

The Feminist Art Project

TFAP@CAA DAY OF PANELS

The M Word

College Art Association Annual Conference 2014

Saturday, February 15, 2014 – 9am-5pm

Columbia College Chicago – Stage TWO

ABSTRACT

Panel: Motherhood and the Exhibitionary Platform: Considering the Implications of Maternity Through the Curatorial Lens

Chair: Jessica Cochran, Columbia College Chicago

This session will address exhibitions that have been premised upon the idea of motherhood and the maternal, within the broader context of feminism and the history and theory of exhibition making. In addition to considering the curatorial role itself through a “curator as maternalist” paradigm, presentations will reflect various curatorial methodologies from traditional museum scale exhibitions to hybrid or itinerant curatorial projects that engage various forms of social space, including the home. By bringing together various critical feminist positions alongside divergent curatorial strategies the goal of this session is to chart an evolution of practice via exemplary models for thinking and doing. As such, an important outcome of the dialogue will be an assessment of the kinds of critical attention paid to these projects, and an analysis of the quality of discourse that orbits them.

Papers

Rebecca Niederlander and Iris Anna Regn, co-founders, BROODWORK: Creative Practice and Family Life

Curating BROODWORK: Encouraging the intergenerational relationship of creative practice and family life.

What is the relationship between creative practice and family life and how can a curatorial endeavor explore this relationship? All creative practitioners find themselves at crossroads throughout their life; however, being affected by the specific juncture of practice and family is not generally acknowledged for its true impact. Who would have thought that writing for his son about a bear named Winnie-the-Pooh would catapult the political satirist A. A. Milne from Punch magazine into the stratosphere of literary history. His era’s exception, however, is now our rule for all parents, male and female; the convergence of family and practice is recognized by BROODWORK as a pivotal influence to produce profound and unexpected work.

It is BROODWORK's mission to seek out this work and to influence and encourage an intergenerational relationship with creative practice. Our multi-disciplinary project includes curatorial installation, design, talking, blogging, site-specific object creation, and event-making; these diverse modalities give us a unique ability to bring together disparate communities through the great lens of Family. We foster a communal space that stimulates innovation in tandem with familial connection.

Bruria Finkel, Artist and Independent Curator, Santa Monica, CA

Breaking in Two

Breaking in Two (2012) was the first comprehensive exhibition of work by women artists who are mothers based on the west coast (Maternal Metaphors, curated by Myrel Chernick and Jennie Klein, took place in 2004). The exhibition featured art works that integrated the maternal experience, the relationship to the body, the child, the family, and the society at large. The exhibition, which

featured a number of artists associated with the Los Angeles Woman's Building debuted as part of the Getty initiative *Pacific Standard Time*, a city-wide series of events and performances in 2011 and 2012 that celebrated art made in California.

The comprehensive exhibition engaged a multicultural group of four generations of nationally and internationally recognized artist-mothers including Cheri Gaulke, Eleanor Antin, Mary Kelly, June Wayne, Betye Saar, Kim Abeles, Judith Hernandez, and Bruria Finkel, who is an artist as well as a curator. The works represented the multi-faceted and changing realities of motherhood through painting, drawing, sculpture, collage and assemblage, installation, photography, film/video, poetry/writing and live performance.

The film *Breaking in Two* by Sabine Sighichelli will be discussed as well.

Lucian Gomoll, Ph.D., Visiting Fellow, Center for Ideas and Society, University of California Riverside

The Care in Curation: Maternalist Exhibition Paradigms

A critical genealogy of the *curator-as-maternalist* reveals a rich history of intergenerational exchange between feminist artists, curators, and mothers who have significantly transformed how art is produced and displayed. Collaborative efforts such as *Womanhouse* (1972) nurtured feminist productions that intervened into popular presentations of menstruation, sex, birth, and raising children, as the contributors aestheticized domestic forms of labor that are often degraded in Western society. More recently, a number of feminist exhibitions such as Amelia Jones' *Sexual Politics* (1996), Connie Butler's *Wack!* (2007), and the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art (2007), have assembled artistic matrilineages, alternatives to what Mira Schor has called the *artistic patrilineage*, a conventional system of inheritance that denies history to women artists and thus casts them as orphans. Such matrilineages have not gone uncriticized, within and outside of feminist spheres, but nonetheless they reveal how the etymological overlappings of motherhood and curation – which include “caring for,” “keeping,” and “guardianship” – are more than superficial. Other projects concerned explicitly with motherhood in their content, such as the Museum of Motherhood (2011) and Natalie Loveless' *New Maternalisms* (2012), further demonstrate the extents to which curation and maternity productively intersect, as well as how in some cases they are impossible to distinguish.

Rebecca Trawick, Curator, Wignall Museum of Contemporary Art, Chaffey College

Denise M. Johnson, Chaffey College

Separation Anxiety: Curated by Denise Johnson & Rebecca Trawick

As shifting economies and the successes of the feminist movement have resulted in women comprising a slight majority of paid workers in the U.S. for the first time, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's long honored notion of the “Good Mother” and the demand that she blithely sacrifice all for the good of her children and family has been dutifully challenged. But as women have claimed presence within the domestic AND public realms, conservative groups have predictably lamented the decline of “family values.” Within that cry, the child is portrayed as tragically endangered, while mothers seeking to redefine their obligations are characterized as frantic and perpetually on the brink of unraveling. In contradiction, celebrity moms appear to have it all; fulfilling careers, beautiful biological and adopted children, plenty of bling, and active social lives – but only because they engage in that most despicable practice of paying for childcare. All the while, frank discussion of the practical complexities that the everyday mom faces are rarely considered with genuine interest. Far from being resolved, such contretemps are symptomatic presentations of longstanding cultural anxieties concerning evolving states of family brought forth by critiques denouncing historically and culturally unusual notions of family-hood that are entirely unattainable. Drawing from the curators' own efforts to balance the demands of motherhood with creative and professional endeavors, *Separation Anxiety* explores contemporary artistic negotiations of the unstable and inhospitable terrain of modern parenthood, family, and gender roles.

Christa Donner, Cultural ReProducers

Investigating Spaces for Cultural ReProduction

To be a vital cultural creator and an engaged parent need not be mutually exclusive. Despite this, many artists find the art world closed to them once they have children. This continues to have a profound impact on the making, experiencing, critical writing, and curation of contemporary art. While many have worked to expand the art world to include those who are not autonomous white male artists, the inclusion of cultural producers raising children must include a rethinking how institutions structure the possibility of participation. From pram mobs to residency reports, a growing number of projects employ public intervention and web-based platforms to curate new spaces for visibility, support, and artistic dialogue, expanding the field to include the work of parents in the arts.