BREASTFEEDING CONTRADICTIONS: ART, WORDS, THEORY

Victoria Francis
During this project, I hope to explore aspects of motherhood focusing on how mothers decide to feed their children in their early years. I am aiming to create a year-long exhibit exploring four subcategories of breastfeeding:

These four subcategories will include:

- public vs private breastfeeding,
- pumping mothers,
- nursing toddlers,
- and the effects of breastfeeding on the mother’s body.

For those performing mothering duties, the crush of unrelenting surveillance by the public, the media, as well as family members, is often laden with judgment.

Comments regarding the way mothers best determine to feed their children are often opinionated and unhelpful. This is especially true for nursing mothers. Whether pumping, using a formula, or nursing in public or in private, these choices are up for commentary.
This year-long project will delve into the world of nursing mothers.

Each of the four categories discussed will use art, research, and my personal experience as a mother to show the often-hidden side of breastfeeding mothers.

The exhibit will also help showcase how mothers might manage judgments and assessments from others while continuing to find a way to care for their children.

By using the visual arts to interrogate these topics, it is my hope to aid viewers to comprehend aspects of a world they may have never been a part of.

By displaying this exhibit online at MoM, I want to shed light on the complexities, joys, questions, and also the comments mothers face while feeding their offspring as they adjust to their own changing bodies in the world.
The first category, public vs private, has proven to be the topic that garners a large portion of the controversy in the breastfeeding world, along with undue judgment from the outside world.

**PUBLIC VS PRIVATE**

Public breastfeeding has been a topic of discussion for people from different backgrounds, ending in drastically varying opinions.

There are many people who seem offended, disgusted, or even disturbed when mothers breastfeed their child within a public setting.

Even though this has been a natural and necessary act throughout human history, it still seems to be a controversial exercise for many and continues to garner mixed reactions when performed in public settings.

This has created a difficult environment for mothers to be able to nurse their children when needed in public.

Even around family, many mothers feel the need to breastfeed their child in a private setting such as a separate room, or at a minimum will use a cover to ensure that the nursing is unseen.

The judgments that ensue from either side of this argument create more work and more unnecessary stress for both the mother and their child.

Breastfeeding is a necessary act that ensures the health of the mother and nourishment of the child. Complicating this process can even be perceived as stressful and even cruel.
GINA JONES

As a mother and artist based in Far North Queensland, Australia, my mission is to help other parents capture and preserve special moments in their families' lives through unique and personal family portrait paintings.

My art styles often center around themes of breastfeeding, family, and love, and I use alcohol ink to create paintings with a dreamy, watercolor-like effect. I am available for commissioning bespoke pieces of original wall art in a range of sizes.

What sets my work apart from others is my use of breastmilk as a medium in some of my pieces, creating beautiful and meaningful breastmilk art.

Being a world first, my art has gained much media attention over the years and has been featured in many publications, radio, and TV interviews across Australia. Not only is this breastmilk art beautiful, but it also serves as a breastmilk keepsake, allowing mothers to keep a special part of their child with them forever.

At Gina Jones Creations, I am dedicated to providing mothers with the highest quality family portrait paintings and breastmilk art. I hope to inspire other mothers to embrace the transformative power of capturing special moments in their family's life and celebrate the beauty of the mother-child bond through my art.
As an artist, I have found breastfeeding my daughter Bella to be one of the most powerful sources of inspiration for my artwork. From the moment she was born, I knew that my journey as a mother would be transformative, but I had no idea how deeply it would touch my creative spirit. The early weeks of breastfeeding were filled with challenges. My body was sore, my emotions were all over the place, and I felt like I had no idea what I was doing. But as I settled into the rhythm of feeding her, I began to notice something miraculous happening. As Bella Rose nursed, I felt a profound connection with her, a sense of oneness that transcended words or actions. In those moments, I felt like I was doing something vital, something that mattered.

