

The notion of a mother seems simple enough. But just one shy cut beneath the surface lies a multitude of facets, problems, questions, contradictions and wonders all connected to the idea of maternity. Biologically speaking, every person has a mother; perhaps it is the one fact we all have in common. Nevertheless this issue, dedicated to Mother, raises more questions than it is able to answer. Precisely because everyone appears to understand what a mother is, many crucial aspects of the topic are never questioned and are instead taken as a given. Is a mother defined by just having a child, or is it a child that defines the mother? Can we look at the mother without assuming womanhood? Can we untie the gendered attributes bound to the role of a mother? And what exactly are the notions of gender and sex that are connected to the common idea of motherhood? Where do they stem from? What kind of social, biological and economic pressure do mothers and potential mothers face?

In the following pages, we explore alternative family structures and how responsibilities of parenting might be shared; prevailing working conditions for mothers in the arts; difficulties, challenges and prejudices mothers face in their professional lives, and what an ideal work environment might look like. Simultaneously, this issue deals with disappointments and unfulfilled expectations in the mother-child relationship, and again at that relationship in the social context. We picture the past and the present in the process of envisioning what maternity could look like in the future.

While working on this issue of Pfeil Magazine it very quickly became very clear that there is a lack of discourse around motherhood, not only in the art world but everywhere. This issue could have easily been double its size and led into a never-ending magazine series. Our aim has never been to draw a conclusion but to open a space for exchange, arguments, and fantasy about what a mother can be and how we can understand the complications behind the plain facade of over-simplified concepts of the mother.