Finding aid for the Mother Art records, 1973-2017

Hitomi Matsuyama and Sarah Mackenzie Wade
Descriptive Summary

Title: Mother Art records

Date (inclusive): 1973-2017, undated

Number: 2017.M.60

Creator/Collector: Mother Art

Physical Description: 7.57 Linear Feet (12 boxes. Computer media: 2.98 GB [20 files])

Repository: The Getty Research Institute

Special Collections
1200 Getty Center Drive, Suite 1100
Los Angeles 90049-1688
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URL: http://hdl.handle.net/10020/askref

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Abstract: The Mother Art records document the Los Angeles collective's artistic engagement with sociopolitical concerns relating to maternity, domesticity, and women's issues through photographs, posters, ephemera, press kits, and audio and videorecordings.

Request Materials: Request access to the physical materials described in this inventory through the catalog record for this collection. Click here for the access policy.

Language: Collection material is in English

Biographical / Historical

Formed in 1973 in the Los Angeles Woman's Building, Mother Art was a collective of women artists dedicated to creating sociopolitical art around issues such as the social invisibility of maternal labor and the impact of the lack of socially supported daycare on the professional practices of female artists.

The Mother Art collective was established by five artists from the Feminist Studio Workshop who lacked support from their instructors and fellow participants who did not have children and did not believe it feasible for parents to be serious artists. Jan Cook, Christine Kruse, Helen Million, Suzanne Siegel, and Laura Silagi began meeting weekly in 1973 to advocate for their needs as both mothers and artists. Mother Art's first project was to create a space at the Woman's Building for children, who had not previously been permitted onsite. In 1974, they used electrical cable spools from the Department of Water and Power to build Rainbow Playground in the Woman's Building parking lot. Their next major project, 1975's By Mothers, consisted of an exhibition at the Woman's Building in which ten artists reflected on their personal experience as mothers, with a month-long program series for mothers and children that included workshops, performances, and lectures on motherhood and feminism. A second, larger exhibition, By Mothers was curated by the collective in 1976, with work by women artists from all over the western United States.

Additional Mother Art projects include Laundry Works (1977), a performance series funded by a California Arts Council grant that took place in laundromats throughout Los Angeles; and two 1978 performances, Mother Art Cleans Up City Hall and Mother Art Cleans Up the Banks, with a related installation in 1979 at California State University, Los Angeles. In the 1980s, Mother Art performances and installations incorporated real women's narratives and focused on various social issues such as abortion (Pro-Choice, 1981), Central American refugees (Flowers for Four Women, 1984), and women's poverty (Homeless Women, 1984).


The (Re)Visiting Mother Art retrospective at the Shenere Velt Gallery in 2000 featured a new installation by members Siegel, Silagi, and Kral: Mid-Life, Running out of Time. The group has since participated in several exhibitions, including Doin' It in Public (2011) at the Otis Art Institute as part of the Getty's Pacific Standard Time initiative. In 2012, Mother Art created a documentary film of the collective's history: Mother Art Tells Her Story.

Sources consulted:


Access
Open for use by qualified researchers. Born digital content will be made available on-site only, through the digital preservation repository. Born digital content and audiovisual materials unavailable until reformatting. Contact reference for reformatting.

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Preferred Citation
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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Processing Information
Initial arrangement and description by Hitomi Matsuyama, under the supervision of Sarah Mackenzie Wade. Final arrangement and finding aid by Sarah Mackenzie Wade. Digital materials were processed by Laura Schroffel in 2019. Files require further processing before access copies can be made available.

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, ST-03-17-0007-17.

Related Archival Materials.

Scope and Content of Collection
The Mother Art records reflect the sociopolitical and feminist art practices of the Los Angeles women’s collective, formally active from 1973-1986, with administrative files that detail Mother Art’s formation at the Los Angeles Woman's Building and project files that document the group’s performances and installations in Los Angeles area community and arts organizations.

Arrangement

Subjects - Corporate Bodies
Mother Art
Woman's Building (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Woman's Building (Los Angeles, Calif.)

