

# Maternal Embarrassment: Feminist Art and Maternal Affects

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*When I say I am writing a book about maternal bodies I get different very responses that range from interest to blankness, from enthusiasm to disgust, and I feel myself getting embarrassed.<sup>i</sup> I feel the need to clear the ground: 'It's not about mothering or natural birth or celebrity pregnancy...' I stammer and stop. This doesn't sound sufficiently detached. I am too close to it, still feeling embarrassed. I want to look at what produces this affective response – this maternal embarrassment – and whether it can tell me anything about responses to the maternal body and its visibility. What kinds of feelings are invested in (my looking at) maternal bodies in art? Why should they cause me (and others) to blush? Is this tied to what is un-representable in our attachments to the maternal body? I examine these questions in relation to the visibility of maternal artworks in feminist art practices of the late 1970s and early 1980s.*

In this paper I explore a specific historical moment in the cultural politics of feminism between 1973 and 1984, a decade that saw the emergence of feminist arts practice, exhibition and art-writing in Britain and, not incidentally, shaped my own attachment to the women's movement. How were maternal bodies represented within feminist arts practice? Whose bodies and in which places? What did maternal artworks try to make visible, and what were the constituents of looking at the time? I examine three bodies of work that expose the tensions involved in making the maternal visible in the context of feminism: Hackney Flashers *Who's holding the Baby?* (1978), Mary Kelly's works *Antepartum* (1973) and *Post-Partum Document* (1973-79), and Catherine Elwes *With Child*, 1983. Each of these works opened up an important space in the exploration of the politics of reproduction, although it should be recognised that this was still primarily the white maternal body.<sup>ii</sup> I shall argue that they were framed and contested in particular ways: in left wing publications that still prioritised class over gender; in institutions of art exhibition and criticism that were hostile to maternal art, particularly by feminist artists; and in feminist critiques of essentialism that rejected direct imaging of the maternal body.

The women's art movement in Britain was born out of the Women's Liberation Movement, which initially was formed by women in higher education and the trades unions, many already involved in left and libertarian politics.<sup>iii</sup> They argued that much of women's

oppression took place in private in the areas of life considered ‘personal’, such as childcare, housework and sexual relations. By making the issue of male power central to their politics, feminists broke down traditional barriers between the socio-economic concerns of the left and the role of women as workers and mothers. It was in this political context that women artists’ groups emerged, emphasising their shared identity as women and with sexual politics at their core. In London, the Women’s Workshop of the Artists’ Union was set up in 1972, with Mary Kelly as its first chair, and the Women’s Free Art Alliance was formed in 1973, as were other women artists’ groups in the UK.<sup>iv</sup> Both London groups argued for equality of representation in art education and exhibition, and mounted all-women shows and collective projects, including *Women and Work* in 1975, an installation by Mary Kelly, Margaret Harrison and Kay Hunt that addressed the impact of equal pay legislation on a group of women sheet metal workers in Southwark. The *Feministo* group focused on women’s domestic oppression in their postal art event *Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife*, which articulated the ambivalence between ‘the appeal of domesticity and the bitterness and disillusion’ that they experienced as women at home with children.<sup>v</sup> These two themes of the sexual division of labour and women’s role as artists and mothers continued throughout the decade, articulated as a tension between production and reproduction. Attention to artistic means of production as well as to creating new audiences for art also became important for women artists in the 1970s, who were exploring how representational codes and contexts affected the meanings ascribed to maternal bodies. These twin aspects were exemplified in Hackney Flashers’ photomontage project *Who’s Holding the Baby?*

Hackney Flashers was a London based collective, originally made up of ten socialist feminists working in education and media, who held a documentary photographic exhibition *Women and Work* in 1975 at Hackney Town Hall, followed by venues across the UK and abroad. They disseminated their work through trades union, community and women’s events, and in the feminist and socialist press, deliberately choosing to place their work in political rather than art contexts (figure 1).

