

# 20 BABIES



Illustrated by  
Josie Brookes

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We would like to thank all of the parents who took part in the project and whose stories are illustrated in this book: Adam, Amanda, Caitlin, Carmen, Catherine, Emma, Grace, Jessie, Jose, Kag, Kate E, Kate L, Laura, Maria, Matthew, Melanie, Natalie, Natasha, Nina, Rachael, Rachel, Ryan, Sam and Samantha.

And the artists who have brought their own experiences and creative ideas to the project: Josie Brookes, Company of Others, Alex Hughes, Helen Pailing and Megan Randall.

This book is dedicated to the 20 Babies: Amelia, Ash, Brody, Daisy, Danai, Eleanor H, Eleanor T, Elliot, Emilia, Florence, Isla, Issac, JJ, Kaungambu, Leo, Maisie, Maria, Nakai, Oliver and Scott.

As well as Kit and Mollie, whose births inspired this project.

[www.baltic.art](http://www.baltic.art)



Supported by



On 23 March 2020, the UK Government implemented a nationwide lockdown in England, to help slow the spread of Covid-19. Schools, leisure facilities and non-essential shops were closed. People were advised to work from home and avoid all contact with those outside of their household.

For mothers who gave birth during this time, many had to attend hospital appointments alone, had reduced contact with health professionals, were unable to attend antenatal classes and baby groups and were prevented from having emotional and practical support from their friends and family. It is from this experience that Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead developed the *20 Babies* project.

Every Wednesday between September 2021 and August 2022, 20 babies born during the first national lockdown were welcomed, along with their caregivers, to the gallery. Through regular artist-led workshops and opportunities to socialise informally, a space was created where families could stop, reflect and create together, building social connections with others who had shared a similar experience.

This book compiles, in visual form, the stories of these families. It chronicles the early days of parenting in a pandemic and documents how a creative community has been built through the project.

Whilst experiences of the pandemic were diverse and unequal, *20 Babies* highlighted the importance of kinship; of kindness and care, of connection and routine, as the threads that unite everyone.



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That first bit was a bubble.  
It really was a newborn bubble



I was so nervous going alone



It was the small things that  
made a big difference

*You're meant to share those happy experiences with people, aren't you?*



*The comfort of tea and toast when you've just given birth*



He spent the first few months of his life surrounded by trees and nature because that's all you could do



