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Still Care: (Re)Imagining Teachers' Experiences of Care as Aesthetically Crafted Events

by

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Thesis Submitted for The Doctor of Philosophy Qualification

Guildhall School of Music & Drama

Drama Department

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In loving memory of my aunt Dina

and for all the invisible, constant workers of care out there.

“Beauty is not optional but a strategy for survival”.

Terry Tempest Williams

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ABSTRACT

This research is about what it feels like to do care as a teacher. Coming from the perspective of a teacher and artist, it proposes an intimately artistic way to examine the nuanced experience of performing care in teaching. It does so through the medium of a performance framework, through performance art and participatory performance. This framework allows a novel perspective of the experience of care as this is practised by the teacher towards her students, as performance that resembles artistic, aesthetic making. Starting from the personal, the project responds more broadly to the context of teachers' burnout and stress epidemic and suggests performance as an effective, yet unacknowledged way towards understanding the importance of the teaching/caring experience.

The research uses a mixed methodology of performance practice and participatory, applied performance with autoethnography. It also draws on a period of ethnography doing observations and interviews with teachers at diverse school settings. This ethnographic strand of the project nurtured and developed a practice of designing participatory/applied performance workshops with teachers at the schools. In doing so, the research extends its perspective into identifying analogies between caring in teaching and the experience of designing caring participatory experiences as an artist-researcher. The methodology ultimately demonstrates what a caring ethos of doing research may look like, spanning all stages of conducting and writing about research, and what it feels like to be a caring researcher.

Care in this project speaks in the technical elements of performance, in time, space and body. The project suggests that care is a performance, an event and lived experience with temporal and spatial signification, which stretches however, the teaching subjectivity beyond the here and now. It argues for care as an experience nuanced and ambivalent in its temporality, between performing memory, becoming memory for students, and tenderly preserving the memory of past students, while envisioning and hoping for their future. Analogies and materialised metaphors of treating matter such as rock or paper with care explore the ambivalence of caring emotion in its embodiment, in its stillness or in its hardness. Considering therefore the psychoanalytic and political, feminised aspects of teaching, the project demonstrates how care in teaching is a complex experience which is often experienced by the teacher as a suspended form of care, a caring stillness, such as being a rock for their students. These textural and performative qualities propose a method of caring, poetic imagination for the understanding of the caring experience. They suggest that care provision is rooted in imaginative dreaming and should be interpreted and addressed as an embodied, artful practice with the demands of an artistic practice. The project ultimately argues that this aesthetic appreciation of care can nurture and support the caring experience of the teacher in the space of performance and participatory performance.

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I feel that a study on the lived experience of care should primarily acknowledge the caring worlds out of which it was born. I therefore honour all the lived ecosystems of care that informed and crafted my teaching and my artistic practice of care and self-care.

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Declaration:

The student grants powers of discretion to the School Librarian to allow the thesis to be copied in whole or in part without further reference to the author.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PROJECT

This research is an inquiry on the felt experience of teachers caring for their students. It is a project developed in a period of five years between 2016 and 2021 during which I was, as I still am, a primary school teacher working in permanent and supply posts while also being a practising performance artist and facilitator working in participatory/applied theatre. The project is inspired by and is the product of this experience coming from the position of a teacher with an often-drained subjectivity, being also a carer tangled within the webs and depths of my multiple caring roles that informed and interpreted one another. Although not initially setting out to do so, in a way, the project unfolds the story of a teacher eventually finding self-care in performance. This underlying aspect was ultimately echoing and tending to the widespread phenomenon of teachers' burnout, not with the intention to portray care as difficult, hard, or ugly, but to understand the more intimate qualities of how teachers experience feeling and providing care for our students. This was implying that behind the draining and burnout, feeling and practising care in teaching is an active state and form of practice that requires some sort of effort. It may suggest that the effort of care provision in teaching may look

and feel like an offering crafted with such 'care' that it can constitute aesthetic making.

This has drawn my attention to the aesthetics of care field considering that teaching might be understood better if explored in terms of aesthetics. By that I mean not only the beauty but also the textures, sensations, the embodied states of feeling care and the doing of caring practices at schools, that this research explores as aesthetic. My engagement with these qualities animates a form of experience that I call 'caring imagination', a way of drawing attention to the nuances of care to understand it more and support it, using the artistic means of performance. With this project, I propose that bringing performance together with care can imagine, and therefore visualise, activate, and embody the 'performative images' that care can produce and portray, and support teachers into connecting more to this experience.