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Figure 1: Hackney Flashers 1978 *Beyond the Family Album and Other projects* Belfast Exposed Archive 2005

In 1978, their exhibition *Who's Holding the Baby* was held at Centerprise Community Project in Hackney – the venue was important, Hackney had a thousand children on its daycare waiting list and the exhibition was linked to campaigns for nurseries in the borough. According to Liz Heron, a later member of the collective, the exhibition was intended as an ideological analysis of motherhood and childcare, showing the mutually reinforcing effects of class and women's oppression, rather than a straightforward documentation of women's lives. For example, the poster *Who's Still Holding the Baby?* took the form of montage made up of cartoons, collage, graphics, photographs and texts (figure 2):

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Figure 2: Hackney Flashers *Who's Still Holding the Baby?* 1978

This image was entirely constructed and had nothing to do with documentary photography. We graffitied the wall late one night then photographed it. A photograph of a mother and children was laid underneath the hole cut in the print of the wall. Then a banner headline was added. Thus the link could be made between the WHY of struggles for childcare facilities, and the HOW.<sup>vi</sup>

This juxtaposition of different media, texts and imagery was intended to deconstruct the naturalised ideology of motherhood and to subvert the individualistic imagery used in contemporary advertising, as well as to offer alternative representations of collective childcare. The methodology was significant because the deconstruction of prevailing models of feminine identity as well as collective and community based work defined early feminist arts practice in the UK. Tensions emerged however between the exhibition's interventionist role in the local Hackney nursery campaign, and its function as a 'valuable educational and

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agitational tool’ within a broader theoretical project of exposing domestic ideology (figure 3).<sup>vii</sup>



Figure 3: Hackney Flashers 1978, *Beyond the Family Album and Other projects* Belfast Exposed Archive 2005

Heron’s article ‘Hackney Flashers Collective: Who’s Still Holding the Camera?’ first appeared in the section ‘Left Photography Today’ in *Photography Politics: One* (1979). This first Photography Workshop annual publication was edited by Jo Spence and Terry Dennett, and explicitly framed within a socialist perspective: ‘our starting point is class struggle... However, we do not assume that a left photography must be linked to a party or that it must mainly document the working class.’<sup>viii</sup> Heron’s article was republished in Jo Spence’s *Putting Myself in the Picture: A Political, Personal and Photographic Autobiography* (1986), part of an art series edited by Frances Borzello for Camden Press.<sup>ix</sup> Changes to the article, including the addition of a new photograph (absent from the original) showing a Hackney Flashers meeting complete with a baby, make the point that some of the photographer-artists were also mothers. I detail this change to explain the particular political configurations in which maternal bodies became visible. The two publications mark a political/theoretical shift from a collective socialist-feminist intervention to an autobiographical feminist context, although Jo Spence was herself a member of Hackney Flashers and preferred to be named

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photographer rather than artist. The point is not just a shift between collective and individual politics, but that new forms of maternal intimacy became visible in the context of socialist-feminist debates about the social value of women's reproductive labour, in which reproduction was connected directly with particular forms of art practice (figure 4).



Figure 4: Hackney Flashers 1978, *Beyond the Family Album and Other projects* Belfast Exposed Archive 2005

The explicit connection made by Hackney Flashers between women's work and childcare, production and reproduction, was also evident in Mary Kelly's early work-in-progress, later entitled *AntePartum*, which was first shown in the form of a dual film projection in 1974. On one screen, a woman's hands appeared operating an industrial lathe, while on the other, a woman was shown stroking her heavily pregnant belly in a repetitive sequence that echoed the rhythm of the first.<sup>x</sup> The close up image that fills the screen appears initially like an abstract moonscape and only materialises as a naked belly marked by the navel and alba lingua as the hands repeatedly touch and caress it; this was Kelly's own pregnant body although it was unidentified at the time (figure 5).

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Figure 5: Mary Kelly *Antepartum* 1973, 8mm film transferred to DVD 1999

The combination of abstraction and materiality, naturalistic imagery and didactic purpose neatly encapsulates the problematic posed within Kelly's Marxist-feminist aesthetic. Siona Wilson argues that the representational division in *AntePartum* between one woman's productive labour and the other's reproductive labour both engendered and continued to trouble Kelly's mature work.<sup>xi</sup> This was made explicit in the early stages of *Post-Partum Document*, Kelly's first major work as a solo artist, although both the direct imaging of the maternal body and women's work had by this time disappeared. *Post-Partum Document* (*PPD*) was based on the record of Kelly's relationship with her infant son over a six year period between 1973 and 1979:

IN THE POST-PARTUM DOCUMENT, I AM TRYING TO SHOW THE RECIPROCITY OF THE PROCESS OF SOCIALIZATION IN THE FIRST FEW YEARS OF LIFE. IT IS NOT ONLY THE INFANT WHOSE FUTURE PERSONALITY IS FORMED AT THIS CRUCIAL MOMENT, BUT ALSO THE MOTHER WHOSE 'FEMININE PSYCHOLOGY' IS SEALED BY THE SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOUR IN CHILDCARE.<sup>xii</sup>

This statement anticipates later feminist theories of the maternal relationship as constituting maternal desire as well as infant subjectivity, but differs in one crucial respect; Kelly saw motherhood as sealing 'feminine psychology' within a heterosexual domestic economy. The residue of the Marxist feminist ideas that defined Kelly's film work was still present in the

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reference to the sexual division of labour, but her interest had shifted to psychoanalytic theories then beginning to be explored within the same feminist circles.<sup>xiii</sup> This was exemplified in the work of Juliet Mitchell, whose two books *Women's Estate* (1971) and *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974) were highly influential in British feminism.<sup>xiv</sup> Mitchell argued that, while Marxism offered an analysis of class and capital, only psychoanalysis could explain how sexual difference functioned to subordinate women under the social order of patriarchy. Mitchell's Lacanian reworking of Freud provided the tools for understanding the acquisition of gendered subjectivity as the mechanism through which, with women's consent, patriarchy perpetuates itself – and offered a means to Kelly through which she could explore the mother-child relationship.<sup>xv</sup>

*PPD* emerged from this theoretical position and was a contribution to it, framed by Kelly's own deconstructive analysis of the maternal body set out in Lacanian terms, which she later described as 'an effort to articulate the mother's fantasies, her desires, her stake in that project called motherhood'.<sup>xvi</sup> However, where orthodox psychoanalysis traces the psychic development of the child, Kelly's concern was with how the maternal-infant relation positions the mother as subject. She explored the process of mapping gendered subjectivity onto language that, according to Lacan, is fixed by the Oedipal narrative that produces sexual difference and consequent loss of the maternal body. In *Documentation II Analysed Utterances and Related Speech Events* (1975), Kelly recorded her son's acquisition of language, recognising that this not only constituted his subjectivity but also signified 'her own negative entry into language and culture' as he began to communicate without her maternal mediation.<sup>xvii</sup> Thus for Kelly, the subjectivity of the mother is constituted alongside that of her infant, but only insofar as she remains in a position of lack associated by Lacan with femininity, as signified by her final bracketed question: '(WHY DON'T I UNDERSTAND?)'.<sup>xviii</sup>

Since it was originally shown, feminist critics have been divided on the question of Kelly's articulation of feminine-maternal subjectivity within a Lacanian schema, a debate which initially focused on *PPD*'s (lack of) accessibility to a contemporary women's audience.<sup>xix</sup> Indeed *PPD* attracted general hostile critical attention when it was first shown at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London in 1976 and at the Hayward Annual II in 1978.<sup>xx</sup> As

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Griselda Pollock observed, feminist artworks were singled out for disproportionate attack in the second exhibition and Kelly's work in particular scandalised male art critics, receiving comments that ranged from 'militant feminist offered the weakest part of the show' to the assertion that it was more appropriate for 'the foyers of Mothercare', thus revealing confusion between the political demands of the work and its supposed inappropriate expression of maternal narcissism.<sup>xxi</sup> The section that attracted most hostility was *Documentation I; Analysed Faecal Stains and Feeding Charts* (1974), which became notorious as the 'dirty nappies', despite its spectral stains and deliberately objectified title.

However, while feminists rightly complained of the critics' failure to recognise the complexity of the work, such responses did highlight the affective relations in Kelly's work that had largely escaped critical attention. In the Introduction to *Post-Partum Document, Folded Vests* (1973), the repeated folding and flattening of four tiny vests bespeaks embodied closeness and maternal tenderness, a representation of the psychic intersubjectivity and tactile relationship between mother and child in the first months of his life (figure 6).

