



We are Artist, We became mothers...

...and we are still artists. An interventional exhibition of 14 mother artists who's works are exhibited amongst the collections, offering unexpected moments as you walk through the museum.

This exhibition offers a new way to experience individual works by allowing surrounding objects and space to add context and for the artworks to enliven existing displays.

This approach echos the notion of hidden mothers/parents in our society. The interventions invite the viewer to stop and take notice.

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M'Other Art

Exhibition Foreword by Beth Hartshorne

The M'Other exhibition shines a light on a dual identity so often hidden in the shadows of modern society: the mother-artist. Indeed, before I became a mother, I thought I had to make a choice. An 'either, or.' Either music, or motherhood. Growing up, I had not seen any of my musical idols integrate motherhood into their creative careers. I did not know what that looked like, or if it was even possible. It certainly was not very rock'n'roll. Happily, there are more examples of this in 2023, though I have sat alongside many more mothers who are struggling to find room for both. Their own creative endeavours often falling to the bottom of the list, or they themselves placed there by others.

For me, that struggle for room is literal. The little music room I used for recording is now a bedroom. It is no exaggeration to say that, since I became a mother, I have spent most of my life with a baby attached to me. No room for a guitar or violin. The callouses from years of strings are starting to soften. Instead of evening gigs, it's bedtime stories. It's amazing, and a bit odd.

So, personally, this exhibition is a timely gift. After recording 'This Shore' as I was transitioning into motherhood, Khyati's invitation to include a visual with this song is why one exists. I can't begin to tell you what joy it brought me to use my creative energy to curate footage for the music video, at a time when most of what was left was being used on nappy ditties and improvised lullabies. It showed me that I was still in there. Somewhere behind the months of sleep deprivation, sickly muslin cloths and baby class biscuits. That creative part, alongside the part that created, and is sustaining, life. What I'm slowly coming to realise is that they are not different parts, but the same. There is room for both, and my identity is growing. I have more, not less, to say and to sing. I certainly have ample inspiration at my fingertips.

But I can't know what comes next. I am but a novice. 'Baby on Board' sign still proudly announcing my learner status. So I come to this exhibition with gratitude for the creative sharings from mothers who can offer inspiration, guidance and community in a space that witnesses and honours these often hidden gifts.

In times before now, mothers and their children were surrounded by their village, not raised in isolation. Motherhood was integrated into identity and the wider community. Children were reared by mothers and others together*. Creativity was valued, instinctively used for connection and wellbeing. With this in mind, Khyati's exhibition invites us to reclaim parts of ourselves that have split due to modern circumstances and to bear witness to the greater whole of who we are. Especially the M'Others amongst us.

*Dr. Darcia Narváez, <https://evolvednest.org>

‘I am mum and.....’

***A chance to focus on the ‘you’
before becoming anOther... a m’Other.
Artist parents have been invited to share their
creative practice in this exhibition to celebrate
mother artists.***

Where this venture began....

First and foremost, **I’m a mum**. In their eyes and now in everyone else’s, I’m now referred to as mum when they are by my side, they see them first, then me. I had so much of me before them. A name, a job title, hobbies and interests etc. I talked about me. Now it’s about them. I gave me up.

I spoke to a lady, a mother. She talked about her baby, the issues she’s dealing with, I talked about my babies. We shared mummy stories, advice and experiences, I enjoyed the adult conversation. Curiously I asked her what she did beside Mummying? ‘I am a lecturer at the University’... incredible, another mum identified herself as a frustrated managing director of a large pharmaceutical company and now cannot travel the world for work. Then there was the accountant, the police women, the marketing director, the artists mothers, the curator... and all the Others.

In 2022, I received an Arts Council DYCP grant, I used this grant to further research the role of an independent curator with particular focus on how other Mother Artists continue their practice. I realised that for mothers, it was a reoccurring situation, where creative practice was left to stifle amid domestic and parental responsibilities. I was not alone. I now wish to use my curatorial practice to reignite the creative practice of other mums and artist parents with an opportunity to share their work and celebrate the Artist that they are.

Thank you for sharing this journey with me.
Mum X

I have focused on artist mothers because statistically two thirds of mums still take on the majority of childcare duties 'while 83% of parents believe society's attitudes towards childcare have changed since they were young, two thirds (64%) of mothers are still the primary carer for their children, compared to just a third (36%) of fathers.'

