

— PRESS RELEASE —

Emma Jääskeläinen  
'Slo Mo Mother'  
Vleeshal

April 16 – July 2 2023

Opening: April 15, 5 - 7 pm

Public Program: June 17, 4 - 6 pm

Curator: Roos Gortzak

How to commit to taking care of what is already there  
How to take care of others, how to think of family in an extended sense  
How to be a mother, in a sense, without actually biologically giving birth  
How to do that in a concrete way  
How to commit to acts of collaborative healing  
Instead of fighting invisible enemies in space  
How to commit to these stories  
-- Even Minn

'Slo Mo Mother' is the first solo exhibition of Finnish artist Emma Jääskeläinen (1988) in the Netherlands. She presents recent sculptures, specifically adapted and expanded with new elements for Vleeshal. The title of the exhibition refers to the physical act of slowing down that Jääskeläinen experiences in both motherhood and her work as an artist, two roles of labor that she depicts and connects with humoristic light-heartedness.

Physicality, slowness, and repetition play an important role in Jääskeläinen's work. This is not only evident in her 'Gustonian' bulky body forms, but also in her choice of marble as the primary material for her sculptures. The labor-intensive and repetitive manual work required to process the heavy blocks of stone is a way for Jääskeläinen to engage in a dialogue and allow the material itself to determine the form. She describes the intensive relationship she has with the stone as family-like, experiencing similar feelings of empathy, care, and attention.

Jääskeläinen addresses fundamental questions about motherhood and care, but she always does so with funny, clumsy, and soft forms. The stories, anecdotes, and motifs underlying the sculptures are influenced by the life of the artist as part of a family. From domestic tasks to her father smoking a cigarette, from her brother's blisters caused by playing the guitar to a lullaby she sings to her children. Rather than telling a personal story her works depict universal feelings regarding life's questions.

Next to stone carving, Jääskeläinen works with metal casting and wool felting techniques. Sometimes she adds an everyday object as a concrete indication of a story or event, but the meaning of her work usually remains suggestive and open to multiple interpretations. Text is an essential part of Jääskeläinen's practice. While working, she creates a network of words referring to the materials and associations present in the object; forming rhymes and catchy phrases that reveal her performative background.

An interesting aspect of Jääskeläinen's practice is that she continues to adapt her sculptures. In the Vleeshal, she transformed the existing sculptures 'At Her Fingertips' and 'Repose' by adding new details

and further working the marble stone. 'At Her Fingertips' is about the connection between mother and child, and the process of detachment. The sculpture consists of five stones lying apart from each other. It forms one gigantic hand in which a subtle chain connects the fingers to the palm of the hand. By adding more stones and another chain with links made of hearts, eternity signs and zeros, she reflects on her experience of becoming a mother. According to Jääskeläinen the fingers are like child-sized 'piglets', aggressively chained to the palm of the hand. The hand with a cigarette clamped between the fingers in 'Repose' refers to a rare moment of rest in the life of a mother. Hands are a recurring motif in Jääskeläinen's work, being a portrait of labor.

For the back of the space Jääskeläinen has designed a fireplace that has been built by the technical team of Vleeshal. The warm heart of the home, a place to gather around. Not only for the sculptures and visitors but also for the performers who come for the public program on Saturday June 17. The program will consist of two parts: the chains from 'At Her Fingertips' will be used as an instrument by the Finnish musicians Verner Pohjola and Joonas Riippa and Finnish writer and dramatist Even Minn will perform their essay 'Alien mother'

#### Works:

'At Her Fingertips'  
Nordic pink marble, metal  
2022–2023

'Repose'  
Nordic pink marble, metal  
Norwegian rose marble, travertine Noce, Finnsheep wool  
2021

'Long Long Longing, Unfolding the Night'  
9 marble clippings, many bricks, a fire,  
Norwegian rose marble, and felt  
2023

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Vleeshal

Center for Contemporary Art  
Markt 1, Middelburg  
[www.vleeshal.nl](http://www.vleeshal.nl)  
Wed - Fri 13:00 - 17:00  
Sat - Sun 11:00 - 17:00

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