

The mother takes a room and closes the door because that is what she needs. Inside, she is preparing for the live performance of mothering that happens elsewhere. The room holds what has to be done at a distance. She reads, watches a workshop, practises what to say, breathes on the floor, plans, does nothing. She builds capacity away from demand so care can continue. This is mothering. It is ordinary, and it is rigorous. She is inside, or sometimes isn't. It is whether-dependent.

*The performance is private. It is for me. It is for my children. We are the audience. Not what is visible, but what is possible. How am I doing? Is it going well? What do we need right now? My children are the feedback. It is between us.*

*The mother study is a six-year practice-led praxis of mothering as a performance, undertaken by an artist who is also a mother. In a disabled and neurodivergent family, where the inherited scripts do not reach, the mother crafts habits for new forms of relation. The study draws on two bodies of practice: contemporary parenting methodologies, and the documentation strategies of performance art. From the first come techniques—what to say, how to listen, when to withdraw. From the second come apparatuses—a lens, a recording—which act on the mothering by the fact of recording it.*

*Care and art are one act here, at a scale of one to one. A single practice that inherits the tools and the concerns of both, and shares their process: becoming over being, attunement over outcome. The study is a wager placed on this particular child, on the possibility that being changed by him will make of her a mother she cannot yet be. The wager is enacted by persisting, staying in the mothering, through the maintenance marathon of the post-partum, showing up and showing up again.*

*Techniques and apparatuses together are the mechanism of becoming, accumulating into a repertoire of tool-beings – what a mother reaches for to aid the work of mothering. The crying face and the selfie that cuts through it, the breath and the recording that witnesses it, the glimmer and the question that propels it forward. The apparatus scaffolds the technique*

*– documentation performing an action within the becoming rather than producing a record of it, useful to the mothering as it happens. It holds attention. The mother sees her own technique from inside its emergence, audience to herself. What remains accrues in the body, carried forward into the next encounter.*

*Rehearsals for Mothering is the next tool-being. The privacy of the room is functional. The parenting curriculum says take space and close the door; the work of rehearsal requires no audience but the mother herself. The actual maternal act of closing the door, in real time. What the room gives back to the mothering is not known until it has been used.*

–Clare Fleming

For the duration of the exhibition *Rehearsals for Mothering* the gallery will be closed from public access, and solely occupied by Fleming.

Clare Fleming (Pākehā) is an artist based in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. She holds a BFA from the Dunedin School of Art and an MFA from Elam School of Fine Arts. Fleming works across sculpture, sound, image and performance. Her practice weaves art and everyday life, studying the becoming subject as it is formed and reformed in relation to structures of power. She is a doctoral candidate at Auckland University of Technology, where her practice-led research approaches mothering itself as the performance, and documentation as what sustains the practice rather than what records it.

