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## Special Issue: Art for the Sake of Care

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### Art for the Sake of Care: Editorial Introduction

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## Introduction

This special issue showcases more than 30 authors with contributions rooted in artistic practice, offering fresh perspectives on care. Based on their contributions, in this editorial introduction, we propose three promises for revitalizing care through artistic practice: (1) fullness, (2) shared sensibilities, and (3) regenerating places. With this issue, we respond to what Ellen Dissanayake, professor emerita and author of *Homo Aestheticus and Art & Intimacy*, once wrote: “Lacking mutuality, we lack humanity” (1992, p. 43). Now, more than three decades later, in this current particularly challenging moment, we find ourselves yearning for more than just our lost humanity. We crave respect for all species and a more fluid, interconnected understanding of existence. We’re becoming increasingly aware of the deep interdependence of all life forms, urging us to transcend traditional boundaries and embrace a renewed perspective to life and how we care for it. This quest for interconnectedness and inter-species respect is not just a desire or ‘nice,’ but a necessity for a harmonious, caring future (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Varpanen et al., 2024). We’ve observed this yearning for regeneration not only among the authors of this issue but also among our students and on our campuses. This generation of students is particularly interested in sustainability, repurposing, and revitalizing both physical spaces and cultural artifacts through upcycling and sustainable fashion; interest in preserving and restoring historical buildings and landmarks; through community projects that aim to revitalize neglected spaces and breathe new life into forgotten corners of our cities as well as the resurgence of traditional crafts like knitting and sewing. These activities not only provide a creative outlet but also contribute to a sense of community and sustainability and care. They show us how important it is for us to ‘make.’ This special issue, *Art for the Sake of Care*, which emerged from five-years of collaboration in our Art & Care Platform Series ([www.art-and-care.com](http://www.art-and-care.com)), joins the chorus of the quickly developing interest in the nexus of Art & Care, for example through artistic, practice-led research creation on care (e.g. Travis et al., 2024; Slager, 2024; Coumans & Van Driel, 2023; Springgay, 2022; Bickel & Fisher, 2022; ARIAS, n.d.; HKU, n.d.), research on the concept of (feminist) “care aesthetics” (Thompson, 2022; Saito, 2022; Cologni, 2020a, 2020b). And research in related fields such as art therapy, worldwide Arts & Health programs, and occupational therapy (Sonke et al., 2024; Lewis et al., 2024; Sajnani, 2023; Pesata et al., 2022; Groot et al., 2021; Gerber et al., 2020; Fancourt & Finn, 2019; Fancourt, 2017), the ‘art of caring’ in the Caring Sciences and nursing (Suárez-Baquero & Champion, 2021), initiatives in the humanities (Hansen, 2023; Swinnen et al., 2022; Crawford et al., 2015) and many more, such as those who are combining orientations, themes and fields inquiring concepts directly related to care (e.g. Bourgault & Rosamond, 2024; Daelman et al., 2024; Mattingly & Grøn, 2022, Visse et al., 2019, 2020, 2024).

This special issue presents artists-academics’ contributions of more than 30 people, grounded in artistic practice, focusing on care, building on decades and even centuries of insight into art

and care. Artists from a recent past have referred to or embedded caring values in their critical practices and art practice research. They also referred to various themes including the environment, gender and social inequalities, parenthood and more. Among these: Mierle Laderman Ukeles, proclaiming herself a ‘maintenance artist’ is often mentioned in this context as her work has caring for others, and caring for the environmental at the core;<sup>1</sup> Los Angeles based Mother Art Collective,<sup>2</sup> whose work went from ‘caring for their children to caring for the planet,’ and whose work is highlighted in this special issue. Brazilian Lygia Clark has a social driven practice, as her relational objects were presented in exhibitions and adopted in therapeutic practice (Arslan, 2017). More widely issues relating to care such as sickness, pain, suffering, illness, mental health, as well as medicine, pharmacy and remedies, but also care as political and driven by a pledge for social justice, have been addressed by artists for centuries including Georges Chicotot, Honoré Daumier, Albrecht Dürer, Max Ernst, Alberto Giacometti, Paul Klee, Meret Oppenheim, Arnulf Rainer. Most recently Marina Abramović, Ruedi Gerber, Keith Haring, Anna Halprin, Joseph Cornell, Joseph Beuys, Louise Bourgeois, Sophie Calle, Damien Hirst, Bruce Nauman, Hanspeter Hofmann, Marc Quinn, Pipilotti Rist Uriel Orlow, Rosemarie Trockel, Luc Tuymans, Kiki Smith, Shana Moulton, Cecilia Vicuña, Helen Cammock. These are only a few among a wide range of artists included in a growing number of art exhibitions addressing care in different ways.<sup>3</sup>

Care is also at the core of formal and informal art education (Bickel, Fisher, 2022; Staikidis, 2024), and art educators have focused on this intersection for centuries, wondering how the arts could contribute to a more just and caring society. In the 18th century pedagogues, educators and philosophers such as Alexander Baumgarten and Friedrich Schiller, and their contemporary Johann Pestalozzi created a grounding for how the arts can contribute to good care and a caring society. Pestalozzi, for example, worked with young people who no longer had parents, but needed guidance growing up. He wondered how he could guide them through drawing practices toward becoming caring fellow citizens. Later, other art educators like Maxine Greene (2000) in “Releasing the imagination,” Harry Broudy (1979), in “Arts

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<sup>1</sup> By challenging the domestic role of women, Laderman Ukeles proclaimed herself a ‘maintenance artist,’ in the Maintenance Art Manifesto 1969! Proposal for an exhibition “CARE”: Maintenance Art Manifesto 1969! Proposal for an exhibition “CARE.” [[https://www.queensmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Ukeles MANIFESTO.pdf](https://www.queensmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Ukeles_MANIFESTO.pdf)]

<sup>2</sup> Mother Art is a collective of women artists. See <https://motherart.org/>.

