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ARTICLE

Performing the Breastfeeding Body: Lactivism and Art Interventions

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“Performing the Breastfeeding Body: Lactivism and Art Interventions” addresses the ways in which three contemporary North American artist-parents position themselves and their work as potential agents of cultural change around the topic of breastfeeding. Their socially engaged works challenge the increasing social divisions, seen particularly in the United States, around the breastfeeding body. By employing collaboration, intervening in institutional spaces as well as moving outside of them, and creating works that actively counter societal treatment of the breastfeeding body, these artists create raise critical questions and alter public and private spaces in ways that make visible and challenge one of the many taboos still surrounding motherhood. In order to destabilize the perceived spectacle of the breastfeeding body, each of these artist-activists stages a spectacle of her own, placing the breastfeeding body front and center by enacting breastfeeding as a private / public performance and simultaneously confronting public discomfort and culturally normative behaviors.

Artists who work in an activist vein frequently use spectacle and hyperbole to draw widespread attention to political or social issues. They may exaggerate a position, or employ tools of irony, slapstick humor, or self-deprecation in order to make a point. In some cases, visual artists create sensory spectacles to highlight a social injustice; in others, artists use spectacle as a distraction, defusing a hot-button issue by redirecting the public's attention while slyly hitting home a particular viewpoint or at least prompting viewers to question their existing assumptions. For decades now, visual artists in the United States and elsewhere have taken on motherhood as an issue of social activism, granting visibility to the diversity of lived maternal experiences and protesting inequality and discrimination. Perhaps the richest maternal territory for activist-artists to address is that most contentious of maternal bodies, the lactating body, which is regularly subjected to censorship in the popular press and in society at large. In these instances, the notion of spectacle becomes an important tool for dismantling media-driven, patriarchal constructions and expectations of maternity.

For artists interested in engaging with spectacles around maternity, and specifically around breastfeeding, the United States has offered a gold mine of recent contextual grounding. In U.S. media coverage over the last several years, national headlines have reported on discrimination and censorship of the lactating body on a monthly, if not weekly, basis. Breastfeeding mothers have been denied their legal rights in workplaces, restaurants, health clubs, airplanes, swimming pools, retail stores, and courtrooms. While 49 of the 50 United States now have laws that specifically protect the act of breastfeeding in public, the vast majority have no enforcement provisions, meaning that breastfeeding mothers may have little legal recourse when their actions are illegally censored.¹ Popular magazines and newspapers report on such incidents, embracing and exacerbating the polarizing dynamic around breastfeeding and, on occasion, even manufacturing their own controversies around the lactating body. In May of 2013, Jamie Lynne Grumet agreed to participate in a photo shoot about breastfeeding for TIME magazine. Grumet later shared

¹ Jake Marcus, "Lactation and the Law," originally published in *Mothering* (July/August 2007); updated for <http://breastfeedinglaw.com/articles/lactation-and-the-law/>

that the photographer, disregarding hundreds of usable photos, staged the awkward photo that became the cover image after several hours of work, when her son was exhausted.² The standing pose, which had the effect of making her son look taller and older than his three years, generated a firestorm of controversy about breastfeeding in the letters to the editor and online. In a time when controversies about mothering blow up over social media, mothers who might never claim the label of activist are unexpectedly becoming so, using social media to their own ends. In March of 2015, new mom Kristen Hilderman was shamed by a United Airlines flight attendant for breastfeeding her five-month-old son in flight.³ Receiving little initial response from United about her complaint, Hilderman turned to Twitter, where her story was retweeted nearly 2500 times, prompting an eventual apology from the airline. Two years after their manufactured breastfeeding controversy, *TIME* magazine published an article about Hilderman's situation, suggesting that "social media is helping moms win the war" over breastfeeding in public.⁴ During 2015–16, celebrities and everyday women in the United States and elsewhere have joined the Free the Nipple campaign with actions of guerrilla nudity designed to challenge the censorship not only of breastfeeding but of women's bodies in general.

