



MOTHER

2022-2023

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ESMERALDA KOSMATOPOULOS

“With maternal love, life makes you a promise at dawn that it never keeps.”

— **Romain Gary**, *Promise at Dawn*

MOTHER!

MOTHER! explores the mother–daughter relationship and the ways femininity is constructed, inherited and lived across generations. Taking the breast as its central form, the project follows what passes from one woman to another through words, expectations, images, memories and bodily traces. The mother is not presented as an absolute origin, but as one link in a longer chain of transmission: she carries what she has received while passing on her own contradictions, protections and desires.

Across four interconnected bodies of work, the series moves from social instruction to intimate memory, from symbolic representation to biological coexistence. Maternal phrases become sculptural assemblages; childhood photographs merge with lunar landscapes made from skin; the image of the moon is eclipsed by a mammogram; embroidered bodies reveal the foreign cells that mothers and daughters continue to carry within one another. Femininity emerges not as a stable identity transmitted intact, but as something continually assembled and transformed. A woman does not begin where her mother ends. She emerges within what passes between them.

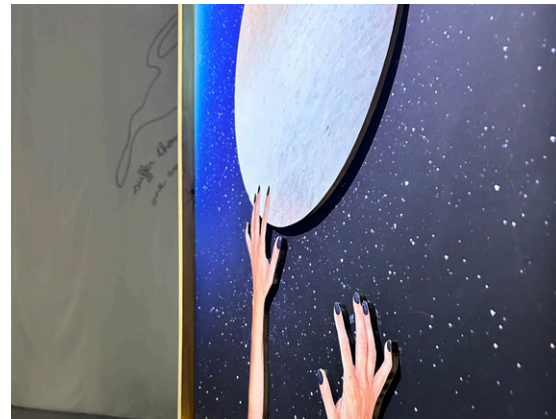
From Her to the Moon

2023, Archival prints, laser-cut wood and wheels

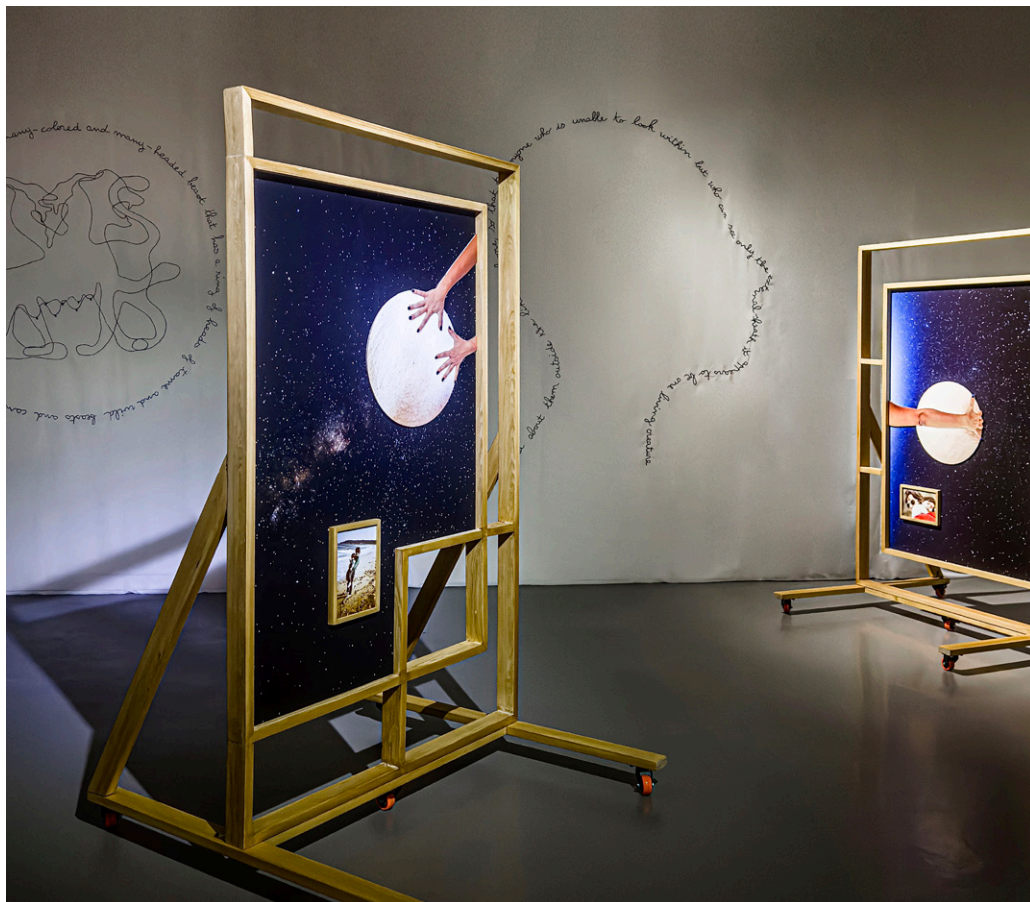
From Her to the Moon returns to the maternal breast as one of Kosmatopoulos's earliest experiences of femininity, nourishment and protection. Childhood photographs of the artist with her mother are combined with enlarged images of her own breast. Areolae, pores, beauty marks and stretch marks are applied to the surface of the full moon, transforming skin into a celestial landscape and the distant lunar body into something intimate and corporeal.