Subjects - Topics
Art, American -- California -- 20th century
Art -- Political aspects -- United States -- 20th century
Feminism in art -- United States -- 20th century
Installations (Art)
Motherhood and the arts
Performance art -- California -- Los Angeles
Women artists -- Archives
Women artists -- California -- Los Angeles
Women artists -- United States -- 20th century

Genres and Forms of Material
Audiocassettes
Black-and-white prints (photographs)
Born digital
Color slides
DVDs
Inkjet prints
Photographs, Original.
Printed ephemera
Video recordings

Contributors
Mother Art
Krall, Deborah
Siegel, Suzanne
Silagi, Laura

Series I. Administrative files, 1974-2014, undated

Physical Description: 1.29 Linear Feet(6 boxes)

Scope and Content Note
Administrative files consist of materials by and about Mother Art that document the collective's mission to create and promote art centered on women's issues. The series includes audiocassettes of Mother Art interviews on Los Angeles area radio programs; presentation scripts and resumes that detail the collective's formation and project history; image reproduction correspondence; and the collective's 2011 documentary film, Mother Art Tells Her Story, with related photographs and promotional materials. A disbound binder of assorted documents conveys an array of Mother Art's early artistic endeavors, with project proposals, press releases, clippings of exhibition reviews, and a financial report for the California Arts Council grant for 1977's Laundry Works performances.

The series also contains one CD of digital presentation files. Software formats were identified using a DROID (Digital Record Object IDentification) report from information recorded in the PRONOM technical registry. All dates refer to last modified dates of files. Born digital materials are integrated into their corresponding series based on content.

Two publications, Mother Art: A Collective of Women Artists and The First Decade: Celebrating the Tenth Anniversary of the Woman's Building, have been transferred to General Collections.

Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically by format and subject.

Articles and writings about Mother Art, 1978-2014, undated

1978, 1984
circa 1981-2009, undated
2014

Artists' statements, 1978, undated


Proposals and statements; resumes; press releases, 1974-1983, undated

Scope and Content Note
Includes artists' statements; strategic planning notes for the evolution of the collective; and proposals for realized and unrealized projects, including Rainbow Playground, By Mothers (1976), and Laundry Works. Also includes press releases for By Mothers, Art For Public Consumption, Mother Art Cleans Up, and the collective's participation in the 1976 Garden Theater Festival in Barnsdall Park.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box Folder</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| box 1, folder 5 | **General correspondence, 1976-1983, undated**  
Scope and Content Note  
Includes professional correspondence by Mother Art in support of the collective's projects and mission to champion mothers and female artists, with letters between Mother Art and Los Angeles area radio stations; Pennsylvania Congressman Thomas M. Foglietta; Los Angeles City officials Mayor Tom Bradley and Councilwomen Pat Russell and Peggy Stevenson; the office of California Governor Jerry Brown; the Woman's Building Galleries; and the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art (LAICA). Also includes correspondence by Mother Art to the Los Angeles Times in response to an article accusing the California Arts Council of wasting taxpayer money with its award to Mother Art for Laundry Works, and a guest list of attendees for Working Together, one of the installations in Mother Art Cleans Up. |
| box 1, folder 6 | **Laundry Works and draft project descriptions, 1976-1982, undated**  
Scope and Content Note  
Includes preparatory materials for Mother Art's Laundry Works project, with notes, correspondence to laundromat owners, handwritten attendee comments, and the date and location schedule for the five performances in the project series. Also includes the Laundry Works grant award document from the California Arts Council and the grant's requisite final evaluation and financial reports. Draft project descriptions consist of summary texts for the collective's early projects as well as drafts for the questionnaire that was part of the Laundry Works performances. |
| box 1, folder 7 | **Correspondence, 1978-2008**  
Scope and Content Note  
Includes correspondence for image reproduction requests and with LAICA Board Director Robert L. Smith regarding the CETA guest artist program. |
| box 1, folder 8 | **History of Mother Art presentations, circa 1979-2008**  
**Scripts, circa 1979-2008**  
**"Mother Art PPT show #11, PowerPoint slide show," 2007 March 5**  
Physical Description: 0.027 GB5 files  
Scope and Content Note  
1 computer disc (CD) : digital ; 4 3/4 in.  
| box 1, folder 9 | **Letterhead, business cards, and decals, undated**  
**Mother Art Tells Her Story, 2011-2013**  
**Color prints, circa 2011**  
Scope and Content Note  
Eight 4 x 6 inch photographs of Mother Art setting up to interview Helen Million in Modesto, California. |
| box 9, Item DVD1-DVD2 | **DVDs, 2011**  
Scope and Content Note  
2 videodiscs (DVD) (46min) ; 4 3/4 in.  
Original case labeled: Copyright 2011, run time 46 minutes. Award winning documentary tells of 8 Los Angeles artists who were not afraid of those with power. Abortion, immigration, homelessness, weapons of mass destruction ... the hot topics of the 70's and 80's. The 8 artists of Mother Art dealt with issues through Public Art. |
| box 1, folder 10 | **Film festival ephemera, 2012-2013**  
**Script and interview questions, circa 2011**  
**Radio interviews, 1976-1987** |
Series I. Administrative files, 1974-2014, undated

