

International Journal of Education & the Arts

Special Issue: Art for the Sake of Care

Editors

Merel Visse, Section Editor
Drew University, U.S.A.

Elena Cogni, Guest Editor
Anglia Ruskin University, U.K.

<http://www.ijea.org/>

ISSN: 1529-8094

Volume 25 Special Issue 1.6

September 27, 2024

Mother(ings): From the Home to the Planet A Dialogue Between Mother Art Collective and Elena Cogni

Elena Cogni
Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom

Mother Art Collective
United States of America

Citation: Cogni, E. (2024). Mother(ings): From the home to the planet. A dialogue between Mother Art Collective and Elena Cogni. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 25(si1.6). <http://doi.org/10.26209/ijea25si1.6>

Abstract

Mother Art Collective (MAC) have been ‘practicing’ care through their pioneering art within the feminist art scene formed in the 70s at the *Woman’s Building* in Los Angeles, and their alternative education project the *Feminist Studio Workshop*, centered around lived experience and informed by theories and ideas from the first and second waves feminism. MAC’s controversial public-funded early artworks this account will refer to specifically, were crucial to advance the debate on the invisibility of those who were artist and mothers. I relate to their work with a ‘caring-with’ approach and argue that not only it anticipated the then not yet formed philosophical/psychological context of care ethics, including a new understanding of care practices, motherhood and ‘care as labour,’ but that it also contributes to a feminist care aesthetics through ‘practicing mothering’ as a social and political act.

Mother Art Collective (MAC) stated: ‘We began caring for our children and then evolved to caring about the planet’ (Cognigni, Mother Art, 2023)¹ a trajectory which begun in Los Angeles in the 70s, and took them to work at some for the most interesting, collaborative and participatory public art taking place at the time. In my own art research, I have used the term ‘intraplace’ to define the spatiality in between artist and participant, within the *caring with* creative approach (Cognigni, 2020), developed from considering how reciprocal relations affect the subject involved and is underpinned by care ethics (Held, 2006; Fisher and Tronto, 1990). My dialogue with Mother Art Collective is understood as a manifestation of this relational approach. Among their projects I will refer to here are ‘RAINBOW playground’ for children (1973) and ‘LAUNDRYWORKS’ (1976), which are examples of a creative caring practices and embed the artists lived experience. Their interventions have influenced and contributed to change the cultural and social contexts in which they operated, by creating new connections and by stimulating debates on urgent social and political issues. MAC were part of a generation of artists who anticipated the then not yet formed philosophical and psychological context of care ethics (Gilligan, 1982; Willette, 2020), including a new understanding of motherhood (Ruddick, 1980), now intersecting with art in a new interdisciplinary context (Cognigni, 2020; Stake and Visse, 2021; Wade, 2021). I am arguing that their work also contributes to defining a new feminist care aesthetics (Cognigni, 2024). Central to this is ‘practicing mothering’ through collaborative, and relational approaches, they adopted before relational aesthetics were defined (Bourriaud, 1998, 2002) and critiqued (Reckitt, 2013) and adopting new public art approaches, by taking the private domestic context to the public arena, ultimately breaking the dichotomy private/public.

Mother(ings)

The concept of motherhood has been long debated by feminists and care ethicists (Noddings, 1984; O’Reilly, 2010; Van Nistelrooij, 2022), and it is useful to briefly introduce how this debate has evolved and refers to MAC’s different ways of being mothers and *doing* mother(ings) in their art practice. In their creative trajectory, which took them from ‘caring for their children to caring for the planet’ one can see how they embed their lived experience and the collapse of the dichotomy private/public (Pulcini, 2020; Butler, 2020)², as well as ‘care as labour’ (Ruddick, 1989).

¹ This is from the interview on 26th April 2023 in Los Angeles, and it will be referred to as Cognigni, Mother Art, 2023.

² Vulnerability if also understood by Butler (2004, 2009), MacIntyre (1999), Nussbaum (2006), Ricoeur (2007), Schildrick (2002), and Turner (2006).

Motherhood was a concern at the core of caring theories and practices from the mid-80s, debate which took a more political turn in the mid 90's, in the context of feminist care theory rooted in the second feminist wave that explored maternal practices (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984; Ruddick, 1989). Virginia Held (2006) identifies Sara Ruddick as the original pioneer of the theory of care ethics, citing Ruddick's 1980 article "Maternal Thinking" as the first articulation of a distinctly feminine approach to ethics. In this article, and in her later book of the same title (1989), Ruddick uses care ethical methodology to theorize from the lived experience of mothering, rendering a unique approach to moral reasoning and a ground for a feminist politics of peace. Ruddick explains how the practices of "maternal persons" (who may be men or women), exhibit cognitive capacities or conceptions of virtue with larger moral relevance. Ruddick's analysis, which forges strong associations between care ethics and motherhood, has been both well-received and controversial. Joan Tronto's understood motherhood beyond essentialism (1993) to establish the importance of care as *assistance* and moral political concept, as she famously defined it as an "activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair our "world" so that we can experience it as best as possible. That world includes our bodies, [our selves, and] our environments [sic], into which we seek to weave a complex, life-sustaining web" (Tronto, 1993, p. 103). MAC's work contributes to an understanding of mothering through practice which from meaning caring in the house, goes on to mean caring more widely for and within society. Ruddick who conceptualizes care as a practice (1989), explicitly defines mothers not as those who have had the physical experience of gestation. A mother is a person who takes responsibility for the lives of her children and for whom providing childcare constitutes a significant part of her work life. Although most mothers have been and are women, motherhood is potentially a job for men and women (Ruddick 1989, p. 40). After Ruddick, more recently Van Nistelrooij (2022) also explains that the care practices of preserving, nursing, and training children are the practices of "mothering" and can be taken on by anyone.

The verb "mothering" (to become mothers) should not be confused with ideologies of "motherhood" in which a mother's identity is fixed. Being maternal means, what people do and can do, which is not linked to their gender but rather the result of social, moral and political practices. Ruddick's "practical" way of thinking helps her to separate sexual identity ("the feminine") from the moral and political thought that arises from the practices of caring for a child ("motherhood"). An analysis in line with feminist theory, which emphasizes practices, the social distribution of these practices, non-dualism (male -female, culture-nature, reason-emotion, detachment-attachment, etc.), and fundamental gender equality.³

³ Others developed from Ruddick's early work and saw 'the maternal' as a highly relevant political and feminist issue (O'Reilly 2008, 2010, 2021). O'Reilly, A. (Ed.). (2021). *Maternal Theory: Essential Readings, The 2nd*

Interestingly, both care and art operate, and impact the world, through practice. Tronto (1993), Ruddick (1989), Barnes (2012) and Held (2006) conceptualize care as a practice, as it is something we do that includes a certain attitude as well as "a form of practical rationality" (Tronto, 1993, pp. 108-109; Ruddick, 1989, p. 13 ff.). Art practice and the artist's *studio experience* also includes the *theorizing* that occurs within the creative practical process, and which produces the specific knowing of *transcognition*, a process that "captures the movement and purposeful searching of the artistic mind" (Sullivan, 2005, p. 190). Practices which are based on lived experience, at the core of all care ethics, feminism⁴ and MAC's art practice.

The Feminist Studio Workshop at the Woman's Building in LA

A lot has been written at the time and over the years on the Woman's Building and feminist art scene in Los Angeles (LA),⁵ and for the purpose of this article it useful to focus only on aspects that are relevant to frame Mother Art Collective's link to that scene. The collective contributed to the Woman's Building (1973/74) which was located in the former building of the Chouinard Art School building near downtown LA. The Woman's Building took the name from the structure created for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and was a context for the provision of studio and exhibition spaces for women, who at the time were not integrated in the art system. As part of its vision, it focused on the integration of art, the development of women's experiences, and the women's movement.

Edition. Demeter Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1s2t0hn>; O'Reilly, A. (Ed.). (2008). FEMINIST MOTHERING, Atate University of NY Press.

⁴ Initial enquiry in women's lived experiences, within a feminist standpoint, reveals the way in which male-dominated ideologies distort reality. Feminist scholars working within a number of disciplines - such as Dorothy Smith, Nancy Hartsock, Hilary Rose, Sandra Harding, Patricia Hill Collins, Alison Jaggar and Donna Haraway - have advocated taking women's lived experiences, particularly experiences of (caring) work, including: Sandra Harding, ed., *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader* New York and London: Routledge, 2004; Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges" in Harding 2004; Diana Mulinari, & Kerstin Sandell. (1999). Exploring the Notion of Experience in Feminist Thought. *Acta Sociologica*, 42(4), 287-297. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4201163>; Miriam Solomon, "Standpoint and Creativity," *Hypatia* 24(4) 2009: 226-237.

⁵ "The Woman's Building and Los Angeles' Leading Role in the Feminist Art Movement," in the e-book, *[From Site to Vision] the Woman's Building in Contemporary Culture*, edited by Sondra Hale and Terry Wolverton, (2007).



Figure 1. Maria Karras, Woman's Building—Grandview location, 1973. Image shot for the first Feminist Studio Workshop brochure. c Maria Karras.

In 1973, within this context artist Judy Chicago, graphic designer Sheila Levant de Bretteville, and art historian Arlene Raven founded the Feminist Studio Workshop (FSW), one of the first independent schools for women artists.⁶ The founders established the workshop as a non-profit alternative education centre committed to developing art based on women's experiences. The FSW focused not only on the development of art skills, but also on the development of women's experiences and the incorporation of those experiences into their artwork. Central to this vision was the idea that art should not be separated from other activities related to the developing women's movement. The FSW shared space with other organizations and enterprises including several performance groups, Womanspace Gallery, Sisterhood Bookstore, the National Organization of Women, and the Women's Liberation Union. Lucy Lippard (2007) states:

The Woman's Building was the capital of cultural feminism, where the spiritual and the political met and rowdily merged. It was an off-center center, defying the marginalization of women's lives and arts. In 1973, when it was founded, a women's

⁶ In addition to material, I was able to access at the Library of the Getty Research Institute, a large part of the documents relating to this history are accessible digitally in the Woman's Building records, 1970-1992. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution [<https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/womans-building-records-6347/historical-note>, accessed on 12/-02/2024].

community was something new and very appealing. To visit the Woman's Building then was like vacationing at a wonderful, healing resort (2007, p.12).

