

MOTHERS WHO MAKE

DEVON

Wednesday 19th February | 9.30am - 3.30pm
MAKETANK | Paris Street, Exeter

9.30-10.30am **Opening**
10.30-11.30am **Session 1**
11.30am-12.30pm **Session 2**
12.30-1.30pm **Lunch**
1.30-2.30pm **Session 3**
2.30-3.30pm **Closing**

The Future of Motherhood: How can we use the arts to better prepare and educate young people for all that motherhood* can mean?

An invitation from Lizzy Humber (*Mothers Who Make*) to young women** and Trans individuals, artists, mothers, educators, women's* health professionals and thinkers to come together to talk about the future of motherhood in a one-day Open Space event.

Since I became a mother I have been reflecting on the cultural narratives about motherhood. How we both value and undervalue this role in society.

I felt like I spent the first year of motherhood in shock. Unprepared. The enormity of the change was overwhelming. I mourned the loss of my sense of self. But I gradually realised that I was becoming something both old and new. In Indian culture there is a saying that when a baby is born, two lives are born – that of the baby, and that of the mother. I had spent 9 months buying prams, slings, clothes, painting rooms, reading about feeding and sleeping. I had focused on the coming baby, but I had not prepared for my own birth into a new identity. I didn't expect the emotional, intellectual, mental, physical and artistic shifts that took place in myself. I didn't know how to maintain my career, or how to be with colleagues and employers in a way that acknowledged my new role and responsibility. I experienced prejudice, judgment and felt excluded from spaces where before I was welcome. I felt invisible within my professional network. I felt shut out from job opportunities. But I have had some significant, affirming and empowering experiences too. I have been exploring modeling new ways of existing as my whole self – mother, artist, runner, thinker.

As girls and young women we learn about safe sex and relationships in school. But motherhood prevention is the common rhetoric, rather than

motherhood preparation. Motherhood is presented as something to be feared, avoided at all costs as young women. Children are too often seen as a problem to solve, to hide from the working world.

**The word 'mother' is intended as inclusive for every kind of mother - for example - biological, adoptive, step, surrogate, foster, LGBTQ+, bereaved, grand, great grand, future, to be. ** the use of the word 'woman' is intended as inclusive for anyone who identifies as female.*

Why don't we prepare for child-bearing and raising in the way we plan for our future careers? For all women and Trans people the issue of motherhood is something to be considered at some point in their lives. A woman may choose not to have children. She may choose to keep or terminate a pregnancy. She may choose to have a child but then miscarry. She may choose, if she can, to commit to being a full time mother. She may choose to find ways to sustain her career alongside her mothering. Currently women too often have to make these choices alone, to undergo these huge experiences without adequate information or support, and with significant economic, emotional and societal pressures at play.

What if... we discussed motherhood with girls/young women/Trans people at the start of their careers? To help prepare them, to help them to plan, to change attitudes and to trail blaze other ways of doing things?

What would it be useful to know at the start of adult life, at the start of a career? What could help future women be better prepared for motherhood?

Also, what support is there for girls/young women/Trans people who are already mothers/parents, to enable them to have careers and ambitions alongside their mothering?

I believe as artists and mothers that it is our job to think creatively and to dream of different ways of doing things, to find new ways to connect and empower people. We must ask the questions that no one else is asking in order to imagine new models for our children, future mothers and ourselves.

With this in mind, I want to create workshops to help prepare and educate girls/young women/Trans people for all that motherhood might mean. This Open Space event is an opportunity for us to come together to discuss, dream, play and think together about what such workshops could look like. Bring your ideas, questions, provocations and exercises to try out or share. If you have an idea, this is the place to test it out!

I look forward very much to seeing you there.
- Lizzy

About Open Space Technology:

Open Space Technology (OST) is a great way for groups to think, talk and take action together. It can work for as few as 5 people, and as many as 5000. It is particularly effective at tackling large and complex, multi-faceted issues. Participants self-organise to create their own agenda on the day, allowing a dynamic and immediate response to the issues at hand. The process allows free-flowing conversations and engagements about the things that really matter to the people in the room.

Host:

Lizzy Humber, Mother, Producer, Co-Director Mothers Who Make & MWM
Devon Pilot

Facilitator:

Matilda Leyser, Mother, Writer, Co-Director Mothers Who Make, Associate
Director Improbable.

Participants:

- **15 young women** aged 16-25 years old from Exeter College, Doorstep Arts and Exeter University
- **Estelle Buckridge**, Mother, Theatre Maker, Community Facilitator, Co-Director Eager Spark.
- **Grace Parker**, Mother, Lecturer Exeter College
- **Hannah Mulder**, Mother, Theatre Maker, Director The Wrong Crowd, Singer/Musician
- **Holly Ebony**, Mother, Singer/Songwriter
- **Jade Campbell**, Mother, Theatre Maker, Co-Director Doorstep Arts (Torbay)
- **Jenny Cahill**, Mother, Climate Activist, Dance Artist, Jeweller
- **Laura Godfrey Isaacs**, Mother, Midwife, Artist, Founder of Maternal Journal
- **Maisaa Sweid**, Mother, Community Builder, (ECI) Facilitator Yalla Community Theatre.
- **Olya Petrakova**, Founder of MakeTank, Academic, Theatre Maker
- **Sophie Lovett**, Mother, Home Educator, Writer 'Raising Revolutionaries' blog, Climate Activist.
- **Viola Depcik**, Mother, Photographer
- **9 Children**

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