

## *Mother* — Director Statement

*Mother* is an exploration of womanhood and the intersection between femininity and motherhood. This experimental film focuses on the gendered expectations of a woman, and the horrors associated with the disruption of these expectations.

A woman, in the binary sense, is someone who can give birth. Childbirth and motherhood have thus become feminized acts. Through this film, we tear down any preconceived notion of womanhood: beauty standards, hygiene, household expectations, anger, and sex (or the promise of it). In the intersection of womanhood, femininity and motherhood exists blood, either through periods, miscarriages, or childbirth. Blood has been used against women for being “dirty” or “unhygienic.” Using blood and childbirth as the fundamental female experience, *Mother* is a challenge of those feminine expectations.

In an empty house, a woman washes dishes, humming lightly. She sets a table for an absent man. Her movements and the camera are controlled. She is caged into this house and this mentality; going through the motions of “being a woman.” She addresses the camera with a sensual smile and briefly reveals what lies underneath: sex. We jump back to her admiring herself in the mirror, stagnant. As she applies her makeup, she is in a hall of mirrors and lights—as if she were backstage getting ready to perform. But the downshift in music, handheld nature of the camerawork, and introduction of darker sounds, notes the shift into her internal state. She stands and stares, expressionless, emotionless. Blood runs down her legs; a fetus slips out of her; someone else takes it away; she continues to wait. “It’s not over yet,” until placenta gushes down her legs, pooling around her feet. Her hand dips down and she plays with the bloody placenta. Suddenly, she is sitting in the kitchen—nude and aggressively sexual. She promises sex to the viewer, who is almost like a male voyeur. She plays with the blood that came out of her; she eats her placenta. Her bloody hand tightens around her neck. She inhabits the “bad” woman. The original song that she was humming plays, but it is drowned out by male artists singing about love and a preacher talking about sin. And yet, overarching it all, we hear her orgasmic screams that turn violent as she destroys all her careful kitchen work from before. She suddenly feels removed and stares at her blood on her fingers, without care for hygiene or beauty. She steps out of the pool of blood, without care for the child she never picked up. After the title fades, we are left in the spaces she used to occupy—aware that there is a presence there, a shadow that moves briefly across the wall, but no longer allowed to see or hear her. We are left caged in this space, this mentality, without a way to walk out until we cut to black.

*Mother* begs the questions: Is a woman a mother without acting feminine? Are there certain qualities that inhibit (i.e. cleanliness, beauty) or prohibit (i.e. eroticism, anger) a woman from being a “good” mother? Is a woman feminine without being a mother?