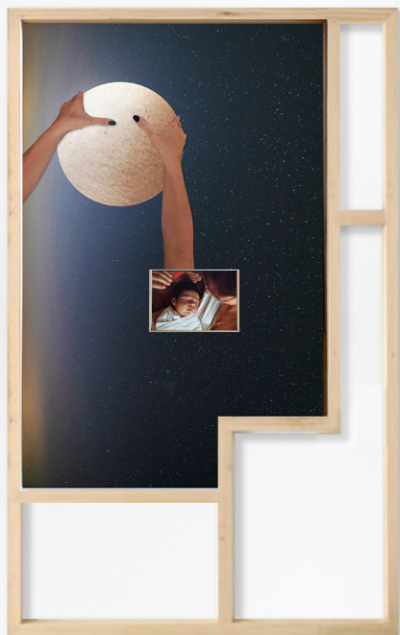
The artist's adult hands reach towards this hybrid form, attempting to hold an image that belongs simultaneously to her mother's body, her childhood and the body she now inhabits. Rather than presenting the breast as an erotic object or an emblem of maternal virtue, the works treat it as a mutable form capable of generating multiple images of femininity. Mounted on dimensional wooden structures fitted with wheels, the photographs enter the exhibition space as mobile bodies. Like maternal inheritance, they follow the daughter through life, shifting position and acquiring another body, scale and meaning.

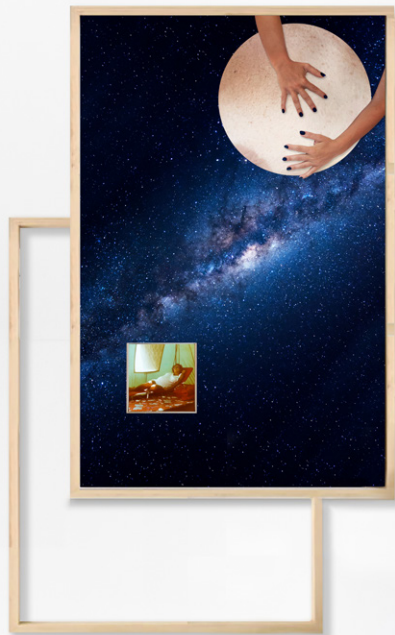


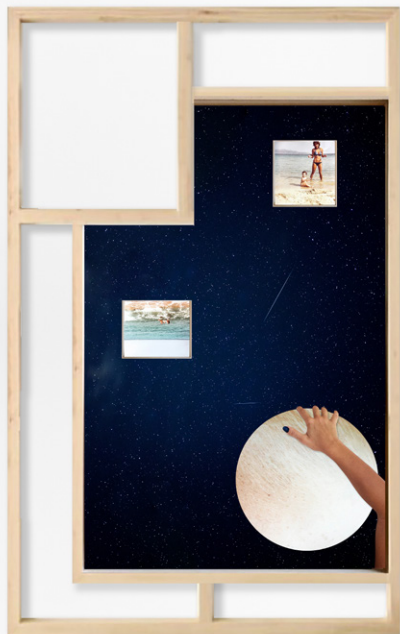


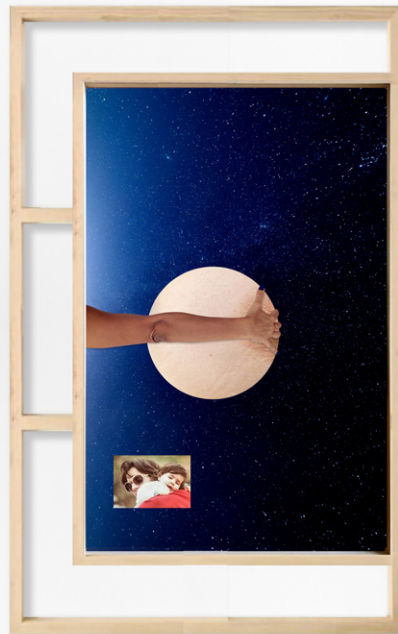


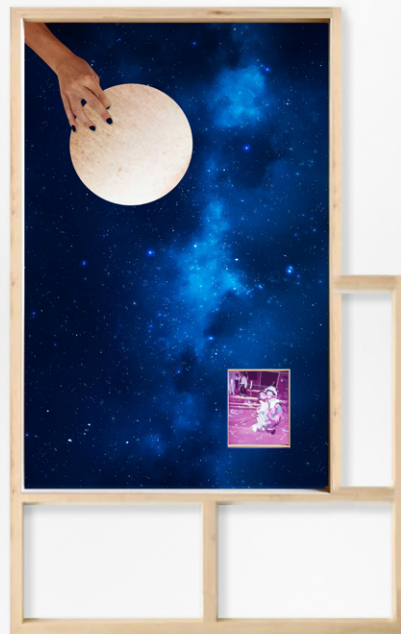
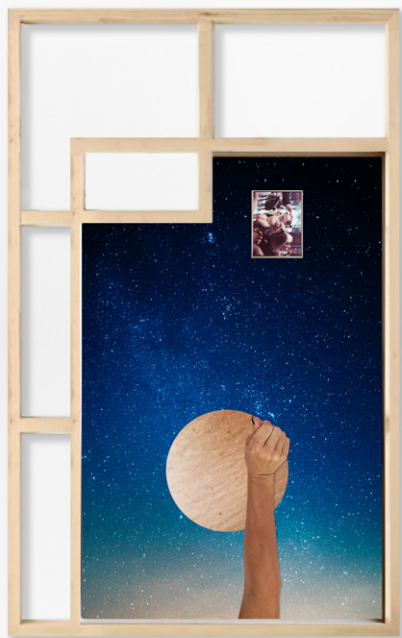












