

# ARTIST/PARENT

Sat 4th Feb-Sat 4th March

**AIR**  
Gallery

## **Exhibition runs**

Saturday 4th February- Saturday 4th March

## **Meet the Artists**

Saturday 4th February 1-4pm

## **Creative Embroidery Workshop for kids**

with artist Christina Rose Brown

Sunday 5th February 11am-12noon

£5 per child

Book via eventbrite or at the front desk

## **Collage.Paint.De-Stress**

with artist Lucy Cade

Saturday 18th February 2pm-4pm

£5 per person

Book via eventbrite or at the front desk

**We'd love to hear your feedback and  
your own personal stories  
Share these by scanning the QR below**



## **Exhibiting Artists**

### **Main Gallery**

Andrea Allan / Caroline McCambridge / Christina Rose Brown  
Hettie Judah / Kathryn Jago / Lāsma Poiša / Lauren McLaughlin  
Lexi Strauss / Liz Locke / Lucy Cade / Mike Chavez-Dawson  
Mishka Henner / Richard Shields / Sally Butcher

### **(RE)PRODUCTION: Parenthood and the Art World**

Symposium by Andrea Allan includes the work of:  
Alma Haser / Carli Adby / Adele Annett / Amelia Lancaster  
Boglarka Varga / Sally Butcher / Jocelyn Allen / Marta Mengardo  
Maura Jamieson / Nikki Davidson Bowman / Rezia Wahid  
Dyana Gravina / Victoria Smits / Lauren McLaughlin  
Frank Abruzzese Jill Skulina

