

**art/mamas:**  
**Intermedial Conversations**  
**on Art, Motherhood**  
**and Caregiving**



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**Cover Image:**

Maria Anna Parolin: *Mama Brain (with a hint of grey)*,  
digital photograph, 2022.

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## Territorial Acknowledgement

art/mamas acknowledge that our residency took place within the ancestral, traditional, and unceded territories of the X̱m̱əθḵʷəy̱əm (Musqueam), S̱ḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh).

## Acknowledgements

art/mamas acknowledge the generous support of Access Gallery, the Canada Council for the Arts, VIVO Media Arts Centre, and the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA BC) for making this project possible.



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# About art/mamas

art/mamas is a group of Vancouver-based artist mothers, featuring: Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda, Matilda Aslizadeh, Robyn Laba, Natasha McHardy, Maria Anna Parolin, Heather Passmore, Sarah Shamash, prOphecy sun and Damla Tamer. The group is a collective working within the intersections of feminism(s), motherhood, reproductive and artistic labour. Many of art/mamas members identify as women of colour, immigrants and queer bodies.

In 2016, the collective was formed in response to a practical need for accountability, encouragement, and feedback in the process of making new work, and a desire to articulate a model for feminist, women-centered, sustainable creation processes that integrate life and all of its chaos into a viable and valued way of being and creating. This positive valuation of our unique lived experiences as individuals from diverse backgrounds juggling the challenges of parenting, making a living, and creative production in its many forms is positioned against the dominant culture of art production which increasingly mimics a corporate model of production, marketing, PR and specialization.

# About this Publication

This publication emerges from our PLOT residency at Access Gallery in Vancouver during the fall of 2021. While we had initially planned a series of open community dialogues with artists, mothers, and artist-mothers around food and the chaos of children within the confines of a physical space, as a result of the pandemic our activities moved online. Our collective of interdisciplinary artists with heterogeneous practices working in dialogue with our larger communities was generative in terms of community building and knowledge sharing. The works, texts, and images presented herein reflect this generative process while also pointing to other resources, mediated spaces, artworks, artforms, and dialogues. From digital art, to Zoom recordings, to drawings, curated film programs, artist archives, poetry, photography, sound art, performance, painting, sculpture, social movements, and blog posts, this publication encompasses an interconnected, intergenerational, and intermedial meditation on art and motherhood as expanded fields of knowledge production.

# About PLOT

During art/mamas' PLOT residency, we conceived of PLOT as a fertile place to scheme and gather as we worked to create inclusive opportunities to share experiences, intergenerational knowledge, skills, ideas, and to support artistic experimentation. We did so by bringing together diverse and disparate communities of creative, working, self-identified mothers and caregivers. As such, art/mamas imagined PLOT as a laboratory facilitated by our members; we looked outward to include other creative producers who are mothers/parents from the local community and beyond.

We structured the residency around four community conversations. Each conversation was facilitated by members of the collective and included invited speakers and participants. All sessions were conducted virtually on Zoom in accordance with COVID-19 provincial health and safety protocols in BC. They were open to the public and especially targeted all self-identified mothers, including 2SLGBTQQIA community members.

## **The community conversations that took place were:**

- Intergenerational Dialogue of Artist Mothers
- Precarious Academic Labour and Motherhood
- Film and Motherhood
- Making Space for Time: Artist Parents Meet and Make

# Introduction

by **Katie Belcher, Curator, Access Gallery**

For six months in 2021, art/mamas held a virtual tenure in Access Gallery's PLOT program to generate greater visibility, legitimacy, and acceptance as a collective and for artist-mothers in the art world. Throughout the fall of 2021, they hosted a series of discursive online events to engage in timely critical dialogue concerning feminist perspectives and artistic creation.

Access Gallery's PLOT program prioritizes the non exhibitionary aspects of artistic, organizational, and curatorial practice, nested within our mandate to create conditions for emergence in contemporary art. The PLOT space is intended for occupation—physically and digitally—by collectives, artist initiatives, nascent or small-scale organizations and those conducting itinerant projects who seek space, greater visibility and, most importantly, who desire to cultivate a relationship with a community or public. The partnerships aim to support a cross-pollination of communities, a sharing of skills and resources, and an investment in the cultivation of conversations that might otherwise remain isolated.

When I first imagined art/mamas' tenure, I envisioned a space in the gallery taken over with shared meals, academic and empathetic discussions, children, and frankly, chaos. Given the ongoing waves of COVID-19, the gallery instead remained quiet and closed during their residency, mirroring the isolation felt by so many during this time. I grieve the wild, warm, and intuitive connections that might have formed through a physical presence in the gallery during this project, just as I grieve the lack of the same in my own life. The trade-off was an unexpected richness by the invitation of programming into our family/domestic spheres, and the blurring of public and private. The ease of access provided by hosting online discussions and ensuring they were transcribed, opened the potential for participation from parents who otherwise may not have been able to attend—many of whom were facing ongoing isolation and a deep need for this shared connection<sup>1</sup>. The ability to step out and return meant discussions were fueled by the incredible bookmarking of interrupted conversations

<sup>1</sup> I truly appreciate the work of Kay Slater and Grunt Gallery for their workshop, *Captioning, Transcription and Non-Auditory Access*, which opened for me the possibilities of transcription, and made these efforts a priority for me, particularly for an online program centering the experience of parents.

that I've witnessed with parent-friends. Watching the recorded talks, and/or reading the transcriptions provide another point of access—for research, to clarify a thought not quite absorbed in the moment, to sit beside in the quiet, attentive time not on offer during a child's waking hours, or to be taken in smaller bites.

In the context of a global pandemic, organizations have faced the structural shortcomings of models that exclude considerations of intersectional accessibility—whether gender equity and childcare, economic hardship, racial and disability justice, unwaged labour, mental health and isolation, etc. The project by art/mamas begins to address several areas of consideration for meaningful inclusion in the largely white-cis-male-dominated Canadian art world<sup>2,3</sup>—work that was urgent prior to the pandemic, and warrants immediate attention by arts organizations as we emerge into new socio-political contexts. These ideas align with ongoing priorities in Access' curatorial and community-oriented program and organizational practices, and we look forward to the work that will be prompted by these important discussions. Kate Henderson's text considers how art/mamas programs began to unpack some of the complex realities of parenthood in the arts. As a curator, a host, a child and grandchild, an aunt, a friend to people with children and teens, and someone who has no child of my own—by choice and circumstance—the idea of mother as a verb rather than a noun, resonates deeply with me. What care do we provide to our families and communities—in all of their forms—and what can that care teach all of us—of all genders—about our role in society?

I value this resource for my own personal work—as an arts administrator and curator, and will carry this with me as I help artists to realize their projects, and welcome the public into our space again. I invite you to consider the content of this publication not only as a record of these conversations, but also as an invitation to imagine alternative futures, wherein participation is robustly supported, our values are embedded in our institutions, and our work reflexive and ever changing.

2 Alison Cooley, Amy Luo, and Caoimhe Morgan-Feir "Canada's Galleries Fall Short: The Not-So Great White North" *Canadian Art* online (21 April 2015) <https://canadianart.ca/features/canadas-galleries-fall-short-the-not-so-great-white-north/>

3 Michael Maranda "Hard Numbers: A Study on Diversity in Canada's Galleries" *Canadian Art* online (5 April 2017) <https://canadianart.ca/features/art-leadership-diversity/>





# mother maker

by **Natasha M<sup>C</sup>Hardy**

worker player sleeper tailor

carer juror dreamer aimer

thinker shopper joker changer

manager helper watcher washer

realizer sympathiser advocator administrator

multitasker overcomer slacker procrastinator

jester councillor teacher baker

supporter director learner shaker

nurturer lover listener believer

follower healer driver repeater

rinser planner walker demander

defender sweeper cleaner complainer

leader facilitator helper bather

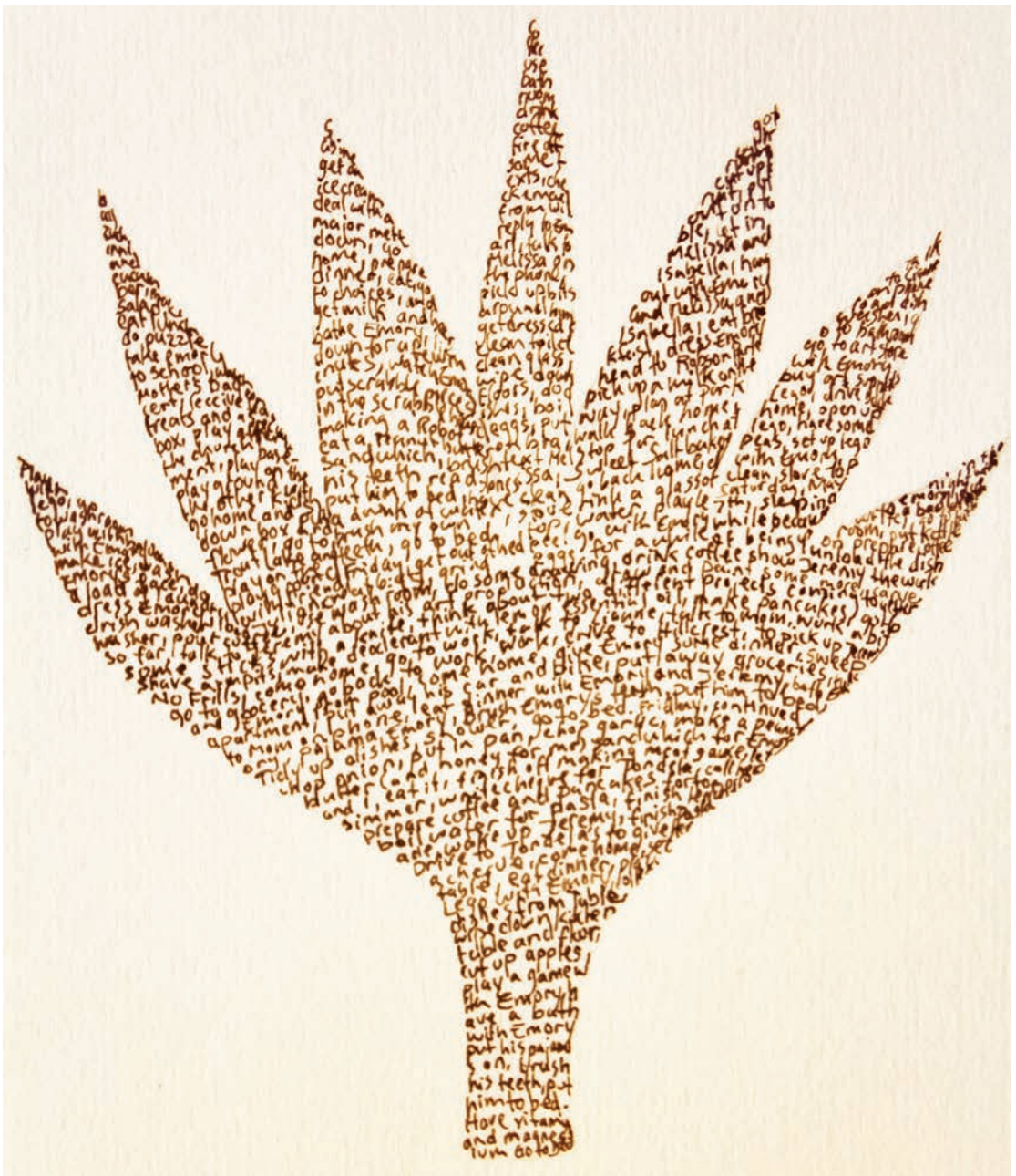
communicator empathizer realizer collaborator

diaperer dishwasher deal breaker timewaster

window cleaner singer finger painter instigator

whisperer silencer collaborator creator





Natasha McHardy, *Plant Form*, gouache ink on paper, 2018.

**CONVERSATION 1**

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# Intergenerational Dialogue of Artist Mothers

**ORGANIZERS**

Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda  
Matilda Aslizadeh  
Natasha M<sup>C</sup>Hardy

**Link to video recording of  
the conversation:**

[vimeo.com/615258931](https://vimeo.com/615258931)

**Link to access event page:**

[accessgallery.ca/event/conversation-1-  
intergenerational-dialogue-artist-mothers](https://accessgallery.ca/event/conversation-1-intergenerational-dialogue-artist-mothers)



## **ART/MAMAS — INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE OF ARTIST MOTHERS**

September 18, 2021, 12 PM (PST)

Screenshot from  
Conversation 1

This conversation was organized by art/mamas Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda, Matilda Aslizadeh and Natasha McHardy who invited Karen Knights, Elizabeth Vander Zaag, Margaret Dragu, LaTiesha Fazakas, Jin-me Yoon and Elizabeth MacKenzie to discuss the impacts of motherhood on their artistic practices and consider the shifting historical moments shaping possibilities for artist-mothers in Canadian visual art institutions, art schools, and within culture at large. Marlene Yuen created drawings in response to the dialogue as it unfolded.

Together, we discussed the history of individual and collective organizing that have created and continue to create opportunities and support for artist mothers, along with the role that curators and archives play in generating and preserving these histories. Our discussion explored projects and artworks that specifically address the subject and experience of maternity, understood through an inclusive lens, and was accompanied by an online archive, hosted by VIVO Media Arts Centre, featuring video, audio, images, and articles by and about participants.

We premised our conversation with the following series of questions, and a recording of the event can be found here: [www.vimeo.com/615258931](https://www.vimeo.com/615258931)

## FRAMING QUESTIONS

Could you speak about the histories of collective organizing around art and motherhood/parenting in Vancouver or in a larger context in which you have been involved with? Have there been moments of increased engagement and moments of dispersion that you've noticed or that have been significant to you? What does it look like for you now and into the future?

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When addressing motherhood in your artwork are there specific moments that were or have been more generative of artmaking (i.e. when you were pregnant or when your kids were teenagers, etc.)?

---

Are there any resonances between performing the role of motherhood in everyday life and your professional practice? In your experience, how does art and life flow in and out of each other?

---

What systems of care were available to you as you developed as a mother and artist and what strategies did you use to sustain your practice? How does the experience of being an artist mother impact other communities or ecologies (i.e. extended families, activisms, pedagogical approaches)?

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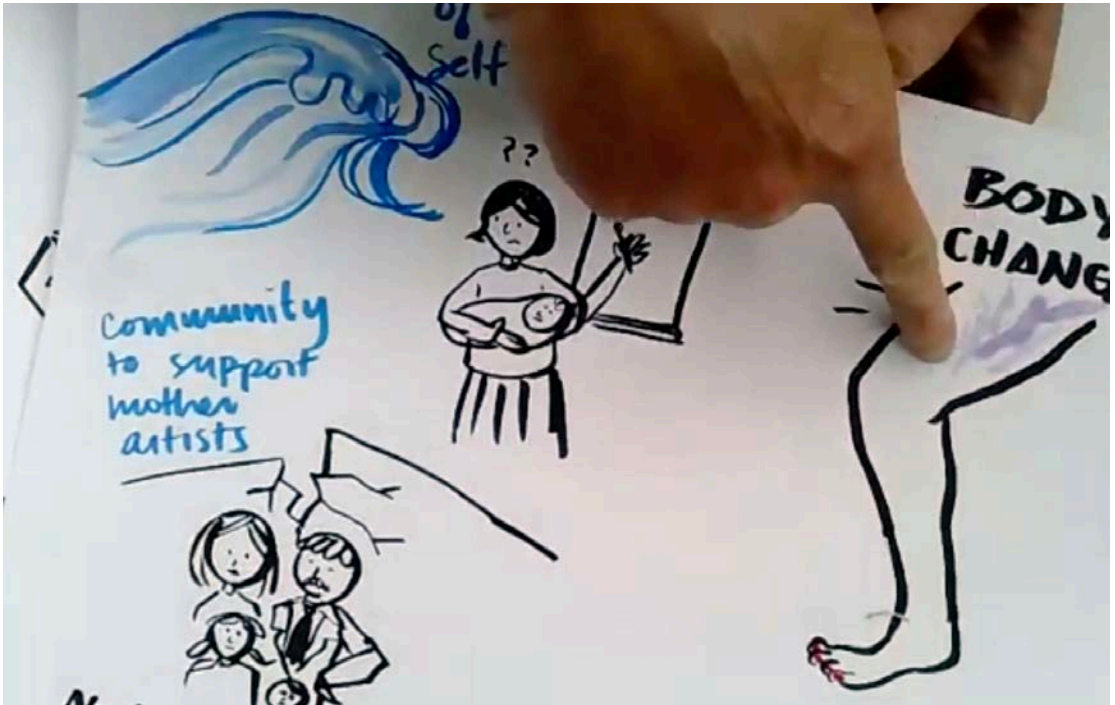
How does motherhood shape your relation to technology or use of technology? Has your gender identification influenced your professional and pedagogical practice at any point in your career?

---

How has your practice engaged in dismantling normative conceptions of motherhood and the nuclear family unit?

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Screenshot from Conversation 1

## Excerpts from the Conversation with Drawings by Marlene Yuen

“I think that when you are making art, a lot of times you make art, that’s the thing you know...but you don’t know how to do the mothering. So you sometimes use the artmaking as a crutch to get you through some of those moments when you don’t know what the heck is going on with the things that evolve when you’re a mother, whether it’s when they are babies, whether it’s childbirth, teens, even when they’re adults...the artmaking is always the consistent thing. That’s the thing you have control over... So I think in a way artmaking for me was a little bit of a psychological support, because I could control the artmaking, but I couldn’t control the situation of mothering.” — **Elizabeth Vander Zaag**

“I looked to artists’ work to help me through a lot of issues I was dealing with at the time when I became pregnant, and I became pregnant unexpectedly. So I felt like a lot of the work that I did through that period of time reflects my experience, a buoy through issues that I was dealing with in my personal life that I felt would affect my capacity to be a mother... It was really great too, looking at lesbian artists who had been the artists who had done a lot of organizing around the issue of being a mother, what it meant for them financially, what it meant for them in terms of their residential capacity, all those other issues... It was really sort of around 1995 when that really burst open and started expanding...who were being seen as mothers, how much work was being presented in the public sphere on motherhood came from people who identified either as lesbians, or as trans mothers. And so I think, all that’s been very interesting to me and helpful.” — **Karen Knights**



knew more about  
art before mothering  
Liz Vanderzaag



“...to reflect on the lesbian artists, the first time I ever heard of childcare or anything for cultural things was with Kiss and Tell Collective.<sup>4</sup> Kiss and Tell would have performances, and they did all these things which seemed new to me, amazing and forward thinking. They would warn people that there would be triggers coming for things around sexual violence so that people in the audience felt comfortable to leave. That seemed like a revolutionary idea to me. And they would also provide childcare for parents coming with children so that they could see the performance. And they included that in their budget. And that just seemed so astounding.” — *Margaret Dragu*



“I remember when I was in art school, just hanging around in the cafeteria with one of my white male professors, and I said, ‘Yeah, you know, I’m not sure, but I might think about having kids,’ and he said, ‘Oh, that’s really too bad, you have so much promise.’... I remember, you weren’t supposed to speak about those things if you’re a serious artist...you basically had to kind of masquerade as a man, in particular, a white man... I remember when Marian<sup>5</sup>, who’s here, was one of my teachers, and, you know, she didn’t hide it, she was just upfront about it. And it’s important to have those ways in which we support each other and understand that this isn’t an aberration.”

