

Mothering is my practicum.
Abstract

The *avant-garde* stole the habits of mothering and got rid of the kids.

Mothering is my practicum and as such it reaffirms the value of the philosophy and critical thought I learn as an artist. This is not the simple delight in observing the infant's entering the mirror stage or abjecting bodily waste or her mildly phobic reaction to the plug hole of the bathtub but, more deeply, the way *avant-garde* practice informs who I am as a mother. If art of the past one hundred and fifty years has yearned to be 'life', if the practice of artists has approached the *dasein* of daily life, then artists who are mothers have *arrived*. Mothering artists live the *avant-garde*.

Thus, mothering becomes durational performance, situationist *dérive*, post-studio conceptual art. The mothering artist performs ritualistic activities with bodily fluids and substances that look and feel like bodily fluids. The mothering artist builds the archive, documents and repeats process on a scale beyond the most enduring of durational performances. The mothering artist loses the object better than her conceptual forebears and then finds the object like the best of Dadaists. In the course of her work, her practice is improvisational, spontaneous, methodical, process-based, surreal. It is a throw piece *extraordinaire*. It is made up of junk and sticks. It is quotational, post-modern, hybridized: mothering artists take what they need wherever they find it. Of course, no child is a ready-made, but when artists mother they bring to mothering an entire history of radical methodologies. What's more, as the child grows, the child becomes an active participant in the ebb and flow of the *avant-garde* practice of living.

This paper will present documents of art being life and life being art: strategies for the survival of art and mothers and children.