

Is / Is Not

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As Artists we constantly ask critical questions and are always reconsidering our perception of visual knowledge. This collaboration began both individually and collectively from a shared interest but through an individual lens as we noticed that our concentration around exploring the idea of 'motherhood' stemmed from two binary approaches: one overtly sentimental and conscious, and one biological and unconscious.

This collaborative installation, titled *Is / Is Not*, first developed through our consideration as to how we could visually represent a condition of being that is consistently in a state of instability and uncertainty. Would we be able to visualize and make tangible something that is deeply rooted in a social constructs and imbedded in our own personal unconsciousness? How could we lead the viewers to think about how knowledge of "motherhood" is narrowly formed and engraved disregarding unconscious and invisible components? We agreed on the term 'motherhood' rather than motherhood or mothering as we felt those terms are more intrinsically based on a cliched representation. Freud's notion of the unconscious implies that contradictory thoughts generate tensions in our minds which can produce physical reactions in our bodies. If we follow Freud's logic and assume that our lives are constantly being shaped and influenced by forces that we are unaware of, how then can we represent these ideas tactually? Freud's idea of the unconscious is entrenched within the negation of our consciousness. By denying one thing it also acknowledges its own presence and this notion of duality is key to our collaboration. Through a series of binaries within the materials, processes and content used we impose further investigation left for the viewer to complete by provided works that act not as objects but clues.

Moving image, sounds, letters, and smells all together read as visual signs or language and forms knowledge of "motherhood." While Husserl distinguishes visual and tactual realms with phenomenology of embodiment, and emphasizes body as a lived center of experience, in video of *Is / Is Not*, every fierce physical experience of "motherhood" are hidden as layers and expressed in a very detached manner from our common social understanding of "motherhood." Physical pain, corporal change and mental experience of delivery, earning "motherhood" and the beginning of human life are amalgamated with alternatively shown clips and sounds. Floating in the air, eight individual sheets of white paper hang across the video plane, each paper providing a clue. With the viewers' close attention and inference, one will eventually be able to deduce that the missing letters are from the word "motherhood," and that missing letters actually hold their own meaning. The hanging papers are letterpressed using blind embossment by corporal pressure, making them difficult to read without much light from the back. Filling the entire room, smell from alternative bottles of breast milk and bleach on the floor will stimulate the viewer's olfactory sense. Bleach, consciously used for both saving and killing living matters, and breast milk, unconsciously created for nurturing and recovering, are placed alternatively together.