

The term “family values” is deeply loaded and has long been co-opted as part of conservative rhetoric, excluding the many radical possibilities that the idea of family can embody. I’m writing this letter to you just days ahead of a presidential inauguration that promises to usher in a frighteningly toxic manifestation of white supremacist patriarchy. Many of us are rightfully afraid of the harm this administration could bring upon our own families. In this era of post-truth, where leaders touting an ideology of “family values” dismantle essential healthcare legislation, espouse violently xenophobic rhetoric, attack women’s rights, and continue to push forward laws designed to target LGBTQ citizens we must reclaim the notion of family values, increasing and honoring the connections between ourselves, our neighbors, and the environment.

As such, our goal for this issue was to explore and challenge the beliefs and standards traditionally associated with this expression. How do inheritance, parenting, and domesticity factor into pop culture and feminism? What alternate family values and structures are contemporary thinkers, feminists, and families coming up with? How does queer culture celebrate chosen family? What writers, thinkers, artists, and musicians share a common lineage? How do we honor those who came before us?

I am grateful to Art Director Kristin Rogers Brown, not only for her willingness to commandeer a four-wheel drive vehicle and guide us safely through Portland’s snowpocalypse 2017 as we delivered magazine proofs to snowed-in copy editors during this production cycle, but also for the thoughtful way she approaches bringing the art and design into conversation with the editorial content in each issue.

Designing the cover for this issue was a group effort from the whole Bitch family. We knew from the start that we wanted an image that would destabilize the traditional associations attached to family values. Armed with this desire to subvert the form by using the form, we were first drawn to the idea of the hearth and mantle. Further discussion had us considering the family dinner and the dinner table itself. The more we leaned in to this idea of family values, the thornier things got. Even as we settled on the idea of the kitchen as a dynamic site that could potentially hold ideas of nourishment, resistance, chosen and inherited family, we never came to an easy resolution. We struggled. How were class and race intersecting here? What about gentrification? Would we really be able to communicate a subversion of this scene? As is often the case when taking on an idea that comes with such multifaceted cultural weight, there is no easy line from idea to solution.

I am especially excited to discuss how recent albums by sisters Beyoncé and Solange Knowles are part of the rich history and legacy of Black women who practice musical performance as a form of political resistance (p. 18), to examine the role of corporate family structure and media complicity in Trump’s rise to power (p. 44), and to take a look at how queer chosen families work to support survivors of sexual assault (p. 40). As always, and perhaps now more than ever, I’m grateful for you, readers and the community we create together. —Britt Ashley