"Mother Art Interview, KPFA-FM, Paul Vangelisti, Nov. 30 1976," 1976
Scope and Content Note
1 audiocassette (60 min.) : analog ; 3 7/8 x 2 1/2 in., 1/8 in. tape. Unavailable until reformatted. Contact reference for reformatting.

"Mother Art, KPFA-FM with Claire Spark 2/25/79," 1979
Scope and Content Note
1 audiocassette (60 min.) : analog ; 3 7/8 x 2 1/2 in., 1/8 in. tape. Unavailable until reformatted. Access restricted due to fragility; contact the repository to request access.

"KUTE-102FM 'Community Awareness' Mother's Day 8 May 1983," 1983
Scope and Content Note
1 audiocassette : analog ; 3 7/8 x 2 1/2 in., 1/8 in. tape. Unavailable until reformatted. Contact reference for reformatting.

Scope and Content Note
1 audiocassette (90 min.) : analog, 1 7/8 ips ; 3 7/8 x 2 1/2 in., 1/8 in. tape. Unavailable until reformatted. Contact reference for reformatting.

"ARN 3-13-87 Broadcast #24 Kaleidoscope The Artist Is a Woman, Mother Art," 1987
Scope and Content Note
1 audiocassette : analog ; 3 7/8 x 2 1/2 in., 1/8 in. tape. Unavailable until reformatted. Contact reference for reformatting.

Resumes and exhibition histories, 1983-2009, undated
Scope and Content Note
Includes an undated price list of select Mother Art works.

Woman's Building calendars, programs, and clippings, 1976-1977, 1988
Scope and Content Note
Includes event calendars for July-September 1976, January-February 1977, and May-June 1988, as well as a program for the Artists Who are Mothers workshop held at the Woman's Building on May 7, 1988.
Series II. Project files, 1973-2017, undated

Physical Description: 6.28 Linear Feet (11 boxes)

Scope and Content Note
Materials in this series document Mother Art's major performance and installation projects, from 1973's Rainbow Playground, a space created for children at the Woman's Building, to the 2000 retrospective (Re)Visiting Mother Art, with project proposals, performance scripts, postcards and posters, and exhibition review clippings. Most files contain either color slides or black-and-white photographs (prints and negatives) of project performances and installations. Some files also include undated inkjet prints, printed at dates later than the project dates, and certainly all after 1990. Additional project materials include original Mother Art trading cards, a menu list for the 1977 Bake Sale Exhibition, audiocassette recordings of women's abortion stories for the Pro-Choice project, and typescript narratives for the 1984 installation Flowers for Four Women.

The series also contains three DVDs of digital image files. Software formats were identified using a DROID (Digital Record Object IDentification) report from information recorded in the PRONOM technical registry. All dates refer to last modified dates of files. Born-digital materials are integrated into their corresponding series based on content. The original order of the born-digital files is retained.

Arrangement
Arranged chronologically by project, with group exhibitions and unidentified projects at the end of the series. When project files include materials that date beyond the date of the project itself, the project date is noted in parentheses following the project title. Most slides were originally housed in a binder, with select color slides originally housed in project files and labeled as slides for the Mother Art: A Collective of Women Artists publication. All slides (color and black-and-white) were rehoused in archival binders by the processing archivists. The distinction between the groups of color slides was maintained.

Color slides, 1974

Notes and inkjet prints, 1973, undated

Trading Cards for gumball machine, 1974
Scope and Content Note
Thirty-two laminated handmade color trading cards of figurative or abstract illustrations and one baseball card for Angels shortstop Jim Anderson.

By Mothers (1975-1976), 1975-1980
Black-and-white print, 1975
Scope and Content Note
One 10 x 13 inch print, mounted.