As time went on, my experiences with breastfeeding continued to inspire my artwork. I began to create pieces that explored the themes of motherhood, femininity, and nurturing.

In some of my paintings, I incorporated breastmilk as a symbol of the bond between mother and child. For me, breastmilk represented the life-giving force that sustains our babies and creates an incomparable emotional bond.

But as Bella grew older, the memory of breastfeeding started to slip away. I began to realise how quickly time was passing and how much I wanted to hold onto those precious moments with my daughter. That’s when I decided to create a portrait painting of Bella nursing, capturing the tender intimacy of the moment and the beauty of breastfeeding.

Looking at that painting now, I am reminded of the power of love, the beauty of motherhood, and the resilience of the human spirit. I am thankful to have a breastmilk painting as a way to remember the journey of breastfeeding and to honor the bond between Bella Rose and me. As a mother and an artist, I know that my journey has been filled with both peak moments and challenging times. But through it all, breastfeeding has been one of the most beautiful and powerful experiences of my life. It has taught me the meaning of unconditional love, the beauty of vulnerability, and the power of perseverance. Through my artwork, I hope to inspire other mothers to embrace the transformative power of breastfeeding, to honor their bodies, and to celebrate the beauty of the mother-child bond. I believe that art has the power to heal, to uplift, and to transform, and I am grateful for the opportunity to share my experiences with others.
TRACY MARIE TAYLOR
is a Chicago-based multi-media artist and educator.

Taylor's studio practice thematically and practically explores the relationship between nature and technology. Through her art, she surveys the assisted reproductive and breast-feeding technologies that were her companions during her struggles to become a mother and in her efforts to sustain new life.

She embraces traditional and digital tools such as painting, video, installation and creative coding.

Taylor holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and BFA from the University of New Mexico and is an Associate Professor and the Chair of The Art and Art History Department at Lake Forest College.
When he was a newborn sleeping soundly in his crib, I would obsessively watch him from the crib to detect signs of life.

Sometimes I would convince myself that he was dead, because after struggling to conceive and sustain life for so long, it seemed like I somehow didn't deserve to be a real mother.

I started making small paintings of him sleeping during his naptimes. With each painting, I kept painting out the details of his crib, so he looked like he was falling from the sky. I didn't understand at the time why I was doing this, but my impulse to continue was strong.

It was not until the series was nearly finished that it occurred to me that these paintings of my son sleeping were not about him at all.

He was serving as a stand-in for all the miscarriages and failed pregnancies that came before him. Painting my newborn son allowed me to finally grieve the siblings he would never have and move forward in healing my heart.

Painting my newborn son allowed me to finally grieve the siblings he would never have and move forward in healing my heart.
LEANNA PEARCE

is a portrait artist working and living in the Northeast of England. She is motivated by making purposeful work, most recent collections include breastfeed —— Portraits with Purpose and Breastfeeding the Brave.

Leanne has exhibited her artwork throughout the UK in group and solo exhibitions at universities, galleries, hospitals and public spaces. Her work also resides in private collections in the US and Australia.

Since successfully completing her first degree in fine art at Northumbria University in the North-East, Leanne has been commissioned to paint many faces, some of which appear regularly in the public arena. She gained a place in the semi-finals of the ITV show ‘A Brush With Fame’ in which she painted a whole host of celebrities including Tanni Grey-Thompson and Paul Nicholas. She was also asked to capture on canvas the faces of Cheryl Tweedy and Ashley Cole for a wedding gift. More recently she has appeared as a contestant twice on Sky Art Portrait Artist of the Year (2018 and 2022), where she painted Robert Bathurst and Jim Carter, gaining a place in the top 3 in her heat.

Leanne refers to her arts practice as Portraits with Purpose.

Her work includes breastfeed, celebratory collection of portraits depicting breastfeeding mothers, Wisdom, Youth, Listen, Act which includes the world renowned Greta Thunberg. Her art practice is motivated by making impactful work that reflects womanhood, the maternal, breastfeeding and female empowerment.

