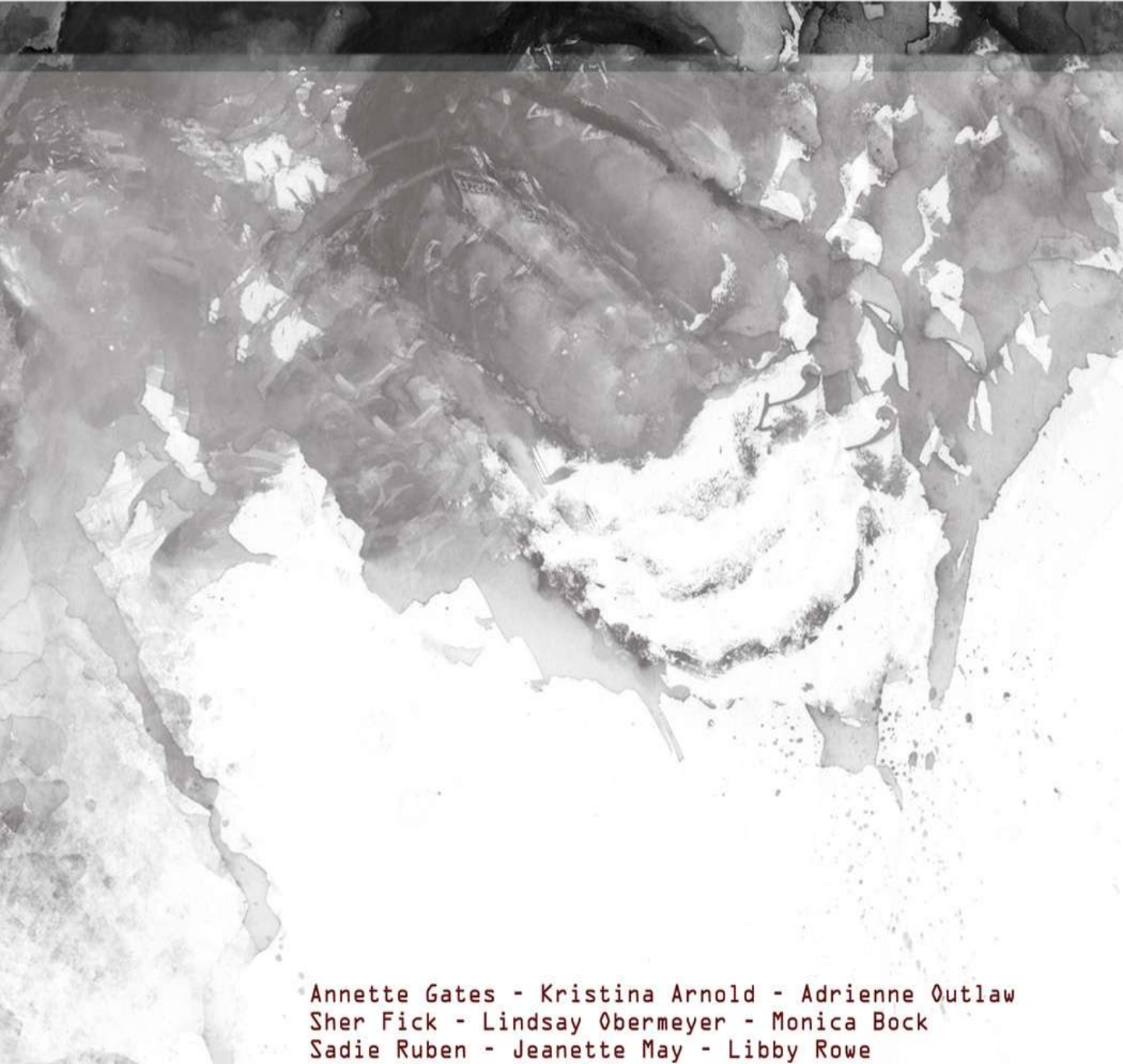




TAKE CARE:



The Art, Science and Bioethics of Motherhood



Annette Gates - Kristina Arnold - Adrienne Outlaw
Sher Fick - Lindsay Obermeyer - Monica Bock
Sadie Ruben - Jeanette May - Libby Rowe

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

The rapid advancement of medical technology has brought with it unprecedented bioethical dilemmas. Particularly in economically advanced countries, technologies are outpacing our ability to fully understand their moral implications. The exhibit *TAKE CARE: The Art, Science and Bioethics of Motherhood* considers civilization's unease with modern family planning, maternal and fetal care, childbirth and child rearing. For the first time in history, there is knowledge available to mothers which forces them to make life or death decisions whether to carry a disfigured, malformed, or unintentional fetus to term, whether to use pharmaceuticals with their associated risks, and whether to risk passing on genetic diseases. In these situations, we are no longer able to rely on long-established religious, societal or medical expertise for guidance, and too often, we only grapple with such problems at the time of crisis. The show highlights these bioethical dilemmas, with the hope that viewers will take the opportunity to better appreciate the complexity of these personal decisions in a rapidly changing world.



Annette Gates

Annette Gates makes porcelain sculptures rooted in the biological reality of microscopic single-cell organisms. Gates' work speaks to genetic memory passed in humans from mother to child through mitochondrial DNA, providing direct physical maternal linkage. This nationally exhibited artist holds a BFA from the University of Colorado, Boulder and an MFA from the University of Georgia, Athens.



