working as cleaners. That is, the housework they did at home in this way diminished their leisure time, as their time was spent in ways that ran counter to their individual needs.

Women of the sixties went on rent strikes, welfare struggles, as Silvia Federici’s puts it “to refuse the work of reproducing ourselves and others (...) as workers, as labour power, as commodities— as objects,”²¹¹ and they insisted on the idea that “women produce living individuals –children, relatives, friends– not labor-power.”²¹²

To which we add that women and men, alone or together in any possible combination, produce “love-power” and not labor-power, this is, the power of reproducing life itself without any other purpose than having a “good life”.

From this scenario we have inherited our working conditions, where employers invest less and less in the quality of life of their employees, since the struggles of the sixties have shown that such investments do not improve industrial productivity.²¹³ This philosophy differs from the preceding working conditions. The decline in the number of workers at the end of the 19th century forced the “capitalist class” to invest in life quality and in “reproduction of labor”.²¹⁴

Today, anyone who struggles to find the time and space for the good life while it is still possible to think of a family and/or explore all individual abilities on their own, comes up against the outdated working conditions that have become increasingly obscured since the 1960s.

In the current scenario there is no time for leisure, and retirement has become a utopia, as it is stated in the film of Helke Sander “Redupers” (1978), analyzed in Chapter I, where the life situation of the main character is a good example of the insecure working conditions, more precisely in the creative field, where there is no sick leave and less and less vacation is taken.

In today’s world, the ongoing crisis in the economy calls for new political approaches to redefine the

208 Staples, David (2006) *No Place Like Home*, Apud Federici, Silvia (2009) *The reproduction of labour-power in the global economy, Marxist theory and the unfinished feminist revolution* <https://caringlabor.wordpress.com/2010/10/25/silvia-federici-the-reproduction-of-labour-power-in-the-global-economy-marxist-theory-and-the-unfinished-feminist-revolution/> Retrieved 09.12.14

209 Federici, Silvia (2009) *The reproduction of labour-power in the global economy, Marxist theory and the unfinished feminist revolution* <https://caringlabor.wordpress.com/2010/10/25/silvia-federici-the-reproduction-of-labour-power-in-the-global-economy-marxist-theory-and-the-unfinished-feminist-revolution/> Retrieved 09.12.14

210 Ibid.

211 Ibid.

212 Federici, Silvia (2009) *The reproduction of Labour-Power in the Global Economy, Marxist theory and the Unfinished Feminist Revolution* <http://culturalstudies.ucsc.edu/EVENTS/Winter09/FedericiReading.pdf> Retrieved 09.12.14

213 Ibid.

214 Ibid.

place of male and female labor and the family, taking into account the idea that love “kept us warm during the depression”²¹⁵ and that “we had better bring it with us on our present excursion into hard times.”²¹⁶

The idea of “love” referred to here has to do above all with its political implications, because its politicization refers to the right to a decent life, which we wanted to include in the „commons” or common resources that belong to all humanity and that must be available to everyone.

This struggle for a better life, in which love and child-rearing find a place, takes place in a scenario marked by privatization and the plundering of common resources by corporations, calling us to “re-appropriate the basic means of our subsistence.”²¹⁷

Although capitalism and its planlessness have led to the dissolution of the traditional roles that were present in feudalism and that consisted in marginalizing women, as well as keeping alive the promise of success for anyone who knows how to play with the rules of free entrepreneurship, the position occupied by women in these new conditions has been, however, not the same given to their male peers. The majority of women have been kept out of the game because, historically, we have been treated like children under the supervision of male authorities, and our economic relationship, interwoven with “Capital”, has been confined mainly to a limited sphere of action within household affairs.

In today’s world, not only do women earn less than their male counterparts, but it is also well known that we have to work harder to access jobs compared to the time our male counterparts invest in education and general preparation to access the same jobs.

In a wider sense, women’s work has not been considered as good as men’s, and we have historically resigned ourselves to never being good enough. A situation Virginia Woolf describes as “that deepseated desire, not so much that she shall be inferior as that he shall be superior.”²¹⁸

In such a discouraging scenario, it is understandable that we limit ourselves to dedicating our lives to our children and husbands, where we can finally find appreciation in this limited circle; or at least consider our careers as secondary to our family.

These reasons are still present in the answer to the question “Why are Women Poorer than Men?” so well illustrated by Virginia Woolf, long ago in 1929.²¹⁹ A discussion that can be updated combining the thoughts of Hans Abbing in his text “Why are Artists Poor?”²²⁰ and the reflection on the lack of opportunities for women in the art world, described in the text of 1971 “Why Have There Been no Great Women Artists?”²²¹ of Linda Nochlin. Ideas that finally make us wonder why nowadays are women artists poorer than men artists?