Leanne was also co-founder and creative director of the Community Interest Company Thought Foundation (TF). It opened in 2016 for the community to experience art, learn new skills, eat good food in a creative venue. Although the TF is now closed, due to the covid pandemic, it has left a positive legacy.
INSPIRATION

When I was a teenager my mum had 2 more children. It was an absolute pleasure for me to have a new little brother and then a baby sister in my life. Therefore I was witness to positive breastfeeding experiences in my formative teen years.

I remember being about 15 and going along to a parenting group with my mum where she was asked to talk to expectant mums about the positives of breastfeeding, my mum is a relatively shy person and she started with "well what can I say, breast is best" I realize now that this is quite a controversial and potentially insensitive thing to say, but she meant well by it and totally believed it.

Years later when I was pregnant with my first daughter it didn't even occur to me to not breastfeed, although I didn't fully appreciate what was in store but I knew 100% I wanted to do it. My experience was not plain sailing, quite painful even and at one point me and my baby both ended up in hospital. However I breastfed her until she was one, it was definitely the best thing for us to do.

When breastfeeding my second daughter, again I felt passionately about breastfeeding her. When she was around 18 months

I peered down at her whilst she fed and I felt a sudden creative rush to paint our portrait, together, breastfeeding.

I used this portrait to reach out to other mums to ask if they wanted to model for me whilst they breastfed their little ones, hundreds of people got in touch.

So I went on a quest to meet mums, listen to their stories and paint their portraits. In total I painted around 20 large scale portraits, the biggest being 4ft x 6ft. The collection became breastfeed - - Portraits with Purpose. Since then the artwork has been exhibited across the UK in galleries, universities, hospitals, community spaces and schools. The majority of the paintings are now on long term loan to hospitals throughout the UK, one also now resides in Montana, USA.
The second category, pumping mothers, presents another level of complexity and judgment.

**PUMPING MOTHERS**

Many mothers in America are working mothers. Some of these mothers spend a great portion of their day away from their children. Therefore, they are unable to directly breastfeed and must rely on banking their milk.

Even when distanced from their child, a mother must express her milk to keep up supply as well as avoid the undue health issues that may arise from not expressing their milk properly. This process takes a great deal of time, physical energy, as well as adds to additional stress within a normal workday. Mothers need to have a safe location where they can set up pumps, store milk, and have the needed privacy to concentrate.

All of these factors assist in the ability to produce breast milk especially considering that for many women, producing milk while your child is not nearby has proven to be difficult.

Even for workplaces that have pumping spaces, there still may not be support from the employer to allow a mother to continue pumping. This struggle for any working mothers can be very lonely and challenging. There are inherent difficulties balancing the two very different worlds of not only being a great employee but also a great mother.

Pumping milk is another aspect of motherhood that often is overlooked by those who are not involved in the process or who have no experience with what it takes to provide for a child physically while making the adjustment to professional working life.
Kasey Jones is an interdisciplinary social artist and educator.

She received her BFA from Ohio University and her MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art. Jones creates socially driven artwork that reflects her experiences of being a woman and mother in contemporary society.

Her artwork spans topics such as breastfeeding, lack of paid maternity leave, motherhood, menstruation, and womanhood. Her "Working Mother Suit" series was profiled by international news outlets such as the Huffington Post, Cosmopolitan, and Yahoo! News.

In addition, to her studio practice Jones is also a professor of art at the Columbus College of Art and Design. She lives in the Appalachian foothills with her husband and three daughters.
While pregnant with my first daughter a friend made a comment "now you can make mom art". This comment struck a chord within me and I started to question what "mom art" really was.

As I did this, my perspective on what "mom art" could be shifted. I began to become more aware of how "the mother" was depicted in visual art, who was communicating that representation, and how inaccurate that representation felt.