<sup>3</sup> In different context including the health contexts (e.g. [hospitalrooms](#) UK), and museums and galleries for example Take Care. Art and Medicine April 8–July 17, 2022, Kunsthaus Zürich, including 50 artists and exploring the relationship between art and medicine; the Wellcome Trust in London regularly presents exhibitions on health and medicine always including artist’s practice.

Education: Necessary or Just Nice,” and Eliot Eisner in “The Enlightened Eye” (1991) added to the work, followed by art educators with a focus on research like Liora Bresler (2006) with her innovative approach to aesthetics-led inquiry grounded in a relational ontology and who is also the founder of this journal. Erin Manning’s relational approach to pedagogy, philosophy and art education, and Stephanie Springgay (2022), a leader scholar on research-creation, Karinna Ridett-Moore (2009) and Richard Siegesmund’s work on Aesthetics as a Curriculum of Care and Responsible Choice (2010) and Richard Shusterman’s work on somaesthetics (2006, 2024) are other examples. Each of them focuses on the importance of the arts in meaningful connections, creating compassion, arts of living and relationality. Some of these art educators promote ideas of socially responsive art in educational contexts, inviting us in their classrooms and beyond. Together with other contemporary art educators like Joy Bertling (2015), Mark Graham (2007), Dalton & Hrenko (2016), Varpanen et al. (2024), they transform practices and offer us views on critical issues of our time.

Informal art education programs tend to reach those who might not have access to the traditional education system for various reasons, and manifest in different platforms and settings, in community spaces, art centers, online and at home. Among the many examples worldwide, Hospital Rooms<sup>4</sup> is one of them, as from an idea of founders Tim Shaw and Niamh White of improving mental health environments has developed an education program to accompany an impressive series of art projects. This is also possibly to be considered part of the legacy of the wide range of informal art activities and programs developed during covid (Keyes et al., 2024) of which this issue shows various examples (for example, Ian Nesbitt’s *Intermezzo*).

Thematically, there is growing interest in critical place-based approaches to care pedagogy engaged with issues on “ecological care.” They promote approaches to artmaking as socially and educationally responsive, fostering community through listening and “radical relatedness.” Art, many argue, should serve as a tool for shaping culture morally, rather than existing solely for aesthetic contemplation or the benefit of wealthy collectors (Gablik, 1991, p. 142). We’re providing this snapshot of the groundbreaking work of others before introducing this issue’s contributions, because this context is important for understanding how our current explorations build upon the foundations laid by these pioneers. By drawing upon their insights, we aim to shed new light on the intersection of art and care from a perspective grounded in contemporary artistic practices.

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<sup>4</sup> Hospital Room is a community-based art project that work with patients and staffs to curate site-specific artworks for care facilities. See <https://hospital-rooms.com/> for more information.

This issue's contributors go beyond promoting an approach to artmaking that emphasizes community and social needs, offering more. They show us what the actual practicing of the arts for the sake of care may look like and may do. To them, some more than others, artmaking involves active listening, showing compassion, meticulously critique, from a receptive and radical relational stance: the art and the artistic inquiry is not only inherently entangled with others, but also with materialities, nature, surrounding structures – from classrooms to kitchens, from town halls to public parks, from protocols to laws. The meaning of the artistic practice emerges from this exchange, transcending the artist's perspectives and influencing both the artist and the viewer and the work itself. Sometimes the practice exists for its own sake. Most times, art shifts away from merely being an 'expression' or 'skill' by a singular artist towards a deeply entangled, engaged practice for and by those people, things and environments present, including the artworks themselves. The special issue "Art for the Sake of Care" offers a glimpse into artistic practices as care practices, and as moral ecologies, like in landscapes, which we've previously explored in our work (Schwandt, 1995; Walker, 2007; Visse et al., 2012). One of the *Intermezzo* pieces of the issue (by Mariëlle Schuurman) provides meaningful illustrations of this concept. A moral ecology can be viewed as an interconnected, expressive-collaborative, performative practice; a coming together of art, research and care practices where values, beliefs, and behaviors within a specific context or environment are enacted. Morality in a moral ecology is not a solitary individualistic pursuit or something to "strive for," but is generative: we discover what is good, including what is good care, by living the questions through making. This practice is deeply influenced by the social, cultural, ecological factors and materialities that shape our views of care. In this context, the strength of the arts lies in their claim that they are presentational, transformative and "performative," not referential, not abstract cognitive symbolic systems (Broudy, 1978, p.23; Bickel & Fisher, 2022). In a way, this issue provides examples of what Maurice Hamington calls for in his book *Revolutionary Care*, "(...) personal, social, and political transformations *not* through a Scrooge-like epiphany that changes someone from uncaring to caring overnight but rather a steady shift of values, disposition, and *practices* that deepen and extend care" (2024, p. 62) [italics added by us]. The practices of this issue are not merely instrumental ('for the sake of care') but are shaped by and shape care practices in a reciprocal manner, slowly and steadily.

In this issue we focus on care multifold by delving deep into practices of making and caring. Although many perceive overlap between art, health, and well-being, to us, care encompasses a complex spectrum of ethical, political, and social concerns not comparable to health or health sciences scholarship. 'Care,' thus, may contribute to, but is not necessarily 'health' nor only present in (public or clinical) healthcare, so we don't refer to care provided in health care or public health contexts particularly, even though some care practices in this issue unfold in health care contexts. In those practices, as the authors clarify, they focus on how art and

aesthetics may reveal elements of care as a practice (instead of primarily discussing care as service related to issues of illness and disease). This also means we did not include art therapeutic initiatives in health care settings, for example, even though we believe there are important insights on the concept and practice of care to be found there.