— *Jin-me Yoon*



4 Kiss and Tell Collective (1990-) is a Vancouver-based collective formed by Persimmon Blackbridge, Lizard Jones and Susan Stewart. Concerned with lesbian sexuality Kiss and Tell organized the photo-based exhibition *Drawing the Line* in response to feminist and queer debates around the oppressive nature of female sexual imagery and diverse sexual practices. For more on Kiss and Tell Collective see Stewart, Blackbridge, Jones, et al. (1991) *Drawing the Line: Lesbian Sexual Politics on the Wall / Kiss & Tell: Susan Stewart, Photographer, in Collaboration with Persimmon Blackbridge and Lizard Jones*. Press Gang Publishers.

5 Marian Penner-Bancroft (1947) is a Canadian artist and photographer based in Vancouver. She is a professor emeritus at the Emily Carr University of Art and Design, where she has been teaching since 1981. She has previously also taught at Simon Fraser University and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. See [www.connect.ecuad.ca/people/profile/14412](http://www.connect.ecuad.ca/people/profile/14412)

“...doubt is a recurring motif in my work as an artist, as well as in all the other aspects of my life. And certainly when I became a mother, I was doubtful that I would be able to do a good job. First of all, I didn’t think I could make art until certain conditions were met. The idea of seeing doubt as something that was productive has become very important to me...if you don’t know that something is true or something is possible, then you have to be creative. Seeing maternity as a creative practice was very much part of what I learned and found to be helpful to me... In some ways, traditionally or stereotypically, ‘artist mother’ is an oxymoron... So the idea that mothering could be this creative practice that was actually a social practice, that was not just simply something exclusive that you were doing. And that artmaking was also a social practice that depended on other people. I think that those were really important insights for me, as an emerging artist mother.”

— **Elizabeth MacKenzie**

“It’s very much about participating in a community and being involved with other people. So seeing one’s work as an artist as not being something that’s a private activity, but something that’s related to what’s going on in the world and what’s going on in your life. And not differentiating between those categories, or at least seeing the overlap between those categories. The other thing that has made it possible for me to continue working, both as an artist and as an artist mother, is participating in community and participating with others— gathering together with others as the art/mamas have done.”

— **Elizabeth MacKenzie**



“There have been points where I’ve been able to disrupt it a bit more than what it sort of ended up as, and the time where I left for a decade from the art community was when my mother also needed care, and ended up moving my mother in with the family. And then at the same time, my brother went through a divorce, and he moved in, and then his kids were there every second weekend. And it was actually brilliant, like, finally, there was support on a whole bunch of levels..” — **Karen Knights**



“It comes back to this concept of giving is receiving, giving each other space, giving each other our experiences, and being brave enough to share those and be exposed in that kind of intimate way creates an opportunity for other people to not feel so alone... Thinking back to the second question... there are these times and moments in my life that I experience as being a woman that really galvanized a lot of creation for me, and those experiences are super valuable and super relevant and we should encourage each other to keep doing that. I know, for me, when I first had children, I had children really young...my body had changed so much, and I really was perplexed about how to feel about my body... I had my kids at 18 and 20, and so I didn’t know how to grapple with that. For me, being able to produce some sort of creative practice out of it was very therapeutic.” — *LaTiesha Fazakas*



“... I think the nuclear family is extremely isolating. And it’s actually historically not the norm. We just have bought into this, and there’s tremendous pressure, particularly for women who have babies, to jam themselves into this nuclear family look, regardless of what their life or orientation is. It gives so little support... The structure of the nuclear family is something that I would love to dismember. I would love to have thought that I spent some of my motherhood and my art time dismembering this institution, or revitalizing and creating new roles and opportunities. I was just surviving. I mean, I just barely had time to have a manual typewriter and cut out some pictures and make some little books. And, you know, find a way of maybe getting a bit more education so I could get out of the goddamn bakery where I was working, which was just like, the worst job on the planet. So many of these decisions are made just through incredible necessity and pressure, but I do see the nuclear family as being this oppressive force. It’s also a myth, the way that the brilliant genius artist, who’s always male and white, is the antithesis of being a mother... What I love about how performance art and visual art has changed



over the last number of decades is a stronger appreciation for community-based practice and relational practices which inherently mean people and building community, or how artist run centers operate or art/mamas. It's about, you really can't make art by yourself. It is a social practice. It is a community practice. It is a community building practice. It's of the utmost necessity." — *Margaret Dragu*

"...this whole COVID thing has made us aware that there's a lot more children out there than we ever paid attention to, because now they're calling on their mothers while they're in their Zoom meetings, right? ...So now that they're in our space, we can't do anything about it because of COVID, at what point do we start to accept the visibility of children in our culture, and what does that mean?... Ardel Lister<sup>6</sup> put her daughter Zoe in front of the camera in the Western Front's Zoe's Car and she turned out to be a star. So some kids love it, some kids don't. You use them, you know, because they're there... That's certainly a discussion I've been thinking about retroactively: how much is it okay to put your kids in front of a camera? I think we have to learn to work with our children beside us. COVID has shown us that we can't delegate them to someone else at all times. That's not a reality, so we have to become more open and more accepting of that, but I don't know whether we can put them in our work." — *Elizabeth Vander Zaag*



<sup>6</sup> Ardele Lister (1950) is a Canadian time-based media artist, writer, editor and educator based in New York City. She moved to New York in the mid 1980s after having a prolific career in Vancouver's art, feminist and publishing circles. In New York she taught media production and critical studies at Rutgers University, Montclair State University in New Jersey, School of the Visual Arts, and Center for Media Arts, both in New York City. See <http://ardelelister.com>

“...it comes down to understanding my direct and inherited histories... I don't understand myself outside of those things. It's always been relational for me. My kin, or my family: it's not just my family, they're history. They're actually embodied histories, and I think of my children that way. There's this sense of time and temporality, and as somebody who uses durational media, I think that's really been interesting for me to work through... The conceptual and philosophical and emotional intensities are not separate for me... what I've done... of being a kind of pivot between generations... I don't think of my art as separate from those concerns that I've had in my life and trying to work through them... Although, because I'm the first generation of Korean women to have this particular kind of agency, I would argue in many ways, I am fierce about not giving everything away, not to my children, not to my extended family, and even caring for my parents... I did the best I can, but I always kept a little, and I think I am ok with that, I think you need to... it is a complex confluence, but I find it very very stimulating to get inside of it and work with it, make work about it, and that's using my children because they are part of my life.”

— *Jin-me Yoon*

“...thinking about working with children, they're part of the foreground, not the background. In some ways it's harder not to work with your children early in your career as an artist, if you have young children. It would take more energy than I ever had just to keep them out.”

— *Elizabeth MacKenzie*



*children in  
art work*



*children foreground rather than background*

“...One of the concepts that I’ve really come to value came to me through my friend, Jeanne Randolph<sup>7</sup>, who writes in relation to psychoanalytic theory. She introduced me to a lot of different ideas as well as the work of psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott,<sup>8</sup> who was actually a pediatrician. Winnicott developed this concept of the good enough mother that has really been a touchstone for me. The suggestion is that if we over-mother, we’re, in fact, harming our children. So it’s better for us to be just good enough—not to be perfect. When I encountered this I was, wow, this is a revelation! I’ve also been trying to apply the idea of being a good enough artist to myself, as well. So that’s been an interesting investigation: being good enough, just good enough. Sometimes you’re great, but most of the time you’re just good enough (and sometimes, you’re actually bad).” — *Elizabeth MacKenzie*



“...it is the body, the one thing that really, really profoundly affected me, having gone through pregnancy and birth... I can say embodied, but I didn’t really know what that meant, and it split me open literally in terms of the experience of being pregnant and giving birth to my two children. I want to honor that. I think that’s amazing... If we could stop thinking about the body in relation to capitalism: that we just kind of endlessly mine our bodies as if there’s just endless stuff there, and then we just pump it out and make that crude thing, refined oil or something...the systems that we strive for and our aspirations are so conditioned by those ideas, and I just think, wow! good enough!...to embrace that, to say that’s good enough...it’s just a process, it’s like living.” — *Jin-me Yoon*



<sup>7</sup> Jean Randolph (1943) is a Canadian cultural critic, performance artist, and author of *Psychoanalysis & Synchronized Swimming* (1991) as well as *Symbolization and Its Discontents* (1997), *Why Stoics Box*, (2003), and *Ethics of Luxury* (2007). See <https://artspeak.ca/jeanne-randolph/>

<sup>8</sup> D.W. Winnicott (1896-1971) English pediatrician and psychoanalyst. For more on Elizabeth MacKenzie’s engagement with Winnicott’s theories see her blog entry “Good Enough Artist” <http://blogs.eciad.ca/elizabethmackenzie/?p=8607> which is also included in this publication.

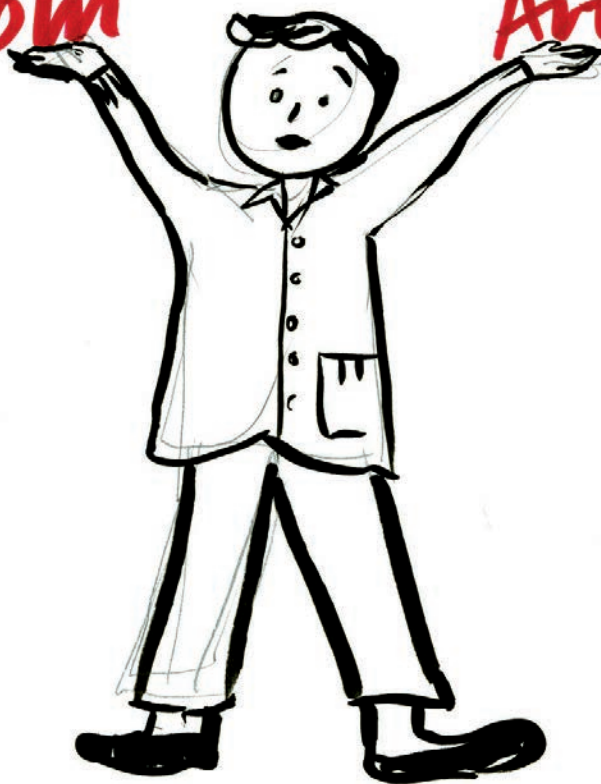
“This makes me think of the concept of an artistic journey rather than an artistic destination... I think about my experience working with artists who become successful because of a particular destination that they got to that becomes successful. That can be actually very, very limiting because then people want them to just stay there... I prefer the beauty of the idea that we’re not going to get there, to perfection, and that the journey along the way is just as valuable and in fact more valuable.” — *LaTiesha Fazakas*

“...every day that I work on behalf of the Crista Dahl Media Library and Archive<sup>9</sup>, which is filled with amazing mothers’ works, whether they speak to that in them or not, I always feel really privileged to do that. But I also feel like Liz made an astute point about younger artists and the type of care that they require. And I also want to harken back to older artists and older artists who were mothers who perhaps didn’t get the opportunities that even our generation had in order to be able to carry on their art practice in the way they would have liked to in their imaginary: we all have that place that we hoped, you know, we would be when we’re talking about good enough. And I just hope that we continue to uplift those women as well.” — *Karen Knights*

<sup>9</sup> Crista Dahl Media Library and Archive (CDMLA) is a repository of video by artists and independent producers held at VIVO Media Arts named after Crista Dahl. Dahl (1935) is an artist based in Vancouver and a longstanding member of VIVO Media Arts. CDMLA safeguards video collections chronicling unique B.C. histories including those of Metro Media, The Women’s Labour History Project, The First Nations Access Program, Vancouver Status of Women, GaybleVision, Operation Solidarity, and Women in Focus. See <http://archive.vivomediaarts.com/>

Good  
Enough  
Mom

Good  
Enough  
Artist



## Good Enough Artist

### 4 Replies

I recently participated in an [intergenerational artist mother conversation](#) “to discuss the impacts of motherhood on [my] artistic practice and consider the shifting historical moments shaping possibilities for artist-mothers in Canadian visual art institutions, art schools, and within culture at large.”



*Me First (video still), 1999*

I shared a couple of terms I've been using in relation to my identity as an artist mother: “[good enough mother](#)” and “good enough artist.”

The idea of a “good enough mother” originates with English paediatrician and child psychotherapist D.W. Winnicott: “The good-enough mother...starts off with an almost complete adaptation to her infant’s needs, and as time proceeds she adapts less and less completely, gradually, according to the infant’s growing ability to deal with her failure.”\*

What a relief to recognize that children *need* their parents to fail them, in reasonable ways, as they grow and develop. The idea that we should become “perfect” and “self-sacrificing” mothers (caregivers), who respond to the child’s every need, interferes with their ability to develop a healthy sense of themselves and their capacity to survive and thrive within an imperfect world.

Winnicott’s formulation suggested the term “good enough artist,” as a way for me to acknowledge the possibility that an artist is still an artist if they don’t conform to the (remarkably resilient) stereotype of the artist, that is solitary, self-centred, prolific and successful.

Being a good enough artist allows that there will be gaps in my production, that all of my energy can’t be directed towards art making, that I may be unable to pursue and develop large, ambitious projects.

In preparation for writing this post I googled the term, “good enough artist” and came across Irish artist [Michelle Brown](#)’s 2015 performance lecture at the Dutch Art Institute: “[Good Enough](#).” She asks: “Can the idea of the ‘good enough’ be a model for artists working in the art world?”

*Perhaps being good enough is something we can consider for all artists, as it is a position that doesn’t allow the artist to be created in the capitalist model. Perhaps being good enough is a radical gesture in its challenge to the current circumstances of ever-increasing demand for production and labour time. Therefore being good enough is an act of resistance.*

The acknowledgment that we are good enough, that we are capable of meeting and responding to the complicated circumstances of our lives, in spite of our own limitations and failures as well as the limitations and failures of our culture, is a wonderfully productive way to rethink our positions as both mothers and artists.

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\* Winnicott, D.W. (1953) “Transitional objects and transitional phenomena: A study of the first not-me possession.” *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 34, 89–97.

Screenshot of a post on Elizabeth MacKenzie’s blog, *negotiating doubt*, that expands on the concept of the “Good Enough Artist:” [blogs.eciad.ca/elizabethmackenzie/?p=8607](https://blogs.eciad.ca/elizabethmackenzie/?p=8607)



The information on the slate is blurred and the director unmarked, but it comes from a project I shot in the summer of 2021. Caught between the clapper is my daughter Lucine, who plays a daughter in the story.

In *Conversation 1: Intergenerational Dialogue of Artist Mothers*, many participants spoke about incorporating their children into their work and questions arose: Is it an exploitative act when the child is too young to understand? Is it simply inevitable if they are “in the foreground” and deeply entrenched in everyday life, including in the studio? Are there ways we can think about labour that is outside the capitalist model of exchange that produces the binary of fair/exploitative labour practices? How do we separate from the all-encompassing role of mother to carve space for production? Can we effectively separate the labour of artmaking and the labour of child raising?

All the characters of children in my work are based on my daughter and my relationship with/to her (*and the idea of her*). In this film she is a frank commentator on affairs: a voice of reason and inquiry. This is Lucine as I perceived her at the time I wrote the script, before she changed, I changed, and the world changed, as it is always changing.

She always wanted to be in front of the camera. In a previous project, I cast another five-year-old girl, and Lucine only appeared as a background performer in scenes where my parents, grandparents and friends were also present: she was nearby but surrounded by abundant care that wasn't given by me. It was my first production after her birth, and I needed a radical separation to be able to work.

Matilda Aslizadeh, *Before and After*, video still and text, 2022.





Her desire to be in front of the camera may come from always already being with me *before* the camera - in production meetings, in the studio, wandering the landscape on location visits, tagging along on research trips, her own journals in tow.

In this scene she looks out the window with longing, much as she felt during the pandemic that divided her life into two chapters: before and after. The film's period is 1979-81: the years during which my family emigrated from Iran to Vancouver: *my* childhood before and after.

In this way, we are both consciously reliving a kind of threshold within this image, before the clapper comes down and our work together begins.

As we were hosting our PLOT residency on motherhood and art, the health of my mother, Gabriela, began to deteriorate. She has dealt with mental health issues for as long as I can remember. Art has been both an outlet and a means of making a living. Earning a living and obtaining recognition as an artist was hard to attain because her art practice was not taken seriously. Like many of us, she juggled art and motherhood and took any opportunity she had to make art and participate in art exhibitions. She drew portraits of my friends who came to our house for playdates after school. She enrolled in workshops and took classes with “famous male” artists. She participated in more than a dozen women’s art exhibitions showing a range of large-scale oil paintings, sculptures and etchings. She had more than five solo shows and her work is part of several private art collections based in Guadalajara, the city where she was born. She established a printmaking studio in our house, where she taught etching for over twenty years. The same studio became a creative workshop for children, where she taught me how to use a printing press and how to teach art so I could earn money to pay for my art education and, eventually, save enough to study abroad.

