

# MOTHERS





# **MOTHERS**

**THE WOMEN'S GALLERY  
WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND.**

**1981**

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**Mothers** is a touring exhibition of work by New Zealand women artists, put together by the Women's Gallery as a part of its continuing exhibition programme,

This catalogue is designed to place the work in **Mothers** in its context in the visual arts and in current feminist thinking. As well as details of work included in the exhibition and statements by the artists involved, it contains articles, poems and a detailed list of resources available to those who wish to explore the theme of **Mothers** in more depth.

The material in the catalogue is arranged in two main parts, one concerned with the traditions and nurturing which we have been given, and the other with contemporary motherhood. Included in the first, "Our Mothers", are articles by Bridie Lonie (*Motherhood in New Zealand Painting*) and Juliet Batten (*Mother and child in Western Art: the unrealised theme*), poems and details of work in the exhibition: about mythical mothers, about participants' relationships with their mothers, and portraits of the artists' mothers. The second part, "Our Children", includes Robin McKinlay's article (*Madonnas or heroes? A reappraisal of the mythic models of motherhood*), poems and details of work in the exhibition: about birth, contemporary motherhood, and portraits of the artists' children.

While **Mothers** is in Wellington, we have planned a weekend of workshops about aspects of motherhood, as we believe that it is important that the treatment of themes in art is paralleled by and integrated with examination of them in personal and political situations. Information to help others setting up similar associated programmes is available from the Gallery.

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## THE SUBJECT OF MOTHERHOOD AS TREATED IN NEW ZEALAND PAINTING

Until very recently the history of European art in New Zealand, as in other countries, seemed to lead inevitably to abstraction, with a few diehards producing figurative painting. The genre painting of the nineteenth century, impressionistic landscapes and portraits of the early twentieth century, and social realism and analytical landscapes of the thirties and forties had yielded to the great semi-abstract sweeps of Colin McCahon, Toss Woollaston, Gretchen Albrecht, or the hard edged abstraction of Milan Mrkusich, Richard Killeen, Ralph Hotere, and others. Landscape continued, stylistically tightened: Don Binney, Robin White, Brent Wong working through the influence of a specific New Zealand light, first demonstrated by Rita Angus. In the early seventies it began to seem that the human creature was irrelevant to art: as a hitchhiker I was continually asked what these painters meant: 'who are they kidding?' It was interesting how many people cared.

There was of course a body of work dealing with the figure, or people in social settings, but it didn't receive such coverage. Social commentators like Lois White, Garth Tapper, Bryan Dew were submerged; Pat Hanly's figures were more metaphysical than actual, David Armitage's too explicitly sexual. In forgetting the gloom of having been born New Zealanders we forgot our surroundings, our actuality, our specific and changing qualities.

In the seventies, with increasing interest in art, and in art history, doors opened, both to the past and the present. It became important to examine the nature of people here, to extrapolate from common data the generalities. The influence of Maori art grew, Rita Angus' *Betty Curnow* could be recognized as home ground, Michael Smither could paint his children as metaphor. It became possible to see, not one teleological sweep, but several equally valid preoccupations. With the exception of Maori art, any attempt to unravel the history of these preoccupations relies as much on external influences as it does on indigenous ones. At present art in this country is like a hydra, many heads moving from one short body. A feminist description of New Zealand women's art begs a certain number of feminist works, and while these are now being produced, those works of the past which dealt with allied topics did so incidentally. To narrow oneself to women, and further, to their treatment of one subject, becomes a microscopic exercise, with so much data buried, lost because undocumented and unrecognized.

Looking through the Turnbull Library photo collection, the Women's Art Archive, art periodicals and books, for works by women dealing with the subject of motherhood, I became disturbed at the lack of them, expecting many, even of the saccharine variety: it grew to look like a tabu subject. Allowing for the swamp into which past works, especially women's works, disappear, I looked at the works of the more celebrated women painters and the same pattern emerged, with a difference: where the subject arose, it was frequently seen as a difficult subject, hedged with contradictions.

Frances Hodgkins began as a genre painter and turned progressively away from simply figurative work, but continued to paint portraits. The paintings I refer to can be found in the issue of *Ascent* dedicated to her work (December 1969) and in *Art New Zealand* 16. The first, *Mother and Child* 1906 is a small watercolour. The mother holds the child naturally, protectively; she looks out to the right, her attention caught. The child lies slumped asleep in her arms: she is sharing her attention between it and something else. It's a genre painting, typical, interesting, light. The second, *Summer*, c 1912, is impressionistic: here the subject is sunlight as much as it is the group described. The mother, or nurse, holds the child, looking

down at it benevolently, proudly. On the other side, a girl echoes her expression. Their faces are lightly sketched while the child's, more descriptively modelled, is the focal point. Perhaps because of the heaviness of its features, perhaps because of the adoration in the women's faces, one imagines it is a boy.

Twenty years later, a wash sketch, *Mother and Child* 1927 shows a woman holding a child up, he central, raised, she looking up with a curious, slightly disturbing expression, like a priestess in some ecstasy she has no control over. Her arms have an ambiguous quality, both supporting and supported. The child looks forward, boldly. *Lancashire Family*, 1927, shows the mother looking wistfully out of the painting. *Mother and Child*, 1930, a pencil drawing, shows the mother looking at the viewer or into some personal space: one eye wanders and she has an expression of pride and strength, but through effort: there is a residue of exhaustion. Her son is proportionately enormous, almost a cuckoo child. He looks eagerly out of the picture, her hand almost holding him back. The relationship described is powerful, all encompassing. Because of this quality, and the historical tradition of the 'Virgin and Child' theme, these paintings have a resonance which seems a commentary on the traditional theme. This may be coincidence, but it is hard to portray a static 'Mother and Child' without raising the ghosts of innumerable Christian icons. What is clearer, I think, is that Hodgkins was interested in the balance of power between mother and child, and this is made poignant by the consistent suggestion of masculinity in the children she treats in these paintings.

A much earlier work of hers, of a Maori woman and child, has the child on the woman's shoulders, almost parallel. A sketch by Mina Arndt shows the same subject: the compositional qualities have interesting possibilities. Hodgkins' mother looks out, charming the viewer while the child's head is disproportionately small, its expression forlorn, whimpery. There's no communication. Arndt's child and mother are on the same plane, they are equivalent creatures, both immersed in some satisfying interior world, interdependent. These two works are in the National Gallery Collection, Wellington.

Grace Joel's *Mother and Child* (Dunedin Public Art Gallery catalogue no 28) shows the child, about four, on the mother's shoulders, while she curves below it, supporting it. The child's face is defensive, while she appears protective: both seem to be shielding their relationship from the painter, or viewer. The composition is almost circular, which assists the sense of emotional union between the two subjects.

Rita Angus' works are currently being researched. She painted women, and she painted children, but I could not find a mother and child. Her portrait of Betty Curnow, that icon of the New Zealand woman, has no explicit reference to the children she has, whom Rita painted. Angus' people are often alone, individuals, though Betty Curnow appears a woman used to people and the portrait refers to art, books, the life she led outside the domestic sphere. The piece of blue cloth in her hands might suggest mending, but it might be a scarf: the intellectual pursuits described behind her are in counterpoint with the expression of practical capability in her hands and face. Angus painted herself as Virgin, and as, in *Rutu* (National Gallery, Wellington), a goddess rising out of tropical bush, a stiff white halo around her head. She lived alone, and very independently: it's a difficult position to maintain, and I imagine she chose to emphasize the individuality of women against familiar roles.

Hodgkins' influence on New Zealand art has been minimal, Angus' great. Initially influencing the landscape tradition, her approach to portraiture was later taken up by Robin White, who translated the frontal, hands together portrait of Betty Curnow into *Florence at Harbour Cone*. We know this is Robin White's mother: it is part of the function of the painting. Florence is old, depleted, weary. Her eyes don't

face the viewer calmly, confidently: they are looking back on a difficult life, resigned. The landscape beside her suggests the difficulties of farming, of work involving both people and land: there is no sense of reward but that of fulfilling functions as natural, and as hard, as the land.

Robin White's themes are constant, and she has made a series of prints of herself and of her son. One of the self portraits shows her, arms folded, in front of her house, greying, determined. This time the effort is present, the difficulties current. Beside it, at an exhibition in Wellington, *Michael at home* 1978; a portrait of her son, slumped a little in a chair, hands fallen into his lap, palms together. This was painted just before he went to school: it's a farewell to the closeness of the mother and child relationship. He asked that the gumboots be put in the picture; they face out of it. Here, explicitly, motherhood and art become mixed, in a dialogue, and not an easy one.

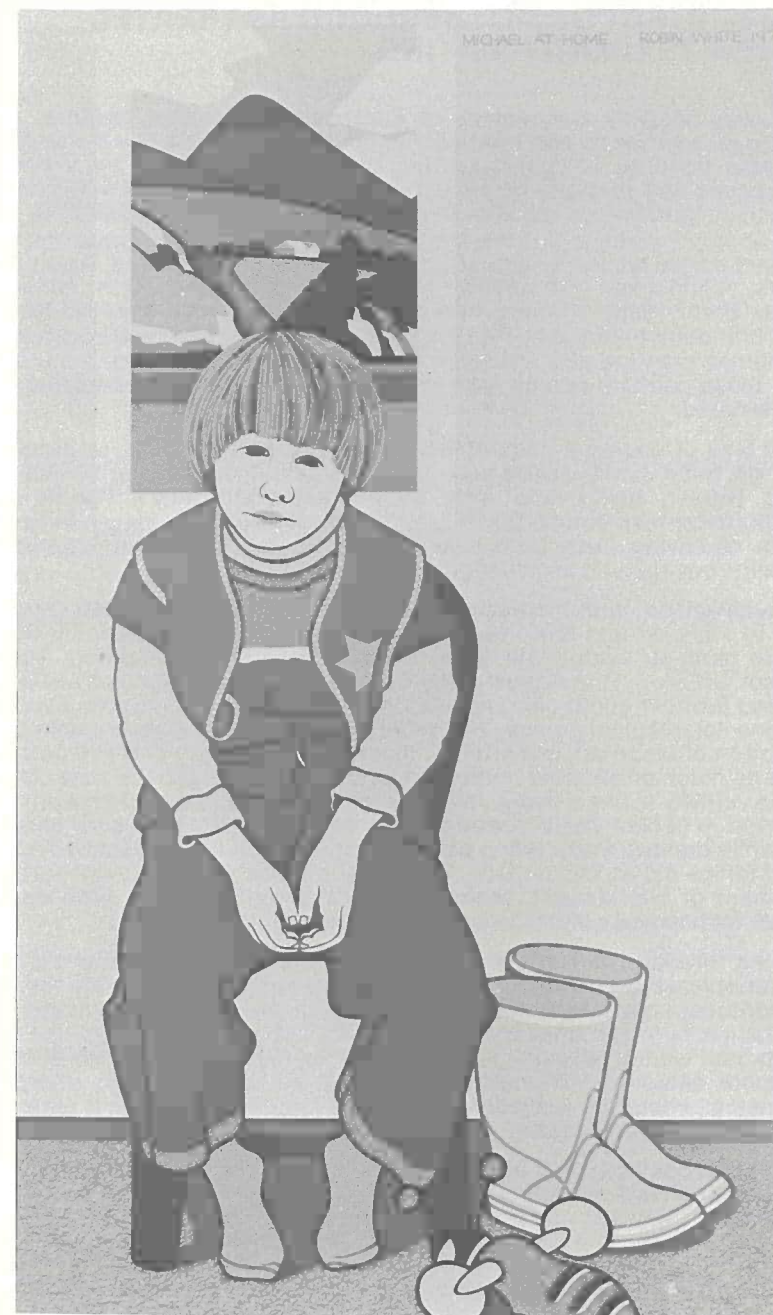
Robin Kahukiwa's *The Migration* (1973) shows a naked Polynesian woman, stretched toward the viewer on her bed. Her small son is in the foreground seeking her, unsure; her husband sits on the other side of the bed, his head in his hands, his back, like his son's, toward the viewer, while through the window one sees tall figures, men and women, striding toward the house. Here maternity is paramount, while the men are unsure, or in despair. Claire Jennings's *The Window* shows a woman, her two children on either side, holding her hands. They stand on a chess board leading to mountains behind. She looks to the viewer, requiring not so much assistance as recognition.

A rarity: Joan Fanning's portrait of Pat Fry, pregnant, in profile, her legs stretched out on the sofa she's sitting on, a piano behind. She has all the awkwardness of late pregnancy and a strong, slightly aggressive face. (Turnbull photo collection.)

These are some of the images of motherhood painted by women. How have men treated the subject? Again, a selection, from a better known body of work. Colin McCahon's *The Virgin Mary as compared to a jug of pure water and the infant Jesus to a lamp* is one of the rare translations of the Virgin and Child theme, a dialogue between symbolism and actuality, the child serious, clumsy, the mother calm and firm, far more substantial than water, the child nothing so luminous as light. It's a warm painting, on a theme which has its own rewards: a theme which women find difficult, implying as it does the overwhelming subjection of the mother to the maternal role.

The subject of domesticity, of the family environment, has recently become the subject of several painters. Michael Smither paints his wife and children: he has latterly painted his children, as small, powerful, amoral creatures, while their mother, shown previously as a calm, supportive presence, has ceased to appear. He has not, to my knowledge, placed himself in these paintings. Nigel Brown paints the whole family, warmly, vigorously, but there's an otherworld quality, as of a hundred years ago. The traditional roles are maintained, but against contemporary life. Jeffrey Harris paints horrific images of the relationship between man and woman, children innocent bystanders. In a series of small paintings (1977) he used the virgin theme, her womb related compositionally to a pool of cold, grey-blue water. His point of view is religious, socially isolated and frightening. John Lethbridge's *New Zealand Stilled Life* (1971), a screenprint, has a tombstone, its top a lurid pink jellytit, its base in grass. On its face is a grisaille representation of four generations of women. A lament for sensuality lost, but for whom? The sensuality is as packaged as the grisaille women are anonymous, and there seems little option for escape. While the difficulties of the nuclear family are seen, the role of motherhood seems accepted as inevitable and unchangeable.

Most women artists have not used their work as subject matter where that use might alter or damage the relationships they maintain with their families. Many



Robin White *Michael at home* 1978

screenprint 665 x 375



women artists feel that art is an option out of the family role, and therefore don't want to mix the two. Others have had to remain single, or childless, in order to remain artists, or have had to leave their families. The overly subjective has been avoided as material for public art, and this has prevented the recognition of a common problem as subject matter. To leave one's family is still socially unacceptable; the need to express first the problems of this, and then the solutions, still falls victim to the reticence instilled by social pressure. Within feminist art circles the pressures are reversed: because motherhood has prevented artistic self realization it is difficult to celebrate motherhood.

