



NEW RELEASE 2025

Michaela Spiegel *Instant Memoir II* *Mutti*

Texts by Trisha Pender, Gemma Rolls-Bentley, Michaela Spiegel

Designed by Kehrer Design (Laura Pecoroni)

Hardcover with German text booklet

11,5 × 16 cm

304 pages

145 color illustrations

English / German

ISBN 978-3-96900-216-2

Euro 38,00

Intimate portraits, radical truths—an uncompromising enquiry into the figure of the mother

»I have no objectivity, no qualification and no right to break the canon of motherhood veneration. Casting a shadow on the patriarchal respect for motherhood, this unique, untouchable declination of female existence, is a sacrilege. Mother is the only female variation worthy of male respect – if mother plays by the rules of bearing for patriarchy. Motherhood is always conditional.« —Michaela Spiegel

In *Mutti*, the second volume of her *Instant Memoir*, Michaela Spiegel undertakes an uncompromising exploration of the figure of the mother through the artistic deconstruction of her deceased mother's portrait. Performative femininity, conditional motherhood, and the persistent patriarchal myths surrounding class and gender permeate the fairy-tale-like, feminist gaze of her instant-camera lens. The photographs are drawn from the *Instant Memoir Archive*, a chronologically arranged collection of around thirty thousand private moments of »female banality« spanning the last three decades. These polaroids are further enriched by meticulously staged studio-portraits of Spiegel's mother as a Viennese socialite, weaving a complex and layered portrait of feminine representation.

From the preface by **Gemma Rolls-Bentley**

Her photographs – layered, spontaneous, imperfect – mirror the fractured terrain of memory. They document her mother, herself, the spaces between them. They hold tension: presence and absence, intimacy and alienation. These are not static portraits, but flashes of relationality, always in motion.

The images are accompanied by texts in which Spiegel reflects on her mother's life through a feminist lens and a critical eye toward patriarchy. Unflinchingly, she lays bare the unconventional nature of their relationship and the emotional distance that separated them.

From the text *Afterword to Mutti* by **Patricia Pender**

Indeed, exposing the inadequacies of our vocabulary for women's psychology is one of the achievements of this text. Spiegel paints a portrait of her mother so disturbing and yet so textured it makes the application of today's buzzword »narcissistic« seem ridiculously reductive.

Michaela Spiegel is an interdisciplinary artist and feminist activist, known for her large-scale pastel drawings and her video interview series about feminism. She is the founder and director of the feminist laboratory Centre Pompadour in Northern France.

Gemma Rolls-Bentley is a curator, writer, & creative consultant. She has been at the forefront of contemporary art for two decades, working passionately to champion diversity in the field. Gemma's curatorial practice amplifies the work of female and queer artists and provides a platform for art that explores LGBTQIA+ identity.

Patricia Pender is an Associate Professor, English and Writing, at the University of Newcastle, Australia. She is the author and editor of multiple publications.

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Kehrer Verlag, Mannheimer Str. 175, 69123 Heidelberg, Germany
Phone +49 (0) 6221 - 649 20-18 – www.kehrerverlag.com

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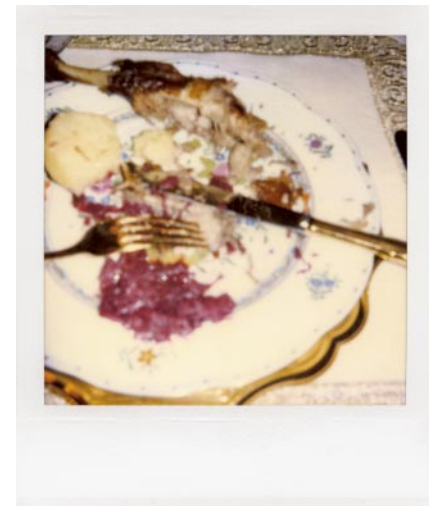
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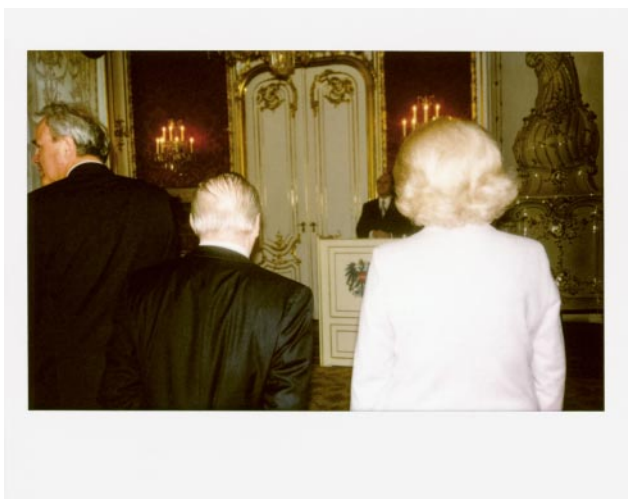
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