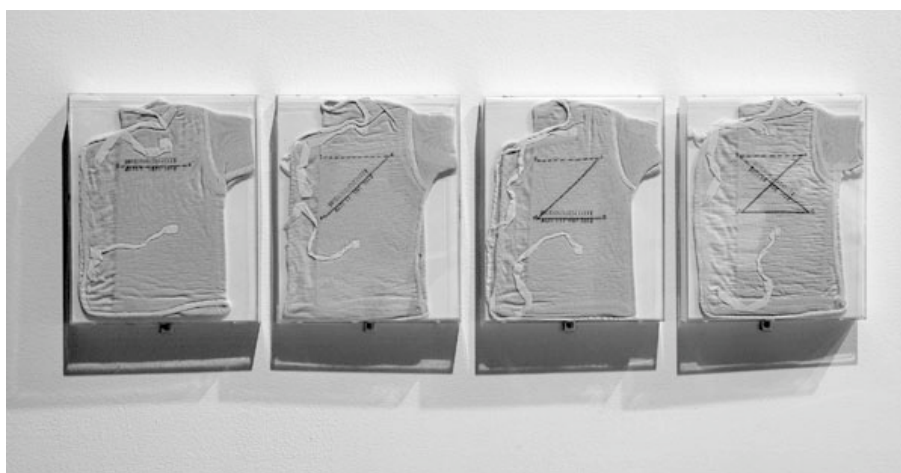


Figure 6: Mary Kelly *Post-partum Document Introduction Folded Vests*, 1973. Four units 8 x 10 ins. mixed media

The affective dimension of these images was rigorously controlled by the diagrams and text Kelly inscribed on them, for example, on the first vest this reads: 'INTERSUBJECTIVITY AXIS 1 SEPT 1973', repeated with sequential dates and increasingly complex diagrams on the other three images. As Pollock put it, this kind of feminist work showed 'a tight

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classifying tendency, grids, graphs, careful drawing, pristine lines, subdued colour' that was characteristic of contemporary conceptual art practices at the time.<sup>xxii</sup> Kelly's maternal art was shaped by the formal sensibilities and avant-garde aesthetics of the late 1970s, in which visual pleasures were there to be deconstructed. But while she parodied the aesthetics of museum display, she also 'relied heavily on the viewer's *affective* relation to the visual configuration of objects and texts'.<sup>xxiii</sup> On first seeing *Document IV Transitional Objects, diary and diagram* (1976), I was touched by the impress of the child's hand and specific soft tactile quality of the white plaster clay combined with the maternal words typed onto the torn fragments of her child's comforter, his "blankie" (figure 7).

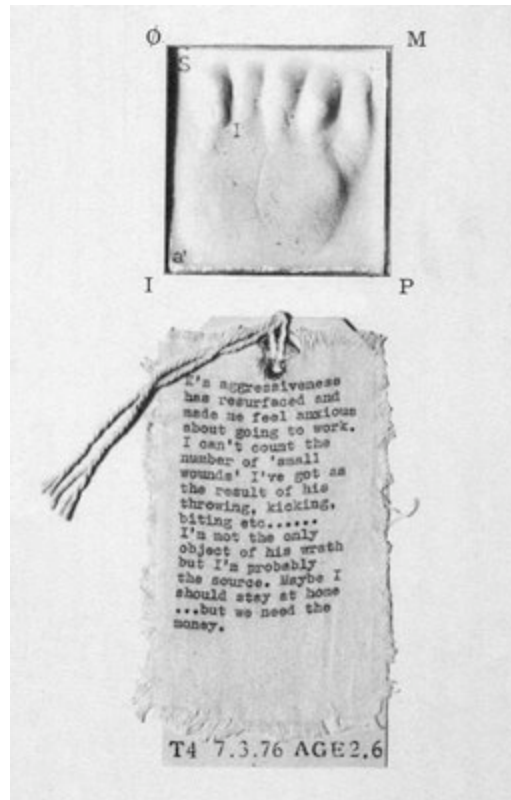


Figure 7: Mary Kelly *Post-partum Document, Documentation IV Transitional objects, diary and diagram*, 1976. Detail, 11 x 14 ins. mixed media

The diary entry speaks in the mother's ambivalent voice:

*K's aggressiveness has resurfaced and made me feel anxious about going to work. I can't count the number of 'small wounds' I've got as a result of his throwing, kicking, biting etc.....*

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*I'm not the only object of his wrath but I'm probably the source. Maybe I should stay at home...but we need the money.*<sup>xxiv</sup>

