



Making (Babies)

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Ahead of moulding the placenta I had long thought about the strangeness of this organ that exists between the mother and child. My voiced video essay responds to H  l  ne Rouch and Luce Irigaray's¹ interpretation of the role of the placenta as a mediating space that exists between mother and child, whilst being independent of both, which allows the foetus to grow without exhausting the mother in the process. My pursuit of visual art practice, as it plays out in the video, is framed as a means of seeking to regain such a mediating space between myself and my child, and to manage motherhood and associated domestic responsibilities. However, the art practice simultaneously forms an additional (unpaid) labour, responsibility, and tension in the domestic environment. Therefore, the question remains how easy such a space is to find.

¹ Luce Irigaray, 'On the Maternal Order', interview with H  l  ne Rouch, in *Je, Tu, Nous: Toward a Culture of Difference* trans. by Alison Martin. (New York; London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 37-44 (pp. 38-39).

Beyond the biological framework of Irigaray's ideas of the placenta, the film goes further to consider this mediating space in terms of its political potential to accept 'otherness'. Just as my voiceover seeks to unfix our ideas about the role of the placenta purely as a conduit from mother to child, so I seek to unfix preconceptions about the gendered role of the mother and associated duties and responsibilities. My approach is not to wear motherhood as a fixed, essentialised identity, but to break it into clumsy, bodily fragments: precious, fleeting and borne out of manual - as much as reproductive - labour. The processes that the video follows reveal the strangeness, dirtiness and isolation of day-to-day problems and labours I encounter as an artist-mother; disrupting the apparent safety of the heteronormative, white, family unit, to reveal 'feral' elements within it. This extends my continuing interest in the feral as a wildness that exists within the domestic terrain, rather than necessarily being outside of it.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

