

Live Art and Motherhood

A Study Room Guide on Live Art and the Maternal



Compiled & written by Emily Underwood-Lee and
Lena Šimić

2016



Live Art
Development
Agency

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The idea is to help navigate Study Room users through the resource, enable them to experience the materials in a new way and highlight materials that they may not have otherwise come across.

All Study Room Guides are available to view in our Study Room, or can be viewed and/or downloaded directly from their Study Room catalogue entry.

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An Incomplete and Completely Partial Rationale

This *Study Room Guide on Live Art and Motherhood* features fourteen individual artists and two artist collectives working in the mediums of Live Art and performance around the topic of the maternal. Motherhood and the maternal are difficult terms. There is an inherent essentialism and biology is often assumed. For us, motherhood refers to the lived experience of mothering regardless of our route to it, whereas the maternal refers to the study of and representations of motherhood. All of the contributors in this volume are mothers but we hope this volume is of interest to both those who have cared for children and those who have not, after all, we all have direct experience of being m/othered. We are all first of all natal before we are mortals (thank you Hannah Arendt).

This project is of its time, its generation, and its geographical location with its own set of connections and logic. It has been researched and written in 2015 and 2016. Many of the artists featured here came together through the research gathering *Motherhood and Live Art* which was organised by Emily Underwood-Lee and Lena Šimić in January 2016 at the Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home in Liverpool, part of the Study Room in Exile series of events, in collaboration with the Live Art Development Agency.¹ The artists who were not present at that gathering yet are featured in this Study Room Guide have come to our attention thanks to the women at the event and due to our own feminist histories. As authors of this Study Room Guide we raise our hands: we are guilty of favouritism and we are subjective. We admit that this is about personal connections, inspired conversations, common politics, solidarity, but also importantly, our own sense of agency as artists and mothers.

We (Emily and Lena) have worked together for a number of years sharing a common interest in autobiography and performance. Initially we met through the *Women's Writing for Performance* series of workshops at Lancaster University (2003 – 2006) and then, with five other women performance practitioners, co-founded the Factory Floor network (2006 - 2016) for women solo performers and writers.² Our energies and enthusiasm combined again under the common (practice as) research interest in 'performance and the maternal' at the *Motherhood and Creative Practice: Maternal Structures in Creative Work* international conference at South Bank University in June 2015, organized by Elena Marchevska and Valerie Walkerdine. This encounter activated our desire to research artists working on 'maternal performance'. We were therefore delighted to be a part of *A Study Room Gathering on Caring and Making*, organised by Chloé Déchery and Mary Paterson, which took place at the Live Art Development Agency in July 2015. This gathering happened in response to a large number of *DIY 11: 2014* applications from artists who wanted to devise workshops around issues of care, dependents, parenthood/motherhood and children.

We are not alone. The last few years have seen a proliferation of support networks dedicated to parents/artists. These include Artful Care, Mothers Who Make, Enemies of

¹ Please see <http://www.twoaddthree.org/motherhood-and-live-art/> for documentation of this event.

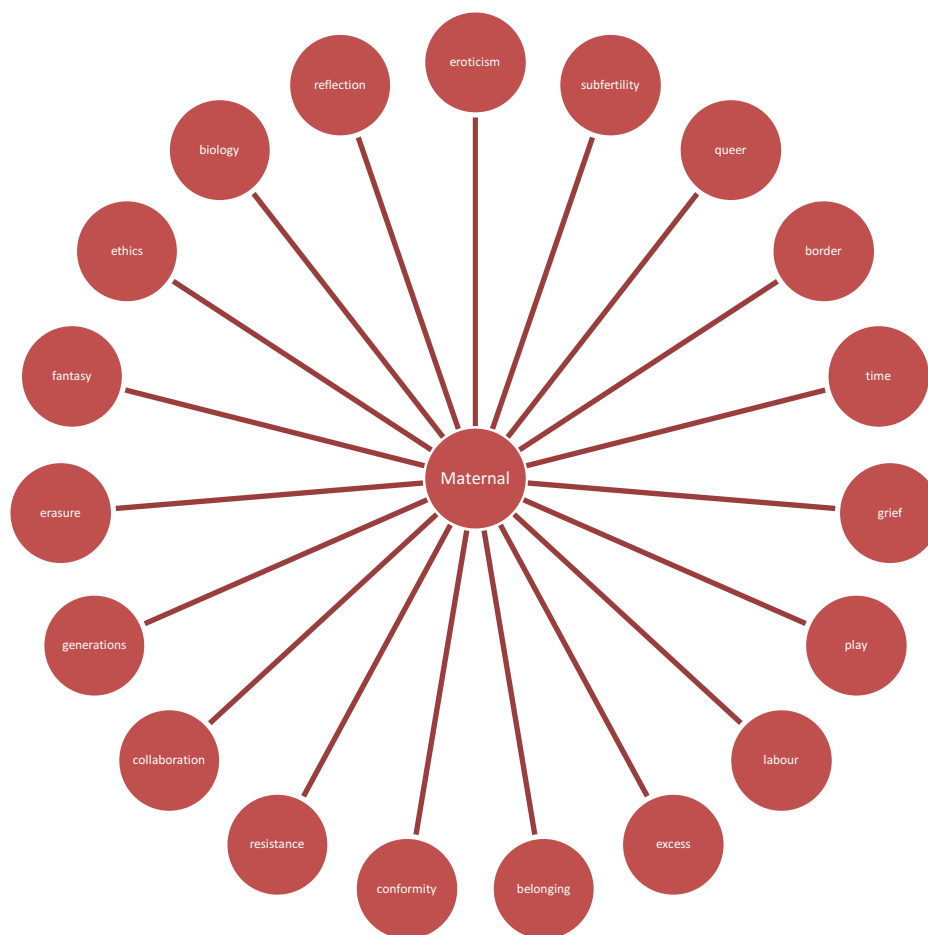
² Factory Floor was created in collaboration with Abi Lake, Caroline Wilson, Clare Duffy, Kerstin Bueschges and Louie Jenkins.

Good Art, Motherhood: A Social Practice, The Mums and Babies Ensemble, the Facebook group Artist/Mother Society, Parents in Performing Arts and internationally The Mothernists, Cultural ReProducers, Artist Parent Index, and M/Other Voices foundation, to name a few.

It feels important to note all this past and present activity around the subject of arts and parenthood and position this *Study Room Guide on Live Art and Motherhood* as yet another incomplete attempt to map a somewhat disparate and disconnected but yet deeply engaged artists' community consisting of mothers working in the medium of Live Art. What is specific here? The artist/mothers featured in this guide have set out to make *performance* and/or *Live Art* work about their particular maternal experience. All artist/mothers therefore engage with a specific set of methodologies of performance/Live Art making and inevitably develop a certain individual maternal performance aesthetic. This Study Room Guide is about mapping the artists' works and themes, creating an archive, and, on a pragmatic as well as highly political level, giving visibility to this field and proclaiming maternal agencies through and in arts making. Too often the mother has been invisible; a search through the creative and academic archives reveals she is often second to her child, reduced to a screen on which to project the antipathy, reverence or hatred of the central protagonist: she is the source of *his* problems or oedipal anxieties. With this Study Room Guide we wish to bring the mother centre stage, to celebrate the diversity of maternal performance practice and artworks by mothers about mothering. This Study Room Guide is part of our wider scholarly project; we wish to be part of the current movement to name maternal performance aesthetics and explore them deeper (please see our reading list at the end of the guide).