In this context of heightened anxiety about maternal bodies, it is perhaps unsurprising that recent years have also witnessed a groundswell of maternal activism among North American artists, some of whom directly engage as agents of cultural change around breastfeeding. By employing collaboration, intervening in institutional spaces as well as moving outside of them, and creating works that actively counter societal treatment of the breastfeeding body, these artists raise critical questions and alter public and private spaces in ways that make visible and challenge one of the significant taboos still surrounding motherhood. In order to destabilize the perceived spectacle of the breastfeeding body, each of these artist-activists stages

² Grumet shared these insights while participating in a panel discussion with the author at The Pump Station & Nurture in Los Angeles, California, on August 23, 2013.

³ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/11/united-airlines-breastfeeding-kristen-hilderman_n_6848818.html

⁴ Darlena Cunha, "Social Media is Helping Moms Win the War Over Public Breastfeeding," *TIME* (6 April 2015), <http://time.com/3768321/public-breastfeeding/>

a spectacle of her own, placing the breastfeeding body front and center by enacting breastfeeding as a private / public performance and simultaneously confronting public discomfort and culturally normative behaviors.

The three artists discussed below—Ashlee Wells Jackson, Jess Dobkin, and Jill Miller—each engage in social art practices that necessarily involve the audience in the completion of the spectacles they stage. Social art practices have gained increasing currency in recent years among contemporary artists but have also generated much critical debate. Many framings of this genre of art refer back to Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*, in which he emphasizes the positive social impact of art works that generate new social relations.⁵ Claire Bishop has been the most vocal critic of this debated trend, arguing not only that much socially engaged, or participatory, art disregards aesthetics but also that such works most often do not forge new democratic or emancipatory relationships, instead engaging art-world audiences who were already predisposed to form connections.⁶ Kathryn Brown's recent volume of essays seems to seek out a middle ground, examining what she terms "interactive" contemporary art by avoiding generalizations and instead focusing on the specific contexts and types of dialogue produced by and through each discrete work.⁷ Brown's emphasis on specificity offers the clearest connection to the artists discussed here, for all three artists operate within a fairly narrow context: Jackson, Dobkin, and Miller each stage spectacles in order to hyperbolize situations and facilitate interactive dialogues around the breastfeeding body.

Spectacular Bodies

Chicago artist Ashlee Wells Jackson embraces and showcases the spectacle of postpartum and lactating bodies through an on-going series of photographs. Since 2013, Jackson has traveled the world to photograph postpartum bodies for the *4th Trimester Bodies Project*. Initially conceived as Jackson sought ways to recover from infant loss and from traumatic birth and post-birth experiences, *4th Trimester Bodies* has both general and specific goals: to honor and make visible the vast array of women's

⁵ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with the participation of Mathieu Copeland (Paris: Les Presses du réel, 2009).

⁶ See, for example, Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* (Fall 2004): 51–79.

⁷ Kathryn Brown, ed., *Interactive Contemporary Art: Participation in Practice* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

postpartum bodies, and to use these photography sessions as a means to highlight women's choices and varied experiences in birth, breastfeeding, and mothering. For some, the photographs are pure celebration of their maternal experiences; for others, including Jackson herself, they are the first step in a long journey of healing. In Jackson's photographs, some mothers are shown breastfeeding or surrounded by their children; others are photographed in multi-generational groups; still others are photographed alone. The vast majority showcase bodies not found in mainstream magazines, whether for size or shape, age or ethnicity.

Jackson's photographs function first and foremost as private performances of the breastfeeding and postpartum body. The photograph that now represents the project (**Fig. 1**) began as a private self-portrait by Jackson, a lactating, scarred, postpartum body performed only for the camera. Clutching the surviving twin to her body as she feeds, Jackson positions the baby to cover much of the body that she no longer recognizes. Still new to this role and reeling from the traumas of medical interventions and terrible loss, Jackson takes the photograph to give herself concrete evidence of this performance of new motherhood. Choosing not to show her own face, it is the nursing baby and the distressed body that define her in this moment.



Figure 1: Ashlee Wells Jackson, 4th Trimester Bodies Project inaugural photograph, 2013.

From that very first photograph, Jackson's project enters into a significant history of feminist artists performing the body.⁸ Like Ana Mendieta or Hannah Wilke before her, Jackson becomes both photographer and subject. She performs the (nude maternal) body but rejects its sexual objectification in favor of a feminist personal / political statement. Jayne Wark argues that feminism and performance art are inextricably linked: feminism has "played a decisive role in negotiating a new relationship between art and politics" because of the ways that each contest definitions of gender.⁹ Right from the outset, Jackson challenges cultural conventions of female body appearance by showcasing not only a postpartum body but also one that pushes against expectations of maternal propriety through lavish tattooing.