Women's relationships with their own mothers are subject to similar difficulties. It requires a strong stomach to state and deal with the tensions inevitable in the relationship: the mother/daughter aspects become slightly reversed as the daughter grows older. Robin White's other portraits of her mother and a gentle pencil drawing of Edith Collier's (Sargeant Gallery, Wanganui), are, outside the works in this exhibition, the only examples I could find. There must be others.

Conceptual, environmental, sculptural art presents possibilities that are different. These forms deal with allusion and tend to be more exploratory in content as well as form. The historical rigidity of the mother and child (madonna and child) subject can be avoided: the physical nature of processes can be examined. Two women, both mothers, treated the theme in the Women's Art Environment at the CSA Gallery, in 1977.

Rosemary Johnson used the entrance lobby, seeing the gallery as a womb, the lobby and staircase the place of birth, 'a transition from one form of existence to another.' She used panels of transparent fabric: 'Each layer of the hanging fabric represents a different aspect of this transition: the pink panels, impending flesh; the dark interval panel an unknown or forgotten area; the mauve panel which has to be passed by, to the patterned outside panels which lead to emergence in the outside WORLD.' Rosemary Johnson was pregnant at the time of setting this work up. Joanna Paul, in the same exhibition, showed an installation, *Unpacking the Body* (since turned into a book, *Unwrapping the Body*). This was the result of her exploration of the physical nature of the body after her child's heart defect forced her to confront 'the intrusion of the manmade into the natural order.' After her child's death she continued to study the etymology of anatomical terminology. 'I found seven or eight basic symbols — cup-sword-tree-wheel-house-ring ... which I made manifest by hanging in frames (STROMA) corresponding objects ... above these items in their flesh coloured frames hung the list of terms and etymologies. What was in the pink wooden CHEST was the hub and node of the exercise.' She says of it 'I thought the piece ... was about science: anatomy, physiology, a bridge between the languages of science and imagination. I think I was also building a shrine/temple/body for my dead child.'

These are certain of the works which are accessible. Robyn Kahukiwa's work is the only example of a Polynesian point of view; and I have not touched at all on photography, which would reward research. Like sculpture, it is somewhat freed from tradition, and there have been documentations of birth (Kevin Donovan); Jane Zusters has photographed women and children, as have many others. This essay is more a plea for further research, and for further treatment of the subject, than any exegesis. While to live as a painter means producing saleable works, exploratory work, requiring private means or government assistance remains difficult, and a deliberate analysis of motherhood, and motherhood in New Zealand, lies in this exhibition, and in the future.

I would like to thank Barbara Strathdee, who helped research this article, and Janet Paul, the Turnbull Library and the National Gallery.

**Bridie Lonie**

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*Ascent*, December 1969 (Frances Hodgkins)  
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*Grace Joel Retrospective catalogue*. Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 1980.  
Paul, Joanna. *Unwrapping the body*. Dunedin, 1978.  
*Spiral*, no. 3 (Rosemary Johnson, Joanna Paul).



## Robyn F. Kahukiwa

Hinetitama bore several children to her father, Tane. Upon discovering the fact that her father and her husband were one and the same, Hinetitama was so overcome with shame that she fled to the underworld where she became Hine-nui-te-po (great lady of the night or death). Her final words to Tane were "Farewell, o Tane! Remain here to bring forth progeny to the world of life, while I will ever draw them down to the Po." Tane was disconsolate at the loss of his beloved Hine and he is doomed to follow her personified form of the dawn across the sky every day in his personified form as the sun.

The large female figure in the centre of the painting represents Hinetitama. Her body is shown becoming fragmented to represent her change from an earth dweller to the goddess of death. Superimposed on top of Hinetitama is the stylised form of Tane, placed so that he is part of her as well as being her lover. The lizard represents Maui when he tried to conquer Hine-nui-te-po. The foetus represents the children of Tane and Hinetitama. Above Hinetitama's head is a spiral which represents the ten overworlds and also symbolises the sun as Tane's personified form. The dawn is shown breaking over the hills but up above the sky is black as it is still night. The ten underworlds are shown in the lower half of the picture beginning with the grass and trees and going through various layers into Meto, the extinct.

## Keri Hulme

Why in an exhibition of “Mothers” deal only with mythical mothers? Because I feel motherhood isn’t limited to the physical production of babies — there are creative mental and spiritual dimensions of mothering that are yet nearly totally unexplored.

*Deity Considered as Mother Death* 1980 poem

I have long been fascinated by Hinenuitepo, the Great Lady of the night. You can visualise her as embodied horror, or as living black nothingness, as a creation hard-done-by a creator.

She was originally the daughter of the first created being, Hine-ahu-one, and her father was the god, Tane. Suffused with beauty, she was known as Hine-titama, the Lady of the dawn. She had daughters in her turn, but when she realised that her father, and theirs, were the same person, her sense of rightness was offended and she fled into the night.

<i>Lullaby for a stone doll</i>	1980	poem		
<i>Lullaby for a stone doll I</i>	1980	watercolour/biro	450 x 320	NFS
<i>Lullaby for a stone doll II</i>	1980	watercolour/biro	450 x 320	NFS

This poem and the derivative sketches are indebted to a patere composed by Hine-i-turama, an aristocratic lady of Ngati Rangiwewehi. A patere is a chant with gestures, and it is frequently of an abusive nature.

Hine-i-turama composed her song when she was accused of being pregnant — she, a puhi, that is, a chiefly woman who was supposed to remain a virgin until an arranged marriage which would bring honour to her people was accomplished. She made herself a stone baby, and sang the patere in derision of her accusers. However, it is also recorded that she really did have a baby, Tuwairua, and composed the patere in defiance.

One version of Hine-i-turama’s patere can be found in Ngata and te Hurinui’s *Nga Moteatea (part 2)* and another in Mitcalfe’s *The singing word* 1.

1. Ngata, Apirana, *Nga moteatea: the songs; scattered pieces from many canoe areas*, collected by A.T. Ngata and translated by Pei Te Hurinui. Part II. Wellington, Polynesian Society, 1961 p 111.

Mitcalfe, Barry. *Maori poetry: the singing word*. Wellington, Victoria University Press, 1974 p 61.

## Deity Considered As Mother Death

Now  
night is menace, mystery  
no handhold here  
changes the redmist dawning daughter to someone beyond laughter  
poised as a spider  
her doorkeepers, shadows...

Her children now  
are the baby children of death  
the bandylegged potbellied slanteyed bonechests  
and the shrinking ghosts wrapped in her night hair

(have you noticed the skull  
that hides under your skin  
caging your mind?)

She  
guards over our dreams of living, soothes our songs of whimpering  
waits for the blooming of that instinct that draws us into traps of flame like light  
sends us moths out again  
waits  
never smiles

Her privates, they say, are bladed with flakes of blackstone sharper than grief  
her eyes, they say, are blank and jade  
her skin still skin of the Girla Dawn but intruded on by shadows  
and such careless shapes as the body assumes on dying  
her hair, they say, flowing tangling as seaweed closing over your head  
after Rerenga-wairua  
they say

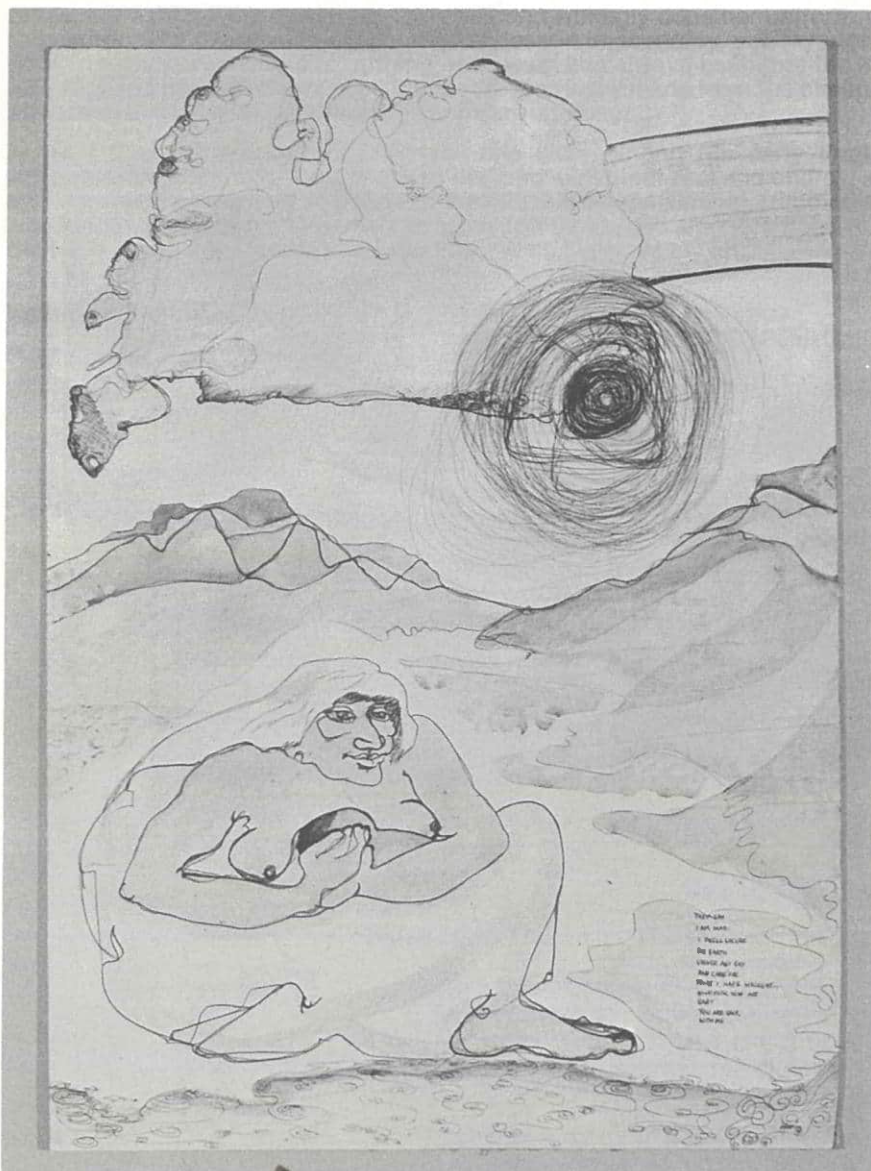
From the Lady of Clay the Girla Dawn first wakened red and smiling  
nobody asks to be born  
nobody asks to be born

We all share being  
born of blood and water  
dying  
going from dark to dark

So we began, dreaming swimmers on inward seas,  
and live and die  
why death after being? why being? why death?  
Come! let us go and ask our mother together  
hand in hand to the door,  
ask Her poised in her shadow, Hinenuitepo

Did you not often ask  
the unanswerable questions of your mother?  
And did she not answer you?

A moth,  
caught in the crack in the tree,  
drowned by hard rain...



## Lullaby For a Stone Doll

O I could suck on their brains!  
Those longtongued spiteful men!

Their lewd words  
rob me of my place  
I am footloose on a barren way  
searching for something lost  
never mind! I shall be all parents to you —  
here, a plaited cover, a cloak to keep you from the cold  
like any other winterborn child,  
muka to protect that new raw navel and titoki oil  
and I shape you, with caress, as any massaging mother does her soft newborn  
hah! but that will teach them to jeer  
Hine-i-turama, my highborn self...

I'll charge you with so much love  
that you'll laugh  
and cry real tears  
and I'll hear your heartbeat  
ticking away like a small cicada  
at night

And I even have a name for you, son —  
Tuwairua  
— do you like it?  
We shall be able to say our names together  
when we go down to the dark  
you and I.

They say  
I am made, I am mad but  
I dwell secure on earth  
under any sky  
and care for all I have wrought  
whatever you are, baby,  
you are safe with me —

What am I afraid of?  
Not the mixture of fist and tongue they thrust out  
but of hurting without comfort, surcease,  
forgetting to care  
being hopeless  
the kea to get to my heartmeat is despair

Still, I hold you  
with love —

O I could eat them!

## MOTHER AND CHILD IN WESTERN ART: THE UNREALISED THEME

### Introduction

This subject raises a question for which I have no answer. It is the question of whether certain classes of people (men, women, blacks, whites) have some experiences which remain inaccessible to others, or whether all experiences are finally accessible to all people, given sufficient empathy. I have written this essay as if the childbirth experience is fundamentally a woman's experience, but one which might become accessible to men once women have reclaimed it for themselves, explored it and given it artistic expression. In making this claim I have assumed that the theme "belongs" to women. On reflection I am not sure that this is true, although undoubtedly men have distorted and repressed the birth/nurturing experience in their art. Women may well be the ones to unlock the theme from its cages of repression, but I hesitate to state that they will "own" the theme from then on. It is not until our society shakes itself loose from the bonds of sex-role stereotyping that we can know where the real limits of male and female experience lie.

\* \* \* \* \*

The father watched his child's birth: he saw the head crown, then slowly swivel to reveal the face. There it was, like a dead thing, bluish, utterly still, eyes sealed. The moment lasted but an instant. Blood surged to the cheeks, the eyes fluttered open, the mouth drew breath and the cries of life broke forth.

His description of that moment, of the death before birth, was one I never forgot. My own birthing of the child seemed to have reclaimed the disappearing point of death, to tug it back, to tie up the circle. Death and birth became one; the snake eats its own tail.