However, regardless of our common experience of identifying as mother/artists working in the medium of Live Art, we are each different from one another. We are not a unified group, we do not represent an essential mother and we do not embark on our journeys to motherhood through a common biological path. Instead we find unity and community in our different but related experiences as women who identify as mothers and artists. Our lived experiences of class, race, sexuality, gender, age, religion, migration, dis/ability, financial status, (lack of) partnership, sense of recognition in our careers, in our communities, in our cities and beyond, all matter and feed into our arts practice, into both outcomes and processes. Each artist has therefore been given a space for their own expression, tasked with 300 words on a given topic, which is in dialogue with their arts practice. In inviting the artists to do their work in reflecting, naming and engaging with their practice, we have come to imagine ourselves as 'curators' of this Study Room Guide. The readers are invited to enjoy the works and reflections, challenge their own preconceptions about motherhood and mothering practices, and add to the list of maternal performance practice, whilst looking back to the past, sideways to the present and imagining our feminist maternal futures.

This Study Room Guide is arranged alphabetically by artist's first name (following feminist tradition). Once we identified artists to ask to be part of this collection we explored their work; both as they had presented it to us and as we interpreted it. We identified a number of themes and asked each artist or collective to write about their work in relation to a particular strand we recognised in their maternal performance practice.



Not all of the artists we contacted took up our invitation to write about their work and in our working process some themes disappeared; ethics, biology and reflection were dropped along the way. However the themes that remain reflect the diversity of work being created around the maternal and inevitably illustrate the breadth of maternal experiences.

In 2015 Bobby Baker recreated her seminal performance *Drawing on a Mother's Experience* (1988) as *Drawing on a (Grand) Mother's Experience* (2015) at the Southbank Centre in London. As feminist artist/mothers we are standing beside our feminist (grand) mothers. The works of Mary Kelly, Lea Lublin, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Laura Mulvey, Susan Hiller, the Mother Art Collective, the Magdalena Project network and Bobby Baker have been a source of inspiration, challenge and constant re-negotiations in our own work. A *Study Room Guide on Live Art and Feminism* asks the question 'Are We There Yet?'. Yet is still to come. Looking to the future is a hopeful act, by thinking of our futures we can imagine other ways of existing in the world, other ways of living and making art within and around the maternal. Through the everyday struggles in motherhood, and its repetitious cycle from generation to generation, we discover (anew) Live Art practice as a space of solidarity, creativity and openness.

In January 2016, at the Study Room in Exile event *Motherhood and Live Art* we explored the ways in which performance-based art on the maternal differs from visual and fine art. What is specific about motherhood being represented through Live Art/performance? We collectively wondered about liveness and risk, and placed it alongside our experiences as

(failing, good/bad) artist/mothers. We created a temporary community, which arrived at some quick conclusions in relation to Live Art and Motherhood. Later on, Emily and Lena made notes:

- Temporality and durational performance entail multiple and complex connections to maternal arts practice.
- Whilst there's a mutual resistance against dominant narratives in lots of our work, we recognize each other's specific struggles.
- Issues of representation are not easily solved and they seem impossible to escape in/through performance.
- Action doesn't necessarily need to be juxtaposed with performance; they might be one and the same thing.
- There's a desire towards articulating the unsayable: a kind of admiration for monstrous, corporeal, viscous and excessive mothers.

Inspired by everyone's contributions as well as further research into maternal performance practices we started dreaming about the creation of a new kind of maternal performance aesthetics which would entail and complexify all of those issues as well as take into consideration maternal care, interdependency, a new sense of time and attention, repetition, boredom and thirst for new collaborations between ourselves and our children. We still continue to long for a new kind of maternal performance aesthetics, which would seriously consider the ethical and political dimensions of working with/about children, but also fight for visibility of our own ambivalent and precarious identity formations as artist/mothers. We are hopeful that the work of the artists represented in these pages will help us get there.

Emily Underwood-Lee and Lena Šimić

Áine Phillips

sex, birth & death (2003)



sex birth & death, 2003. Photo by Nigel Rolfe.

Áine Phillips is a performance artist based in the west of Ireland where she is head of sculpture at Burren College of Art. She has been exhibiting multi-media performance works, installation and video in Ireland and internationally since the late 80s. She has created work for multiple contexts; public art commissions, the street, club events, galleries and museums including City of Women Festival Ljubljana, Kyoto Art Centre Japan, Stanley Picker Gallery London, Bunkier Sztuki Krakow, and Mobius Boston USA. She has been involved in curating major Live Art and performance events in Ireland such as Tulca Live 2005-2007 and Future Histories 2016. Her edited book *Performance Art in Ireland: A History* was published by the Live Art Development Agency and Intellect Books UK in 2015. Her work is supported by the Arts Council of Ireland.

www.ainephillips.com

Eroticism

I created *sex, birth & death* in 2002 and performed it five times from 2003-2004 in Ireland, the UK, USA and Austria. It is my favourite performance work and I consider it the most developed, original and culturally significant work I have produced. The subject matter is abortion and motherhood - juxtaposing the two linked experiences and showing them as two sides of the one coin. The deeper underlying theme of the work is eroticism which I used to open up new readings of maternalism.

In our (Northern European) culture this physical pleasure in motherhood is denied. In my personal experience giving birth was like an enormous orgasm and breastfeeding aroused sexual feelings in my whole body. I am sure I am not alone in these experiences. A sexual act begins motherhood, why would the entire experience not relate back to sexuality? I articulate this correspondence in my script "Two who are separate become one, two who are one become separate."

In *sex, birth & death* I consider the image of lactation to be a metaphor for female eroticism. The experience of breastfeeding is of a flowing (expression) of nourishing and delicious bodily fluid from one body into another. The breast milk is both food and a form of pleasure for both and links mother and baby in a symbiotic relationship paralleling and extending the unity of two bodies in pregnancy.

In *sex, birth & death* I made what I hoped was an erotic performance of the representations of maternal experience. I hoped the audience would feel my expressed pleasure in my mothering body and witness the maternal body as erotic. I also intended to explicitly link abortion with motherhood and eroticism. In Ireland, abortion is illegal and Irish women travel to the UK to avail of abortion services. 100,000 Irish women have had UK abortions, but admitting or talking about it publicly is still problematic. I wanted to normalise the experience of abortion and place it along the continuum of female sexuality.

Áine Phillips

Anna Furse

Yerma's Eggs (2003)



Helen Spackman in *Yerma's Eggs*, 2003. Riverside Studios. Photo by Hugo Glendinning.

Anna Furse is Professor of Theatre and Performance at *Goldsmiths* where she directs the international laboratory *MA in Performance Making* and is Co-Director of the *Centre of the Body*. Her career in professional theatre includes over 30 years as a director, writer, project leader, programmer, artistic director, curator, consultant and educator. Artistic Directorships include *BloodGroup* (1980 – 86) and *Paines Plough* (1990 -95). She founded *Athletes of the Heart* in 2003 with a *Wellcome Trust Impact Award*. Her many collaborative projects include working with hospitals and health organisations as well as international venues, including co-productions in France, Serbia and Slovenia. Her most recent work has been shown at venues including the *Cantieri Culturali Zisa*, Palermo, *Live Collision*, Dublin and *GIFT UK* festivals, and the Michael Cacoyiannia Foundation, Athens. Anna is the editor of *Theatre in Pieces – Politics, Poetics and Interdisciplinary Collaboration* (Methuen 2011) an anthology of performance texts that includes *Don Juan. Who?/ Don Juan. Kdo?* her co-productions with Mladinsko Gledalisce, Ljubljana (*Shunt* and *Riverside Studios* 2008). Her current project *The Anatomy Act* is commissioned by *CREATE* Dublin (premiering *Live Collision* 2016).

www.athletesoftheheart.org

Subfertility

Lorca's poetic drama *Yerma* (meaning 'barren'), about a desperate childless peasant, was the catalyst for this exploration into the subfertile psyche. I wanted to get under the skin of the subject via the body in performance and reflect complexity and contradiction via a layering of elements. With Assisted Reproductive Technologies (A.R.T.), the human heart collaborates with highly invasive medical technology. We are impelled to reconsider our ethical assumptions. We subject our bodies to a necessary splitting - the separation of eggs from ovaries, sperm from testes, reproduction from sexual intercourse - as our sex cells become involved in a spectacular process of fusion and, if successful, growth outside us.