This issue was briefly addressed in Chapter II and needs further discussion.

To deal with this question faces the absurdity of finding no one to blame, as for Deleuze and Guattari “there are no longer even any masters, only slaves commanding other slaves; there is no longer any need to burden the animal from the outside, it shoulders its own burden.”²²²

In this way, women have also found ways to independence and gain in the face of poverty and exploitation, like the 22% of women in the U.S. who earn more than their husbands, while women now make up nearly half of the labor force.²²³

Similarly, for Deleuze and Guattari, in its process of “Deterritorialization”, the “theater of production”, which is the theater of cruelty, has been as destructive as liberating, producing a new land that is “not a promised and a pre-existing land, but a world created in the process of its tendency, its coming undone, its

215 Sir Keith Joseph Apud Federici, Silvia (1975) Counter-Planning from the Kitchen <https://caringlabor.wordpress.com/2010/10/20/nicole-cox-and-silvia-federici-counter-planning-from-the-kitchen/> Retrieved 09.12.14

216 Ibid.

217 Federici, Silvia (2009) The Unfinished Feminist Revolution <http://www.commoner.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/08-federici.pdf> Retrieved 09.12.14

218 Woolf, Virginia (1929) A Room of One’s Own. <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/chapter1.html> Retrieved 19.03.15

219 Ibid.

220 Abbing, Hans (2002) Why are Artists Poor? Amsterdam University Press

221 Nochlin, Linda (1971) Why There Have Been no Great Women Artists? http://canon.hypotheses.org/files/2012/01/whynogreatwomenartists_4.pdf Retrieved 04.04.2015

222 Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix (1972) Anti-Oedipus. University of Minnesota Press. p. 254

223 http://super.abril.com.br/ciencia/amor-fim-566660.shtml?utm_source=redesabril_jovem&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=redesabril_super

deterritorialization,"²²⁴ a world where there is "not at all a hope, but a simple 'finding', a 'finished design'."²²⁵

Moreover, Marshall Berman describes Capitalism as a complex economic system responsible for the greatest achievements of humankind. According to Berman, the always-unstable and chaos-driven economic system has also the potential to reunite us together to ultimately fight for better life conditions.

The positive achievements of the bourgeoisie are quoted in Berman from Marx, as it has "been the first to show what man's activity can bring about [and has] accomplished wonders that far surpass Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, Gothic cathedrals":²²⁶

The bourgeoisie, in its reign of barely a hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive power than have all previous generations put together. Subjection of nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to agriculture and industry, steam navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground- what earlier century had even an intimation that such productive power slept in the womb of social labor?²²⁷

Another aspect is added by Berman, as he recognizes that the ruling class in capitalism has based its authority not on who their ancestors were, but on what they themselves actually do,²²⁸ a self-entitlement that also presents a number of difficulties. For Berman, Capitalism can be a source of beauty and joy for all,²²⁹ as well as we are forced to face the real conditions of our lives and we will thus have the opportunity to "overcome together the cold that cuts through us all".²³⁰ But does the cold affect all of us who live under capitalism in the same way?

In Berman's words, Capitalism destroys the human possibilities that it creates,²³¹ as the solid citizens that emerge from it would tear down the world if it paid²³²; and, as we have seen, they have efficiently done just that.

In this way, a positive change is brought about, as a product of the collective struggle for a good and just life for all, in contrast to what we seem to be experiencing today. In the hope that the collective struggles will prove profitable and in this way a change can take place.

From another point of view, within the bourgeoisie, the familiar cell is affected, as Marx put it:

The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and turned the family relation into a pure money relation... In place of exploitation veiled by religious and political illusions, it has put open, shameless, direct, naked exploitation.²³³

As well as for Deleuze and Guattari in Capitalism

[T]he alliances and filiations no longer pass through people but through money; so the family becomes a microcosm, suited to expressing what it no longer dominates (...) Father, mother, and child thus become the simulacrum of the images of capital ("Mister Capital, Madame Earth," and their child the Worker).²³⁴

In this complex web of relationships that Marx believed the doctor, the scientist, the lawyer, the priest, and the poet would not be affected by the need to sell their labor,²³⁵ we need to locate care work.

224 Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix (1972) *Anti-Oedipus*. University of Minnesota Press. p. 322

225 Ibid.

226 Apud Berman, Marshall (1982) *All That is Solid Melts into Air*. Penguin Books. New York. p. 92.

227 Ibid. p.95

228 Ibid.

229 Ibid. p.97

230 Marx Apud Marshall, Berman (1982) *All That is Solid Melts into Air*. Penguin Books. New York. p.110

231 Ibid. p.96

232 Ibid. p.100

233 Apud Marshall, Berman (1982) *All That is Solid Melts into Air*. Penguin Books. New York. p. 106

234 Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix (1972) *Anti-Oedipus*. University of Minnesota Press. p. 264

235 Apud Marshall, Berman (1982) *All That is Solid Melts into Air*. Penguin Books. New York. p.116-117

Care work must be seen as part of any utopian escape from capitalism. Care work has been buried in the core of precarity, where it has remained until our time.