The field of care studies is defined broadly, encompassing ‘care theory’ and ‘care ethics’ and ‘care inquiry.’<sup>5</sup> In this special issue, we do not try to demarcate and define, given the existing body of scholarship, but happily refer to others who do (e.g. Collins, 2015; 2017).

Summarized, care may be perceived multifold: as an epistemology, countering dominant ways of knowing the world (Dalmiya, 2016; Hamington, 2008; 2024); as a relational practice, embracing feelings and affect (Pulcini, 2017, 2012; Baur et al., 2017); care is a collaborative-expressive and ecological practice where people negotiate who should do what for whom and why in the context of their entanglements with materialities and the natural environment (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Walker, 2007). Care can be a pedagogy (Bozalek et al., 2020, Noddings, 2019; Freire, 2014), and can be perceived as an ontology, a way of being (Hamington, 2020a, 2020b; Hansen et al., 2020). Last but not least, political scientists like Joan Tronto (2013), Fabienne Brugère (2020), Maggie Fitzgerald (2022), Daniel Engster (2007), Fiona Robinson (2024), Araujo Guimarães and Hirata (2023), Hee-Kang Kim (2021), Sophie Bourgault (2022), Batthyány (2022) and others, think about care as a pillar of a caring democracy, a deeply normative practice that warrants dedicated attention and listening across nations and continents.

In this special issue, we show that the making of art, that caring, and creating are what makes life livable. We show what more caring, care(full), and care-based art practices and research may look like. This issue demonstrates that art experiences are not exclusive to a select group or merely products of ‘culture;’ rather, art practice is deeply intertwined with our relational

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<sup>5</sup> The terminology surrounding the field of care studies is currently under debate. While some scholars use terms like care theory, care ethics, care inquiry, and care research, others prefer umbrellas closely related to their disciplinary vocabulary (such as the caring sciences using the art of care). Additionally, critical and feminist interpretations offer unique perspectives within this field. For a comprehensive overview of the development and actual themes, we refer to Maurice Hamington’s book *Revolutionary Care* (2024), to the Introduction of Sophie Bourgault, Maggie FitzGerald and Fiona Robinson’s volume on *Decentering Epistemologies* (2024) and Mercer Gary’s article on “From care ethics to pluralist care theory” (2022), even though it’s worth noting that the article could have further explored care as an interdisciplinary field of inquiry (Leget, Van Nistelrooij and Visse, 2019), alongside other initiatives related to Indigenous and intersectional approaches. For those seeking a deeper exploration of the field of care studies/ethics and theory, we recommend keeping an eye out for the upcoming *Bloomsbury Handbook of Care Ethics*, edited by Matilda Carter. The handbook is expected to be published in 2025.

nature, just like care. The experience of care is profoundly relational and closely connected to how we structure and govern our institutions and society as – some care ethicists propose – “life-sustaining webs” (Tronto & Fisher, 1990; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Art and care are present in the most intimate practices and the most public spaces, as this issue demonstrates by challenging these boundaries. Art and care are integral to the ceremonies of birth, death, transition, and transcendence.

### **Rationale for This Issue**

Deeply rooted in care scholarship and artistic practice within, and outside academia, this issue’s point of departure is a deep concern about the lack of mutuality and the lack of attention to us as ‘aesthetic beings’ (cf. homo aestheticus Dissanayake, 2001) and caring beings (cf. homines curans, Tronto, 2017). We believe the disposition “to make” is a natural human response, while care is not innate but influenced by social, cultural, and historical factors<sup>6</sup>. The arts and practices of making are not something of an elite, but are central to everyone who cares, who lives, who survives and who thrives (Dissanayake, 2001). The arts were central to the emergence, adaptation and survival of the human species and can contribute to care and to enhance the possibilities of all to be full members of society and local communities, offering a richer horizon than we currently perceive (Greene, 2000; Dissanayake, 2000; Bresler, 2006). Understanding care as a socially constructed practice rather than a natural impulse, Joan Tronto argues that the concept of “natural care” can be problematic, as it often reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Her colleague Virginia Held (2005) suggests that while care may have natural roots, it is also shaped by social and cultural norms. She argues that care ethics should focus on developing virtues and practices that promote caring relationships, rather than assuming that care is a naturally occurring trait. This contrasts with how some scholars view ‘art’ as natural human behavior, rooted in our evolutionary history. Ellen Dissanayake, for example, posits that art evolved as an adaptation, serving essential functions for human survival and social cohesion. Her theory, known as “artifactual selection,” suggests that the creation and appreciation of art are innate human traits, similar to language or tool-making. She emphasizes the role of art in fostering social bonding, emotional expression, and cultural transmission. Other art scholars like Harry Broudy (1977) argued art is not just nice, but necessary. It’s not just a mere luxury or a product of cultural development, but a fundamental aspect of human nature, essential for our

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<sup>6</sup> Ellen Dissanayake views the caring disposition as closely connected to a broad set of affective affirmations and to evolutionary development of attachment behaviors and reciprocity, hence embedded in relationality. In her work, she discusses how the caring disposition involves a naturalistic aesthetic disposition<sup>6</sup>: a view of the human being as an aesthetic being, deeply involved in intersubjective practices of ‘mutuality,’ ‘belonging,’ ‘meaning’ and ‘elaboration,’ which she calls art (2000). We present Dissanayake’s view of these practices in a forthcoming article (Visse, forthcoming).

well-being and survival. These places the promise of the arts for care in a meaningful light, because care's aspiration points in a similar direction.