From that moment on I made a conscious decision to create "mom art" that was unlike any type of "mom art" that had come before.
I am incredibly passionate about maternal health and celebrating the stages of parenthood. After having my second baby at home, I started to question why my births were so different. This curiosity led me to become a doula and support families through their own pregnancy, birth, and postpartum journeys.

My name is Lauren and I am a mother, artist, and birth worker.

LAUREN J. TURNER

Lauren J. Turner

Artwork by Lauren J. Turner
Every birth experience is different, but I needed to know why. So I immersed myself in birth and became a doula.
LEAH DEVUN

I'm a Professor at Rutgers University, where I teach in the departments of History and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

My scholarship, artwork, and curatorial practice reflect my interest in queer and trans history, science and technology, archives and collectives, and feminist activism.

I'm the author of The Shape of Sex: Nonbinary Gender from Genesis to the Renaissance (Columbia University Press, 2021); co-editor of "Trans*historicities" (with Zeb Tortorici), a special issue of the journal TSQ (Duke, 2018), among other publications.

My work has been in Artforum, Huffington Post, People Magazine, Hyperallergic, LA Review of Books, Out, Art Papers, Feature Shoot, Redbook, Slate, JSTOR Daily, Capricious, LA Weekly, Gallerist, Buzzfeed, Forbes, Refinery29, and Modern Painters, and I've participated in exhibitions and programs at universities and arts venues in the U.S. and Europe.
“In the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” is focused on technologies and child rearing, especially devices that help women with breastfeeding, ie pumps, shields, tubes, and all manner of other plastic devices. This project came out of my own experience of pregnancy and birth.

I felt disappointed about my birth experience because everyone else I knew was giving birth naturally: in the woods in a tub, delivering their baby with their own hands — one friend even told me she saw God. When I gave birth, I was diagnosed with pre-eclampsia, among other issues, and I was lying down, feeling terrible, and hooked up to a bunch of machines. And breastfeeding didn’t come naturally for me either. My disappointment turns out to be a very common but not much discussed experience of parenthood. I felt like I missed out on something, and I recognized that I was feeling this widespread pressure on women to have childbirth feel like a peak life experience, a challenge to be met head on with focus, drive, athleticism.

This is birth as achievement and self-actualization and Instagram fodder. And speaking of Instagram, the images that I saw online of breastfeeding were empowering, like breastfeeding while doing yoga, or they were Madonna-and-child-like.

I didn’t really see the medically and technologically mediated experience of birth, with all its feelings of being tired, uncomfortable, or just bored, and with its cyborg-like apparatuses. For several years, I photographed women that I met online wearing all the devices they used for breastfeeding, devices are almost totally invisible in pop culture imagery of motherhood but are a huge part of the experience. This doesn’t fit with the idea of childbirth and breastfeeding as “natural” and it shows us how enmeshed our lives are with technology.

Also, questions about pumping and formula, and how people deal with breastfeeding — whether in public or at work, or for how long — have been such a big part of the news. Wrapped up in these photos are all the choices women make about what to do with their bodies, when and where, and how — this experience needs to be visualized so we can see what we’re talking about.

I also want to emphasize the queerness of my series here. Trans people are often faulted for having to use technology to get their bodies to do what should come naturally. But these photos make visually clear how much work and assistance it takes for all bodies, even those generally viewed as normative, cisgender, and female, to achieve “naturalness,” and that technology and artificiality are now a part of the process of enacting womanhood across a spectrum of experiences.
I have always had a love for art as well as the struggles of motherhood. I never believed motherhood to be easy but once I became a mother I saw first-hand the struggles that can come with it. Breastfeeding has been one of the most emotional parts of this journey.

With my first child there was complications that led to her being in NICU, with a feeding tube, for the first several weeks of her life. Given that circumstance I could not breastfeed her and had to begin pumping. As she got use to bottles in NICU I kept up with it. After finally getting her home I was involved in a car accident that caused injuries that stopped my supply. I was beyond devastated that I could provide the nourishment for my child I felt I needed.