*I am the great-granddaughter of Josefina, the gran daughter of Gabriela, the daughter of Gabriela and the mother of Sofia.*

*You stayed in Guadalajara, near Josefina and Gabriela.  
You hired a nanny to take care of me.*

*I moved to another country; far away from you, Gabriela and Josefina. I did not hire a nanny. I put Sofia in daycare to be able to work, study, make art and continue to juggle art and motherhood.*


*I went back to Guadalajara to put you in a home.*

*This was the last photo I took of you. The last day you were at your house, in your studio. The house that my dad built for you, for us.*

*What would Sofia do?*

*Who will live in the house now?*

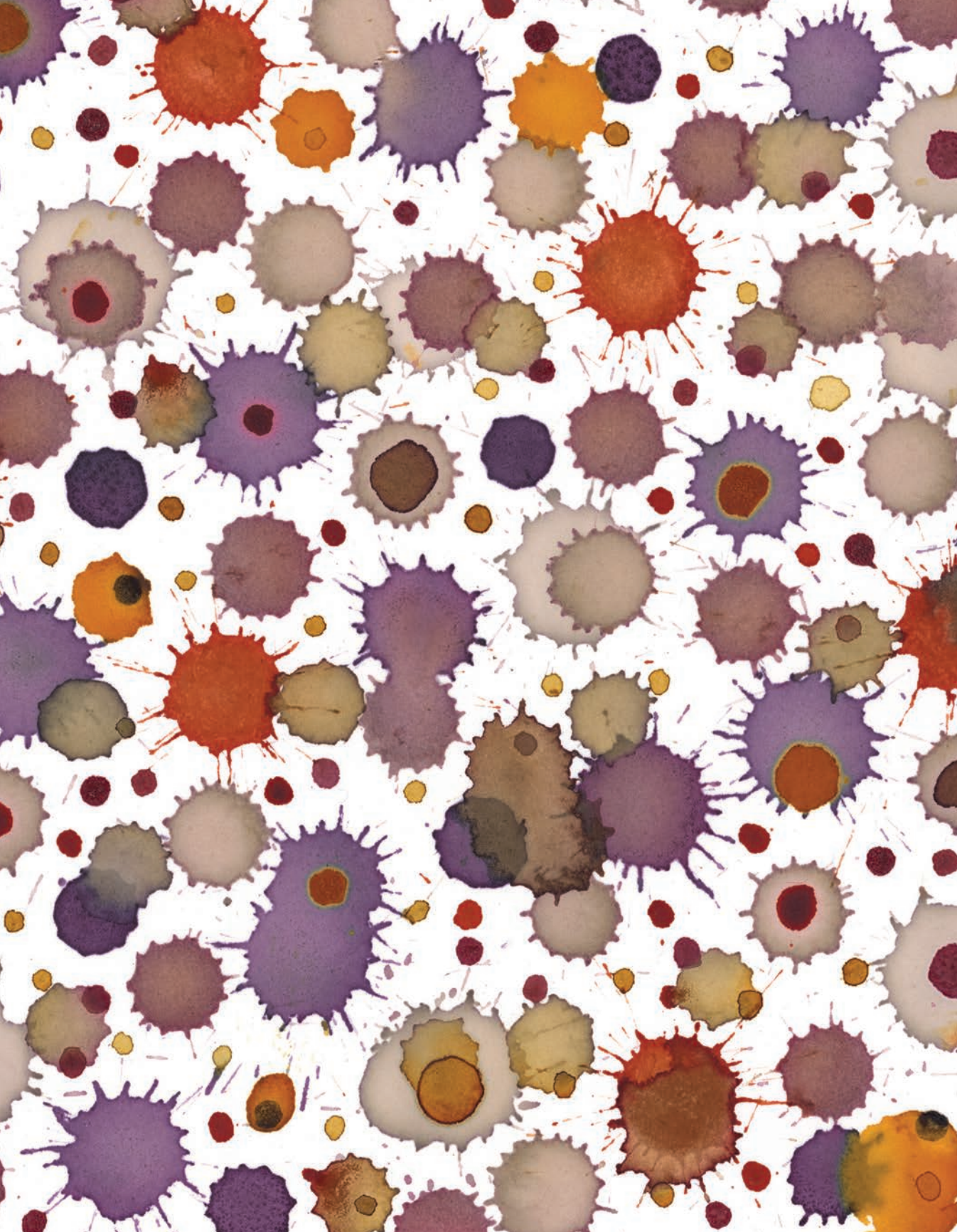
— *The last photograph, November 11, 2021* —



Soy la bisnieta de Josefina, la nieta  
de Gabriela, la hija de Gabriela y mamá  
de Sofía. Tu viviste siempre en Guadalajara  
cerca de Gabriela y de Josefina. Tu contrataste  
a una nana para que me cuidara. Yo me  
mude a otro país lejos de Gabriela,  
de Josefina y de Ju. Metí a Sofía  
a una guardería para poder estudiar,  
trabajar y ser mamá. Para poder seguir  
trabajando y pensar en la relación entre  
la maternidad y el arte, viajé a Guadalajara  
a llevarte a una casa de retiro.  
Esta fue la última foto que te tome, el  
último día que pasaste en tu casa. En  
la casa que construyó mi papá para  
tú, para todos. ¿Que hará Sofía?  
¿Quién vivirá en la casa ahora?

— La última foto, 11 de Noviembre 2021 —

Maria Anna Parolin,  
*Bright Moments (soon to fade)*,  
inks made from peony and  
dahlia blooms, 2021.



# Precarious Academic Labour and Motherhood, Part I

**ORGANIZERS**

Matilda Aslizadeh

Maria Anna Parolin

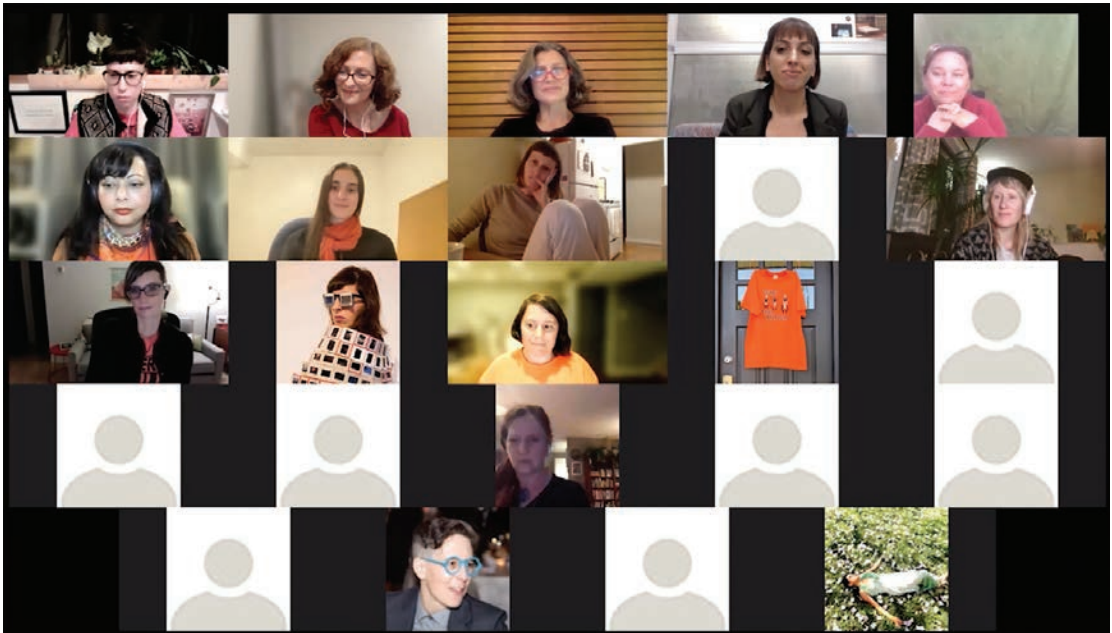
Damla Tamer

**Link to video recording of  
the conversation:**

<https://vimeo.com/650115805>

**Link to access event page:**

<https://accessgallery.ca/event/conversation-2-precious-academic-labour-and-motherhood>



## **ART/MAMAS — PRECARIOUS ACADEMIC LABOUR AND MOTHERHOOD**

September 30, 2021, 7:30 PM (PST)

Screenshot from  
Conversation 2, Part I

How does the absence of steady employment, fair pay, and basic control over working conditions in academic institutions affect contract faculty who are also mothers and caregivers with dependents? How does the partitioned space-time of precarious labour influence our capacities for knowledge production? How can we create close or broad-based networks that support collective organizing and caregiving beyond normative models of the nuclear family? Can we imagine alternative futures within or outside of the university as educators?

art/mamas Damla Tamer, Maria Anna Parolin, and Matilda Aslizadeh organized a two-part conversation on the topic of Precarious Academic Labour and Motherhood. In Part I, Magnolia Pauker, Terra Poirier, Sunny Nestler, Sarika Bose, Elisa Baniassad and Annabree Fairweather presented their personal and professional experiences, drawing on a variety of topics ranging from contract faculty rights to intersections of pedagogy and parenting as relational practices.

A recording of the presentations can be viewed here:

<https://vimeo.com/650115805>.

**Otoniya J. Okot Bitek created visual poetry in response to both conversations. The project, pictured on page 42, is titled *Art, Life and Motherhood in Gold Ink*.**

This event unintentionally coincided with the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, and all organizers and participants joined in acknowledgement of its weight and significance.

*Today is the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a day to honour the survivors of Indian residential schools, their families, and communities, and to mourn the thousands of children who died while forced to attend these institutions. We would like to have a moment of silence for those children. For those of us who are non-Indigenous, it's also a day to reflect on the legacies of residential schools, the colonial systems that created and enabled them, and to support Indigenous communities in their calls for justice and self-determination.*



## Excerpts of the Conversation, with Visual Poetry by Juliane Okot Bitek

“I want to foreground the fact that each of us is positioned differently, and that we are vulnerable and precarious in diverse ways. I also want to state clearly that the logic of neoliberal racial capitalism, which structures the current configuration of precarious academic labour, is part of the continuum of colonialism. These are not separate issues ... And this call for justice in regard to precarious academic labour must be multifaceted and polyvocal, and must take shape in relation to and in support of our shared commitments to decolonization and Indigenization, anti-racism, gender diversity, trans rights, disability and climate justice, etc. Here I employ what Judith Butler terms the ‘embarrassed etc.’ – embarrassed because it cannot possibly contain all that it must point to.” — *Magnolia Pauker*

“I have taught three terms consecutively every year for 11 years at Emily Carr. Given that I teach in all three terms, most years I carry more than a full-time course load. I am not part-time faculty. In the summer of 2020, there were 67 teaching faculty. 64 of us were non-regulars. Often, we start teaching in the summer session before knowing whether we’ll be hired in the fall or if the courses we have been offered will in fact run... Until labour conditions change, Emily Carr University’s much-publicized Statement of Equity, Diversity + Inclusion will remain a statement in principle only. Non-regular faculty must be granted basic rights including access to extended benefits such as health care, job security, and opportunities for regularization. Until these policies are enacted, Emily Carr will continue to maintain separate classes of teaching faculty and those of us at the bottom will be eventually ground down and out.”  
— *Magnolia Pauker*

“Today’s self-help Empire of Care and its crass regimes of commercialized and commodified care products must give way to anti-capitalist, anti-colonial, and decolonial structures of care. These future forms of care will require a radical democratic commitment to what the Care Collective calls “the de-domestication of structures of care”<sup>10</sup>...Caring is both generative and critical. And for me, pedagogy, like parenting, which is a scary thing to say, is a relational practice that entails finding ways to enable critical and caring modes of living and learning together, particularly at a time when so many have been cast adrift from the lives we once had.” — *Magnolia Pauker*

<sup>10</sup> The Care Collective is a London-based reading group aiming to understand and address the multiple and extreme crises of care. Members include Andreas Chatzidakis, Jamie Hakim, Jo Littler, Catherine Rottenberg, and Lynne Segal. In 2020 they wrote *The Care Manifesto*, published by Verso.

Wages, <sup>an auto changing</sup> ~~very~~ in relation to teaching  
& art making? Burn out. No way that  
we can have the same level of energy over time  
have such a thinking oriented practice  
teacher & disperseable labor, imperable  
my post-industrial economy. How do we as  
teachers experience time and space? How do  
we survive in institutional and domestic  
do we survive on cases in relation to  
be constantly short lived neoliberal  
as shift requires fluidity and flexibility  
What would be the most immediate  
could bring relief from the university?  
to making & decentralizing the university  
with a collaborative performance prac-  
tice. such as filling the school parking  
spaces and deciding to all sleep in from  
long exposure practice good enough  
liberal policy requires fluidity and  
ability disperseable people disperseable labor

“In spite of my top marks, my application showed a glaring absence of extracurricular activities. Solo parenting a baby, while fighting city hall for housing and organizing letters to welfare for the right to stay in school, well, apparently, those things didn’t count. And I came to understand that it would have been better if I had been helping underprivileged youth, instead of being one... So I never forgot that devaluation of my caregiving labour. I mean, how could I? It’s still happening. Surviving and eventually thriving as a young single lesbian mother didn’t seem to count. And by that, I mean, it never seemed to fit anyone’s idea of motherhood, and certainly not of productive work.” — *Terra Poirier*

“All of my non-regular instructors were excellent... But once I realized that this extra support amounted to service, once I understood about what service was, and that most of my instructors, because most of them are non-regular, were not paid to do that service, I began to feel guilty about asking them for that support... So, I was sitting there in this uncomfortable space in which my legitimate needs as a student could only be met if my mentors compromised their own well-being and worked for free, and I realized that my instructors’ working conditions echoed my own experience as a low-income single mother and it should be noted that many of my mentors were also mothers themselves. And this resonance wasn’t a coincidence, of course, because you know, teaching is care work... And I’ve come to understand that it’s no coincidence that this type of work in the academy often falls to women, and especially racialized women, who are then not rewarded for doing this work... So, of course, academic care is not the same as parenting, but I do think it is undervalued due to its proximity to parenting, to supporting other humans.” — *Terra Poirier*

“So I can’t say enough how important mentorship is for students, especially for those of us who have faced significant barriers in accessing education, I mean, we really need that care...and hers (Magnolia’s) was not the only contribution that made *Non-Regular*<sup>11</sup> possible, but it was pivotal. And I’m sharing it here because it’s an example of what engaged mentorship can do. And, you know, right now, the over-reliance on precarious labour in post-secondary is foreclosing on the possibility of pivotal moments like that for students.” — *Terra Poirier*

<sup>11</sup> Terra Poirier is the creator of *Non-Regular: Precarious academic labour at Emily Carr University of Art + Design*, a book produced in collaboration with dozens of instructors, students and other artists. <https://www.nonregular.ca>

“I’m thinking about the topic of this event tonight, and what emerges for me at the intersections of parenting and reproduction, gender roles and labour conditions...trying to discover what might fit in those intersections is really important to me.” — **Sunny Nestler**

“I haven’t really found a lot of philosophical writing by or about reproductive labour, surrogates and donors that I’ve connected with, so I wrote a piece of creative nonfiction, and it’s going to be published next year in this volume called *The Liminal Chrysalis*<sup>12</sup>... In the short story, I tried to explore the way that organisms are connected through reproduction by using connectedness across species as a metaphor. I decided to add one fictional character to an otherwise true story to structure this, and the character is an endangered sea turtle who conspires to infiltrate the human embryo with its own DNA at the moment of aspiration... So in this case, I used the sea turtle as a stand-in for my own role in reproduction in terms of the amount of distance that I felt from the intended family. I don’t identify as mother or father to my three genetic offspring, but I’m also not nothing to them even though I signed contracts that tend to frame it that way. I didn’t feel like the contract as a document described our actual relationship. So I wrote this story as one way to try to find another way to describe it.” — **Sunny Nestler**

“Even though I’ve found it challenging to navigate the structures of society, I’ve often enjoyed my work in the arts, in education and research, and community building, as well as helping to make new people—which I understand can be a subject that brings up a lot of feelings and opinions around a lot of different bioethical problems. But, for me, the line between the work of human reproduction and being in the workplace has never been very obvious as someone whose work has more often than not existed on the margins. Community building is also work. Surrogacy is also work. Gestation is also work. Parenthood is also work.” — **Sunny Nestler**

“In 2018, CAUT<sup>13</sup> did a survey that confirmed that approximately 1/3 of academics at universities and colleges in Canada are hired on so-called temporary contracts...these temporary contracts are pretty long-term jobs. They’re just precarious. They feel precarious...they make you feel as if you don’t belong in the academy.” — **Sarika Bose**

12 Title of Sunny Nestler’s short story is “The Work of Assisted Reproductive Technology in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”. *The Liminal Chrysalis: Imagining Reproduction and Parenting Futures Beyond the Binary*, published by Demeter Press. <https://demeterpress.org/books/the-liminal-chrysalis-imagining-reproduction-and-parenting-futures-beyond-the-binary/>

13 Canadian Association of University Teachers. <https://www.caut.ca>

age of being a motherhood artist  
knows that my cl  
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<sup>the isolation</sup> <sup>parenting</sup> <sup>chrysalis</sup>

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human dignity  
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of not <sup>gender</sup> <sup>belonging</sup> <sup>is to academy</sup>  
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city to precarity Affirming that this is not  
experience but looks of us appearance of  
my hand? Am I overreacting? put in my  
train. Have given up applying because it is too  
also we get so many rejections as artists  
name so you can get how do you manage  
let on to teaching, parenting and art making?

“Our knowledge, our specialization cannot be disseminated either through teaching or through publications, because we neither have the time, nor do we have the opportunities to teach in our specialized subject. Our education system is devalued, because investment is going into amenities like swimming pools, like sports teams and sports facilities, not into teaching or libraries. The loss of academic freedom is huge, partly because of the administrative surveillance culture that has spilled out into every part of academia. We have lost that academic freedom because we find that a lot of our colleagues who are who are sessional or contract workers.”

— **Sarika Bose**

“Contract employment impacts long term planning. So 33% of the survey respondents in *Out of the Shadows*<sup>14</sup> — and it was just under about 2000 respondents in that survey across Canada -they’re talking about the strain on domestic arrangements, on family planning, on relationships. And you find that the financial insecurity that we are all feeling negatively affects the wider economy. So we can’t afford to buy houses to live in, we’re forced to go on unemployment insurance every time we are not teaching in a particular term, we’re forced to rely on more and more government services, if they’re available, for special health needs for the contract academics themselves and for their communities, for their families, for their children. What I find very disturbing is that all of these psychological and financial pressures move to the next generations in families of academics, so that a cycle of poverty and poverty thinking becomes entrenched, and opportunities become fewer and harder to access. And in the larger society, that loss of job and financial security means that contract academics are part of this whole precarious movement, which leads to wider national economic instability, a greater burden on government services, and that cycle of poverty that I mentioned.” — **Sarika Bose**

“...one of the layers of the exploitation of academics is found in the fact that the university is a racialized site, and we continue to marginalize nonwhite people. There are many ways in which the institutional practices at universities perpetuates structural racism...women and racialized contract academic staff work more hours per course per week than their white, male, contract academic staff colleagues, and are overrepresented in lower income categories.”

— **Sarika Bose**

<sup>14</sup> *Out of the Shadows: Experiences of Contract Academic Staff* is the report based on CAUT’s Survey and can be found here: [https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/cas\\_report.pdf](https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/cas_report.pdf)

“Let’s move beyond simply counting the numbers of indigenous faculty...if you were simply to look superficially at UBC and the hiring of indigenous faculty, it would look as if they’re doing quite well. My department, for example, has four faculty members who are identifying themselves as indigenous. Well, we need to move beyond that to really value indigenous ways of knowing and teaching, and thus create the criteria changes for appointment workload, workload distribution, and tenure. We need to rebalance knowledge away from Eurocentric texts, languages, ways of knowing and teaching, and the SSHRC<sup>15</sup> actually has some quite good principles for recognizing indigenous research. We need to move away from managerial structures of evaluations, including those student experience surveys.” — **Sarika Bose**

“At the end of 2020, we did a COVID Impacts Study where we asked all faculty to tell us about their experiences over the last year, over 1000 people responded.<sup>16</sup>... (We found out that) caregiver status is negatively correlated with access to a private workspace. In other words, if you have anybody to care for, then you took a hit in terms of your private workspace, and private workspace is positively correlated with overall productivity. So if you were lucky enough to get a private workspace, then you were overall productive...caregiver status was also very positively correlated with needing more time to parent which was very negatively correlated with overall productivity.” — **Elisa Baniassad**

“(In the study) contract faculty moms talked so much about their fears about being able to continue in their roles...so many people said they were afraid for their contracts, they were worried about being able to do work to get themselves out of a contract position. Many people reported that they had been trying to do research or trying to do educational work to be able to promote themselves out of precarious positions, and instead apply for tenure track positions. And that was all thwarted basically by this year of disruption.” — **Elisa Baniassad**

<sup>15</sup> The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) is Canada’s federal research funding agency that promotes and supports research and training in the humanities and social sciences. Indigenous research criteria and definitions: [https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/society-societe/community-communite/indigenous\\_research-recherche\\_autochtone/index-eng.aspx](https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/society-societe/community-communite/indigenous_research-recherche_autochtone/index-eng.aspx)

<sup>16</sup> This survey was developed by the Status of Women Committee of the UBC Faculty Association to examine the impacts of COVID on different faculty members: women, racialized groups, caregivers.