Though the new context also proved to be a difficult one for some to adapt to, as Lippard also states:

To live there was obviously a lot more demanding [...] It provided not a room of one's own but of our own, and sharing did not always come easily to all the fledgling egos occupying it. As the Building became "home," the community was also "family"—a situation that was at once comforting and threatening. Leaders— though there weren't supposed to be any, and no one wanted to replicate the psychological tensions of the mother/daughter relationship—encouraged ego-expanding ambition along with community, and the two were not always compatible (2007, p.12).

This was also partly how MAC collective felt, they formed out of attending the Feminist Studio Workshop (FSW) they attended in 1973/74, and then continued to work independently. The FSW context is particularly interesting in the approach adopted which revolved around lived experience, through for example the so called 'consciousness raising' stage, for which a topic relevant to that experience was selected and expanded upon. This was then the basis to produce art (Chicago, 1982).

Performance was the preferred medium to convey these exchanges, and still quite experimental at the time, thus contributing to positioning the work taking place around the FSW at the core of cutting-edge art making. Steven Durland, editor of High Performance magazine (1983-1997), recalls that that:

...was a time when the artworld seemed like the only interesting work being done was coming out of the feminist artworld [...] the way they were taking an aesthetic and politicizing it. [and] they (oriented it toward) autobiography. Now that's used by artists from cultures outside the mainstream for self and group affirmation. It's a way of letting people know they aren't alone (1992, p. 28).⁷

MAC contributed to forming FSW in 1973, and according to a later poster of its activities in 1977, FSW was a:

⁷ Steven Durland, quoted in Jan Breslauer, "Woman's Building Lost to a Hitch in 'Herstory,'" Los Angeles Times, January 7, 1992, this is found in Hale S. and Wolverton, T. (eds) *From Site to Vision the Woman's Building in Contemporary Culture*, e-book [<https://thewomansbuilding.org/images/FSTV%20PDFs/Meyer.pdf> 15-03-2024], p 28.

women's support community committed to discovering, exploring, creating, and sharing women's culture with the public.⁸

It continues by stating "the purpose of our learning situation is to create community; develop the unique situation of mutual support and responsible mutual criticism; and make strong, articulate individual and collective work."⁹

The FSW adopted collective teaching and learning methods like consciousness-raising, crits groups, and the use of performance, skills development in video and graphic art, and included different specific programs, and teachers training.

⁸ Woman's Building (Los Angeles, Calif.). Advertisement for the Feminist Studio Workshop at the Woman's Building, 1977. Woman's Building records, 1970-1992. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Members of the Feminist Studio Workshop Collective at that point were designer Sheila de Bretteville, art historian Ruth Iskin, performance artist Suzanne Lacy, novelist and poet Deena Metzger, art historian Alren Raven, and graphic artist Helen Roth.

⁹ Ibid.

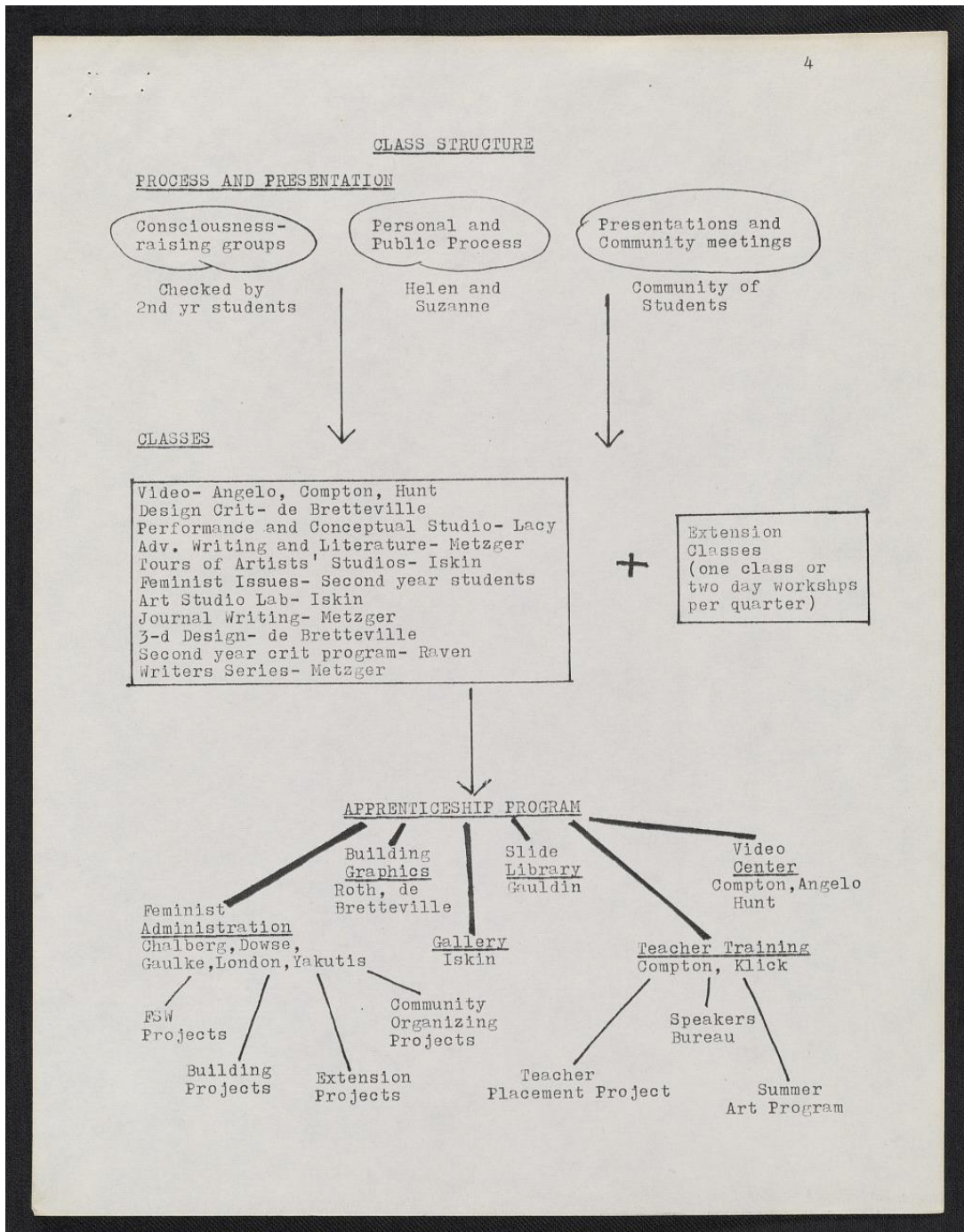


Figure 2. Woman's Building (Los Angeles, Calif.). Curriculum for the Feminist Studio Workshop at the Woman's Building, between 1976 and 1980. Woman's Building records, 1970-1992. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/items/detail/curriculum-feminist-studio-workshop-womans-building-12734>.

Consciousness raising (or awareness raising, Crook, 2018; Yu 2018; Brownmiller, 1999; Sarachild, 1973; Willis, 1984) is a form of activism which originated in United States and adopted feminist groups in the late 1960s in New York (New York Radical Women in 1967), to then spread throughout the United States. Raising consciousness was a way to helping oneself and helping others to become aware of systematic forms of oppression and politically conscious, by bringing women together to discuss and analyse their lives, without interference from the presence of men.¹⁰ The FSW was born as part of this phenomenon in social history, which has widely influenced art practices at the time (Tobin, 2023, Fields, 2012, Phelan, 2012). FSW collective declared that:

Through consciousness-raising, study and work, women learn to connect with, draw upon, and validate their own personal experiences and to understand their experiences in a historical and political context. It is this individual, group and class information that becomes the raw material for our creative efforts (Crook, 2018).¹¹

¹⁰ More on the potential issues of inclusion in the phenomenon see for example Betty Freidan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), London 2010.

