

Stephanie Eche

2023 Catalog of Postpartum Paintings



“I live in a place without time, in the realm of the mothers.”

– Jazmina Barrera, *Linea Nigra: An Essay on Pregnancy and Earthquakes*

Artist Statement

During my transition into motherhood I kept a sketchbook where I would make very quick drawings from the corner of my bedroom in short bursts. I made them irregularly and at odd hours, whenever I had a few minutes and I wasn't too tired, hungry, confused, overwhelmed, taking medication, giving myself a shot, recording my blood pressure, breastfeeding the baby, caring for my baby, eating, going to the restroom, researching something about the baby on my phone, or resting. Months later, when I had some childcare, time, and space, I recreated my simple drawings on a variety of surfaces, including wood, linen, and ceramic stoneware, using acrylic paint, fiber paste, and glazes. These paintings record my matrescence, a vulnerable and universal experience that is ongoing. I have joined the realm of mothers.

I refer to my postpartum sketchbook drawings and continue to make quick drawings and notes however possible, by hand or digitally, during moments between caring for my child and working on my business. I've developed a resilience to create wherever I am. From making impressions of elements in my home, to drawing from characters inspired by my mestizo ancestry; my practice is an amalgamation based in the past and the present.



Safe Sleep I

Ceramic with glaze

5.25 x 4.5 x 1 in



Reading with M

Ceramic with glaze

7.75 x 8 x 1.5 in



Cat & Baby

Ceramic with glaze

7.5 x 6.25 x 1.5 in

“At this historical moment, we need to become skilled at mothering.

There will be no liberation without us knowing how to depend on each other, how to be encumbered with and responsible for each other.

We will dream and never descend.”

– Cynthia Dewi Oka, *A Mothering as Revolutionary Praxis: A Manifesto for Revolutionary Homemaking in Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines* by Loretta Ross and Mai'i Williams.





Floating Baby I

Acrylic on linen

10 x 8 x 1.5 in



Floating Baby II

Ceramic with glaze

4.5 x 5 x 1.25 in



Waving Baby

Ceramic with glaze

6 x 6 x 0.5 in

***“Mothering, in cellular terms, is both a desire for survival
and a curiosity manifesting in an external connection
that expands the idea of self.”***

– Orkan Telhan, *The Cell* in Michelle M. Fisher and Amber Winick, eds: *Designing
Motherhood*





Safe Sleep II

Acrylic on linen

10 x 8 x 1.5 in



Portrait I

Ceramic with glaze

8 x 6 x 1 in

“Having a baby changes the brain. Not only for the one in five birthing parents who develop a perinatal mood or anxiety disorder, but for all of them. For all parents.”

– Chelsea Conaboy, *Mother Brain, How Neuroscience is Rewriting the Story of Parenthood*





Center of the Universe

Acrylic on wood panel

7 x 5 x 1.625 in



Anywhere other than here is closer to somewhere else

Acrylic on wood panel

7 x 5 x 1.625 in



I'll stop the world and melt with you

Acrylic on wood panel

7 x 5 x 1.625 in



The last day of May

Acrylic on wood panel

5 x 7 x 1.625 in



Co-sleeping

Acrylic on wood panel

5 x 7 x 1.625 in

Existe un árbol.

Sí,

Existe el *árbol de Chichihuacuauhco*

Una luz de esperanza.

Un pedazo de seguridad.

Te invito.

Ya lo has encontrado.

Por alguna razón, has buscado y buscado.

Día y noche, has buscado una respuesta,

Algo para consolar tus sentimientos de culpa, confusión, desesperación.

Hasta aquí llegaste...

Y aquí, eres bienvenido.

Más allá, hay un lugar especialmente para esa vida.

No hay que preocuparse.

No hay que llorar.

No hay que lamentar.

No hay que cuestionar.

No hay que culparse.

Ya no hay que sufrir.

There exists a tree.
Yes,
There is such tree named *Chichihuacuauhco*
A ray of hope.
A piece of security.

I invite you,
For you have now found it.
For some reason, you have searched far and wide,
Day and night you've searched for an answer.
Something to console your feelings of guilt, confusion, despair.
You've made it here...
And here, you are welcome.

Somewhere beyond, exists a place for that life.
No need to worry.
No need to cry.
No need to regret.
No need to question.
No need to blame.
No need to suffer, anymore.

My ancestors, los Aztecas, believed that there are four places the dead can transcend to. El Árbol de Chichihuacuauhco, a nursing tree, is the designated place for unborn babies. This tree provides babies with breasts to suckle on—nourishing and caring for them. There are many reasons why a baby may not have had the initial chance to live: miscarriage, drug exposure in utero, pre-maturity, and so forth. Once upon a time, my temachtiani (“teacher” in Nahuatl) informed me that babies have the opportunity to be reborn whether it be through a loved one or simply at a later time. Do not fear. I share this in hopes of providing you with a blanket of security and peace—to let you know that this situation is not uncommon. Free the pain buried within you. Free yourself, for they are safe here.

– Jowen Scarlet Escobar, *El Árbol de Chichihuacuauhco* in *La Gente*





Do you have any children?

Acrylic and watercolor on linen

20 x 16 x 1.5 in



Toca Suave

Acrylic on linen

20 x 16 x 1.5 in



Toca Suave II

Ceramic with glaze
6.75 x 6.25 x 1.25 in

About Stephanie Eche

Stephanie Eche is a Mexican-American artist based in Brooklyn, NYC with roots in Arizona.

She creates sculptures and paintings to investigate her mestizo heritage, explore motherhood, and preserve memories. She is the founder and principal of Distill Creative, host of the First Coat podcast, and co-founder of Communer. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband, daughter, and two cats.

Eche has had a solo exhibition at eeeee in Mexico City, MX and has participated in group exhibitions at galleries throughout the USA, including NARS Foundation in Brooklyn, NY, Untitled Space in Manhattan, NY, Maake Projects in State College, PA, and Form and Concept in Santa Fe, NM. Eche's work has been written about in Vantage Art Projects, Artsy, Art Spiel, and Hola Cultura. Eche has been a teaching artist for the Center for Urban Pedagogy, the SU-CASA program in Lower Manhattan, Root Division, and the Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts in San Francisco, CA. She was a Creative Community Fellow with National Arts Strategies and a Healthy Places Network Leader for Urban Land Institute.

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