

I don't care

2021 JANUARY BY JAAKKO PALLASVUO

Artist and writer Jaakko Palasvuo was selected as a Rupert resident in 2019.

1.

Sometimes to make art was to practice not-caring.

To practice closing the door between yourself and your child, who was crying and needed you.

To make art was to take your child to the daycare center where trained carers would do that work, while you did the work of work, the work of whatever your artistic practice was. Your child was cared for, while you sat in a room alone staring at nothing.

But that is what you wanted to do, your nature, to be in that room alone and draw and write. Wasn't that a kind of caring? A care for the ether, a care for some over-historical conversation, a care for the speculative reader or viewer in the future?

2.

One can feel cared for by dead authors. When one is alone, one can be with the authors' words and to be not-alone.

Art cannot 'respond'

Art cannot 'respond urgently'

Art cannot respond.

When art responds art becomes a response.

And a response is really necessary. Change is necessary. A complete cultural shift in direction is absolutely necessary. Art cannot respond.

Art cannot be care. Art is a demon. Art is the east wind, the exterminating angel.

3.

I close the door between the world and myself.

OR

When I write, when I draw, when I edit a video, I am in fact present in the world. I am not isolated. Sometimes when I'm with other people I feel isolated in my social role, trapped in what I imagine are others' perceptions of me.

The fantasy of closing the door and being in the private room. To not be seen, to do things without an awareness of the gaze of others. The needs of others do not distort the field of gravity in this room.

4.

The demand circulates for artists to step out of their rooms. To join each other in the streets, to embrace each other, to finally facilitate that workshop.

But radical change cannot be achieved through professional means. To imagine a revolution is to imagine the death of the people we are now, the roles we play. In the revolution the artist dies, the private room becomes common, or..

5.

Maybe we weren't looking for care, maybe we were looking to be saved.

The art world wanted care without commitment, without spirit or cosmology, without duty or any other old shit like that.

Maybe care was work.. care was work of course, and they wanted to be cared for at work, they wanted to believe that they wouldn't have to let go of the context of work in order to be saved.

6.

Sometimes I think of the previous art world. It probably still exists somewhere, a little bit submerged. The art world of narcissism, cocaine and gossip, of nervous breakdowns, of merciless jetlag and heels that fuck up your feet, of harnesses and money and big ugly paintings made of toxic plastics.

Rotting carcasses in formaldehyde made by some dumbass artist, purchased by botoxed investment bankers. Where did these monstrosities disappear to, now that art is ethical, non-hierarchical and at one with the mushrooms and the lichen?

7.

In order to write you have to close the door in the face of your crying 3 year old. Their father carries them away. The cries retreat into the distance. You are alone in your room.

You have to let the panic go. You have to resist the urge to get up. You want to stay in the room. You want to sit still and listen. You sit in front of a typewriter in an itchy grey wool jumper. There's a draft in the room. It is autumn. It is raining.

You listen. Sometimes words come. You type. The words come from a supportive emptiness. The words come from nothing. Writing is a way for nothing to speak. This emptiness is your mother. Your actual mother is dead.

8.

Now it is thirty years later. Your child is not happy that you took time to write all those novels instead of taking care of them. Has your child read your books? No. The child says they're not interested. The child is an adult.

The child has a hard time letting go of the past. The child is angry. You are calm. You observe your child's negativity. You accept it. Maybe you will write about it. You know what your child doesn't. They know the closed door. You know what was on your side of that

door. The emptiness was there, and words were falling from it, and you had to catch the words.

9.

As the child's mother was writing of emptiness, the child's father was curating a biennial about microplastics or whatever.

The child's mother and father HATED being called Mother and Father. It's too heavy, too Freudian. We have names you know? It doesn't feel right, energetically. I feel like I'm more of a host of multiple gut bacteria than a father, really, the father said, and got on a flight to Lisbon.

The child was alone, playing video games, the babysitter was browsing Tinder on the living room couch. Everyone wanted to get fucked, everyone wanted to be destroyed, by a person, or an idea, or a social dynamic, or something.

What if we stopped caring and the world would fix itself?

10.

I don't care:

the sentence, the attitude, the serenity!

Art was something angry queers made in Reagan's America. A spitting in the face of.

Art was something asexual Marxists tried out in Berlin in 2003, completely removed from visual pleasure.

Art was something you could win prizes for: there was video evidence of the Lithuanian art scene dancing around a golden calf.

Art was beautiful frescoes by Fra Angelico, painted in the cells at Convento di San Marco, something for the other friars to contemplate on. Maybe that was care.

Did you believe me when I said:

I don't care.

11.

Art seems to require not-caring. A kind of detachment from the business of the world. Maybe caring and attachment are not the same.

Art becomes distorted, artless, when the artist cares too much (about collectors, curators, activists, their parents' opinions, etc.)

Art is scrambled, harebrained, careless. Art hurts people with its carelessness. It consumes lives. It can misrepresent reality, it can paint something fragile into a corner, foreclose it.

The discursively anti-institutional biennials were still brutal juggernauts. Next to the workshop on the commons? The café and the gift shop.

12.

13.

I care about the moment at hand. I shift my attention here. I am here. It is cold. I am in a park. People are caring for a communal garden set up in a corner of the park. I am cold. I watch them. I care.

Someone is pushing their child in the swings. The child swings back and forth. This is care: cyclical, ticking.

Care cannot be an event. Care cannot be a creative EU initiative. It is cold I am in the park.

I have this scarf on and it's trying to warm me, but it's not enough. This scarf cost a 160 euros. Buying it was kind of an accident, I didn't read the price correctly. I felt like I couldn't back down when they were already asking for payment. I can never lose this scarf. Everything will lose its form and return to formlessness. Money isn't real. The scarf cost more than this text did.

14.

Is it possible to think of care without thinking of austerity? The way resources are being taken away from care work, how care is being privatised, speculated on.

When public health becomes private luxury, we end up here. Care becomes extraordinary, rarefied and cool Unusual like a sculpture. What a sad thought. It is cold. I have to get up and walk around.

A parent wearing a yellow raincoat is jumping up and down on the weird soft asphalt of the playground.

The reason everything looks beautiful is because it is out of balance, but its background is always in perfect harmony. This is how everything exists in the realm of Buddha nature, losing its balance against a background of perfect balance.

– Shunryū Suzuki; *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*