Soon after that first generative photograph, Jackson began facilitating other maternal performances. Using her background in boudoir photography, Jackson emphasizes a body-positive approach and helps women with hair and makeup as desired before photographing them, seeking not to glamorize the mothers but rather to emphasize their maternal beauty for their own benefit. Through photo shoots that function as private celebrations of motherhood, as journeys of healing, or as a way to strengthen multi-generational connections, Jackson gives wide attention to the diversity of maternal experiences. In addition to the photographs, Jackson records and presents narrative text as gleaned from conversation during the session. Jackson relates the narrative of each woman's journey, acting as both confidante and conduit to give public visibility to stories and journeys that are often kept hidden. Many of these stories are messy. Just as Jackson's photographs embrace the spectacle of sagging, stretched out, leaking maternal bodies, the textual narratives underscore the difficult, unplanned, unexpected, and sometimes traumatic experiences of pregnancy, birth, and lactation. While some women who participate in *4th Trimester Bodies* tell Jackson of their smooth journeys, far more give voice to narratives of

⁸ For an in-depth discussion, see Amelia Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

⁹ Jayne Wark, *Radical Gestures: Feminism and Performance Art in North America* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 3.

abuse, miscarriage, adoption, teen pregnancy, stillbirth, postpartum depression, and other maternal traumas alongside the simultaneous joys of motherhood.¹⁰

Idealistically seeking to help her participants achieve a new level of comfort in their postpartum maternal bodies, Jackson co-opts what many viewers may think of as media-driven visual language that puts those bodies on display. The breastfeeding mothers in Jackson's photographs wear black undergarments at most, may be photographed topless, or may forego clothing altogether. The choices are made by the mothers themselves, in consultation with the photographer; showing skin is their decision, and Jackson positions their bodies as part of her larger project of reclaiming female bodily representation and normalizing the range of visible maternal bodies and of women's birthing and postpartum experiences.

The photographs change direction soon after they are taken, moving from the private photographic performance to the public spectacle of putting those bodies on display to challenge culturally normative stereotypes of what a mother's body looks like. Jackson inundates social media sites with her photographs of maternal bodies, offering a counter-narrative to the endless parade of women's bodies on sexualized display in televised, print, and social media. While sexualized bodies run amok on social media, Jackson's photographs of empowered women displaying their postpartum bodies have received a far different reception. Jessica Valenti recently argued that social media giants seek to protect "men who have grown up on sanitized and sexualized images of female bodies. . . [I]f they have to see a woman that is anything other than thin, hairless, and ready for sex – well, bring out the smelling salts."¹¹ Regardless of how much skin Jackson's photographs show or don't show, *4th Trimester Bodies* has been routinely banned from U.S.-based social media sites. Summer 2014 witnessed a particular onslaught of social media censorship: although the photographs do not violate the community standards set forth by Facebook or Instagram, Jackson was repeatedly locked out of her linked account and her account

¹⁰ 4thtrimesterbodies.com archives all photographs and the accompanying narratives in their entirety.

¹¹ Jessica Valenti, "Social media is protecting men from periods, breast milk and body hair." *The Guardian*, 30 March 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/30/social-media-protecting-men-periods-breast-milk-body-hair>

was deleted a total of 9 times, with many dozens of photographs removed, whether they included breastfeeding or nudity or not; sometimes the deletions came with a warning, but often the photographs were censored surreptitiously, removed without warning or explanation. Neither Facebook nor Instagram has responded to the hundreds of email contacts by Jackson and her attorneys.