Unfortunately, late-modern views on care and art—dominant views on what we think is normal—are marginalizing these views of who we are and what we should aspire to. They push the need for care and the need for 'making,' despite efforts to bring them into focus, to the margin. The late-modern 'care script' often emphasizes efficiency, technology, and professionalization or academization, sometimes at the expense of experiential, compassionate and holistic approaches. This script can push the boundaries of what are considered adequate care and art, of what "counts" as valuable to the margin. The script often prioritizes measurable outcomes over the nuanced needs of people and other species.<sup>7</sup> The modern script highlights policy, protocol and dualist views of humans and their bodies, disentangled from each other, leading to alienation and a continuous sense of uncertainty and precariousness due to rapid change and the breakdown of traditional expectations. This "shrinking present" (Rosa, 2013) is exacerbated by environmental and technological challenges, leading to a fear of the 'more than human world.' The frenetic pace of life also alienates us from our bodies and erodes our sense of existence, contributing to a crisis of being. It makes some of us feel alone, desperate and without perspective. It makes visible painful hierarchies in values, increased precarity, exclusion and existential losses.

If we center ourselves as aesthetic beings, if we center artmaking and if we advocate care as a political and moral responsibility, then we would do everything to nurture societal, environmental, and personal development. We would challenge "privileged responsibility (Tronto 1993, p. 121) and epistemic irresponsibility (Bourgault et al., 2024; Casalini 2020) Ideally, we would promote epistemic and relation humility (Dalmiya, 2016), we would foster the freedom for people to choose their life goals with care, develop themselves in the context of their communities, and thrive, while respecting the limitations of nature and systems. We would re-imagine education as inclusive, less hierarchical and as an explicitly embodied posthuman practice that fosters caring pedagogies (Hamington, 2020; Vaitinen, 2015). We would re-think responsibility altogether (Nistelrooij & Visse, 2019) and develop practices of listening (Bourgault, 2022). This cannot be done without also perceiving us as creating beings. Human thriving requires the possibility of making things better, of imagining how things can be better, of being full members of society and local communities. However, despite growing opportunities for some and general wealth increase, many are still unable to flourish, let alone live a decent life. They are abandoned by others, lacking time, money,

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<sup>7</sup> Dutch art educator and Ph.D. researcher Esther Willemse's research looks into re-thinking impact in cultural management education, part of the Dutch Meaningful Artistic Research platform.



opportunities, or suffering from various forms of oppression. Their opinions don't count, and their expressions aren't included. Renowned Indigenous professor and biologist Robin Wall Kimmerer in her book 'Braiding Sweetgrass,' shared her experiences about meeting with a professor at a college she was applying to: "The professor made me doubt where I came from, what I knew, and claimed that his was the *right* way to think... The only way I could make sense of it was to conclude that the things I had always believed about plants must not be true after all" (2013, p41). Here, what is 'right' for people and plants should be negotiated instead of "reject[ing] the idea that context, embodiment or emotion do, or should, play a part in authorizing what is *ethical* in genuine ethical judgement" (Hutchings 2013, p. 27). Care ethicists argue that claims of good care are always embedded in and co-constitutive of socio-political-economic contexts. They contend that rationalist approaches often "oppress alternative voices and perspectives" (Beattie and Schick, 2013, p. 2).

With this special issue, we hope to contribute to transforming practices of making and care. We believe some of the contributors to this issue have found a path, or at least catch a glimpse of it. They embrace views of care for the human, less-than-human, and non-human that counters reduced notions of who we are and that re-ignite mutuality and with that, foster care. They acknowledge themselves as caring beings (cf. *Homines curans*, Tronto, 2017) and aesthetic beings (cf. *Homo aestheticus*, Dissanayake, 2001). To counter losses such as unjust hierarchies, precarity, and exclusion, and to respond creatively and realistically, we learn how to practice our mutuality through shared sensibilities and expressions. Because in shared perceptions and sensibilities—even though they might be filled with conflict—lie the promise of care.

### Three Promises

#### *Fullness*

This special issue may provide three promises for revitalizing research on care through artistic practice: (1) fullness, (2) shared sensibilities, and (3) regenerating places. The first is the about fullness. The issue's contributions show what it means to embrace we as creative, as makers, aspiring to care. They show what it means to accept the dark, chaotic, and disturbing aspects of care, as well as the beautiful and uplifting ones. The authors recognize the interconnectedness of things, embracing a more nuanced and complex understanding of ourselves and the world around us. They acknowledge the complexity and ambiguity of care and embracing both its joys and its sorrows. It reminds us of what Rebecca Solnit wrote, a few years ago, in the Washington Post, on how we need to re-think abundance: *What if climate change meant not doom—but abundance?* With this issue, through practice-led research, we join that chorus. We feel compelled to stretch the view. We share a variety of contributions that offer a view of people as multisensory, aesthetic, as entangled with materialities, as place-

bound, as makers, with a strong imagination, with focused possibilities and limitations too, able to pay attention, to listen, to be receptive.

Paradoxically, the contributions in this issue also demonstrate the need to decenter ourselves as a result. Of pushing our view of ourselves as knowers to the side and move towards *relational humility*, being part of messy fullness of interpersonal relationships and materialities with complex moral and affective demands, practicing perceptiveness to the needs of another (including things) (Dalmiya, 2016). Together with many, we propose a new reflexivity on who we are as carers, as care receivers, as artists, as researchers regarding our own position of privilege.