Recently I gave birth to my second child that came with complications as well, though not NICU, I had to deliver at 37 weeks which made latching with my son difficult. With a lot of hard emotions I worked back to pumping. Luckily previous injuries were not an issue and I have been able to supply more than enough breastmilk. Even with feeling good about having the ability to feed my child as well as freeze a large supply there are still setbacks. I developed mastitis from the effects of pumping on my breasts which lead to lumps, rashes, high fever, painful pumping, and a decreased production. Going through that was a struggle but luckily was able to look towards art and seeing others make it through the same struggles helped get over the process.

I look to these artists as well as my own experience to help showcase all aspectst hat come in breastfeeding journeys. Each has its own struggle that a mother has to navigate in the way that best fits their life.
I have recently looked into my daily life of nursing, pumping, to see the small moments or struggles in each day. As a mother of a three month old as well as a toddler that is 21 months adding pumping to our daily life is hectic.

Most times I end up with my toddler “assisting” my pumping sessions with having her hand on the pump handle while I use it. I find these times where she will still snuggle in with me as she understands that I am getting milk for her brother. Even when sadly this was not a part of her life that she would remember as my supply stopped by the time she was three months old.

I have also taken to painting the changing stages of my breasts that I have witnessed as I have gone through a second pregnancy and a full nursing journey.
The third category - the age of the breastfed child - can be informed by historical and anthropological evidence. This has changed throughout history.

The creation of a formula substitute to give infants in recent history, starting in the 1860s, has allowed for the decision of how to feed children to change. In contemporary America, where food is generally accessible, and formula can be obtained by many breastfeeding older children is not as much of a necessity as it may be elsewhere. Theoretically, in America today, the choice of when to wean can be left up to the mother (and her partner) to decide and when to wean can be viewed as a choice rather than an objective imperative.

However, breastfeeding is not only about providing nourishment but is also about creating and maintaining bonding between a mother and child. For some mothers, the time spent breastfeeding may be the only true unobstructed time they have to connect with their child.

Along with the physical/emotional connection breastfeeding creates, there are numerous benefits for both the mother and child for breastfeeding longer than the early infant stages.

AGE OF THE BREASTFEED CHILD
I am a stay at home mother artist who looks at her daily life for inspirations in my photography as well as other media platforms.

I have a BFA from Brigham Young University where, as I still do, took inspiration from my current daily life in my photography. I have been fortunate enough to be at home since having my oldest child who is now 5 ½ years old. Allowing me to nurse each one as well as watch their everyday life as they grow. We have moved several times from D.C. to Georgia and now to Hawaii as work as required for my partner. In each location I have witnessed different takes on what it meant to be a mother. From the career driven and later in life childbirth of D.C., to the southern family values of Georgia of more stay at home mothers, and now to Hawaii where the locals are open about it and are frequently breastfeeding on beaches.

I have learned in these experiences to embrace each version of motherhood that comes to every person individually.
As I am now nursing my fourth child breastfeeding is an almost constant within my life. I am blessed to have been able to feed all my child through breastfeeding. I have allowed them all to nurse as long as they wanted. My first and second child are 14 months apart which led to some overlap of breastfeeding both of them until my oldest weened himself off around 20 months old. My second child decided to ween herself as she turned one. I am now on the same journey repeating as my third and fourth child, who is now two months old, are 15 months apart. I was spending many naps and nights nursing my 15 month old as I was nine months pregnant.

As nursing takes most of my time it has been wonderful to share those sweet moments with my children to whatever age they feel they need it. To be able to sit and snuggle for the one on one time that we may not get during other parts of our hectic days. I have witnessed how this has also allowed my child to not be surprised by others breastfeeding their child in public circumstances. They can understand at their young ages this is how mothers feed their child.