¹¹ *ibid*

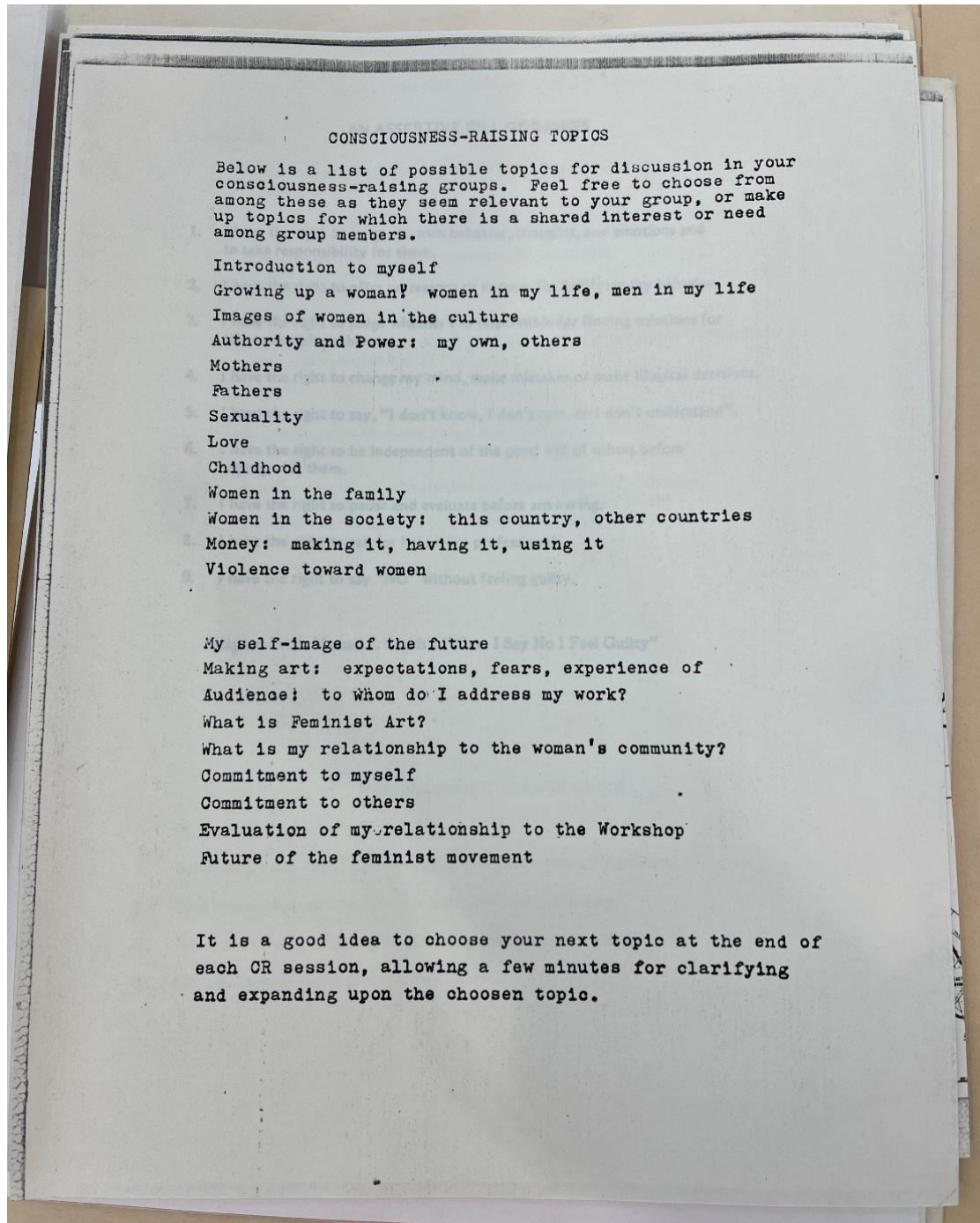


Figure 3. Consciousness-raising topics, in Mother Art Collective records, Getty Research Institute LA, picture by Elena Cogni

Suzanne Siegel of MAC stated:

The CR [Mother Art Consciousness-Raising] in that group was really important because we really dealt with issues about what it meant to be mother. What our relationship to our mothers were. We dealt with a whole lot of issues in that dual identity and trying to make a place for ourselves in terms of the art world and as mothers. At the time it seemed really important to be able to say you could do both. I think now, almost 20 years later, it is almost taken for granted that you can do both those roles [...]" (Moravec, 1992).

Suzanne specifies further with me for the purpose of this article:

The CR group I reference here was one formed by mother art outside the FSW. At the FSW, we each were randomly assigned to a CR group, some of which were more successful and compatible than others. In my CR group, we each created symbolic self-portraits (Cogni, Mother Art, 2023).

The Feminist Studio Workshop Collective emphasised the connection between CR and art:

by working together in a feminist community, we have not only created from present realizations of past experience, but we have had new and unique interactions, thus changing our art. We have re-defined the function of art as rising consciousness, inviting dialogues and transforming culture—a definition which reflects our awareness of the social nature of art and our commitment to the public.

Betty Ann Brown,¹² stated that in the “Feminist Art Education at the Los Angeles Woman’s Building,” the “unleashing of self,” was as a preface to social change. This intention is certainly at the core of Mother Art’s response to an invitation sent by Ruth Iskin, Lucy Lippard, and Arlene Raven for 1976 "What is Feminist Art?" exhibition at the Woman's Building—link which I found in the Woman's Building records, 1970-1992. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian¹³. The response consisted of the statement below.

¹² “Feminist Art Education at the Los Angeles Woman’s Building,” in the same volume.”

¹³ Woman's Building records, 1970-1992. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/items/detail/mother-art-response-to-what-feminist-art-12899>.

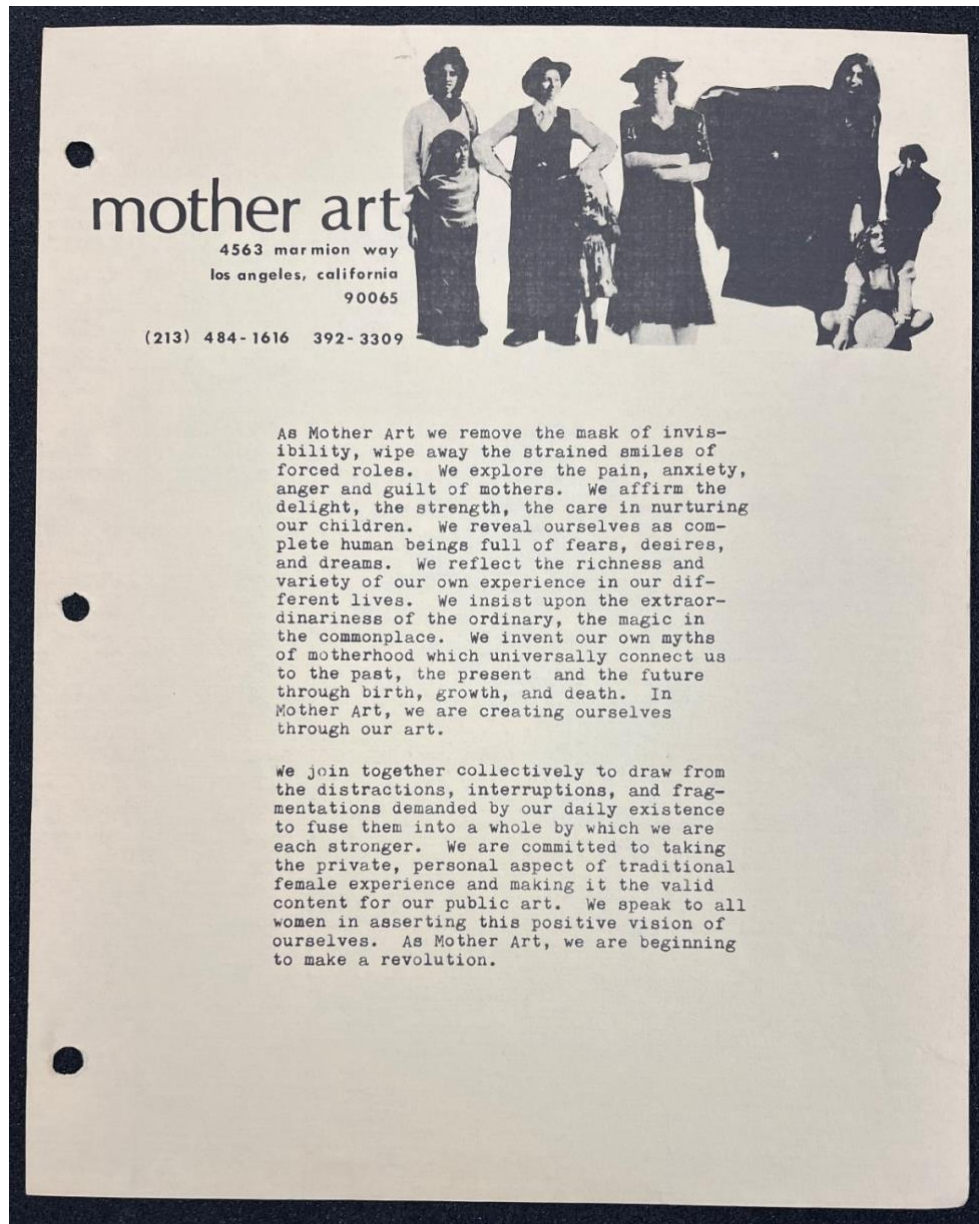


Figure 4. (Artists' Statement: 1 p. : typescript, ill. ; 28 x 22 cm. Mother Art. Mother Art response to "What is Feminist Art?" between 1976 and 1977. Woman's Building records, 1970-1992. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/items/detail/mother-art-response-to-what-feminist-art-12899>. This image was taken by Elena Cologni of the version held at Getty Library, Research Institute, 2017.M.60 (box 1, f.4)

This beautiful statement is a love letter to their togetherness and a declaration of intent in working in a new form of public art. In it, they pledge to: ‘draw from the distractions, interruptions and fragmentations demanded by our daily existence to fuse them into a whole by which we are each stronger.’

The context, and methods adopted in the FSW and absorbed by MAC seem to me to influence the themes and approaches in their work afterwards, which embed some preoccupations associated with an ethics of lived, concrete experiences (Brennan, 1999, p. 861).

Mother Art Collective’s Aesthetics



Helen Million, Suzanne Siegel, Gloria Hajduk, Laura Silagi (1979)

Figure 5. (article and image appeared in MS Magazine, 1979).

MAC were actively part in establishing the Woman's Building, they explained to me:

“...when the woman's building opened, it was in need of repair, so workshop participants painted walls, sanded floors, and constructed studio space, using power tools. To create a place for women's art was physically demanding and empowering, Mother Art members drove a forklift in order to build the playground: a new experience for us” (Cognigni, Mother Art, 2023)

MAC's work is significant in advancing the understanding of how women/mother artists were finding ways of working though they were at the margins of society, and of the art system itself. MAC was established by five artists from the Feminist Studio Workshop, based at the Woman's Building who lacked support from their instructors and fellow participants who did not have children and did not believe it feasible for parents to be serious artists (Suzanne Siegel, 2023). Jan Cook, Christine Kruse, Helen Million, Suzanne Siegel, and Laura Silagi began meeting weekly in 1973 to advocate for their needs as both mothers and artists - Velene Campell and Gloria Hajduk joined later. Deborah Krall became a member of Mother Art after she had her first child. Though it was an exciting new context for women, as seen above, it was also a complicated one, so as part of the first Feminist Studio Workshop, Mother Art's first project was to create a space at the Woman's Building for children, who had not previously been permitted onsite. Their approach was controversial even within the feminist movement, and to confront the limits imposed over women artists who were mother the group began to work collaboratively, and to curate exhibitions of work by these artists at the same venue. “The first thing we did was build the rainbow playground with our children. Then we curated the “By Mothers” exhibition” (Cognigni, Mother Art, 2023).

