

## Celebrating Women in Photography Today

# MUM'S NOT THE WORD

Denise Felkin

There are an expanding seven billion people worldwide, and four hundred thousand births per day. The choice to reproduce is not regarded as needing any thought or justification, and childless women are expected to explain themselves. One in seven couples who can't have children and twenty-five percent is medically unexplained.

Females who do not procreate are too often misrepresented by stereotypes; barren, spinster, wicked stepmother or crazy cat lady. On many occasions, I have heard people say: "You wouldn't understand unless you are a parent yourself.", establishing a premise that suggests that women who do not reproduce are selfish, do not like children or are not real women.

I conceived Mum's not the word book because I do not have children, I label myself as childfree because I didn't want to have them. I use photography to challenge negative attitudes about the disgrace attached to people without kids. However, being infertile is not always a choice and this is also a shameful experience. For some, it's also a grieving process, which for some may slowly grow into acceptance, while for others it may be a cause of constant pain. There are also the childless by circumstance and disability.

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*Mum's Not The Word is newly released photobook, published June 2018 by Earthworld Publishing. The photo essays were featured in the Guardian Weekend magazine and iPaper. Mum's Not The Word received an Honourable Mention in the special edition of the Julia Margaret Cameron Award, Women Seen by Women, and was shortlisted in the National Open Art themed prize Continuity in an Uncertain World, and the People category of the Sony World Photography Award,*

### MORE INFO

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