Kristina Arnold

Biomedical researcher turned artist, Kristina Arnold has always addressed issues of biology and the sociological construction of health and medicine. Her glass and plastic *Drip* installation investigates questions associated with genetic inheritance and the emotional cost of love. An art professor at Western Kentucky University, this internationally exhibited artist holds a BA from Brown University and an MFA from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.



Adrienne Outlaw

Interested in ethical questions created by rapidly advancing technology, Adrienne Outlaw explores the often contentious dialogue in science, politics and religion and how that impacts bioethical issues. Her *Fecund Videos* juxtapose mysterious, fleshy forms with the latest advancements in biophysics. Breast-like structures house these videos in such a way that they appear to float. This internationally exhibited artist holds a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an MLAS from Vanderbilt University.



Sher Fick

Sher Fick's work is about her struggles with her childhood as well as the challenges of balancing family and career. *Coping Skills* consists of 169 prescription bottles covered with scraps of hand-stitched, vintage fabric obsessively stitched together. The bottles rest on a mirrored wooden altar. This nationally exhibited artist holds a BFA from Middle Tennessee State University.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON
TAKE CARE: THE ART, SCIENCE AND BIOETHICS OF MOTHERHOOD
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Lindsay Obermeyer

Fiber artist Lindsay Obermeyer was thrown into motherhood when her aunt unexpectedly died four years after adopting a child from Romania. Her beaded and embroidered *Shadows* series investigates ethical dilemmas associated with mental disorders. This internationally exhibited artist holds a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, an MFA from the University of Washington, Seattle and an MAT from National-Louis University, Chicago.



Monica Bock

Monica Bock's work focuses on the ordinary and extreme phenomena of maternal life. *Afterbirth (Sac Fluid Cord)*, consists of three cast-glycerin dustpans, each containing a glass bottle in their handle. One carries a bit of amniotic sac, the next amniotic fluid, and the last, the umbilical cord. An art professor at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, this nationally exhibited artist holds a BFA and MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.



Sadie Ruben

Danish artist Sadie Ruben spends, as many women do, perhaps too much time caring for others. Her *Alien Fetus* series is a collection of fantastical, malformed and twisted bodies. Preserved in clear gel, these slimy, translucent, flesh-tone forms seem to float inside their glass containers. *TAKE CARE* is Ruben's first international show.



Jeanette May

Photographer Jeanette May's *Fertility in the Age of A.R.T. (Assisted Reproductive Technology)* examines the current discourse in micro-managed procreation through a series of natural, cultural and technology-laden photographs combined with textual citations. This internationally exhibited artist holds a BFA from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts.



Libby Rowe

Libby Rowe's work contemporizes the idea of "Womanhood," and provides a forum to address women's place in 21st Century society. *Womb Worries* is a collection of hand-made sock monkeys. Some of these red-lipped, grey bodied dolls have only one leg; others have far too many. An art professor at Vanderbilt University, this nationally exhibited artist holds a BFA from University of the Northern Iowa and an MFA from Syracuse University.





EXHIBITION ESSAY - BY VERONICA KAVASS - NEW YORK BASED WRITER-CURATOR

There is one subject that pins every woman up against the wall and that is her ability to carry life inside her body and release it into the world. And the adjective that is typically associated with this is "scary." It is scary for many reasons. Today when we think of pregnancy, it is easy to picture all the technological equipment involved, but perhaps difficult to understand what all that equipment can mean to a pregnant woman. Viewing the ultrasound is an emotionally charged experience. While it is merely the representation of something that is real, actually seeing one's fetus pumping on the screen offers more to the legitimacy of the experience than the constant biological reminders like pickle cravings and nausea. Today's sophisticated sonograms also allow in-depth and heart-wrenching views of death and deformity. How many times is the question "Are you going to keep it?" asked when a woman delivers the news about her pregnancy, including her genetic test, to a best friend? On top of this, women face other concerns, ranging from overpopulation, infertility and parental skills/relationships to money, Freud and hysterical outbursts.

TAKE CARE: The Art, Science and Bioethics of Motherhood may be labeled as a feminist show or a pregnancy show, but above everything it is an art show—for it is not about the art of motherhood but art about the challenges of new life and especially those problems inherent in an increasingly technological world.

From adoption rituals to the study of single-celled organisms, the nine artists in this show each reveal a different problematic constituent of motherhood. Adrienne Outlaw and Annette Gates explore the more technical realm of pregnancy. Outlaw's scientific videos floating inside breast-like structures give off a tongue-in-cheek quality to the artistic notion of providing information while offering a different take on tunnel/funnel vision. Gates' cast-porcelain sculptures display the crystallization of life-growth as a study of the way cells operate in navigating genetic codes. Lindsay Obermeyer and Sher Fick's work underscore the notion of repetition. As a coping mechanism, safe and recognizable movements can help people with mental disorders locate a comfortable space. In today's society, of course, so do drugs. Libby Rowe's installation of deformed sock-monkey puppets works the hardest to contextualize the historical timeline of feminist/motherly concerns in to our current era.

The constant shedding of out-of-date knowledge and the rapid advancements in technology make more room in these twenty-first century mothers' minds for scientific thought and maybe less about matters that concerned mothers prior to this era of information. Thusly, *TAKE CARE* is considered a "bioethical show" because it points at the departure from one era of motherhood and traces the outline of a new one. Is it saying this one is better than the last? It is hard to determine. *TAKE CARE* addresses an issue which is at the heart of art practices, that is the nurturing and understanding of intentional and unintentional creation and it provides a range of aesthetic reactions to this crucial issue. At the end of it viewers will wonder what happened to the notion of the miracle.

For more information on the exhibit, including Kavass' expanded essay, go to: www.n-cap.org