Although it is work that is „worthwhile to be paid for“ because, according to Berman, it „contributes to the multiplication of capital,“ care work has been rendered invisible because it is the basis of the reproduction of labor power.

At the same time, and not only for the feminists, “housewives [have] a fate which we all agree is, so to speak, worse than death.”²³⁶ For Federici, the trap for feminists is that “they know that this is the most powerless position in society and so they do not want to realise that they are housewives too (and this weakness, subsequently) is maintained and perpetuated through the lack of self-identification.”²³⁷ For this reason, it remains crucial to discuss and identify with the housewife in order to break the system of enslavement, as Federici puts it:

(...) until we recognise our slavery we cannot recognise our struggle against it, because as long as we think we are something better, something different than a housewife, we accept the logic of the master, which is a logic of division, and for us the logic of slavery.²³⁸

This struggle to make visible has been extensively addressed in the works of the women artists in Chapter I. The connection between motherhood and precarity-including in the art world in its contemporary forms of unpaid and precarious labor-can be understood from the perspective of the early feminist Marxist struggle of the 1960s and 1970s, which was to recognize the hidden social labor of caregiving and domestic work.

Moreover, the history of feminism has counted more with belittlement than with recognition, as feminists recall that they were seen “as nagging bitches, not workers in struggle.”²³⁹

In this respect Louise Bourgeois contrasted the usual differentiation in the levels of seriousness interpreted from gender attitudes, as Bourgeois stated that when a man speaks, “of course, when he speaks the world stops in its tracks. Whereas she, she just chitchats. And when it’s time for dinner, he’s the chef. He prepares this wonderful meal! Whereas she, she just cooks. Just cooks.”²⁴⁰ At the same time that within the dynamics of the art world, the exhibition at the ICA of the British group Feministo received critiques from male visitors such as “Miserable Bitches”, “Bitter and Twisted” and “I don’t see what all the fuss is about.”²⁴¹

These struggles seem to be the contestation of the first world post-Fordist economy in the sixties and seventies.

In contrast to this scenario, women play a different role. On the other side of the current state of hyperproduction, in the countries of the “periphery”, where women still face an increasing transition to the neoliberalization of their economy, women’s power is also the target of attacks. The origin of such situation goes back to colonization, where, for instance, in Latin America, indigenous women that were previously the priestesses, farmers and healers, were turned into subalterns as the colonizers because the colonizers refused to do business with them and forced the men to treat the women as their servants.²⁴²

Along with the fact that women were losing their strategic position, the colonizers created the myth of the witch to further undermine women’s power over the land and water. The struggle of women in the “peripheral lands” is a struggle for the “commons” and takes place in a language that is the language of non-white, non-middle class, and non-“first world” women. Theirs is the old language of those who must remain organized to fight against impoverishment. As Federici exemplifies:

236 Federici, Silvia (1975) Wages Against Housework <https://caringlabor.wordpress.com/2010/09/15/silvia-federici-wages-against-housework/> Retrieved 09.12.14

237 Ibid.

238 Ibid.

239 Federici, Silvia (1975) Wages Against Housework <https://caringlabor.wordpress.com/2010/09/15/silvia-federici-wages-against-housework/> Retrieved 09.12.14

240 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/07/18/louise-bourgeois_n_5600404.html

241 Battista, Kathy (2013) Renegotiating the Body: Feminist Art in 1970s London. I.B. Tauris, New York. p. 111

242 Federici, Silvia (2004) Caliban and the Witch. Autonomedia. New York. p.230

Women have helped their communities to avoid total dispossession, extend budgets [and] add food to the kitchen pots. Amidst wars, economic crises, devaluations, as the world around them was falling apart, they have planted corn on abandoned town plots, cooked food to sell on the side of the streets, created communal kitchens -*ola communes*- as in the case of Chile and Peru, thus standing in the way of a total commodification of life.²⁴³

The aforementioned case of the “Common Cooking Pots” in Chile and Peru in the 1980s is a movement to which, due to stiff inflation, women joined, as they could no longer afford to shop on their own.²⁴⁴

In this scenario, it is thanks to the struggle of women that they continue to provide for their families by cultivating often unused public or private land, and thus millions of people have been able to survive in the face of economic liberalization.²⁴⁵

