

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



*And Everything Else*, 2015

Image: copyright and courtesy of Melissa Smedley & Home Affairs

## ***THE LET DOWN REFLEX***

January 30 - March 12, 2016

At **EFA Project Space**, 323 West 39th Street,  
2nd Floor

**Opening reception Saturday, Jan 30, 2 - 4**

**pm:** Families and children are encouraged to attend.

**Artists:** Dillon de Give, Home Affairs (Arzu Ozkal, Claudia Costa Pederson & Nanette Yannuzzi), Jacqueline Hoàng Nguyễn, Leisure (Meredith Carruthers & Susannah Wesley), Lise Haller Baggesen, LoVid, Shane Aslan Selzer

**Curators:** Amber Berson and Juliana Driever

EFA Project Space presents *The Let Down Reflex*, an exhibition that attempts to recognize the complexities of parenting in the art world, and asks if a better alternative for families can exist. Curated by **Amber Berson** and **Juliana Driever**, the exhibition opens Saturday afternoon, January 30 and remains on view through March 12th, 2016. Families and children are encouraged to attend.

Calling out a slippage in today's feminist art world, the curators summon a group of artist-parents to contribute to a springboard for re-imagining an art world where "Mom" is not a demeaning characterization, where childcare is factored-in for participating artists at art spaces, and where artists aren't forced to choose between home and work because of a lack of parental leave. The "let down reflex," a term referencing the involuntary reflex that causes nursing mothers to produce breast milk, takes on a double meaning in this exhibition, referring here to the reflexive tendency of letting down parents, and particularly mothers, within the flawed labor system of the art world.

*The Let Down Reflex* creates a radical presence for *families* in an art world where they are typically absent; excluded from residency programs, low-pay/high demand exhibition opportunities, panel discussions, and the like. This exhibition highlights the need for a more flexible system in which

artist-parents can find art world advocacy, encouraging a model that promotes sustainable practices for those actively caring for young children.

- What feminist tactics were in place in the past that we have come to take for granted, and are they being considered in the current art world infrastructure?
- What strategies can be developed to improve current conditions, and how can we alter current systems to build a better future aligned with our values?

These questions drive this exhibition, asking artists (both parents, and not) to contemplate work that critiques the perception of parenthood – and more specifically, motherhood – as liability, and move towards building a feminist space for the flourishing of labor-based practices that work with the realities faced by families.

Participating artists help draw the blueprint for an art world that acknowledges and respects parents. As such, it forces a confrontation with a universal sense of vulnerability in the various balancing acts of family life and art practice and solicits non-parents to reflect on the current status quo and strengthen a system of support and community. The artworks included reflect the various needs and desires of parents, including individual challenges and successes, and calls to action.

The artists work from a variety of approaches. Some take space as parents: Lise Haller Baggeson presents *Mothernism*, an installation which creates “a mother sized space in the gallery” and which proposes a child space, a lactation room, and disco. Others, like LoVid, work through their archives to assess the secret ingredients of art spaces and institutions that welcomed them as artist-parents. In the art of Jacqueline Hoàng Nguyễn and Leisure (Meredith Carruthers & Susannah Wesley), the artists work through historic precedents for a feminist call to action, and attempt to see where new shifts can occur.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a series of performances by Dillon de Give as well as by a panel discussion hosted by Jacqueline Hoàng Nguyễn.

### **Related Events:**

February 17 & 19, 7:30 PM: *By My Own Admission*, performance by Dillon de Give

February 27, 3:00 – 5:00 PM: *Wah-wah, shh, chomp, munch, nom, burp, poot, slurp, yum, toot, mwah. But who's holding the baby?*, a panel discussion organized by Jacqueline Hoàng Nguyễn

March 5, 11:00 – 1:00 PM: *Early Horizons: an exploratory material workshop for children under 6 years old*, organized by Shane Aslan Selzer (RSVP by Friday, March 4 to [meghana@efanyc.org](mailto:meghana@efanyc.org))

March 10, 6:30 – 9:00 PM: *Artists Raising Kids*, seminar with Andrew Simonet for [Creative Capital](#)

**For press inquiries, contact Meghana Karnik, Program Manager at [meghana@efanyc.org](mailto:meghana@efanyc.org) or 212-563-5855 x 244**

## Curator Bios:

Amber Berson is a writer, curator and art administrator living in Montreal. She is conducting doctoral research at Queen's University on the subject of artist-run culture and feminist, utopian thinking. She most recently curated TrailMix (2014); \*~.~.\*JENNIFER X JENNIFER\*..~ (2013); The Annual Art Administrator's Relay Race (2013); and The Wild Bush Residency (2012-ongoing). She sits on the editorial committee of .dpi, a feminist journal of digital art and culture and recently organized the Montreal edition of the Art and Feminism Wikipedia Edit-a-thon. Her writing has been published in Breach Magazine, Canadian Art, C Magazine, Esse, Fuse Magazine and the St Andrews Journal of Art History and Museum Studies. She is a mother to a toddler named Paloma.

Juliana Driever is a curator, writer, and educator. Her work strives to create equity for art and ideas that exist beyond a perceived mainstream. She is primarily concerned with public space, site-specificity, and participation, and has worked on a variety of related exhibition, programming, editorial, and writing projects. Recent curatorial work includes About, With & For (2013, Boston Center for the Arts), Art in Odd Places 2014: FREE (with Dylan Gauthier, New York, NY), and Socially Acceptable (2015, Residency Unlimited and InCube Arts). Her writing on social and participatory art has been published online by A Blade of Grass Foundation and Bad at Sports, and in the print volume Service Media: Is it 'Public Art' or Art in Public Space? She is a mother to a seven year-old named Jackson.

This presentation is made possible in part with public funds from the **New York State Council on the Arts'** Electronic Media and Film Presentation Funds grant program, administered by **The ARTS Council of the Southern Finger Lakes** and **Women and Performance: a journal of feminist theory**.

---

EFA Project Space, launched in September 2008 as a program of The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, is a collaborative, cross-disciplinary arts venue founded on the belief that art is directly connected to the individuals who produce it, the communities that arise because of it, and to everyday life; and that by providing an arena for exploring these connections, we empower artists to forge new partnerships and encourage the expansion of ideas.

The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (EFA) is a 501 (c) (3) public charity. Through its three core programs, EFA Studios, EFA Project Space and the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop, EFA is dedicated to providing artists across all disciplines with space, tools and a cooperative forum for the development of individual practice. [www.efanyc.org](http://www.efanyc.org)

EFA Project Space is supported in part by public funding from The National Endowment for the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in Partnership with the City Council.

**efa** project space

A Program of the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts

323 West 39 Street 2nd Floor New York NY 10018  
212.563.5855 x 244 Wed- Sat 12- 6  
[www.efanyc.org](http://www.efanyc.org)