My oldest daughter has started to “nurse” her own baby with toys as I nurse with her younger siblings. In my years as well of traveling through many countries around the world I wish Americans overall could be as comfortable with breastfeeding as my young children are. I have traveled in South America, Europe, and Africa where it is far more normal of a discussion or sight to see a mother breastfeeding their child of any age in public when needed.
Born in Lisbon in 26 January 1984, I lived in Lisbon until I majored in architecture, in 2007. My internship was done in New York and after that I returned to Lisbon and worked at an architecture firm.

In 2013 I moved to Angola and worked in design and construction companies until I came back to Portugal, in 2017, but this time to the Algarve, where I renovated my first romantic getaway and started working by myself, as owner and manager of said getaway. This year I met my husband and we started working together, now with two romantic getaways. I became a mother in February 2019, with my first boy. During this year I started to get interested in photographing him more and more, as I understood how fleeting these moments can be but it wasn't until 2020, when the pandemic hit, that I took the time to really learn about photography.

With the constant support and help from my husband, capturing my boys became my true way not only to preserve precious memories but also to express myself artistically and get my creative juices flowing. It's a true passion of him and editing a photo daily is one of my favorite routines.
When I became a mother, my closest girlfriends had no shortage of advice to give me: from how to feed my baby to when I should do it, how should I lay him down, and so on and so forth. Most of this advice came when I shared pictures of my baby with them, in the hopes to hear some encouragement and kindness. Instead, what I heard was that I wasn't doing things right, I needed to change because I was “harming” the baby and I shouldn't want to rush any stages as I would miss them, so I shouldn't be celebrating them.

With this treatment, I started to send them less and less pictures until the point when we got together for my bachelorette party and I decided to take the baby with me: he was 7 months old by then and we were very attached to each other as I breastfed him regularly and without restrictions, by my choice, which they disapproved of. They criticized me throughout the whole dinner, saying that I gave him his soup at the wrong time, I shouldn't breastfeed him to sleep and, most of all, I was negligent about his safety because one time that we went for a stroll I didn't strap him properly to his cot (the cot was placed almost horizontal and I was looking at him the whole time, so it was in no way an unsafe situation).

From this moment on I stopped sending them pictures and stopped talking to one of them, still talking to the one that judged me less. I understood, through pain and loneliness, that everyone but especially we mothers need to get away from toxic friendships, from “friends” that instead of cheering and supporting our choices, even though we might think differently, just criticise us and tear us down. I'm happy that I listened to my own gut and mother instinct, still nourishing my first baby even though he's now 4 years old, sharing a beautiful connection that I hope will always stay this way.
The fourth category, the effect of breastfeeding on the mother's body, is one that has not had as much spotlight on it.

THE MOTHER’S BODY

For many women, the effects of nursing start as soon as they become pregnant, then continue throughout the pregnancy into the breastfeeding stages.

Since the impact of nursing is rarely seen by the public (as mothers breastfeed privately or cover up their bodies postpartum), many who do not understand the post-partum body do not see the effects that pregnancy and childbirth have on the body. Often, the mother's body transforms radically. This can be a difficult adjustment.

Being able to highlight this area of motherhood may bring on some deeper introspection or even sympathy from those who have not gone through this process regarding everything a mother’s body has to endure.
Rachel Marcotte (nee Unkle) lived her early life between Maryland, New York, and Pennsylvania. After high school, she attended the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, NY to study Photography.

Rachel went on to earn a BFA in Photography and a Master of Science for Teachers in Art Education. She is a certified art teacher in both New York State and New Jersey, having taught children aged 3 years old to 18 years old.

After teaching for 10 years, Rachel is now taking time away from the classroom to focus on her own artwork and raising her 3 daughters.
Before I gave birth, I was so self-conscious about my body. Not necessarily how I looked, but how I felt. I didn't want to show off my figure, or 'look' like I was trying to show my figure. I just didn't feel fully connected and comfortable with my physical form. But becoming a mother, and more specifically giving birth and breastfeeding, changed that completely.

