

MOTHER is an experimental, generative AI photo-film, by artist Beverley Hood that showcases a novel approach to digital storytelling around the subject of motherhood. The film reconsiders representations of motherhood within generative AI imaging platforms, in response to the sanitised, heavily conditioned visual material that the subject typically generates. The work was generated from a poetic script, written by the artist in prose form based on personal experience of being a mother and carer. This was fed as text prompts into the generative AI software Adobe Firefly to create the still imagery for the film. The film follows a poetic visual narrative, teasing out the capabilities of the AI, working around the linguistic limits of modesty and categorisation in accepted prompts, and nudges the platform beyond its conventional, generic aesthetics, into richer, more evocative and visceral image-making. The work brings insight into the intersection of advanced technology and personal narrative, examining how generative AI can be directed to express deeper, more nuanced social themes. *MOTHER* attempts to prompt a broader contemplation on the ethics of AI in art, particularly in how technology impacts representation and identity within digital media.

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Concept and background

MOTHER is an experimental, generative AI photo-film, by artist Beverley Hood (2024). It builds upon Hood's creative critical work since the mid-1990s, which has probed the impact of technology and science on the body, relationships, and human experience through the creation of digital media, performance art projects, and writing.¹ *MOTHER* builds upon Hood's critical engagement with artificial intelligence, as both a tool and subject. It follows previous works such as *Madame I* (2006)², which used speech synthesis modelled on the artist's own voice, and more recently, *It's all about the feeling...* (2021-2023)³, a performance about AI and emotion, featuring actor Pauline Goldsmith.

In *MOTHER*, Hood showcases an AI-infused approach to digital storytelling, around the subject of motherhood. The artwork was generated from a poetic script, written by the artist in prose form based on personal experience of being a mother and carer. This was fed as text prompts into the generative AI software Adobe Firefly to create the still imagery for the film. Hood uses the prose style prompts to nudge the generative AI imaging platform towards a reconsidered representation of motherhood, in response to the sanitised, heavily conditioned visual material that the subject typically generates.

Here, Hood makes a purposeful choice about the generative AI platform of use. Firefly is adopted as a platform that attempts to take a responsible position around its training data, i.e., only using images licensed to Adobe. This attempt at a corporate ethical stance is here adopted as an ethical reason for use, but is also recognised as a potential aesthetically affecting factor. Much of Adobe's licensed imagery material has the characteristic of being 'stock photography', which attributes certain aesthetic characteristics to the resulting generated images. Hood uses prompts written in prose, rather than the typical instructive style prompts, to coax and draw out other aesthetic potentials. At the same time, *MOTHER* is created with the full knowledge that the aesthetic characteristics of generative AI platforms are wholly derivative.

Generative AI Photo-film

The resulting film is composed entirely of still generative AI images, edited together into a poetic visual narrative. The film teases out the capabilities of the AI, and works around the linguistic limits of modesty and categorisation in accepted prompts, based on culturally specific criteria. For example, Firefly often rejects prompts that include visceral language around flesh, bellies, skin, cut, etc., which relate



Fig. 1. Beverley Hood, *MOTHER*, film still (2024).



Fig. 2. Beverley Hood, *MOTHER*, film still (2024).

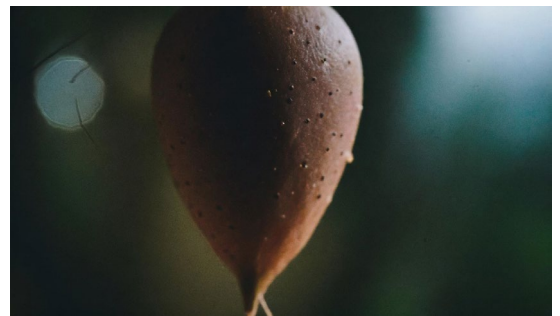


Fig. 3. Beverley Hood, *MOTHER*, film still (2024).

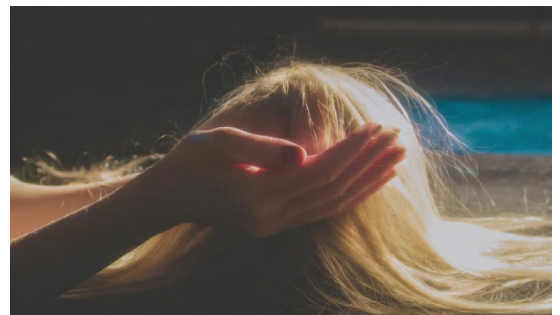


Fig. 4. Beverley Hood, *MOTHER*, film still (2024).

to pregnancy and birth. Hood negotiated around these restrictions through the poetic prose style prompts, finding words and phrases that could nudge the platform beyond its conventional, generic aesthetics, into richer, more evocative, and visceral image-making.

An ambient, experimental electronic soundtrack accompanies the film imagery. Continuing the derivative use of reconstituted existing materials, this is composed through the digital sampling of tracks by musicians Pan Sonic and EmptySet (courtesy of Mute Song Limited and Emptyset).

The work brings insight into the intersection of advanced technology and personal narrative, examining how generative AI can be directed to express deeper, more nuanced social themes. *MOTHER* attempts to prompt a broader contemplation on the ethics of AI in art, particularly in how technology impacts representation and identity within digital media.

Acknowledgements. This short, digital film was generated from a poetic script, written by the artist in prose form, fed into the generative AI software Adobe Firefly to create the still imagery for the film. The soundtrack uses samples of tracks by Pan Sonic and EmptySet (courtesy of Emptyset and Mute Song Limited). It includes introductory prose text in English.

Notes

1. Beverley Hood's work is interdisciplinary and research-led, undertaken in collaboration with a range of practitioners, including medical researchers, scientists, writers, technologists, dancers, actors, and composers. Hood creates complex, multi-component artworks that have been performed, screened, and exhibited at international galleries, museums, festivals, and academic events. <http://www.bhood.co.uk>

2. <https://www.bhood.co.uk/projects/madamel>

3. <https://www.bhood.co.uk/projects/its-all-about-the-feelings>