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The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Discovery Center announces *Designing Motherhood*

The Discovery Center is the next stop for this critically acclaimed exhibition that explores the arc of human reproduction through design and art.

SEATTLE (January 18, 2023) – The Bill & Melinda Gates Discovery Center announces its next exhibition, *Designing Motherhood: Things That Make and Break Our Births*, opening on February 16, 2023 and on view through December 31, 2023. Organized by design historians, birth advocates, and medical and midwifery history experts, *Designing Motherhood* explores the arc of human reproduction through the lens of design and art from the 19th century to the present day.

Aiming to examine traditionally gendered narratives of parenthood, as well as racial and socio-economic disparities in access to care, *Designing Motherhood* features over 200 objects and centers experiences of (in)fertility, pregnancy, postpartum, and parenthood. The exhibition also demonstrates the evolution of rights and societal norms pertaining to con(tra)ception, pregnancy, birth, and postpartum experiences over the last 150 years, highlighting that birth—and the material culture that surrounds it—impacts every living person.

“This project examines one of the most fundamental experiences in life—being born. We started the *Designing Motherhood* project in 2017 to confront the large gap around this topic in the collections and classrooms where we work, as well as in culture more broadly,” said the *Designing Motherhood* curatorial team.

“Motherhood is not just a ‘women’s issue.’ This exhibition is for *everyone* because we’re all born and thus all shaped by these things that ‘make and break our births.’”

“We are excited to bring this exhibition to the Gates Foundation Discovery Center and to our region,” said Charlotte Beall, Deputy Director for the Discovery Center. “I am looking forward to expanding the conversation beyond the US with the inclusion of global objects, innovations, stories, and programming that reflect the Gates Foundation’s strategic focus on maternal, newborn, and child health and gender equality.”

The exhibition originated in Philadelphia at the Mütter Museum and the Center for Architecture and Design where the curatorial team partnered for three years with the pioneering Maternity Care Coalition, who have worked since 1980 to empower families navigating reproductive health, pregnancy, and early childhood in that city. The exhibition was most recently on view in Boston at the MassArt Art Museum (MAAM) where the local partner was the Neighborhood Birth Center.

“The objects in the exhibition tell complex, rich, and important stories that impact each one of us,” said Sarah Bloom, the Gates Foundation Discovery Center’s curator of exhibitions. “We will also highlight the incredible communities we have right here in the Seattle region that have contributed to developments and innovation in culturally responsive care and design. I’m excited to have this exhibition on view for a year, giving us the opportunity to connect more deeply with the Seattle community and our visitors on all facets of our lives that the show touches on.”

The *Designing Motherhood* book, a 344-page volume published by the MIT Press in 2021, accompanies the exhibition.

Social Media

Connect with the Discovery Center @discovergates on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Follow the Designing Motherhood project on Instagram @designingmotherhood.

Exhibition Credits

This exhibition was organized by *the Designing Motherhood* curatorial team in collaboration with the Discovery Center at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

In Seattle, the project thought partners are the *Designing Motherhood* advisory committee: Amie Bishop, Senior Research Advisor for OutRight Action International; Angela Garbes, Seattle-based writer and author of *Like A Mother* (2018); Ari Robbins Greene, proud dad to two children; Dr. Cyril Engmann, Senior Director of Quality and Program Impact and Institutional Official at PATH; Dila Perera, Executive Director at Open

Arms Perinatal Services; Mercedes Snyder, owner of Something Beautiful Midwifery; and Rebecca Mauldin, Director of Communications & Development at ChildStrive.

In Philadelphia, the project's thought partner was Maternity Care Coalition (MCC) who ensure families can birth with dignity, parent with autonomy, and raise babies who are healthy, growing, and thriving.

In Boston, the project's thought partner was the Neighborhood Birth Center (NBC) which will open in 2024 as the first-of-its-kind birth center in Boston with the vision of improving birth experiences and outcomes, across communities, for generations.

MassArt Art Museum (MAAM), the Mütter Museum, the Philadelphia Center for Architecture and Design, and the University of Pennsylvania School of Design, were vital to the development of the *Designing Motherhood* exhibition.

Major support for *Designing Motherhood's* initial presentation and publication was provided to the Maternity Care Coalition by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage and the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.

About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Discovery Center

Located next to Seattle Center and the headquarters of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Gates Foundation Discovery Center is a catalyst to educate, inspire, and motivate local and global awareness and action. Through exhibits and programs, the Discovery Center convenes and connects people to relevant topics, stories and resources to inspire action in Seattle and beyond. Open Thursdays – Saturdays 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Admission is always free. More information at discovergates.org.

About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Mark Suzman, under the direction of Co-chairs Bill Gates and Melinda French Gates and the board of trustees.