Given the statistic that 1 in 6 couples suffer involuntary childlessness and fertility problems in the UK it is striking how little such stories are told. But then, the subfertile tend to implode, muted, suffering with gritted teeth out of a sense of powerlessness, failure, guilt and marginalisation. Our voices rarely come through into the culture. It was such silence I chose to break. My more recent theatre research has reflected a subjective perspective in a triptych of very different projects on (non) reproduction and correlative issues since 2000.

Yerma's Eggs was inevitably a highly charged, personal work bearing the stamp of each of my collaborators. The performer's body remained central, clothed and naked, screaming and whispering. The piece began with water, the source of life, and ended with the voice of my child. In between these lay the material of a performance that was inevitably uncomfortable for an audience. The subject is rife with contradictions, particularly for women. Splicing together a medical and technological world with the visceral elusiveness and tenderness of physical theatre posed many but necessary challenges. To do justice to the subject matter, machine and flesh had to be married. Medical imperative on the one side and embodied emotion on the other are the dualities that the sub-fertile straddles, daily. We medicate and meditate. We inject and project. We imagine.³

Anna Furse

³ Extract from 'Performing in glass: reproduction, technology, performance and the bio-spectacular', in *Feminist Futures: Theatre, Performance, Theory*, edited by Geraldine Harris and Elaine Aston (Palgrave MacMillan USA, 2006).

Bean

(m)other/ the untitled (2014)



(m)other / the untitled, 2014. Venice International Performance Art Week.
Photo by Monica Sobczak.

Bean's work is predominantly performance led, working through the intersections of installation, video and sound. Her work has been described as deliberately “accidental, scattered, scuffed, blurry and incomplete”, a statement that she ferociously upholds in her attempts to undermine systems of patriarchy & capitalism through the aesthetic, material and durational choices within her practice. As both artist and curator she is interested in producing work that is quietly yet overtly political, lacks linear narrative and challenges its audiences. She is interested in curating spaces and situations that connect artists, makers, thinkers and feelers and has done so through the creation of]performance s p a c e [and ongoing research into alternative modes of existence, queer theory, post-feminist realities and queer domesticity.

www.beaninthearchive.com/

Queer

By having a child my identity was automatically perceived as less queer. However everything in this child's short existence has been done somewhat queerly: from their conception in the van I was living in in East London, to their home birth, their gender neutral name and own (neither parents) surname. Furthermore I feel the process of becoming mother has direct alignments with that of queer, firstly and simply that it's a state of transition and becoming (that breeds new states of transition and becoming also).

I felt incredibly *othered* during my pregnancy and continuously judged on my physical status. And it's this physicality that felt to me the most queerly empowering: my body has never been so unruly, so leaky, so fluid and irrational, emotional and non-understandable (non-penetrable). I find it deeply saddening that patriarchy and capitalism have turned pregnancy and parenting into something to be feared and bought into every step of the way. This should be the most potent force, the ultimate fuck you patriarchy I am life. Yet instead pregnant women and mothers are belittled and herded into sanitised and conformist corners of identity & existence.

He is not my husband, boyfriend, partner or lover. He is he and I am I and together we are not one, not a family, not a unit. Sometimes when we sleep at night I think of us as a pack of animals, but that's as together as we get. We learn from such a young age that it is not nice or good to put people into categories; people don't live well in boxes. But in the home we continue to confine individuals to (gendered and aged) roles such as mother, father, child, sister, brother. If we could rid ourselves of these titles, their expectations and boundaries we could all roam domestic geographies and subsequently our lives, more freely and happily.⁴

Bean

⁴ An excerpt from 'To Destroy Capitalism We Must Destroy The Family', available at Bean's blog <http://1lii.tumblr.com/post/79198341946/to-destroy-capitalism-we-must-destroy-the-family>

Clare Qualmann

Perambulator (2014)



Baby Slow Marathon, 2014. Huntly, Aberdeenshire. Photo by Clare Qualmann.

Clare Qualmann is an artist/researcher with an interdisciplinary performance oriented practice. Her work engages a range of participatory methods, and a breadth of media to explore and reveal the overlooked - the politics and potentials of everyday life. She works at the University of East London and The Cass where her teaching and research connects strongly to walking art practice, working on modules that forefront interdisciplinarity, participation and site specificity. A founder member of the Walking Artists Network, Clare continues to facilitate its occasional events and active online presence. Projects include *walkwalkwalk: stories from the Bethnal Green archive* (2010) a permanent installation in Bethnal Green Old Town Hall, *Perambulator* (2014) a participatory performance/walking project (with prams) for Deveron Arts in Huntly (Aberdeenshire), *East End Jam* (2015) a collaborative walking, foraging and jam-making project for the London Legacy Development Corporation, and *WALKING WOMEN* (2016) at Somerset House and Forest Fringe in collaboration with Amy Sharrocks.

www.clarequalmann.co.uk/

Borders

On Borders and Perambulator

In 2012, when my son was a few months old, I was invited to make a walk for a project at Lewisham Art House. Initially I ruled this out. My practice before would have required multiple research trips, extensive walking in the area. This now felt entirely unfeasible. Instead of saying no I decided to try to make a piece that would be possible to do with my baby in tow.

Barriers. Boundaries. Edges. Limits.

In the first months of his life, pushing his pram around the area that I had lived in for years, I was struck by the number of detours that I had to take: the route alterations, the impediments to smooth passage. My very familiar routes through and to places were rudely disrupted, forcing a new relationship with the physical details of the urban environment.

Where you have to stop. Past which you cannot move or progress.

A new radar evolves – seeking out the dropped kerbs and the ramps – avoiding steps, narrow gaps, awkward turns: going the long way round becomes the norm. Viewing the city through this new lens feels political. Losing the freedom of easy mobility – a freedom that I hadn't been aware of before – connects me to a massive group of people (predominantly women) in the same position, encumbered by wheels.

Mold. Immobilize. Reduce.⁵

This became the premise for *Perambulator* - making visible these issues through a mass walking with prams. Following the first *Perambulator* walk in Lewisham I went on to make a more extensive version of the project in Huntly, Aberdeenshire, exploring the pram walking cultures of the town in a month-long residency as part of Deveron Arts 'Walking Institute' (2014). Walking in a small town highlighted the borders and boundaries far more than walking in the city. The project became about finding them, testing them, crossing them, and taking others with me.

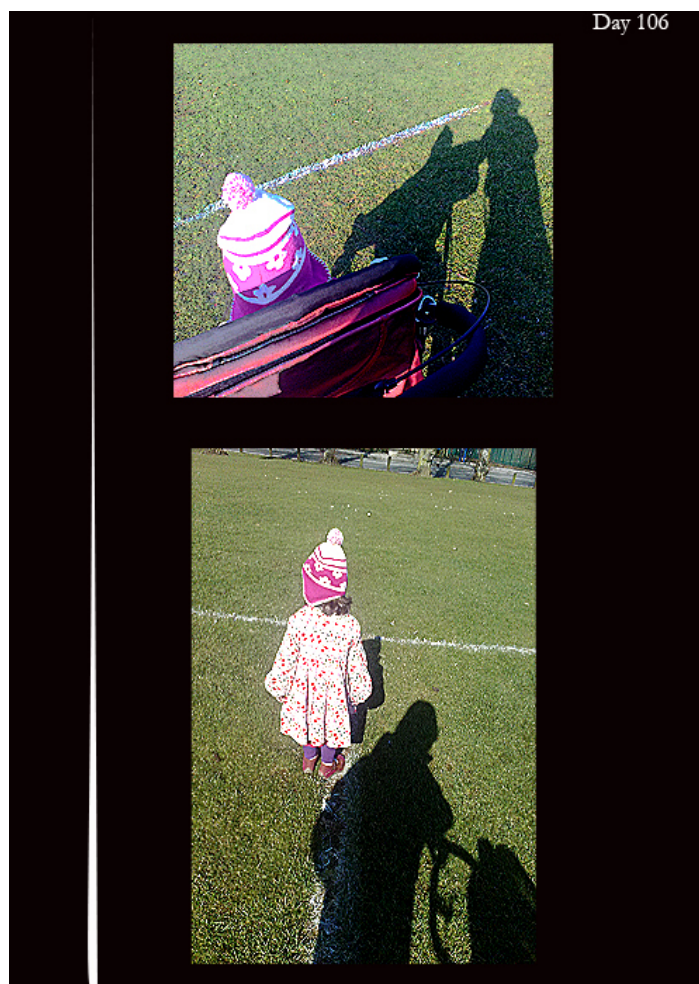
Thus far and no further.