### **Micro Gallery**

Carli Adby-Notley

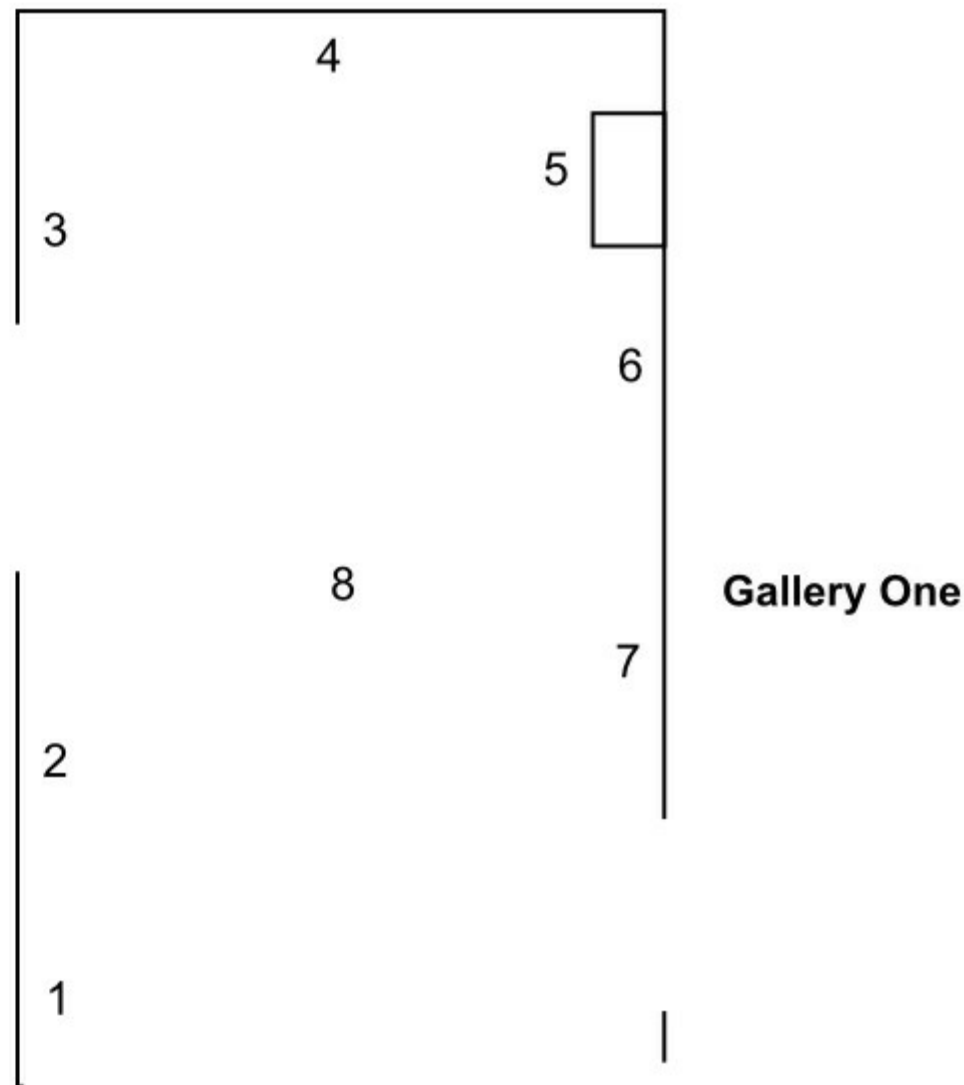
## Introduction

This exhibition is exploring the theme of parenthood; from artists who are already parents, those who are expecting and those in which parenthood may not be an option.

The subject of parenthood is a contentious one in the art world; historically the attitude has been that works on this theme have been dismissed and not taken seriously. But parenting is an experience many of us will face in our lifetimes; whether this be through the role of becoming a parent ourselves or a care giving role we may undertake as family members age. As a universal shared experience, why are institutions not doing more to look at this as a subject and provide a platform for these personal experiences to be shared.

Since the pandemic there has been a surge of artist/parents seeking to change the systematic exclusion they face in the current climate. Many are overlooked for opportunities as it is assumed they won't be able to give the project their full attention; many who reduce their creativity or take a break from their practice to raise a child are penalised for taking time out; many residencies don't allow for children to come along and most exhibition openings take place in the evening when parents are trying to get their child to bed. Inequalities like this need to be addressed and we need to challenge the once pervasive conception that artists cannot be dedicated to their creative work while raising a family.

All the artists highlighted in this exhibition are proof that you can find this balance. The show presents a discourse to show that art about children, the domestic and parenting need not be kitschy or sentimental but instead the work brings to light the mosaic of issues, unexpected moments and opportunities that arise for artists when they become parents; and the intimate, poignant and illuminating work which results at the intersection of art-making and family life.



1. **Lāsma Poiša**, *Untitled*, Photography £300
2. **Christina Rose Brown**, *6:02*, Embroidery on Quilted Linen, £900
3. **Lucy Cade**, *Snakes & Lions Beware*, Oil and Acrylic, £900
4. **Mike Chavez-Dawson**, *Parent-Thesis-Action, Preliminaries Part 1 2023*, Mixed, POA
5. **Liz Lock**, *MotherChild*, Photograph, POA
6. **Mishka Henner**, *Isle of You*, Framed Print, Commissions -£500
7. **Sally Butcher**, *Infertile Platitudes of Embodied Emptiness series (2020)*, Sonogram Archival Print, NFS
8. **Sophie Jones** 'My Child Could Have Done That' series, Felt-tip Pen and Cotton Thread on Unbleached Calico, £450 each



## Room One

In Gallery One some of the main themes explored include intimate moments, family bonds and societal pressures.

To the left of the main gallery and starting the show is the work of **Lāsma Poiša**, a photographer and educator from the North West. Her practice uses methods of documentary, portraiture and performance through still and moving image. Since becoming a parent in early 2022, her work has explored the themes of birth and motherhood through personal reflections. Like many female photographers, she turned to this subject on one hand to capture this experience for her family album, but also because it became the only opportunity for creative output during this time. Becoming a mother is a challenging time of severe transformation. It is both, life's greatest joy and a pathway to one's deepest darkness. As such her work exposes the realities of motherhood that largely remain hidden; with the view to resonate with other parents that also struggle to relate to the glorified image of parenthood perpetuated in visual culture.