Online censorship prompted a marked shift in Jackson's project, moving her from personal activism, aimed at empowering women and making publicly visible the wide range of maternal bodies and experiences, to a community-based activism that positions participants as fellow actors in the fight against censorship. In 2014, Jackson initiated the "Stop Censoring Motherhood" campaign, which she promotes on her social media accounts and at her many photo sessions and public presentations.¹² Her supporters wear "Stop Censoring Motherhood" and "All Bodies are Beautiful" t-shirts with bold messaging designed to start conversations, and Jackson obscures some of her photographs using the "Stop Censoring Motherhood" message. "Sadly we've started censoring our own photographs for Instagram and Facebook [with] a black heart over . . . [the breasts] with the phrase 'Stop Censoring Motherhood.'"¹³ While fewer of her breastfeeding photos have recently been removed from social media, she has found that a more insidious form of censorship is now taking place: as of mid-2015, the *4th Trimester Bodies Project* had over 50,000 Facebook followers, yet her posts no longer reach more than a tiny fraction of that audience, apparently throttled from the outset. Far from daunting her, the censorship of Jackson's project has convinced her more than ever of the need to normalize the wide variety of postpartum bodies and to normalize images and perceptions of breastfeeding in the United States. In a recent breastfeeding photograph from 2015, Jackson montaged a sequence featuring nine women and herself (**Fig. 2**), with the goal of broadening what is considered socially acceptable for nursing behavior: the women, from varied ethnic backgrounds, represent not only breastfeeding mothers with newborns but also those with nursing toddlers and preschoolers, mothers who pump exclusively,

¹² Rachel Epp Buller, "Censoring the Maternal Body," Nursing Clio blog, 24 April 2014 <http://nursing-clio.org/2014/04/24/censoring-the-maternal-body/>

¹³ Ashlee Wells Jackson, email to the author, 19 May 2015.



Figure 2: Ashlee Wells Jackson, untitled montage of breastfeeding mothers, 2015.

and mothers who use supplementary nursing systems (SNS) to overcome breastfeeding difficulties and establish a nursing relationship in spite of obstacles.

Jess Dobkin, an American artist living in Toronto, has pushed boundaries of social comfort in order to enable a public discussion of breastfeeding. In a series of performances between 2006 and 2016, entitled *The Lactation Station Breastmilk Bar*, Dobkin has staged gallery events akin to wine tastings.¹⁴ Using breastmilk donated by half a dozen lactating mothers, Dobkin acts for the evening as sommelier of sorts, leading participants through “breastmilk tastings” and discussing with them the flavor differences between the milks – the nutty flavors or hints of curry - and at the same time making space for expressions of awkwardness and uneasiness. By addressing the social discomfort around the concept of milk-*tasting*, Dobkin’s performances implicitly confront the larger issue of social discomfort with breastfeeding in *general*.

Just as Jackson’s photographs defy culturally normative perceptions of the maternal body, Dobkin turns the tables on the female body that is so prominent in galleries and museums. By staging her events in galleries, Dobkin intervenes in specific institutional spaces. The lactating body, however, is nowhere to be seen: the breastfeeding has occurred privately and off-site and viewers can only imagine those

¹⁴ Charles Reeve notes the clear connection to food and beverage tastings in “The Kindness of Human Milk: Jess Dobkin’s Lactation Station Breastmilk Bar,” *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* (Winter 2009). See also Penny van Esterik, “Vintage Breast Milk: Exploring the Discursive Limits of Feminine Fluids,” in *Taking Food Public: Redefining Foodways in a Changing World*, eds. Psyche Williams-Forsen and Carole Counihan (New York: Routledge, 2012).

bodies. Rather than putting breasts on display, Dobkin introduces the *product* of women's breasts into the gallery as a way to transform it from a place for simply viewing the nude female form into a place for honest, critical discourse about social perceptions of breastfeeding bodies.

Dobkin's role as performer who facilitates discussion of social issues relates to several public performances staged in the 1990s by the Los Angeles-based activist group M.A.M.A. (Mother Artists Making Art), in which they both performed the breastfeeding body and involved the audience in the performance. *Milkstained* (1996), a multimedia performance, featured theatrical staging, visual projections, and spoken narratives about breastfeeding, audible sounds of lactation, and, finally, a participatory element in which viewers were invited to drink fresh breast milk. Like Dobkin's gallery milk tasting, M.A.M.A. staged breastfeeding as a public performance in order to confront social discomfort. But unlike Dobkin's elegant event in which milk is presented in a wine-tasting setting, wholly detached from the lactating mothers who donate the milk, *Milkstained* gave public profile to the messiness of motherhood by making visible the act of lactation. Andrea Liss argues that *Milkstained* embodied "a challenging gesture toward characterizations in Western philosophical tradition of women's and mothers' bodies as chaotic and disorderly because of our uncontrollable, hysterical fluids – blood, milk, emotions, tears."¹⁵ In *Milkstained* and in M.A.M.A.'s later performances *Let Down* and *California Civil Code 43.3*, audiences became participants – sometimes invited, sometimes unsuspecting – in staging spectacles of maternal messiness that push against conventions of propriety and demand dialogue.