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meine time and space? How do  
in institutional and domestic  
• envision ourselves in relation to  
instantly short listed neoliberal  
shift requires fluidity and flexibility  
it would be the most immediate  
bring relief from the university?  
sing & decentralizing the university  
a collaborative performance piece  
• Such as filling the school parking  
and deciding to all sleep on them  
expense pecuniary good enough  
policy requires fluidity and



“...expectations stayed so high for everybody but even for contract faculty who weren’t necessarily even being paid for some of their preparation time. So these expectations stayed super super high, the students were still expecting this top quality from their top tier university, and the administration was also saying, ‘We know it’s a really hard year but you’re going to do great,...you’re going to achieve just as much as you always have been’, and that basically left contract faculty moms feeling so squeezed and they use words like ‘stretched’ and ‘just overwhelmed’... So even through increased parenting needs, because of the contract position, contract moms were unable to cut back on work. They couldn’t make any cutbacks there, so what they did cut back on was sleep...on life necessities, like going to the bathroom and eating and doing really anything that was for themselves. They traded in all of that to just somehow physically make all the work fit into all the time.” — *Elisa Baniassad*

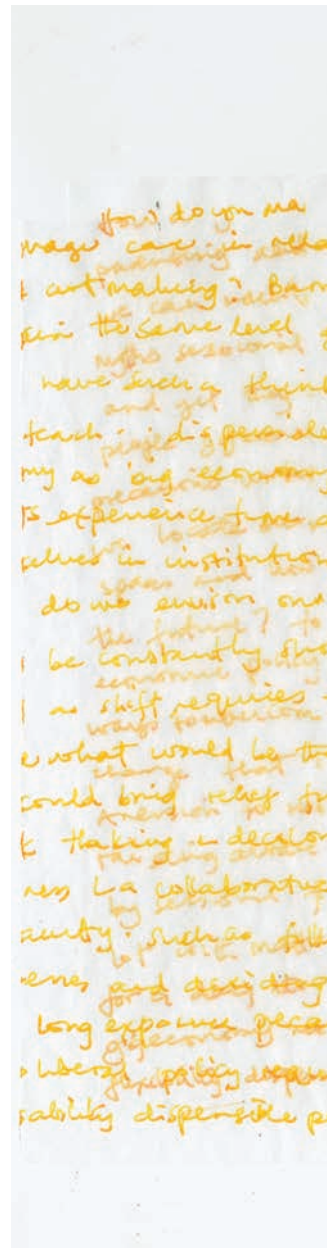
“There were feelings of isolation from friends, family and support systems... there was also this deep effect of, especially moms, supporting everyone around them, including their students. And of course, this all came along with deep depression, anxiety, feeling stressed, feeling like worse parents. Many people actually said they felt like they were doing worse parenting because that was one of the things they could cut back on, was the quality of parenting. And then of course, the added fear of job prospects, the fact that you couldn’t promote yourselves, you couldn’t do the research that you needed to do... What was really clear was that all of the maybe even inadequate systems that are currently in place were so severely disrupted for those in precarious positions, particularly moms, through COVID with effects that are both profound and also lasting.” — *Elisa Baniassad*

“I have a bit of a confession to make. Before we move on, I’m going to get this off my chest, but I always thought I would be that person who did it all, who had that academic career, who had children and a family. But in truth being an academic is really hard. And being a mother is probably the single hardest thing that I have ever done. There exists a conflict between child rearing and professional careers in higher education, and it disproportionately negatively affects women. This disconnect has been further exacerbated by the pandemic, but it didn’t originate from the pandemic. There are inadequate accommodations, stress and exhaustion, and exclusion from professional life. Those hidden costs of having families and being somebody other than an academic, the fear is real, especially in a profession where so much depends on personal relationships, and where we are constantly mindful of being perceived as something less than fully committed to our work.” — *Annabree Fairweather*

“My partner was pregnant with our first child, and it was after...the years, the donor contracts, artificial insemination, the miscarriages, the struggles, all of it was worth it. But it was painful and emotionally isolating at the time where you’re trying to finish your grad school or do teaching. But my kid was finally born. And it was in the middle of a term, the same week that 120 essays were due. And that third midterm exam hit. I had no sick leave, I had no health benefits, no support from within the faculty since I was only ever on campus part time, but also during nonstandard work hours. And at the time, I was holding the thread of three separate employment contracts. I very much recognized how unsustainable that it all can be in those moments. But having come from a life of poverty as a young person, I took every job opportunity that came my way and fear that I would otherwise be destitute or I would miss the next one.” — **Annabree Fairweather**

“Contract faculty need security clauses in their contracts, like the right of first refusal, paid sick leave, access to employer-provided benefits, fair pay. I know that I’m talking about contract faculty but so many contract faculty are women and are members of equity seeking groups and these are avenues for addressing systemic discrimination for contract faculty. We need to move away from anonymous student evaluations because they disproportionately hurt women and they feed the problems of penalizing women in academia and keeping them from opportunities, either promotion or secure contracts. On-campus daycares need to better accommodate the part-time needs and the non-standard work hours of contract faculty, especially institutions where they work really odd hours of the day that aren’t contained to a traditional workday of eight to five.” — **Annabree Fairweather**

“We reference often, in labour, the ‘Bread and Roses’ poem...did you know that it’s based on a political speech by Helen Todd who said bread for all and roses, too. Helen Todd was an American women’s suffrage and child labour activist In the early 1900s. She advocated a hundred years ago or more for the same issues that we talk about today: that by supporting women in the workforce, including childcare, we’ll create a more equitable, just, and prosperous society for all. And when we lift women up, they bring their children. My wish for all of you, bread and roses too, but by that I really mean I wish for real, actual change.” — **Annabree Fairweather**





**CONVERSATION 2**

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# Precarious Academic Labour and Motherhood, Part II

**ORGANIZERS**

Matilda Aslizadeh  
Maria Anna Parolin  
Damla Tamer

**Link to access event page:**

<https://accessgallery.ca/event/conversation-2-precarius-academic-labour-and-motherhood-part-ii>



## ART/MAMAS — PRECARIOUS ACADEMIC LABOUR AND MOTHERHOOD, PART II

October 2, 2021, 12:00 PM (PST)

In *Academic Nomads: The Changing Conception of Academic Work Under Precarious Working Conditions*, Asli Vatansever says that, in order to “raise a self-conscious anti-institutional intellectual subjectivity one must depart from individual and individualistic attempts to overcome uncertainty. Precariousness, and the short-term mentality it imposes upon us, happens to many of us simultaneously... Putting our hopes on individual solutions can only result in the strengthening of the competitive market mechanisms, which fuelled this uncertainty in the first place. After all, the future, even when it concerns the individual, always has a social dimension: it depends on others.”<sup>17</sup>

The second part of this conversation was an open-participation, forum style audience dialogue framed by the following questions. We developed these questions as a way to integrate our own thoughts with the presentations from Part I.

To preserve the anonymity of discussion participants, we decided not to transcribe or record the session.

Conversation 2,  
Part II captured  
by Terra Poirier in  
a long exposure  
pinhole photograph

<sup>17</sup> A. Vatansever (2018) *Academic Nomads. The Changing Conception of Academic Work under Precarious Conditions*. *Cambio* Vol. 8, n. 15: 153-165. doi: 10.13128/cam bio-22537

**Terra Poirier created pinhole photographs of the Zoom session as it unfolded. The project, pictured in the following pages, is titled *This art is dusty: A conversation about mothering and academic precarity.***

## **FRAMING QUESTIONS**

### **Partitioned Space-Time of the Academic Precariat**

How do you manage your simultaneous roles as artist/researcher, instructor and caregiver?

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Have your aspirations for the future and feelings about your work changed from when you first started teaching to now?

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What are the rhetorics of “emergency” that materialized in academic institutions over the COVID-19 pandemic? Did these legitimize job cuts and transitions to online learning without adequate support for contract faculty? How has COVID-19 compounded existing issues such as financial uncertainty, lack of support from the institutions, proper access to teaching space and resources, and more importantly, the feeling that our limits are being tested with an appeal to notions of flexibility and resilience?

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Are contract instructors hosts or guests in the university? The difficulty of defining oneself: guest vs. host in the institution.

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How do we, as precarious workers, experience space and time? How do we locate ourselves in institutional and domestic spaces, and how do we envision ourselves in relation to the future?

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How does internalized capitalism shape our sense of time? Can we find ways to radically re-situate presence in a context other than productivity?

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We could say that contract instructors, on one hand, experience continuous uncertainty about their future, and on the other hand, are forced to imagine themselves as being on a linear trajectory of “upward mobility”, always a step short of promotion or employment stability. There is a mismatch between not being on any timeline vs. having to imagine oneself on a linear path of progress, between lack-of-control and the learned notion of predictable advancement. Could the return to a pre-80’s, proletariat time of 9-5 be the solution, or do we have to invent a brand new time-space (and what would it look like)?

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Are universities/departments setting impossible goals for instructors? Why could that be?

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## Teaching And Caregiving

Can the university ever be decolonized? How can we practice Indigenous ways of knowing and non-Western modes of engaging in an authentic way, rather than “add ons” to existing practices? What are the obstacles preventing us from doing these?

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Women have traditionally been relied on for social reproduction as much as biological reproduction—replication and maintenance of patterns. How does this manifest in academia? What are the gendered facets of uncompensated labour?

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Can caregiving be a link between sustainability and progress, both in the university but in society as a whole? Are there aspects to caregiving that can make for better university/ education practices?

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## Asking For Change

What would be the most immediate changes that you would expect from your institution to improve the working conditions of contract instructors?

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What are the childcare initiatives you would like to see happen in the university?

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Can universities address the housing problems of families and people with dependants?

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How can the focus of wellness programs be shifted from individual to collective wellness to promote being O.K. rather than feeling O.K.?

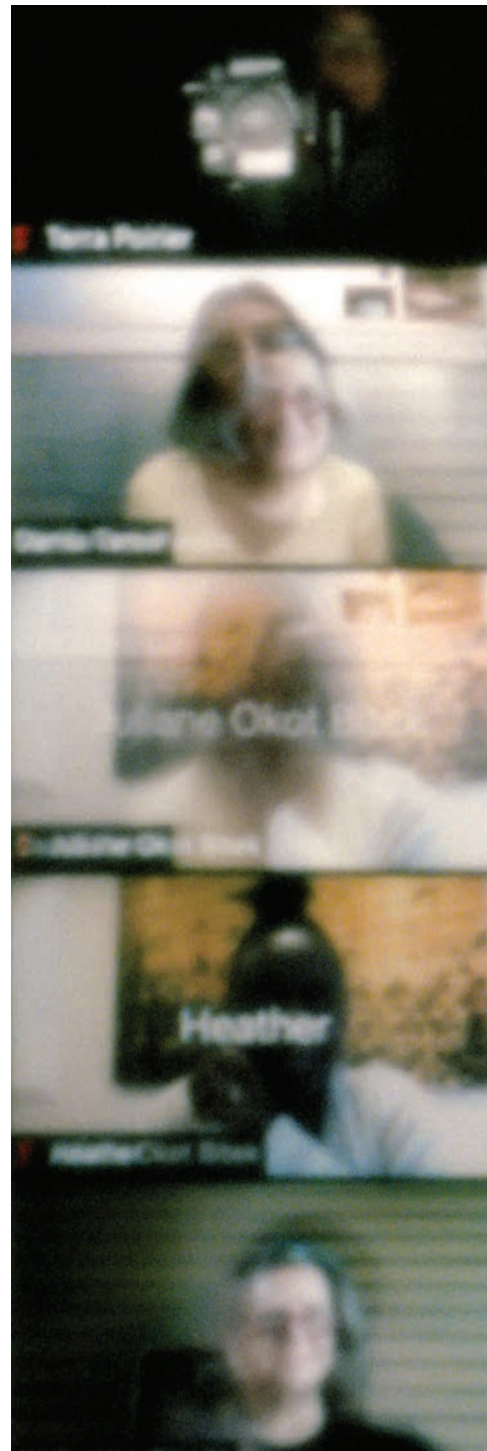
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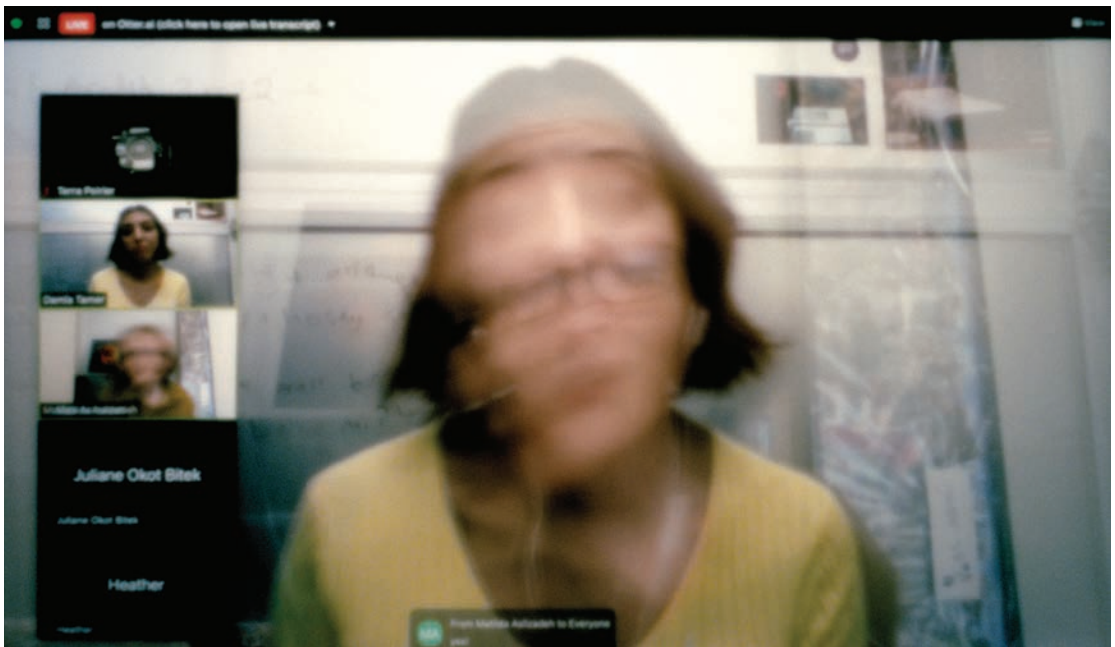
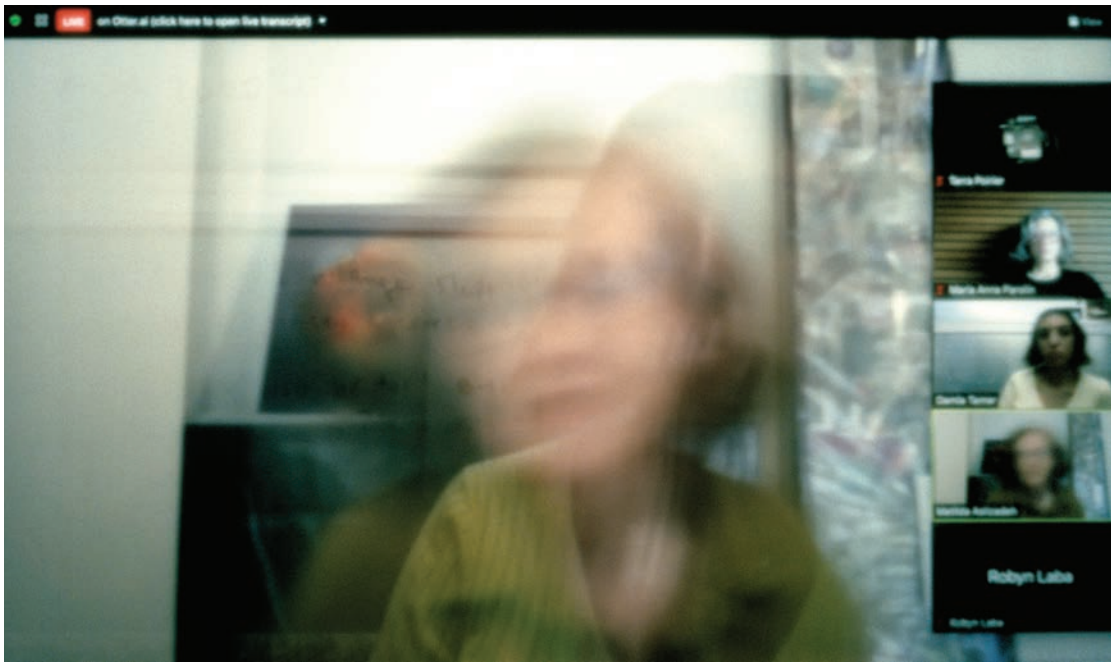
What are the obstacles for organizing, support networks and practical solutions? Why is it so difficult to change the “circumstances”? What are the obstacles that you have individually experienced?

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How can we counter the “yo-yo” effect — wanting to be engaged and change things and needing to step away completely?

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How can we reliably access data that tells us our own working conditions? Who assembles and manages data? What percentage of instructors in higher education work on a contract basis? How fast is this number increasing? How many contract instructors are able to secure permanent employment in their own departments? What is the composition of the sessional work force in terms of gender, race and ethnicity?

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Do you think that unions are helpful for addressing and improving contract faculty issues? What are the advantages and disadvantages to contract faculty being represented by the same unions who serve permanent, tenure-track faculty?

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While many arts, humanities and social sciences departments make commitments to social justice, how much of this trickles down to labour relations? Does “optical social justice” help entrench unjust labour practices in these institutions?

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Is there a sense of “entrepreneurialism”, expectations for being self-made, that tinges the university’s treatment of contract faculty? Why is unpredictability often excused because artists (replace with other profession) “need” the flexibility?

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What are the different ways of organizing towards improving our working conditions? We can talk about legal ways of organizing (eg. unions), direct action (eg. protests) and self-organized, informal support networks (email groups, anonymous meetings, what else)?

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Damla Tamer, detail  
from weaving with  
clear monofilament  
thread, clear bra  
straps, paper pulp,  
45" x 33", 2022.

