

Mother Mother
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How can I make the experience of my labor speak (my first, just seven weeks ago as I write these words) and can the expression be visual? Elaine Scarry answers me: Physical pain has no voice, she writes. It shatters all language. Is this the reason there is so little art about motherhood and even less about the physical experience of laboring out our babies? I thought, in the moments after delivery: this is what my work will be about from here on out: not the experience of birth exactly, but the impossibility to account for bodily sensation and trauma and entropy in words and pictures. Turn and face the strange rings in my head as I feel you urge through me and into the world, too brightly lit for the both of us. David Bowie, who died two months before you were born, wrote these lyrics while expecting his first child almost half a century before. Feeling your wet and quick pulse – it sounded like a horse pounding across land in the distance, now your stuttering cries have the same affect – I thought of Thoreau's *Ktaadn*, written deep in the Maine woods: Contact! Contact! What are we? Who are we? (1848). I thought, with my eyes closed: Am I being born? I knew: I will never be able to make artwork as good as this. Luke said, looking at him: Carmen, it's our nature and I knew just what he meant. I wept in motion. I was relieved to see you and relieved the pain was nearly over. Would you reflexively know forever what I endured for you and your body? (And would that knowledge hold us close?) Weeks later, I saw pictures that you took and they looked nothing like my feelings.