The combination of the imprint of the infant hand, a fetish object for the mother, and the frayed label inscribed with her anxieties suggests the embodied maternal contact of touch and voice, but these affective relations are deliberately confined within a Lacanian diagram that refers to the subject's place within Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real.<sup>xxv</sup> As the accompanying documentation explains, these "transitional objects" and texts function as both a 'confessional' to express maternal ambivalence and as a 'polemic' that interrogates the mother's "separation anxiety".<sup>xxvi</sup> Kelly explores the maternal experience of separation and loss linked to the child's growing social independence and her contradictory emotions engendered by his hostility, the 'small wounds' that puncture their fragile relationship. Kelly thus carefully framed the viewer's response within psychoanalytic terms that deterred any direct affective encounter with the maternal body. As she commented in her introduction to the later book version of *PPD*:

Perhaps this is also why it seemed crucial, not in the sense of a moral imperative, but as a historical strategy, to avoid the literal figuration of mother and child, to avoid any means of representation which risked recuperation as "a slice of life". To use the body of the woman, her image or person is not impossible but problematic for feminism.<sup>xxvii</sup>

As Laura Mulvey put it in her review in *Spare Rib*, Kelly 'reduces the passion involved... to the minimum; her aim is to distance the emotion by putting the dilemma into a wider context: the way women's unconscious is shaped by the patriarchy'.<sup>xxviii</sup> What troubled me was the way in which such distancing excluded representation of the ambivalent emotions of love and hate, guilt and loss in relation to the maternal body that shape our psychic lives. I remained impressed by the mark of the child's hand, but shivered under the Lacanian theory that foreclosed my affective responses to it. At the time I resisted the sentimentality and essentialism I saw as implicated in such mute sensuous impressions, but simultaneously felt frustrated by the prohibition on my pleasurable response to them.<sup>xxix</sup> If everyday experiences of the maternal body were culturally repressed and unspoken, then a feminist strategy of non-representation seemed only to reinforce this absence. What this 'risked' for me was exposing a split between feminist theorising and my own investment in the maternal; precisely 'the relation of writing to the mother's body' that Kelly herself proposed.<sup>xxx</sup>

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The Catherine Elwes piece *With Child* (1983) addressed this risk directly in a work that she described later as: ‘my own attempts to problematise the male gaze consisted of staring hard at the viewer through a pair of thick glasses whilst eight months pregnant’.<sup>xxxii</sup> The context for the work was theorization of the gaze in the wake of Laura Mulvey’s influential essay on visual pleasure, in which she defined spectatorship in Lacanian terms.<sup>xxxiii</sup> This was the moment when feminist film theorists were grappling with questions of female spectatorship and desire in relation to particular psychoanalytic (and filmic) models of passivity and activity, proximity and distance, surface and depth. It is precisely that binary logic which Elwes sought to displace – she cites the cinematic moment ‘when the spectacles finally come off and the hair tumbles down, the woman is returned to her designated position as object of male desire’.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Elwes thus places her work at the centre of contemporary debate about the male gaze, but where does this leave her maternal body? I suggest that despite her intention, it is the pregnant bump rather than the ‘bespectacled frump’ in *With Child* that disturbs the viewer.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Like Kelly, Elwes sought to represent the mother’s sexual desire, but chose to present her maternal narrative very differently: ‘I intended to create a subjective position behind the lens (replicating the objectifying lens of the camera) as a foil to the plenitude of biological meaning in the image of my swollen belly’ (figure 8).<sup>xxxv</sup>



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Figure 8: Cate Elwes *With Child* 1983. Video still

Coming out of a tradition of feminist performance and body art, Elwes employed the more risky mode of humor and horror, in which the direct imaging of the maternal body was a central strategy.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

In formal terms, the piece is non-narrative and uses explicit editing techniques with long slow panning shots in real time and jumpcuts that were characteristic of avant-garde film-making in the early 1980s. It shows pregnancy from the viewpoint of the mother as a time of watching and waiting, even boredom; in various sequences, she plays with infant toys and folds baby clothes against a soundtrack of natural sounds and vocalisations. In other ‘dream’ imagery, fetish objects act out the mother’s desires and fears: a comic sequence of two pink and blue soft toys make love to the accompaniment of swelling orchestral music, followed by a brief series of shots that cut between images of the artist’s face, a stabbing knife, and a doll, with strong overtones of threat and violence (figure 9).