Personal reflections and struggles are also featured in the works of **Christina Rose Brown**, an artist and educator from London. Her hand embroidered drawings explore the liminal state between sleep and consciousness that comes with sharing a bed with restless babies. Her eldest is autistic and it is common for children with ASD to suffer with severe sleep disturbances. This beautiful textile work has captured a rare moment of calm when all three of them have fallen asleep together. These fleeting moments are further heightened by the abstract quality of the stitched line and the crumpled linen- evoking that half-awake, half-asleep dreamlike state. The tea staining is also significant to the work. Symbolising both British identity but also the experience of motherhood; from the first cup of extra surgery tea post-birth to the endless half drunk cups left around the house. Tea is one of the first things we turn to at difficult times, how we look after ourselves and each other, how we express our love.



Many of the artists within this exhibition present the fluctuating emotions between overwhelming love and extreme exhaustion. In Gallery one this is most prominent in the work of Liz Lock and Lucy Cade. **Lucy Cade's** work explores her own experience of postnatal psychosis and this piece "Snakes & Lions Beware" encapsulates this perfectly. The work itself gives an uneasy feeling of conflicting states of being; where the mothers love and urge to protect her child is giving her a 'laser focus' even in the grips of psychosis. Similar to the previous artists, Cade is highlighting the unseen face of parenthood, raising awareness of the impact both on the body and on the mind and yet giving a heightened sense of the joys and demands of early parenthood.



Similar themes are also explored in the works of **Liz Lock**; an artist with a background in documentary photography. This beautiful small photograph encapsulated the contradictory feeling of being both equally drained and filled up at the same time. The mother figure is seen to be fiercely staring down the viewer in a protective yet exhausted gaze, accompanied with multiple references to her new status as 'Mom' on her necklace and arm. Liz has recently returned to art after a significant gap in my career after having two children who are now in full time school.



Exploring parent-child relationships further is the work of **Mike Chavez-Dawson**, a conceptual artist whose works often questions the legacy of defunct belief systems, art & design history and seeks to empower the audience. Mike has two children and has worked collaboratively with his sons at different stages of his practice-including this new work *Parent-Thesis-Action, Preliminaries Part 1*. This multi-part work sees the artist giving his children the rights to recreate any of their artworks/bodies of works acting as 'Mike Chavez-Dawson' from beyond the grave. It includes the contract, recreation of the artist signature, recreations of his current text-Rorschach series, a video work explaining the process and an original acrylic painting of Richard Hamilton's re-construction of the large glass (by Duchamp) by his son Lucio under the tuition of Mike and fellow artist Rebecca Davy. These collective works bring to question the idea of legacy-questioning the extension of your existence through the survival of your genes as ideas and methodologies; But also the influence and reactions of your children to your life as a creative artist.

Working our way around the room clockwise, we come to the work of **Mishka Henner** who, similar to Chavez-Dawson, has been making work reflecting on family and experience as he has watched his children grow. For the past few years, has been producing biographies of peoples lives as Island maps. These are often portraits of families, including locations, people, experiences, interests and dislikes significant to them. Post-COVID, the idea that we are all islands has taken on extra resonance for Mishka, especially in the context of families who experienced lockdown together, each of us in our own domestic bubbles for good or for worse.