Another examples are found in Africa, where women produce 80% of the food people consume, despite the attempts by the World Bank and other agencies to convince them to divert their activities to cash-cropping.²⁴⁶ In the 1990s, in many African towns, in the face of rising food prices, women appropriated plots in public lands and planted corn, beans, cassava. As in India, the Philippines, and across Latin America, women have replanted trees in degraded forests, joined hands to chase away loggers, made blockades against mining operations and the construction of dams, and led the rebellion against the privatization of water.²⁴⁷

Similar is the formation of credit associations based on the concept of money as a common from Cambodia to Senegal.²⁴⁸ Differently named, the “tontines” in Africa are “autonomous, self-managed, womenmade banking systems that provide cash to individuals or groups that have no access to banks, working purely on a basis of trust,”²⁴⁹ and contrary to the World Bank’s microcredit systems which have driven women to suicide;²⁵⁰ to mention just some examples.

The social movements above referred have struggled to keep strong and with dignity in the time of imposed scarcity that is lived at the other side of hyper consume, pointing to the need of re-opening “a collective struggle over reproduction aiming to create new forms of cooperation (...) that are outside of the logic of capital and the market,”²⁵¹ and that are able to recognize and connect the two sides of hyper production, as well as it is mandatory to rethink “the question of “reproduction” in a planetary perspective,”²⁵² as stated by Silvia Federici.

These social movements also confirm that women have been kept in a disadvantaged position regardless of the different stages of capitalist development in the world.

As we have shown, it is not the same struggle that feminism faced in the first world than the one of the “low class feminists” from around the world, who have fought since long ago. Such struggle is fairly absent from the works of art produced during the 1960s and 1970s, which restricts our global correlations to a silent zone, impeding the necessary sensitization able to conduct to changes, in which art could play a role.

243 Federici, Silvia (2009) *The Unfinished Feminist Revolution* <http://www.commoner.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/08-federici.pdf> Retrieved 09.12.14

244 Federici, Silvia (2011) *Feminism and the politics of the commons* <http://www.commoner.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/federici-feminism-and-the-politics-of-commons.pdf> Retrieved 09.12.14

245 Federici, Silvia (2009) *On capitalism, colonialism, women and food politics* <http://politicsandculture.org/2009/11/03/silvia-federici-on-capitalism-colonialism-women-and-food-politics/> Retrieved 09.12.14

246 Ibid.

247 Ibid.

248 Podlashuc Apud Federici, Silvia (2011) *Feminism and the politics of the commons* <http://www.commoner.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/federici-feminism-and-the-politics-of-commons.pdf> Retrieved 09.12.14.

249 Ibid.

250 Ibid.

251 Federici, Silvia (2009) *The Unfinished Feminist Revolution* <http://www.commoner.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/08-federici.pdf> Retrieved 09.12.14

252 Federici, Silvia (2009) *The reproduction of labour-power in the global economy, Marxist theory and the unfinished feminist revolution* <https://caringlabor.wordpress.com/2010/10/25/silvia-federici-the-reproduction-of-labour-power-in-the-global-economy-marxist-theory-and-the-unfinished-feminist-revolution/> Retrieved 09.12.14

As described above, and due to the different stages of capitalist development in the world, feminism could only take place in the so-called "First World", while the struggles of low income women in the so-called "Third World" faced and still face a completely different context that prevents them from identifying with and thus being part of feminism. For these women feminism "connoted women who spurned tradition, bashed men, acted like men, or maybe even wanted to be men, but in any case their demands for equality had to do with upper-class women."²⁵³

It is therefore necessary to deepen their perspective in order to find the terms that better correspond to their needs and concerns in the general demand for better living conditions.

However, "center" and "peripheral" women -and also men- are ultimately connected by our current state of production that inevitably becomes a production of death for others.²⁵⁴

This way, we are sadly connected by what Maria Mies describes like "what appears as development in one part of the capitalist faction is underdevelopment in another part."²⁵⁵ Fields like art, where only few cases can be mentioned, have marginally explored this relation.

This is the case of Line Storm's work in 1975, as part of the "Women's Exhibition XX in Charlottenburg" (1975) in Copenhagen.

Storm's work consisted in a pyramid made of milk cartons of 5x5 meters. On the walls of the room photographs hung depicting the industrialization of food production, as well as women and children of the so-called "Third World" who did not have real access to the food they were producing.²⁵⁶

In today's era of globalization and increased population migration, the distinction between "peripheral" and "central countries" as an experience of the world is being diluted as millions of women migrate and new categories of poverty emerge. In this way, poverty has had a female face since early capitalism, and today women are "the shock absorbers of the economic crisis originally triggered by the globalization process but now destined to become a permanent feature of the world economy."²⁵⁷

And in this process, millions leave their countries because in them they cannot reproduce themselves, constituting half of them women.²⁵⁸

In the following chapter, we will make a final and brief analysis of contemporary migration phenomena that occur as a result of women's precarious living conditions.