Clare Qualmann

⁵ Marilyn Frye *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Crossing Press, 1983) p. 2.

Elena Marchevska

Valid until... (2009 – 2011)



Day 106, *Valid until...*, 2009-2011 video and performance. Photo by Elena Marchevska.

Elena Marchevska is an interdisciplinary artist and researcher. Following her doctoral study on screen and feminist performance practice, she continued to focus on the relationships between performance, maternal body and digital writing. She was a key organizer of the international conference 'Motherhood and Creative Practice' at London South Bank University in 2015, and writes about the intersections between maternal, creativity and activism. She is currently working on research about radical self-organised performance practices (focusing predominately on South East Europe) and their urban manifestation. She is a Senior Lecturer in Drama and Performance at London South Bank University and Graduate Advisor for Transart Institute, Berlin.

www.eleamarcevska.com/

Time

Diary entry, Day 91

Living between two worlds can be demanding. Like an illness, you can't escape from it. It is so deep in your body. It covers every border that protects you from outside. You can articulate yourself on the screen, but deep inside you know that the screen never articulates, it only imposes form.

Delivery at gate.

There are two gates. One in. One out. And me in between.

A: "We miss you so much". Her eyes get tearful.

I can't deliver the news.

B: "Maybe we will stay."

A: "Stay where?"

B: "I am not quite sure...."

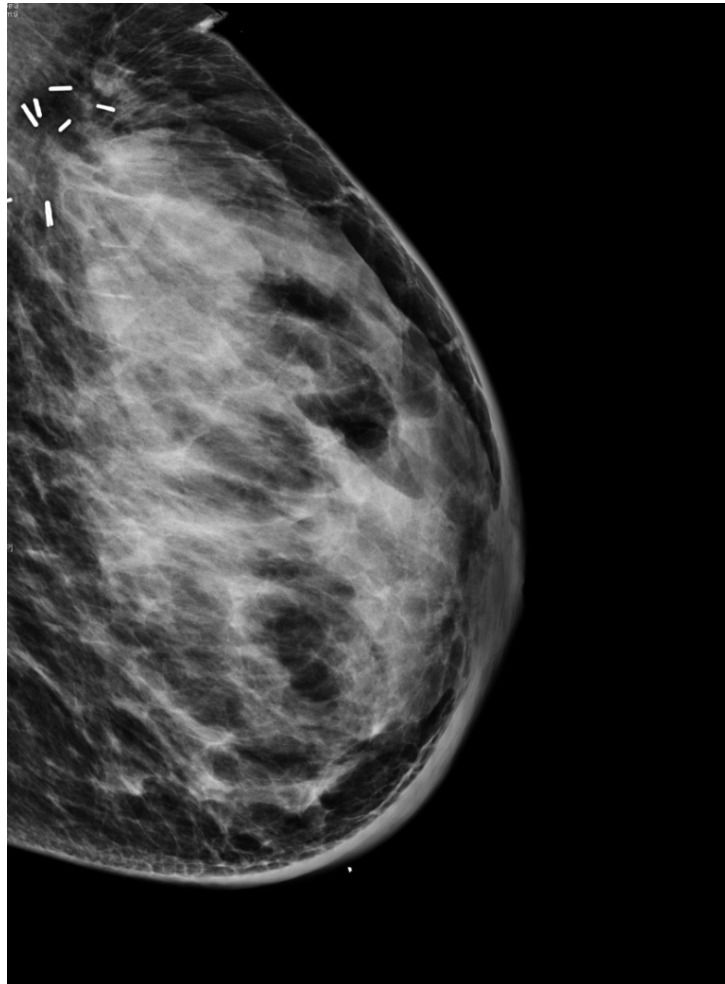
How do you deliver a loss?

My project *Valid until...* (2009-2011) is an in-depth research on the theme of borders and motherhood. It consisted of a series of autobiographical writing, performative photographs and videos taken during a period of 140 days. The period was symbolic, equal to one hundred and forty questions that I had to answer about myself, my children and my family in the visa application. This is a challenge that repeatedly occurs in my life. Coming from South East Europe (the ex-Yugoslavia region), my validity and legal status is constantly re-evaluated and subject to the scrutiny of the Western European authorities. The period of one hundred and forty days was a period of confirming the validity of my legal status in the United Kingdom. Borders can be built from outside, they can be physical and tangible, difficult to cross, but passable. I felt compelled as an artist to talk about the experience of motherhood as a highly political state, where the body is split and carries not only the child into this world, but also cultural responsibility and an intergenerational take on the borders that youngsters have to cross. In my research and performative interventions, I looked at the ways in which artist-mothers negotiate and translate their experiences with/on the border.

Elena Marchevska

Emily Underwood-Lee

Patience (2009)



Still from *Patience*, 2009. Photo by Emily Underwood-Lee.

Emily Underwood-Lee is a failing feminist mother to two daughters. She is also a performance practitioner and Research Fellow at the George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling at the University of South Wales. Emily creates autobiographical work and is principally concerned with the construction of gender and how the body can be presented and represented in performance. Her research focuses on autobiographical stories and the body in a variety of contexts including feminist performance art, narratives of illness, performance and the maternal, and performance and disability. Emily's solo projects include *Titillation* (2014), *Titillation Grade 3* (2011), *Patience* (2009), and *Ode to Morten Harket* (2007).

www.emilyunderwoodlee.wordpress.com

Grief

Grief is an instance where the mind is unable to contain and control itself or maintain rational reasoning. The fallacy that our bodies are under the control of our minds is brought to the fore. The confusion of the emotional and physical sensations of grief, the flowing of tears, the involuntary rage and depression, all serve to illustrate the lack of control we have over both our physical bodies and our emotional selves. Grief also breaks down our ability to contain ourselves within the Symbolic.⁶ Grief not only destroys the Symbolic; it also literally renders us outside language. It can leave us without words, or grief-stricken. We are struck dumb by the power of our emotions; the mind and the body are united in their inability to psychically or physically contain our grief. *Patience* is my attempt to find a way to perform the experience of grief which was such a profound part of my own journey to motherhood.

When I was 18 weeks pregnant I was diagnosed with a grade 3 invasive ductal carcinoma of the breast. I had a lumpectomy while I was pregnant. My baby was delivered 8 weeks early by caesarean section and spent a fortnight in the Special Care Baby Unit because of feeding and breathing difficulties. After my daughter was born I had chemotherapy and radiotherapy. The local treatment was unsuccessful and I had a recurrence 12 months later, which meant I had a full mastectomy of the left breast. In *Patience* the grief I felt for the mother I thought I would be, the child I thought I would have, the loss of my healthy body, and the passing of my temporary status as able bodied were thrown at the audience through words and images. The script draws on my diary writings from the time, images of my various surgeries, photographs of my daughter's birth, films made of the future I had previously imagined for myself and my daughter, as well as the medical notes from my pregnancy, my daughter's birth and her time in hospital and my treatment. In *Patience* I attempt to bring my maternal grief to the fore in order to create a space for debate about the actualities of what it means to become a mother.

Emily Underwood-Lee

⁶ Jacques Lacan 'Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in Hamlet', *Yale French Studies* 55/56 (1977) pp. 11 – 52.