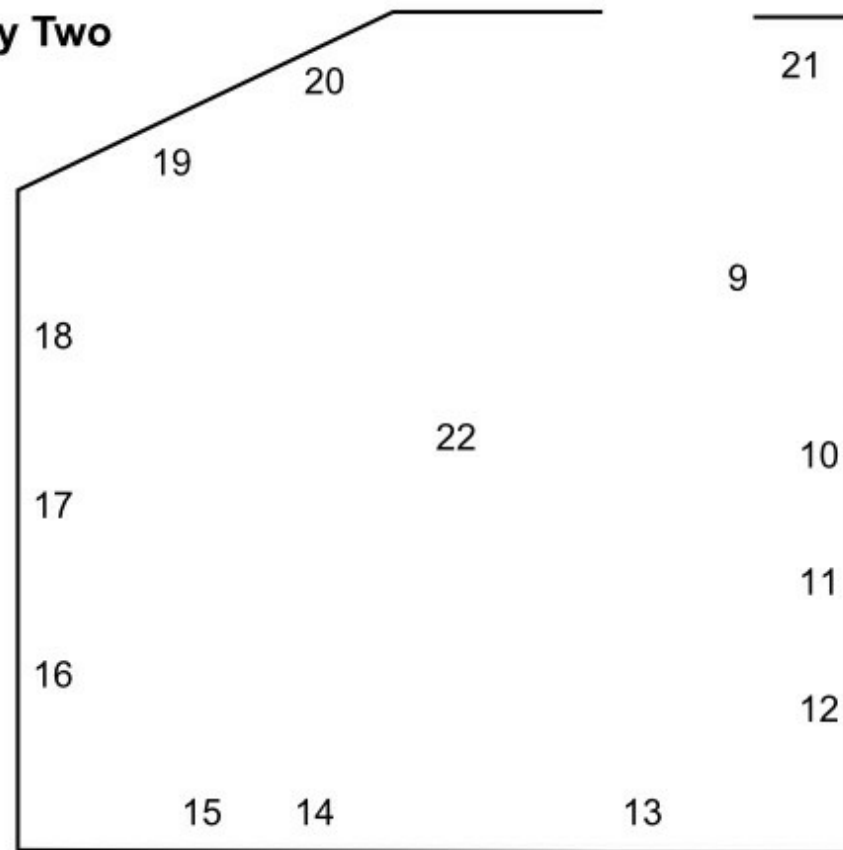


In the centre of the main room hangs the work of textile artist **Sophie Jones**. Sophie tackles ideas surrounding young parenthood and domesticity, as well as the dual labour of balance their art practice and parental responsibility. These three tapestries are part of a much larger collection of works called *'My Child Could Have Done That'*; a series documenting and preserving objects from her child's early years. These works portray their child's uninhibited felt-tip scribbles, immortalised using split-stitch embroidery with cotton thread. This technique mimics the thick lines of the felt-tip marks but also creates a physical presence upon the surface. The act of seizing these drawings from their child and stitching into them reflects a childlike selfishness of taking an object for self-gain, whilst also noticing that tracing these rudimentary marks speaks of the intimacy of parent-child relationships. The works have been titled by their child immediately after creation and subsequently given an article number to highlight that this object is a record of a specific stage in their child's development. The series title *'My Child Could Have Done That'* also plays to the dismissal of children's 'art' in the professional sphere, preemptively titling the work with the very criticism it may receive. The overall works are a playful yet poignant reminder of the temporarily of children's early years of creative expression.



To the right of the first gallery is the work of **Sally Butcher** which brings a different take to the theme by exploring her own personal lived experience of infertility. Infertility is a time when you are seen as non-maternal but you are completely and utterly enveloped in the concept of this, both physically and psychologically, but also silently and invisibly. It is a relevant part of what the artist calls the *'Maternal Spectrum'* and is a vital narrative to include in the bigger picture of parenthood. The series *'Infertile Platitudes of Embodied Emptiness'* mimic the uterine projection of ultrasound scans but instead show the outside of the abdomen, an impenetrable surface marked with the umbilicus (belly button) as a symbol of the original maternal connection, now striving to mother another. With a body full of hormones and a mind exhausted by constant thoughts of an unattainable state of pregnancy, the innocent platitudes you endure over this time remain monotonous and hollow in their own embodied emptiness.