# Clear Bra Straps and Why Try So Hard

by **Damla Tamer**

The art/mamas PLOT conversations took place through September and October of 2021. We explored the necessity of connecting mutually non-exclusive iterations of labour such as reproductive work, care work, creative work and organizing work. We discussed how these were affected by the precarization of traditionally more secure jobs and the rise of gig work in its vast, eerily creative forms, the erosion of social security networks and the entrenchment of the heteronormative nuclear family in the public imaginary as the central care hub. These conversations encouraged me to take notice of what is going on beyond my local networks; they charged me up for wanting to connect and do more.

As we were organizing the art/mamas PLOT sessions as a group, my individual work at the studio had been taking shape around a particular object: the clear bra strap. For months, I was intrigued by the possibilities of making textile structures with clear materials, stretching and weaving monofilaments and submerging them in paper pulp baths. Dried pulp formed a coating on the materials, holding the fibres together after being taken off the loom, while partially transforming them into paper surfaces. This was a frustrating process, weavings collapsing if the paper pulp didn't manage to fix the fibres, frames requiring larger and larger tubs of water as I blew up the dimensions of the project. It was time and space consuming, two things which never seem to be available at the same time. I brought an inflatable kid's pool into my studio in lieu of a giant paper making vat, which to my son's delight, doubled for its intended purpose.

The anecdotal starting point for working with clear monofilaments came from an early encounter as an art student with a particular aesthetic judgement: a professor asking us, the students, to avoid using fishing wire to hang up our works, because

this material pretended to be invisible but was not really so— *just like clear bra straps*. I remember the moment vividly, how logical the statement sounded at the time (and how it still does, if I insert myself into that particular logic), and how it sank in and slowly transformed into a brick in the wall of gendered value judgements sloshing around in my mind. That the (art)work should “show” its own mechanisms of making, “own up” to its means and boundaries, make them either completely visible or completely invisible, can be considered as gendered demands. These demands connect appearances with behaviours and responsibilities in a specific way, linking attributes such as transparency and clarity with virtues such as honesty and sincerity when it comes to art works, and art work in general.

And yet, our labour as artists and caregivers is never completely invisible nor visible—in the sense that the messy bits and pieces of the boring labour of sustaining life cannot always perfectly and magically disappear when it is time to don our individual artist personas (as Jin-me Yoon drew attention to this in the Intergenerational Motherhood dialogue, “You’re not meant to talk about your extended family, you’re supposed to exist in a vacuum in art making, except romantic bits related to your wonderful bohemian life.”) Neither is our artistic labour entirely visible in the schema of capitalist productivity that measures value in the form of hours worked to fulfil a pre-determined task and products sold. This schema demands both a complete absence/invisibility and a complete presence/visibility from us, an on-off switch that can be operated on demand; but for parents, caregivers, and frankly, for anybody with social ties, this is not possible.

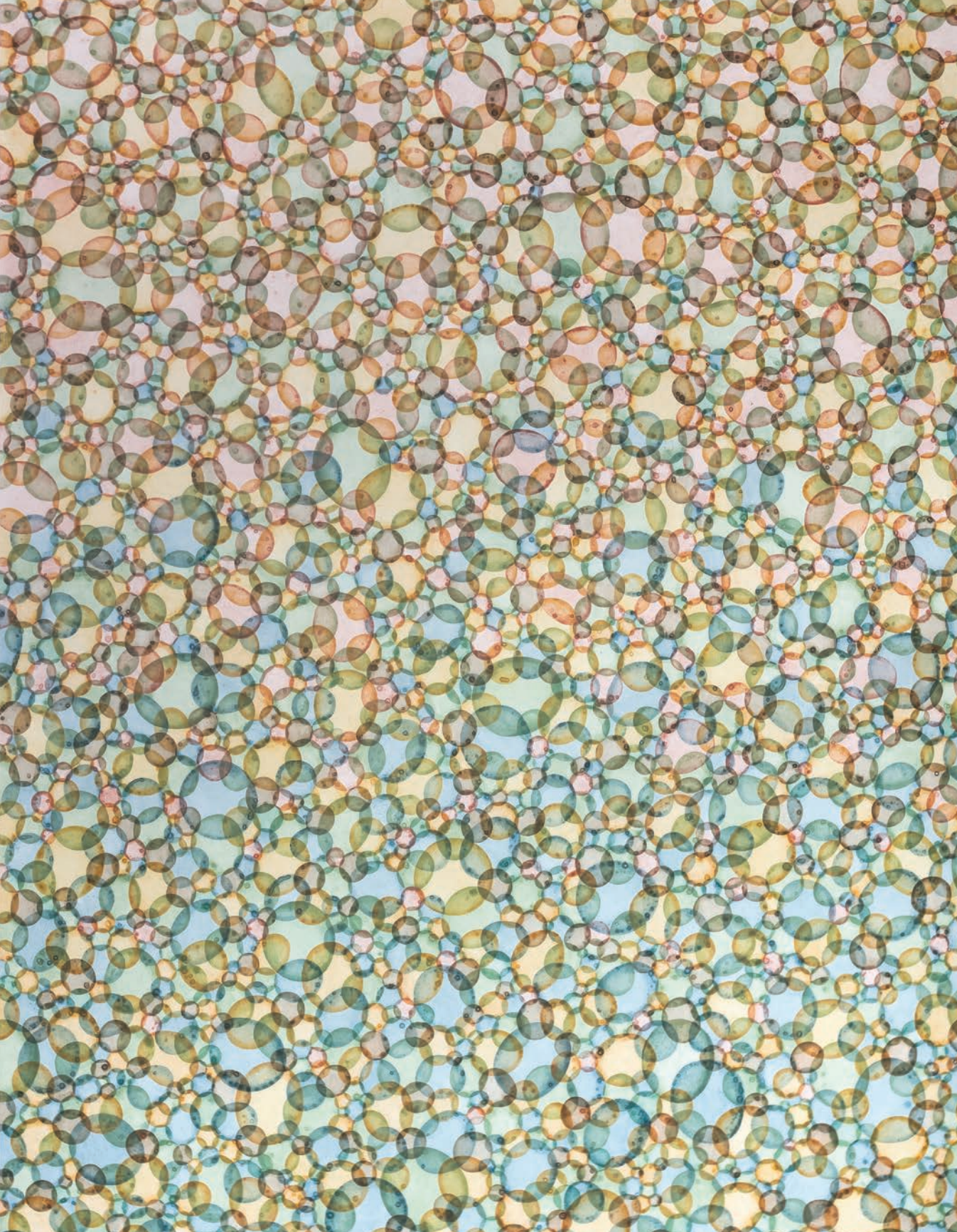
Sianne Ngai describes the gimmick as a labour-saving device that reveals our tacit measurements of value under late capitalism.<sup>18</sup> Judging something as a gimmick means it feels overrated and one would have to be naive to fall for it. Objects like banana slicers and products like the Hamburger Helper irritate us but hold our attention: we cannot look away from their simultaneous over-working and under-working, trying too hard to achieve what is ultimately a shortcut. To me, the clear bra strap is the perfect feminine gimmick, an object that tries to take a shortcut to absence but ultimately landing in the ambiguous space of semi-visibility. The irritation it stirs for the spectator is real (“why try so hard to hide itself?”) but this may as well be a byproduct of our own paradoxical expectations from appearances of labour.

A huge thanks to all the speakers, participants and audience members who made the conversation rich with their insights and experiences, and my group members and friends at art/mamas, specifically Matilda Aslizadeh and Maria Anna Parolin, whom I worked with for organizing the Precarious Academic Labour and Motherhood sessions. To discovering alternative ways of being together.

<sup>18</sup> Sianne Ngai (2020). *Theory of the Gimmick : Aesthetic Judgment and Capitalist Form*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press Of Harvard University Press.

Heather Passmore, *Motherwork #5*,  
36" x 48", casein and natural pigments  
on wooden panel, 2021.





# (M)other Spaces: art/mamas and the Visibility of Caregiving and Artistic Labour “Post-pandemic”

by Kate Henderson

I preface this text by holding space for those who give and receive care beyond the definition of “motherhood”—those who choose not to have children, those who yearn to have children but are unable to, and those who have lost their children. I speak primarily from my experience as a white, cisgender, birthing mother coming from a place of privilege, and it is certainly not only these normative experiences that are of value as we dismantle heteronormative, colonial, and patriarchal structures. Oppressive systems of power must give way to anti-capitalist, intersectional-feminist, multi-gendered, and decolonial structures of care that everyone has access to and, in turn, is supported by.

*“Behind every factory, behind every school, behind every office or mine there is the hidden work of millions of women who have consumed their life, their labour, producing the labour that works in those factories, schools and mines.” — Silvia Federici<sup>19</sup>*

*“Having a child was a crisis. Crisis is the only thing which creates fast, substantive change. I’ve never been the same since, nor, by extension, has my work and its process.” — Barbara Zucker<sup>20</sup>*

<sup>19</sup> Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2020), 27.

<sup>20</sup> Barbara Zucker, “From the M/E/A/N/I/N/G Forum: On Motherhood, Art, and Apple Pie” (1992), in *Mother Reader: Essential Writings on Motherhood*, ed. Moyra Davey (New York: Seven Stories, 2001), 210.

In an effort to be honest with myself, and with you, the reader, I want to first acknowledge the grief and rawness of motherhood, which is so rarely spoken about. Such honesty can begin to dismantle normative conceptions of motherhood and draw attention to its subversive potential. Motherhood is messy, dark, and excruciating, but, in a circuitous way, it is a beautiful and deeply meaningful lens through which to envision the world as a space for relationship-building, community care, flexibility, and collaboration—values of utmost importance as we enter a so-called post-pandemic world.

Eight months after my daughter was born, we entered the first of several COVID-19 lockdowns. In the pandemic's early days, many people remarked on how isolating the experience was. For me, the monotony, anxiety, and isolation from my community were no different than maternity leave. Myself and many other caregivers of young children had grieved the loss of self and support well before lockdown, and I felt well-equipped to handle—or at least was acquainted with—the duality of boredom and paranoia.

Isolation and invisibility are so keenly felt by mothers, particularly in a society that upholds the mythology of the nuclear family. Under that unsustainable structure, many mothers during the pandemic homeschooled their children in between Zoom meetings and their pre-existing domestic and reproductive labour duties. The pandemic also highlighted inequitable working conditions for essential workers—many of whom are racialized mothers or caregivers—who cannot work from the safety of their home. The pandemic illuminated the challenges of caregiving labour (reproductive and otherwise) and how various forms of care are devalued, underpaid, or unpaid, as activist Silvia Federici and her Wages for Housework movement of the 1970s fought so hard to make visible.<sup>21</sup> For many who give care, this invisibility and devaluation is not new, and has been, as Annabree Fairweather<sup>22</sup>

21 “The International Wages for Housework Campaign (IWFHC) is a grassroots women’s network campaigning for recognition and payment for all caring work, in the home and outside [it]. It was started in 1972 by Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Silvia Federici, Brigitte Galtier, and Selma James who first put forward the demand for wages for housework. They consider the demand for wages for unwaged caring work to be also a perspective and a way of organizing from the bottom up, of autonomous sectors working together to end the power relations among them.” Wikipedia, s.v. “Wages for housework,” last modified April 7, 2022, 10:31, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wages\\_for\\_housework](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wages_for_housework).

22 Annabree Fairweather (Executive Director, CUFA BC: Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia).

stated in her art/mamas talk, “further exacerbated by the pandemic but did not originate from it.”

This systemic problem, unsurprisingly, also afflicts the art world, which so often mirrors capitalist and patriarchal forms of production and dissemination. Motherhood remains a trivialized subject in contemporary art, rarely given space, attention, or opportunity for critical discourse within gallery settings. Due to these conditions, mothers, caregivers, and their children or dependents are nearly invisible in cultural institutions. Women and nonbinary artists historically have been and continue to be underrepresented in art spaces, full stop. As in most careers, the scenario of women artists being pressured to choose between their career and motherhood is a systemic issue that has long been perpetuated in the art world, and even when women do not have children, they still suffer the consequences of being labelled a “risky liability” when of child-bearing age. The meaningful and relevant narratives of mothers and women are thus excluded from larger cultural representations—narratives we all benefit from.

Despite its continued forced invisibilization, motherhood and caregiving can become a rich and empowering part of an artist’s creative identity. If given space, mothering can ignite collective action to subvert heteronormative and patriarchal legacies in the art world and beyond. In many ways, mothering parallels artistic production. Both are forms of labour requiring high levels of stamina and strength, yet both forms of (re)production are undervalued—especially when they present themselves together.

It is this continued lack of visibility and devaluation of artist mothers that inspired the formation of art/mamas, a diverse Vancouver-based collective of artist mothers who seek to create other spaces for mothers and caregivers—ones that support and engage with community, seek to uplift, and encourage a safe space for critique and growth. Since 2016, art/mamas has met monthly to discuss their practices and experiences in an open forum. The group works against dominant structures of art and academia—fields that increasingly mirror unsustainable, corporate, and isolating models of production and specialization. From July to December 2021, art/mamas took part in a residency at Access Gallery’s PLOT space to gather together an international community of self-identified caregivers and mothers. Through the residency, art/mamas and their invited guests investigated the subject and experience of maternity and caregiving through a wide, inclusive lens.

The series began with “Intergenerational Dialogue of Artist Mothers,” for which artist mothers of diverse ages and backgrounds discussed their unique experiences navigating the intersection between art and motherhood in Canadian visual art institutions. Margaret Dragu<sup>23</sup> described running Momz

<sup>23</sup> Margaret Dragu (Vancouver-based performance artist).

Radio, a radio program and publication in the 1990s that expanded who was perceived as mothers, thereby making visible the intersectional in caregiving; and Jin-me Yoon<sup>24</sup> discussed the idea of children as embodied histories who should be foregrounded in art. This led to a poignant statement from Elizabeth Vander Zaag<sup>25</sup> on the increased visibility of children during the COVID-19 pandemic, as domestic life became an unavoidably visible part of the work ecology, with many of us conducting meetings on Zoom. She remarked: “At what point do we start to accept the visibility of children in our culture? We have to learn to work with our children beside us.” Further, it became clear that community-based and relational practices can be a counternarrative to the oppressive force of the nuclear family model—a model that, historically, is not the norm.

Next in the series was “Precarious Academic Labour and Motherhood,” a two-part talk focusing on the instability of sessional faculty positions in academia. According to the research Elisa Baniassad<sup>26</sup> presented, it is evident a glaring disproportion of contract labour exists among mothers. During the pandemic, a huge drop in self-care and a major increase in parenting needs occurred, and through her research, Barriassad found that the relentless pace of contract work has a particularly negative impact on marginalized academics. Sarika Bose’s<sup>27</sup> presentation highlighted that women and racialized staff work more hours per week than their white male counterparts and are often overrepresented in lower income categories. Expectations of academic labourers remained at a high level throughout the pandemic while domestic and caregiving labour simultaneously increased. Further, as Annabree Fairweather stated, in times of austerity—like a global pandemic—contract faculty are often among the first to be laid off. Seen as “low-hanging fruit,” these individuals are primarily women, racialized folks, and members of equity-seeking groups. These talks were a poignant reminder of the ongoing devaluation of teaching labour—which is, after all, caregiving labour. As Terra Poirier<sup>28</sup> stated, “It’s soft skills.”

The “Film and Motherhood” program was the third event held during art/ mamas’ residency. The curatorial project consisted of three online screenings: “Experimental Short Program”, “Mid Length: Intimate Portraits”, and a “Feature Length” film. A final screening was held in person at Access Gallery. The online group conversation “Film and Motherhood” spoke directly to the experience

24 Jin-me Yoon (Vancouver-based lens-based artist).

25 Elizabeth Vander Zaag (Vancouver-based digital media artist).

26 Elisa Baniassad (Associate Professor of Teaching at the University of British Columbia [UBC] and Chair of the Status of Women Committee for the UBC Faculty Association).

27 Sarika Bose (long-term contract academic in the Department of English Language and Literatures at UBC and Contract Faculty Committee Chair for the UBC Faculty Association).

28 Terra Poirier (Vancouver-based interdisciplinary artist and organizer).

of making work while simultaneously parenting. Artists discussed the need to find new models of production when becoming mothers—how to accommodate and adapt to making shorter or smaller works to match the pace of change. Some remarked on how they became more productive once they became mothers, because windows of time were so precious—particularly so during lockdowns, when nearness to partners and children made art making more urgent as a way to process their collective experience. The participants reiterated how generative it can be to draw on the materials of everyday life to create work. Clare Yow<sup>29</sup> spoke to the intergenerational potential in artistic production, in particular her experience making a short film with her mother as the subject. She remarked: “Being part of the Chinese diaspora, I’m always trying to navigate what it means to embody cultural knowledge and caregiving while also honoring the power of matriarchs and thinking a lot about sorrow, too, because I think cultural knowledge keeps diluting with every generation.” As Yow states, art making can be a psychological support for mothers, especially when life, art, and intergenerational knowledge are allowed to flow in and out of each other.

“Film and Motherhood” reinforced the notion that motherhood is time travel: reckoning with our identities links us so deeply to our mothers and grandmothers while simultaneously placing us back inside our childhood bodies, as we see the world through our children’s eyes. Indeed, motherhood is an embodied, durational—almost cinematic—experience of intergenerational memory, story, and trauma, with our children as the markers of time passing.

The art/mamas PLOT residency raised many urgent questions during this fraught moment of ours. How can we take the social invisibility of the maternal experience and use it to induce positive systemic change in cultural spaces? How can we make visible the conditions of caregivers and fairly compensate or give value to this labour? How can “mother” become a verb that subverts colonial and patriarchal legacies? How can mothering become a collective action that can (re)produce systems of community care that benefit everyone?

Motherhood and caregiving can unravel and unsettle the institutionalized, patriarchal, and colonized space of the gallery, academia, and beyond. Precarious and unsustainable labour can give way to reimagined, inclusive, and equitable work. It can, as Federici states, “reconstruct the world as a space of nurturing, creativity, and care,”<sup>30</sup> redefining our lives in opposition to the capitalist labour market. If the qualities of mothering become better reflected in our culture, then these values of care and intersectional feminism will create a more just and creative society for everyone. We can build and weave (m)other spaces into the fabric of our communities and, in turn, soften how we move through this world by building deeper, richer relationships, collaboration, and artistic production.

<sup>29</sup> Clare Yow (Vancouver-based visual artist).

<sup>30</sup> Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero*, xvii.

# art/mamas as portal and social practice

by Sarah Shamash

art/mamas is a portal in which we create a space where we can exist with dignity, and meaningfully contribute to art herstories. This portal leads to a future where our children can grow in a world where they can dream and exist beyond the confines of the de-futuring patriarchal, anthropocentric, capitalist paradigm. art/mamas is both a survival mechanism and a utopian project that, despite the obstacles (i.e. colonization, neoliberalism, racial capital, patriarchy) persists.

