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Fruits of Labor— Reframing Motherhood and Artmaking **submitted by: Bruna Shapira**

The exhibition "Fruits of Labor— Reframing Motherhood and Artmaking" calls for a shift in the paradigms of both mothering and artistic expression. The first is still seen as a burden in the art world. Tracy Emin said: "There are good artists that have children. — They are called men", while Marina Abramović declared that kids would have destroyed her career. The show aims to challenge the idea of the "solitary artist", echoed by Emin, Abramović and others throughout Art History, arguing that it's not motherhood that is in conflict with artmaking but rather the prevailing narratives framing womanhood and artmaking, as well as systemic issues affecting women particularly in the US, where public policies to support mothers and pregnant people are virtually nonexistent.

"Fruits of Labor" brings together artists whose work discuss, respond to or emerge from childbirth and motherhood. Working on a variety of media and coming from different stages in their careers, they not only interrogate parenthood publicly, but embrace its constraints — the nap-length studio time, the fragmented, interrupted focus, the repetitive, durational approach and the limited resources — as themes and modes of work.

Ahna Serendren's "ES/AS Collaborative Drawing 2-2-21" (2021) is a collaboration between the artist and her 2 ½ year old daughter. Like many women in the US, Serendren didn't have access to childcare during the pandemic. To work, she had to take her child to the studio. The pieces grapple with the delight and resentment embedded in the experience of mothering. They also evoke interruption as a rhythm of motherhood— time and authorship are no longer her own but caught in fleeting moments.

Lenka Clayton's "63 Objects Taken From My Son's Mouth" (2013) employs buttons, chalk, Christmas decoration, cigarette butt, coins, metro ticket — artifacts from their life together — to document the worries of parenthood. The labor used to make such installation is one that underscores the hidden load of mothering.

Cara Romero's "Julia & Jocelyn" (2018), part of Romero's The First American Girl series, is a response to the lack of Native American dolls, which she noticed after having her daughter. A highly staged composition of a life-sized doll box, Julia & Jocelyn depicts a mother and daughter duo posing as culture bearers with their own everyday items — heirloom, precolonial cultural artifacts. The goal is illuminating Indigenous

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worldviews and showcase child-raising as an intergenerational, collective endeavor, as opposed to the Western, "colonized" views of motherhood and child-rearing.

Katya Meykson's sculptures *Untitled* (2019) reconfigures organic patterns, natural shapes and old fabrics into a talismanic, tactile piece that nods to soft blankets — the transitional objects that help young children slowly transition to independence.

The public program showcases a screening of Irene Luzstig's *"The Motherhood Archives"* (2013). Combining archival montage, science fiction and an homage to 1970s feminist filmmaking, this essay film excavates the changing political and social constructions of motherhood while raising important questions to anyone (man or woman, mother or not) living in the US post the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*.