Femme des années 80

2022, Ceramic, fabric, wood, mirror, feathers, metal and found objects

Femme des années 80 examines the mother–daughter relationship as one of the first places where femininity is learned, negotiated and transmitted. Drawing on Kosmatopoulos’s upbringing in a Greek family in France, the series begins with the contradictory instructions repeatedly addressed to her by her mother: to remain beautiful, care for a husband and become a good mother, but also to be independent, control her own body and never allow a man to limit her freedom.

Each instruction becomes a sculptural assemblage composed of bras, ceramic vases, mirrors, feathers and domestic objects. The recurring bra and vase operate as containers: both hold a changing substance within a predetermined form and impose its outline from the outside. The works do not oppose a traditional mother to an emancipated daughter. They reveal how inherited conventions and aspirations towards freedom can be transmitted through the same voice. The daughter neither reproduces nor simply rejects what she receives; she assembles herself within its contradictions.





**“you will see when you will
become a mother” (Virgin Mary)**

ceramic, fabric, wool, steel, albacor,
feathers



“the real beauty comes from the inside” (Simone)

Metal, digital print on fabric, bricks, rope





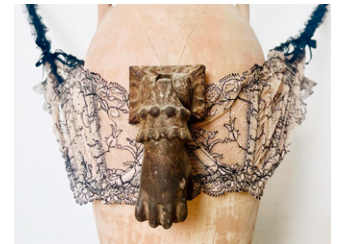
**“like mother like daughter” (the
chicken and the egg)**

ceramic, fabric, steel, plastic, wire, feather,
albacore, cyanotype print on paper

**“ how will you ever be able to take care
of a house and a man?” (Cinderella)**

ceramic, fabric, steel





“always, make them wait” (Dalida)

ceramic, fabric, bronze, artificial flower, electric piano

**“you must shine everywhere
you go” (Madona)**

ceramic, fabric, wood, mirror,
feather, metal





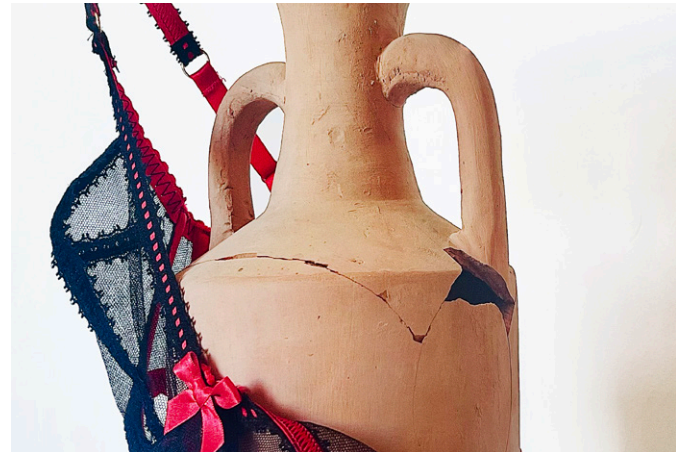
**you don't want to end up like your
grandmother (Family Tree)**

ceramic, fabric, steel, wood, tule, paper



**“don’t ever let a man tell you
what to do” (Marianne)**

ceramic, fabric, steel, wood, concrete





**“you are so pretty with your
polka dot dress” (Venus)**

ceramic, fabric, shell, steel, bids

**“they just want one thing from
you” (the First Time)**

ceramic, fabric, steel, glass, horn



Eclipse

2023, Prints on glass

Eclipse brings together two images through which femininity has repeatedly been defined: the full moon and the breast. Across a sequence of six photographs, a mammogram of Kosmatopoulos's breast gradually passes over the lunar surface until one circular form almost completely eclipses the other. Their visual similarity makes the transition appear natural, while concealing the radically different systems of representation to which they belong.

The moon carries centuries of associations with femininity, fertility, beauty, mystery and cyclical time. It projects the female body into the cosmos, where it can be idealised and contemplated from a distance. The mammogram introduces another gaze: it penetrates the body, flattening flesh into shadows, densities and signs to be examined. As the two images overlap, neither fully disappears. The celestial and anatomical bodies become temporarily indistinguishable, holding mythology and diagnosis, projection and physical evidence within the same visual event. Each reveals how the other has been made into an image.







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