My exploration expresses a focus on one side of the caring dyad, the teacher. This is not individualistic nor is it to undermine the importance of relationality, the importance of children, of the simultaneous and the attuning between the carer (in this case, the teacher) and the cared-for (the student). It is also not to state that the management and effort of care concerns only the teacher and is not a shared, co-created with the student(s) event, often with grace and

beauty. The project is thus, foregrounded on how relationships are rooted in and produced by the inter-relational and the social. Moreover, as care is always situated and context-related, this was a project coming from a particular point of view and the experience of a teacher who set out to understand her own experiences of caring for her students. It is a slice or a snapshot of (over)caring, and this standpoint is echoed as I was searching for hope and meaning in overcoming significant challenges with the progressive intensification of the role. Even more, the pandemic crucially shifted the ways of being on and off school and the usual routines of teaching and, evidently, of researching. Founded on the lived experience of caring as a teacher, it also often stemmed from a heightened sense of frustration between the ambivalences of care in teaching and the dominant discussions that only stress how rewarding teaching is, overlooking the realities of the job.

The questions this project asks are:

What is the felt experience of caring in teaching and how can artistic methods be used to explore and understand this experience?

Why it might be important to engage in aesthetic and participatory practices to support the labour of caring in teaching?

1.2 METHODS

The project evolved a methodology of performance making in parallel to my professional work as a teacher and brought together my multidimensional caring roles as a teacher, mother, artist. The methods sit in a practice with which I centralise the aesthetics of what it means and feels to care merging performance, applied performance, and uses of matter in installations and audio-visual work, as a self-devised, performative method of healing in performance and participatory work. In my practice I draw on the work of artists working in performance and visual arts and the ways that I am inspired by elements in their work that I see as caring, on navigating journeys of broad experiences of care, on caring maintenance of time and memory. In these works, I also consider actions and gestures such as caring touch, wrapping and holding, that explicitly or implicitly can be read as caring for others and the self, and which were important in the development of my own artistic research.

In the project I explore care through a series of performance practices, performance making of my own while reflecting on my own experience of being a teacher, working with teacher participants in

applied performance workshops, along with a social practice of observing and interviewing teachers.

My explorations in the studio would result into performances that often were for public audiences, presented in galleries, research events or on stage. Other performances were more intimate, happening at home or in walks in the mountains and evolved as an ongoing performance practice. Those private practices reflect a turning inward, and a quest for making meaning out of the struggles of the role of the teacher, also crucially marked by the pandemic conditions that affected the project with a substantial decrease in the research at schools during the lockdowns of 2020 and 2021.

From a total of twelve works of my performance practice, I have selected to discuss in this thesis works that crucially contributed to the project and the question on the felt experience of care: my public performances of *early works with paper* (2018), *CROWNING* (2018, 2019), and *PaperCare* (2018), which were a series of private and public performances with a focus on the emotional labour and the emotional landscape of teaching, the private performative practice with a *doll's house* (2021) which explores the notion of memory, time and hope in teaching, and the private, walking practice *Rock Walk* (2021), a performative exploration of finding self-care as a teacher.

These practices developed along with my applied performance practice in which I designed and delivered participatory workshops with teachers at schools. The series of workshops illuminated the importance of the aesthetic as perspective in understanding care in relational practices, as both teaching and applied performance are, as also the cruciality of the medium of participatory performance in creating shared, (self)caring experiences for teachers. Moreover, all these seemingly disparate practices related to each other in the way that they were designed or performed, which was *with* care, eventually illuminating care as a crucial aspect of the project's identification. Alluding to Jane Rendell's (2010) account on the relation between theory as perspective or as use, there was not only a theoretical perspective around care, but a form of use identified. Indeed, the thesis will extensively discuss how performing caring methods, designing and delivering interventions of relational approach, as well as the feedback from participants illuminated how the aesthetic can be important as principle for supporting the labour and overall experience of teachers' care as this is contextualised within the institution.

This use of care *about* caring teaching may suggest the application of set of qualities or principles onto something, in this case, *applying care to care*. And doing this in research could also be seen as disruptive,

moving beyond the contextual, resisting the absolutism of ‘reasoning’, ultimately allowing an unsettling of care, as we may know it.

Indeed, against what Michelle Murphy argues as “the conflation of care with affection, happiness, attachment, and positive feeling as political goods” (2015: 719). It may also suggest a form of re-examining or challenging even the “hegemony of textualism” (Conquergood 2002: 147) as the only way of doing research through ‘reading’ human experience, rather than feeling it. As such, it signals the relationship of the project to policy and the intensification of education. The materialistic and political conditions of care in capitalist societies that promote cultures of being independent instead of interdependent, are evident in the ways that this project explores the often impossible or absurd in care. It thus aims to understand the teacher as a figure susceptible to these variables, a figure rendered stable and permanent by the dominant discourse, however, emerging sensitive, tender, ephemeral, yet temporally persistent. Eventually, in precarious times of multifaceted crises, my conceptual framework of researching care tends to how the figure of the caring teacher or artist may sit in relation to post-anthropocentric calls for care, urgently posed by social and environmental agendas. And this echoes crucial questions on how to embody and model genuine care for the profound needs of our world while having to find hope in despair and uncertainty.

