

The Ecosystem of Intimacy — Dina Jezdic

You do not need to be invited into this room. There is no welcome sign but you feel like it's a space you want to enter, to pause in. You are surrounded by warmth. It's decorated, wallpapered to be precise. Some parts are faded, torn, unkept, crumbling like the passing of time. It feels like a home, life bursting out of and within. The wallpaper houses little forget-me-nots growing in vertical lines, flowers that require little maintenance.

The room is compiled of twenty-two pieces of art, each by a different contributor. The art descriptions that accompany each piece were written by the artists themselves, from their own perspective. I see this as a direct movement to artistic autonomy while leaning on others for support. They are coherent and original, all 'portraits', but not as we know them. Presented like individual love letters, each portrait is a representation of an individual meaningful to the artist. I see it as an invitation to ponder and think about our own language of love; who we would bestow such honour on.

mothermother is an iterative, artist-led project. Conceived as no ordinary group art endeavour, mothermother progresses with artists segueing from one iteration into the next as each departing exhibitor invites the following contributor. This is categorised as a cycle but it is more like a dynasty, made to last and endure like the relationships formed. Situations unfold unpredictably over time. The Art Fair is mothermother's 10th iteration.

This is a particularly divisive time and we need spaces that bring us together. Spaces that have the power to un-contaminate our way of thinking, giving our imagination free reign. mothermother presents woven threads of intimacy, building blocks that culminate in the formation of a larger relationship. There is care in a human and close way, directly addressing the Art Fair and asking us to think: who does it serve, whose needs are being met? It's a refusal to reduce the artwork to a mere product for consumerist needs. More than a commodity. It is also a denial of the larger ecosystem that it is created in. This transformation of a white-cube gallery booth into a dynamic domestic wasteland for art is doing its best to reveal the traces of the actual labour involved in these works, giving attention to feminist discussions about unacknowledged labour. Some of these voices are loud while some are intimate whispers, like the quiet stolen moments in which they were created. The mothermother booth is a lot like a cosy lounge filled with community working in concert to the art, and the art world. It is a space that allows new forces to intervene by creating new directions that unbalance and grow.

Care can be a potential antidote to the systemic problems that the current art world presents us with. But in this eulogy, I am hoping to highlight why alternative spaces are important and to offer mothermother as a possible solution. Within the relational ripples embraced by these walls are 21-months of mentoring and friendship, passed between the artists at different stages of their art practices. These exchanges are visible and fundamental to the solidarity within mothermother's unique art ecology. They are based around cooperative structures and point to

cooperatives for answers. It's a window into what is possible outside of brand guidelines, revealing what colonial traces we transmit, whether consciously or unconsciously, and why we are often coerced to accept forces that serve the institution and not the artist community. These unique opportunities for leadership and development are frequently beyond the reach of the art community, often offered to the 'headliners' of the art world. The 1%. Perhaps this is why we urgently need to spread the demand for change.

It is hard to be sceptical when entering the mothermother space. We are in front of a shared vision that will shape what the future of this collective looks like. One that is sharing the load of creative authority and power in service of the participating community of artists. In this power-sharing model there is collective responsibility. It's a perfect Art Fair escape room, with clues of this novel model all around us.

I like being presented with anti-institutional collective concepts like this one. Merging ethical responsibility and questioning the structures of art is complicated. But it is something altogether different to see the world as the artist does and to enter a space that is inviting them to come as they are.

I see the room as a manuscript that has suddenly changed its font, moved away from the white cube and into a room of their own, standing on shoulders of those that came before. It is flipping the context of how we often see and perceive art. Instead of a singular voice, I feel like I can hear a symphony, carving pathways and connecting to audiences in expanding ripples.

Is it a turning point? Is it an interruption? I hope it suggests a more equitable future narrative, an obituary to structures from the past. So momentous and difficult to frame in one hall, but here it is, succeeding. Perhaps it's equally not asking us to love it all, but as with anything that is meaningful, accept the inevitable ups and downs.

I am feeling fulfilled just by existing in this space. mothermother is a network of generosity that is most certainly intimate. It is art in the eyes of those that will benefit from its existence.