Their work anticipated the wave of art projects and exhibitions on mothers and motherhood¹⁴ since, until the recent raise of new opportunities and support for artists who are mothers. This achievement is certainly due to those who fought for us before, like MAC, but some of the issues are recurrent, real nodes within the very condition of being artists and mothers. Most importantly, some of the battles for women's rights won in those days, are never to be taken for granted, so this work is still central awareness building in our society. This discussion of

¹⁴ To name only a few: Hettie Judah, *Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood* exhibition Arnolfini, Bristol (2024); *Real Families: Stories of Change*. Exhibition, Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge (2023 - 2024); Procreate Project, London (2019); I also developed a few projects including *Seeds of Attachment*, in collaboration to the Woman Art Collection, the Centre for Family Research in Cambridge, and the Freud Museum in London (2016/18). Numerous publications including: *FEMINIST ART AND THE MATERNAL* Andrea Liss 2009 among many.

MAC's work in relation to feminist care aesthetics attempts to renew the understanding of their work so that it can be appreciated as pioneering some concerns artists continue to work on today.

Relationality and Interdependence



Figure 6. Laura, Suzanne, and Deborah with the art installation presented at Otis Art Institute *Doin' It in public* 2011 (2023, ph. Elena Cognini).

MAC trajectory in the understanding of motherhood is particularly relevant here as they state that in their life and art, from caring for their children 'evolved to caring about the planet.' An uncanny reminder of Tronto's famous statement above (1990). As we were sitting in Laura's studio in April 2023, I asked if they considered their work as mothers as political, to which Laura replied: "of course, it came out of oppression, which is a motivation for everybody to fight something. It is when it's oppressive to you and then you see it's how oppressive it is for others." This attitude underpins all their work and is embedded in collaborations, as they involve others through conversations and co-production (Hathaway, 1978).

As I asked about their collaborative way of working and their *shared aesthetics*, what emerged is that a multidisciplinary approach was adopted by the collective as each member had a different background. They clarified:

Each of us had come to Mother Art as practicing artists doing our own work. We were all mothers and that was a criterion for joining the group. Deborah has been a fiber artist and then became intrigued with sculpture as a way to express ideas inside and outside of objects, such as volcanoes and flowers. Suzanne had been an abstract painter who later used collage in ways to explore her role as a feminist, often combining religious symbols of the Virgin Mary in different household settings, usually humorous. Laura Silagi studied with Eleanor Antin, noted performance artist who employed narratives in her works. She was interested in photography and film, using those to create short poem-narratives. She started out using formal compositions to explore ideas, such as the edges of the frame. She also became interested in depicting narratives of emotions, such as loneliness, isolation, and domestic violence. Christy Kruse drew large-scale charcoal drawings of flowers and violation. Helen Million Ruby was interested in her female lineage which she recorded using photography and performance. Later Helen created her own mythological creatures in prints and paintings. Jan drew surreal images of people, often creating her own unsettling world. Velene, a poet, primarily used images of nature. Gloria Hajduk, an assemblage artist, created witty pieces from discarded objects, often with puns and social commentary (Cognigni, E., *Mother Art*, 2024).

These different backgrounds were brought into the collective's context, and they state, "as time went on, we drew on those to create artworks about social and political issues that affect women and children" (2023). Furthermore, Suzanne said that "part of what the feminist studio workshop was about was connecting your life and your art, or to use your own life experience for that" (2023), and as they talked about their practice it became clear how subjectivity was central in defining the work, more so than the format it might take.

MAC's collaborative mode of working speaks to the feminist ethics of care, which emphasizes lived experience but also relationality (Pulcini, 2001). But as one could argue that 'the maternal' is relational and is built on interdependence (Stone, 2019), for the member of the collective, this has to be balanced with their autonomy in the co-creative process.



Figure 7. Mother Art Members at Suzanne's home. Left to right: Suzanne, Helen Million, Laura, Gloria Hajduk. Courtesy: The Getty Research Institute, photograph by Elena Cogni.

And these aspects are embedded in MAC's social engaged and public artwork, and resonate with my approach,¹⁵ which leads to co-production of art (and knowledge), that is meaningful to the locations where the art and research take place and is specific to the communities involved. Much has been written on relational and participatory art practice (Bourriaud, 1998/2002; Reckitt, 2013; Cogni, 2016; Bishop, 2011). Within the context of feminist art

¹⁵ For example in: *Rockfluid* (2011/13-2014/15), outcome of a residency at the University of Cambridge, Faculty of Experimental Psychology (awarded with two Grant for the Arts, Arts Council of England, and Escalator Visual Art Retreat at Wysing Arts Centre, Escalator live art, Colchester Arts Centre); *Seeds of Attachment* (2016-18) in collaboration with the Centre for Family Research, University of Cambridge, and the Woman's Art Collection, University of Cambridge and Freud Museum, London; *The Body of/at Work 2021-* (awarded a Grant for the Arts, Arts Council of England).

developed in the LA art scene in the 70's, MAC's relational and participatory approach through their interventions have influenced and contributed to change the cultural and social contexts in which they operated by mirroring other similar practices in the US scene (Cottingham, 2013; Brodsky, 1994; Abrams, 2016) by creating new connections and by stimulating debates on urgent social and political issues.

MAC had a clear sense of how their art impacted not only the art scene in LA but also the wider pedagogical, social and political context, starting from within the Woman's Building. Suzanne discusses how in the Woman's Building the direction was decided through meetings and at some point, there was a discussion around access to the studios.



Figure 8. RAINBOW playground, Courtesy of Mother Art Collective's archive.

It was decided that you could bring dogs to the building but no children. You could not bring children to the studios [...] it was a very anti-child attitude among some of the young single women [...] we as mothers felt out of the loop [...] there was a question if you wanted to be a feminist you had to be single, dedicated to your art.' 'A group of us formed what was called Mother Art which was at the end of the first year [...] we really wanted to make that as a positive statement. So, we did a number of things as a group. The first thing we did was to curate the group show called *By Mothers* [1975

and 76]. We solicited work from all over, not just from among people in the Building, and had all this work by and about mothering [...]. And the other thing we did was we built a playground at the Woman's Building [...] at Grandview.¹⁶



Figure 9. RAINBOW playground, Courtesy of Mother Art Collective's archive.

Their collaborative way of working is very interesting. As I asked members of the collective how they came to share their ideas to agree on a format (or formats) Suzanne said:

we would meet and discuss political and social issues that were affecting us as women and mothers. We would toss out a number of ideas for ways we could respond. When we reached a consensus, we would decide how we would divide the labor necessary to create the piece (Cogni, Mother Art, 2023).

In particular, among the most conceptually rich of Mother Art's projects is 'Laundry Works'

¹⁶ Moravec, M., (1992). Interview with Suzanne Siegel, The Woman's Building History Project, Los Angeles (transcript found in Getty Archive, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles).

(1977), I felt close to as an artist, because of my own project ‘The Body of/at Work’ (2021), pointing to the invisibility of women’s labour, including that of washing. Laundry Works included a series of site-specific performances in laundromats throughout Los Angeles in which they hung their art and poetry on clotheslines and discussed with the people doing their laundry the work involved in domestic tasks— each mini-performance was timed to the wash-and-dry cycle. Suzanne states that in this project they were each “doing something that contributed to the whole, you know, going into the laundry and stringing the line and hanging things was something that we collaborated on.”

Andrea Liss (2009) states that

This project's clever timing and well considered site of the Laundromat emphasized the harried lives of mothers, especially poor mothers, as well as the lack of cultural space accorded to mother-workers and mothers working as artists. Articulate, timely and provocative, Mother Art considered the effects of its work, especially Laundry Works, on a deep social and psychic level” (p.2).

In it, MAC are mentioned to say:

It crossed class lines; there was something absolutely, wonderfully material about dealing with the sheer transformation of dirty clothes-wet, dry and the cycle, the literal revolution-and the metaphors are ripe for connections with social revolution, perhaps even something unimagined, perhaps utopian” (Liss, 2009, p. 3).¹⁷

¹⁷ Interview with Mother Art by Andrea Liss, Los Angeles, November 5, 2005, in Liss (2009).