1.3 CONTEXT & ARGUMENT

In his influential paper “Towards an Aesthetics of Care” (2015), James Thompson draws analogies between participatory performance and care provision, to propose “...an aesthetics of care [that] could be orientated as much to institutional care practices as it might be to community-based theatre” (2015: 440). Indeed, a significantly growing body of participatory work related mostly to the health-care sector, employs performance methodologies to analyse and support the ways that care is performed by care practitioners. The latest years of intensification and the demands for care that profoundly climaxed with the pandemic, have expanded a performance field that explores and supports care in these settings. The field of care is broad and the employment of the expertise of performance in many aspects of care provision often offers exceptional results both in processes and productions, however, the absence of any similar initiatives around care in teaching is regrettable. It is in these areas of performance of care and the aesthetics of care that this research is contextualised in and the gap that it fills.

Teaching is often considered as a form of art, this offering an indication of the aesthetic nature or value that it carries. At the same time, the aesthetics of care field illuminates the aesthetics of the

ordinary in care (Thompson 2023, Saito 2022) while also allowing the beauty of the fleeting, the intimate and momentous to emerge.

Thompson suggests that “we need to know the experiences of care more precisely, in its different nuances and micro processes, from the perspectives whose lives are shaped by its importance” (2023: 154).

This then may also lead us to think about care in its provision, to allow an understanding of how care may be experienced by those on the offering side, in this case, by the teacher, as state and feeling that may eventually make their care for their students artful.

With this project, I argue that an aesthetics-informed perspective can advocate for the lived experience of caring as a teacher, and to do so, I explore and convey this experience through the aesthetic modes of performance. My engagement with the aesthetic is neither with the intention of utilising it for making students’ learning more effective, nor for creating aesthetic experiences inside the classroom. I argue for the aesthetic as my methodological framework for understanding and

exploring care as an intimate experience for the teacher, which is tenderly, aesthetically crafted for the student and offered to them. For this, I demonstrate how a landscape of teachers’ experiences of care (my own and shared by other teachers), as well the lineage of artistic practices that I draw on, inspired symbolic¹ ways of exploring care as teachers may feel it. These were expressed through performance making, often working with matter such as paper or rocks, and metaphors which seemed to convey how caring as a teacher feels like. Those metaphors used a language that was aesthetic, speaking about an experience which was complex to put into words. Stuart Wood argues that

Art-based research methods are valuable in situations where the topic of the research is difficult to put into words or to classify. [] The move from the unspeakable to the attempt to name is not a simple epistemological line. [] Artistic methodologies help translate the multiplicity as it acts on us, often without needing to name it. (Wood 2019: 75)

¹ The notion and use of the symbolic as it originates in psychoanalysis and the contribution of psychoanalytic thinking are often evident and have been crucial in this project. Carl Jung has argued about the importance of the symbolic life in the modern world: “We have no symbolic life, and we are all badly in need of the symbolic life. Only the symbolic life can express the need

of the soul – the daily need of the soul... Life is too rational; there is no symbolic existence in which I am something else, in which I am fulfilling my role, my role as one of the actors in the divine drama of life” (Jung 1976 § 627).

Similarly to what Wood suggests, it was often (only) through the artistic methodologies of performance that I could explore care and explain, or even, alleviate the intensity of it. It is in and through the essential concepts of performance in the notion of bodies, affect, memory, and how these may occur in care, that I claim that this intensity can be addressed and supported. With my exploration of these elements, what I argue is that the aesthetic can refer not only to the inter-relational of caring enactments, but indeed, because of it, to a self in fact marked, in-formed and shaped by the care they offer, as this happens and after it is completed. And this affirms the obvious, that care is also a work of time, yet, indicating its nuances in relation to the past or the future, to memory or hope. My performative autoethnography and work on installations and walks ponder on the intricate relation of care to time and the place(s) it happens and/or remains. This reveals something crucial, that this thesis proposes. That care should be conceptualised as event and examined as performance through landmark performance theory (Schechner 1985; Phelan 1993; Schneider 2011).

