

The M/Other Project: Creativity, Procreation, and Contemporary Art.

Initiative: Freigeist-Fellowships

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Although motherhood is one of the most prevalent subjects in the history of Western art, it often conveys a one-dimensional and skewed picture of that experience. Indeed, the metaphor of the artist as mother-like, "birthing" the work of art, has been a longstanding refrain of art's power, underscoring the extent to which non-mothers have dominated this vocabulary. In recent decades, however, the situation has changed dramatically: for the first time in art's history, the artist can also be a mother, and she begins to make very different pictures of maternal experience, emphasizing a multiplicity of views, from queer motherhood to Black motherhood to even cis-men claiming this lived terrain. Such works challenge how we define the boundary between art and nonart, between artifice and nature, between the making of lifelike imagery and the making of living bodies. This Freigeist project is the first attempt to systematically identify and describe this emergent body of work and it does so by employing a comparative analysis across Euro-American and Latin American contexts. Does this paradigm shift equate to a transversal of values, supplanting patriarchal and Eurocentric concepts of art? Or is artistic maternalism simply feminism for hard times, a retreat during a backlash of neo-conservatism and neo-nationalism? By drawing on analyses of artworks, interviews with artists and writers, newly discovered archives, and insights from related disciplines, the research group will locate the origins of this postulated maternal paradigm and analyze how it has changed over time. It will suggest that in moving from a paradigm of creation against procreation to creation as procreation, those moments of sustaining life may also be our most creative.

Projektbeteiligte

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