## Gallery Two



9. **Hettie Judah**, *How not to exclude artist mothers*, Publication, Gallery copy only
10. **Richard Shields**,
11. **Lucy Cade**, *Chin Up (Eirene & Ploutos)*, Oil on Linen, £1200
12. **Lauren McLaughlin**, *Untitled (Madonna Series)*, Analogue Collages, £220
13. **Lexi Strauss**, *Tupperware Party*, Handpainted lithographic, £350 (£550 framed)
- 14-15. **Kathryn Jago**, *The Height of Instability & Clutter Brain*, Print, £400 each
16. **Caroline McCambridge**, *Stepping Stone*, Acrylic, spray paint, clothes line, nail, pieces from clothes horse, £850
17. **Caroline McCambridge**, *Islanded*, Plunger, fringing, oven element, clothes line, acrylic, spray paint, rolling pin, screw £850
18. **Caroline McCambridge**, *full stop or pregnant pause*, Plunger, acrylic, stocking, screw, £500
19. **Christina Rose Brown**, *Consumed*, Embroidery on quilted linen, £500
20. **Lexi Strauss**, *Anxiety is the Beginning of Conscience, which is the Parent of the Soul, but Incompatible with Innocence*. (Angela Carter), Acrylic on Paper, POA
21. **Lexi Strauss**, *I always loved you, I just didn't understand you until now*. acrylic on paper, POA
22. **Andrea Allan**, *(Re)Production; Parenthood and the art world*, Video and Zine

## Room Two

Moving into the Gallery Two; the works explore open conversations bringing to light the anxiety, loss of self and moments of challenge, chaos and pause.

To the left is the newest publication by artist **Hettie Judah** ' *How Not To Exclude Artist Mothers (and other parents)*'. For too long, artists have been told that they can't have both motherhood and a successful career. In this polemical volume, critic and campaigner Hettie Judah argues that a paradigm shift is needed within the art world to take account of the needs of artist mothers (and other parents: artist fathers, parents who don't identify with the term 'mother', and parents in other sectors of the art world). Drawing on interviews with artists internationally, the book highlights some of the success stories that offer models for the future, from alternative support networks and residency models, to studio complexes with onsite childcare, and galleries with family-friendly policies. However the art world in it's current state needs restructuring to accommodate the artist/parent and this book argues that by making changes and becoming more sensitive to the needs of artist parents, the art world has much to gain. Please do feel free to pick up the book and have a read whilst browsing the gallery today.

In the centre of the room is the work of **Andrea Allan**, a Manchester Based artist who works across photography, text and book arts. This video slideshow and zine were an outcome of a symposium called '*(RE)PRODUCTION: PARENTHOOD AND THE ART WORLD*' held last year that looked at how artists parents/carers balance and sustain their professional and personal creativity and the demands of a family. The talks were recorded and are available to listen to through the artists website at <https://www.andreaallan.co.uk/reproduction-parenthood-and-the-art-world>.

The resulting research from the symposium was brought together in a collection of two zines by the artist Jill Skulina; which reflected on the talks and the Q&A section. Please feel free to read the zines or take one home with you.



Circling the room clockwise, the first wall to the left explores the theme of parenthood from personal experiences of conflicting emotions, intertwined with historical references. The first is the work of **Richard Shields**, whose inspiration is the greek god of war; Ares and his twin sons 'Phobos' (fear and panic) and 'Deimos' (terror and dread). Richards first experience as a parent was both a violent and loving act as he cut the umbilical cord connecting his child to their mother and breaking this symbiotic state of being. In this one act, the feeling of fear, panic, terror and dread were eclipsed by love and adoration. In one aspect this piece symbolises this first act as a father to welcome the child as an individual being but the cutters can also be seen as a symbol of cutting ties and severance felt as a new parent from one's old life.



Following on is the second piece by **Lucy Cade**, continuing the theme of post-natal psychosis. 'Chin Up (Eirene and Ploutos)' envisages the Roman ideals of Mother & Child in their mythology as Eirene (Peace) and Ploutos (Wealth) to explore and critique the maternal relationship as both one of mutual care (child towards mother as much as mother towards child) and in which the mother can feel vulnerable and in shock after birth. The otherworldly colours and shapes suggest the twilight uncanny in between world in which new mothers often speak of living in, in the early days. Similar to the other work on this wall, there is focus on altered perceptions (positively and negatively) that occur after childbirth.