When Natasha and Matilda started our collective of artist mothers in 2016, we knew we were working outside the pressures of the artworld because addressing art and motherhood was considered anathema. I am reminded of the Guerrilla Girls' 1988 poster "The Advantages of Being a Woman Artist" that used irony to speak back to the racism and sexism of the art industrial complex. The same is true today. Being a woman artist with kids means that we can work "without the pressure of success" and pretty much every other point on that Guerrilla Girls' poster.

Notwithstanding living in a patriarchal world that often limits the potential of mothers in professional spheres, our collective is a means to create community, one that resists and critiques intersecting systems of power both within the institution of the family and reproduced in larger societal structures such as art and film institutions. Our collective is a means to analyze and critique power structures through film and art and community organizing and mutual support.

As part of our PLOT residency at Access Gallery, I was most actively involved in curating the "Film and Motherhood" programs (four in total) along with Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda and prOphecy sun. Cinema has always been one of my greatest teachers; making and understanding film through motherhood and mothering have become other lenses through which to envision the filmic medium.

While I was thinking about film and motherhood in our programming choices, I was also making a film. Filming, mothering, and programming films on motherhood were inevitably intertwined with the threads of our conversations and programming choices. Like Gabriela, with one foot in Canada and the other in Latin America, with my personal ties to Brazil, and hers to Mexico, we curated a program of films with a strong Latin American presence. The curatorial vision



intentionally gave access to the realities of motherhood from the Global South and in hemispheric dialogues with Turtle Island with films by Black, Indigenous, Chicana and other diaspora women.

Sarah Shamash,  
“P,” *Skulls & Oceans*,  
film still, 2018.

As witnessed in the films we programmed, motherhood and mothering are complex fields situated in a historical, existential, and political nexus often tied to activism, care, and community. Whether nurturing a community of resistance, or a vision for a film, or one for the world, the films we programmed and their filmmakers expanded a matricentric worldview.

From the minutiae of mothering (Errin Siddal), to the activism of the Chicana movement (Sylvia Rodriguez), to the struggles and inheritances of Black, Asian, Latinx, Middle Eastern, and Indigenous diaspora (Safira Moreira, Clare Yow, Francisca Duran, Ghinwa Yassine, Lindsay McIntyre, Guadalupe Martínez), to the spiritual dimensions of motherhood (Jules Koostachin, Michele Kaiowá, Preta Performance), to the absurdities of mothering (Lois Klassen, *Maternal Fantasies*), and mothering in a racist society (Nadine Valcin, Preta Performance), these filmmakers underscored complex and contemporary reflections on this most ancient trope. Mother/ mothering/ motherhood and film and all of their messiness were further unpacked in an online dialogue with artist-filmmakers.



# THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING A WOMAN ARTIST:

Guerrilla Girls,  
*The Advantages  
of Being A Woman  
Artist*, 1988.

Copyright ©  
Guerrilla Girls,  
courtesy  
guerrillagirls.com

**Working without the pressure of success**  
**Not having to be in shows with men**  
**Having an escape from the art world in your 4 free-lance jobs**  
**Knowing your career might pick up after you're eighty**  
**Being reassured that whatever kind of art you make it will be labeled feminine**  
**Not being stuck in a tenured teaching position**  
**Seeing your ideas live on in the work of others**  
**Having the opportunity to choose between career and motherhood**  
**Not having to choke on those big cigars or paint in Italian suits**  
**Having more time to work when your mate dumps you for someone younger**  
**Being included in revised versions of art history**  
**Not having to undergo the embarrassment of being called a genius**  
**Getting your picture in the art magazines wearing a gorilla suit**

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM **GUERRILLA GIRLS** CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD

I come away with a vision that centers matricentrism as an act of feminist solidarity with those who have lost their babies, who choose to have abortions, to have (or not to have) babies, who continue to care, build and fight for their communities. Film and motherhood is a way of reframing the conversation on what film production can be, on how to hear and make visible stories from a large yet often neglected sector of the population—those who fight, protect, labour, love and struggle like a mother.

Beyond biological imperatives, art/mamas and what we did, and what we do and how we do it, carry forward the labour of many. We continue to think art, film, socio-geo-politics, and motherhood, and make film and art and social movements, and act against patriarchy, and labour for more just futures for the next generations. art/mamas is a social practice — one that offers another paradigm outside of patriarchy and ultimately leads to social change within and beyond the art-industrial-academic-complex.

## **CONVERSATION 3**

# **Film and Motherhood**

### **ORGANIZERS**

Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda  
Sarah Shamash  
prOphecy sun

### **Links to media:**

<https://vimeo.com/637521063>

<https://www.vivomediaarts.com/archive/film-and-motherhood>

<https://accessgallery.ca/event/conversation-3-film-and-motherhood>



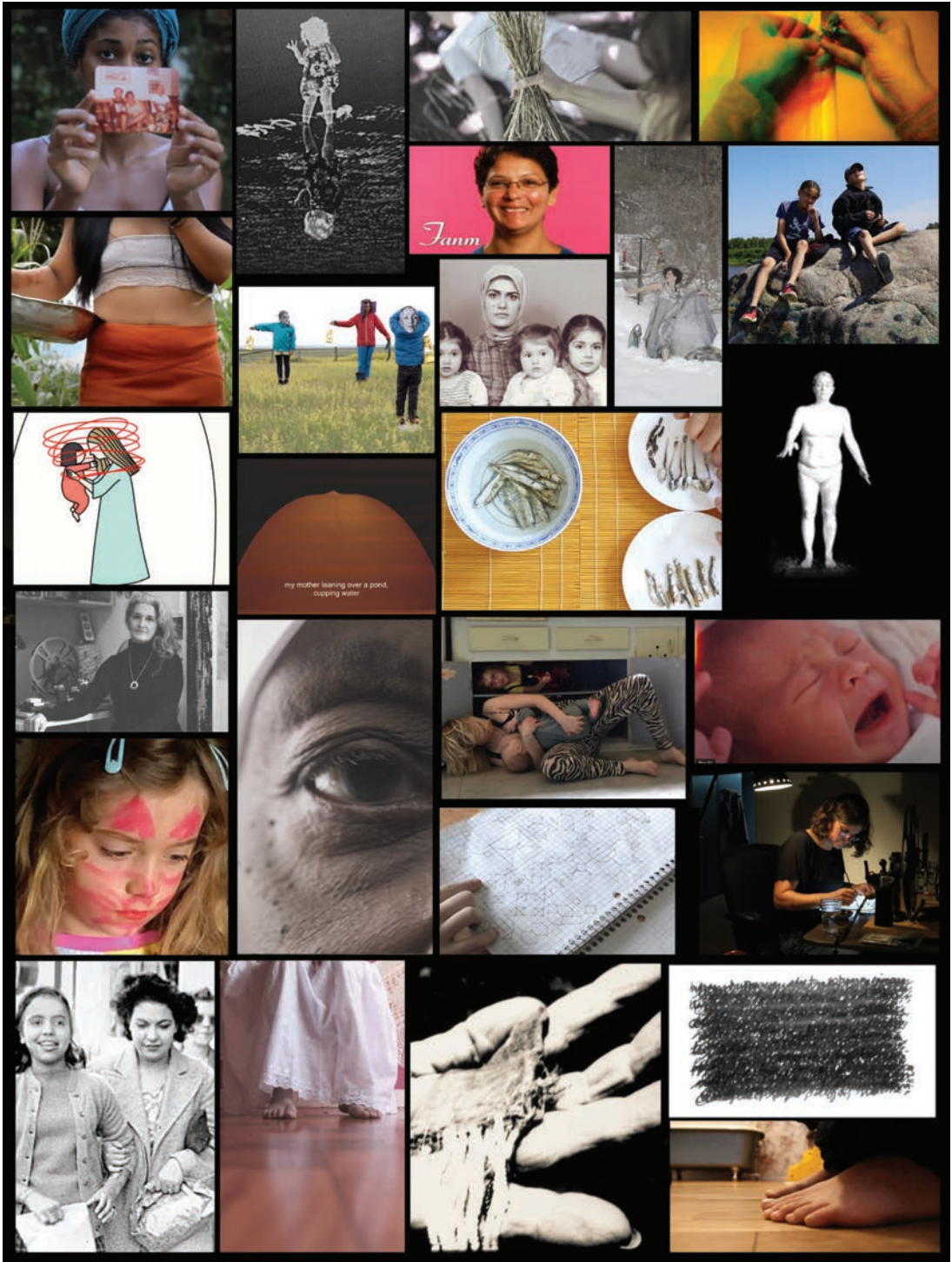
## **ART/MAMAS — FILM AND MOTHERHOOD CONVERSATION**

October 16, 2021, 12PM (PST)

### **Curatorial Statement**

The film and motherhood curatorial project is comprised of four programs (October 8-22, 2021): Experimental Shorts (online), Intimate Portraits (online), a Feature Length film (online), and Gallery Screening (in person). Curated by Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda, Sarah Shamash, and prOphecy sun, the films all speak to the complex relationships to, engendered by, and toward motherhood. As we adapted our program to the conditions of the evolving pandemic, these works are selected from our local context on unceded Coast Salish territory in Vancouver and from international artist-filmmaker-mothers. As practicing media artists and mothers, we considered the roles and challenges of motherhood as explored through the diverse and culturally specific perspectives in the film and video programs presented. The diverse selection of films and videos on varied interpretations of “motherhood,” taken as a whole, self-reflect on the condition of being an artist/filmmaker today.

The film programs were accompanied by a dialogue with filmmakers (see recording of dialogue here: <https://vimeo.com/637521063>), based on a series of open-ended questions. Marlene Yuen created drawings in response to the dialogue as it unfolded.



Montage of film stills

# Film and Motherhood Program

## Feature-Length program

- *A Crushing Love*, 2009. Dir. Sylvia Morales (58 mins).

## Mid-Length Intimate Portraits program

- *Her Silent Life*, 2012. Dir. Lindsay McIntyre (31 mins) 16mm and S8 to digital.
- *Oshkikishikaw: A New Day*, 201. Jules Koostachin (25 mins).
- *Confidences*, 2016. Dir. Anne-Marie Bouchard (6 mins).
- *De Michele para Sophia*, 2021. Dir. Michele Kaiwá (7 mins)
- *Boy*, 2005. Dir. Francisca Duran (6 mins).
- *La vie en rose*, 2010. Dir. Nathalie Lopez (4 mins).
- *THREADS*, 2018. Dir. Torill Kove (8.48 mins).

## Experimental Shorts program

- *Travessia*, 2019. Dir. Safira Moreira (5 mins).
- *Daughters of Our Diaspora*, 2020. Claire Yow (3:35 mins).
- *Family Photo*, 2014. Dir. Ghinwa Yassine (2 mins).
- *Nossais Mais*, 2020. (Eng. Our Mothers) Dir. Preta Performance (5 mins)
- *Minutiae*, 2010. Erin Siddall (3 mins b/w).
- *Domesticated*, 2018. Navarana Igliorte (3:20 mins).
- *Endearing Enduring*, 2004. Dir. Lois Klassen (6:40 mins.)
- *Heartbreak*, 2016. Dir. Nadine Valcine (1 mins).
- *Suspended Time, on Caring*, 2020. Dir. Maternal Fantasies (12 mins).
- *Escribiendome*, 2016. Dir. Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda (14:54 mins.)
- *Perfumed Dreaming*, 2020. Dir. Kathleen Hepburn (5mins).

## Exhibiting program at Access Gallery

- *Flood*, 2015. Dir. Ariel Kirk-Gushowaty (5 mins).
- *Mothering Bacteria*, 2019. Dir. Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda, Freya Zinovieff, prOphecy sun (10:53 mins).
- *Presenting Letters of the Alphabet: "P,"* 2019. Dir. Sarah Shamash (2 mins)
- *Domestic Cupboards*, 2017. Dir. prOphecy sun (11:33 mins)
- *The Physical Impossibility of Prehistory in the Car of Someone Living*, 2020 Dir. Freya Zinovieff (11:08 mins)
- *Chapter 6: BLOOD*, 2020. Performed by Sai Di, Jelena Markovic, Guadalupe Martinez, and Dalia Shalabi, Narration by Guadalupe Martinez (6 mins)
- *Still and Moving*, 2021. Dir. Anna Zoria (16 mins)

# Dialogue With Filmmakers

## Invited Guests

Jules Koostachin, Nadine Valcin, Clare Yow, Preta Performance (Dáda Felix, Luanah Cruz, Tarcilla Thais, Rodrigo Servero and Vinícius Soares), Ghinwa Yassine, and Maternal Fantasies (Lena Chen, Mikala Hyldig Dal, Magdalena Kallenberger, Hanne Klaas, Maicyra Leao, Aino El Solh and Isabell Spengler).

## FRAMING QUESTIONS

Could you speak to how your film/ artwork has been influenced by the event of motherhood from your perspectives and contexts of production and as they relate to the themes in your works (i.e spirituality, diaspora, racism, collectivity, etc)?

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When addressing motherhood in your films and artworks are there specific moments that were or have been more generative ( i.e. when you were pregnant or when your kids were teenagers, etc.)?

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Are there any resonances between performing the role of motherhood in everyday life and your professional practice? In your experience, how does art and life flow in and out of each other?

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What systems of care were available to you as you developed as a mother and artist and what strategies did you use to sustain your practice? How does the experience of being an artist mother impact other communities or ecologies (i.e. extended families, activisms, pedagogical approaches)?

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How has your practice engaged in dismantling normative conceptions of motherhood and the nuclear family unit?

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Could you speak to your involvement in collective organizing around art and motherhood/parenting in a larger context? Have there been moments of increased engagement and moments of dispersion that you've noticed or that have been significant to you? What does it look like for you now and into the future?

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Screenshots from  
Film and Motherhood  
Dialogue.

“I was such a young mom...I just remember grieving, I remember having to make that choice and it was so difficult and I think now, being close to 50, I’m like, I acknowledge that I grieved. You know, I don’t want to blame my kids or anything like that, but I did have to let go of a big part of myself as a creative person and as an artist, even though I do bring my kids into my work and I still do to this day.”  
— Jules Koostachin



**Excerpts from the Conversation with Drawings  
by Marlene Yuen**

“I think it’s really interesting that you’re talking about becoming a mother early in life. We realized in our collective that since we’re all academics, more or less, we became mothers much later in our lives. And this whole, it makes for a very different, but not less severe, I would say, career cut. So I suppose this was also part of the motivation to get together in this collective, how to keep your practice going in the time when the children are very young.” — *Isabell Sprengler, Maternal Fantasies*



Dada



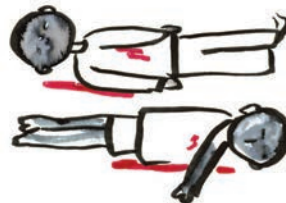
Would I have the same support??



black genocide in Brazil

↓  
mother's caring for white children

young black indigenous were killed



Afro-Derby mermaid

“I feel like you have a new art and life unity through the children, which has to do with a completely different facet of truthfulness, or who you are and also fictionality because, I mean, it is very great to include it [fiction] if you collaborate with children, the kind of fantasy and imagination they bring through their perspective. So, yeah, so I felt, it’s a very complex topic. The demand of the outside world to be one consistent person, I feel is almost impossible because we have to switch between all these different roles, so I don’t feel I can. In this authentic kind of way, be the same person in my life as an artist and as a mother all the time.” — *Isabell Sprengler, Maternal Fantasies*

“I’ve felt a lot of grief, and maybe resentment and frustration about my young child because I felt like his needs were kind of superseding mine and feeling very conflicted about that. And so just trying to remind myself as I go through day-to-day life, that to really be gentle on myself and patient because all these things take time to be in community with each other, especially as we kind of navigate this global crisis, it’s really this daily negotiation.” — *Clare Yow*

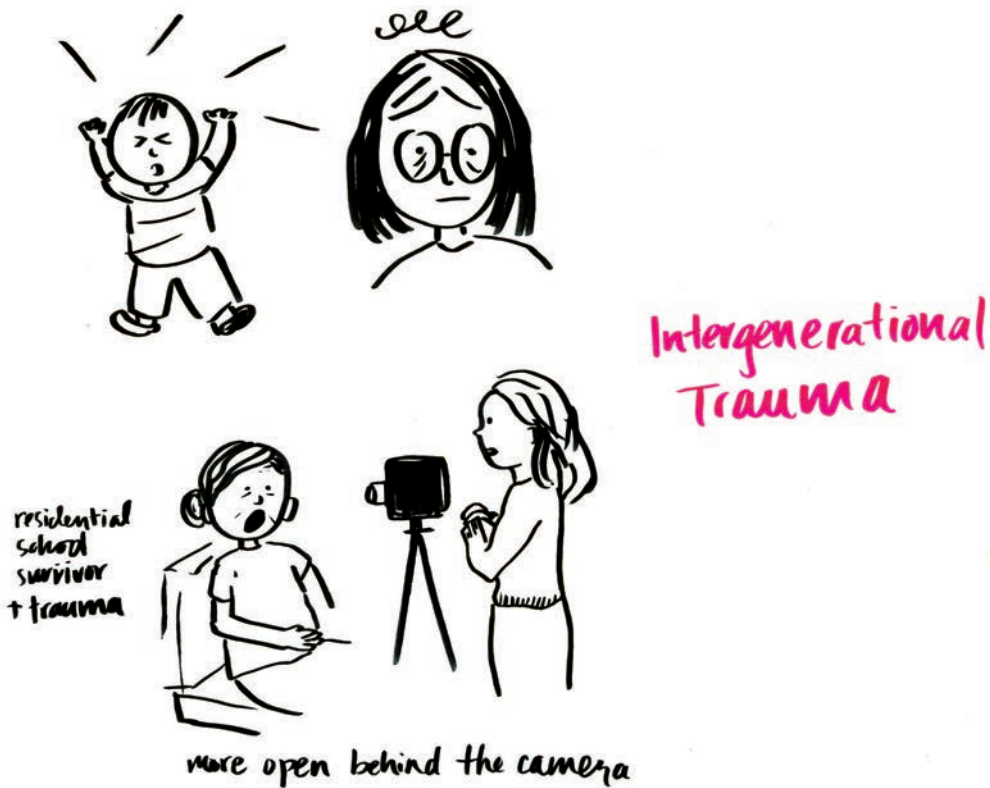
Producer  
is  
kind  
of like  
being a  
Mom



dules  
son  
operating  
a boom

“I love hearing Isabell speak about the collaborative nature of it and I feel like we need to find new models of production, because, you know, I would say, despite all the progress we’ve made, childcare isn’t flexible enough to accommodate people with irregular schedules. You know here childcare will cost you as much as your mortgage so it’s not really affordable. And, you know, I would like to say, I don’t know who asked the question, but it’s not you, it’s not your difficulty in adapting I think, it’s the difficulty of, you know, the production environment in accommodating what you want to do and accommodating motherhood...while my daughter was young I made shorter pieces. I made shorter, more contained pieces that I could shoot in one or two days that I could just edit on my own. But yeah, I think, you know, the system has to change or we need to create spaces that have that flexibility and allow for women to create in a different way.”