Artists-academics and those who live creatively and all those who create in their everyday work have so much to offer for learning about care, this issue shows. Artist-academics are experts in not only how to respond to this form of precarious knowing (Niemeijer & Visse, 2024) productively, but they need it for their work to emerge in their own right. We do not claim artists-academics are the only ones who have answers. On the contrary. The views proposed earlier about humans being aesthetic beings, interdependent, social, affective and creative beings, highlight the creative nature of each of us. We live that nature while belonging to complex environments and ancestries. Mona-Lisa Angell's contribution to this special issue on C(h)ords of Care shows this "fullness" and connects her view on artmaking as a way of paying attention to shared care, as it involves holding time, space, and matter for lingering and viewing her artistic inquiries as a deeply affective and embodied practice. Nisha Gupta's article on the lived experiences of oppression and reclaiming erotic power among women from the South Asian diaspora, in light of their cultural contexts is another strong example what it means to re-claim us as making and caring beings. She collaborated with Desi artists and created poetry and prose on reclaiming erotic power to situate intimacy within an ecological discourse. Keren Moscovitch, in her article on 'Ecological Intimacy as Anarchic Feminist Care Practice' triangulates an approach to ecology, via the frames offered by the intersection of intimacy and care. She situates radical intimacy within a discourse of care and investigates the work and ideas of Annie Sprinkle and Beth Stephens, specifically their ecosexuality projects, as counterpoint and complement to her own work as an artist. These studies on care for ecology have implications for educational contexts, for example Joy Bertling's proposal for a curriculum informed by the ecological imagination, a call for education that embraces the arts as a way to conceive of new ecological perspectives and dialogues (Bertling, 2015).

### ***Shared Sensibilities***

This issue's contributors identify as female, male, non-binary, using pronouns across the board. They are located across the globe and throughout the work on this issue moved around,

sharing unique perspectives of local issues that have global meaning. They identify as artists\*academics,<sup>8</sup> creative practitioners, 'a/r/tographers,' 'artist-scholars,' 'practice-led researchers,' 'research-creators,' 'care ethicists,' care researchers, 'arts-informed researchers' or art education researchers.<sup>9</sup> Together, they share work about the transformative power of the arts for purposes of understanding, practicing and transforming issues of care. They invite us to engage in reading about their artistic practice and their views and practices of care. They assist us to perceive care better together, as a collective, and propose original solutions for pressing problems. Next to reintroducing images of the human being as entangled with other species, as sensory, experiencing beings, and how that drives care, these contributors help us to make certain worlds enter the "partition of the perceptible" (Rancière 1999, p. 24). For example, Marta Stefanyshyn's article advocating for attention to the meanings of being connected to ancestral strengths of Ukrainian culture. She explores those connections through an ecofeminist lens, highlighting care as nursing generational inheritance and our relational beingness with ancestors and communities. Or Ryan Woodring's article that makes visible the significance of 'process' in the visual effects industry. Woodring emphasizes Rosa Menkman's "Glitch Studies Manifesto," that uses the concept of "glitch" for revealing, hegemonic standards and norms. Each of these authors and others, in their own way, support us in developing a 'shared sensibility,' making the unseen, seen. The oppressed more visible. Some care practices, such as caring for ancestral ties and caring for visceral processes in visual effect industry, were invisible or incomprehensible by the logic of the dominant research, practice and scholarship, but will now become perceptible, part of our shared sensibilities. It happens in this issue, but also broader, in society. Our modest attempt to bring into view facets of care that previously existed beyond the perceptible, and the struggle for those whose actions and expressions were not "identifiable within a given field of experience" (Rancière 1999, p. 35), is a political and critical quest. What we deem worthy of attention and resources and concentrates control over this distribution in the hands of a select few. As researchers, we can influence this sensible reality and that's one of the rationales for this issue. Pieter Dronkers' contribution, "Needling the Public/Private Divide: How to Stitch a Common World to Care For," offers a compelling example. Using Palestinian embroidery as a lens, he challenges our preconceived notions of the public/private divide. Dronkers proposes

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<sup>8</sup> See <https://artist-academic.com/>.

<sup>9</sup> We gratefully refer to Gabrielle McGulloch's review of the scholarly literature on Arts-based Research and Teaching carried out as an undergraduate Summer Research Scholar at the University of Auckland, under the supervision of Professor Helen Sword: artists-academics (Bennett et al., 2009; Lam, 2020; Wright et al., 2010),<sup>9</sup> creative practitioners (Stewart, 2006, p. 1), 'a/r/tographers' (Irwin et al., 2006, p. 75), 'artist-scholar' (Daichendt, 2011), 'practice-led researcher' (Knowles, 2020, p. 218), 'research-creation' (Manning, 2016), 'arts-informed researcher' and art researchers (Sullivan, 2006, p. 23).

embroidery as a metaphor for weaving a caring society, transcending boundaries and highlighting the interconnectedness of people, places, and the concepts of art and care. Dronkers' approach aligns with Rancière's concept of "the redistribution of the sensible." By challenging traditional notions of public and private spheres, Dronkers aims to reconfigure our understanding of these categories and create new possibilities for social and political engagement.

This brings us to the last promise and key insight this issue offers: what happens if we move from seeing a shared perception we don't appreciate, to imagining what's possible instead? To regenerating care through artistic practice? What happens when we halt, reflect, critique and challenge what we see? To move towards a caring society, featured by what Joan Tronto called the pillars of equity, solidarity and trust (Tronto, 2013).

