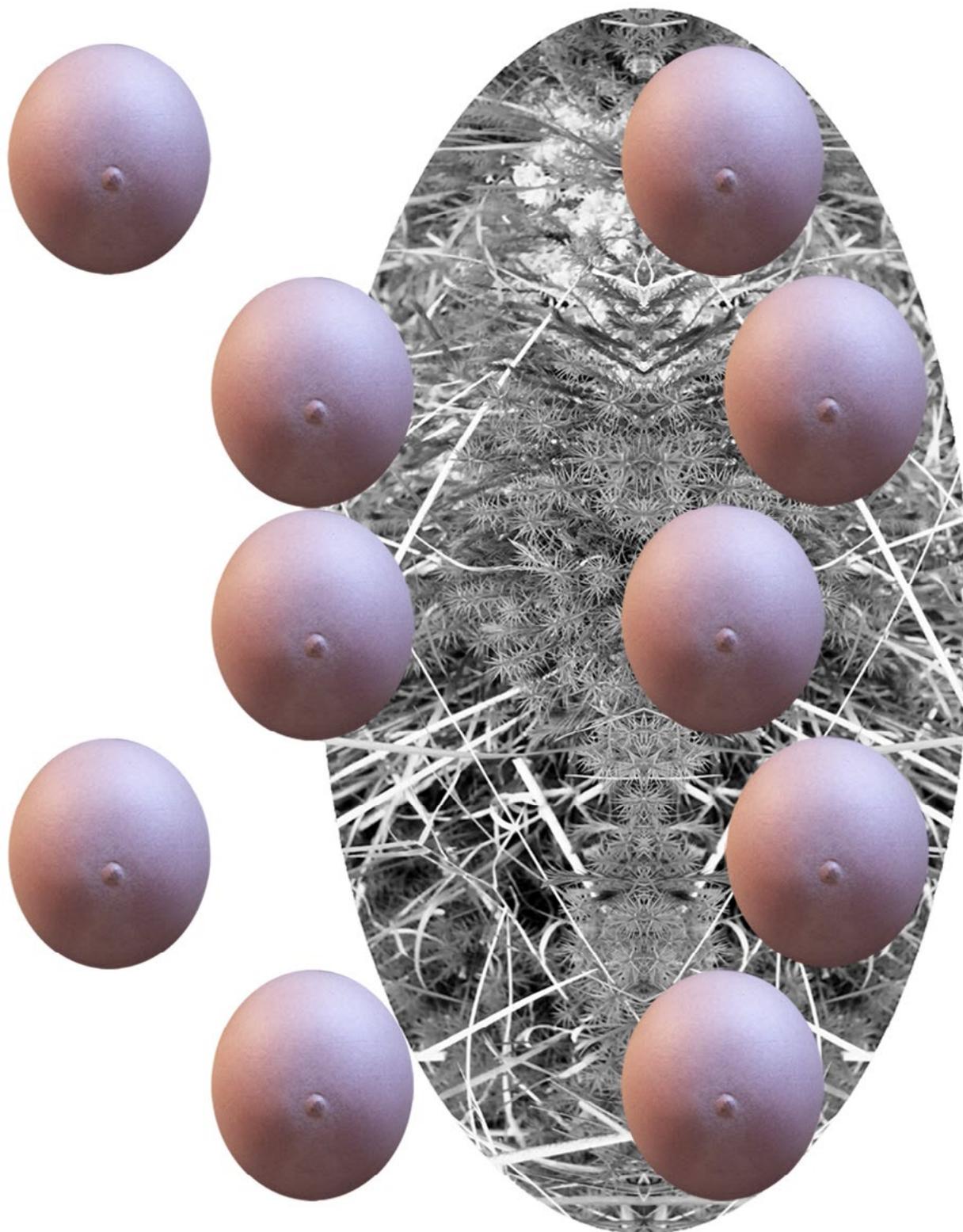


Corridor  **CHAIN/MAIL**

Issue 4: Yorkshire and The Humber



#1

Sunshine and I write to each other. We meet a total of three times in the virtual space, never in the corporeal sense. Apart from this rally of correspondence, we are strangers to one another, chain-linked through a passing-over of sorts: a break in my temporary stewardship of the role of Yorkshire editor and Sunshine's continuation of this role.

Continuity and rupture could certainly be the by-words of the past year — both played out on a personal level and on a much grander, global scale. I'm ever more conscious of this given that my year has been marked by both loss and soon to be, imminently and indelibly, by new life.

Impending motherhood and an exterior viral threat have brought my attention back to the porousness of bodily borders and boundaries, and how they can be permeated at a cellular level. I find the notion of micro-chimerism strangely soothing, to know that there is a physical trace of my body's current and former inhabitants.

Sunshine, I want to ask, when was the last time you recall feeling the slippages between your own boundaries and something external to self. A sense of distance being removed?

Holly

#2

Hello Holly. I've also felt those moments of broken boundaries in the intense grief and joy of new beings. They happened to be ones that my body made. I held perfect stillness once. She was so small in my arms.

And not even a year later, life came in a little hat that said 'Hello World', nestled in the same arms. Both times, I felt an exquisite, yawning emptiness inside in different ways: the first time, I was suddenly 'alone'; the second time, I was 'myself again'.