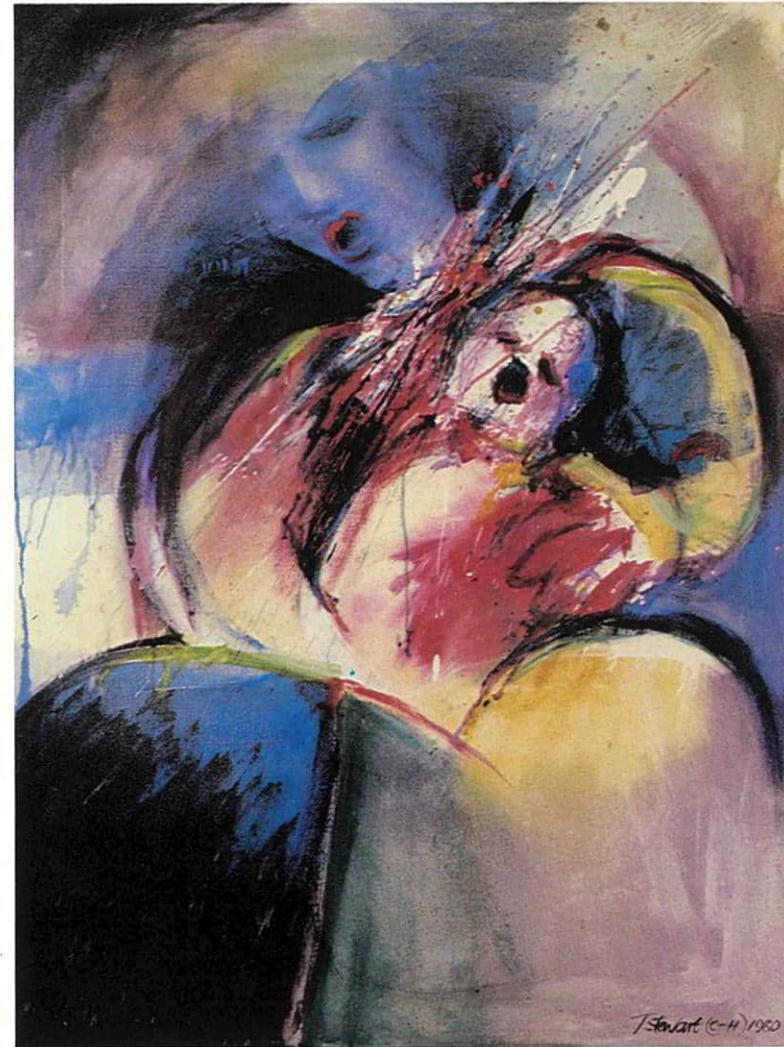
In Western art birth and death have occupied opposite poles. Death as a theme in its own right has been thoroughly explored throughout the centuries. In tomb art the figures lie transfixed, hands folded on chest, in eternal sleep.

The Etruscan painters show their people dancing into death, banquetting their way into the Other World. Rembrandt's green corpse, laid out on the anatomy lesson table, take on a more sinister tone, as do his bloody raw carcasses of meat hanging on their hooks in the slaughter house. We have the Massacre of the Innocents, battle scenes, Sacrifices, and of course the most painted death scene of all: the Crucifixion.

The artists have known their theme well, for the artists have been men, and men's contact with death has been active as well as passive. Throughout the ages a growing boy has had to prepare himself for the fact that one day he might have to kill. Whether out of aggression or self-defence, society has expected it of him.

At the other end of the scale there is birth. Young women grow up with the expectation, not that they will have to kill, but that they may one day give birth to new life. However, women have not been the artists. While death scenes have filled the galleries of Old Masters, the theme of birth has remained a blank canvas waiting to be filled, a block of stone not yet carved.

Yet birth is a universal experience, something we have all known. It lies buried in the deep recesses of our memories, difficult to reach. Women who give birth have the opportunity to reach that experience, by reliving it. Even though I am now mother rather than baby, in labour I may once again struggle down the birth



Jill Stewart *Madonna* 1980

acrylic on canvas 1190 x 880

canal. My baby suckling is myself suckling, nestling once more into the soft comfort of my mother's breast.

Men have felt distanced from this experience, and their sense of distance, as I shall show, may be seen in the art they have produced.

Imaginatively they have tried to reach the experience, searching to locate it on the other side of death, through their theology and their art, in the theme of the Resurrection. Grunewald's *Resurrection* panel of the Isenheim Altarpiece may be the closest male equivalent of the woman's birth experience, of the breakthrough and release after pain. (The pain itself is also included elsewhere in the altarpiece.)

More often, as we shall see, men have acted to deny or repress the experience that they do not understand, that seems to exclude them and make them redundant.

Great Art is supposed to express universal themes. However, men's definition of the Universal has been incomplete, for it has failed to include the theme of birth on its most profound level. The work of women artists, coming from the centre of this experience, is necessary to expand our definition of the human condition and lead the way for men to identify imaginatively with an experience that is not so easily their own.

On another level, there are the associated themes of nurturing and child-rearing: also untapped, since in the past women artists have usually managed to become artists only because they have not had to rear children. From the physical experience of growing life inside one's body, labouring to deliver it, taking it to the breast while the uterus still contracts and bleeds from the loss, flowing the milk into the tight grip of the child's mouth — there is a whole range of intense sensuous and spiritual experience that has as yet scarcely been given shape in painting or sculpture.

### The Diminishing Breast

It is necessary to go either outside Western society or right back to prehistoric art to find unrepressed expression of the woman's role as child-bearer. The fertility goddesses of prehistoric times are broad-hipped or bellied, full-breasted or many-breasted, and powerful: figures to be hallowed, figures to be feared. We do not know if these figures were made by men or women, but a strong acceptance, if not celebration of female sexuality is conveyed by them.

1 Later came Christianity and the wan procession of the madonnas begins. Female sexuality is denied. The woman becomes a passive vehicle for the will of the male God, from whom she produces a male child. The madonnas are pale flowers compared with the old earthy goddesses. Their breasts wither into tiny apples, not fit for suckling. Their faces become ethereal, melancholy, stamped with eternal patience. The child is detached from the mother's body; throughout the Renaissance he twists away, his attention on the world outside. He lies on a ledge while she worships him with her hands closed in prayer, or he stands up straight on her knee, looking out at the world. There is rarely eye contact between them. If the child looks at her, she looks out and beyond; if she looks at the child, he looks away or goes to sleep.

Some artists attempt to imbue the subject with tenderness or a homely playful quality. Grunewald's *Virgin and Child* in the Isenheim Altarpiece is one of the

most successful of these; the faces are closer together than usual, and the baby's hands play with a string of beads. But even here, the eye contact seems to just miss the mark, as if the bodies do not carry the conviction that is needed 2 to establish the link.

3 The *Adoration of the Magi*, so favoured by our Christmas stamps, makes the theme clearer still. Here the separation of child from mother is almost complete as the world comes to adore and claim him. The baby lies on the ground like an offering, or is being held out towards the visitors. It is a man's world; the Virgin is often the only female in a crowded canvas.

Now the attention is no longer given to the reproductive nature of female sexuality; it is focussed on the miracle of the male child. Mary the mother, and her experience, have been bypassed. God reigns supreme and the Goddess is reduced to a pale shadow in a blue robe.

Some people might now want to protest that these paintings work on a religious level, and have little to do with mothers and children. I would answer that such a statement denies the very nature of mythology. If a culture throws up such a powerful myth as that of the virgin birth of a male messiah, it is no accident. Such myths may be interpreted as projections of the deep preoccupations of a people, or on a more conscious level, as political weapons. The story of Christ's birth, which significantly leaves the earthly male (Joseph) out in the cold, expresses the attitude of patriarchal Christian society towards the miracle of birth itself. The miracle, the magical aspect of birth, is wrested out of female hands. The male, excluded on an earthly level, reappears in a much more flattering role, as the Impregnating God. The mother is no longer the mysterious source (with some male help), but a chaste vessel for the male seed, during which time she remains untouched; in other words, a container but not a participant. The Christian image for her was a pitcher, a vessel of pure water. Today, if science has its way, the vessel is likely to become a test-tube, and the male dream will have turned into a reality.

The myth is powerful. It enables men to suppress their fear of women's supreme role in child-bearing, and to put her safely out of reach on a pedestal. It is no wonder that the Virgin and Child, in all its ramifications, was for two centuries one of the most painted themes in art.

Rembrandt is one of the few male artists to reject the myth and put in its place both an identification with the female world and an honest expression of the male dilemma. His drawings of women teaching a child to walk, of a naughty boy, of Saskia carrying their child downstairs, of the mother comforting a child frightened by a dog, all show an intimate connectedness with the female world that comes from sympathetic observation. Even more remarkable is his *Holy Family* which shows the man, divided from wife and baby by a table, gazing at them with an intensity of longing, envy, empathy, and awareness of his separation from them. It is just such a response that surely contains the starting point for the male to gain access to the birth/nurturing experience. Only when the separation is confronted and not denied, can steps be taken to close the gap.

### Death to the Goddess

The final phase of the mythologising process continues to the present day: woman, detached from her child, is presented as sex object. From Titian to Ingres, from Boucher to Wesselmann, women become passive objects for male contemplation. The breast returns, and is transformed. In the world of Wesselmann and *Playboy* the Big Tit rises as the rubber incarnation of female

sterility. The Miss World contestant must be uncontaminated by childbirth; her breast may be sucked but never suckled; the Goddess is not merely repressed but she has now been killed.

## Women Artists

Does the work of women artists through the ages give us a different perspective on the themes of birth/nurturing/motherhood? The answer is disappointing. To start with, few women have broken through the obstacles to become artists, and of these, even fewer have been artists and mothers. Some, like Judith Leyster, managed to paint lively studies of their own children. Mary Cassatt, who never married, produced loving pictures of other people's children. Others, like Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and even Berthe Morisot, did not move beyond the sentimentalising current of the societies in which they lived. Vigée-Lebrun's painting of herself with her daughter entwined in her arms is particularly sugary; 4 the product of a sophisticated courtly woman who never had to wipe her child's bottom.

It is not until the early 20th century that a different note is struck, when Paula Modersohn-Becker, desiring a child but putting her development as an artist first, projected her longing into paintings of peasant women and children. Her paintings show large-breasted women suckling their babies. There is a sensuous unity between mother, child, and the world of nature surrounding them. These works are both intimate and earthy. In the Bremen *Mother and Child*, a pregnant woman lies sleeping on a mat with her baby beside her - the child seeming like a dream-like projection of the child within. The painting has a sensuality which no madonna would ever stoop to, let alone lie down to, a connectedness between mother and child to which women viewers respond with a shock of recognition.

Paula Modersohn-Becker became pregnant in 1907, and gave birth to a daughter. She never lived to paint the experience; three weeks after the birth she died from a heart attack.

It is in the work of Käthe Kollwitz that the theme gains power. Working only in black and white or sculpture throughout her life, she produced many works depicting mothers and children. Her women have intense body contact with their children: cheek to cheek, or hugged to the belly with huge protective arms and hands enfolding them. Hers is a world where mothers fight for their children's survival; a world of fierce protective instincts, of the anxiety and anguish of motherhood as well as its sensuous flow.

Kollwitz gave birth to two sons. The pain of losing one of them, Peter, in the 6 First World War, remained with her always. In her *Pietà* the mother seems to take the young male body back into her body, re-absorbing it into the womb. Above it she broods, monumental. How different this is from Michelangelo's *Pietà* in St Peter's, Rome. There the male body, beautiful in its pain, is laid out on Mary's lap for display. She is young, sweet, sad but unravaged, incapable of the tragic emotion of Kollwitz's women. In the Florence *Pietà*, executed late in Michelangelo's life, the figure of Mary is smaller than that of her son, as she sags in the effort of trying to support him. The towering figure who rises above the group is Joseph of Aramathea, to whom Michelangelo gave his own features. Kollwitz replaces the father with the mother in the position of strength, and in doing so speaks to us of the female experience.

7 In her woodcut *Mary and Elizabeth*, she depicts two pregnant women meeting, one touching the other's womb. Messiahs they might be, shaping themselves in these wombs, but it is once again the women's perspective that Kollwitz transmits.



**Tiffany Thornley**

*Old photos* 1980 line etching & aquatint, handcoloured 160 x 160

There are few portrayals of pregnant women, by women, in the history of art. Usually they are utterly different from the stereotype of the advertising world, who stands young and innocent, a modern madonna in front of filmy curtains in misty morning light, holding in her hand an innocuous daisy. Paula Modersohn-Becker's paintings of herself pregnant convey a fruitfulness that harks back to the old fertility goddesses. Alice Neel's *Pregnant Woman* is a stark presentation of the other side of the coin, where varicose veins, prolapsed wombs and eternal fatigue have their day. She stares out at us from her couch, her body heavy and distorted with its burden, a reminder that the fruit may also be a parasite.

Finally, there is Frida Kahlo. Her paintings of her own miscarriages present yet another facet of the birth theme; and her remarkable painting *The Birth of Moses*, made after reading Freud's analysis of the subject, gives expression to her own unfulfilled desire to bear a child.

The theme has been beginning to surface in the 20th century, through the work of women artists. The other surfacing theme is also an aspect of the birth theme: female sexuality. Through the work of Judy Chicago this theme has broken the ice, has been released, has flowered. Women artists, now in the process of discovering themselves as females, often need to go through the process of using overt sexual imagery. In this way they discover the centre from which to begin.

It may be that the centre lies even deeper, in that aspect of women's sexuality which has aroused in men feelings of awe, worship, fear, and then methods of repression and destruction. The next stage in the unlocking of the female experience may be to plumb the depths of the birth theme, to explore every aspect of women's fertility: what it means **not** to become a mother, what it means to miscarry, what it means to nurture, to raise children, and to lose them. From the still birth to the live birth, from the deformed child to the healthy child, from the joy of a growing infant to the torment and rage of it — all these subjects remain like unborn infants themselves, curling in the shadows of a dusty closet, waiting to be released into the light of day.

**Juliet Batten**

## Notes

1. See, for example, the following paintings in Florence: Raphael, *Madonna del Granduca*; Perugino, *Virgin and Child with Saints*; Correggio, *Rest on the Flight*; and in London's National Gallery, Campin, *Virgin and Child Before a Firescreen*.
2. It is interesting to compare this with Ghirlandaio's *Portrait of an Old Man and a Boy*, where the two are also gazing at each other, but in a more convincing manner.
3. See, for example, *Adorations* by the following: Van der Weyden (Munich), with at least 30 men plus Virgin; Botticelli (Florence) with 32 men; Mantegna (Florence) with 26 men, Ghirlandaio (Florence) with 28 men; and Gentile da Fabriano (Florence) with about 50 men, the Virgin and two serving women.
4. Illustrated in Karen Petersen and J.J. Wilson, *Women Artists*, New York, 1976, p 52.
5. See Petersen and Wilson, p 109.
6. See Petersen and Wilson, p 117.
7. See Petersen and Wilson, p 116.
8. See Petersen and Wilson, p 135.





