

## ARTIST IN RESIDENCE Hannah Brockbank - MOM Art Annex 2017:

**Discovering the Museum of Motherhood (MoM)** is very exciting for me. I am a writer and a mother to two young daughters, and for some time, I'd wanted to find a place I could work uninterrupted on my creative Ph.D. which involves the creation of a new collection of matrifocal poems about my experiences of mothering.

**At the start of my writing career**, I quickly discovered that balancing writing and motherhood is difficult. Often, I think I haven't got the balance right despite organizing my life to the last minute and trying to divide time equally, and I admit, I feel guilty about it all the time. So, you can imagine my delight when I discovered this quotation in *How We Do Both. Art and Motherhood* (eds. Jigarjian & Mestrich: 2015) amongst MoM's substantial book collection:

**I think this is always out of balance.** It's a tug of war at best. Something and someone is always losing. – Joanne Leonard p.67

**Later, I discussed my relief at finding this perspective with Joy Rose** (Director of MoM) and she offered some excellent advice, which honestly, will sustain and support me through those times of guilt. To paraphrase, everyone is given the same amount of energy in a cup, you divide it the best you can, and when it's gone, it's gone. You've given and done all you can.

**Knowing this, having this image, has been tremendously helpful.** It's OK to not succeed 100% in all areas all of the time. In fact, it is impossible! Accepting has been very liberating. This morning, I began writing with fresh eyes (jetlag considerably reduced after a comfortable sleep in the Art Annex). I have the time and space to sustain lengthy pieces of writing, but also educate myself further in Mother Studies, its history, theory, and activism.

**Creatively, many of the exhibits have triggered memories of labour** with my first daughter, which was simultaneously one of the most wonderful and frightening experiences of my life. After 41 hours of labour, prolonged second stage labour, ensuing exhaustion, and worrying fetal heart trace, I had an epidural, episiotomy, and a forcep delivery. It was only last year, 5 years after her birth, that I recovered physically with the aid of gynaecological surgery.

**Many of the exhibits** have rekindled a desire to explore both my corporeal experience of giving birth, but also the emotional flux I experience as my body changed irrevocably. Earlier this morning, I handled antique forceps which were crafted in Germany during the 1800s (and it is worth noting, that there has been substantial forcep development since then) and I was shocked. Their cool heaviness was a stern contrast in my warm, soft hands - a startling image, and the beginning of a new poem. When this happens I'm compelled to write about it. Sometimes it's cathartic and sometimes it's not, and there's always the very real risk of re-traumatizing, however, I've started writing and will see where this poem takes me.  
*Artist in Residence 2017 Hannah Brockbank PhD, (England)*