**Lauren McLaughlin** practice is deeply rooted in a desire to make visible the undervalued experience of mothering, caregiving and gendered work through a feminist lens. Often focusing on subjects which are still considered taboo such as childbirth, reproductive rights, single parenting and economic inequality, my aim is to spark important conversations around the value structures present in our capitalist society. This is a triptych of small paper collages are taken from an ongoing body of work where imagery of Madonna and Child from art history are taken out of context to question the impossible standards modern mothers are held up against. The Virgin Mary is a cultural icon like no other and whose influence still impacts the way in which mothers are perceived by society today; either revered or ignored. In these works, the maternal figure is either obscured to hide her individual identity, or taken out of context to bring Mary into focus and to provoke empathy for the maternal subject. The use of household objects is an nod towards the role of the mother as 'housewife' and the forced domesticity that comes with motherhood.





Ending the room we come back to the works of Christina Rose Brown and Lexi Strauss; with two works that continue this underlying element of anxiety and personal loss. *Consumed* by **Christina Rose Brown** shows the artist's face being literally consumed by her two children, as they pull and merge with her features. The distortion of the body highlights the instability she feels and her fragmented form hints at a loss of self whilst trying to remain this stable force.



Similarly **Lexi Strauss** painting *'Anxiety is the Beginning of Conscience, which is the Parent of the Soul, but Incompatible with Innocence'* depicts a father figure and child in a darkened room. There is a light source possible from a window or screen that highlights their faces but their expressions seem to contain elements of worry. The father seems distracted, eyes glazed yet the child is staring intently at him with an expression that resembles worry or anxiety. It is an evocative work taken from her parenting series that she created shortly after her son began school. Having become geographically and economically isolated due to motherhood; they sought a new form of expression to understand this new role and transition, whilst soothing the accompanying sense of loss. As her work evolved, she became a mature student at the RCA where she was told by her tutors to look elsewhere for inspiration since creative work around parenting would be 'valueless' in the art world.

This point brings our room full circle. Parenthood may seem like the most natural, nearly universal adult condition and yet the academic art world is still dismissing this subject as being too 'sentimental' and 'valueless'. **This needs to change**; parenting should no longer be tainted with systemic exclusion within the arts but embraced as a rich inspiration for a myriad of new works and opportunities. No longer should artists have to choose between one or the other; if organisations are willing to be more flexible then this work/life balance can be achievable and a better alternative for artist/families can exist.



*Mishka Henner, Isle of Prokop-Sanchez, Framed Archival Print  
Commissions start at £500*



# MOT-TER: a porous construction

## Carli Adby-Notley

Underpinned by feminist narratives, this project explores themes of identity, memory, agency and the inherent expression of female as body. Originating from an autobiographical position, these concepts are interrogated through the mother daughter relationship and remembered childhood gestures.

Forming a sense of self; our personal experience shapes our expressions and the performance of our present choices, forcing us to consider the cyclical language within these recalled motions and the perceived obligations of our surroundings.

How do these mannerisms, these historical interpretations or political notions of the naked body, of the female, form and the role of woman; truly separate us as an individual? Where does one begin and the other end?

Through this uncomfortable line of familiarity and unspoken distance between mother and daughter, this project hopes to antagonise the concept of our own beginning, of co existing synonymity and nuance; finally asking, can we every truly take claim of our own identity.