Figure 9: Cate Elwes *With Child* 1983. Video still

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In the final sequence, the female doll appears increasingly overwhelmed by the looming belly of the mother as she slowly dresses it in baby clothes while staccato texts roll over the screen:

*alors – start again – recommence – with feeling this time – les yeux ouvertes – no shirking – la peur – solitude – mummy helps – papa aide – the child – ne me quitte pas – cette fois en Anglais – this time in English – s’il vous plaît – thank you – fin.*

When Parker and Pollock put together their collection documenting feminist arts practice *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women’s Movement 1970-1985*, they located Elwes’ earlier work *Menstruation II* (1979), in relation to debates about essentialism then raging amongst feminist critics and artists. Influential contemporary theorists argued that: ‘in celebrating what is essentially female we may be simply reinforcing oppressive definitions of women, e.g. women as always in their separate sphere, or women as defining their identities exclusively, and narcissistically, through their bodies’.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Parker and Pollock provide an important qualification to this and reject classification of feminist work by its content, stating: ‘how the body is lived in and experienced is implicated at all levels in social or socially determined psychic processes’.<sup>xxxviii</sup> *With Child* also anticipated Parker’s later writing on maternal ambivalence as ‘a dynamic experience of conflict’ between maternal love and hate.<sup>xxxix</sup> In 1984, Elwes followed up with what she calls her ‘infamous lactating breast tape’ *There Is a Myth*, in which her infant son is depicted repeatedly pummeling her breast until a stream of milk emerged from the nipple (figure 10).<sup>xl</sup>



Figure 10: Cate Elwes *There is a Myth* 1984. Video still

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As she put it: ‘I’ve always liked combining cool cerebral structures with an image that is potentially sentimental or erotic like the breast piece’.<sup>xli</sup> Elwes attempted to represent how the maternal was lived and experienced but, rather than defining her identity through her body, Elwes radically questioned maternal ideology. As she wrote in 1982: ‘this process produced many autobiographical works which countered the distorted images of femininity in the media and in the arts with explicit exposition of women’s actual social, biological and psychological experiences’.<sup>xlii</sup>

The status of ‘women’s actual experience’ and how to represent it was indeed central to her work, but Elwes also practiced deconstruction in the terms Parker and Pollock later described it, ‘feminism explores the pleasures of resistance, of deconstruction, of discovery, of defining, of fragmenting, of redefining, all of which is often still tentative and provisional.’<sup>xliii</sup> Elwes’ complex handling of ideas and techniques of deconstruction in her maternal works was not recognised as such at the time, and was consequently largely ignored by feminist critics, who mistook her exploration of maternal subjectivity for essentialism or narcissism. By the mid 1980s, the political critique of essentialism held sway in feminist arts practice, and there was little audience for this kind of work within UK feminism or elsewhere – it was simply deemed too embarrassing. In 1984-85, a significant exhibition *Difference: On Representation and Sexuality* at the New Museum in New York and the ICA in London marked the theoretical turn towards a visual analysis of gendered looking that was about sexuality, language and meaning, and not about women’s experience of their (maternal) bodies.<sup>xliv</sup>

An important space was opened up in the late 1970s and early 1980s in which feminist artists were able to explore maternal subjectivity and embodiment in ways that were aesthetically and politically radical. Initially, the problematic of motherhood was constituted in relation to external material conditions of capitalist society and then, via psychoanalysis, in terms of its psychic meaning for women. At the same time, this work was framed and contested in exhibitions and publications on the left and in the mainstream that marginalised maternal art works, and by feminist theorists who rejected any imaging of the maternal body. All of this made it embarrassing to be making art about motherhood unless it was subject to severe political deconstruction and considerable distancing on the part of the artist and her viewer. The critique of essentialism on the one hand and fear of sentimentality on the other rendered

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feminism silent on questions of affect that bear on our intimate relations to the self and others. As a consequence, receptive spaces for understanding the critical *and* affective dimensions of the maternal body in Hackney Flashers', Kelly's and Elwes' work disappeared by the mid 1980s with a real sense of closure. In the preceding decade, transformative art works were being made by women that moved 'towards the materiality of motherhood, its textures and tinglings', in ways that are only now being explored.<sup>xlv</sup> My argument is that maternal art practices such as these can anticipate theoretical enquiry, which in turn for better or worse can reframe them anew. It is the configuration between affective immediacy of the maternal body and feminist politics of representation that continues to constitute my interest in maternal art of the past and present.