Color slides, 1975-1976

Fliers, programs, and clippings, 1975-1980
Poster, 1975

Bake Sale Exhibition, 1977
Color slides, 1977
Fliers and price list, 1977

Laundry Works (1977), 1976-1984, undated
Black-and-white negatives and contact prints, 1977
Black-and-white prints, 1977
Scope and Content Note
Six 7 x 9 inch prints, mounted.

California Arts Council grant account book, circa 1977-1984
Clippings, 1976-1981, undated
Series II. Project files, 1973-2017, undated

**Scope and Content Note**

includes Mother Art collective correspondence to the editor of the *Los Angeles Times* and a letter by Los Angeles artist Nancy Buchanan to *Los Angeles Times* theater critic Dan Sullivan. Also includes fliers, black-and-white photographs, typescript notes on the performances, and a black-and-white paper mask featuring images of clothespins.

**Final financial report, 1976 December**

Scope and Content Note

Mounted on mat board.

**"Laundry Works: Gallery into Laundry" pencil drawing, circa 1977**

Scope and Content Note

Additional label on drawing reads: Environment by Mother Art and members of WCA at the Woman's Building celebration, Wednesday, Feb 2, 1977. 20 x 16 1/4 inches.

**Poster, 1977**

*Mother Art Cleans Up (1978), 1974-1979, 2000, undated*

**Color slides, Mother Art Cleans Up City Hall, 1978**

Color slides, *Mother Art Cleans Up the Banks, 1978*

**Gallery exhibitions and related material, 1974-1978, 2000**

Scope and Content Note

Includes black-and-white prints, inkjet prints, and ephemera that document performances at Los Angeles City Hall and Los Angeles area banks. Also includes a certificate of appreciation from the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art (LAICA).

**"Making It Safe: A Project on Violence Against Women in Ocean Park" event calendar, 1979**

**"Making It Safe" and "Working Together" installations, 1979**

Scope and Content Note

Includes ephemera and black-and-white prints that document the *Mother Art Cleans Up* installations at Barrett's appliance store in Santa Monica and the Exploratorium Gallery at California State University, Los Angeles.

**Art for Public Consumption, 1978**

**Black-and-white prints and fliers, 1978**

**Black-and-white negatives, 1978**

Scope and Content Note

Also includes negatives of an event preceding *Art for Public Consumption* held at Barnsdall Art Park, "Dialogues at Barnsdall."


**Black-and-white negatives, 1980**

**Black-and-white prints, 1980 July**

**Color polaroid photographs, 1980 July**

**Correspondence and ephemera, 1979-1981**

Scope and Content Note

Also includes several black-and-white prints, some mounted.


**Abortion notes, circa 1981**
Abortion stories, 1981-1983, undated
Scope and Content Note
Accounts from women who received illegal abortions.

box 11, Item C6
"Mother Art, Gloria's Story, last take 175," undated
Scope and Content Note
1 audiocassette (90 min.) : analog ; 3 7/8 x 2 1/2 in., 1/8 in. tape. Unavailable until reformatted. Contact reference for reformatting.

box 11, Item C7
"0-55 Deborah-abortion, Hal-abortion, Arlene-abortion," undated
Scope and Content Note
1 audiocassette (90 min.) : analog ; 3 7/8 x 2 1/2 in., 1/8 in. tape. Unavailable until reformatted. Contact reference for reformatting.

box 11, Item C8
"Mother Art - 11/21/81 art perf. 'Not Even If It's You,' Church of Ocean Park, Santa Monica, CA," 1981
Scope and Content Note
1 audiocassette (60 min.) : analog ; 3 7/8 x 2 1/2 in., 1/8 in. tape. Handwritten on B side: Dodgers win World Series - 10/28/81 to 415. Unavailable until reformatted. Contact reference for reformatting.

box 11, Item C9
Scope and Content Note
1 audiocassette (60 min.) : analog, mono ; 3 7/8 x 2 1/2 in., 1/8 in. tape. Unavailable until reformatted. Contact reference for reformatting.

box 11, Item C10
"Mother Art abortion tape, 4 stories repeated, whole tape 10-83," 1983
Scope and Content Note
1 audiocassette (90 min.) : analog ; 3 7/8 x 2 1/2 in., 1/8 in. tape. Handwritten on B side: Skip 1st story (Deb), start w/ Caroline." Unavailable until reformatted. Contact reference for reformatting.