### ***Regenerating Places***

At the time of writing, we as editors find ourselves in two places: at the center of Illinois in the American Mid-West, on situated on the traditional lands of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Chickasaw Nations. On the land with rolling prairies, numerous state parks and friendly communities. We are also located in Cambridge, the United Kingdom, with its rich academic heritage, stunning architecture, and picturesque landscapes and lands that have been home to various Celtic tribes and later to Anglo-Saxon, Viking, and Norman settlers as well as crossroad for many cultures from Africa, Europe, the US the Mediterranean, the East, and Asia. But we also carry with us our own family history and migration trajectories (Italy and the Netherlands) which inform our perspectives and approaches to inquiry in various ways (Cogni, Scardi, 2022), ultimately underpinning our interests in widening our horizon, in regeneration and renewal (Visse, 2024). This issue tries to do so by hosting other perspectives from various geographical locations, universities, research traditions and art schools. A plurality and cross-over of cultural-geographical inquiry are what features this special issue. We value the intellectual and everyday quest to understand and foster (better) care in the context of local traditions and future aspirations, artistic and intellectually. We, the editors, are first and foremost artists. Artists with a research practice that focuses on the transformative power of care, since 2019, gathered in our Art & Care Platform Series.<sup>10</sup> We both had (and

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<sup>10</sup>The series includes symposia, talks and workshops, and in addition to some of the contributions to this issue, we also collaborated with: Care Collective (Lynne Segal, Andreas Chatzidakis, Jamie Hakim, Jo Littler, and Catherine Rottenberg), Lorenzo Balbi, Costanza Meli, Paula Gerstenblatt, Gabi Scardi, Elke Krasny, Bob Stake, Karen Thomas, Gustaaf Bos, Papa Baiden, Barbara Lehtna, Els van

have) an active artistic practice, and imagined a global platform would bring a sense of mutuality with others with similar hopes, and that would connect various geographical impulses. And here we are, because this issue that highlights some of these ‘care landscapes’ was developed through the Art and Care Platform Series, bottom up. Since 2019, our Art & Care Platform series provided a space to wonder about the nature and practice of care, to explore what it means to move beyond the binaries of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ care, to learn about the nuances, complexities and relationships between care and art. Could care have artistic features and reversed, something that the care aesthetics scholars (Thompson, 2022; Saito, 2022; Cologni 2020a, 2020b) look into especially. Some participants were focused on developing methodologies using the arts to study care. Most contributors hope to contribute to transforming practices, to better care, to close by, where they live. We, as editors, primarily aimed to create a platform and space where living these questions is at the heart.

The contributions show how practices of listening, touching, perceiving, loving, connecting, being intimate, interconnecting, speculating, decentering, resisting, opening, receiving, giving, contextualizing, and honoring can regenerate practices. Thematically, some contributions engage with ancestors, animals and nature, while others address issues of illness, disease and well-being. In each case the traditional distinction between object and subject of study collapses. In this form of research, there is no such distinction, but the concrete matters, existential dimensions of life, performative utterances, including bodily and speech acts, are closely entwined. Authors of this issue recognize the agency of both human and non-human actors in shaping their practices, and some, but not all, explicitly write about art objects having agency and what it is like to be “receptive” to both human and non-human actors.

Contributors offer diverse perspectives on the relationship between art, research and care, often challenging traditional boundaries and methodologies. Regardless of whether we perceive this connection as deliberate or inherent (à la new materialists), each contribution offers a landscape of assumptions about the relationship between art, research and care, including methodological tools, if they speak of methodology at all. The authors share their personal journeys of inquiry, encompassing thinking, making, observing, experiencing, and theorizing. The contributors write about performing, moving, perceiving, co-creating, music-making, grooming, wood-working, crafting, photographing, claying, painting, embroidering, tracing, typing, mattering.

The contributions show how the practices of contributors regenerate care through:

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Wijngaarden, Eveline Wandl-Vogt, Aleyda Rocha, Petra Kupperts, Sarah Travis, Helen Knowles, Kisito Assangni, Jan Erkert, Melinda Guillen.

*Listening, Nurturing and Responsibility*

Challenging gendered assumptions and the hierarchical power dynamics inherent in care practices.

*Life-Creating, Inter-Species Forces*

Extending the concept of care beyond human-human interactions to include non-human beings. Acknowledging the physical and emotional dimensions of care, including pain, disgust, and fear about environmental forces.

*Path-Making, highlighting Practicality*

Viewing care as a concrete, everyday practice rather than an abstract concept.  
Highlighting situatedness. Celebrating the ordinary.

*Liberation and Sovereignty*

Connecting care with systemic oppression and promoting social justice.

*Disruptive Forces*

Challenging Norms: Seeking to disrupt normative categories (e.g. gender roles) and power dynamics.

*Radical Intimacy*

Highlighting dynamic (and thus creative) tensions in care between unification and separation, where boundaries blur and destabilize fixed ontologies.

*Material Practice*

Exploring the material aspects of care, 'materialized care' and their role in shaping relationships: Objects, spaces, and technologies are increasingly recognized as agents of care and artistic practice.

*Migration Sceneries (Intra-Active Entanglements of)*

Making visible (and sensible) how people from various locations, including different countries, experience challenges of maintaining connections with caring others scattered across the globe (e.g. migrant workers).

*Recognition and Collaboration*

Emphasizing (once again) the importance of fostering care through practices of recognition and collaboration through open communication and self-reflection.

*Spatio-Temporal Movement*

Examining the cultural (re)production of care within physical, somatic, and sensory dimensions, also through corporeal visual culture and the ways in which we perceive and interact with our 'social body.'

*Intergenerational, Ancestral Communal Sceneries*

Examining the cosmological, intergenerational ties with history, ceremony, and oral and spiritual traditions. Showing the need for connecting with Indigenous Studies.