— *Nadine Valcin*



“It is important that we know which women we’re talking about because when we speak about being a woman, especially here in Brazil, when we say women, we automatically think about white women, and being a white woman in Brazil, not just in Brazil, but to be a Black woman, because the question she put here is, will I have the same supporting networks?... So we started to discuss the opportunities and the support systems that Black women don’t have, especially because they have to work, and don’t have time to care for their children, because we have to work a lot.” — *Luanah Cruz, Preta Performance*

“We also, in our film, we discussed the importance of the image of lemanjá in Candomblé, because Candomblé, more than a religion here, because of the diaspora, it is a way of, it’s the organization of Afro-Brazilian people. And it is important to think about, especially the women, especially about the mothers, because it was a way that these mothers could be together and to be strong and take care of their children.” — *Luanah Cruz, Preta Performance*



“I actually want to talk about.. performing the role of motherhood because I do performance... I created a mastermind (a persona) called the ‘mothering artist’ because I almost, in the beginning, it was a refusal to just like have this role, like this title, ‘mother’, and ‘artist.’ I feel like it is a performance, the whole thing, and it’s like almost this these scenes that either come after each other, and like a good flow, or they’re completely disruptive and sometimes they flow well and sometimes they’re like continuous and sometimes they juxtapose but sometimes they don’t work at all... It’s going to be messy.” — *Ghinwa Yassine*

“I mean just thinking about one of the questions that art/mamas has posed about the nuclear family. It’s so unnatural and problematic. So instead of trying to question our own abilities as mothers, we should be questioning and dismantling the system that has forced us to kind of parent by ourselves, to just kind of, yeah this pace of life that I think neoliberalism and racial capitalism has forced us into, it really needs rethinking and dismantling.” — *Clare Yow*

“I grew up as a Shia Muslim, and the ideology is based on a trauma, so every year we, my parents would mourn a massacre, and the people who died, and then in this project I’m negotiating whether I’m passing this consciously or subconsciously on to my daughter and whether it’s my responsibility as well to pass it as a story of justice or not, because I was confronted by seeing her do things that I don’t necessarily like, walking, shifting her hip to one side, the way I used to do before my whatever accident, rehabilitation, so things that I don’t understand how she replicates without me, actually, you know, passing them on to her, literally or consciously” — **Ghinwa Yassine**

“...when I shot my film *Without Words* and I had this multimedia installation called *Alive With Breath* and I interviewed my mom and what I found interesting through the filming process was that my mom opened up more when I was behind the camera...it kind of delved a little bit deeper into healing our relationship, and I don’t know what it is about the camera, or why, in that situation, my mother felt more comfortable, maybe because I think she spent her whole life trying to protect her children from what happened to her at residential school, but I think you know for me the camera or documentary is a way, I call it ‘documentary’ or an Indigenous archive, because we’re able to kind of hold these stories and gather the narratives of our elders, who, you know have passed on and stuff...” — **Jules Koostachin**

“Being a woman, and being Black, or an Indigenous woman, specifically in Brazil, I think it’s important to think about if the feminist questions contemplate us. Because there are stereotypes attributed to us, and they are different from those attributed to white women. If we think about being a Black or Indigenous woman, especially if you’re a mother, we are always related to servitude and objectifying roles... It’s more intense.”  
— **Luanah Cruz, Preta Performance**

making time

Core Audio Built-in Microphone 2 (Stereo) Recording... Built-in Output

0 15 30 45 1:00 1:15 1:30 1:45 2:00 2:15

Mono, 48000Hz 32-bit float

Audio Track

Mute Solo

Mono, 48000Hz 32-bit float

Audio Track

Mute Solo

Mono, 48000Hz 32-bit float

Audio Track

Mute Solo

Mono, 48000Hz 32-bit float

Beazu Whole

Mute Solo

Mono, 48000Hz 32-bit float

Beazu Wholesale Head Office 174

Audio Track

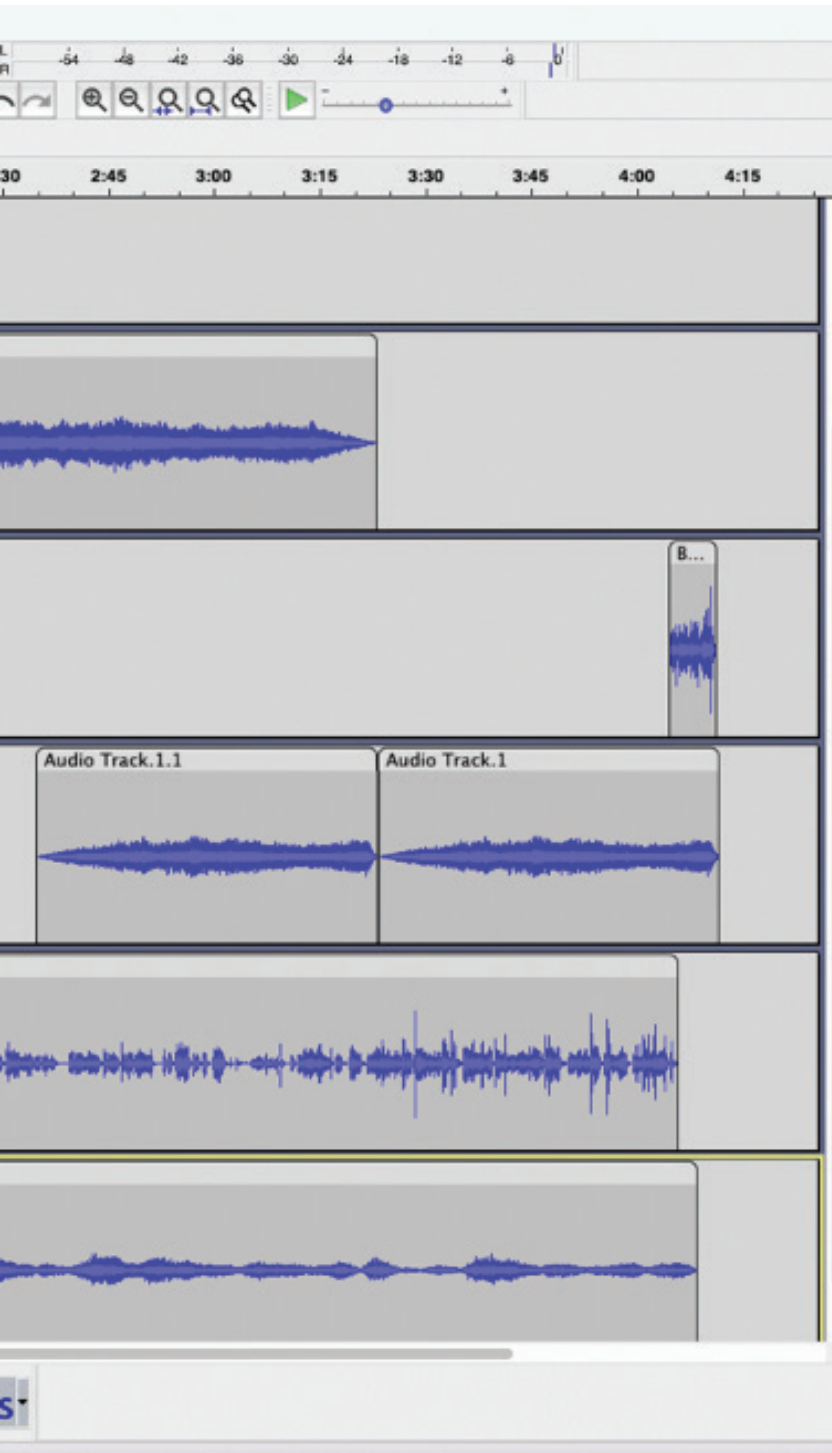
Mute Solo

Mono, 48000Hz 32-bit float

Project Rate (Hz) 48000 Snap-To Start and End of Selection

00 h 00 m 29.272 s 00 h 00 m 34.030 s 00 h 00 m 29.272 s

The screenshot shows a digital audio workstation (DAW) interface. At the top, there's a transport control bar with play, stop, and record buttons, and a timeline from 0 to 2:15. Below that, the audio input is set to 'Core Audio Built-in Microphone' and the output to 'Built-in Output'. The main workspace contains several tracks. The top track shows a single audio clip with a waveform. Below it are three tracks labeled 'Audio Track', each with a different waveform. The fifth track is labeled 'Beazu Whole' and has a track name 'Beazu Wholesale Head Office 174'. The bottom track is another 'Audio Track'. The bottom of the interface shows project settings: Project Rate (Hz) is 48000, Snap-To is 'Start and End of Selection', and the current time is 00 h 00 m 29.272 s.



prOphecy sun, *making time*,  
audio file, 2022.

**Link to audio file:**

[https://soundcloud.com/prophecy-sun/making-time?utm\\_source=clipboard&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=social\\_sharing](https://soundcloud.com/prophecy-sun/making-time?utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)

**CONVERSATION 4**

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# **Making Space for Time: Artist Parents Meet and Make**

**ORGANIZERS**

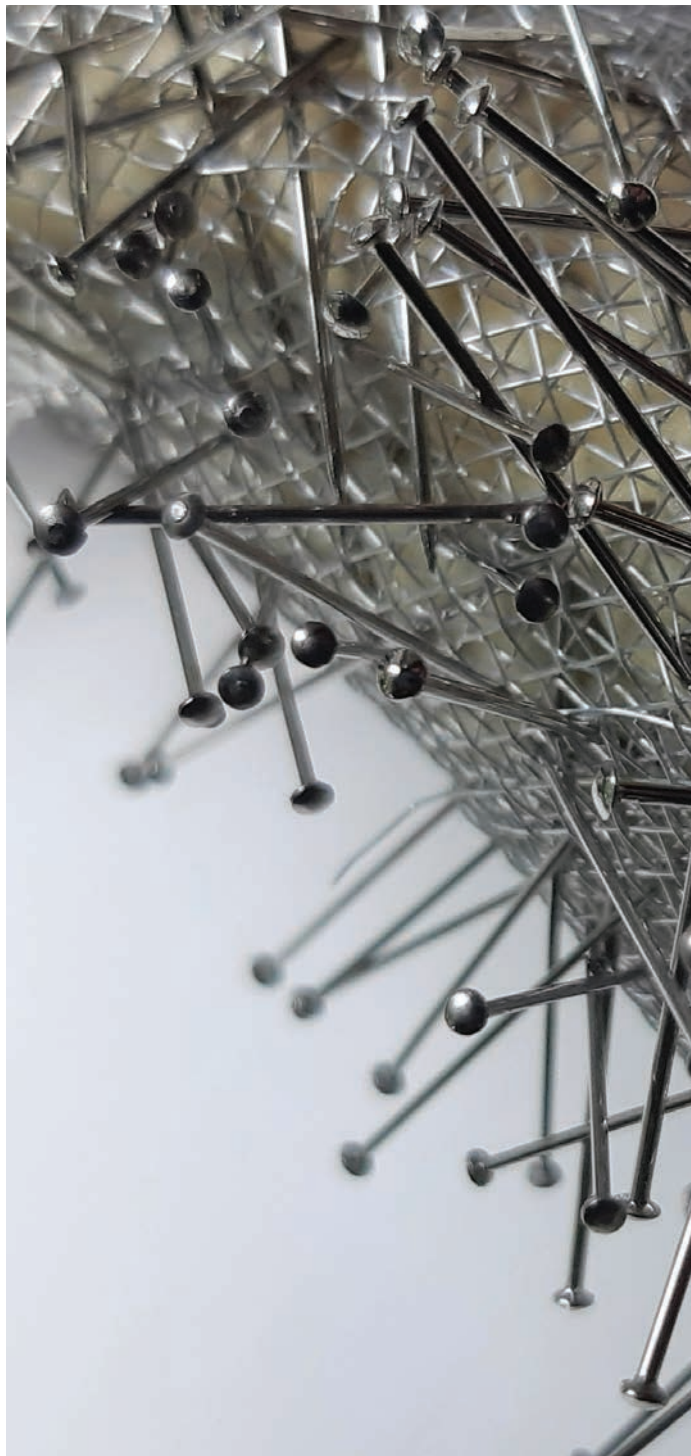
art/mamas



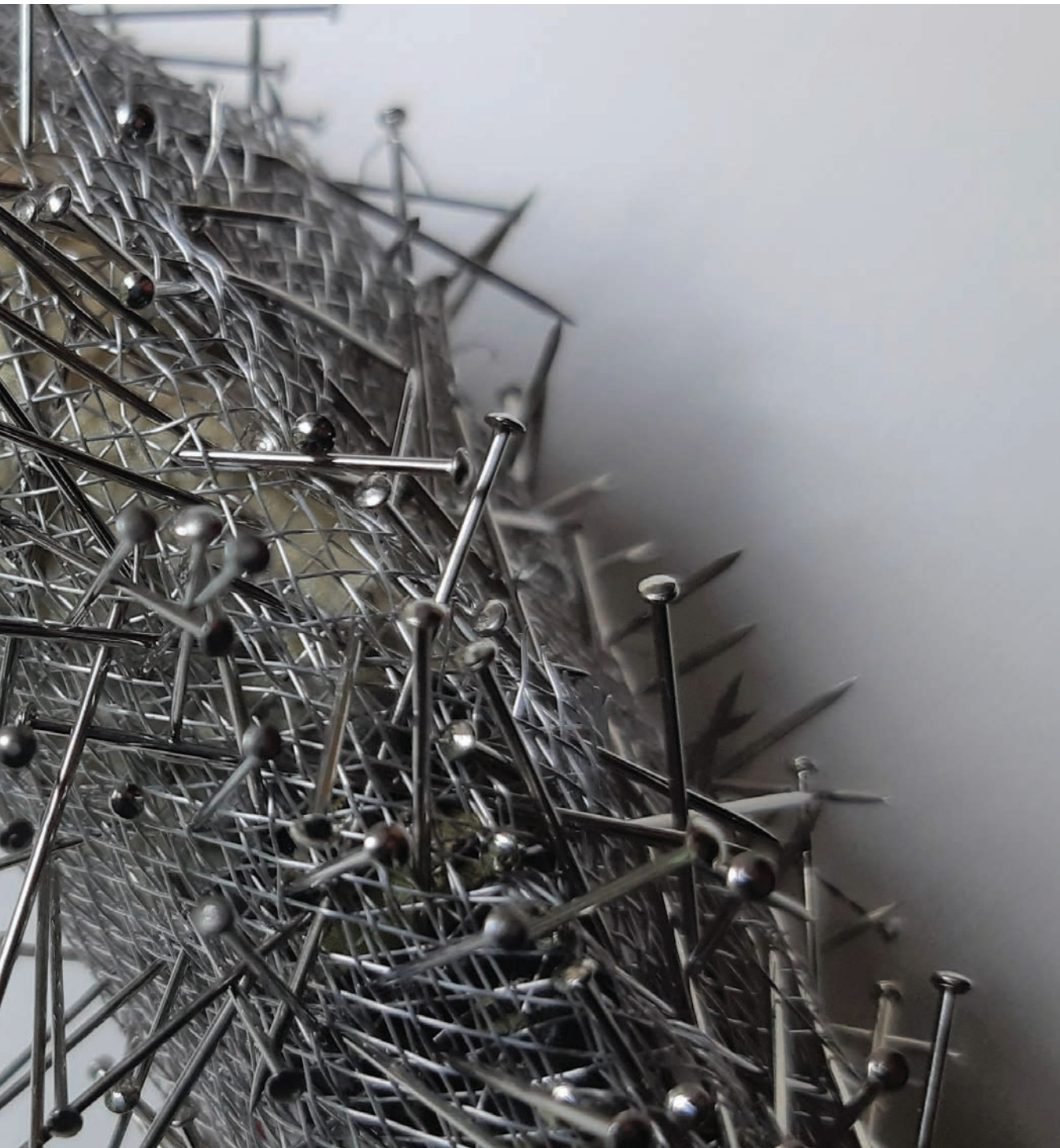
## **ART/MAMAS — MAKING SPACE FOR TIME: ARTIST PARENTS MEET AND MAKE**

October 30, 2021, 12PM (PST)

In this session, self-identified artist-parents were invited to make informal work in the shared space of a virtual studio. Distraction was encouraged and children were welcome as we made work and developed personal connections while discussing issues of interest. Guiding topics included the often solitary, intermittent conditions of working from home as an artist-parent, as well as the deviation from the “ideal” career-path of the art world professional that this working environment represents.



Robyn Laba, *Wheel*  
(detail of work in progress),  
steel pins, wire, newspaper



## APPENDIX

# About art/mamas Members

**Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda** is Associate Professor in the School of Interactive Arts and Technology at Simon Fraser University where she directs the interdisciplinary research-creation studio cMAS (criticalMediArtStudio). She is the author of *Women Made Visible: Feminist Art and Media in post-1968 Mexico* (University of Nebraska Press, 2019) awarded Best Book in 2020 by the Canadian Association of Latin American Studies (CALACS). Her research on women, art and technology; transnational networks of artistic exchange; feminist art, activism and archival practices in the Americas has appeared in *Media-N the Journal of the New Media Caucus*, *Platform Journal* and *Revista de Estudios Globales y Arte Contemporáneo*. Her interactive installations exploring the body as archive and site of cultural, gender and bio-political inscriptions have been exhibited internationally since 1990 and published in *Public Journal*, *Feminist Media Histories Journal*, *Feral Feminisms* and *Mapping Meaning Art Journal*.

**Matilda Aslizadeh** is a visual artist based in Vancouver, Canada. Her media installations are characterized by dense visual surfaces and unexpected juxtapositions drawn from a range of influences including early cinema, cartography and fashion. Deeply invested in exploring the critical potential of immersive spectacle, the ambivalent centrality of storytelling in human existence, and the fluid threshold between documentation and fictionalization, Aslizadeh's work locates political thinking firmly within affective experience. Her work has been exhibited internationally in galleries and festivals, including Vancouver Art Gallery, AC Institute (New York), Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery (Kitchener), the Audain Museum (Whistler) and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Toronto. Matilda is a Sessional Instructor at Emily Carr University of Art and Design.

**Robyn Laba** is an artist working within the ancestral, traditional, and unceded territories of the X̱m̱əθḵ'əy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh). She has had solo exhibitions at the Or Gallery, Artspeak, and CSA Space, and her work has been included in group exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery and Charles H. Scott Gallery, and at the Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales, Havana, Cuba.

**Natasha McHardy** is an interdisciplinary contemporary artist based in Vancouver. Her work engages with conceptual, visual and folk art histories while exploring ideas of play and relations of power within class, race and gender constructs. Natasha received a BFA and MFA from the University of British Columbia and has exhibited her work nationally and internationally. She received a 2005 Hampton Fund Research Grant (in collaboration), a 2003 Visual Arts Development Award and the B.C. Binning Award for Drawing in 2001.

