



THE STORY
BEHIND
THE PRINT

BASED IN:
Amsterdam, Netherlands

TECHNIQUE:
Linocut



Motherhood

When I found out I was pregnant again, memories from my first birth were suddenly at the front of my mind every day. So I started carving the images I couldn't get out of my head.

My *Motherhood* series began accompanied by morning sickness, fatigue and a really sweet three-year-old chatting beside me. That's partly why the linos are so small, on blocks of 7.5cm x 10cm – a size that meant I could still get something done when there weren't many good hours left in a day.


The postcard format also felt right for sending myself memories, difficult ones as well as beautiful ones I wanted to set down before entering newborn land again. Becoming a mum in 2020 was a time of such extremes – Covid, isolation, illness, exhaustion, new life, intense closeness and a bubble outside of time on our Amsterdam houseboat. These linocuts are about all of it – the magic of seeing a child evolve, the overload, the intimacy, the being stretched to all limits and the joyful bits too.

I didn't have any particular expectations of these works but they turned out to be transformative. They have eased the difficult memories (the most graphic of these can be seen on my website) – they're not tight in my chest anymore, but on paper, outside of me.

An even more wonderful side effect has been hearing how these linocuts connect with other women. It started out

as an extremely personal project, but in sharing them I have heard how many women relate to each and every image and sometimes feel 'seen' for the first time. Best of all, they don't see self-portraits of me in the prints, but themselves.

A real inspiration along the way was reading *Matrescence* by Lucy Jones, a memoir and critique of the institution of motherhood in Western society. We live in a culture strong on 'enjoy every minute' messaging but weak on actual support or acknowledgment of what round-the-clock caregiving takes. Until we live it, we are often clueless about birth injuries, the near-madness of sleep deprivation, the anxiety around keeping a small human alive, alone, at home, and the ambivalence of missing your old identity yet doing 'the most important job in the world'.

The cultural silence around the parts of motherhood that aren't pastel-hued makes it all the harder to separate absolutely loving your child from sometimes not loving the experience of intensive motherhood. We don't talk enough about the tough parts, or see them depicted, – it's easy to feel alone with them. Sharing these images felt like a small contribution towards turning that around. 

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SOPHIE LEWISOHN

The series continues at www.sophielewisohnart.com  [sophielewisohnart](https://www.instagram.com/sophielewisohnart)