

2020

On the Cover: Artist's Statement for A Glimpse of Motherhood

Follow this and additional works at: https://vc.bridgew.edu/grad_rev



Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(2020) On the Cover: Artist's Statement for A Glimpse of Motherhood. *The Graduate Review*, 5, 6-7.
Available at: https://vc.bridgew.edu/grad_rev/vol5/iss1/5

This item is available as part of Virtual Commons, the open-access institutional repository of Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.
Copyright © 2020

On the Cover

Artist's Statement for *A Glimpse of Motherhood*¹

ELENA MURPHY

The installation is comprised of embroidered garments from my son's infancy, with the intent of depicting the connection between mother and infant, and the domestic work associated with motherhood. The garments, such as clothing, cloth diapers, and blankets, are white or grey with navy blue thread, where I have hand-stitched contour drawings of our daily connectedness. The stitched imagery includes depictions of maternity, domesticity, and maternal life.

The adorned garments are installed on laundry lines within the gallery space to emphasize the increased domestic duties tied with having an infant. Three clotheslines hang, each approximately 10 inches in length; the lines are staggered in height at about eye level, one above, and one below. Two laundry baskets sit on the floor to reinforce the idea of domestic duties by the presence of these very familiar objects. The staggered heights

of the clotheslines allow viewers to see the quantity of the individual pieces, representing the scale of domestic duties associated with caregiving. It is my hope that the delicacy of the embroidery encourages viewers to enter the space to examine the details, allowing for a more intimate experience. Though the clothing and clothes are all worn, they are very clean and some folded neatly, signifying a task completed by the mother. The garments hang in order of the daily cycles of mother and infant, allowing the viewer to follow the line to experience the documentation of my son's birth and daily interactions between mother and son. Repetition is used to express how cyclical the domestic duties are.

I am interested in using hand-embroidery as a means of drawing to express both the satisfaction of the maternal bond and to reflect on the work of having a baby. I employ stem stitch and backstitching techniques to create fluid, contour lines for the depicted imagery. I want to present the viewer with simple, delineated representations of figures such that a wide audience could reflect on and connect with the imagery. Giving the viewer only the essential information without including a setting or background makes the imagery relatable to a larger audience. By using simpler mark making, it also speaks to the amount of time mothers have to devote to personal work, after having a child.

I have selected the medium of embroidery to tell my story of maternity and motherhood. Embroidery has been used for tens of thousands of years to tell stories about peoples' values and lives. It has been a medium tied to women's education, domestic life and duties, artistic expression, and the feminist voice. There is so much love and history wrapped up in the role of a mother, as well as a history that is changing as women move toward equality in many aspects of our lives. I feel the home is one of the slower moving aspects because of biological obligations, social pressures, and traditional values. Birth can lead to a common experience of transition: role changes that reinforce old values and challenge us to move toward equality for our children. The history of the art of embroidery adds to the content of my work, and the content adds to the history; it becomes a common thread.

About the Artist

Elena Murphy is an artist and mother and finds inspiration all around her, especially within her own home. She works in many mediums, including painting, drawing, pottery, and embroidery. Her son has been her inspiration for many of her current works, as his presence has changed her role so profoundly.

Elena is a teacher of the visual arts at the high school level. She is passionate about giving students hands-on experiences with art making in a variety of mediums and challenging them to think of themselves as artists. Elena earned her bachelor's degree through Bridgewater State University and is currently completing her Master of Arts in Teaching the Creative Arts.

¹**Editor's Note:** This artwork that graces the cover of *The Graduate Review*, volume V is from an installation of artwork by this artist, Elena Murphy, that was presented at Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts during the 2019-2020 academic year. This artist's statement describes the installation of and rationale for this artwork.