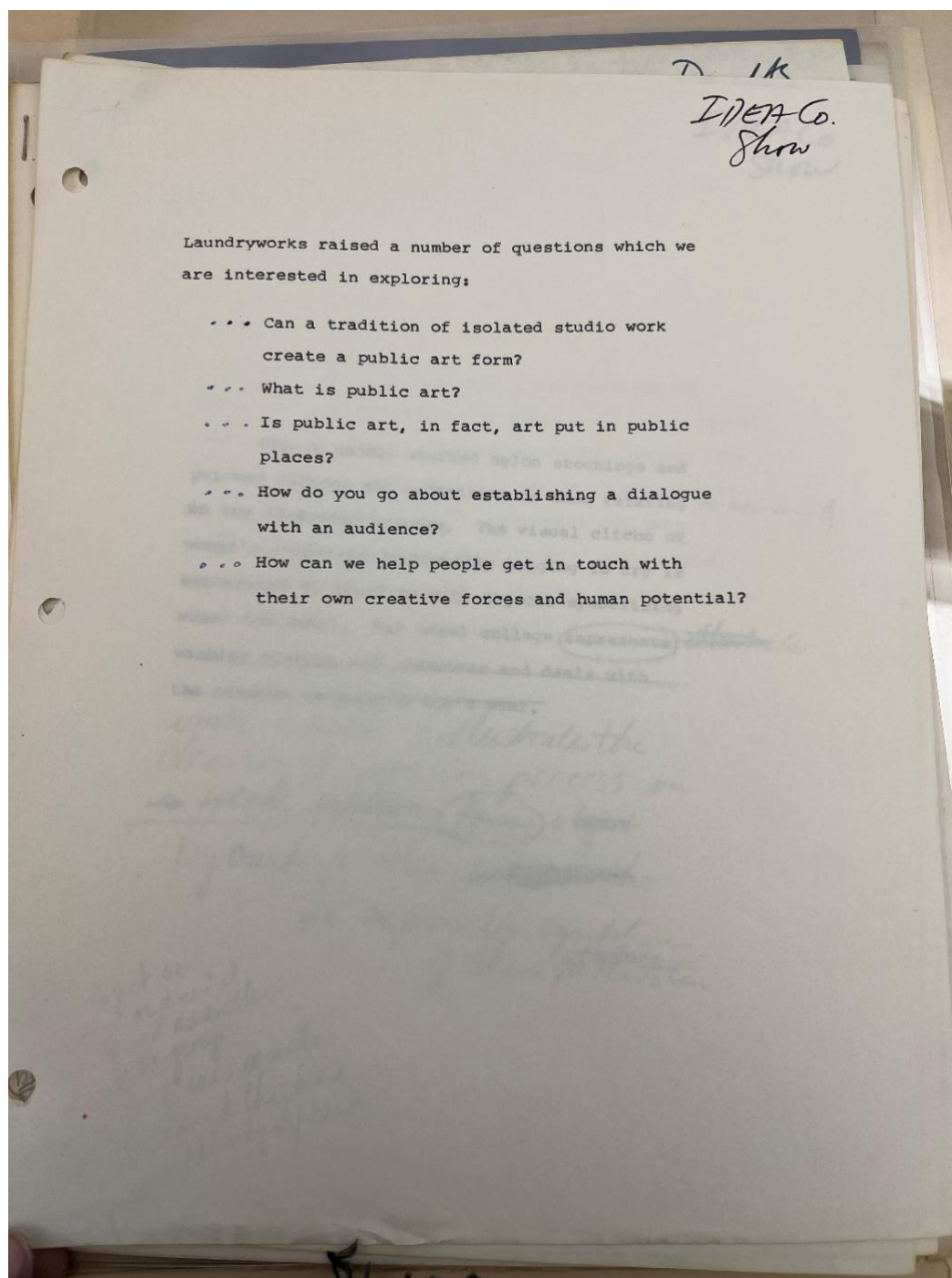


Figure 10. Working drafts (Getty Archives), picture by Elena Cogni.

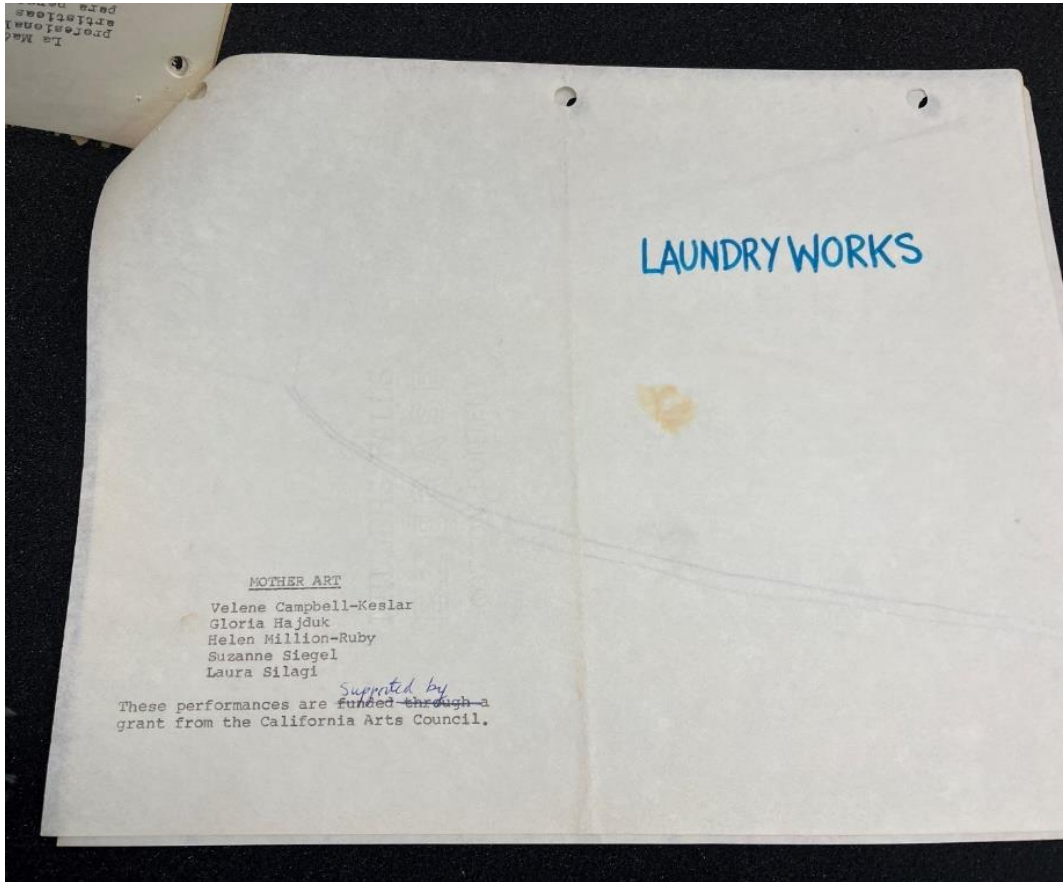


Figure 11. Working drafts (Getty Archives), picture by Elena Cologni.

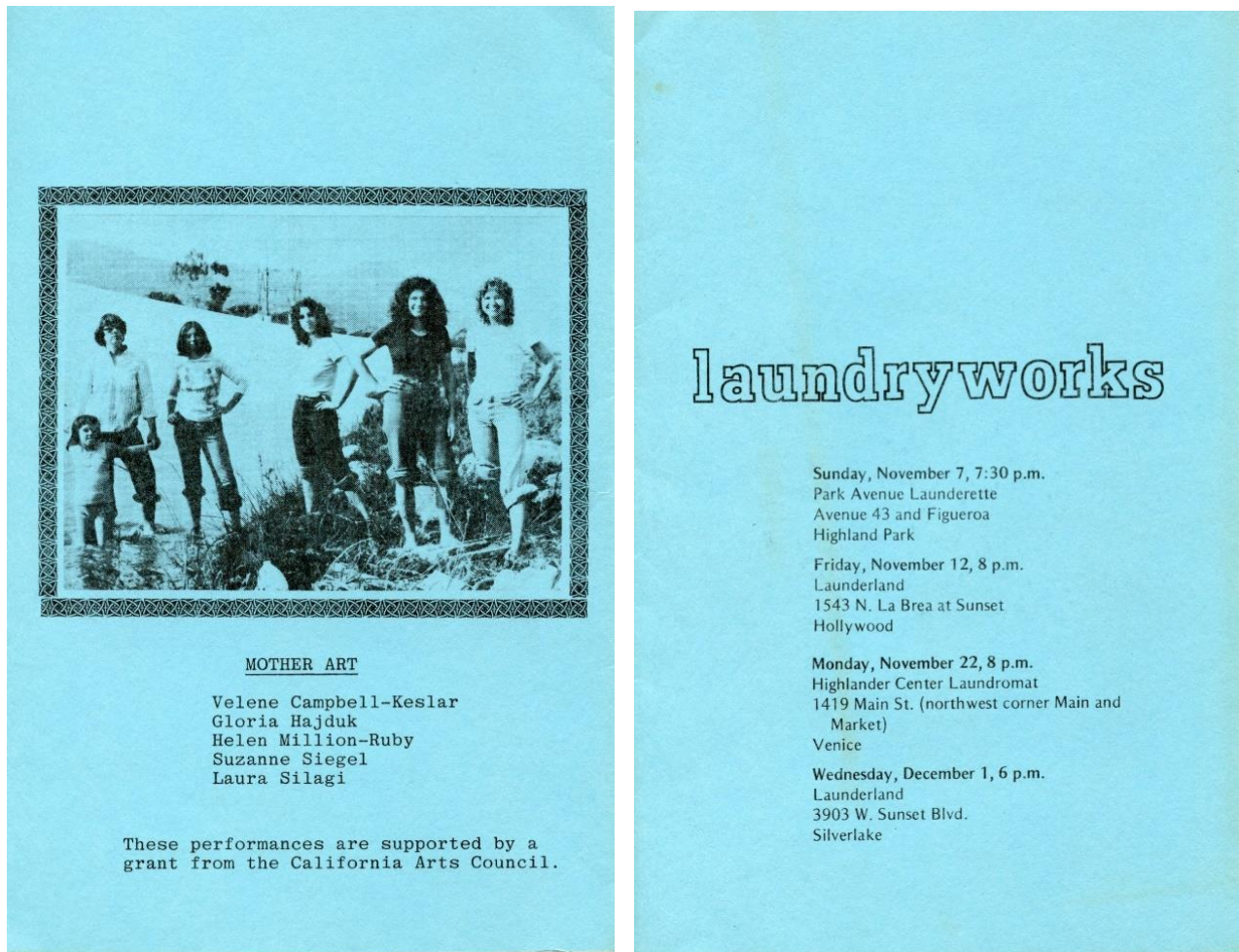


Figure 12. *Laundryworks*, Booklet accompanying the project, front and back, Courtesy Mother Art Collective.

The collective states that

Laundry Works was a transformative artwork for Mother Art. We started out by thinking about the ritual of cleansing. We went to the Los Angeles River to photograph ourselves involved in washing clothing in the river. Cleansing is part of many rituals in various religions, and women have been involved in this for eons. It is also a social activity in traditional cultures, and we were exploring that idea. For our group, the laundromat functioned as a public symbol of the work done by women in the home (Cogni, Mother Art, 2023).¹⁸

¹⁸ Interview, 24 April 2023, Los Angeles

MAC's project very much speaks to art that takes place in public space, that connects communities in specific areas of the city, where they are invited to also share their private dimension in public. For the purpose of clarifying the development process MAC stated that the format for the performances was arrived at by collaboration and consensus.

We selected Los Angeles laundromats in the different neighbourhoods we lived in, five in all. When we entered the laundromats, we put clothes in a washer and moved them to the dryer when the wash was done. Thus, the installation/performance lasted the washer and dryer cycle and consisted of the members of Mother Art sequentially hanging their work on a clothesline that we had strung throughout the laundromat space. Each member of Mother Art interpreted their relation to cleaning individually in their artwork (Cognigni, Mother Art, 2023).