253 O'Reilly, Andrea (2008) *Feminist Mothering*, State Univ of New York Pr. p. 220

254 Federici, Silvia (2011) *Feminism and the politics of the commons* <http://www.commoner.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/federici-feminism-and-the-politics-of-commons.pdf> Retrieved 09.12.14

255 Apud Federici, Silvia (2006) "Precarious Labor: A Feminist Viewpoint" In *The Middle of a Whirlwind: 2008 Convention Protests, Movement, and Movement*. Los Angeles: Journal of Aesthetics & Protest Press www.inthemiddleofawhirlwind.info. Retrieved 09.12.14

256 Ibid p. 99

257 Federici, Silvia (2009) *The Unfinished Feminist Revolution* <http://www.commoner.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/08-federici.pdf> Retrieved 09.12.14

258 Federici, Silvia (2009) *The reproduction of labour-power in the global economy, Marxist theory and the unfinished feminist revolution* <https://caringlabor.wordpress.com/2010/10/25/silvia-federici-the-reproduction-of-labour-power-in-the-global-economy-marxist-theory-and-the-unfinished-feminist-revolution/> Retrieved 09.12.14

Chapter IV. Immigrant Force Represented

In this last chapter we will give a place to the migrant women of our time, whose lives take place in the so-called “First World”, while they are inevitably disadvantaged as migrants of the “Third World”. We will therefore look at some works of art that illustrate the complex position of these women by emphasizing motherhood.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, millions of people leave their countries because they cannot reproduce there; half of them are women, many of them married and with children to leave behind.²⁵⁹

It is true that these migrant women entered the waged workplace when arriving to every country of Western Europe and the US, and found jobs as domestic workers, sex workers, eldercarers and nurses, generally losing their social status and facing years of social isolation.

That is, women fleeing poverty have only found more of it.

All over the world, the living conditions of the working class consist of working two jobs in an exhausting work week that leaves them no time for anything but work.²⁶⁰

With immigrant women now providing a large part of the labor force in major cities, a new international division of labor has emerged based on the impoverishment of the populations of the “Global South” when women from Eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America or Asia leave their countries. Their absence means a direct impoverishment of the human capital of their communities.²⁶¹

Ironically, global cutbacks and privatization of health care have resulted in hospitals providing fewer and fewer services, while these women provide for the care of the “First World”.²⁶² These women then have to leave their children at home unsupervised.

While governments celebrate the “globalization of care”, this disposition enables them to reduce the investment in reproduction.

In a global perspective, in Silvia Federici’s words:

Neither the reorganization of reproductive work on a market basis, nor the “globalization of care,” much less the technologization of reproductive work have in any way “liberated women” and eliminated the exploitation inherent to reproductive work in its present form. If we take a global perspective we see that not only do women still do most of the housework in every country, but due to the state’s cut of investment in social services and the decentralization of industrial production the amount of domestic work paid and unpaid they perform may have actually increased, even when they have had a extradomestic job.²⁶³

259 Federici, Silvia (2009) The reproduction of labour-power in the global economy, Marxist theory and the unfinished feminist revolution <https://caringlabor.wordpress.com/2010/10/25/silvia-federici-the-reproduction-of-labour-power-in-the-global-economy-marxist-theory-and-the-unfinished-feminist-revolution/> Retrieved 09.12.14

260 Federici, Silvia (2009) The Unfinished Feminist Revolution <http://www.commoner.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/08-federici.pdf> Retrieved 09.12.14

261 Federici, Silvia (2009) The reproduction of labour-power in the global economy, Marxist theory and the unfinished feminist revolution <https://caringlabor.wordpress.com/2010/10/25/silvia-federici-the-reproduction-of-labour-power-in-the-global-economy-marxist-theory-and-the-unfinished-feminist-revolution/> Retrieved 09.12.14

262 Federici, Silvia (2009) The Unfinished Feminist Revolution <http://www.commoner.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/08-federici.pdf> Retrieved 09.12.14

263 Federici, Silvia (2009) The reproduction of labour-power in the global economy, Marxist theory and the unfinished feminist revolution <https://caringlabor.wordpress.com/2010/10/25/silvia-federici-the-reproduction-of-labour-power-in-the-global-economy-marxist-theory-and-the-unfinished-feminist-revolution/> Retrieved 09.12.14

As well as a general approach to migration should not forget that, again, in Federici's words:

When hundreds of thousands leave, to face years of humiliation and alienation, and live with the anguish of not being able to give to the people they love the care they give to others across the world, we know that something quite dramatic is happening in the organization of world reproduction.²⁶⁴

In this respect the image of the immigrant mother has been a recurring figure type in nineteenth-century North American pictures of immigrants.²⁶⁵ Most precisely breastfeeding immigrants, like the case of the 1884 painting of Charles Ulrich "In the Land of Promise, Castle Garden" in which converge motherhood, breastfeeding and the politics of race, class and heredity.

