Entangled Motherhoods: Care, Politics and Intimacies (Tallinn, 8–9 Apr 27)

Tallinn, Apr 8–09, 2027
Deadline: Nov 1, 2026

Jana Kukaine and Eda Tuulberg

The Kumu Art Museum, the Estonian Academy of Arts and Rīga Stradiņš University invite you to participate in the interdisciplinary conference Entangled Motherhoods: Care, Politics and Intimacies, which brings together perspectives and experiences from Central and Eastern Europe and serves as a satellite event to the international exhibition Who's Afraid of Motherhood?, held at the Kumu Art Museum in Tallinn.

Motherhood has been a profound topic in feminist research and art. From Adrienne Rich's seminal distinction between motherhood as an institution and as an experience (1976) to Andrea O'Reilly's call for matricentric feminism (2016), motherhood has remained a central concern of feminist thought. In recent decades, the relevance of these debates has gained increasing prominence in Central and Eastern Europe. While heteropatriarchal understandings of motherhood have recently been reinforced by emerging trends of femonationalism and new definitions of maternal citizenship (e.g. Bisigirskaitė, Gradskova and Yazdanpanah 2026), various initiatives, spanning research, activism, artistic practice and exhibitions, have contributed counter-discourses that highlight the inherent tensions and contradictions of motherhood, which, drawing on Wendy Harcourt's concept, we describe as conundrums of care (2025). They manifest in experiences of motherhood as dichotomies:love and labour, intimacy and burden, agency and constraint, personal fulfilment and self-sacrifice, and potential sources of solidarity and resistance.

The conference invites participants to critically re-examine historical, cultural and social representations of motherhood and to bring together perspectives derived from lived experience, regional histories and critical theories in order to highlight how motherhood is entangled with social processes and policies, and can catalyse social change, thereby shaping a collective life characterised by openness, equality and solidarity.

We invite contributions – academic papers, round-table discussions, artists talks and world-cafes – to one of the following key themes:
Constructions of Good Motherhood: Norms, Tensions and Expectations
Cultural ideals and social expectations surrounding motherhood, and the ways they shape, regulate and constrain maternal identities and practices.
The Politics of Care and Life-Making Practices
Questions of who provides care, for whom, under what conditions and with what resources, and how care is entangled with power, social inequality and the distribution of labour.
Maternal Affects, Self-Care and Intimacies

The affective, embodied and intimate dimensions of motherhood, including pleasure, ambivalence, exhaustion, rage, vulnerability, agency and practices of self-care.
Critical Vocabularies: Rethinking Motherhood and Kinship
New concepts, languages and theoretical approaches for questioning established understandings of mother, parenthood, family, kinship, and maternal subjectivity.
New Aesthetic Categories in Creative Practices
Artistic and creative practices that challenge established representations of motherhood and develop new forms, imaginaries and aesthetic languages for articulating maternal experiences.
Communities, Solidarities and the Commons
Collective forms of mutual support and solidarity, and alternative ways of organising motherhood and care beyond individualised and privatised models.
We also invite experimental, hands-on and site-specific contributions in the form of walkshops: guided walks, immersive meditations or other forms of creative engagement taking place indoors or outdoors (lasting one to two hours). We have a limited budget to cover materials and related expenses for walkshops. Please indicate what you would require and provide an estimated cost. We will do our best to accommodate your needs within the available budget.

Individual or collective representations may focus on any historical period, provided that they engage with contemporary debates and discussions on motherhood.

Please submit your proposal (up to 250 words) along with a brief biography by 1 November, 2026: https://forms.gle/3QEFvh9vWqxCFKuX8

Organised by: Jana Kukaine (Rīga Stradiņš University Faculty of Social Sciences) and Eda Tuulberg (Kumu Art Museum, Estonian Academy of Arts).

Reference:
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