They further specify that Suzanne Siegel was interested in the repetition of housework and the invisibility of that work. She conveyed this idea through a series of photos of herself at the washing machine that repeated and faded. Suzanne explained "I had things that faded. I had self-portrait photographs of myself at the washing machine arranged in a grid that slowly faded to blanks. It referenced the repetition of housework, its invisibility and devaluation in the masculine world" (2023). Velene Campbell wrote a poem about nature with fragments printed on a number of pillowcases. The patrons in the laundromat selected random pieces to hang on a clothesline, which formed a different poem each time it was assembled. Helen Ruby created clothespin masks, relating these masks to primitive rituals. Gloria Hajduk utilized diapers and towels as a ground for her images. They stated "We created a brochure that we gave out to laundromat patrons. It included poems, images, and a questionnaire about attitudes toward doing laundry"

When asked whether they would define it as an installation or a site specific, Laura Silagi (2023) responded: "Well, it was performance art installation." In the installation, Laura had large photos of water that she had covered with gauze. She dipped the photos in water as a play on the idea of cleansing. When asked, she explained further:

We went to a river. The L.A. River, and we washed clothes in the river. And the whole genesis of this was from Helen, who wrote a grant for \$700 to the California Arts Council. So, the idea that we would create art about cleansing and also to bring it into a place where the public actually did that, particularly women did that activity, although there were a lot of men. And so that was the original idea behind it was to make, you know, because we all would say the *private is the public*. The private is political. What was that phrase? *Personal is political*. This was a feminist statement. We were particularly interested in private tasks surrounding the home and children.

We thought of the private or personal actions as being political, revealing the way one interacts with the world. Although sometimes devalued, without those activities, such as child rearing, the fabric of society would fall apart. We wanted to convey this idea though placing our work in non-art venues for the public to see (Cogni, Mother Art, 2023).

This is what interested me the most in their work: the relationship between public, private, personal, political. The fact that the work is outside of the gallery, outside of the places where art is usually seen, and I told them:

This was quite a statement at the time. This is what makes the work so strong and effective. And so meaningful as well because you enter the places where things happen in the everyday. And so, then you made that connection just now, in your slip of the tongue, really. You connected the personal with the private, and the public. I'm interested in this (2023).

The format of the projects by MAC were not defined, the issues they were addressing were decided as a response to the social and political climate of the time, but in all they clearly referred to the dichotomy private/public feminists were contesting, within the famous slogan 'private is political.' This was also the foundation of the work carried out at the Woman's Building and the Feminist Studio Workshop. Sheila de Bretteville discusses with and Bia Lowe the relationship between private and public, which informed notions of participatory democracy and design which she formed in the Women's Design Program in 1971 and the Woman's Building in 1973. These are today very much relevant for participatory art, spatial practices and art in the public space, including how one relates to others and space. De Bretteville, stated:

The flow between PUBLIC and PRIVATE is forever of interest to me and I have, like many other people in the intervening decades, tried to look in a more nuanced way at how these two aspects of myself interweave. Clearly, there is a hunger for exposure and access to the intimate facts with little interest in socially constructed notions we possess, the pathologies at work, or whatever complex needs and desires create these events.' [...] that "private" at the Building meant time to look at past and present experience in ways that would allow each woman to transform and condense her content into art. And when each woman felt her work could be seen by others, then an exhibition could be put up in the Building, and the work would become "public." [...]

She then gives an example and states:

that class I taught, “Private Conversation, Public Announcements,” in which women made posters about places in Los Angeles. They created enough of a relationship with the people at those places for their posters to be accepted as publicly displayed statements about that place and that woman’s feelings about being there (De Bretteville and Lowe, 2017, p. 246).

A process that not only conceptually links personal and private stories and makes them public, but also the context where this process takes place so that public space becomes a central tool for art. It seems to me that this relates quite well to MAC’s approach.

Discussing MAC’s project in terms of the relation between private and public, Suzanne said: “We were thinking of this work that is done in the home, which is private. So, we were taking the private work done in the home and doing it in a public context where they were also doing the same kind of work.” The relationship and dichotomy between private and public is beautifully discussed and challenged by care ethicist Elena Pulcini, in particular the idea of private as related to the feminine and public as related to the masculine. Pulcini (2001, 2023, 2014)¹⁹ contends that female specificity in the public sphere had proven ineffective, a fruitless strategy for the theory of care to acquire a political value and the moral impact it deserves (Tronto, 1993). As a feminist and care ethicist theorist she sought to promote equality of the sexes, classes, and racial and ethnic minority groups, following Tronto and Fisher and Puig de la Bellacasa (2017), defining of care as a social, moral and political practice rather than one linked to gendered experiences. More specifically, Tronto believes that the first care ethicists on maternal practices (especially Noddings, 1984) did not recognize “the political context of their moral arguments at their peril” (Tronto, 1993, p. 3) and as a consequence of a strategy politically naive and ineffective. For these reasons she developed an ethics of care as a broad political and moral theory. Joan Tronto's pioneering work was an invaluable new impetus for the ethics of care at the point when it found itself increasingly stuck in binary oppositions of sex and gender.

Hannah Arendt (1989) underlined that in modernity the private sector takes on a new legitimacy and this happens at the price of a clear separation and hierarchy between the two spheres of action. Similarly, Pulcini suggests that since modernity, care itself has been relegated exclusively to the intimate and private dimension, and she argues that in this sense care becomes a legitimizing element of that public/private separation which corresponds to

¹⁹ Pulcini, E., ‘La cura le emozioni e il soggetto vulnerabile’ in Merlini F., Bernardini R. Eds. *Eranos Yearbook*, 2013-2014, L’anima tra incanto e disincanto. Florence, Italy / Italia, September / Settembre 2014; E. Pulcini, *L’individuo senza passioni. Individualismo moderno e perdita del legame sociale*, Bollati Boringhieri 2001; E. Pulcini, *Il potere di unire. Femminile, desiderio, cura*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2003.

one of the many dualisms of Western thought; including in the male/female one, which means that the fate of care actually coincides with the fate of women, as subjects identified with the private. Pulcini traces the origin of this in Rousseau's thought to the self-giving and maternal image that was destined to become a true pillar of modernity. The woman, wife and mother, becomes the subject of care par excellence, who acts in the intimate sphere through a wise and maternal management of feelings and dedication to the other (to one's own family), called to those reproductive and educational functions through which she fulfils her presumed natural vocation (2014). In this context, motherhood is defined by the meaning given to the age of care in terms of relationships. A hierarchical opposition is thus consolidated which sees on the one hand, the autonomous and rational subject (male) who acts in the public sphere and in the world, on the other, a dependent subject (female) who is confined to the private and is essentially defined through emotional relationship with the other (2014).

Thus, Pulcini suggests that care became the fundamental need of an altruistic and self-giving subject, effectively mutilated in their identity, defining themselves exclusively through the relationship with the other (as wife, mother, daughter). The result is a sort of splitting of the subject: on the one hand an altruistic subject who establishes an essentially sacrificial relationship with the other; on the other, a selfish subject who establishes a purely instrumental relationship with the other exclusively for the pursuit of his own interests. Pulcini suggests that *rehabilitating care* then means thinking of a new subject: "one that allows us to overcome, together with the male/female contrast, the dichotomous vision between selfishness and altruism, between the priority of the self and the priority of the other in order to recognize the constitutive reality of being with the other."²⁰ (2014, p. 482)

MAC creative trajectory is an example of different ways of actively 'practicing' mothering in society, by considering the caring role in the home, in the public arena, and on the political stage through a practice that is open to others beyond essentialism. From caring for the loved ones to caring for the world. Caring as a form of activism.

²⁰ My translation from the original in Italian.



Figure 13. Laundry Works, 1976 (images courtesy of Mother Art Collective archive).

Laura said:

Well, we actually thought of the laundromat as a place where women wash their clothes, but it wasn't the case when we were there. We have so many men who are, you know, and actually the laundromat, one of the first things we (my husband and I) did before we bought a house was we got to a lot about a washer dryer because it's so tedious going to the laundromat and takes so much time and you can't do anything or you can leave your clothes and hope they're still there [...] So, we went to five different laundromats. In different neighborhoods of Los Angeles, representing where we all lived (Cognigni, Mother Art, 2023).



*Performances in Laundromats
in the Los Angeles.*

*Funded by a \$700 grant from the
California Arts Council, 1977*

Figure 14. Image from *The Mother Art Book* (2020), p. 31.

Legislators Seek Ways to Cut Fat, Don't Have Far to Look

BY W. B. ROOD
Times Staff Writer

SACRAMENTO—Chances are most people would not give a guy \$1,000 to build musical instruments so he could sit under water in a brand new wet suit and play songs for dolphins and whales.

But the California Arts Council did just that, and in hopes of providing a little culture for housewives, the council gave another \$700 of the state's money to a group called Mother Art, which used the grant to stage plays in laundromats.

But that was before last Tuesday when voters, two-thirds of them, passed Proposition 13 in a stunning show of discontent with high taxes and government waste.

Passage of the Jarvis property-tax initiative has touched off the most frantic search in California history for ways to cut the fat in state spending.

Politicians and bureaucrats in Sacramento will not have to hunt far for the most blatant examples, in some cases no further than their own garages.

For instance, there's Atty. Gen. Evelle J. Younger, the Republican gubernatorial nominee who hopes to ride the taxpayer revolt to victory in November in his state-owned, bullet-proof Lincoln Continental.

His opponent in the race, Gov. Brown, traded in former Gov. Ronald Reagan's limousine for a blue Plymouth, but his critics like to point out that as secretary of state Brown enjoyed the comfort of a state-furnished Cadillac.

Last year alone, the state bought 2,500 new cars for a tidy \$11.25 million. All told, state employees have at their disposal about 18,000 cars and trucks.

"I really question the overnight use of a lot of these cars," said one state

payers' money. Department directors get them and exempt employes get them on the theory they are doing state work 20 hours a day."