This painting reflects on a historical moment where at the same time that immigrant offsprings were thought to strengthen the nations by becoming citizens, whilst the underlying xenophobia made them threats as they were not believed to be able to escape their heritage, as well as their cultural and moral roots, come from an old country.²⁶⁶

Contemporary migration presents a new social figure. This is the one of the woman who, lacking the documents that allow her to stay legally, gives birth to a child in the foreign country. This process is described by South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham as immigrants that

Come here to drop a child. It's called "drop and leave". To have a child in America, they cross the border, they go to the emergency room, have a child, and that child's automatically a [North] American citizen. That shouldn't be the case. That attracts people for all the wrong reasons.²⁶⁷

Inside the global mobilization new familiar structures emerge, where the mother is deported and the children face no other option but staying in their new countries of origin.

This is the case of Elvira Arellano whose images constitute a representation of a modern "Madonna and Child" –Image 1 following-. As well as Sayda Umanzor, who during her deportation was separated from her North American born, 9 months old, breastfed son, for 11 days –Image 2 following-.²⁶⁸

264 Ibid.

265 Wilk, Debora F. (2012) "Of Milk and Homeland: Breastfeeding, Immigrant Mothers, and Eugenics in the Nineteenth and Twenty-First Centuries" In Epp Buller, Rachel (2012) *Reconciling Art and Mothering*, Ashgate Pub Co p. 30