**Maria Anna Parolin** is a maker, mother, art instructor and researcher at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, caregiver, soccer coach, block watch captain, Co-President of the Burnaby Arts Council and proud member of the art/mama collective. She has participated in a number of residencies including the Itsukaichi Art Program (Japan), Gros Morne National Park (Newfoundland), the Banff Centre, was awarded a research fellowship at Musashino Art University in Tokyo and has exhibited her work nationally and internationally. Maria Anna strives to bring people together to make and manipulate materials through intergenerational gatherings in her neighbourhood, hands-on workshops at her children's schools and through diverse programming at the Arts Council. Her studio is currently filled with jars of ink made from orphaned plants she adopts from properties being slated for demolition in her neighbourhood. All materials are worth saving and manipulating into something useful, beautiful and communal.

**Heather Passmore's** practice reconfigures painting, drawing, and photography with socio-historically laden materials. For the past twenty years she has exhibited extensively across Canada and internationally. Heather's work has been included in a number of art fairs and biennials and is held in many official public collections such as the Vancouver Art Gallery, SFU Gallery, UBC AMS Gallery and Kamloops Art Gallery. Heather has completed four Scandinavian artist residencies and a dozen small-scale public artworks both locally and abroad. She holds a BFA, B.Ed. and MFA from the University of British Columbia. Heather is the recipient of many prizes and awards and her projects are frequently recognized by the Canada Council and BC Arts Council. Most recently, she was awarded the 2021 *Elmore Ozard Art Education Prize* by the University of British Columbia.

**Sarah Shamash's** interdisciplinary research centers Latin American Cinema, Indigenous film and media, and feminist praxis. Her artworks comprise the use of media in a wide variety formats, such as installation, documentary, photography, sound, performance, and video. They have been shown in curated exhibitions and film festivals internationally. She recently launched her arts council funded film project, *From Chile to Canada: Media Herstories*. She currently teaches film studies in local universities in Vancouver and is an independent film programmer.

Her work as an artist, researcher, educator, and programmer can be understood as interconnected and whole; they all revolve around a passion for cinema as a pluriversal art. She gratefully lives and raises her son on the unsundered territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil Waututh First Nations in what is known as Vancouver.

**prOphesy sun** (PhD) is an interdisciplinary performance artist, queer, movement, video, sound maker, and mother of three. Her practice celebrates both conscious and unconscious moments and the vulnerable spaces of the in-between in which art, performance, and life overlap. Her recent research has focused on ecofeminist perspectives, co-composing with voice, objects, surveillance technologies, and site-specific engagements along the Columbia Basin region and beyond. She is the Arts Editor for *Ecocene: Cappadocia Journal of Environmental Humanities* and a sessional faculty member at Emily Carr University of Art + Design. She performs and exhibits regularly in local, national, and international settings, music festivals, conferences, and galleries and has authored several peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and journal publications on sound design, installation, performance, and domestic spheres.

**Damla Tamer** (b. Istanbul, Turkey) is a visual artist and educator. Her practice involves a close engagement with craft, focusing on weaving and other textile techniques and combining them with experimental mark making, alongside spoken performances and collaborative social work. Her work has been the focus of solo exhibitions at Darling Foundry (Montreal, 2013) and the Fifty Fifty Arts Collective (Victoria, 2018), included in *The Artist's Studio is Her Bedroom* at the Contemporary Art Gallery curated by Kimberly Phillips (Vancouver, 2020), and featured on the cover of *Capilano Review* (3.42: Translingual). She has served in various non-profit organizations and co-operatives including the artist-run Dynamo Arts Association, and has co-founded the Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Platform in False Creek South that has initiated work on equity for access to co-operative housing. She teaches as a sessional lecturer at the University of British Columbia and Emily Carr University of Art+Design.

# About the Participating Artists

## CONVERSATION 1

### Invited Participant Bios

**Karen Knights** is Manager and Special Projects Lead at the VIVO Media Arts Centre's Crista Dahl Media Library & Archive. As an independent curator and writer, she has undertaken several historical surveys of artist-run media archives, across multiple institutions and publications. Karen's current focus is on activating the CDMLA Special Collections through a series of Archivist Internships, digitization projects, and exhibition series. Karen and VIVO have kindly collaborated with us to build a site that highlights the practice of our invited guests, pulling together video and ephemera from the VIVO archive and artists' personal collections, including her own work on the theme of motherhood.

**Margaret Dragu** celebrates her 50th year as a working artist. Her favourite material is still the body despite/because of her bionic status as a grateful owner of two hip replacements. Margaret works in video, installation, publication & performance. Spanning relational, durational, interventionist and community-based practices, she has shown in Canada, the US & Europe and was the recipient of the Governor General's Award for Visual and Media Arts in 2012. In 1991, Margaret created a show which aired on Co-op radio called MomZ Radio that featured interviews with mothers about their experiences. The interviews were also incorporated in a performance, Secret Kitchen, that characteristically collapses the domestic and the political.

**LaTiesha Fazakas** has been dedicated to studying contemporary Indigenous art since 1998 and established Fazakas Gallery in 2012. In 2017, LaTiesha was the curatorial coordinator for Beau Dick's participation in Documenta 14, and the same year saw LaTiesha debut her feature-length documentary, Maker of Monsters: The Extraordinary Life of Beau Dick, which was featured in international film festivals and played in theatres across Canada. Also in 2017, LaTiesha invited Art/mamas to participate in an exhibition at Fazakas Gallery called SE-I-LA, women Art and Production, which included conversations that formed the inspiration and model for the one we are having today.

**Elizabeth MacKenzie** uses drawing to explore the productive aspects of uncertainty through repetition, interrogations of portraiture and considerations of intersubjective experience, such as maternity. The materials and processes she employs interrupt representation and create tension between the act of drawing and the illusion it creates. Her drawing installations have been shown across Canada, including exhibitions at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, the Glenbow Museum and the Vancouver Art Gallery. Alongside her drawing practice, Elizabeth has prolifically explored the interconnections between the identities of artist and mother through writing, organizing and media works.

**Elizabeth Vander Zaag's** innovative videos and interactive installations have been informed by the practice of mothering including *Baby Eyes*, *Hearts Beat* and *Kids in China*. Her interactive media installations *Talk Back* and *Talk Nice* use custom software to detect volume and tone in the user, impacting the progression of the interaction with tween and teen women, respectively. In 2007 Elizabeth received a Masters in interdisciplinary studies from UBC that further developed her research in affect in speech. Her works have been exhibited internationally and are in many collections including the Museum of Modern Art, Walker Art Centre and the National Gallery.

**Jin-me Yoon** is a Korean-born, Vancouver-based artist whose lens-based practice has critically examined the construction of self and other in relation to her own direct and inherited history, as well as within broader geopolitical contexts. Unpacking stereotypical assumptions and dominant discourses while foregrounding intersectional considerations, Jin-me's work has examined gender, sexuality, maternity, ethnicity, citizenship and nationhood. Her work has been presented extensively including a thirty-year survey exhibition organized by the Musée d'art de Joliette which is currently touring nationally and an upcoming exhibit of new work at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2022.

**Marlene Yuen** is a Vancouver-based artist who received her bachelor's of studio arts in 1998 from the University of British Columbia. Marlene has exhibited at galleries, artist-run centers, and cultural events in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Belgium, and Japan. Although she is a multidisciplinary artist, her current focus is on handmade books; her artist books have been retained in special collections nationally and internationally. Currently, Marlene is focusing her subject matters on Chinese Canadian labour history and preservation of Vancouver's historic Chinatown. She is working on her next artist book about Vancouver, Chinatown's last print shop, Ho Sun Hing Printers.



## CONVERSATION 2

# Invited Participant Bios

**Magnolia Pauker** is a Lecturer in Critical and Cultural Studies at the Emily Carr University of Art + Design. Magnolia’s practice takes up what she terms the philosophical interview as a model for caring critical engagement, knowledge production, and transgressive critical pedagogy. Sketching the edges of cultural and critical studies, philosophy, journalism, and critical media studies, Magnolia strives to engage conversation and awareness of intersectionality that acknowledges how multiple oppressions are experienced simultaneously and thus are inextricable from one another. For it is precisely through these complex entanglements that we are bound together. She is co-editor of *Inter Views in Performance Philosophy: Crossings and Conversations*.

**Terra Poirier** is an interdisciplinary artist working with pinhole photography, artist books and installation. Her interests (which are informed by her experiences as a low-income, queer, teen mother) include labour, place and storytelling—especially whose stories are told and whose are erased. Terra is the creator of *Non-Regular: Precarious academic labour at Emily Carr University of Art + Design*, produced in collaboration with dozens of instructors, students and other artists. On Mothers’ Day 2021, Terra installed a response to the ongoing renaming underway at Grandview Park on Commercial Drive. Her iteration, *Single Moms Chilling Park*, speaks to the site’s history as a gathering place for low-income, single mothers. Previously Terra has taught video production and made short films which have screened worldwide.

**Sunny Nestler** teaches drawing and science courses at Emily Carr University of Art + Design, where they have been a non-regular faculty member since 2013. They are currently a representative on the executive committee of ECUAD’s faculty association and were previously a researcher to support collective bargaining. Sunny is also a Faculty Writing Associate at ECUAD’s Writing Centre. Their past work includes gallery exhibitions, collaborative animation, community-led arts programming, a recent municipal commission, and thirteen years co-managing community bike shops and other collective-run spaces. Sunny is working on several studio projects including an artists’ book and a virtual reality experiment. Sunny is a binge learner and loves to devour everything about a subject. Most recently learning French on Zoom, pottery and ocean kayaking.

**Sarika Bose** is a long-term contract academic in the Department of English Language and Literatures at UBC. She taught a first-year writing course for many years until it was taken out of the department in 2020. Her disciplines include Victorian and Children's Literature and has dedicated the past summer developing online courses for the department's new online minor. She has served in the UBC Faculty Association for many years, first as a member of the Contract Faculty Committee, then as Chair since 2014. She supports her fellow contract academics by connecting them to a variety of resources, monthly pedagogy sessions, convening an annual symposium and publication display to showcase both their pedagogical and academic work, and giving talks highlighting the challenges unstable work brings to their personal lives, and to the profession as a whole.

**Elisa Baniassad** is a mother of two, an Associate Professor of Teaching at the University of British Columbia, and has the privilege of being the chair of the Status of Women Committee for the UBC Faculty Association. Elisa teaches Software Engineering, in the department of Computer Science, and has spent time reflecting on the very different experiences women and mothers in particular have in this male dominated field.

**Annabree Fairweather** is the Executive Director of the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia. She holds a Master of Science in experimental Psychology and a double major Bachelor of Arts and Science in French and Psychology, as well as a Labour Relations-Management Certificate. Annabree has worked in post-secondary academic labour relations union-side for over a decade in British Columbia and Alberta. She has experience representing contract faculty rights in bargaining and labour disputes, as well as personal experience as a contract faculty member. Prior to her career in university labour, Annabree was a published researcher and a contract Instructor. When not working, she enjoys spending time with her wife and two children and distracting herself with hobbies, which include stone sculpture and playing the piano.

**Otoniya J. Okot Bitek** is a poet and scholar. Her collection of poetry, *100 Days* (University of Alberta 2016) was nominated for several writing prizes including the 2017 BC Book Prize, the Pat Lowther Award, the 2017 Alberta Book Awards and the 2017 Canadian Authors Award for Poetry. It won the 2017 IndieFab Book of the Year Award for poetry and the 2017 Glenna Lushei Prize for African Poetry. From the fall of 2020 to the spring of 2021, Otoniya had the privileged position of being the Ellen and Warren Tallman Writer-in-Residence, and one of the SFU Jack and Doris Shadbolt Fellows. She has recently moved to Kingston, Ontario, to live on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe people. Otoniya is an assistant professor at Queen's University, in Kingston, Ontario.

## CONVERSATION 3

# Invited Participant Bios

**Jules Arita Koostachin** was raised by her Cree speaking grandparents in Moosonee, and also with her mother in Ottawa, a warrior of the Canadian Residential school system. Jules is a band member of Attawapiskat First Nation, the *Ancestral* lands of the *MoshKek AsKi InNiNeWak*. In 2010, she completed her masters at Ryerson University in Documentary Media where she was awarded the *Award of Distinction* for her thesis work, as well as the *Graduate Ryerson Gold Medal* for highest academic achievement. While in graduate school, she produced her first feature documentary *Remembering Inninimowin* regarding her journey of remembering *InNiNiMoWin* (Cree). After graduation, Jules was one of six women selected for the Women in the Directors Chair program at the Banff Center, where she directed a scene from her feature script *Broken Angel*, a dramatic thriller. *Broken Angel* was selected by the Toronto International Film Festival Filmmakers Lab in 2018 and the Whistler Screenwriting Lab (aka Praxis) in 2019. *Broken Angel* commenced production in the fall of 2021, and is now in post-production. Also, she is in production with her first NFB feature film *WaaPiiKee*. Jules' popular television series *AskiBOYZ* (2016) co-produced with Big Soul Production is now being aired on Aboriginal Peoples Television Network in both English and Cree. Jules will be shooting her first feature *Broken Angel* in November 2021, and she is in development with her NFB documentary feature *WaaPiiKee*. Jules was selected for the Directors Program for Women (2021/22) with the Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television.

**Ghinwa Yassine** is an anti-disciplinary artist based on the land of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh people, so-called Vancouver. Her work uses various media, including film, installation, performance, text, and drawing. Born in Beirut at the end of the Lebanese Civil War and raised in a traditional Shiite Muslim family, she witnessed the entangled historical traumas in Shiism and war narratives. Yassine's work confronts the ideological and patriarchal systems that she grew up in while exploring collective feelings and what it means to be a marked body. She seeks a radical historicizing of individual and collective traumas where embodied memories are put into question. Using hybrid forms of storytelling, where story manifests as somatic experiencing, ritual, and gesture, her projects are portals to factual/fictional dimensions that activate collective memory. She pursues community-based research around embodied writing and the healing potential of autobiographical art. Yassine holds an MFA in Contemporary Art—Interdisciplinary Studies at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, an MA in Digital Video Design from the University of the Arts Utrecht, and a BA in Graphic Design from the American University of Science

and Technology in Beirut. Her works have been exhibited in the Netherlands, Lebanon, UAE, Canada, Iran, and Croatia. She is the founder of Arts Embodiment, a trauma-informed interdisciplinary education platform.

**Clare Yow** (she/her) is a Chinese-Canadian visual artist living, working, and parenting on the unceded, ancestral, and occupied homelands of the x̣ʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and sə́lilwə́taʔt / Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations, so-called Vancouver, Canada. Her lens-based artworks—jointly conceptual art and documentary in nature—revolve around the politics of identity and being. Whether through performance and self-portraiture, still lifes, or walking and photographing as a woman of colour street photographer, Clare seeks to explore how race, transnationality, and feminist culture intersect with the materials of everyday life. Clare holds an MFA in Visual Art from the University of British Columbia and an Honours BFA in Photographic Studies from Ryerson University. Since 2003, Clare has participated in exhibitions and events across Canada such as at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery and University of British Columbia (Vancouver), Two Rivers Gallery (Prince George), The Works Art and Design Festival (Edmonton), Koffler Gallery (Toronto), and The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery (St. John's). Her work is held in private collections across the country. Clare's art studio is located in Vancouver's historic Chinatown at BCA Sun Wah where she also co-founded and runs United Aunties Arts Association, supporting independent artists and artisans with racialized and equity seeking backgrounds through collaborative art-making initiatives.

**Preta Performance** is a collective of Black artists trained in various creative languages (dance, performance, theater, audiovisual). The collective works in the expanded scene to critically respond through art related to racial inequalities by problematizing the historical and social conditions of the Black population of Brazil. Current members of Preta Performance are Dáda Felix, Luanah Cruz, Tarcilla Thais, Rodrigo Servero and Vinícius Soares.

**Maternal Fantasies** is an interdisciplinary group of international artists and cultural producers based in Berlin. They shape the discourse on motherhood through collective artistic processes while enhancing the visibility of contemporary feminist positions addressing motherhood(s) in the arts. From writing autobiographical responses to classic feminist texts to devising performances using children's games, their art practice favours inclusive community-oriented experiments as alternatives to traditional structures of art production. Bridging theory and practice, their strategy transforms research on motherhood(s), care work and representation in the arts into frameworks for immersive modes of critique. Current members of Maternal Fantasies are Aino El Solh, Hanne Klaas, Isabell Spengler, Lena Chen, Magdalena Kallenberger, Maicyra Leao, Mikala Hylidig Dal.

**Nadine Valcin** is an award-winning filmmaker and media artist based in Toronto. She is currently the Archive/Counter Archive artist-in-residence at Library and Archives Canada. She has directed four documentary projects for the National Film Board of Canada, including the critically-acclaimed *Black, Bold and Beautiful* (1999) and *Une école sans frontières (A School without Borders, 2008)* and is currently developing a fifth project about the future of cities. Nadine has been awarded numerous grants and prizes including the OCADU Presidential scholarship, two Chalmers Arts Fellowships and a Drama Prize from the National Screen Institute. She holds a professional degree in architecture from McGill University and is an alumna of Doc Lab and Women in the Director's Chair.

# Writer Bios

**Katie Belcher** is an artist and arts worker of settler ancestry, based on the unceded territories of the x̓məθkwəy̓əm, Skwxwú7mesh, and Səlílwətał/Selilwiltulh Nations. As an artist, she makes monumental drawings that act as scores, translations, and rehearsals of a remembered gesture. In her organizational work—as the Director/Curator of Access Gallery (Vancouver, BC, since 2017) and Director/Curator of Eyelevel (Halifax, NS, 2013-17)—she has worked to build space for care, risk, and failure in artistic practice, with a particular interest in cultivating gathering spaces for discussion. Belcher holds a BFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

**Kate Henderson** is a curator, public art consultant, educator, artist and cultural worker of white UK settler ancestry, based on the unceded territories of the x̓məθkwəy̓əm, Skwxwú7mesh and Səlílwətał/Selilwiltulh Nations in what is known colonially as Vancouver, BC. Kate is committed to amplifying the voices of emerging, underrepresented, and BIPOC artists and she strives to decenter and interrogate the white, male, heteronormative legacy of Vancouver's art ecology by finding connections between artists who explore gender, equity, identity, motherhood, decolonization and the interstices between. Kate has held curatorial positions at Capture Photography Festival, Vancouver (Director/Curator, 2018-20); Art Gallery at Evergreen (AGE), Coquitlam (Interim Curator, 2021-22); and Gordon Smith Gallery of Canadian Art, North Vancouver (Guest Curator, 2022). Kate is particularly invested in public art and curated numerous public art projects in her roles at Capture and AGE, as well as held the position of Public Art Consultant at the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation in 2020. She is currently Public Art Project Manager at Ballard Fine Art. She holds an MFA in Visual Art from UBC, Vancouver (2013) and a BFA from ECU, Vancouver, with a Major in Photography (2007).