Grace Surman

I Love My Baby And My Baby Loves... (2010)



Still from *I Love My Baby And My Baby Loves...* , 2010. Photo by Grace Surman.

Grace Surman works around the terms performance, Live Art, theatre and choreography and has over 20 years experience of making solo and collaborative work exploring live presence, installation and video art. Her work has been presented nationally and internationally. She is interested in how we live and experience the world through constraints and conditions around us. The drive of the work is to explore and excavate these conditions, drawing on theatrical devices, process-based performance actions, feminist theories and contemporary culture.

www.gracesurman.wordpress.com/

Play

This performance for camera was made at home with my one year old son, whilst my four year old daughter was at school. It is a simple premise in that he is invited, or given reason to react and to interact with household, domestic materials in isolation and removed from some context: an apple, a bed sheet, white flour, white bread, me, water. This selection in particular is all materials, props, that I have used and explored in my personal performance practice. I present the items to him in a structure or pattern that begins to develop into a 'game' or 'play'.

The strategy of 'play' began in earnest in the practical research for a solo theatre work ...*White* (2003) before I had children. I spent many hours alone, alone in an empty studio space. Through this lengthy process I practiced a state of mind that allowed exploration and play. I fostered a concentration and focus that can be observed of playing children. There is something powerful in this state, and it took a long time to get there and then to understand what I was doing. I was interested in beginning with fragments and observations and thoughts, and through the process constructing a dialogue with the activities that inevitably responded.

Discovering the importance of play in child development through personal experience and research, has added to my desire to use it as a tool and concept with real fervor in my stage works *THINGS STACK UP* (2014) and *Performance With Hope* (due to take place in April 2017).

Grace Surman

Helen Sargeant

M(other) Stories (2015 - 2016)



M(other) Stories, 2015-2016. Photo by Helen Sargeant.

Helen Sargeant has developed a collaborative arts practice with her family and others with the aim of widening the representation of work related to arts practice and parenting. Between 2013 and 2014, she brought together 32 artists, academics and writers to work on *The Egg, The Womb, The Head and The Moon*, an on-line interdisciplinary arts project about the maternal, which lasted 42 weeks to mirror the duration of a pregnancy. In 2015 Helen presented *M(other) Stories* at the Motherhood and Creative Practices Conference, at the South Bank University and her work was shown as part of *Project AfterBirth* at The White Moose Galley, Barnstaple Devon. In 2016 she was invited to exhibit in the *Artist As Mother As Artist* exhibition at The Lace Market Gallery, Nottingham and later this year she will be taking part in a residency together with her son in Tampere, Finland as part of *We Are Resident*.

www.helensargeant.co.uk

Labour

I created *M(other) Stories*, an on-line journal of a mother/artist, over the duration of a year, writing and publishing a post each day as a way of representing honestly the physical and emotional labour of mothering. I had wanted to complete this project when my children were smaller, but it was only when my youngest son started school that I felt able to. Mostly my family were willing collaborators, however occasionally they were reluctant and sometimes there was animosity around the all consuming nature of the project.

M(other) Stories was inspired by Mierle Laderman Ukeles' *Manifesto for Maintenance Art* (1969) and Lisa Baraitser's writing in *Maternal Encounters The Ethics of Interruption* (2009) book.

Autobiographical writing is juxtaposed with photographs taken at home and during the school run using my smart phone camera. Photographs record the ever shifting, transitory time I share with my family. There are shadow portraits of me and my son playing, intimate observations of my son sleeping, his body and skin, collaged together with chalked marks drawn on the hard tarmac surface of the school playground. There are pictures of the kitchen table, of breakfasts being hastily eaten, dirty bowls and plates.

There are empty prams waiting to be pushed, washing lines hanging heavy with children's clothes, and the brightly coloured plastic paraphernalia of parenthood left abandoned on street corners; high chairs, baths, potties, scooters, bikes, toys. There is a sense of loss, a woman becoming middle aged, reaching her menopause.

M(other) Stories provided a container to record, capture, reflect upon and value my work, feelings, thoughts and actions as artist and as mother. Improvised, unedited, ad-hoc, made from within the unending messy place of mothering this was a work of endurance and ultimately exhaustion. Over the course of a year I published 332 posts.

Helen Sargeant

Helena Walsh

In Pursuit of Pleasure (2012)



In Pursuit of Pleasure, 2012. LABOUR, Void Gallery Derry/ Londonderry.
Photo by Jordan Hutchings.

Helena Walsh is an Irish artist and activist who has been based in London since 2003. Helena works with time, liveness and the materiality of the body, both within constructed installation environments and site-specific spaces. Helena has performed widely in galleries, museums, theatres and non-traditional art spaces, including public sites. In 2009 she received a Doctorate Award from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to undertake a practice-based PhD in the Department of Drama, Queen Mary University of London, which she completed in 2013. Over the course of her doctoral research, she used Live Art as a methodology to investigate the relations between gender, national identity and cultural history in an Irish context. She recently performed a site-responsive Live Art work that considers the activism of women during the 1916 Rising, in 'Future Histories' at Kilmainham Gaol in 2016.

www.helenawalsh.com/

Excess

In Pursuit of Pleasure was performed in the group, durational exhibition, LABOUR. In response to the theme of gender and labour my performance explored the simultaneous idealisation and denigration of motherhood in an Irish context. It took inspiration from June Goulding's memoir, based on her time as a mid-wife in the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary 'mother and baby home' in Bessboro, Co. Cork. Opened in 1922, the year the Irish Free State was established, this institution became a model for other such homes where 'first offenders'- women who fell pregnant outside of wedlock for the first time - were admitted. Following birth these women nursed their babies before being forced to give them up for adoption. Outlining the punitive nature of these Catholic institutions, Goulding recalls that the women were constantly taunted with one question: 'was the five minutes' pleasure worth all this?'⁷

Through interrogating the situating of penance as a condition of female sexual pleasure the performance challenged the ongoing territorial control of female reproductive autonomy, as exemplified by the rigid restrictions on abortion in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. In the performance I both parodied and positively violated iconography central to the excessive policing of the female body, taking aim at the self-sacrificing and nurturing Mother Ireland and the passive sexuality of the virginal Catholic Madonna. In deploying the processes of repetition and duration to reference my personal maternal experience, I performed the excessiveness of maternal labour, in all its messy, leaky, and at times, monotonous, glory. Unleashing the threatening or destabilising potentials of the female body led to an undoing of the sanctified, patriarchal versions of femininity that enable the systematic punishment of women. Over time, I found an immense pleasure in my labour.

Helena Walsh

⁷ June Goulding *The Light in the Window* (London: Ebury Press, 2005) p. 143.

Lena Šimić

Medea/Mothers' Clothes (2004 – 2016)



Medea/Mothers' Clothes, 2016. Studio 12, Bratislava. Photo by Jakub Čajko.

Lena Šimić is a mother of four boys, performance practitioner, pedagogue and scholar. Senior Lecturer in Drama at Edge Hill University. A co-organizer of the Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home, an art activist initiative in her family home in Liverpool, UK. Lena's arts practice concerning the maternal includes *4 Boys [for Beuys]* art activist book (2016), *Friday Records* Live Art event (Dublin Live Art Festival 2016), *Friday Records: A Document of Maternity Leave* blog (with baby James, 2014), *Full Term* (with Julieann O'Malley, short video film 2014), contributions to *the Egg the Moon the Head and the Moon* maternal artists network blog project (2013/2014), *mother & son: 'that just sounds really sad'* artist residency and performance (with Neal Anderson, 25 SG, 2011), *Sid Jonah Anderson by Lena Simic* Live Art event (with baby Sid, MAP Live, Carlisle, 2008), *Contemplation Time* (with baby Sid during maternity leave 2007/2008) and *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* (the Bluecoat, Liverpool, 2004).

www.lenasimic.org

Belonging

Back in 2004 *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* Live Art event was my pursuit for a certain kind of belonging in Liverpool. I was a young foreign mother/artist. I needed friends for myself and my children, context and critical frame for my arts practice. In toddler groups in a community centre on Lark Lane and the Unitarian Church on Ullet Road I encountered stimulating conversations around alternative ways of raising children; my children and I made friends. The Bluecoat Arts Centre, under the Live Art programming of Cathy Butterworth, provided me with a much needed arts context. Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris, who were my PhD supervisors at Lancaster University, introduced me to a critical context of feminist ethics and subjectivity. These were my points of belonging in 2004, my steps towards agency.