<https://www.yourmoney.com/insurance/women-still-primary-carer-households/>

About Me (the curator) I graduated as a Graphic Artist and gained a Masters in Museum & Art Gallery Studies. I became an independent Artist Curator, soon after I had my first child and was made redundant. I have since diligently and stubbornly dug my heels in, to be part of the art world. I am now an Art Lecturer and continue to participate in creative projects, create art (when possible), lead workshops and curate exhibitions.



Lottie Bolster

I am mum and... a multi-hyphenate artist. Since becoming a mother in 2020, whilst struggling with an eating disorder, my practice has centred on experiences of motherhood and mental (ill) health.

‘Weaning Works’ is an experimental collaboration with my daughter, documenting our journey as we attempt to (re)learn a healthy relationship with food together. The project is a playful recording of her first hundred mealtimes, expressed through the remnants. Photographic records are accompanied by ‘food drawings’; paper marked with the traces of the food remains, created by attaching the paper to the highchair tray, prior to the meal.

The pieces have become artefacts of the interactions and conflicts between my work as an artist, my responsibilities as a mother and the need to look after my physical and mental wellbeing. The series came about when owing to the demands of motherhood, and those of an eating disorder, I put aside my art practice, along with my identity as ‘artist’. I let them rot. At the same time, I put my physical needs aside: whilst I nourished my daughter with breastmilk, I neglected to sufficiently nourish myself.

A year on a, number of the ‘food drawings’ had developed substantial holes, and so had my bones. The hole riddled papers have come to represent my equally hole riddled bones.

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Sana Burney

My practice originates from twentieth-century modern collage styles and evolves into a diverse range of alternative techniques, assemblage and found objects combining contemporary influences. It also encompasses traditional types of printmaking entailing new methods and experiments.

I have chosen to focus on ideas of colonialism, post-colonial societies, racialised inequality and not belonging, these hybrid identities are prominent themes in my practice.

The work depicts an image of the Virgin Mary with the baby Christ, and highlights female servants' role as custodian mothers and wet nurses during the British Raj. It also idealises racial separation by using a black bearer with unimaginable love for a white child and vice versa.

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Little Henry and His Bearer

Debbie Daynes

I am a mum and..... my ovaries have withered, my children grown with only few precious moments spent in their busy lives. My work refers to my younger self, when I did not appreciate my ability to procreate.

I work with skills that have been passed onto me through generations of my female ancestors, consolidating programming and drawing to digitalise my designs into embroidery.

This piece I have made for creation sake, I usually default to create for a purpose, such as clothing and objects made from old jeans, which stems from the seeds of why I learnt to make.

My love of nature and particularly the beauty of flowers is why I have chosen them to represent my fertility, which I lost instantly at the onset my cancer treatment.

The broken background formed from scraps of calico waste represents my broken body, removed parts and other pieces cut out and sewn to form the missing areas.

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Blooming Womb

Ilsa Elford

I am mum and a..... painter, using mostly acrylic on canvas. I create large narrative works that are often quite personal and honest. Life's struggles and joys are my inspiration.

I am a single mum. Juggling trying to be an artist and a mother has been difficult, especially financially, at times this has made me feel quite guilty. Motherhood has however been a consent source of inspiration in my artwork.

Head, Heart and Hand

A balancing act of the things I need.



Jane Gibson

I am mum and.... a paper and fibre artist whose practice is based around alternative drawing techniques using photomontage, needle perforations and embroidery to create textured and tactile surfaces. This drawing practice allows the artist to record the passage of time and to embed it into the work itself, with each stitch connecting medium, maker and moment.

Having been a full time mother since my oldest daughter was born, I began my artistic journey in 2018 when my youngest daughter started high school. I enrolled at Leeds Arts University on a two year Foundation course during which time I found the courage and confidence to develop my creative practice. Now a freelance artist I am able to fit working creatively around my family life. I create art, exhibit my work and provide community workshops to empower other women and families to find their creativity.