Anna Keir untitled 1980

pencil 240 x 300

### Advice from Mother

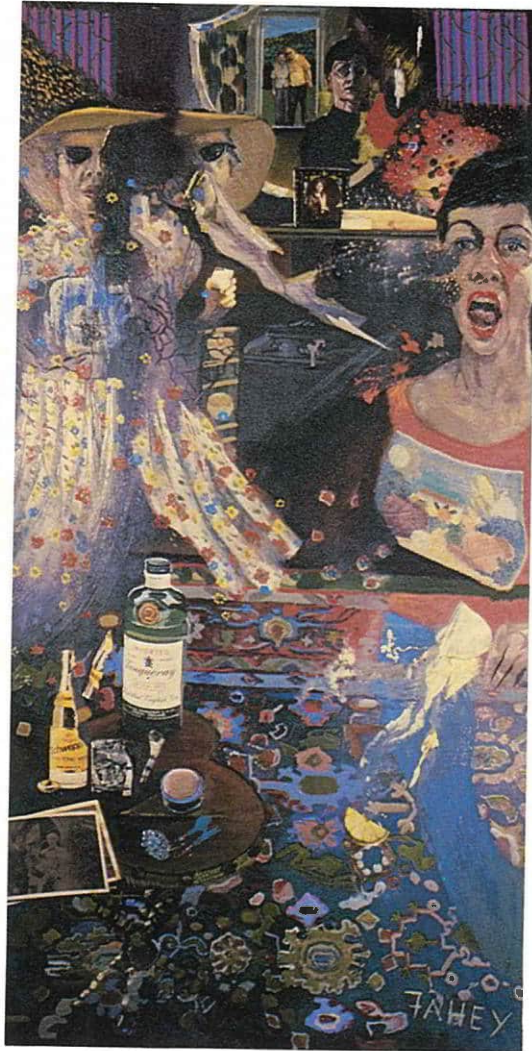
Your job is too hard, dear  
You have too many commitments  
And that poetry writing  
Needs peace and quietness  
How can you write  
If you can't sit down  
For half an hour at a time  
Your aunts used to rest after lunch  
And we always changed dresses  
In the afternoon after housework  
Put our feet up, rested our faces  
In case our husbands were demanding later.  
Funny how she understands better than anyone.

Elizabeth Smither



untitled 1980

pencil 240 x 300



**Jacqueline Fahey**

*Mother and daughter quarrelling* 1977 oil on board 1200 x 600

## Sharon Alston

I made this construction partly to exorcise some of the pain and guilt I have felt since my mother decided to end her life in 1975. I thought I failed her as her friend, sister, daughter. The work is a combination of pure romanticism, dream and hard reality. Not long after she died I dreamt I was walking in a vast field of soft green grass. A thin black cord stretched down from out of a clear blue sky. At the end of the cord was a black telephone; I picked up the receiver and listened to my mother telling me that she felt really wonderful, happy, and that I had no need to worry about her. There was no reason to disbelieve her or doubt the importance of her reassurance. That dream was a very significant catalyst for me because it enabled me to develop a happier, more philosophical approach to death.

Perhaps it's typically romantic to conclude that she had an absolute right to seek, through death, eternal peace and freedom from her oftentimes painful encounters with the living.

For myself I know it's possible to taste strong and satisfying metaphysical freedom amongst the living - in the immediate here and now, but this requires a struggle which must be sustained over long periods of time. It's a luxurious battle few mothers have the time or support to experience. If there is a recipe for freedom, it must inevitably be a profoundly individual one. How we deal with our bondage is clearly our own choice.

When I visualise my mother as a phoenix-like creature, free and flying, I feel a sense of rightness for her. No regret, no loss. So this work is a homage, a dream, a small sculptural description of my romantic concept of where she has journeyed and how she is currently experiencing her trip.

untitled 1981 fabric/wood/metal/papier mache construction NFS

## Jacqueline Fahey

*Mother and daughter quarrelling* 1977 oil on board 1200 x 600 \$450

## Linda James

For me 'Mothers' is about myself and my mother. The continuing and complex link from mother to mother, and everything it means to be part of this chain. How things are changing, yet not changing, and how very different this is often from being male, and a father.

I'm writing this being interrupted by children. This is what is almost impossible about being a mother and being an artist. How hard it is to keep your mind in any direction, let alone anywhere constant. It makes it hard but can end up making you incredibly strong and determined.

Writing with a three year old howling because he wants to write on this paper with my pen. My brain feels like it wants to burst.

My mother was accepted for the Slade School of Art in London just before the war. Her mother wouldn't let her go because the city was considered unsafe. She, my mother, married soon after the war and became totally absorbed in being a wife and a mother. Under enormous pressure to play this part: a result of the post-

war buildup of the importance of family and home. She could have been an artist but was never given the time or space to grow in. I cannot understand why this doesn't make her eaten up with bitterness. But, with the strength of the deprived, she has accepted it.

I am a step further on in the process of female liberation. My generation have opportunities that were never considered for my mother. We are allowed to be artists, but we have to choose one thing or another. To be an artist or a mother. I need both. Being a mother is an important part of my person. I cannot forsake one for the other. This is my struggle. The dreadful conflict between my creativity and my family, having to always want for some time (that precious wonderful thing) to be my own. To condense creativity into short sharp bursts of energy. And not to allow that craziness of fragmented thought and repressed energy to control me completely.

The positive side of this struggle is the realisation that being an artist is a privilege, and that art is much more than an armchair for the ego. Good art will come from artists freed from having to always bolster the self-image. I could write on and on about being an artist and a mother. It is my life. The image we have of an artist can never be combined with that of a mother. This seems to be one of the more persistent myths we live with.

I have to believe that it is possible to be active as a mother and as an artist simultaneously. Not in a way that separates my life into compartments, but in an interrelating and reciprocal way. Each of value to the other.

<i>Motherwork I</i>	1980	etching	510 x 410	\$50
<i>Motherwork II</i>	1980	etching	510 x 410	\$50
<i>Motherwork III</i>	1980	etching	510 x 410	\$50

### Anna Keir

The feelings in these drawings had been with me all my life. The need/ability to draw them out came from reading *My Mother, Myself*, from talks with a friend who was visually working out his feelings about his family, and from being in Europe — an isolation from previous influences which made those influences frighteningly clear.

The dollhouse piece uses something made with love as a basis for an exploration/celebration of my childhood environment and its shifts between fantasy and reality.

1	untitled	1980	pencil	240 x 300	\$50
2	untitled	1980	pencil	240 x 300	\$50
3	untitled	1980	pencil	240 x 300	\$50
4	untitled	1980	pencil	240 x 300	\$50
5	<i>Mother, child &amp; aunt</i>	1980	pencil	240 x 300	\$50
6	<i>Mother, child &amp; aunt</i>	1980	pencil	(200 x 120) x 2	\$50
7	Dollshouse	1980	painted wood	620 x 655 x 555	NFS

### Claudia Pond Eyley

Born Matamata, 1942					
<i>Mothers and grandmothers</i>	1981	collage	810 x 710	NFS	

### Barbara Strathdee

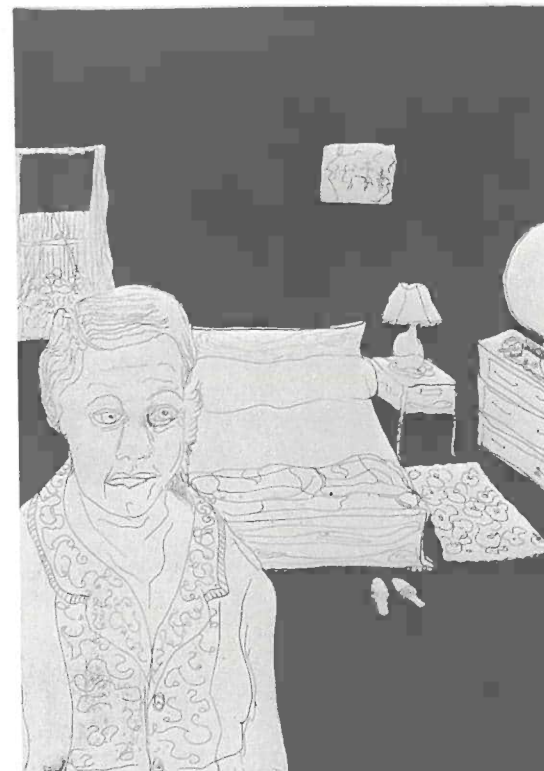
This painting was born of a moment of nostalgia during a Trieste winter. My mother and the sunshine represented home for this expatriate. Her affection dominates the shadows.

<i>Woman with cup of tea</i> (mother of artist)	1972	acrylic on plywood	800 x 700	NFS
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### Tiffany Thornley

*A picture of a landscape for my mother* was done because my mother finds my work quite painful, and always wants to know why I don't do more beautiful pictures.

1	<i>Old photos</i>	1980	line etching & aquatint, handcoloured	160 x 160	\$60
2	<i>Mother and father</i>	1980	line etching & aquatint	295 x 210	\$60
3	<i>A picture of a landscape for my mother</i>	1980	line etching, handcoloured	170 x 205	\$45
4	<i>Freida</i> (mother of artist)	1979	line etching	330 x 235	\$50



**Tiffany Thornley**  
*Freida* (mother of the artist) 1979 line etching 330 x 235

## Robin White

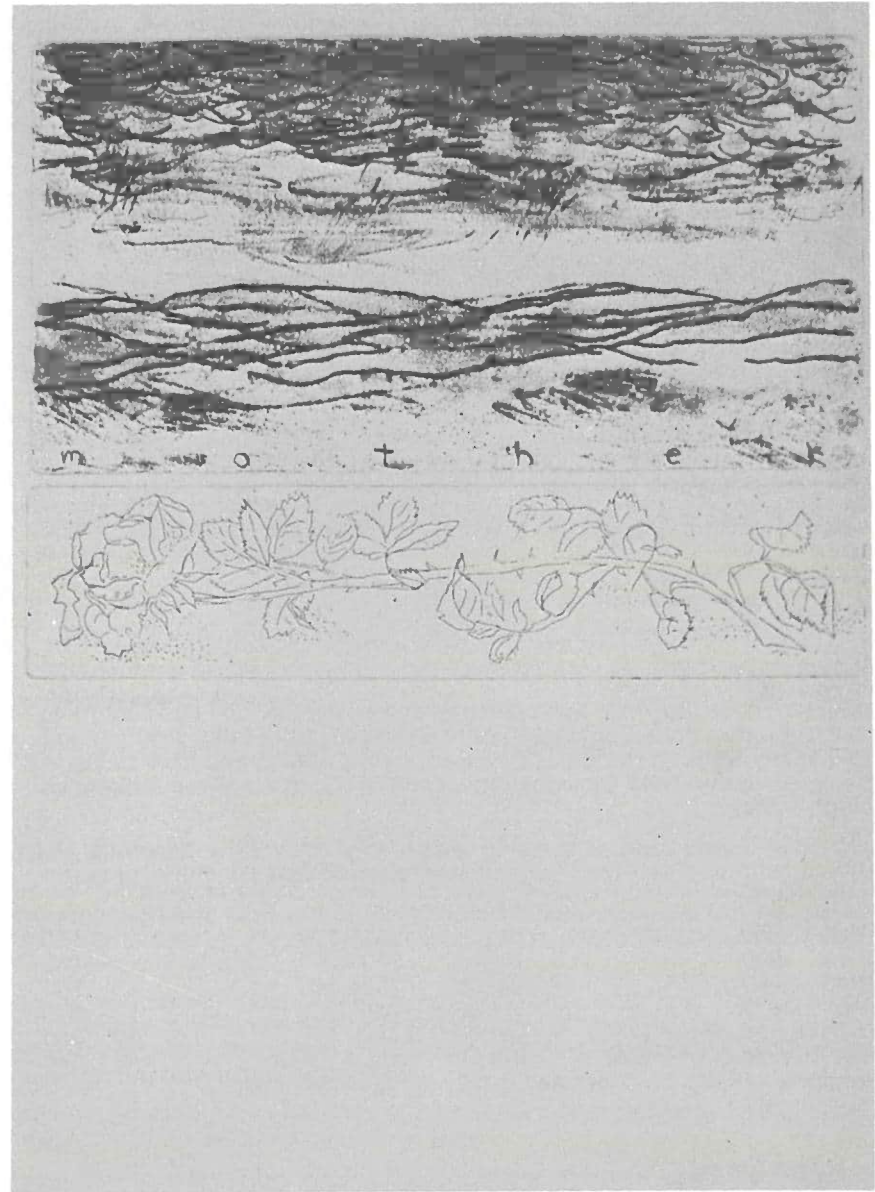
*Florence at Harbour Cone* "is about my mother — it is also about a generation that went through two wars and a depression. My mother is a hardworking, resourceful person. She accepts her station of work and servitude, not by choice, but as if it were conferred upon her, and willingly dons her uniform, her white apron. The depression taught a harsh lesson in economy, and my mother learnt to make do with next to nothing. Her boast has always been that the kids were neat and tidy and clean, even if their dresses were made from the cheapest calico, and their school-bags were made from sugarcane bags."

My mother also comes from a family who were among the early English pioneers to this country. They attacked the land with great zeal and energy, and rather overdid it. Here, in this painting, the hills have been cleared, trimmed and polished. Everything is in order and after a lifetime of hard slog it is good to be able to sit down, relax (just a little), and say, 'Well, I've done my bit.'"

*Islands, vol. 3 no. 4, 1974 p 388*

*Florence at Harbour Cone* 1974

oil on canvas 915 x 609  
lent by the Robert McDougall Gallery



Linda James  
*Motherwork I* 1980

etching 510 x 410

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### **A Shift of Emphasis**

Do not come too close, nor touch  
the swollen knot  
that tightens round  
my multiplicities of pain;  
that scream that flies about the room  
is mine. I allowed it out.

Keep off. Join the mice in nice  
white uniforms running about  
with their routines.

It happens here. All my eyes glare,  
a thousand fists fight  
in the raging darkness of my body —  
this smothered yell  
comes to kill.