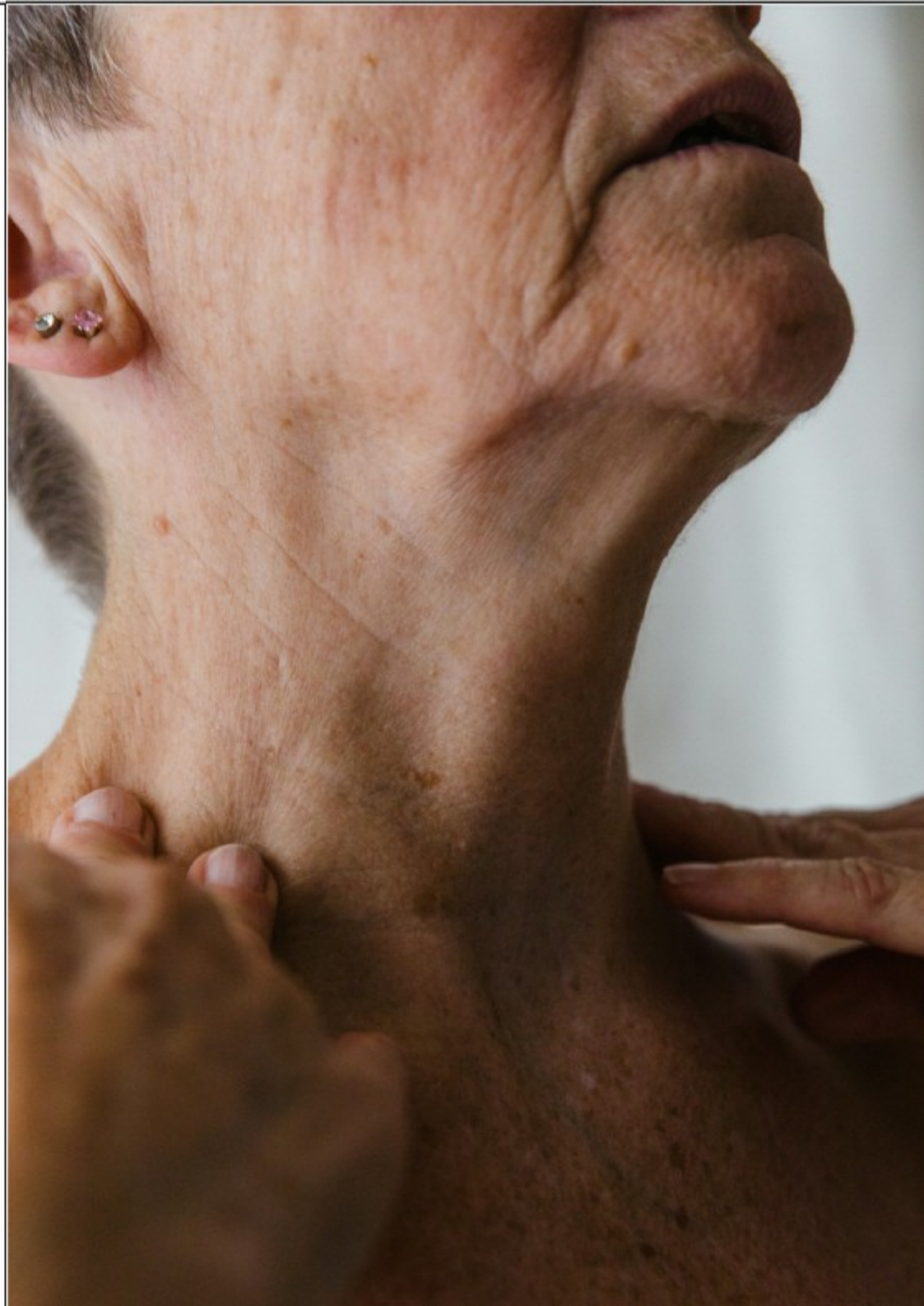
### How do you feel?

Have you noticed gestures, behaviours, sayings or stances that are characteristic of your family?

Has there been a point where you recognise:  
*'My Mother did that!'*

If so, write your thoughts on the back of one of the exhibition cards and stick it to the wall.

Or let us know via social media on our Micro posts.



## **HOW NOT TO EXCLUDE ARTIST PARENTS**

### **Some Guidelines for Institutions and Residencies**

**An introductory suggestion:**

**Treat the artist as a whole person.**

**An introductory request:**

**Be flexible.**

**1. As an organisation, be explicitly welcoming to artists with families**

Be breastfeeding friendly; stay in contact with artists when they become parents. The art does not need to be family friendly, but the institution should be.