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Joined (2020)

*Photomontage and embroidery
thread on paper*

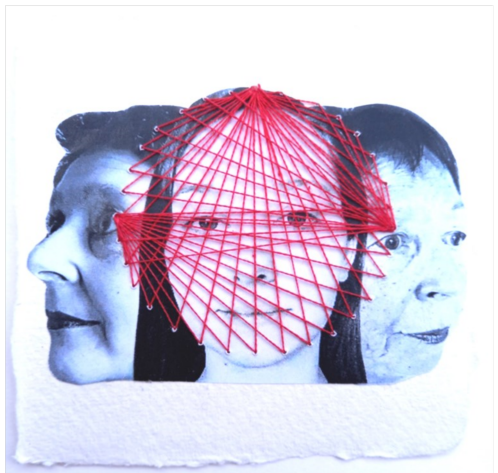
This work reflects on societal attitudes against women and girls taking up space physically, emotionally, intellectually or economically. We must be seen but not heard for fear of being judged 'shrill', 'bossy' or 'hormonal'. Trapped behind these threads of misogyny which are woven through the very fabric of our culture to keep us in our place.

Red, however, represents danger – the danger posed to society by women who are confident in expressing their ideas and opinions, unafraid to own the space around them.

Maid Mother Crone (2022)

*Photomontage and embroidery
thread on paper*

Finding myself in perimenopause and as my own daughters now reach adulthood I am entering a time of transition – still bound to the girl I once was and to two decades of maternal responsibilities I find myself facing a new stage of life just as my mother did before me.



Kristina Hacikjana

I am a mum and... I am grateful for the chance to experience motherhood. Yet, I would like to take this opportunity to show my creative side as an artist, as a graphic designer and as a mum. Drawing for me is a form of self-expression, the process of creation is therapeutic and meditative state.

My fascination with nature continues to be a rich source of inspiration for me. That moment where I stop, look and marvel is what I hope to capture on each of my works. To somehow still the moment and make it last.

Currently I am doing my PGCE course on a subject of Graphic Design.



The Butterfly, Pencil on paper. 40cm x 50cm



The Bee, Pencil on paper. 40cm x 50cm

Beth Hartshorne

I am a mum and, sometimes, it takes an ocean to hold everything this encompasses. I wrote *This Shore* during my pregnancy with my daughter. The journey had not been smooth – with loss, discrimination, and Covid. The transition into motherhood furthered my reflection on the world into which I was bringing my baby. The politics, patriarchy, white supremacy, capitalism, climate change, cultural intergenerational trauma - all accompanied by a rising fierceness to protect my daughter and the planet into which I was bringing her, from a place of love. I needed something big enough to hold all of this with me.

This song captures the quiet moment I found peace and connection beside the ocean. It's special now to have something created while she was growing inside of me. She'll have heard the singing and the instruments I recorded at home together with her dad. After all we've been through, I cherish the memory of how she kicked along and grew stronger with each creative step, and continue with quiet hope to take little steps to make this world a place in which she and future generations can safely embark upon their own creative journeys.

This Shore

The skyward calls for answers

Merge into horizon waves

Drifting off into the vastness

Crashing down on every age

And what a year this one has
brought us

As the lighthouse endured
standing

All the beauty and the trauma

Drawn in old sea tangles

And oh, this sand, this sand

The fortresses we built with
naive hands

And oh, this shore

The faces of the years

returning worn

I wish I didn't have to go back

To a world discriminating

I could stay lost in each sunset

In the harbour of this safety

'Cause now I'm carrying our
daughter

With the wisdom of the water

I would take this world on
for her

And stand guard over this
treasure

And oh, this sand, this sand

The fortresses we built with
naive hands

And oh, this shore

The faces of the years
returning worn

Maybe in the hidden depths

We'll find what lies beneath
each wreck

We made under the false
defense

That swept us into
separateness

And oh, this sand, this sand

And oh, this shore

Sharon James

I'm a busy mum of 3, twin girls of 6 and my son 7. Studio time can vary from 2 hours to 20 hours a week. The mental transition from mum to artist can be problematic.

There are two themes within my work, abstraction and autobiographical. My autobiographical work, documents my lived experiences. More recently I have been painting candid pictures of my children. I wanted them to have pictures of themselves that lived outside of a phone. I want to depict our everyday life honestly.

I previously ran my own artist run gallery for ten years but having children meant that I couldn't really open as a business. I decided that I would use whatever time I have to focus on being a full time artist. I paint between the school runs. I have taken part in several exhibitions but have never shown any of my paintings depicting my children.

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Spoon Face

Hilke Kurzke

I am mum and..... a book artist, writer and printmaker. My main interests are language, culture and human interaction. I am fascinated by taboo's that we are not allowed to talk about, and how we say things without naming them, especially when it comes to womanhood and pregnancy.