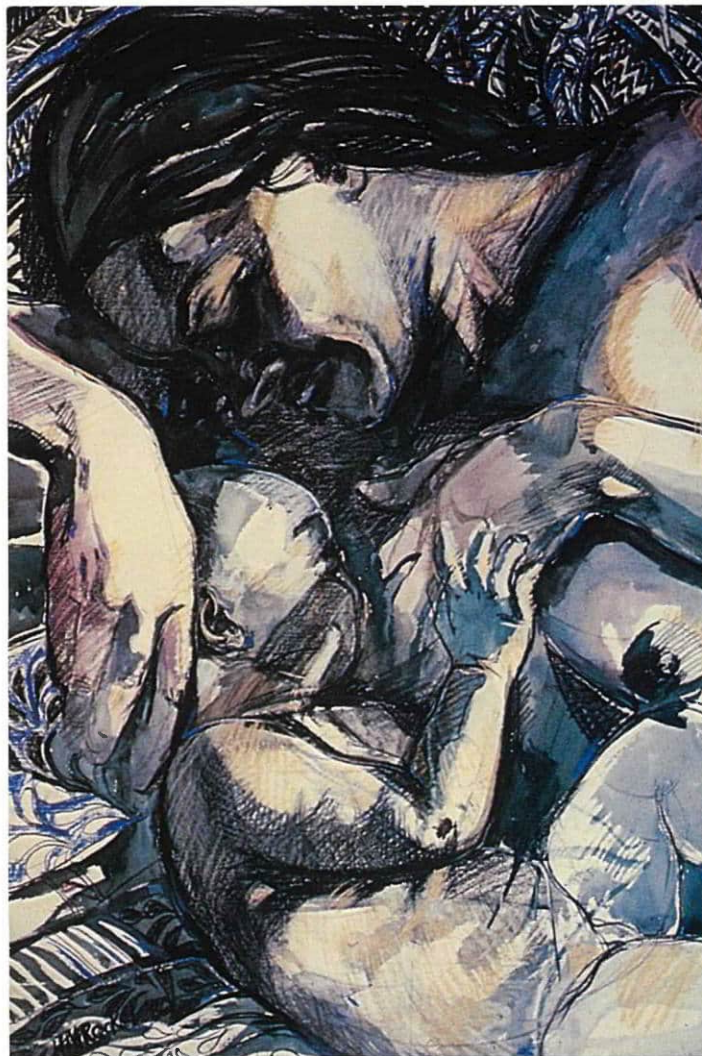
Look out! It cracks me open, it is  
the axe that splits the skull —

the knot of blood is cut.

I am broken, scattered,  
fragments of me melt and flow —  
I am not here; gravity's red centre  
has slipped; off course, I roll about  
like wind-blown eggshells.

Cradled in the world's lap lies instead  
a tiny grey-faced rag of flesh  
with a cry as thin as muslin,  
and all the power to possess the earth  
curled up behind the blindness of its eyes.

**Lauris Edmond**



**HELEN ROCKEL**

Contact 1980

Charcoal and Watercolour

66 x 99cm

## Where Was I Born?

(the children speak)

Why should  
a baby  
resemble  
a buried etruscan  
drunk & lolling on his tomb  
head heavy on the stem  
eyes lidded  
opaque  
mouth open  
black,  
    if not because  
    the Etruscan  
has just been born?

from series 'Pupereal', Wellington 1973

in the garden  
plants push inexorably  
& before the flowers open  
are silent, as heavy with un  
flowering as a baby is  
rapt in mystery before  
awareness dawns,  
smiling

from series 'Felix', Dunedin 1979.

in an orange my mother was eating  
in a mirror  
in a hot fire  
in my gym  
in my brain  
in your hat  
in mummys washing  
in that spoon  
in the telephone book  
nowhere  
in my bones  
inside your bones is soft mustard  
in my hair  
in the caketin  
everywhere  
in my mummy & daddy  
    I lived in their eyes  
in everyone I knew  
    I lived in their mouth  
I lived in my mummys tummy  
    & lived on her food

I was born in a pear  
    which was never eaten

in God & in the earth &  
in the grass & everywhere

thats what I said

then we must have seen  
    ourselves being born

what was I like?

you had the shape of an elephant  
    & the shape of a circle.

**this poem resembling ancient riddling poems  
is the dialogue transcribed as spoken by  
Maggie & Charles, aged 5.**

Joanna Paul

## MADONNAS OR HEROES? A Reappraisal of the Mythic Models of Motherhood

### The Message of the Madonna

When I think of mothers in art it is pictures of the madonna which most readily come to my mind. The traditional image of the holy mother and child is a visual cliché which is repeated from the old masters to the Christmas card makers, on postage stamps and even on election pamphlets. The shape of the mother and child image, downturned head and enveloping arms, are so universally familiar that they can be evoked by the simplest sketch of curving lines.

Look closely at any classic madonna. These images are remarkably consistent. The way the madonna is depicted expresses the qualities and characteristics made sacred by the holy mother, who is an idealisation of motherhood as it is understood in Western society.

In those paintings I know best, the madonna is holding the child. The baby may be quite active, but she is invariably calm and passive. Her face, either turned down to the child or staring into the distance with a look of inner contemplation, shows very little emotion, only an expression of patient tenderness and concern. She seems cut off from the world around her, absorbed in the child in her arms. Her head is inclined towards him and her arms provide shelter and support. Yet there is also distance. We feel no current of warmth and feeling, none of the sensuality a real mother experiences from her baby. We are left with the impression that she has no feelings of her own, no worries, anxieties or challenges, in fact no individuality at all, but that her whole being has been reduced to providing a response to the needs of the male child she has borne.

**“She is reduced to an extension of her own womb, providing for and protecting the child as he grows.”**

This image, so often repeated, conveys very deep and powerful messages about the state of motherhood it idealises. The inclination of the madonna's head, and her devoted expression, stress that the whole concern of the mother is her child. Her happiness is his happiness, and he is the extent of her involvement in the world. Her stance emphasises that her task is to support, protect and nurture this growing male child. She holds him in her arms or on her knee, or suckles him at her breast, and her arms form a sheltering circle in which he is safe. She is reduced to an extension of her own womb, providing for and protecting the child as he grows. She has no concerns outside those of her child, no right to any feelings of her own. He provides her with her reason to be.

This idealisation we see so often repeated in the madonna image presents the mother as a self-denying woman, providing an ever-patient response to the needs of her small male child. It is a static idealisation of a set of qualities that are associated in our minds with motherhood. The child is always small, so we do not see the mother's response to the changing demands of a growing youngster, and she never has more than one child, so she is never seen balancing the conflicting demands of a whole family. Motherhood is known as a state, a condition, not a way of life.

In fact, the qualities made sacred by the madonna are an idealisation of the mother from the child's point of view. They are the qualities **expected** of a mother, not





those which enable a woman to cope best with the experience of **being** a mother. The madonna as she is presented in art is not a woman at all! She is a static personalisation of a culturally prescribed condition, she is a sacred model, a goddess. Being a mother is not a static condition, but a way of life, a process.

What then is the important of the message of the madonna to real mothers? Could we not simply dismiss it as a cluster of qualities associated with the mother of God which have little relevance to women today?

### The Ideal Mother in Today's Society

If we look closely at the way people think and feel about motherhood we find she cannot so easily be dismissed. The same qualities we find associated with the madonna emerge as the deeply felt meanings about motherhood which govern the expectations people have of women with children. The madonna is a figure who symbolises and articulates these meanings, a "mythic mother," a model which demonstrates the qualities our society expects of all mothers. For it is in myth that we find the blueprint for those deep, unconscious meanings which are the moving force of our culture, and by examining myth we can start to understand why society works as it does, and even begin to change it.

The mythic mother we see in the madonna images is the product of our male-dominated society's expectations of its mothers. The mother is the vessel who bears the man. But as such, it is doubtful whether she is an appropriate model for a real mother facing the actual challenges of bearing and rearing children. To face the demands of a growing family while trying to model oneself on a static and superhuman ideal is surely making a hard task harder.

**"The mythic mother we see in the madonna is the product of our male dominated society's expectations of its mothers. The mother is the vessel who bears the man."**

How strong, then, is this ideal? Is its influence really so powerful? In my own study of the meanings of motherhood in our society I have found that the qualities of self denial and patience we see visually presented in the madonna paintings are the same qualities it is felt a good mother should display.

For example, look at this novelist's description of his perfect mother:

1 *"Elizabeth had already, he said, proved herself an ideal mother, giving the children that precious feeling of being devotedly loved by a divinely wise and generous being, yet fostering their independence and making no greedy emotional claims on them."*

This could almost be a description of the madonna herself, with her divine wisdom and devoted yet entirely undemanding love. It is certainly a superhuman ideal. But this is a male novelist's view, and was written nearly 40 years ago. Are today's expectations the same?

In the course of my research, I asked women from a wide range of backgrounds what they thought a good mother was like, and the replies I received were similar:

*"Somebody who cares about her children. She thinks about her children first and herself second."*



*"You have to forget yourself for a start and give your whole self to your husband and children. If you always put your family before yourself, you'd be a good mother."*

If the women I spoke with found fault with themselves as mothers, it was for not living up to the "madonna" ideal of patience -

*"I think I could be better, more patient with the children..."*

Others described themselves as "selfish" for wanting a little time on their own, or an interest outside the home. I concluded that the myth of motherhood still exerts a strong influence over women today.

## Rejecting the Myth

One thing that interested me deeply, however, was my discovery that not all these women wanted to be "good mothers" in the traditional sense. They recognised the madonna ideal, but told me it was not for them. They set themselves other goals, combining their response to their family's needs with their own self development. None of these mothers felt this failure to live up to the traditional standard of good motherhood was bad for their children, and in fact some felt it was better for them. They made a distinction between being a good mother according to social prescription, and good mothering. As one woman put it:

*"No, I don't think I'm a good mother. But then, I don't think it's good for the kids. They have to learn that parents are only human. If you do everything for them, they don't learn to help."*

Like these mothers, I question whether self-denying patience idealised in the madonna is always helpful to either a mother or her children in the day to day process of motherhood. For it must be stressed that motherhood is a process, not a condition. Being a mother involves a continuing response to the ever-changing demands with a constant stance of patience and self-denial may be unhelpful, even impossible.

**"...I question whether the self-denying patience idealised in the madonna is always helpful to either a mother or her children in the day to day process of motherhood."**

For example, children need to have boundaries defined for them, boundaries which mark the limits of acceptable behaviour beyond which they know they cannot go. Though some two- and three-year-olds may accept these boundaries when defined by gentle firmness and patient repetition, there are other children who need to have boundaries defined by anger, even conflict, and who will push and push at their mother's tolerance until she breaks and loses her temper. If this mother is trying to live up to an ideal of patience, she will feel guilt and failure at having flown into a rage, yet her anger may have been the response the child needed.

A mother who succeeds in being always patient and controlled, on the other hand, may leave her children feeling inadequate for their own inability to control their emotions.

And what happens to all those feelings "good" mothers suppress beneath the madonna-mask of self-denial? Do they perhaps surface when the children mature as an over demanding middle age? I would question too whether a mother who lives up to the self-denying ideal is in fact the most appropriate role model for

daughters growing up today. If we want the next generation of women to take their place in an equal society, we must show them examples of leadership, energy and initiative, not self-effacing passivity.

But though as women we may increasingly reject this old ideal in our own lives, it remains in our society's expectations of mothers, and conditions the demands made of them.

**"...if we are looking for a new mythic model for today's mothers I suggest it is the hero who is the most appropriate."**

This was brought home to me in the course of recent research into the hospital care of children. Today, mothers are usually encouraged to accompany their children to hospital and remain with them there. When a child needs highly specialised treatment such as heart surgery, it may mean hospitalisation in another city. Specialists recommending such transfers assume that whatever the 'social' inconvenience and financial cost of such a transfer, every sacrifice will be made in the interests of this child, and it is assumed that the mother will stay with the child, often for a period of weeks, setting all other demands aside.

Listening to these specialists I came to the conclusion that they perceived the situation according to the 'madonna' model of one mother/one child. They did not confront the situation of conflict between the urgent needs of the critically sick child and the equally urgent needs of other children in the family.

According to the assumptions of many experts, medical, educational and others, a mother is expected to be totally available to each of her children, and this expectation can lead to intolerable stress, for which the mother-goddess model provides no helpful guidelines at all.

## Mothers as Heroes

I believe the time has come for us to re-think the meanings of motherhood and to reject the passive, self denying mother goddess, as her example is simply not relevant to the day to day business of mothering. As I have said, real mothering is not a static condition but a task. Caring for small and growing children is a process of response to changing demands. As the children present new challenges their mother must adapt to cope. Above all, it is hard physical work. There is nothing passive about it. And to cope with this work and these ever changing challenges while trying to live up to a super-human model of motherly behaviour is nothing short of heroic. I use the word in its literal sense; for if we are looking for a new mythic model for today's mothers I suggest it is the hero who is the most appropriate.

The mythic figure of the hero, the man who strives to be more than a man, is a model for all those who seek to be something greater than they are, who follow a super-human goal. It is not a specifically male model. In the old myths we find woman-heroes such as Ceres, who made the journey to Hades in search of her lost daughter, or Innana in Babylonian mythology, who descended to the underworld, was destroyed there, and reborn. But in our society where only men are expected to live active, challenging lives, the feminine term, heroine, has been distorted and no longer conveys the same meaning. Because of this, I prefer to talk of woman-heroes.

I want to suggest that we start thinking of mothers as heroes. For if we compare the mythic hero's story and the experiences of motherhood, we find some surprising similarities.

### The Heroic Quest: Journey of Initiation

The mythic hero is not the personification of a set of values as is the madonna. Rather, he is recognised by what he does. The heart of the hero's experience is the quest. The hero is the man or woman who turns from the safe, familiar everyday world and journeys into the unknown, into the mythical "other world" of supernatural challenges and magical possibilities. The gate to the other world is in

**"...in our society, the experience of becoming a mother, of giving birth, has many of the qualities of an initiation."**

itself an ordeal, and the journey presents a further series of tests and ordeals the hero must pass through. The heroic goal is always something infinitely precious, universally valuable. In many myths it is man's immortality that is sought. Frequently this goal, though grasped, is lost, because the hero, despite those godlike aspirations, is only human after all.

Heroes' adventures are cycles of growth during which their calibre is tested and extended, and from which they emerge, even if the impossible goal has not been achieved, greater and wiser people.

It is in fact a mythic journey of initiation, expressing in story the structure of all rites of passage, - separation - initiation - return, or death, experience of the other world, and rebirth, and thus symbolically articulating our human aspiration to triumph over our mortality, to be superhuman.

### The Mother's Heroic Quest

How can we compare the mother's experience to the hero's initiatory journey? She goes on no quest, faces no heroic adventures, but lives in the home which is the very symbol of the safe, civilised world the hero must leave behind.

Yet in our society, the experience of becoming a mother, of giving birth, has many of the qualities of an initiation. Like the initiate, the mother-to-be is separated from the familiar, everyday world in the alien environment of the hospital. Here, her sense of her own identity is reduced in that to those around her she is "just another woman in labour." Just as the initiate must undergo an ordeal without flinching, so the mother is expected to accept the pain of labour. Finally, after a period of separation, both mother and initiate are "reborn" to the ordinary world, but with a new identity, a new "self" - the initiate as a full member of society, the woman as a mother.