But the state's massive auto fleet is only the tip of the spending iceberg. The list of programs, projects and bureaucracies that could wither, if not die, as Jarvis fever spreads through the capital is staggering.

Certainly among the standout entries is a \$100,000 mural an artist has been commissioned to paint on the big, rectangular Personnel Building near the state Capitol.

The artist, Terry Schoonhoven of Los Angeles, says he plans to make

Cost overruns on the Capitol project were put at \$2.1 million.

the building "disappear" by painting it to blend into its surroundings.

That commission tops the list of 35 contracts awarded under the Legislature's new \$700,000 Art in Public Buildings Program.

At least taxpayers will have a mural to show for the \$100,000 they are paying Schoonhoven.

There is virtually nothing to show for the more than \$300,000 a month that is being wasted while the courts are deliberating over a contractual hassle involving a project to restore the old State Capitol building.

Work on the restoration project wound down after the Pacific Legal Foundation and an association of subcontractors sued over a requirement that a percentage of subcontracts over \$250,000 must be awarded to minority-controlled contractors.

That requirement was written into enabling legislation for the \$43 mil-

Leon Ralph (D-Los Angeles).

Cost overruns on the project were estimated at \$2.1 million last November, just before a court injunction crippled it.

"The earliest date we can see awarding contracts is Nov. 1. That's based on getting the word tomorrow and we don't have it yet," said a source in the Legislature.

"The cost of overhead and escalation costs is running more than \$300,000 a month. I keep being told we should hear from the courts any minute, but I just don't know."

Meanwhile, Brown has come up with a spending scheme that has proved too much even for many of the Legislature's most experienced spenders.

The governor wants to put the state in the satellite business with a \$5.3 million investment in the Syncom IV scheduled to be launched by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in January, 1980.

Legislators, who have cringed time and again as Brown applied the knife to their pet programs, see the satellite venture as a chance to pay the governor back for violating the old you-pass-my-program and I'll-vote-for-yours system.

The situation was capsulized in a Sacramento watering hole recently when B.T. Collins, a lobbyist for the governor, tried to sell the satellite idea to state Sen. Dennis E. Carpenter (R-Irvine).

"Listen, I tell you this is a good thing. It means communications during disasters, and jobs," Collins said.

Carpenter was not impressed. "You know the first thing we're going to hear back from that thing when it gets up in the air? Gobble, gobble, gobble, gobble," the senator said, mustering his best turkey call.

Los Angeles Times June 12, 1978

Figure 15. Newspaper clipping, LA Times, June 12, 1978.

Laura also said:

After we did the laundry project, we were vilified by the politicization of the grant received which was used as an example of waste, and to justify funding cuts to the arts. So that's why we did all those cleaning up performances afterwards.

Suzanne stated that the local art scene was very supportive.

We had an event called 'Art for Public Consumption' that was in City Hall in the rotunda. And lots of artists and writers came. And ART critics spoke about how, attacking the arts as wasteful and the government spending is the wrong idea and how the arts are really for or are such an important part of society. The arts were under attack and California Arts Council grants were under attack as well. And when you think about our \$700 grant for what we did, it's like none of us got paid, and it wouldn't even pay for paper clips. And it was ridiculous.

Deborah also added that there were art critics who were supportive like Lucy Lippard, Sheila de Bretteville, including triose who wrote about their work such as: Michelle Moravec, Andrea Liss, Jeanne Willette.



Figure 16. Mother Art Cleans Up, 1978. Getty Research Institute, 2017.M.60 (box 2, f.8).

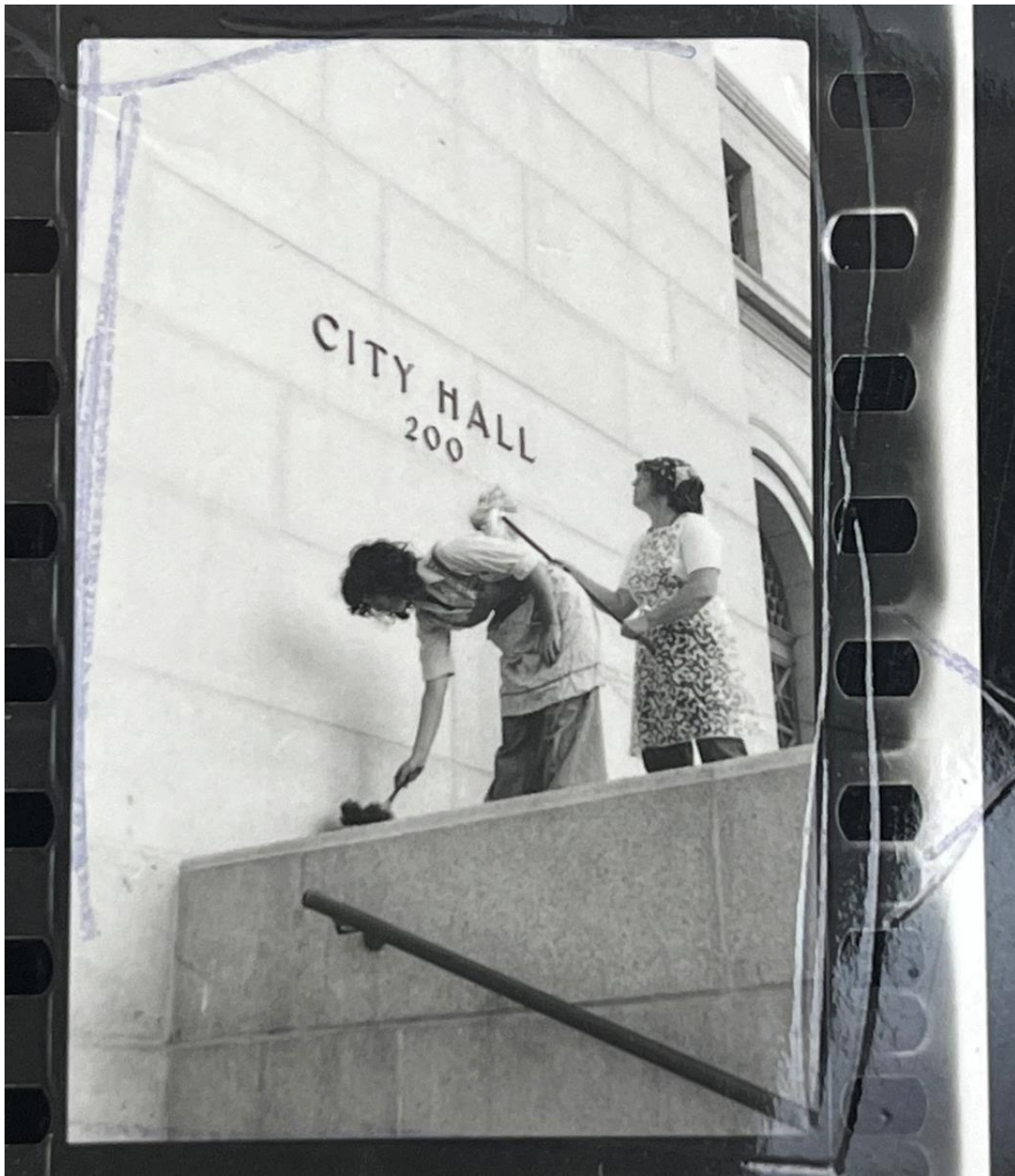


Figure 17. Mother Art Cleans Up, 1978. Getty Research Institute, 2017.M.60 (box 2, f.8).



Figure 18. Digital image detail of Mother Art photomural, in the 2011 exhibition *Doin' It in Public: Feminism and Art* at the Woman's Building exhibition at Otis College of Art and Design, 2017. Getty Research Institute, 2017.M.60 (CM2).

Our ongoing conversation with Mother Art Collective on their work from the 70's in Los Angeles in the 70s is most enlightening in terms of art embedding lived experience, social purpose and caring. Their work 'RAINBOW playground' for children (1973) and 'LAUNDRYWORKS' (1976), represent their pioneer ideas and are examples of a creative caring practice, where the dichotomy public and private is blurred and roles of artist and participants, female and male are erased in the embedded quest to rehabilitate care (Pulcini, 2014) and thus contributing to practicing feminist care aesthetics (Cologni, 2024).

Over time, MAC created works on Abortion, "Not Even If It's You;" the threat of nuclear war "L.A. Guernica;" Migrants, "Flowers for four women:" "Homeless Women" and a piece that celebrated activist women in "The Dining Room Table." They integrated personal stories of women into their work, using the words and voices of those they interviewed in order to

create a connection with the viewer. They utilized a variety of media in their works including video, photography, and performance. Most of their work was shown in nontraditional spaces. As they grew older, they created a self-reflective installation called "Running Out of Time" which recalled their richness of experiences, using shoes with words printed in the shoes' insoles surrounding a clock as the central object. All the topics they dealt with are still relevant and unresolved today and our intergenerational collaboration is testament to this.

MAC creative trajectory is an example of different ways of actively 'practicing' mothering in society, by considering the caring role in the home, in the public arena, through alternative, caring pedagogies, and on the political stage through a practice that is open to others. From caring for the loved ones to caring for the world, they practice caring as a form of activism.

References

- Abrams, H.N. (2016). *Feminist avant-garde: Art of the 1970s: the Sammlung Verbund Collection, Vienna*. Prestel.
- Arendt, H. (1989). *Vita activa: la condizione umana* [Vita active: the human condition]. Translated by, Sergio Finzi. Bompiani
- Balbo, L. (2014). Work, time, care: interconnections and changes. *Politiche Sociali, Social Policies*, (2), pp. 253-262. doi: 10.7389/77342
- Barnes, M. (2012). *Care in everyday life, an ethic of care in practice*. Bristol University Press.
- Bishop, C. (2004). Antagonism and relational aesthetics. *October*, (110), pp. 51–79. doi:10.1162/0162287042379810
- Boldt J. (2017). The interdependence of care and autonomy. In F. Krause & J. Boldt (Eds.) *Care in healthcare: Reflections on theory and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bourriaud, N. (2002). *Relational aesthetics* (S. Pleasance & F. Woods Trans. with the participation of M. Copeland (Original work published 1998). Les presses du reel.
- Breslauer, J. (1992). California performance. *Performing Arts Journal*, 14(2), 87-96. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3245634>
- Brodsky, J. K. (1994). *The power of feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, history and impact*. H.N. Abrams
- Brownmiller, S. (1999). *In our time: Memoir of a revolution*. Dial Press.
- Chicago Women's Liberation Union (1971). *How to start your own consciousness-raising group*. In *Black Maria*.
- Chicago, J. (1982). *Through the Flower: My struggle as a woman artist*. Anchor.
- Cogni E. (2016). A dialogic approach for the artist as an interface in an intercultural society.