I use containers, book elements or secret/asemic script to hide elements of my work and give the reader the experience of uncovering it.

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Milk, Blood, and Thing with Feathers

Katya Kvasova

I am mum and...my practice concentrates on female experience.

I create portraits of women often focusing on hands and body language. I am fascinated with women's hands, to me they embody so much – all the incredible everyday work, rarely noticed, that they do; the care and affection for their loved ones (lovers, children, etc) and they also mirror their owners' character and emotions.

However my work is not focusing on a particular story, but rather represents shared inner female understanding/experience.

In catching the subject's subtle unique personal features and emotional hues I catch the imprints of their stories. I find it extremely fascinating.

With my portraits I aim to show women's power, the kind of power that doesn't scream or shout but a different kind. I see power in vulnerability, in subtleness, gentleness, quietness and beauty.



Small Hands N7 (2022)

graphite on board

18 x 24 cm



Small Hands N2 (2021)

graphite on board

18 x 24 cm



Holding (2021)

mixed media on board

24 x 30 cm

Louise Mortimer

Fierce Fine Art

Establishing an unashamedly female perspective deeply rooted in feminism, I work to represent the often-overlooked perspective of women and children and to investigate the domestic sphere. My work encompasses a range of media: drawing, sculpture, photography and film and is tied by my fascination for subtle clues within forms and objects that suggest human experience. I aim to capture these fleeting moments within my drawings and the objects I create, working without judgement or sentimentality and creating artworks that speak widely of the human condition.

My work has explored depression, sibling rivalries and relationships, parenting, roles and expectations of women and girls, housework, growing up, miscarriage, menopause and birth.

Further examples of my work can be viewed at fiercefineart.com

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Groom (2016)

A reflection on the pleasure of care giving and receiving. A moment of closeness between parent and child and one of my very favourite pieces.



Sizing Up (2016)

Sizing up examines the mother son relationship. For years the height relationship is continually monitored until one day with glee the child outgrows the parent. A metaphor for shifting relationships and changes in the power balance.



Stalemate (2016)

An exploration of sibling rivalry and the competitive nature of children, particularly the desire of younger children to keep up with/outwit their older siblings. The younger child is triumphant in their winning in this piece.

Jenny Stevenson

I'm fascinated by our emotional connections to buildings, that stepping into an old home can transport you straight back in time. My inspiration comes from exploring new locations, and I have a curiosity for buildings; they offer stability in our short lives, and over time we leave marks and make memories.

Paper's ability to be folded and cut into structural forms and also used as fragments pieced together into collages makes it a versatile medium to capture the essence of a place.

Video of Shelter - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yT9gzxxvDR8>

Revive

Revive was made in response to the broken windows theory which states that visible signs of crime and antisocial behaviour creates an urban environment that encourages more crime and disorder. I applied this theory as a metaphor to the time I spent reflecting on my life during the Pandemic, considering any fixes or changes I can. The broken window collages are a physical representation of the areas that need work and the mirrors suggest fragility of life.

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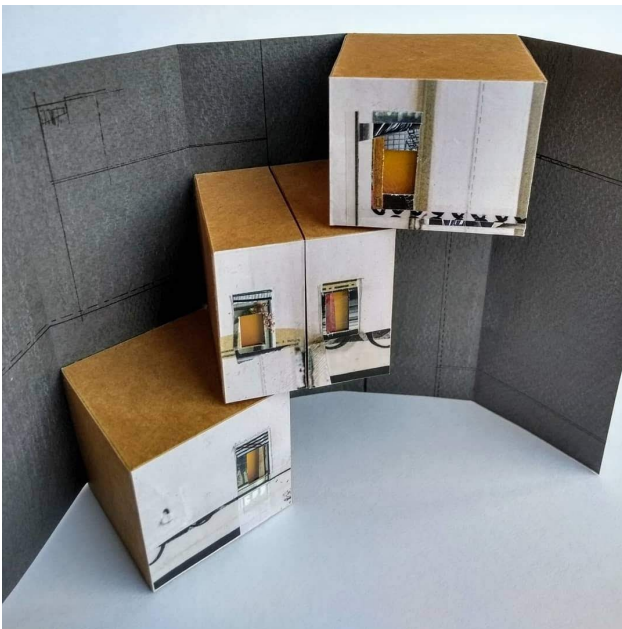
Shelter

Shelter is part of an ongoing collection of books on the theme of homelessness. Made in response to the idea of warmth, it is dedicated to the homeless or those that can't afford adequate heating during winter and how they might feel looking in to all the houses that look so cosy and warm.