**2. Make it standard practice to establish an artist's family circumstances at the outset of a project, and have structures in place to accommodate their parenting responsibilities.**

It shouldn't be left to the artist to have to 'confess' to being a parent, or to fear they may lose a show, commission or residency if they do so.

**3. Assume that any artist parent may need to travel with their children and a partner or other caregiver, and provide for this.**

**4. Agree with the artist at the outset what is expected of them and when, and give enough lead time so that they can plan accordingly**

Don't make urgent last-minute requests for texts, talks, and other extras.

**5. Consider having a specific budget for an artist's childcare costs**

Discuss childcare costs up front with the artist and be clear about what you can and can't cover. Allow artists to invoice for that portion of their fee that they will need to spend on childcare as a direct cost so that they won't be taxed for it as income.

**6. Schedule openings and special events as convenient to artist parents.**

Consider options such as weekend daytime private views rather than sticking rigidly to early evenings when children need to be fed, bathed and put to bed.

**7. Be aware of term dates and program around them.**

Offer artists who need to travel with children the option of installing a show over half term, for example.

**8. Re-think or remove age limits for residencies and awards so that they become inclusive of artists whose careers have been interrupted by having and caring for children**

**9. Work with artists to adapt residencies to fit around their parenting needs**

This may involve allowing the artist to split the residency period into more manageable sections, or supporting them through a research and development period in their own studio if they can't travel.

**10. Don't read gaps on a CV to indicate a lack of commitment or effort**

Artists' careers come in many shapes, and are paused for many reasons, parenting among them.

**Emerging artists are not always those who graduated most recently.**



## RESOURCE LIST

**Cultural ReProducers:** Active group based in Chicago providing international resources for artist/parents. [www.culturalreproducers.org](http://www.culturalreproducers.org)

**The Mother Load:** Global network and community of women who are both artist and mothers. [www.themotherload.org](http://www.themotherload.org)

**ProCreate Project:** Platform providing practice and financial support for artists [www.procreateproject.com](http://www.procreateproject.com)

**Journal of Mother Studies:** A peer reviewed, international and open access digital journal. <http://jourms.wordpress.com>

**Artistmother podcast:** Online regular podcast series and online community <https://artistmotherpodcast.com>

**Artist Parent Index:** Open calls specific to artist exploring the spectrum of parenthood. <http://artistparentindex.com>

**Mothers Who Make:** an International movement of women and non binary people balance creating and caring. <http://motherswhomake.org>.

**An Artist Residency in Motherhood:** Self directed residency opportunities <http://www.artistresidencyinmotherhood.com>

**Desperate Artwives:** Collective of mother/carers, host of WomanUp! Podcast, protest-like subversive takeovers in public spaces. [www.desperateartwives.co.uk](http://www.desperateartwives.co.uk)

**Spilt Milk Collective:** Social enterprise in Edinburgh to promote artist mothers [spiltmilkgallery.com](http://spiltmilkgallery.com)

**Mother House Studios:** Based in London, spaces for women with integrated childcare provisions 3 days a week. [www.motherhousestudios.com](http://www.motherhousestudios.com)

## Further reading

*How not to exclude artist mothers (and other parents)* by Hettie Judah

*Maternal Encounters: The Ethics of Interruption* by Lisa Baraitser

*MILKED* magazine by Lee Nowell-Wilson

*The M Word: Real Mothers in Contemporary Art* by Myrel Chernick

*Family Man: Fatherhood, Housework and Gender Equity* by Scott Coltrane.

*Of Woman Born: Motherhood as experience and Institution* by Adrienne Rich.

*Essential Breakthroughs: Conversations about Men, Mothers and Mothering* by Fiona Joy Green

*Artist-Parents in Contemporary Art: Gender, Identity and Domesticity* by Barbara Kutis.

*Mother Reader: Essential Writings on Motherhood* by Moyra Davey.

*How We Do Both: Art and Motherhood* by Michi Jigarjian.

*Maternal Bodies in the Visual Arts* by Rosemary Betterton.

*Invisible Spaces of Parenthood* by Andrea Francke.