Dobkin's invitation to taste the maternal body also evokes the work of U.S. artist Patty Chang who explores notions of consumption, desire, and female experience through her bodily performances. In *Melons* (1998), Chang metaphorically consumes cantaloupes that stand in as prosthetic breasts. Slicing through her bra, and thus through the cantaloupe, with a sharp knife, Chang reaches in to scoop out and consume the flesh. Similar to the questions of impropriety that may plague participants in Dobkin's performance, Chang uses references of self-mutilation to induce viewer discomfort.

¹⁵ Andrea Liss, *Feminist Art and the Maternal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 76.

Although Dobkin's *Lactation Station* offers a clean and refined presentation of maternal fluid in the gallery, in the promotional poster (**Fig. 3**) for the event, Dobkin positions her own nude body in such a way as to heighten the spectacle. Dobkin uses breastmilk donated by other mothers for her performance, yet she here advertises the event in a way that exaggerates the potential controversy and even provides some false advertising. As many mothers will know from experience, expressing milk most often involves a sizable machine to pump the breastmilk. By manipulating the image to appear that she effortlessly shoots milk into wine glasses, Dobkin humorously engages with social perceptions in a number of ways: first, by suggesting that perhaps many people do not actually know what is involved with pumping breastmilk; second, by implicitly acknowledging that the nude white female body is used to advertise many things, whether or not that body has anything to do with the product (or in this case, the milk); and lastly, in what is more



Figure 3: Jess Dobkin, publicity photograph for *Lactation Station Breastmilk Bar*, 2006–2016.

of an inside joke with herself, by exaggerating her own body's limited abilities, as Dobkin herself had an unsuccessful breastfeeding relationship with her child.

Through a multi-year public performance, U.S. artist Jill Miller confronted the unfriendly environment encountered by many U.S. mothers who nurse in public. After raising funds through a Kickstarter campaign in 2011, Miller purchased an old ice cream truck and converted it into a breastfeeding support vehicle. Miller envisioned that she would drive the truck around Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, offering support to nursing mothers, attending nursing-related events, and responding to breastfeeding emergencies. *The Milk Truck*, a mobile art installation and performance, is designed to empower nursing mothers, create community, raise awareness, and stimulate conversation around breastfeeding – and, as a truck topped by a 5-foot breast with a flashing nipple, is a sight to behold (Fig. 4).

Two things made Miller's activism particularly effective: her social and civic engagement, and her use of humor. Initial drawings from the Kickstarter video showcase Miller's idealistic vision for the truck as a comfortable place where mothers from different walks of life might come together to support each other through breastfeeding. Miller took her project to the streets, driving the truck around Pittsburgh and



Figure 4: Jill Miller, *The Milk Truck*, 2011–2012 at the Pittsburgh Biennial.

bringing heightened visibility to breastfeeding. Her mobile breasturant made its debut at the 2011 Pittsburgh Biennial and September 12 of that year was declared The Milk Truck Day by the city council. By moving outside of the museum, Miller inserted The Milk Truck into public and civic discourse, intervening in a pointed, if humorous way.

Instances of breastfeeding censorship are by nature tense encounters; by introducing an oversized, unexpected, ridiculous emergency vehicle, Miller immediately defused the situation and disarmed potentially critical viewers. Hyperbolizing the idea of spectacle, Miller took the focus off of the publicly debated breastfeeding body and put it squarely on the shoulders of the truck. As Miller herself said, "Thought the nursing mother created a spectacle? Meet *The Milk Truck*."¹⁶ Through its very presence, the Milk Truck "open[ed up] spaces for critical discourse and community connections": drawing viewers in with the spectacle of the truck, Miller offered a space for conversation and the potential for some eventual common ground.¹⁷

Miller's project moves away from the artist as performer and toward the social performance of the audience. Like Dobkin's gallery performances, *The Milk Truck* primarily functions to facilitate discussion about breastfeeding and the censorship of breastfeeding in public. The *Milk Truck* offers a space for what Claire Bishop describes as the nature of participatory art, in which "the artist is conceived less as an individual producer of discrete objects than as a collaborator and producer of *situations*."¹⁸ While the *Milk Truck* might be considered a discrete object, carefully designed as hyperbolic spectacle, its larger functions are to challenge, defuse, question, and facilitate the performance of the audience in any given breastfeeding emergency situation.