- In P. Burnard, E. Mackinlay & K. Powell (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of intercultural arts research*. Routledge.
- Cogni, E. (2020). Caring-with dialogic sculptures. A post-disciplinary investigation into forms of attachment. *PsicoArt – Rivista Di Arte E Psicologia*, 10(10), 19–64. <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2038-6184/11444>
- Cogni, E. & Mother Art (2023). Interview, Los Angeles, 26 April
- Cogni, E. & Mother Art (2024). Interview, online, 31 May
- Cogni, E. (2024). Percipience, embodiment, contamination(s). Practicing a feminist care aesthetics. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 25(si1.25). <http://doi.org/10.26209/ijea25si1.25>
- Cogni, E., & Santomauro, A. (2014). *Un Dialogo [A Dialogue]*. Doppelgaenger, Bari, Italy
- Cottingham, L. (2013). *Seeing through the Seventies: Essays on feminism and art*. Taylor & Francis.
- Crook, S. (2018). The women's liberation movement, activism and therapy at the grassroots, 1968–1985. *Women's History Review*, 27(7): 1152–1168.
- De Bretteville, S. & Lowe, B. (2017). The community of design /The design of community: An email dialogue. In *From site to vision, the woman's building in contemporary culture*, e-book. [<https://thewomansbuilding.org/images/FSTV%20PDFs/BrettevilleLowe.pdf> 15-03-2024]
- Fields, J. (Ed.) (2012). *Entering the picture: Judy Chicago, The Fresno Feminist Art Program, and the collective visions of women artists*. Routledge.
- Finlay, L. (2009). Ambiguous encounters: A relational approach to phenomenological research, *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 9(1), 1-17. DOI: 10.1080/20797222.2009.11433983
- Fisher B., Tronto J. C. (1990). Toward a feminist theory of care. In E. K. Abel & M. K. Nelson (Eds), *Circles of care: Work and identity in women's lives*. State University of New York Press.
- Freeman, J. (1972). The tyranny of structurelessness. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 17, 151–165.
- Freidan, B. (2010). *The feminine mystique*. Penguin. (Original work published 1963)
- Hathaway, D. (1978). Mother art victim of California carving knife. *Newworld*, 6.
- Held, V. (2006). *The ethics of care: personal, political, and global*. Oxford University Press.

- Lippard, L. (2007) FOREWORD. GOING AROUND IN CIRCLES. In: Hale S. and Wolverton, T. (eds) *From Site to Vision the Woman's Building in Contemporary Culture*, e-book [<https://thewomansbuilding.org/images/FSTV%20PDFs/Lippard.pdf> 15-03-2024]
- Liss, A. (2009). *Feminist art and the maternal*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Meyer, L. & Wilding, F. (2010). Collaboration and conflict in the Fresno Feminist Art Program: An experiment in feminist pedagogy. *Paradoxa*, 26, 40-51.
- Moravec, M., (1992). Interview with Suzanne Siegel, The Woman's Building History Project, Los Angeles (transcript found in Getty Archive, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles)
- Nistelrooij, I. (2022). The fluidity of becoming. The maternal body in feminist views of care, worship and theology. In I. van Nistelrooij, M. Sander-Staudt, M. Hamington, (Eds.), *Care ethics, religion, and spiritual traditions* (pp.159-194). Peeters Publishers, Leuven.
- Phelan, P. (2012). *Live art in LA: Performance in Southern California, 1970-1983*. Routledge.
- Pulcini, E. (2001). *L'individuo senza passioni. Individualismo moderno e perdita del legame sociale*, Bollati Boringhieri.
- Pulcini, E. (2003). *Il potere di unire. Femminile, desiderio, cura*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino.
- Pulcini, E. (2014). La cura le emozioni e il soggetto vulnerabile. In F. Merlini, R. Bernardini (Eds.), *Eranos Yearbook, 2013-2014, L'anima tra incanto e disincanto*. Florence, Italy / Italia, September / Settembre.
- Reckitt, H. (2013). Forgotten relations: Feminist artists and relational aesthetics. In A. Dimitrakaki & L. Perry (Eds) *Politics in a glass: Case feminism, exhibition cultures and curatorial transgressions* (pp. 131-156). Liverpool University Press.
- Sarachild, K. (1973) Consciousness-raising: A radical weapon. In *Feminist Revolution: an abridged edition with additional writings* (pp. 144–150). Random House.
- Stake, R. E., Visse, M. (2021). *A paradigm of care*. Information Age Publishing.
- Stone, A. (2019). Dependency, relationality, power, and situatedness. In *Being born: Birth and philosophy* (pp. 85-117). Oxford University Press.
- Tobin, A. (2016). I'll show you mine, if you show me yours: Collaboration, consciousness-raising and feminist-influenced art in the 1970s, *Tate Papers*, 25. <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/tate-papers/25/i-show-you-mine-if-you-show-me-yours>

Tobin, A. (2023). *Women artists together: Art in the age of women's liberation*. Yale University Press.

Wade, S. (2021, April 8) Mother art and the politics of care. Getty.
<https://www.getty.edu/news/mother-art-and-the-politics-of-care/>

Willis, E. (1992). Radical feminism and feminist radicalism. In E. Willis (Ed.), *No more nice girls: Countercultural essays* (pp. 117-150). Wesleyan University Press.

Acknowledgements

This paper is the result of research conducted at and funded by the Getty Research Institute and Archive Library Grant (2023/2025), for Cologni's project 'Mother Art Collective. Towards a Feminist Care Aesthetics.' Further material was kindly provided by Mother Art. The same project was also awarded an Impact Project Fund Stream grant – Quality Research at Anglia Ruskin University, Arts Humanities Education and Social Sciences (2023), and a sabbatical through the Cambridge School of Art, at Anglia Ruskin University (2024). The latter supports collaboration of Cologni and Mother Art with La Sapienza University in Rome and the production of new art. Thank you to all involved in the invaluable exchange, discussion and research around these practices, including Harriet Loffler, Rachel Longaker, Raffaella Perna, Pietro Rigolo, Ilaria Schiaffini.

About the Authors

Elena Cologni is an artist, Associate Professor in Contemporary Art and Critical Practice and Research Lead at the Cambridge School of Art, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (Anglia Ruskin University, UK). Cologni gained a BA in Fine Art from Accademia di Belle Arti Brera in Milan, an MA in Sculpture from Leeds University and a PhD (2004) in Fine Art and Philosophy from University of the Arts London, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design (CSM). Cologni was Post Doctorate Research Fellow at CSM (2004/06 funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council), Research Fellow at York Saint John's University (2007/09), and Associate of the Creativities in Intercultural Arts Network (University of Cambridge) (2013/2016). Cologni's art practice research is being supported by numerous institutions (including La Biennale di Venezia; Fondazione Bevilacqua la Masa, Venice, Italy; MuseumsQuartier, Vienna, Austria; Tate, London, UK; Università di Pisa; Museo Laboratorio Arte Contemporanea, Rome, Italy) and funded by, including UNESCO; Artist Newsletter; Arts Council England; British Council (UK); Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (US). www.elenacologni.com

Mother Art, a collective of women artists based in Los Angeles, dedicated to creating social-political art, was most active during the 1970's and 1980's. By gathering women's personal

stories and crafting them in such a way as to incite collective action and intervention, the collective personalized issues, such as the social invisibility of maternal labor and the impact of the lack of socially supported day care on professional practices of working artist-mothers. As the Collective evolved, they created installations and public performances dealing with those women marginalized from society, including immigrant mothers, women who faced abortion when it was illegal, homeless women and more. All the topics they dealt with came from a desire to create a social practice that could reach beyond the confines of traditional art spaces. All the issues they explored are still relevant today. In 2000, Mother Art mounted a retrospective, and since that time their work has been included in a number of important exhibitions focused on women, mother artists, and women's art collectives. Several members of the Mother Art collective continue to collaborate on the social/political issues of today. In 2012 as part of the Getty Museum Initiative, Pacific Standard Time, Mother Art published a book and produced a video of their history. This 40-minute documentary tells of the odyssey of the collective from youth through middle age as they created art installations in galleries and public spaces, were vilified by conservative politicians and persevered to speak truth to power.

International Journal of Education & the Arts

<http://IJEA.org>

ISSN: 1529-8094

Editor

Tawnya Smith
Boston University

Co-Editors

Kelly Bylica
Boston University
Rose Martin
Nord University
Laurel Forshaw
Lakehead University

Jeanmarie Higgins
University of Texas at Arlington
Merel Visse
Drew University
Karen McGarry
College for Creative Studies

Managing Editor

Yenju Lin
The Pennsylvania State University

Associate Editors

Betty Bauman-Field
Boston University
Amy Catron
Mississippi State University
Christina Hanawalt
University of Georgia
Diana Hawley
Boston University
David Johnson
Lund University
Heather Kaplan
University of Texas El Paso
Elizabeth Kattner
Oakland University
Mary Ann Lanier
Groton School
Allen Legutki
Benedictine University

Alesha Mehta
University of Auckland
Leah Murthy
Boston University
Hayon Park
George Mason University
Allyn Phelps
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
Erin Price
Elizabethtown College
Natalie Schiller
University of Auckland
Tim Smith
Uniarts Helsinki
Yiwen Wei
Virginia Commonwealth University
Zahra Bayati, Helen Eriksen & Gry O. Ulrichsen
Solmaz Collective

Advisory Board

Full List: <http://www.ijea.org/editors.html>

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).