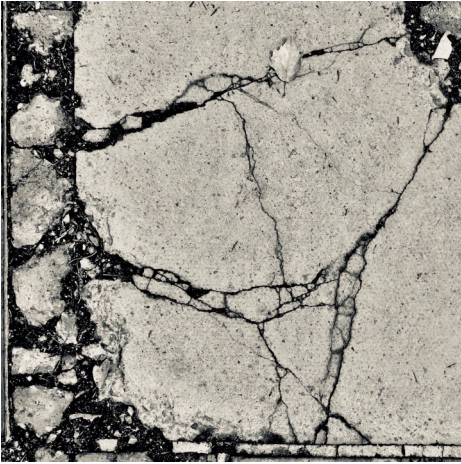
The structure is an integral part of the narrative, the pages are formed from cardboard boxes and mixed media collage. When the book is closed it wraps in on itself to form a blanket around the houses.



Revive



Shelter



Jessica Voke

I am a mum and... my days are spent hiking the length and breadth of this hilly town with a heavy toddler in a pushchair — we stop at regular intervals for him to run around — and then we continue traipsing the streets, often from early morning until evening. Sometimes taking a left, sometimes a right, my feet are in continuous motion. It is utterly exhausting, but there's a momentum which carries me along. Upon reconsidering my access to a traditional drawing practice within the constraints of my current lifestyle, I couldn't help but envision the ritualistic motion of my weary feet as a physical act of ephemeral mark-making upon the pavements. I wondered if I could use this strenuous parenting chapter as both the subject and the enactor of my drawings. The snappy pulse of the edited film has a strong rhythm, occasionally leaning towards the hectic. I enjoyed the challenge of trying to communicate the sensory feel of this intense yet monotonous mothering routine — so common and yet 'unseen' by society. The streets are full of us, but we are invisible.

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Sam Wellington

“I am a mother and became a single parent when my husband left our marriage. Our daughter was 4 weeks old.

I have drawn and ‘made’ all my life and in the last few years become obsessed with clay, following the gift of going to art college as a mature student. Awakening in intensive care on life support, focused attention on the importance of securing a ‘life less ordinary’ – prompting travel, independent working and acceptance into art college. Undertaking learning as a mature student introduced a whole new world of possibilities, crucially that of creating with clay – channelling self-expression and fascination of people into the art of sculpting.

‘Springing into action...’ speaks to the involuntary expectations placed on me beyond my control or influence; it nods to the complexities and demands of that situation alongside the residual damage to my girl. The sculpture also represents strength, versatility and resilience as we bounce back – being responsive, flexible and strong!

My girl was really encouraging of me going back to school, whilst her stepdad (my life partner) is so encouraging of my creative obsession that he puts up with the kitchen being covered in clay and dinner tasting of mud!



Spring Forward

Sarah Woodward

I am mum and an artist focusing on photographic/multi-media/ installation based in Sydney. As an artist I want to share my perceptions of the world, like a child who stops to watch the ladybird, or who marvels at the rainbow on the wall when the window refracts the light.

I use questions of reality and dimension to understand what we see, and how that represents us. My medium is an extension of the lens, creating collage to document the domestic domain, and the female space. I reflect this with the use of light. An object cannot be seen without the light, and the light changes how it is understood, though these effects are barely perceived, they can change everything.

Relationships are the most fundamental part of my work.

The relationship created between me, the work, and the audience.

We are co-dependent, and influence each other's existence.

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Film montage

Share your thoughts.
A chance to focus on the 'you'
before becoming anOther...
a m'Other.

**There was a you before you became a parent,
before your priorities became about another.**
**Take a moment to remind yourself of the 'Other' you and
complete the following:**

I am mum and...

Be ambitious, brave, honest – be you.... The other 'you'

**You can share your comments using the cards provided
at the museum or share online**

Instagram: @kg_curiouscurator

Email: kkgcurator@gmail.com

**Your collective voices will be shared in a collaborative
artwork which will be featured at the end of the
exhibition.**