Medea/Mothers' Clothes Live Art event juxtaposes my experience of becoming a (m)other in the contexts of Liverpool toddler groups with the myth of Medea, an anti-mother archetype. On stage I publically carry my lived experience, my everyday private struggle, my maternal ambivalence. I bang against the universal misrepresentations of (m)others. *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* (supported by the Arts Council England) was developed at the Bluecoat in Liverpool, toured the UK, Croatia and Cuba until 2007, and was recreated for Studio 12 in Bratislava in 2016.

Putting *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* in front of the audiences in Slovakia, a country where I studied theatre directing at the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts from 1995 to 1999, allowed me to mark my artistic development and history, note my Live Art bonds as well as disidentify from any nationality, any art form, any idealized representations of motherhood and art.

I am reminded of a quote from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak I came across whilst writing about *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* for my PhD:

People are similar not by virtue of being similar, but by virtue of producing a differential, or by virtue of thinking of themselves as other than a self-identical example of the species.⁸

We are all different mother/artists here. We carry our own differentials. Yet, here, in this publication of *Study Room Guide on Live Art and Motherhood*, I notice and enact my kind of belonging, my context and ultimately my agency.

Lena Šimić

⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, edited by Sarah Harasym. (New York and London: Routledge, 1990) p. 136.

Liz Clarke

I Tattooed My Baby (2013)



'Onwards! To Mothercare!' in *I Tattooed My Baby*, 2013. Tobacco Factory Theatre.
Photo by Joseph Turp.

Liz Clarke is a Live Artist. Her performance work is mostly body based, placed somewhere in the murky boundaries between theatre, Live Art and cabaret, between gender, between reality and dreamscapes. Her work is strongly connected with representing the Female through alienation, intimacy and construction of mythical, impossible Hyperfeminine archetypes. When not creating her own work she uses her unique blend of socially engaged practice and exploratory devising processes to encourage people to take supported risks through creating new work. She has performed on stages, understairs, in cars, in giant balloons and clubs worldwide, including *In Between Time*, *Arnolfini*, *Duckie*, *Tobacco Factory*, *Mayfest*, *Hazard & Buzzcut*. She is also resident artist with *Beacons Icons & Dykons*.

www.lizclarke.org/

Conformity

I Tattooed My Baby was a performance I made with my 9-month-old daughter (Tobacco Factory Theatre 2013). Looking back I sometimes wonder why I did it, why I wasn't just sitting in the park, or enjoying the elasticated waistline of the still present maternity jeans. I think the lack of sleep made me a little crazy.

Revisiting the script however I remember the urgency I felt and the absurdity of the landscape I found myself in. The accepted images and activities of motherhood that just, well, didn't really sit comfortably with me.

The work was about blueprints we impress upon our children, it was also about the way our family lives and works and about the rights of the very young.

Having my daughter on stage throughout the piece mirrored how my life was at the time. All encompassing, merged, boundaries crossed, ideas all tied in with Motherhood, Work, Art, Life. In the show she fed, she interrupted my flow, she laughed, she gurgled.

Codes of Conformity: places where it's OK to be a mother, and where it is definitely not, played out throughout the piece as did assumptions about mothers and children. There were transformations in the piece, using costume to conform to expected norms of how a mother should look, but also to swerve and shatter them. Modesty aprons that turned into superhero capes, dangerously impractical heels... The final costume was a ridiculous blue lamé number with tattoo style hearts over the nipples (lift up for easy feeding access).

The act of having a baby present on stage throughout the piece broke certain rules of conformity and acceptability, both in theatrical convention and everyday life. Bringing the chaos, delight and struggles of artist-motherhood into view and talking about the light and the dark of this chosen path is something I was interested in exploring *When I Tattooed My Baby*.

Liz Clarke

Lizzie Philps

Maternity Leaves (2013)



Nine Paces, *Maternity Leaves*, 2013. Photo by Lizzie Philps.

Lizzie Philps' work explores walking practices as a way to articulate the maternal experience. Her live documentation of a 50-mile journey carrying her baby to her mother's house, *The Pilgrimage of the Prodigal Daughter* (2013), was developed as part of Bristol Old Vic's Ferment. Performance, exhibition and publication contexts include the international Motherhood and Creativity conference at London Southbank University (2015), *The Walking Encyclopedia* (2014) and *Ways to Wander* (2015) book. As Artistic Director of Full Beam for 14 years, Lizzie toured work to Mayfest, MAC, Suspense Festival, and made participatory and site based events with partners including At-Bristol, Tobacco Factory, Bath Theatre Royal, DANA centre, and Situations. Lizzie's practice-based PhD research considers walking documentation and its potential to re-frame the maternal beyond the suburban and the sentimental. Lizzie is Course Leader of the BA in Drama and Performance at SGS College, validated by the University of Gloucestershire.

www.lizziephilps.com/

Resistance

I wasn't what you'd call a resistant artist before I had a child. But there is nothing like pushing a buggy to bring home the dreaded complicity of being "just" a mum. Words like natural and instinct become silencing devices to those who ask why everything has changed. Suddenly there is a lot to get cross about.

Maternity Leaves explores the boundaries of my own developing resistance, of the visceral and performative intersections between Live Art documentation and maternal ambivalence, through photographs taken in public spaces during the first year of my daughter's life. Creating the distance needed for the photos became an invisible performance, witnessed by an unwitting audience of imaginary social workers posing as passing dog walkers. What began as a personal dare to take a few more steps away from the buggy than was comfortable became an intentional act of provocation; the difference between "ah, look, a mother photographing her baby" and "what the hell is she doing?!" is only a few paces. Though the titles, detailing the number of steps taken, are a plaintiff acknowledgement of responsibility, through this momentary transgression I wanted to trouble definitions of "good" mothering and to challenge the viewers' right to assess my own.

In the age of the selfie to record motherhood through absence seems obtuse, but, the slippery nature of performance documentation and Phelan's familiar betrayal of reproduction takes on new irony.⁹ And these were never baby photos. Whether exploring actual and perceived risk, framing my daughter as a posed object in the landscape, or casting the viewer as apprehended by a seemingly abandoned buggy, these records of my physical detachment reflect my fierce refusal to perform sentiments I didn't always have, or to feel guilty about declaring this artistically.

Lizzie Philps

⁹ Peggy Phelan *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (Routledge: London, 1993).

Mothersuckers Project (Eve Dent and Zoë Gingell)

Breastcups (2011)



Breastcups, 2011. Chapter, Cardiff. Photo by Thomas Bartlett.

Since 1999 **Eve Dent** has performed widely both in the UK and Europe. She is best known for the 'Anchor Series' - ongoing improvisations tailored uniquely to a building or space. Her work has concerned the positioning of the body and the blurring of boundaries of subject and object in architectural space; since becoming a mother she has begun to explore the maternal body as site itself. She also exhibits prints of her performances. In addition she has taught at the University of Wales Institute Cardiff and Gloucestershire University.

Zoë Gingell is an artist and curator whose practice has spanned across painting, theatre design, installation and film-making. Since becoming a mother she has focused on Motherhood as a subject matter, collaborating with partner Josh Leeson and her children. She co-established Cardiff M.A.D.E a CiC organization located in a gallery space in 2013 and is a mentor for postgraduates on the Inc space programme at Cardiff School of Art & Design.