I now have a wobbly C-section scar that grins up at me, a permanent reminder of collapsed distances and my body as host.

This 'body as host' notion is inescapable, especially during a pandemic. Beyond reproductive functions, bodies—plant and animal—are nodal points (and home) for microbes, parasites, and viruses. Our interspecies dependencies go deep and wide, for we are constantly reinventing our survival mechanisms in accordance with each other.

Writer Eula Biss explained 'herd immunity' well before it became a 2020 buzzword, describing how you have to invest in it collectively — i.e. as a social and not as an individual body - to build resistance against disease. She wrote *On Immunity: An Inoculation* to help her consider whether or not to vaccinate her child, and in the process came to see it as a public act with repercussions far beyond our physical, bounded selves.

You don't just belong to you. 'This is a problem of ecology, of interrelationships, of interdependence,' as Biss quotes Rachel Carson saying.

Hi Claudia, how are you? Alba is now six months old. What has it been like becoming a mother during sick times?

Sunshine

#3

Hello Sunshine. Motherhood has been earth shattering and overwhelmingly joyful at the same time. When Alba was very small the pandemic felt distant and like it didn't change very much. Conversely it has completely shaped how I've formed new relationships. We've been unable to be as family orientated as we would have been. My household contracted Covid-19 and its 'sickness' still lingers in some way.

In her seminal book *Purity and Danger*, anthropologist Mary Douglas explored how 'rituals of purity and impurity create unity in experience'. Whether in religious or secular practices, processes of purification are often publicly displayed or enacted. But if these processes are imposed upon us from above rather than from within the community, what does this do to the collective experience and our relationship with one another? The experience of becoming a mother in times of Covid has left me feeling both separate/isolated and part of a collective of new mothers in that isolation.

During labour and immediately after my daughter was born, I was being constantly monitored by medical staff. Locked up in a room with my new baby for four days I felt my previously strong sense of agency had been stripped away. Every four hours my heart rate had to be checked so there was no privacy and no opportunity to sleep with a newborn baby. I found myself battling for any sense of decision-making I could control, which in itself was exhausting. Seven months later, I've had the luxury of being able to make sense of all these feelings with ritual walks in the park and sharing with other new mothers, in a way this is a form of cleansing as we have not only all become mothers but felt confined and isolated and on a path to re-building ourselves.

Claudia

Published
by Corridor8
February 2021
corridor8.co.uk

#1 Holly Grange is a curator based in Leeds. She was formerly Yorkshire and the Humber's Regional Editor for Corridor8 and is currently exhibitions curator at Leeds Art Gallery and expecting her first child in February.

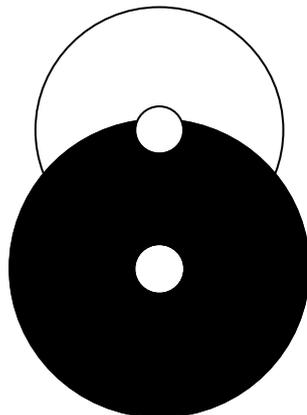
[@gwyn_grange](https://www.instagram.com/gwyn_grange)
[@HollyGrange](https://www.instagram.com/HollyGrange)

#2 Sunshine Wong is an art writer, curator, facilitator and researcher based in Sheffield. She is currently Yorkshire and the Humber's Regional Editor, Curator at Bloc Projects, Sheffield and mother to Ivor.

#3 Claudia Lastra is a cultural producer based in Sheffield. She is currently Executive Director & Joint CEO of Arts Catalyst and mother to 7 month old Alba.

CHAIN/MAIL

Issues 1—4 are supported by the Arts Council England Emergency Response Fund.



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Published
by Corridor8
February 2021
corridor8.co.uk

GIF:

‘Mumma Narnia’,
Emily Hesse, 2021

Emily Hesse is a multidisciplinary
visual artist, author and activist
based in the Tees Valley and
mother to Austin, Lily, Elsa
and Anders.

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[@emhesse](#)
[@EmHesse](#)

Hesse’s GIF appeared on the
Corridor8 website from
24.01–28.02.2021

‘I was thinking thoughts about
becoming/being a Mother during
a pandemic. Bodies as hosts and
time slippages.’

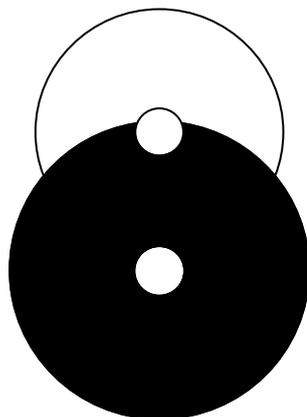
Cover:

‘Strange and Glorious Becomings’,
Victoria Lucas, 2021

Victoria Lucas is an artist /
researcher based in Sheffield,
currently exploring female
subjectivity through an
engagement with landscape.
She is also mother to
a two-year old daughter.

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[@victoria_lucas_gallery](#)

‘Boundaries, becoming, and the
unifying experiences of birth
and motherhood, are things that
I have been reflecting on a lot
during the pandemic. When I look
at this image, I like to think of my
daughter curled up underneath
the surface.’



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