box 4, folder 4 Black-and-white 35mm negatives and contact print, 1981
box 5, folder 7, box 6, folder 9 Color slides, 1981
Scope and Content Note
Museum of Illegal Abortion installation and Not Even If It's You performance shots.

box 3, folder 3 Performance scripts and research notes, 1981, undated
Scope and Content Note
Also includes Mother Art pro-choice ephemera, color inkjet prints, and a performance review of Not Even If It's You, held at the Church in Ocean Park, Santa Monica, California, November 21, 1981.

box 8*, folder 2 Poster, "Thanks, But No Thanks," undated
Scope and Content Note
Poster for a public art event presented by Los Angeles Political Art Documentation/Distribution, with a performance night in Ocean Park that featured Mother Art.

L.A. Guernica (1982), 1982-1985, undated
box 4, folder 5 Black-and-white 35mm negatives, contact prints, and photographs, 1982
box 5, folder 8 Color slides, 1982
box 3, folder 4  Correspondence, fliers, and clippings, 1982-1985, undated
Scope and Content Note
Also includes black-and-white photographs and a color inkjet print of the installation, printed at a later date.

box 7*, folder 6  Journals and wall label, 1985
Flowers for Four Women (1984), 1984, undated
box 6, folder 1, 10  Color slides, 1984
box 3, folder 5  Ephemera and typescript narratives, undated
Scope and Content Note
Includes seven black ink drawings of flowers adhered to a single sheet of paper.

box 6, folder 2  Correspondence, fliers, and typescript narratives, 1985-1988, 2005, undated
Scope and Content Note
Also includes a poster for the Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions presentation of The Cotton Exchange Show and a pencil drawing of an outline of a female figure.

box 6, folder 3, 11  Color slides, 1985
box 3, folder 7  Interview transcripts and color inkjet prints, 1985, undated
Scope and Content Note
Transcripts of an interview with Barbara Avedon, one of the founders of Another Mother for Peace.

box 3, folder 8  (Re)visiting Mother Art (2000), 2000, undated
Postcards and clippings, 2000, undated
Scope and Content Note
Also includes press releases, a price list of Mother Art works, and a timeline of the collective's history.

box 6, folder 4  Color slides, Running Out of Time, 2000
box 3, folder 9  Mother Art Cleans Up Yet Again postcards, 2016

box 6, folder 5  Unidentified, 1975-2017, undated
Color slides, 1975-1978, undated
box 4, folder 6  Black-and-white print and postcard, 1978 January
Scope and Content Note
Includes Helen Million, Suzanne Siegel, Gloria Hajduk, and Laura Silagi.

box 8*, folder 1  Posters, 1978
Scope and Content Note
Two black-and-white posters titled: Wanted: For crimes of role fixing and failure to tamper with stereotypes, featuring images of Gloria Hajduk, Laura Silagi, Suzanne Seigel, and Helen Million Ruby.

box 4, folder 7  Black-and-white 35mm negatives, contact print, and postcard, 1983 March 7
Scope and Content Note
Possibly images of the At Home exhibition at the Long Beach Museum of Art, part of Pro-Choice, Mother Art's series of installations and performances about abortion. Includes group images of Suzanne Siegel, Deborah Krall, Laura Silagi, and Gloria Hajduk.
Photomural panels, 2011, 2017
Scope and Content Note
All dates refer to last modified dates of files.

box 10, Item CM1
"Mother Art photomural panel 1," 2017 September 27
Physical Description: 0.6 GB(4 files)
Scope and Content Note
1 computer disc (DVD-R) : digital ; 4 3/4 in.

box 10, Item CM2
"Mother Art photomural panel 2," 2017 September 27
Physical Description: 0.1 GB(4 files)
Scope and Content Note
1 computer disc (DVD-R) : digital ; 4 3/4 in.

box 10, Item CM4
"Mother Art photomurals, 2 banks, 2 machines, 4 images," 2011 July 25-30
Physical Description: 2.22 GB(7 files)
Scope and Content Note
1 computer disc (DVD-R) : digital ; 4 3/4 in.
CM4 contains: 4 Adobe Photoshop Document files (.psd) titled: panel with machines; panel with banks; correct scale banks; and scaled washing machine panel. Unavailable until reformatted. Contact reference for reformating.

box 4, folder 8
Black-and-white 35mm negatives and contact print, undated