266 Ibid p. 33-36

267 Ibid p. 38

268 Ibid p. 38-40

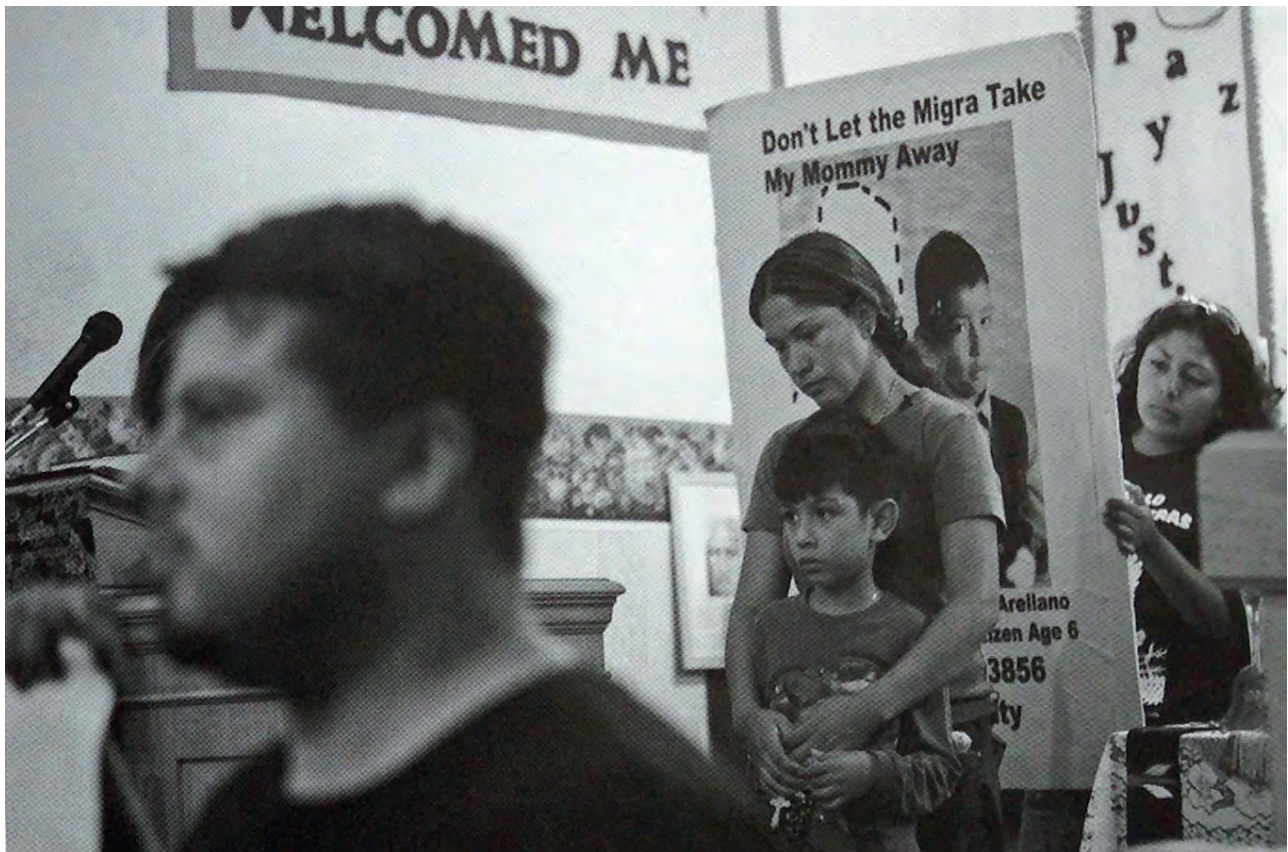


Image 1



Image 2



This aspect is reflected in the work „America’s Family Prison” (2008) - image above - by Guatemalan artist Regina José Galindo, in which she spends two and a half days with her husband and eight-month-old daughter.

In a private interview with Galindo she explained that the work was produced in Texas in a moment where there were 52 private prisons in Texas.

In the work, a 1.50 x 1.50 m prefabricated prison was brought to the Artpace gallery in Texas, its interior „decorated in the double standard manner so typical of North America.”

The Galindo prison was

Just the way real prisons are: full with products from Walmart. In a hypocritical way of saying that they respect human rights, North America imprisons all the family to keep them together. This is the reason why the presence of objects for babies in the prison like cradles is perverse and violates per se all human rights.²⁶⁹

Or in Michel Foucault's words: "this is the fascinating thing about prisons. The power neither conceals itself nor is masked, it shows as ferocious tyranny in the most minimal details."²⁷⁰

As the artist explains, also the public's reaction needs further analysis as in her words

There are 52 private prisons crowded with children that spend three years there in a shitty life because they can't study and neither do much, but the public was instead worried that my daughter spent 48 hours with me in the prison.

That means that they criticize the representation in a gallery of a situation that is already happening around them, but they don't find the tools to fight the reality of how prisons work.

It is as if they don't want to see and they don't want to accept this situation that already happens in a huge scale, and an artwork confronts their feelings on the subject.²⁷¹

"America's Family Prison"(2008) is the third work in which Galindo discusses motherhood. The previous two works were produced during her pregnancy, "Mirror for the little death"(2006) when she was 6 months pregnant and "While they are still free"(2007)²⁷² with 8 months pregnant.

"America's Family Prison"(2008) points to the fact that private prisons in the United States is an industry that has experienced exponential growth since 1980 and today flourishes due to antiterrorism measures and the hardening of immigration laws.²⁷³

As a model for her work, Galindo takes T. Don Hutto "Family Detention Center," located in Taylor, Texas, and operated by Corrections Corporation of America (CCA).

CCA is the largest private jail company in the world with one of the highest stock market values on Wall Street. And T. Don Hutto is one of the many facilities that make up this booming industry. The private prison business has its own commercial exhibitions, conventions, websites, and mail-order catalogues, and works with hundreds of partner companies—from architecture and construction firms to plumbers and vendors of food, security equipment and uniforms, to name only a few—that provide each prison with a range of services.²⁷⁴

In the case of Galindo, given that she is a well known internationally artist, winner of the Golden Lion award at the Venice Biennale in 2005 in the category of "artists under 35", the first and third worlds collide:

I am Guatemalan and I live in two worlds. The majority of the time I am in Guatemala where the reality is that I am a weird case because of having only one child. In Guatemala women normally have many children. My mother had five children.

But I belong to this context in the first place than the one of the art world where women do not have children.

That is the reason why I travel five days and come back to my nest. I am not interested in staying outside longer.²⁷⁵

269 Interview with the artist

270 Apud http://www.artpace.org/works/iair/iair_spring_2008/americas-family-prison

271 Interview with the artist

272 Both works available at <http://www.reginajosegalindo.com>

273 Ibid.

274 Ibid.

275 Interview with the artist

Regarding feminism in her life as a Latin American, Galindo thinks that

To be a feminist does not go against your maternal instinct. On the contrary, to have a daughter is to have more strength to show her the way. There is plenty to do with a daughter or a son because you are educating them with a new life standard.²⁷⁶

But Galindo recalls being screamed by an artist friend: "You stupid! Feminist artists do not get pregnant! Abort that child!" Galindo believes that there are many artist friends who could not negotiate the two paths of motherhood and career and many women artist left the time passed by in the rush of their career, and when they decided to have a child it was too late for them.

For Galindo it was not easy to get pregnant and face her gallery as they answered that she had not even worked with them for three months. But her fear lasted a couple of months and then the hormonal changes of pregnancy took over.

The main concern of people around her was that motherhood would modify the sharpness and anger of her work, "expressing the fear that I was going to lose my capacity of being critical, or that I was going to dedicate myself to the domestic affairs." But on the contrary she "began to feel much more compromised as there was one more reason to keep producing [her] work and to keep pushing to change the order of things."