*Love, aliveness and patience*

Demonstrating the transformative power of unwavering dedication to artistic and scholarly pursuits, cultivating a love for the craft and art of care. By embracing aliveness and patience, creators and scholars can unlock the profound potential of their work.

The contributions give us access to various approaches to artistic practice. Some contributors ground their work in what we know as the “performative paradigm,” emphasizing the productive and transformative nature of artistic practice. In those contributions, artistic works can serve as valuable data, offering unique insights into social, cultural, and personal experiences (Barrett & Bolt, 2014; Haseman, 2006; Gergen & Gergen, 2018). All these practices of inquiry, while sharing a common foundation in artistic practice, offer distinct perspectives and can be selected based on the specific research goals and context. While some of the contributions of this issue clearly position themselves in one of these most find themselves on an intersection and combine, which we applaud. Aligning with trends in artistic research and post humanist inquiry, we encouraged authors to experiment and put their curiosity first instead of methodology. This way, the issue contributes to challenging and decentering traditional research methodologies and embrace an open, exploratory approach. For example, some contributions such as Mona-Lisa Angell’s, Biljana Fredriksen and Ana Sarvanovic’s and Tamar Amiri’s as well as Jennifer Clarke’s align with insights from posthumanism: a theoretical framework that questions the centrality of the human subject and explores the interconnectedness of all beings, including humans, animals, and non-living entities. This perspective challenges the traditional boundaries between nature and culture, subject and object, disrupting the individualized human-centered notions of agency and responsibility. Together with others (e.g. Grünfeld, 2024, Shusterman, 2006), they emphasize the importance of embodied experience, intuition, affectivity and creativity in knowledge production. By encouraging authors to prioritize their curiosity and experiment, we aimed to create a space for innovative and unconventional research. This approach allowed authors to explore their research questions in ways that might not have been possible within traditional frameworks. Moreover, this emphasis on experimentation and curiosity aligns with the post humanist notion of becoming-with, which suggests that knowledge is produced through ongoing interactions and relationships between different entities. By embracing this perspective, researchers can move beyond the limitations of subject-object dualisms and explore the interconnectedness of all beings.

Other contributors engage with arts-based research approaches as a set of innovative methodologies that integrate creative arts techniques into all stages of social, psychological and humanities research, from data collection to representation. These approaches offer a holistic and engaged way to explore complex research questions, merging theory and practice. By adapting the principles of the creative arts, arts-based research provides unique insights into social phenomena. Examples of contribution inspired by arts-based research approaches

are Truus Teunissen's Art in a Caring Society, where through autoethnography she reflects on the meaning of art and artistic expression in her life in the context of a caring society. Aligning with insights on the healing arts, she shows (not only tells) that creating art can be a vehicle for relationality, fostering joy and resonance. Marloeke van der Vlugt's relates to this, as her contribution is closely embedded in her artistic practice and offers us a detailed glimpse of the meaning of artistic practice for people who are terminally ill. She presents a case of a broader project *In Search of Stories*,<sup>11</sup> where she serves as an artist that collaborates with a patient to examine what forms of care between herself as an artist, the participant and the material emerges. From this, she proposes her method of Touching, part of her PhD research on the Aesthetics of Touch. Touch is also paramount in the contribution by scholars from the quickly emerging and growing field of Care Aesthetics, Sarah Campbell, Robyn Dowlen, John Keady and James Thompson, explore music making in dementia care. By connecting soundscapes, touch with care aesthetics, they highlight the "full sensory experience of human bodies in relation to others and the world around them." They demonstrate how fostering specific skills and behaviors related to embodied, sensory and craft in care relationships impact the quality of care. Care aesthetics, they convincingly show, reveals often unacknowledged elements of care. James Thompson has written extensively on care aesthetics, and he is considered the primary founder, even though other scholars have also contributed significantly to the development of care aesthetics, such as nursing professors Peggy L. Chinn (1994) and Jean Watson; from the area of social work Richard Hugman, Moira T. Peelo, Keith Soothill (1997), phenomenologists Kathleen Galvin and Les Todres (2012) and, from the field of feminist care aesthetics: Elena Cologni (2020a, 2020b), Natalia Anna Michna (2023) and Yuriko Saito (2022). This area is represented in special issue, in particular in their article on Woodworking, where Tom Maassen, Nieke Hoek and Tineke Abma position themselves on the intersection of health care education and care aesthetics. Their contribution offers lessons drawn from wood workshops to illuminate the forgotten personal and aesthetic dimensions of care and explore innovative ways to reintroduce these aspects of care in nurse education. Through five concepts they deepen our understanding of the meaning of woodworking for improving the embodied reflection skills of nurses. Annette Hendriks, Susan Woelders and Tineke Abma also focus on these often-unacknowledged elements of care, proposing a Lego DUPLO approach to make 'unsayable' (Visse et al., 2019) elements of care present and accessible. Through a meticulous analysis of what occurs when people living with acquired brain injury creatively construct blocks to access their perspectives and visualize relationships, they show that these approaches disrupt epistemic injustice in research, especially in contexts of patient participation. Further developing

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<sup>11</sup> In Search of Stories. See <https://www.hku.nl/en/research-and-innovation/projects-research-and-innovation/in-search-of-stories>.



insights relevant to the field of care aesthetics, Anna Macdonald focuses her contribution on ‘movements of care’ and exploring the choreographic qualities of moving with chronic pain and how care informs creative practice with those who have chronic pain. She is interested in the quality of responsivity through a participatory dance method that is potentially valuable within both social and medical care contexts and in refining understandings of care aesthetics. Responsivity, she proposes, is also observed as an integral part of practice-based research, where care operates as a method for generating knowledge. Philosopher and dancer Christine Leroy’s focus is on an ethos of care when she proposes an innovative and rigorously developed view on kinaesthetos. Grounded in philosophy, improvisation and dance, she proposes care is closely connected with the neurological body as the origin of empathy. She shows how dance contributes to care by fostering sensuality.