*We had the extra worry of catching covid*



I thought I'd be out and about meeting other mams



It was all so different

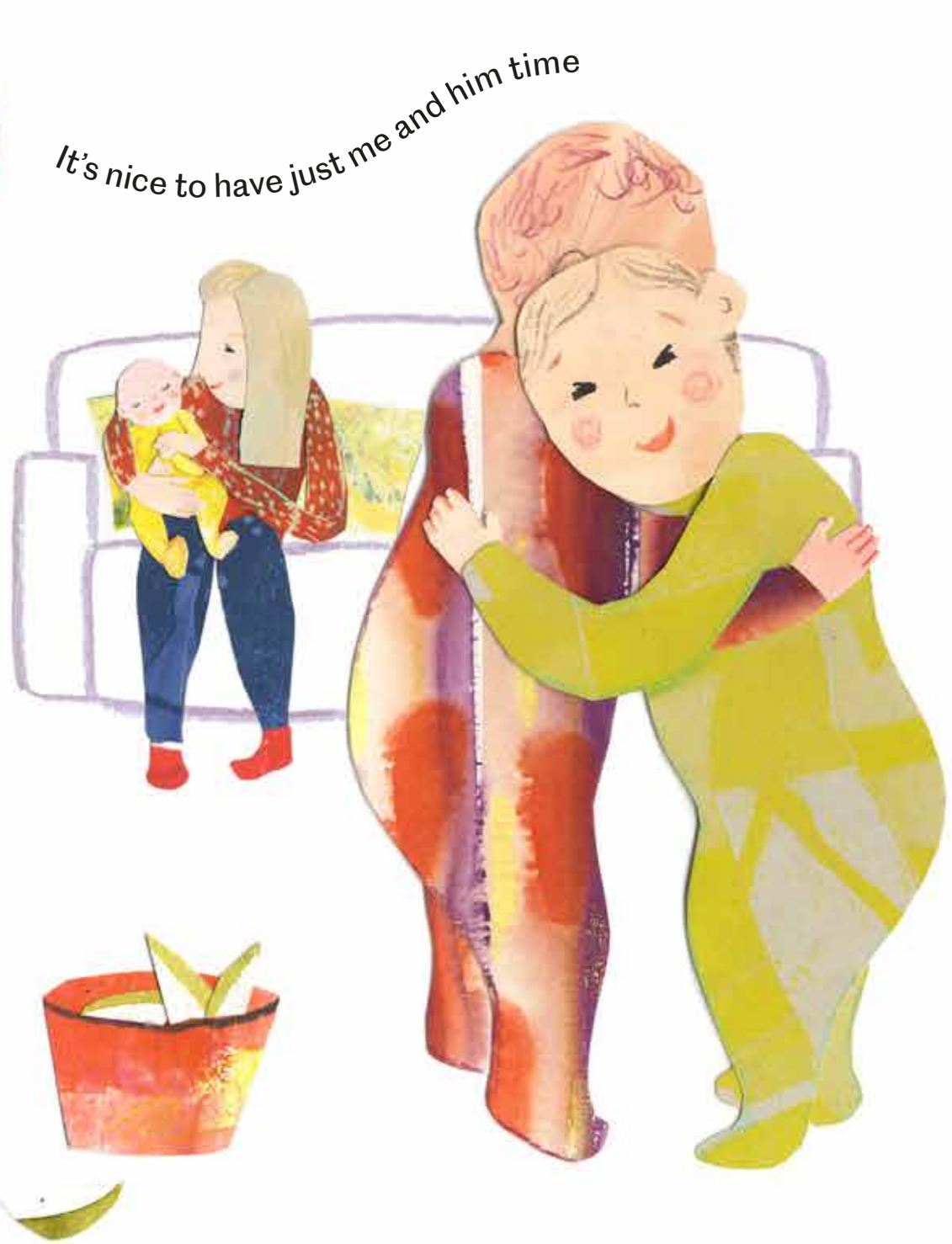


Just taking one day at a time

Slowing down

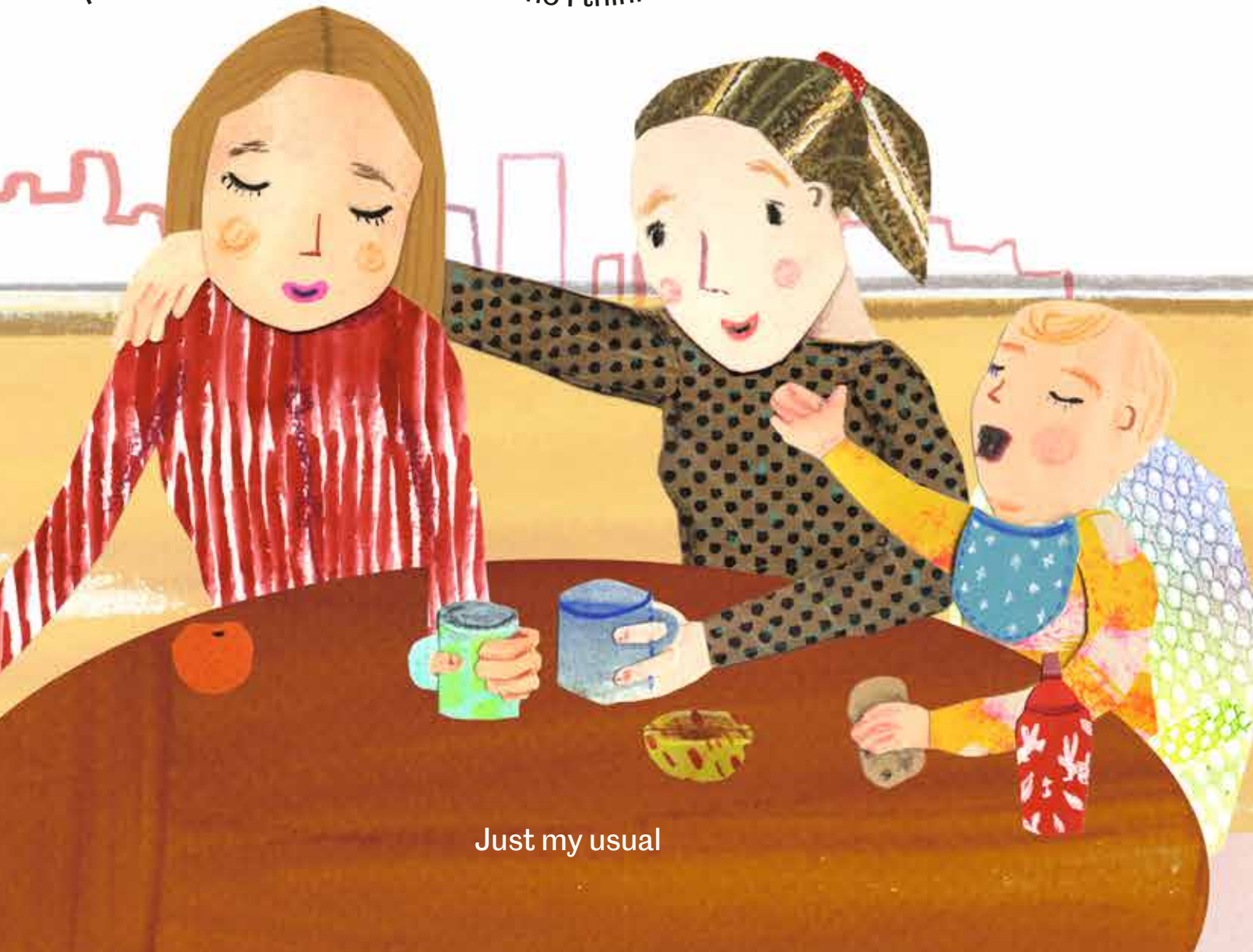


He used to be dead clingy.  
He never left me side



*It's nice to have just me and him time*

I have made some friends here who I think I will know for a very long time



Just my usual



I was welcomed with open arms to share my experience



Go to aunty Grace



It's definitely brought my creative side out



When your hands are busy, you start opening up don't you

I love art, and colour and shapes







In the past, I wouldn't have brought my kids here because if they made a noise, I would be like shhh it's an art gallery but it's not actually like that at all

I thought it was just paintings on a wall but it's so much more



I feel proud of myself  
for getting through it

I appreciate life more because you never know what's next

We got  
through  
It!



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