I felt the purpose in my female form and it was just so empowering, and I guess validating. I grew another human, I used my strength to bring her into the world, and then I used my body to feed her. Every time I have given birth and nursed my children I become more and more amazed at what my body is capable of.

Breastfeeding became the thing that made me feel most comfortable with and proud of my body.

The only artwork I had ever seen of breastfeeding were "Madonna and Child" paintings (done by men) from hundreds of years ago or images of mothers stylized like cheesy fantasy art. Breastfeeding is not some silly fantasy or a rite only reserved for the Virgin Mary. It is work. It is time consuming. It is a feat of the mother's body that takes commitment, patience, and love. I wanted there to be art out there that better represented and celebrated the breastfeeding mother. I started with images of myself and my children, and then slowly began to work with other mothers. I have done work showing babies that are only a few months old and others with children who are as old as 2 years. Each portrait is different because each mother's breastfeeding journey with their child is different, yet all serve to honor and celebrate this wonderous thing that a mother can do.
My grandmother taught me to sew and embroider when I was a child, and I started using fabrics and embroidery to make body reliefs during the second stage of my fine art degree.

In my work I am investigating why some bodies are considered beautiful, and others ugly or disgusting.

I want to unpick these terms and the influence they have on how we see things and how we interpret what we see. I also want to investigate how the media and techniques I use might change how the content of the work is seen.

I like bodies that show their history - most of my work is about bodies that have experienced life and have the marks left by that experience. One of those experiences is pregnancy and the effects that pregnancy has on the mother's body - both temporary and permanent.
I like bodies that show their history — most of my work is about bodies that have experienced life and have the marks left by that experience. One of those experiences is pregnancy and the effects that pregnancy has on the mother's body - both temporary and permanent.
Alexa Villanueva (she/her) is a Filipina-American artist, tarot reader, and mother. She is also the creator of lex a luna studio, a workshop that offers art, ritual objects, and tarot readings that inspire introspection, joy, and healing.

In recent years, Alexa wove her passions for tarot and art by conceiving the Future Ancestor Tarot and Companion Guidebook which are distributed throughout the world. Alexa later spent almost two years abroad in South America gathering new artistic techniques and inspiration. Alexa now resides in Gig Harbor, Washington, with her partner and daughter surrounded by plant friends beneath the stars.
One source of inspiration that finds me again and again has been the Moon.

While I lived abroad, I’d find myself feeling lonely often since I was so far from my community back home, but I’d find so much comfort looking up at the night sky and be reminded that this Moon was the same one casting light on my family and friends far away, and the same Moon that guided my ancestors, as well. The Moon also reminds me the importance of living in cycles, reminding me to find time to rest, plant seeds for the future, and also make time to gather and celebrate in whatever way feels good. It is so easy in this day and age to get caught up in work but the Moon can be a sacred timekeeper that invites pause and reflection.

Even when I was in labor, I would harness the power of my contractions by visualizing the cycles of the moon while my partner timed them. When the contraction was at its peak, I would say “full moon” so he knew when to stop the timer!
This year-long project will delve into the world of nursing mothers. Each of the four categories discussed will use art, research, and my personal experience as a mother to show the often-hidden side of breastfeeding mothers.

By using the visual arts to interrogate these topics, it is my hope to aid viewers to comprehend aspects of a world they may have never been a part of.

The exhibit aims to create an environment that will help other nursing mothers see they are not alone in the struggles they have experienced on their own nursing journeys.

By displaying this exhibit online at MoM, I want to shed light on the complexities, joys, questions, and also the comments mothers face while feeding their offspring as they adjust to their own changing bodies in the world.

The exhibit will also help showcase how mothers might manage judgments and assessments from others while continuing to find a way to care for their children.