Miller's project, like Jackson's and Dobkin's, ultimately depends on the audience, or the receiver of a performance. Shannon Jackson asserts that a work's

¹⁶ Jill Miller, Kickstarter campaign video for The Milk Truck, 2011.

¹⁷ Miller also asserted that, "Taking a humorous approach has been key in making the conversation happen at all. I just can't imagine The Milk Truck garnering as much attention as it did without the 5 foot boob on the roof of the truck. People came close for the spectacle, and they stayed for the conversation." Rachel Epp Buller, "Birthing the American Absurd: Maternal Humour in Contemporary Art," *n.paradoxa: international journal of feminist art*, vol. 36 (July 2015): 53.

¹⁸ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2012), 2.

“performative gesture depends on the presence of the addressee,”¹⁹ but who constitutes an addressee can shift even within a single work. For Ashlee Wells Jackson’s *4th Trimester Bodies Project*, the receiver begins as the mother herself being photographed in a private performance; only once the artist shares the photographs and narratives online does the receiver shift to a broader public. The reception of the *Milk Truck* shifts between breastfeeding mothers who call for back-up in an emergency situation and a broader viewing public who witnesses, or otherwise takes part in, the spectacle. The *Lactation Station Breastmilk Bar*, on the other hand, exists only to address a participatory audience in the gallery, not the mothers who donated the breastmilk.

Jackson, Dobkin, and Miller each operate in the context of cultural prohibitions surrounding breastfeeding that result in discriminatory, emotional, and often highly publicized encounters. Elizabeth Podnieks argues that the censorship of breastfeeding is not isolated but represents a broader cultural attitude, espoused particularly by the media: “Mass media praises and vilifies mothers, keeping them under constant surveillance and judging them according to the extent to which they adhere to ideologies of good motherhood.”²⁰ When nursing in public is deemed inappropriate or even obscene, breastfeeding mothers become bad mothers, despite the fact that pediatricians, lactation consultants, and even formula companies advocate that “Breast is Best.” By exaggerating the spectacle that often surrounds breastfeeding, Jackson, Miller, and Dobkin directly engage with conflicted cultural perceptions of lactation. Performing the breastfeeding body in order to confront social discomfort and culturally normative perceptions of the maternal, each artist opens up space for dialogues that, we may hope, will help to change the public conversation.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

¹⁹ Shannon Jackson, “Performativity and its Addressee,” Walker Art Collection, <http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/performativity/performativity-and-its-addressee/>

²⁰ Elizabeth Podnieks, *Mediating Moms: Mothers in Popular Culture* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2012), 14.

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Dr. Rachel Epp Buller is a feminist art historian printmaker book artist and mother of three whose work often speaks to these intersections. She lectures, curates, and publishes widely on the maternal body in contemporary art, including *Reconciling Art and Mothering* (Ashgate) and a forthcoming volume on *Inappropriate Bodies: Art, Design, and Maternity*. In her recent creative work, she investigates fictional narratives of imagined family histories and textural references to matrilineal traditions of fine handwork such as sewing, crochet, and cut-paper work. She privileges collaborative projects, both within the visual arts and across disciplines, as in her co-edited multidisciplinary volume of essays, *Mothering Mennonite*. Her most recent collaboration, with the directors of Das Verborgene Museum in Berlin, resulted in *Alice Lex-Nerlinger 1893–1975: Fotomonteurin und Malerin / Photomontage Artist and Painter*, a dual-language book and the first-ever retrospective of the artist. She is a board member of the National Women's Caucus for Art (US), a Fulbright Scholar, a regional coordinator of The Feminist Art Project, and current Associate Professor of Visual Arts and Design at Bethel College (US).

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