Another examples of artistic work done on the subject of maternity and migration are the works of Patricia Cué "Bundle of Joy" (2004) in which the Mexican mother artist faces the strong differences of being an immigrant mother in the U.S.

As well as Youngbook Hong's work "What She Carries" (2002), an online work in which, among other subjects, Hong deals with her disappearance in her daughter's name as her mother disappeared in hers.

Moreover, Gail Rebhan "Mother-Son Talk" (1996), "Diversity" (2000) and "Family Shield" (2003) describe the cultural shocks of a Jewish family in the U.S.

As well as Myrel Chernick's "On the Table" (1996) and Camile Bilops and James Hatch's "Finding Christa" (1991) bring to discussion the connection between race, class and the violence that mothers enforce to children.²⁷⁷

These works represent the contemporary scenario in which women's life conditions have not changed in relation to the works produced by mother artist during the 1960s and 1970s, discussed in Chapter I. On the contrary, the works depicting motherhood from the experience of migration represent a natural projection of the problems faced by the women artists of the 1960s and 1970s. These problems were exacerbated by the phenomenon of migration and were both a cause and a consequence of the impoverishment of women.

At the same time, the works presented emphasize the fact that women are called to play a role at the lowest level of possibilities that would allow them to live a good and independent life.

276 Interview with the artist

277 Klein, Jennie (2011) "Visualizing Maternity in Contemporary Art" In: *The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art*, Deme-ter Press. Editors Chernick, Myrel and Klein, Jennie p. 194-212

Conclusions

This text addresses the danger of talking about the difficulties of being a woman in our current patriarchal and economic system, and so, by addressing the issue, it can be understood simplistically as a call to reiterate the traditional roles that have been imposed on women. Our goal could not be more opposite, as we want to rethink the notion of femininity and add a political perspective to the debate to help redefine motherhood outside of the imposed traditional roles. We also insist on broadening the discussion on motherhood to make it clear that the decision whether to have a child or not is one more of the human scopes.

Our labor has been difficult because we are aware that a proper concept of “mother” and “motherhood” has yet to be defined, and that it is necessary to rethink even the language from which these terms emerge, as we are still constrained by it and language is yet another tool that reinforces patriarchy.

It is clear that in this complicated case, dealing with the issue of motherhood, as the mere fact of having children has shown, brings all kinds of difficulties, and this situation hinders a larger discussion about our living conditions. We believe that we must not only insist on strengthening the debate on precariousness, but that it is also necessary to create new terms to define our position as women outside the standards normalized for us by men, and in this way undermine the repetition of the traditional fate of women. And in doing so, undermine the work that is being done against women, including our dangerous self-imposed misogyny.

In a context where care has been degraded to an unprofitable position and thus silenced, it is important to continue the discussion on the topic of motherhood and capitalism.

From this silence, I would like to thank my supervisors from the Master’s program in Critical Studies at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, from which this thesis emerged, Univ.-Prof. Mag. Constanze Ruhm and Univ.-Prof. Diedrich Diederichsen, as well as my family for their encouragement during this research and the production of the accompanying video, as a discussion on the topic of motherhood still finds it hard to be supported.

Along with this written research, a video was produced that complements and continues the struggles of artists in the 60s and 70s, which unfortunately are still present today.

This video can be seen at the link vimeo.com/clauidiasandovalromero/motherhoodintheartworld

-Image below- and consists of interviews to the artists Renate Bertlmann, Regina José Galindo, Christine Hohenbüchler, Stephanie Misa, Tanja Ostojic and Signe Rose, as well as to the curator and art historian Vanessa Joan-Müller.

The video discusses the precarious living conditions of women in the art world, as well as the complexities of finding a balance between personal life, making money, and a career in the arts.

This investigation looks at some art practices and is an invitation to think further about motherhood in other areas, including those that are foreign to the art world.

In conclusion, what is most striking about the artworks referred to in this text is the spirit of the 1960s and 1970s that defends life as the result of freedom and ultimate faith in life.

This premise has remained until our present time of economic and social pessimism, as well as pessimistic forecasts, and has the form of a tiny light of hope that continues to lead us to the inexplicable will of existence, believing that despite all the harsh conditions and insofar as there is the will to fight for a good life for all, life is still worth reproducing.

Figures



Fig.1. Chana Orloff "Reclining Maternity" (1923)



Fig.2. Käthe Kollwitz "Tower of Mothers" (1938)



Fig. 3. Claudia Sandoval Romero, Video "Motherhood in the Art World" (2015)
vimeo.com/clauidiasandovalromero/motherhoodintheartworld

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