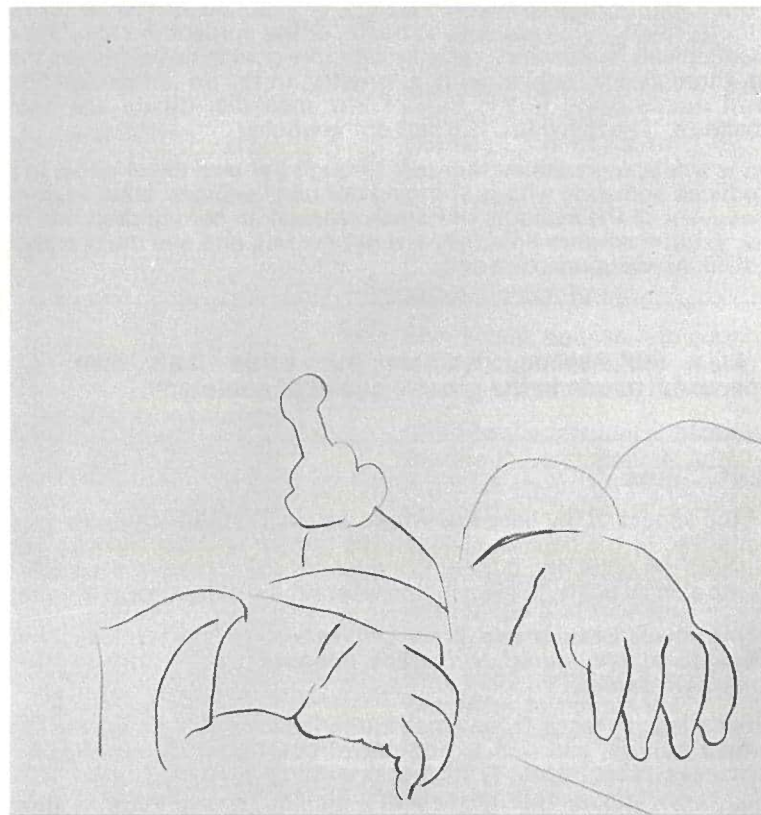
So the experience of becoming a mother can be seen metaphorically as a hero's journey, following the symbolic patterns of initiation involving separation, which is a symbolic death of the old self, followed by a resurrection or rebirth in a new identity. It is part of the strange irony of the experience that while going through this symbolic rebirth, the mother is at the same time undergoing the physical act from which this symbol derives, that of childbirth.

But childbirth is only the opening challenge for the hero-mother. The parallel between the mother's task and the hero's quest does not end there. The mother,

confronted with a dependant, demanding new life faces, as does the hero, a time of continuing trials:

*"The original departure into the land of trials represented only the beginning of the long and really perilous path of initiating conquests and moments of illumination. Dragons have now to be slain and surprising barriers passed — again and again and again."*

2



Joanna Paul *Felix sleeping III* 1980

conte 380 x 457

The trials of the mother, humble though they may be, are all tests of her self-sacrifice. If her original "initiation" on becoming a mother has reduced the demands of her old, individualist self in favour of dedication to the demands of the child, the ongoing processes of infant care ensure that her old ego is not allowed to reassert itself. The needs of the infant take precedence over the mother's physical requirements, the most tested being her need for rest. In the first years of the child's life, the mother is always tired, frequently exhausted, yet can never escape from responsibility. As the child grows, its yet unsocialised will opposing hers gives it the aspect of a dragon that can only be conquered with patience, the supreme effort in self-denial, the qualities of the divine, mother goddess model which she, as hero is striving to live up to.

Of course, there are rewards. The joy a mother can find in her relationship with her child is the equivalent of the hero's moments of ecstasy, of transcendent insight. The reward for both heroes and mothers is profound and very real, enough to tempt some heroes to stay forever in the sacred land, and some women to continue having babies.

### Heroic Wisdom

As I have said above, the goal of the hero's quest is usually man's immortality, and this goal is often lost through human weakness or mischance - the fantail cannot contain his mirth, and Maui is crushed to death, or the serpent devours the magic plant while Gilgamesh is sleeping. Yet although this goal is not achieved the hero is rewarded through his failure with a greater truth, an understanding and acceptance of man's place in the flux of life: men die, others are born, but humanity continues. The individual is a part of the whole.

This wisdom is available to the mother too, through her own experience. In giving birth she produces someone who is "her and not her," self and other in one. Birth is the original event of the symbols of human renewal. In her children, the mother will continue, yet at the same time they are not herself, and she must accept that she as an individual will come to an end.

"Like the heroes, mothers put aside their own personal needs in the greater cause of society."

### Order out of Chaos

But perhaps the aspect of the hero role where we can find the strongest parallel in motherhood is that of the hero as civiliser, the bringer of order out of chaos. The mythic battles of the gods, the cosmic conquest of the forces of disorder, are re-fought daily, on a small scale, in every home where the children are still young.

- 3      *"Into every culture and every civilisation, year after year, hoards of uncultured barbarians descend in the form of newborn babies."*

It is the mother's task to teach these small barbarians the categories and ordering systems of their culture, and it is a long drawn out, heroic struggle. The home, where this process takes place, is in fact a cultural system. Things have their proper place, is in fact a cultural system. Things have their proper places, associated with their appropriate uses, and their symbolic meanings. But as the yet uncultured child becomes mobile she or he will arbitrarily act to undo this order and bring about a state of chaos within the home. Things are taken from their places, that which is not meant for eating is eaten, that which is valuable is spoilt or destroyed. The order of the home is continually under attack and the mother feels she must constantly fight to preserve it; her identity as a member of her culture must be reasserted in the face of the child's activities by the reordering of the house, the everlasting tidying up. The home, instead of providing a place of rest and protection is transformed into the ancient battleground of order and chaos where the mother/hero as she picks up the toys or scrapes the jammy toast off the carpet, is fighting singlehanded in the cause of "culture".

### The Need for Revaluation

We live in a culture where motherhood is devalued, and where the day to day tasks of the carers of small children are trivialised. The whole complex business of

child rearing is confined to the domestic, and defined as unimportant and boring by those not involved in it. Significantly, it is only when motherhood is separated from the work it involves and presented as a passive state, as we have seen it in the madonna images, that it is invested with the dignity of a cultural symbol.

I have tried in this exploration of the heroic nature of the mother's task, to shake off this triviality and to offer a revaluation of motherhood, not as a condition, but as a way of life. Like the heroes, mothers put aside their own personal needs in the greater cause of our society; they confront the challenge of producing the new generation. They undertake the more than human task of ensuring the renewal and continuation of the culture. All this in a cultural framework which labels their task as trivial, their sacrifices as fulfilment. It is time the mother's task was re-examined and accorded the respect it deserves. It is up to those women who have the vision to see past the old myth and strip it of its power to forge, through their art or writing, or the patterns of their own lives, a new myth of heroic motherhood.

**Robin McKinlay**

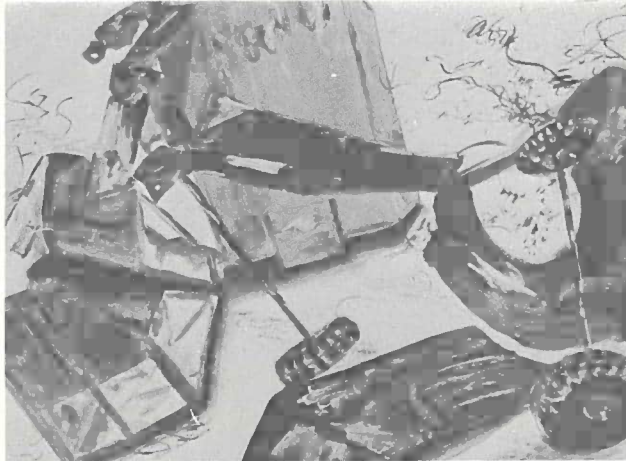
### Notes

- 1 .      *Sirius* by Olaf Stapleton, first published 1944.
- 2 .      Joseph Campbell: *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Panther Books 1949.
- 3 .      P. Bonannan: *Social Anthropology*. Holt Rinehart & Winston 1963.

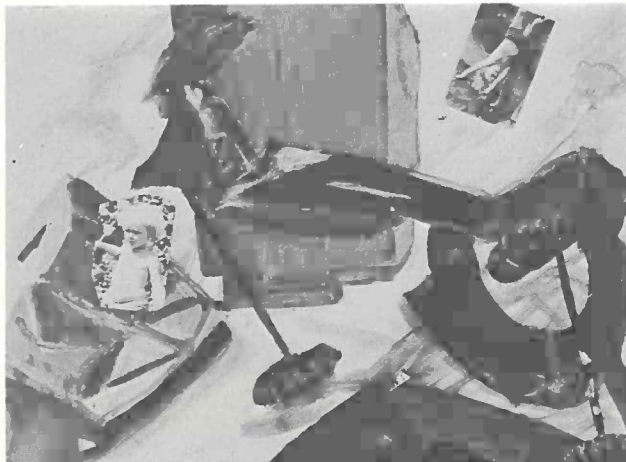
## Juliet Batten

The *Broken Truck* paintings came out of period of intense warfare with my 8 year old son. The old truck my father had lovingly restored for him lay mangled, run over on the driveway. Beyond repair. Through painting the anger, the despair, a truce was reached.

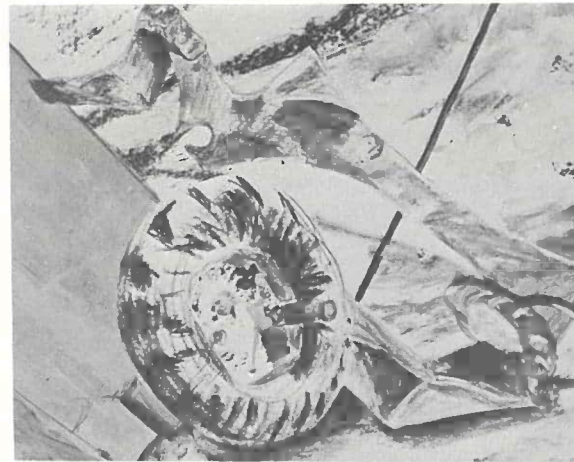
<i>Broken Truck I</i>	1979	acrylic on paper	552 x 750	\$200
<i>Broken Truck II</i>	1979	acrylic on paper with collage	552 x 750	NFS
<i>Broken Truck III</i>	1979	acrylic on paper with collage	552 x 750	NFS
<i>Nurturing</i>	1980	construction	470 x 640 x 700	NFS



*Broken truck I* 1979 acrylic on paper



*Broken truck II* 1979 acrylic on paper with collage



*Broken truck III* 1979 acrylic on paper with collage

## Mother/Child

As the velvet of our days  
Runs its reassuring course,  
Suddenly  
Snarl, jag, barbed wire  
Concealed/revealed, tears  
The flesh. Velvet opens  
On the genealogies of  
Our past:

Yowling 3 a.m. babe with  
Screaming ears, squirms,  
Kicks his comforter.

She, sickly, sunken into couch;  
Hit by tough kid; hit.  
Her limp arms hang, numb.

Child bashed; tower of blocks  
Battered; Babel, babble, here  
It comes again, giving birth  
To guilt.

You, suckling at the nipple  
Of my worth; soft mouth  
With fangs that bite and  
Grind, cut off the flow.

You, become photo in pocket  
Crackling as I circle the  
Globe and return again  
To guilt.

At night now you want the lights  
Out, while we kiss and stay  
Close; here the moment, love  
Snuggled in the dark, velvet  
Running through our days;  
Let us hold to this:  
Turn out the lights on the  
Genealogies of the past.

**Juliet Batten**

## Jo Cornwall

<i>I move, I am surrounded</i>	1980	reverse applique	575 x 720	\$75
<i>Mothers are...</i>	1980	wall quilt	1830 x 1060	\$800

## Allie Eagle

1 untitled	1981	watercolour	720 x 535	\$200
2 untitled	1981	watercolour	720 x 535	\$200

## Jacqueline Fahey

<i>My skirts in your ..... room!</i>	1980	oil on board	1210 x 975	\$600
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### Layer of Stars

#### (to my daughter, Mary)

Layers of stars littered  
the sky in frozen brilliance:  
tonight, a young girl, face  
pale as the distant moon  
left this house, her string  
bag stuffed with night things.

Anger streamed from her hair  
and flowed in her wake;  
It was not a moment too soon —  
it was the eleventh hour,  
a storm was about to break.

ii

From her bruised eyes  
we see she is a woman, now,  
and not the child who once  
swept from the house  
with somewhere to go.  
Now she sits, leaning  
on her father's arm —  
too quiescent.  
We made sure  
she had no reason for hating  
but it is there,  
bruising her eyes from inside  
and she must speak it  
or never love again.

## Meg Campbell

### Pact For Mother and Teenager

Girl, we've quarrelled  
in a motel in a strange town.  
It's 2 a.m. and tomorrow  
I'm due to drive north all day  
on the holiday we've planned  
this six months past.  
If you were a lover,  
I'd have thrown you out;  
if you were your father,  
I might have had a bitter-sweet  
reconciliation. But as you are  
my child, I watch you sleep  
tangled in bedsheets and tearstains,  
and try to plan the shortest way  
out of town.

Fiona Kidman



Jacqueline Fahey *My skirts in your ..... room!* 1980 oil on board 1210 x 975

## Di Ffrench

Three fibre glass vessels, shaped to the contours of a woman's stomach:

- (1) The tight young curves of a young girl — her growing awareness of the womb (the inner shape) — is the daughter. Everyone who is woman is aware of the daughter and the mother.
- (2) The pregnancy — mother, fuller womb contours, movement of the baby's head.
- (3) The woman — last stage, towards death.

The eternal cycle becomes a trinity. Mother, daughter, woman.

Water is level with the edges, a meniscus, and is symbolic of life. Mirror image photographs seen through water are two sides of the personality relating to mother and daughter. Water has density and the women are watching eternally through this. They become ghosts who are what has gone before and what will inevitably come after. Fibre glass is a resilient material which in this work has the translucence of a membrane filled with water.

*Three vessels — Mother, Daughter, Woman* 1980 fibre glass/water  
 photograph construction NFS

## Robin McKinlay

My own experience of motherhood has been one of deep ambivalence; the demands of childcare imposed acutely felt constraints on my freedom to be myself, to develop according to my personal needs, but anger at these constraints conflicted with the profound and complex satisfactions I found in my children. In the 14 years since I became a mother my energies have been directed to resolving this personal conflict; through photography, I found personal enrichment in exploring my experience as a mother and in celebrating my relationship with my children. More recently, I am confronting the conflict on a broader level, exploring the meanings of motherhood in our society in the preparation of a Ph.D thesis.