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<sup>i</sup> Rosemary Betterton, *Maternal Bodies in Visual Culture* (Manchester University Press, forthcoming 2012).

<sup>ii</sup> See Mary O'Brien *The Politics of Reproduction*, (Boston, London and Cambridge: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983). The earliest example of maternal embodiment by a black woman artist based in the UK that I have found is Folaka Shoga's *Tiger II*, 1983. See Lincolnshire County Council *Reclaiming the Madonna: Artists as Mothers* (Lincoln: Lincolnshire County Council, 1993).

<sup>iii</sup> See Sheila Rowbotham (1979) 'The Women's Movement and Organising for Socialism' in S. Rowbotham, L. Segal and H. Wainwright (eds.) *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism*, (London: Merlin Press, 1979. and Anna Coote and Beatrice Campbell, *Sweet Freedom: the Struggle for Women's Liberation*, (London: Pan Books, 1982)

<sup>iv</sup> Rozsika Parker lists 19 women's artists' groups across the UK in 1980 in Rozsika Parker 'The Story of Art Groups' in Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970-1985* (London and New York: Pandora Press, 1987, pp.181-3).

<sup>v</sup> Works of the time on domestic themes include Bobby Baker's *An Edible Family in a Mobile Home*, 1976, and *Packed Lunch*, which she performed in Hayward Annual 1979.

<sup>vi</sup> Liz Heron 'Hackney Flashers Collective: Who's still holding the camera?' in Jo Spence and Terry Dennett (eds.) *Photography/Politics: One* (London: Photography Workshop, 1979, p.124)

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid p.132. An educational slides pack entitled 'Domestic Labour and Visual Representation' was also produced.

<sup>viii</sup> Jo Spence and Terry Dennett *Photography Politics: One*, p.1

<sup>ix</sup> Jo Spence, *Putting Myself in the Picture: a Political, Personal and Photographic Autobiography*, (London: Camden Press, 1986).

<sup>x</sup> This work was not seen publically until 1999, when it was shown as a single screen installation entitled *Antepartum* at the General Foundation, Vienna, and is no longer extant in its original 8mm dual film form.

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<sup>xi</sup> Siona Wilson 'From Women's Work to the Umbilical Lens: Mary Kelly's Early Films' *Art History*, 31:1, (February 2008, pp.79-102).

<sup>xii</sup> Mary Kelly 'Introduction' (1973) in M. Kelly *Post-Partum Document* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983 p.1)

<sup>xiii</sup> Kelly worked with the London Women's Film Group as a feminist activist and documentary film-maker on *Women of the Rhondda* (1973) and with the Berwick Street Film Collective on *Night Cleaners* (1975). See Wilson (ibid) for a full account of Kelly's early films and Margaret Dickinson (ed.) *Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film in Britain 1945-1990*, (London: BFI Publishing, 1999) for documentation of early women's film co-ops in the UK.

<sup>xiv</sup> Juliet Mitchell *Women's Estate* (London: Allen Lane, 1971), *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (London: Allen Lane, 1974)

<sup>xv</sup> There was overlapping membership of London-based feminist study groups in the early 1970s, including the Lacan Women's Study Group, of which Mitchell and Kelly, as well as Laura Mulvey, Jacqueline Rose and Rosalind Delmar were members (Wilson 2008).

<sup>xvi</sup> Kelly, p.xvii

<sup>xvii</sup> Kelly, p.72

<sup>xviii</sup> Kelly, p.71

<sup>xix</sup> *Post-Partum Document* was produced in six sections, 'Documents I-VI' with an 'Introduction' (1973-79) and was exhibited at various venues between 1976 and 1984. See Pollock (1979), Kelly (1983), and Parker and Pollock (1987) for contemporary feminist responses to Kelly's use of psychoanalytic theory.