Eve and Zoë have been collaborating on the 'Mothersuckers Project' since 2009.

www.mothersuckersproject.blogspot.co.uk/

Collaboration

Our collaborative practice began with a series of weekly conversations during which we discussed how the process of becoming a Mother had physically and psychologically altered our sense of self; how we felt as individuals about the transformative maternal body; notions of how body changed for us in pregnancy, becoming the 'other', body as an other, me and not me.

Since our meeting, we have found an exciting and enlivening point of discussion of ideas around the pregnant body, the psyche/self and the breast as a symbol of both connection and separation; questions around a relationship that involves an emotional and psychological evolution through the medium of a shared physical journey.

The piece *Breastcups* evolved from initial ideas to actively work with the subject of 'other-body'. We wanted to use breastmilk as a performative object in itself - using this material body produced in conjunction with the baby (as it cannot be produced without the baby). In *Breastcups* an intimate 'act', expressing milk, becomes a public act. *Breastcups*, combines video, sculpture and performance, to re-present the maternal body; physically displaced through its table-setting, breasts served up as cake and cups on doilies, sitting next to umbilical tubes and feeding paraphernalia, all wrapped in politeness. The collecting of milk, the ever present fluid, acts as a connective currency between the intimate, primitive act of nurture, and a world of manners, tea-time.

Eve's daughter Isla became a willing participant in a staged scenario as a baby and then as a toddler. "The bottom line was that the desire was coming from her wanting to connect to me through breastfeeding. Inclusion of my child added a level of the unexpected and moment to moment creation/adaptation."

The inclusion of the child / maternal self as part of the performance, was also a practical decision in order to facilitate the continuation of one's own practice.

Zoë Gingell and Eve Dent

Miffy Ryan

My Nana's Wedding (Gown) (2010)



My Nana and Grandpa's Wedding in 1949 and *My Nana's Wedding (Gown)*, 2010.
Photo by Alan Duncan.

Miffy Ryan is a performance, prose and digital media artist. Her doctoral research at Loughborough University focuses on the topic of Mother-Daughter performance to camera. She is co-creator, with Vladick Morariu, of *The Satellite Group at Parade* (2010), which is featured in the Chelsea College of Art Critical Practice publication *Modes of Assembly, Forms of Address* (2010). Miffy's *Wearable Sound Machine* was performed at *Circuit* at DMU and the *in-dialogue* symposium, Nottingham. Her spoken word work has featured at the *Dead Good Poets Society*, *Poetics of the Campus* and *Speech Acts*, the latter two at Loughborough University. Her performances include *Waiting, Resting and Sniffing in Public Places*, shown at *Performative Mischief* Loughborough and *Shining, Shimmering Glittering Vomit*, Nottingham Contemporary (2013); *Studio Performance's With Matilda* (2011-2012) which featured in the *Procreate* archive at the Wal (2015); and *My Nana's Wedding (Gown)* (2010) which was exhibited at *Cyberspace & The Myth of Gender* in Chongqing (2010).

www.miffyryan.wordpress.com

Generations

This performance with my Grandmother's wedding dress is my attempt to explore the potential in the camera to help me realise and sustain a visualisation of my Nana whilst she prepared for her wedding in the 1940's. The camera in this context has a very specific purpose in my performance as equipment, or a creative tool that can bridge a gap between me and her – she is deceased. Tools, for Heidegger, are central to a conception of being, a conception not based in a transcendent model but in being-in-the-world; as outlined in his seminal work *Being and Time* (1927), or in other words the everydayness of being. It is only when we make use of the thing that we understand or apprehend it; Heidegger uses the hammer as an example, although here we shall replace it with 'wedding dress' and 'camera'. Knowledge on the nature of being (my Grandmother) can only be gained through use; the conjunction of performance and camera allows me to be there, and be her.

The only image that remains in my mind of my Grandmother is the formal one that she posed for on the steps of the registry office with my Grandfather, who is in uniform. My Grandmother clings to my Grandfather's arm and smiles into the camera. The white dress that initially I had wafted about immerses me; instead of representing my pure, feminine, vulnerable, *supposed* desires, it suffocates me and places me in a straight-jacket. This is not heartfelt, in fact it is rather tongue-in-cheek and a play on pre-suppositions. My Grandmother did not marry as a virgin, she had lived and worked alone, smoked, rode a bicycle around London, delivered babies in the blitz, and married a black man in her late twenties.

I made this work in a locked studio where the performance was only ever encountered as 'live' by the cameraman who photographed me; which was problematic at the time, and remains so because, as we know from Irigaray's writing on the topic, 'the ludic mimicry, the fiction, the "make believe," the "let's pretend" [...] are stopped short, impeded, *controlled by a master-signifier*, the phallus, and by its representative(s)'.¹⁰ The struggle inside the dress mirrors the struggle inside the frame.

Miffy Ryan

¹⁰ Luce Irigaray *Speculum of the Other Woman* translated by Gillian C. Gill (New York: Cornell University Press, 1974) p. 60.

Tracy Evans

caesura (2013)



caesura, 2013. Photo by Jess Rose.

Tracy Evans is a performance artist, researcher, poet and mother of two sons. Originally from Ireland, now based in South Wales, she has worked in a variety of community, educational and arts settings for 15 years. She started making solo performance in 2012 and since then, she has been exploring narratives, rhythm and caesura in the ways women perform their birth stories. Performances include *twenty minutes* (2012), *caesura* (2013), *Rehearsals for a Birth Story* (2014), *AfterBirth* (2016) and *CORD* (2016/17). Tracy's ongoing performance practice is embedded in deep listening, somatic movement and écriture feminine. She is committed to creating performance events which are transformative for her, and which serve her audiences by creating resonant spaces to find themselves in her work. Her practice as research PhD was undertaken at Aberystwyth University, funded by the AHRC, under the supervision of Jill Greenhalgh and Dr Karoline Gritzner.

www.traceofthesea.com/welcome.html

Erasure

leaving this moment forever - she
 caught the tongues of gulls on cliffs she
 watched the colour drain from her skin,
 she lost her eyes...

caesura (2013) is a 6 hour durational, one-to-one performance, which responds to my experience of giving birth to my first son by caesarean section and under general anaesthetic. When I made the decision to have a caesarean, I felt part of me “leave”: where did I go? Clearly my body did not leave. There is a *persistence* of body, in fact. My body held the physical memory of both the birth and the child that was taken from me. *caesura*, then, was an attempt to recover something of myself in performance that had been lost, erased in the birth.

A brightly lit foyer. Chairs around the walls. Waiting. A small television screen in the corner. A woman speaking her birth story over and over. The sound is low. You have to move closer to hear it. Someone comes to take you away. A dark, narrow hallway. A chair at the end. Dim light. Red. You bare your feet. Wait. Alone. You are given a red thread. You take it through the doors. Path of light. Through the curtain. Labyrinth. Sand. A woman sits in the centre. White dress, whitened skin. Red blindfold. Stillness. Silence. Threshold. Enter. Follow the path. Centre. Opposite her. Exchange sound for thread. Sewn onto her dress.

Ribbon-thin stitches,
 sealing the last cracks in my heart,
 are a line of ants
 carrying blood
 to the petrified tissue.

A red seed taken from her mouth, falls to the floor.

Before you turn around to leave
 Stay awhile, do.
 Here, we can rest.

This togetherness
 Soothes –

Shall we call it the Present?

Yes. And return me
 again again again –

Stillness. Silence. You leave.

Tracy Evans

Zoo Indigo

Under the Covers (2010)



'It's time for a break from it all' in *Under the Covers*, 2010. Brighton Fringe Festival, Nightingale Theatre. Photo by Alissa Watts.