*Mothering* 1978/79 photographic series \$78  
*My daughter Anna* 1978 photograph \$35

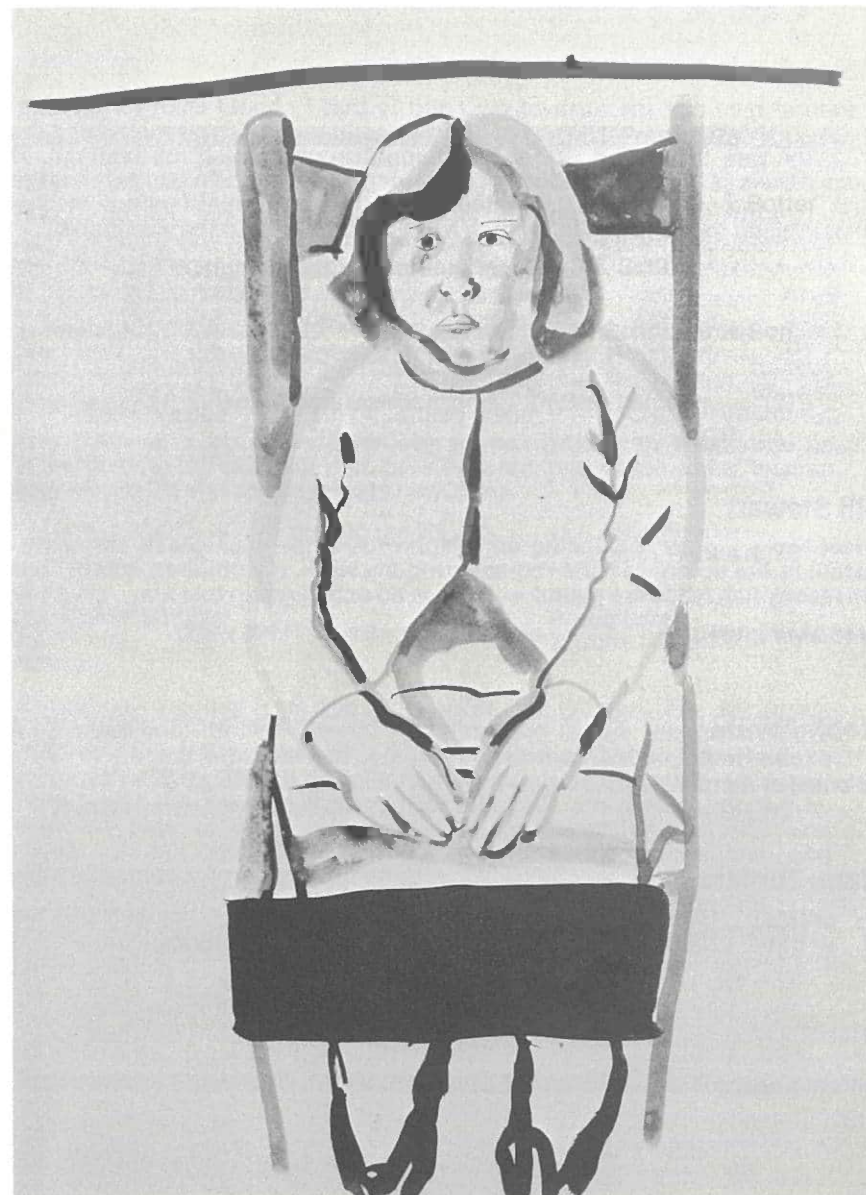
## Joanna Paul

### Magdalena

1	<i>The beautiful beast devouring the days</i>	1974	oil on board	435 x 305	\$150
2	<i>Magdalena's things</i>	1974	conte drawing	430 x 357	\$100
3	<i>Black doll</i>	1974	oil on board	360 x 305	\$120
4	<i>Wooden toy</i>	1974	acrylic on paper	229 x 304	\$100
5	<i>Magdalena at 7</i>	1980	ink drawing	760 x 560	\$130

### Felix

<i>Felix sleeping I</i>	1980	conte	380 x 457	\$100
<i>Felix sleeping II</i>	1980	conte	380 x 457	\$100
<i>Felix sleeping III</i>	1980	conte	380 x 457	\$100
<i>Felix' language: A</i>	1980	colour xerox	280 x 210	\$15
<i>Felix' language: B</i>	1980	colour xerox	280 x 210	\$15
<i>Felix' language: C</i>	1980	colour xerox	280 x 210	\$15



Joanna Paul *Magdalena at 7* 1980 ink drawing 760 x 560

## Claudia Pond Eyley

*Woman with a child* 1979/80 acrylic on canvas 1310 x 950 \$500

## Helen Rockel

A natural result of the birth of my child is that I should wish to express my feelings about what has occurred. My immediate reaction on realising I was pregnant was to allow a drawing to spontaneously detail my feelings. Then came drawings of the awareness of a growing child, the pain and exhilaration of birth, and the experience of my child. Given the strength of feelings involved, I am surprised that this has been such a neglected theme in the visual arts.

1	<i>Awareness</i>	1979	watercolour and pencil	350 x 240	NFS
2	<i>Birth</i>	1980	pencil	350 x 510	NFS
3	<i>Birth</i>	1980	watercolour and pencil	510 x 390	NFS
4	<i>Unity</i>	1980	watercolour	390 x 510	NFS
5	<i>Contact</i>	1980	mixed media	990 x 660	NFS
6	<i>Contact</i>	1980	mixed media	990 x 660	NFS
7	<i>Continuity</i>	1980	mixed media	590 x 430 x 2	NFS

## Jill Stewart

I feel like a juggler, balancing on a high-wire, while ceaselessly throwing and catching the spinning balls representing my work, my children and my sanity. Necessity has made me skilful — there is no safety-net in real life.

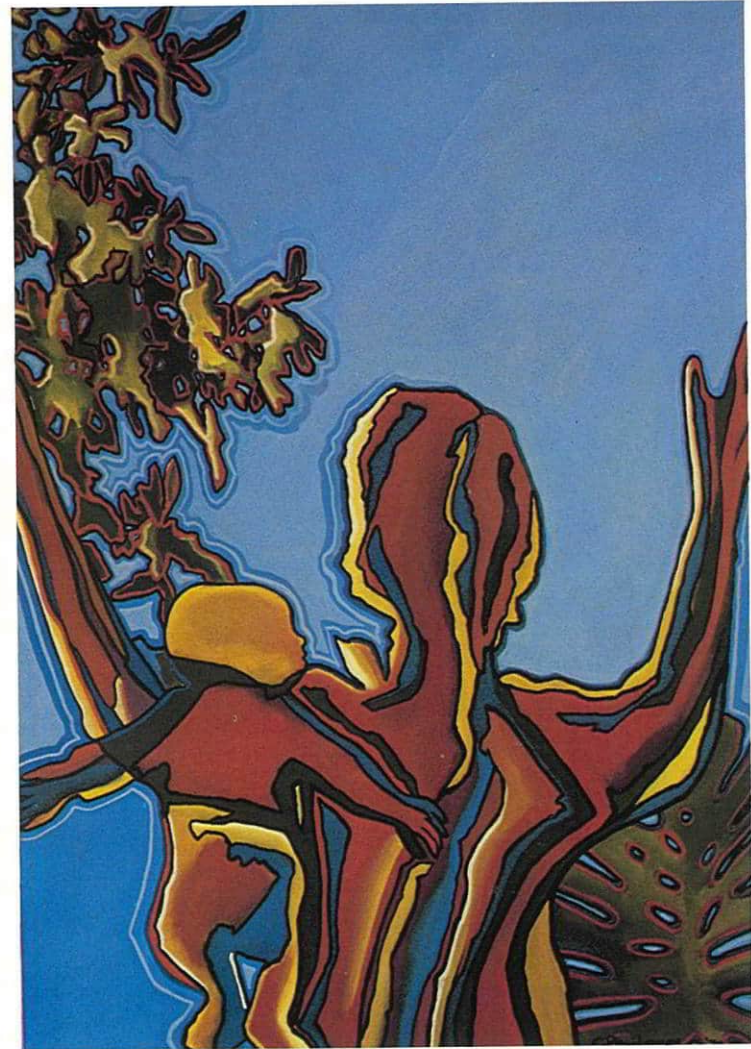
*Madonna* 1980 acrylic on canvas 1190 x 880 \$400

## Robin White

*Michael at home* 1978 screenprint 665 x 375  
lent by the Peter McLeavey Gallery

## Jane Zusters

1	untitled	1980	pencil	670 x 1010	\$150
2	untitled	1980	construction, clay/wood/fabric		\$200



Claudia Pond Eyley *Woman with a child* 1979/80 acrylic on canvas 1310 x 950



## WHY A WOMEN'S GALLERY?

Women artists have been seen to have been in the minority throughout history. Men have defined the human experience through their art and women have often felt excluded. Men have also defined the female experience — we have seen ourselves through men's eyes, whether it be the famous female characters of literature, the celebration of the virgin mother in our religion or the female nudes painted by men throughout history.

Art must express the whole person, but all too often women, in suppressing their femaleness, fail to express their wholeness.

When we undertake the task of breaking out of the images men have presented to us and exploring our exclusively female experience, then we become vulnerable. We uncover private and previously unexpressed areas of ourselves. We lack a positive tradition to encourage and confirm us in what we see. There are few women artists to endorse our new vision. The only tradition we have to draw on is one where women have been suppressed by a predominantly male culture.

This means that we need to withdraw and gain confirmation from each other before we are ready to announce our insights to the "outside world", i.e. our culture, which, despite the changes that have taken place, is still undoubtedly male dominated.

Hence at certain key moments men may be excluded from some event, not out of spite (as some would have it), but because we need to draw on the special advantages of being exclusively among women. An all women gathering makes the audience participants and includes everyone in our event. This separatism is not an end in itself, it is simply part of a process. The process is one of self-discovery, of building our traditions by going back to the roots of our experience.

In the end we hope to redefine not only what is female but also what is the human experience.

January, 1980

The Women's Gallery Inc. was established in January 1980 as a nationally oriented and public space for women's art. It grew out of a movement which had been developing on a regional basis since the early 1970s, paralleling the growth of the women's movement.

Founding members of the Women's Gallery were: *Juliet Batten, Fiona Clark, Allie Eagle, Marian Evans, Claudia Eyley, Keri Hulme, Rosemary Johnson Muller, Anna Keir, Bridie Lonie, Alison McLean, Heather McPherson, Joanna Paul, Nancy Peterson, Helen Rockel, Carole Stewart, Tiffany Thornley.*

The Gallery aims to support and promote women artists, to encourage all women to participate in the arts and to provide a feminist space where women can develop new skills and communicate new ideas.

The core group currently administering the Gallery as a collective is:

*Sharon Alston  
Mary Bailey  
Marian Evans/MacKay  
Louise Genet  
Anna Keir*

*Hilary King  
Marg Leniston  
Bridie Lonie  
Yvonne Williamson*

We have received funding from the *Committee on Women, The McKenzie Education Foundation, the NZ Literary Fund* and the *Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council* and employed a number of women under the Labour Department's Project Employment Programme and, through the Victoria University Students' Association, under the Student Summer Scheme. We are also supported by commission on sale of work, pledges, and the fundraising efforts and subscriptions of our members and generous friends. Donations and membership enquiries are always welcome.

For further information please write or call in to:

**The Women's Gallery**  
26 Harris Street Box 9600  
Wellington NZ Ph: 723-257

## RESOURCE LIST

### BOOKS ON MOTHERHOOD

<b>Author</b>	<b>Title &amp; Subject Material</b>	<b>Publishing Company</b>
Arms, Suzanne	<b>Immaculate Deception</b>	Bantam 1976
Arcana, Judith	<b>Our Mothers' Daughters</b>	Shameless Hussy Press 1979
Arnstein, Helen S.	<b>The Roots of Love</b> Concerned with love and feelings in the early years.	Unwin Paperbacks 1980
Ashdown-Sharp, P.	<b>A Guide to Pregnancy and Parenthood for Women on Their Own</b>	Vintage 1977
Association Choisir	<b>Abortion : The Bobigny Affair</b>	Wild & Woolley 1973
Baer, J.	<b>How to Be an Assertive (not aggressive) Woman</b>	Signet, N.A.L. 1976
Bernard, J.	<b>The Future of Motherhood</b> Sociological analysis of the feminist issues.	Penguin 1975
Baldwin, Raluma	<b>Special Delivery</b> The complete guide to informed birth.	Les Femmes 1979
Betts, Donni	<b>A Shared Journey</b> The birth of a child. Journal of personal experience.	Celestial Arts 1977
Billler, H. & Meredith, D.	<b>Father Power</b> Investigation of the need for greater participation by men in childraising.	Anchor Doubleday 1975
Bing, Elizabeth & Colman, Libby	<b>Having a Baby After Thirty</b>	Bantam 1980
Bing, Elizabeth	<b>Six Practical Lessons For An Easier Childbirth</b>	Bantam 1969
Bloom & Coburn	<b>The New Assertive Woman</b>	Dell 1976
Boston Women's Health Book Collective	<b>Our Bodies Ourselves</b>	Simon & Schulster 1976
Boston Women's Health Book Collective	<b>Ourselves and Our Children</b> A book by and for parents.	Penguin U.K. 1979
Brennan, B. & Heilman, J.	<b>A Complete Book of Midwifery</b>	Dutton 1977
Brewer, G. & T.	<b>What Every Pregnant Women Should Know</b>	Penguin 1979

