



Feminist Art and the Maternal

Andrea Liss

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Feminist motherhood is a surprisingly unexplored subject. In fact, feminism and motherhood have been often thought of as incompatible.

Profound, provocative, and innovative, *Feminist Art and the Maternal* is the first work to critically examine the dilemmas and promises of representing feminist motherhood in contemporary art and visual culture.

Andrea Liss skillfully incorporates theory with passionate personal reflections on the maternal, and in doing so she advances a fresh and necessary perspective on both feminism and art.

Offering new research on works by well-known and emerging artists who approach feminist motherhood issues from their own knowledge and experiences, Liss explores a wide range of examples from the challenging to the taboo, including Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document*, Mierle Laderman Ukeles's Maintenance Art projects, Renée Cox's Yo' Mama portraits, and Ngozi Onwurah's film *The Body Beautiful*.

Liss considers traditional characteristics that mothers are assumed to possess, such as nurturing, empathy, and sacrifice for their children—qualities that paradoxically have negatively defined women as “sentimental”—and assertively revalues them within both motherhood and feminism. Throughout, she deftly intertwines theoretical analysis with the arresting and enlightening first-person voices of artist-mothers and their children.

Putting forth an original ethics of feminism and the maternal—how to be in the place of the other *and* inside one's self, how to care for another *and* one's self—Liss reconceives the mother-child relationship as a model for relations among races, genders, and ages and radically reinterprets maternal traits as vital forms of social, artistic, and political address.

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