<sup>xx</sup> Griselda Pollock 'Feminism, Femininity and the Hayward Annual Exhibition 1978' in Parker and Pollock, pp.174-5. Rozsika Parker notes that this reception was in the context of press attacks on state patronage of the arts, which began in summer 1976 with Carl Andre's 'Bricks' at the Tate Gallery. See Parker (1977) reprinted in Rosemary Betterton *Looking On: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media*, London: Pandora Press, 1987, pp.254-58).

<sup>xxi</sup> Edward Lucie Smith and Kenneth Robinson quoted in Pollock 1987, pp.174-5. Pollock divided women's art practice in the UK into three categories: 'cultural feminism' based on separatism; mainstream art made by women; and feminist interventions by Mary Kelly, Alexis Hunter and Susan Hiller, who were 'doubly disadvantaged' by the lack of any feminist context for their work (Pollock 1987, pp.168-69).

<sup>xxii</sup> Pollock 1987, p.178.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Kelly, p.xx.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Kelly, p.101.

<sup>xxv</sup> In her sympathetic reading of *PPD*, Andrea Liss stresses its playful and parodic aspects, but this does not accord with the deep seriousness with which Kelly and other feminists initially approached Lacan. See Andrea Liss *Feminist Art and the Maternal*, (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

<sup>xxvi</sup> Kelly, p. 97.

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<sup>xxvii</sup> Kelly, p. xxi.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Mulvey in Kelly, 1983, p.202.

<sup>xxix</sup> Lucy Lippard qualified her own initial affective response to the ‘sensual immediacy’ of *PPD*, calling it ‘prosaic biological/autobiographical’ (Kelly, p.xi).

<sup>xxx</sup> Kelly, p. xii.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Catherine Elwes *Video Art: A Guided Tour*, (I.B.Tauris Ltd., 2005, p.93) Catherine Elwes *With Child* (1983) 18 minute video, extracts available at <http://www.luxonline/>

<sup>xxxii</sup> Chronologically, it is located with Mulvey’s rethinking of her position in ‘Afterthoughts on *Duel in the Sun*’, *Framework*, (Summer 1981) and Mary Anne Doane’s critique ‘Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator’ *Screen* 3-4 1982), which articulated feminist concepts of the psycho-social production of sexuality in film in the early 1980s.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Elwes, p. 93 This is best exemplified in the melodrama *Now Voyager* (1942), where ‘a single image signals the momentous transformation of the Bette Davis character from ugly spinster aunt to glamorous single woman’, Doane 1982, p.20).

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Elwes, p. 93.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Elwes, p.93.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Catherine Elwes was responsible for video, performance and installation work in *About Time* held at the ICA in 1980, curated by Elwes, performance artist Rose Garrard and Sandy Nairne, exhibitions director at the ICA, with a catalogue essay by Lynn MacRitchie. This showed together for the first time a body of time-based and performance art by women made since 1970.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Elizabeth Cowie, Claire Johnston, Cora Kaplan, Mary Kelly, Jacqueline Rose and Marie Yates, ‘Representation vs. Communication’ in Feminist Anthology Collective *No Turning Back* (London Women’s Press, 1981, quoted in Parker and Pollock 1987, p. 29).

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Parker and Pollock, p. 29.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Rozsika Parker *Torn in Two: The Experience of Maternal Ambivalence*, (London: Virago Press, 2005, p.7.

<sup>xl</sup> Email to the author (26/04/2009).

<sup>xli</sup> Elwes statement in *Wishing Well* (unpublished video 1991, unpaginated).

<sup>xlii</sup> Elwes in Parker and Pollock (1987, p. 45).

<sup>xliii</sup> Parker & Pollock (1987, p. 29).

<sup>xliv</sup> See Linker, Kate and Weinstock, Jane, *Difference: On Representation and Sexuality* (New York: New Museum, 1984). The exhibition included three sections of Mary Kelly’s *PPD* and Part 1 of *Interim*, as well as works by Ray Barrie, Victor Burgin, Hans Haacke, Yve Lomax, Marie Yates, Sherrie Levine, Barbara Kruger and Silvia Kolbowski, with essays by Craig Owens, Lisa Tickner, Jacqueline Rose, Peter Wollen and Jane Weinstock.

<sup>xlv</sup> Lisa Baraitser *Maternal Encounters: The Ethics of Interruption*, London & New York: Routledge, 2009: 65.

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