Zoo Indigo is a Nottingham based Anglo-German performance company, founded by Rosie Garton and Ildiko Rippel. They tour regionally, nationally and internationally with street interventions, site-specific and theatre-based projects. Their work engages with social and political issues surrounding motherhood, gender and cultural identity. *Under the Covers* (2010) set up live video links to the performers' real-life sleeping babies and projected them into the performance space asking the audience to babysit so the duo could perform. This work has been featured in significant journals such as *Theatre Research International*, *Theatre History Studies* and the book *Observing Theatre. No Woman's Land* (2015) saw the duo re-walking the journey of a relative, who after being violently expelled from Poland in 1945, walked 220 miles through Germany, dragging her two small children and all her belongings in a cart. This new performance work on treadmills draws from the historical and current contexts of this walk. Additionally there is film documentary of the walk touring exhibition centres.

www.zooindigo.co.uk/

Fantasy

This is the fantasy of motherhood that shamefully wept from my rock solid breasts with no mouth to feed. This is the performance that could only happen once my pre-stretched stomach produced a breathing child, or two. This is the confused longing to escape achieved motherhood, an escape akin to a sexual fantasy that only works if it never happens.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we couldn't afford babysitters this evening, please look after our children while we tip-toe out of lullaby reality to drive wildly, just for an hour (adhering to speed limits).

Yes, Ladies and Gentlemen, we are living our fantasy. We are performing at the venues we aspired to. Selling out. Getting paid. Staying overnight. Yes, we are going to stay up until at least 11.55pm. We are definitely *not* going to fall asleep in our twin hotel beds watching *The Changeling*. Because we have organised child-care. We are living the dream. But at this minute, pre-performance, we are sitting on a toilet, weeing. Sitting on the toilet, undoing our shirts to our belly buttons. Sitting on the toilet, preparing an empty milk bottle, attaching a breast pump. Balancing our mobile phones on our lap. Plopping the boob into the plastic, watching the nipple suck through the vacuum, into a new shape, until almost bleeding in those first few pumps. One hand pump, pump, pump. One hand on the phone, swiping to a photo of the baby, to induce the milk. Hands full of pump and phone... our babies, there they are, laughing, crying, feeding, Facebook, emails, work, timetables, plans... milk stops, shit, ow, ow, ow. Nipples expressing blood-milk. Backtrack to photos... babies, milk, aaagh, there she flows, like sieved gold. A half-bottle-full. Breasts emptied and ready to step on stage now, the black box fantasy. Button up, admire, smile, and tip the bottle down the toilet, pump, pump, glug. Milk tears. Sorry kids, sorry breasts.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for babysitting.

Rosie Garton

An Unfinished Response

In the summer of 2016 during the school holidays, here we are with all the artworks, all the words, all the images, uncertainties. What stays? A resolution to stay active, a proposition to keep on, a refusal to pretend that all is as it was before. There's a new becoming, a new formation, a new sense of possibility, a new way of making, a new aesthetics, a new relation, a new sense of solidarity, a new politics.

We remember Lizzie's escapes from the pram, Helena's search for pleasure in politics, Helen's everyday aesthetic struggle; we remember Áine's invitation to the audience to desire her leaking body and Elena's counting to 140, finding a way to be herself when othered. Bean reclaimed the queer, Tracy searched for the lost 20 minutes, Rosie and Ildiko found friendship in touring and 'living the dream' whilst their babies slept at home. Zoë and Eve and Liz brought their babies with them. Grace embraced playfulness by turning her home into the site of performance. Resistance and labour. Overcoming and becoming.

So much space, so many gaps. What falls between them and who is missing?

As we read this guide again we think 'we are the good mothers, we are the political mothers, and we are the mothers with the energy, time and resources to fight for representation and to make artistic practice'.

As we walk through our cities thinking of Clare's perambulations we notice the women who surround us and we wonder 'what is their experience of mothering?':

Have they children waiting at home?

Are their children lost to them?

Could their children be off with friends?

Have their children grown and left and do they come back?

Are their children only memories?

Did their children never exist?

Women are born with our eggs already within us (or not), our potential as biological mothers set in place before we even take a breath. Anna's Yerma struggling with and against our maternal fates.

Generations of mother's remembering and re-enacting, Miffy's grandmother remembered through her wedding dress and brought into our memories through performance.

So many mothers, so many children, so many stories heard and unheard.

Emily Underwood-Lee and Lena Šimić

Study Room resources on artists featured in the guide

Bobby Baker *Drawing on a Mother's Experience* (1988) Ref: D0963

Áine Philips *sex, birth and death* (2003) Ref: P3026

Anna Furse *Yerma's Eggs* (2003) Ref: EF5223

Bean *(m)other/ the untitled* (2014) Ref: EF5226

Clare Qualmann *Perambulator* (2014) Ref: P3002

Elena Marchevska *Valid until...* (2009-2011) Ref: D2222

Emily Underwood-Lee *Patience* (2009/2010) Ref: P3032

Grace Surman *I Love My Baby and My Baby Loves...* (2010) Ref: D2221

Helen Sargeant *M(other) Stories* (2015 - 2016) Ref: P3027

Helena Walsh *In Pursuit of Pleasure* (2012) Ref: D2181

Lena Simic *Medea/Mothers' Clothes* (2004 – 2016) Ref: D0426

Liz Clarke *I Tattooed my Baby* (2013) Ref: P3029

Lizzie Philips *Maternity Leaves* (2013) Ref: D2220

Mothersuckers (Zoë Gingell and Eve Dent) *Breastcups* (2011) Ref: P3030

Miffy Ryan *My Nana's Wedding (Gown)* (2010) Ref: P3028

Tracy Evans *caesura* (2013) Ref: D2219

Zoo Indigo *Under the Covers* (2010) Ref: P3031

Reading List

Study Room

Amber E. Kinser, Kryn Freehling-Burton and Terri Hawkes *Performing Motherhood: Artistic, Activist, and Everyday Enactments* (Bradford: Demeter Press, 2014). Ref: P3033

Andrea Liss *Feminist Art and the Maternal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009). Ref: P3035

Andrea Liss, Jennie Klein, Karen van Meenen, Moyra Davey, and Rachel Hall *Maternal Metaphors: Artists/Mothers/Artwork* (Aardvark Global Publishing Company, 2004). Ref: P3034

Annie Rigby, Duška Radosavljević and Lena Šimić *The Mums and Babies Ensemble* (Liverpool: The Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home, 2015). Ref: P2795

Helena Walsh 'Developing Dialogues: Live Art and Femininity in Post-Conflict Ireland' in *Performance Art in Ireland: A History*, edited by Áine Phillips (London: Live Art Development Agency and Intellect, 2015). Ref: P2642

Lena Šimić *Maternal Matters and Other Sisters* (Liverpool: The Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home, 2009). Ref: P2742

Margrit Shildrick *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries: Feminism, Postmodernism and (Bio)ethics* (London: Routledge, 1997). Ref: P3036

General

'Maternal Aesthetics: The Surprise of the Real', *Studies in the Maternal*, 5(1).

Adrienne Rich *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1996, originally published 1976).

Anna F. D. Furse 'Art of A.R.T.' *Gender Forum: An Internet Journal for Gender Studies* (2003) 6.

Bracha Ettinger *The Matrixial Borderspace* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

Griselda Pollock *Differencing the Canon: Feminism and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London: Routledge, 1999).

Hannah Arendt *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

Helen Sargeant 'Birth: Icon Drawing' *Studies in the Maternal* (2012) 4.1.

Jennie Klein and Meryl Chernick *The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art* (Bradford: Demeter Press, 2011).

Jozefina Komporaly *Staging Motherhood: British Women playwrights, 1956 to the present*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Julia Kristeva *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, edited by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

Lisa Baraitser *Maternal Encounters: Ethics of Interruption* (London: Routledge, 2009).

Lise Haller Baggesen *Motherism* (Green Lantern Press, 2014).

Moyra Davey, editor *Mother Reader: Essential Literature on Motherhood* (Seven Stories Press, 2011).

Naomi Wolf *Misconceptions: Truth, Lies, and the Unexpected on the Journey to Motherhood* (London: Vintage, 2002).

Natalie Loveless *New Maternalisms* (Available at <http://newmaternalisms.ca/>, n.d.). Phyllis

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