Macdonald’s and Leroy’s work sit within the developing field of performance and care in which writers, such as Amanda Stuart Fisher and James Thompson (2020), describe care as something “constitutively implicated within the concept of performance” (Stuart Fisher 2020, p. 7). Marlou Otten’s contribution to this field is (also) rooted in performance analysis and a political care ethics. Her five-theme approach to analyzing Pepe Espalú’s work offers a valuable framework for understanding care as an artistic-activist practice. This approach encompasses vulnerability, interdependency, absence and presence, embodiment and other key elements.

Their contributions also closely connect with insights from the ‘research creation’ and A/r/tography field, prioritizing reflexivity and embodiment. A/r/tography is an arts-based research methodology that employs artistic and aesthetic means to investigate phenomena. This approach challenges the traditional boundaries between researcher and researched, fostering a more responsive and interconnected inquiry. As La Jevic and Springgay argue in their 2008 article “A/r/tography as an Ethics of Embodiment,” this methodology offers a way to explore complex issues through visual journals and other artistic expressions. Biljana Fredriksen and Ana Sarvanovic follow this approach when exploring inter-species solidarity and compassion. They seek a movement toward intergenerational, ecological justice, which closely relates to other contributions in this issue.

We also learn about how contributors perceive and enact their active engagement and intersubjectivity, featured by aesthetic-led research and approaches that center ‘listening’ and, accentuating ‘living the questions’ featured by indirect approaches to explore hidden, unseen, often existential experiences related to human condition or natural phenomena (Visse, 2024, Visse et al., 2020). Rachel Epp Buller’s article introduces us to her participatory project *Taking Care* (2018-present) as a case study through which to consider listening as an orientation, a reciprocal gesture that invites being in relationship. In *Taking Care*, participants

write stories about a time in which they felt cared for. In exchange, Rachel listens to the stories by embroidering selected passages onto fabric in public performances, making visible these often unseen labors of care. The intermezzos by Ian Nesbitt, Natalie Pace and Zsuzsi Soboszlai also closely relate to “living” the questions, real-time, renewing spaces through artistic practice. Artist and filmmaker Ian Nesbitt in *Where do you find yourself? On Listening as a Transformative Collective Practice*, invites us to enter the listening spaces during covid. Zsuzsanna Soboszlai shares artistic work created in Australia in response to the Black Summer bushfires of 2019-20, in collaboration with her colleague Sam James. The fires, she writes in her Intermezzo, devastated some 24 million hectares (an area roughly equal to the terrestrial U.K.) of urban and rural habitat around Australia, claiming the lives of 33 people, and destroyed over 3000 homes (Soboszlai, 2024). We end our introduction with the poignant blessing that sets the tone for her Intermezzo (Wijman, 1970, p. 616):

*With everything having life, with everything having the power of speech,  
with everything having the power to breathe,  
with everything having the power to teach and guide,  
with that in blessing will we live.*

River Junction Curly, *The Blessingway*.

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### **About the Editors**

Merel Visse (Ph.D.) is an academic, artist, editor and educator who, for three decades, successfully initiated and coordinated various grant-funded, innovative, cross-disciplinary projects and programs with academic and civic impact. She is passionate about creating vibrant spaces where thinkers, creators, and innovators meet to address critical issues of our times. She holds a faculty position at Drew University’s Caspersen School of Graduate Studies (U.S.A.) where she also chairs a Graduate Program, and she is affiliated with the Dutch University of Humanistic Studies. She serves on several editorial boards in the U.S.A., co-founded the Meaningful Artistic Research Program in The Netherlands, and she co-leads the Art & Care Platform Series. Merel was an artist in residence at the NY School of Visual Arts, and in 2018 at the NARS Foundation in Brooklyn. Drawing on care theory, research and art practice, she developed a multifaceted approach to inquiry, learning, and community development that invites us to reconnect with “living the questions,” and to explore aspects of reality that defy language, acknowledging the inherent precariousness and ambiguities of our existence. Merel feels fortunate to call both the United States and the Netherlands home. Her website: [www.merelvisse.com](http://www.merelvisse.com).

Elena Cologni is an Artist and Associate Professor in Contemporary Art and Critical Practice and Research Lead at the Cambridge School of Art, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (Anglia Ruskin University, UK), where she also coordinates the Art and Design Postgraduate Researchers and leads the MA Art Health and Wellbeing. Cologni gained a BA in Fine Art from Accademia di Belle Arti Brera in Milan, an MA in Sculpture from Leeds University and a PhD (2004) in Fine Art and Philosophy from University of the Arts London, Central Saint Martins College (CSM). Cologni was Post Doctorate Research Fellow at CSM (2004/06 funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council), Research Fellow at York Saint John's University (2007/09), and Associate of the Creativities in Intercultural Arts Network (University of Cambridge) (2013/2016). Cologni's art practice research is being supported by numerous institutions (including La Biennale di Venezia; Fondazione Bevilacqua la Masa, Venice, Italy, MuseumsQuartier, Vienna, Austria; Tate, London, UK; Università di Pisa; Museo Laboratorio Arte Contemporanea, Rome, Italy) and funded by: Unesco; Artist Newsletter; Arts Council England; British Council (UK); Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (US). [www.elenacologni.com](http://www.elenacologni.com)

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