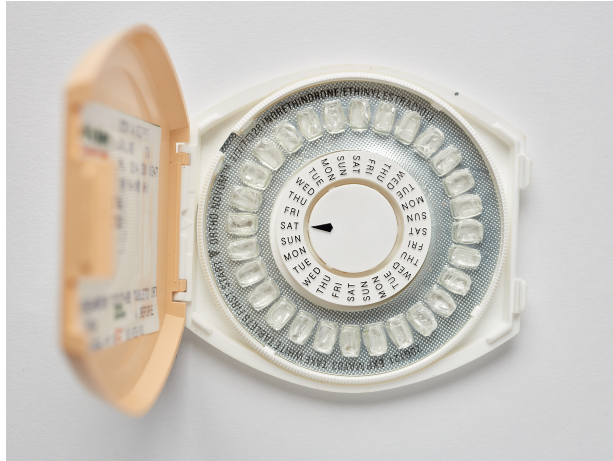


museum of arts and design

MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN TO PRESENT *DESIGNING MOTHERHOOD: THINGS THAT MAKE AND BREAK OUR BIRTHS*

October 4, 2025–March 15, 2026



Left: DialPak Contraceptive Dispenser, ca. 2001. Invented by David P. Wagner (American, b. 20th century) in 1964.
Right: Fisher-Price Nursery Monitor, 1983. Photos: Erik Gould. Images courtesy Designing Motherhood.

NEW YORK, NY (April 17, 2025) – In fall 2025, the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) will present the pioneering exhibition *Designing Motherhood: Things that Make and Break Our Births* (Oct 4, 2025–Mar 15, 2026), newly expanded for its New York City debut. Exploring the arc of human reproduction through a design lens, the exhibition invites audiences to consider why and how designs have been developed over the last 150 years to shape reproductive health.

The exhibition broadly explores the intersections of design and experiences of (in)fertility, pregnancy, postpartum, and parenthood. For this presentation, the curators at MAD have contributed a new section dedicated to the mass-marketing of safety to anxious new parents, and so the exhibition will now include more than 250 manufactured products, speculative design projects, medical devices and tools, graphic materials, contemporary artworks, and more.

“*Designing Motherhood* at MAD will be the first iteration of this exhibition to shine a spotlight on the overlaps between industrial design, consumer capitalism, and the psychology of parenthood for Americans bringing children into the world; building on the project’s ongoing commitment to charting design’s impact on the lives of its users in the realm of reproductive health and happiness. We are thrilled to partner with its creators and bring their groundbreaking project to New York audiences,” said Elissa Auther, the Museum’s Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs and William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator.

The question of access is central to the relationship between design and health presented in the exhibition. While the exhibition examines the pervasive consumerism of parenthood, *Designing Motherhood* also highlights numerous New York City-based organizations and initiatives, such as

Saving Mothers and Mayor Eric Adams' newly announced "NYC Baby Boxes," which are dedicated to making reproductive and infant health more accessible and equitable for all New Yorkers. Combining art, design, and activism, *Designing Motherhood* aims to deepen the cultural awareness and dialogue surrounding design for reproductive health and well-being.

"*Designing Motherhood* celebrates the ingenuity and idealism of designers and designs across the spectrum of reproductive health that have improved lives. At the same time, the exhibition questions the viability of the promised 'better living through design' championed by American manufacturing and sold through the countless products that purport to 'solve' every health challenge related to reproduction—from contraception to birth and lactation to menopause," said Alexandra Schwartz, MAD's Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Craft, and Design, and Elizabeth Koehn, Associate Curator, in a joint statement.

The *Designing Motherhood* originating team reflected that: "These are anxious times not just for parents but for everyone. We live in a country where reproductive justice is still not a given. Since we are all touched by birth at least once in our lives, we hope that MAD visitors will see themselves in the exhibition and be inspired to take action in their daily lives."

The exhibition at MAD will be extended through a series of related public programs, including a panel discussion, virtual lectures, workshops, and films. The award-winning, 344-page companion publication from MIT Press will be available for purchase at The Store at MAD.

Designing Motherhood: Things that Make and Break Our Births is organized by the *Designing Motherhood* curatorial team with Alexandra Schwartz and Elizabeth Koehn for the Museum of Arts and Design. The *Designing Motherhood* curatorial team includes touring curators Juliana Rowen Barton, Director of the Center for the Arts and Curator of Gallery360 at Northeastern University; and Michelle Millar Fisher, Ronald C. and Anita L. Wornick Curator of Contemporary Decorative Arts within the Contemporary Art Department at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; with Zoë Greggs, artist and non-profit administrator; Gabriella Nelson, designer and health equity advocate; and Amber Winick, independent design historian, early childhood consultant and coach. Since opening at the Mütter Museum and the Center for Architecture+Design in Philadelphia in 2021, the exhibition has traveled to the MassArt Art Museum (MAAM) in Boston, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Discovery Center in Seattle, the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, and the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design in Stockholm.

For more information about *Designing Motherhood: Things that Make and Break Our Births* and related programming, visit madmuseum.org.

EXHIBITION CREDITS

Designing Motherhood: Things that Make and Break Our Births is generously sponsored by Ruth Ann Harnisch and the Harnisch Foundation. This exhibition is also made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature, and is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

Major support for *Designing Motherhood* has been provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage and the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields and presents the work of artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity

and skill. Since the Museum's founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum's curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving twenty-first-century innovation, and fosters a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design. For more information, visit madmuseum.org.

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