Broner, E.M.	<b>Her Mothers</b>	Berkeley Books
Broner, E.M.	<b>A Weave of Women</b>	Holt Reinhart & Winston
Butler, Pamela	<b>Self Assertion for Women</b> A guide to becoming androgenous.	Harper & Row 1976
Caplan, F. & T.	<b>The Second Twelve Months of Life</b> Princeton Centre for infancy & early childhood.	Gosset & Durlap 1977
Carlson, Dale	<b>Girls are Equal Too</b> The Women's movement for teenagers.	Aladdin/Atheneum 1973
Carmichael, Carrie	<b>Non-sexist Childraising</b>	Beacon Press 1977
Cherry, Sheldon H.	<b>For Women of All Ages</b> A Gynaecologists guide to modern female health care.	Signet NAL 1980
Chesler, Phyllis	<b>With Child : A diary of Motherhood</b> Cheslers personal diary written whilst carrying her child.	T.Y. Crowell 1979
Davidson, Cathy N. Co-ed. Broner, E.M.	<b>The Lost Tradition</b> Mothers and Daughters in Literature.	Frederick Ungor
Davies, M.	<b>Maternity</b> Letters from working women.	Virago 1978
Davies, V.	<b>Signposts for Solos</b>	Shortland N.Z. 1978
Delliquandri & Breckenridge	<b>Motherhood</b> Helping yourself through the emotional and physical transitions of new motherhood.	Pocket 1979
Diagram Group	<b>A Woman's Body</b>	Paddington/Corgi
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Vida	<b>Our Right To Love</b> Sharing your lesbian identity with your child.	Prentice Hall 1978
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Weideger,	<b>Female Cycles</b>	Women's Press 1978
	<b>WOMENSPIRIT</b> A compilation of Poetry by a N.Z. Auckland Women's Poetry Group.	Womenspirit 1980
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Ehnriek, Barbara & English, Deidre	<b>For Her Own Good:</b> <b>150 years of advice to Mothers.</b>	Anchor Doubleday 1979
Greenberg, S.	<b>Right from the Start</b>	Houghton Mifflin
Shawyer, J & Ludbrook, R	<b>Everything A Single Parent</b> <b>Needs To Know</b>	Council for the Single Mother and Her Child, 1978. Third revised edition



## FILMS ON MOTHERS

- Comparisons: Four Families** Family life and infant care in 4 countries - France, India, Japan and Canada. Comments by Margaret Mead. Comparisons of status of mothers, methods and rituals of infant care, discipline.  
Canada 1958 — 60 min, 16 mm, B/W — National Film Library C490 g:
- Do I Have To Kill My Child** A disturbing drama about a young mother who bashes her baby. The woman who is lonely cannot cope with her domestic responsibilities and does not want her third baby. She desperately needs help, but her husband, mother, doctor and neighbour do not understand her until her baby ends up in hospital with a fractured skull.  
Aust 1976 — 54 min, 16 mm — Col. — National Film Library — C2991 t-g-s-p:
- Five Women, Five Births** A close look at the birth experience of five women.  
USA 1978 — 25 min, 16 mm — B/W — National Film Library — C3131 t-sp:
- Happiness Is** This film of animated cut-outs without words is a spoof of the self-styled child experts who are so caught up with their own views of what's best for the child, that they fail to see the infant's real problem.  
Canada 1972 — 7 min, 16 mm — Col. — Canadian High Commission — NFL — A4433 g:
- It Happens** A discussion film on teenage pregnancy.  
USA 1973 — 25 min, 16 mm — Col. — NFL — C2455 s-t-g:
- It's Not Enough** Considering the jobs available, most women work because they must. However there are other reasons.  
Canada 1974 — 15 min, 16 mm — Col. — Canadian High Commission:
- I Want To Be Joan** Six NZ Women of various ages and from different backgrounds express views on their role in today's society. They talk about their experiences as wives and mothers, and of their past failures and frustrations. They talk of how they have broken away from their stereotyped roles and found their own solutions and strengths as individuals in their own right.  
New Zealand 1977 — 34 min, 16 mm — Col. — NFL — D580 ss-t-g-sp:
- Kerry (Growing up Series)** Kerry, a 15 year old girl who leaves home and lives with her boyfriend. She becomes pregnant, and returns to her family. Considers the effects of this decision on her family, her boyfriend and herself and the baby.  
Australia 1977 — 10 min, 16 mm — Col. — NFL — A4522 t-sp:
- Laurette** A Portrayal of the circumstances of many young women, left alone to cope with family problems.  
Canada 1969 — 19 min, 16 mm — B/W — Canadian High Commission:
- Mothers and Daughters** Presents an informal look at the major differences between 5 young women and their mothers.  
USA 1970 — 53 min, 16 mm — B/W — NFL — C2104 ss-g:
- Mothers Are People** "The powers-that-be, know that women do work — but they turn a deaf ear": Discusses the dilemmas of a widow and a working mother.  
Canada 1974 — 7 min, 16 mm — Col. — Canadian High Commission:
- Mrs Case** Mrs Case is a deserted mother on welfare bringing up her 5 children alone in a big city. Here are the particular problems of a single parent and her encounters with welfare workers, her involvement in community affairs and her constant worry over medical and other expenses.  
Canada 1969 — 14 min, 16 mm — B/W — Canadian High Commission:
- Some of My Best Friends Are Women** Three NZ women representing different age groups, give some of their thoughts on and experiences of, their own lives. Made for International Women's Year.  
New Zealand 1975 — 33 min, 16 mm — Col. — NFL — C2648 ss-g:
- The Street** Inhabitants of a street in a new subdivision in Meadowbank, Auckland, are interviewed about their status, attitudes and way of life. Focuses particularly on the women and how they spend their days, their thoughts on marriage and children.  
New Zealand 1973 — 42 min, 16 mm — B/W — NFL — D588 t-g:
- Three Grandmothers** A glimpse into the lives of 3 grandmothers in an African village compound in Nigeria, in a hill city in Brazil and in a rural community in Manitoba. Each finds in her declining years abundant purpose, usefulness, wisdom and respect.  
Canada 1963 — 28 min, 16 mm — B/W — Canadian High Commission:
- The Waiting Game** A close personal observation of 3 couples during the period of late pregnancy, labour and delivery. The couples show their feelings, moods, worries and behaviour as they adjust to the situation. Shows the husbands involvement in the birth.  
United Kingdom 1978 — 31 min, 16 mm — Col. — NFL — C3149 sp:
- We Can't Afford to be Casual About Child Care** Examines the need for child care centres in NZ and the components of a good quality child care environment and programme to reach the pre-school child. Discusses the revision of regulations governing child care and financial problems.  
New Zealand 1978 — 27 min, 16 mm — Col. — NFL — C3193 t-g-sp:

**Wendy** Wendy discovers she is pregnant. Reveals some of her reactions and her mother's and boyfriend's to the situation. Wendy has her pregnancy terminated by abortion and expresses her feelings before and after the operation.  
(Growing up Series)

Australia 1977 — 10 min, 16 mm — Col. — NFL — A4524 t-sp:

**With A Little Help** The experiences of 3 young couples during a period of 6 weeks after the birth of their first child. Illustrates the major areas of adjustment needed when a new baby arrives and within its own context aims to show how these problems can be tackled and resolved.

United Kingdom 1978 — 34 min, 16 mm — Col. — NFL — D586 sp:

This list of Films has been compiled from the **Committee on Women** Film Cards. Refer to the General Bibliography for further material of your choice.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIES

**Women's Studies Bibliographies** Compiled by Rosemary Seymour Women's Studies Dept at Waikato University. Waikato University.  
— 1974 to 1977  
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— 1979

**Wimmin's Books** Unity Bookshop, Wellington. Unity Book shop Willis St, Wellington.

**Sister Write Catalogue** A mine of information, categorising subject material available in USA and UK. Incorporating literature and film catalogues. Sister Write, 190 Upper Street, London, N.1.

**Committee On Women** Possess a collection of reference material on literature and film. C.O.W. The Treasury Private Bag, Wellington.

**Women's Community Video Inc.** Is a community oriented society seeking to democratize the medium of TV and simultaneously develop women's communication skills. PO Box 68570 Newton, Auckland.  
Tapes for hire on a variety of issues, suitable for discussions, groups, seminars and consciousness raising.

**Committee On Women** A Resource Organisation News Sheet is their newsletter containing material reporting on C.O.W. The Treasury Private Bag, Wellington.

their projects. Concerned with all issues relevant to women and their position in NZ society.

**Women's Information Network of New Zealand** This learning web is a valuable organisation involved with communicating through a newsletter. It offers a description of women's activities and available resources on a national basis. Six issues annually @ \$6.00. WINNZ, PO Box 1369 Whangarei.

**Women's Resource Centre** A Resource Organisation for women. Contact and referral base for women's activities. W.R.C. 6 Boulcott St, phone 721-970

**Women's Gallery** The Women's Gallery aims to support and promote women artists, to encourage all women to participate in the arts, and to provide a feminist space where women can communicate and develop new ideas. Women's Gallery 26 Harrist St, Wellington. Phone 723-257

**Women's Electoral Lobby** Aims to promote women's participation and equality in all forms of life, particularly political. W.E.L. 6 Boulcott St, Wellington Phone 739-321

**Broadsheet** A NZ Feminist magazine. Contains a resource list of local and national women's organisations. PO Box 5799, Auckland.

**Women's Art Archive** A contemporary women's art archive for which contributions of slides, photographs and related information are welcomed. This information in the archive is available for general use. C/- National Art Gallery Private Bag, Wellington. Phone 859-703

## RESOURCE LISTS

### BOOKS ON WOMEN AND ART

- |                                       |   |   |                                     |   |                              |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
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| Burke, Janine                         | <b>Australian Women Artists</b> Catalogue.  | Ewing & George Paton Galleries Melbourne University Victoria 1975 | Loeb, Judy (ed)                     | <b>Feminist Collage</b> Educating women in the visual arts.   | Teachers College 1979        |
| Cassatt, Mary                         | <b>Oils and pastels</b> , ed. John Bullard.   | Watson-Guptill, 1976.   | Mellen, Joan                        | <b>Women and Their Sexuality in New Film</b>  | Davis-Poynter 1974           |
| Chicago, Judy                         | <b>The Dinner Party</b> A symbol of our heritage with strong feminist content.                        | Anchor/Doubleday 1979   | Millon, H. & Nochlin, Linda         | <b>Art and Architecture in the Service of Politics</b>  | MIT Press 1978               |
| Chicago, Judy                         | <b>Through the Flower: my struggle as a woman artist</b>  | Doubleday 1976  | Mustenberg, Hugo                    | <b>A History of Women Artists</b>   | Clarkson, N. & Potter 1975   |
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| Fine, Elsa H.                         | <b>Women and Art</b> A history of women painters sculptors from the Renaissance to the 20th century.  | Allanheld & Schram 1978   | Nemser, Cindy                       | <b>Art Talk</b> Conversations with 12 Women Artists.  | C. Schribner & Son 1975      |
| Greer, Germaine                       | <b>The Obstacle Race</b> The fortunes of women painters and their works.                              | Secker & Warburg 1979   | Perry, Gillian                      | <b>Paula Modersohn-Becker</b> Life and work history of German, early 20th century painter.  | Women's Press 1979           |
| Harris, A.S. & Nochlin, L.            | <b>Women Artists 1550 - 1950</b> Contains the works of 84 women painters.                             | A.A. Knopf 1976   | Petersen, K. & Wilson, J.           | <b>Women Artists</b> Early middle ages to 20th century.   | Harper-Rowe 1976             |
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| Hess, Thomas & Baker, Elizabeth (eds) | <b>Art and Sexual Politics</b> Women's Liberation, Women Artists and Art History.                     | Collier Books 1973  | Ruddick, S. & Daniels, P.           | <b>Working It out</b> Foreword by Adrienne Rich. 23 Women writers, artists, scholars talk about their lives and work. Virginia Vallian, 'Learning to Work'. Anne Lasoff, 'Writing in the Real World'. | Pantheon Press 1977          |
| Huxtable, Ada L.                      | <b>Kicked a Building Lately?</b> A commentary on the state of American Architecture past and present. | Times Book 1978   | Snyder-Ott, Jocelyn                 | <b>Women and Creativity</b> Traces women's dominance in the art of pre-Christian societies and Stonehenge.  | Les Femmes 1974              |
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|                                       |   |   | Wilson, Ellen                       | <b>American in Paris</b> A life of Mary Cassatt   | Farrar, Strans, Gireaux 1971 |

## WOMEN'S ART MAGAZINES

<b>Amazon Quarterly</b>		Box 434, W. Somerville, M.A. 02144, USA.
<b>Bitches, witches and dykes</b>	A women's liberation newspaper. Includes articles on cultural feminism and poems.	Box 68-570, Newton, Auckland. Sub: \$4.
<b>Bread &amp; Roses</b>		29 Glossop Street, Leeds 6, UK.
<b>Broadsheet</b>	NZ Feminist Journal Articles and reviews of women's art.	PO Box 5799, Auckland.
<b>Chrysalis</b>		The Women's Building, 1727 Spring Street, Los Angeles, Ca 90012.
<b>Hecate</b>	A Women's Interdisciplinary Journal.	Box 99, St Lucia, Queensland 4067.
<b>Heresies</b>	A Feminist publication on Art and Politics	PO Box 766, Canal St, Station, NY 10013.
<b>Feminist Art Journal</b>	A Non-profit quarterly	41 Montgomery Place, NY 11215.
<b>L.I.P.</b>	A feminist collective publication representing a wide range of social, cultural issues.	66 Carlton St, Carlton 3053, Victoria.
<b>Luna</b>	A Literary publication	101 Edgevale Rd, Kew, Victoria.
<b>Off Our Backs</b>	A Women's News Journal	1724 20th St, N.W. Washington D.C. 20009.
<b>Quest</b>	A feminist quarterly Art and Politics, Vol 11 No 1.	Box 8843, Washington D.C. 20003.
<b>Refractory Girl</b>	A Women's Studies Journal	25 Alberta St, Sydney 2000.
<b>Scarlet Women</b>	Feminist Socialist Quarterly	25 Alberta St, Sydney 50 Little Latrobe St, Melbourne.
<b>Sojourner</b>	News, opinion, arts	143 Albany Street, Cambridge, M.A. 02139, USA.
<b>Spare Rib</b>		Dist, Moore Harness, 31 Corsica St, London.
<b>Spiral</b>	Women's Art	PO Box 21069, Edgware, Christchurch New Zealand.

## Women and Film

<b>Women's Art Movement</b>	Experimental Art Foundation	PO Box 4501, Berkeley, California 94704.
<b>Women's Report</b>	A bi-monthly	Aaron Press, 233 Rundle St, Adelaide, South Australia 5000.
<b>Women's Show</b>	A report of a Women's Show of Arts and Crafts	C/- 14 Aberdeen Rd, Wealdstone, Middlesex, UK.
<b>Womanspirit</b>	A Quarterly	Kitchener Press 1977. Box 263, Wolf Creek, Oregon 97497.

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## FILMS ON WOMEN AND ART

To be contained within a General Bibliography of Women's Films being compiled by the **Committee on Women** in Wellington: The Treasury, Private Bag. Third Floor, NPF Building, 1 The Terrace.

<b>Sister Write Art Catalogue</b>	Art, Drama, Film, Media, Music, Photography.	Sister Write, 190 Upper Street, London, N.1.
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The Women's Gallery,

Box 9600, Wellington, New Zealand.

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