For example, it brings into focus questions², around what happens after-the-care has finished and how teachers may hold it as a feeling or memory outside of the classroom, often in struggle to let go, in a ‘stillness’ that may express care. The thesis explores how these struggles manifest in emotion and memory for the teacher and employs the device of stillness as a concept that can express the performance of teachers’ care in its embodied, affective, temporal configuration. We see then, care as management and navigation, a form of crafting from the side of the one giving, the teacher, and as a form of labour that can take many forms, emotional, affective, and what I suggest, temporal. In this way, the project tests linear discussions around education and popular understandings of how teachers may experience and provide care and proposes a more nuanced definition of the act of caring as a teacher. This challenges narratives that may address care as ‘natural’ or passive and illuminates that offering and experiencing care is an active, intense experience with aesthetic and political signification. Ultimately, I argue for caring imagination, this project’s approach for owning the vibrancy and even

² As this thesis explores, both in the artistic research, in works such as the performance series with paper (2018, 2019) and the *doll’s house* (2021), as well as discussions with teachers in interviews.

the poetics of teachers' care that nurtured the aesthetic explorations and the relational practices with teachers in this research. Therefore, participatory, applied performance is suggested for exploring and supporting teachers in their caring experience in and through performance, in labour and resistance, in struggle between loss and hope, between holding and letting go, an experience closely bound up with emotion, body and time.

³ As it will be demonstrated throughout the thesis, care is a hugely contested topic and the investment on it may often involve significant complexities, especially for those operating on the offering side of it, as carers, teachers, participatory performance practitioners and in any of the forms that care can take. It is maintained therefore that suggestions for caring practitioners or practices that can be caring for communities, without the equal consideration of the labour of those who provide this care, should be given cautiously as they risk favouring the one end of the caring dyad only, while affirming the culture of invisibility of care by ignoring the other, offering end. The need for initiatives that dare to look at the carer remains strong, especially in the post-pandemic times that accentuated the need for care. Eventually, all performance and care organisations and companies in any context of work, aim for supporting (better) care. But very few venture to do so by looking at the work that carers do and support it through performance.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE

As a model and provocation for the lived experience of care the study exemplifies a re-conceptualisation of care for sectors that care is provided showing that carers are also humans. While teachers are expected to shape the lives of the students, I demonstrate how teachers are also marked and shaped by their experiences of caring for their students. As similar models that address the performance of care in schools do not exist, the research followed closely initiatives that use performance as methodology of exploration and support in the contexts that care is provided³. My account extends this field by

Brilliant exceptions are the *Chimera Network* by Alex Mermikides, a leading figure in the field of medical performance and care and the *Performing Medicine* initiative by the interdisciplinary dance and music company *Clod Ensemble*. Both organisations explore care for the carers through performance models that support work in medical/health-care settings. Another, worth noting project was *Kicking Up Our Heels* (2019), an arts intervention project that employed one-to-one performance methodologies to support parents/carers of hospitalised children. I also follow artistic explorations of care in health-care settings, such as *The Sick of the Fringe*, intergenerational work and arts initiatives in care homes such as the work of *Magic Me*, and care initiatives in ageing performance (*Age Against the Machine* 2019), arts in health and wellbeing (for example *Arts and Health Hub* and *Culture Health and Wellbeing Alliance*), arts and the maternal, such as the *Desperate Artwives*. Also, events that explore broad questions around care, and imagining caring institutions

showcasing an original synthesis of artistic practices and a set of works on an experience previously unexplored through artistic means that reflect on and explore the aesthetics of this unique subject matter. It contributes to the applied performance field with an original practice of designing and facilitating workshops on care that create space and time for the reflection and support of the experience of teachers, a professional group that has not been researched in their experience of care provision through participatory performance. It, therefore, addresses a gap in two fields of literature, that of performance of care and the aesthetics of care. Seminal works in the field, *Care Aesthetics* (Thompson 2023) *Performing Care* (Stuart Fisher and Thompson 2020) and *Aesthetics of Care* (Saito 2022), do not include teaching in the service professions and experiences of care that they explore⁴. This is the area where I offer an original contribution with an account of the unexplored area of the caring experience in teaching, ultimately aiming to encourage and generate new ways of thinking around it.

through the arts, for example, the *Wellcome Collection's* 'Handle with Care' event (2018). See also my further discussion of *Live Art Development Agency's* (LADA) caring vision (Section 5.5) (For all organisations' online material, see relevant section in bibliography).

In doing so, the project also problematises the making of relational practices and socially engaged art, starting an important discussion around the caring labour of applied performance practitioners. In this way, it responds to Thompson's call for future care aesthetics and the "need for more detailed studies of how it relates to specific areas of practice" (2023: 154). The project, therefore, has also significance for socially engaged art, educational policy making and educational discussions, as well as the health and social care sectors.

⁴ It is worth noting that at the time of this thesis' submission an extensive issue on care was published: Baarle von, K., Cervera, F. and Grehan, H. (ed.) (2022) 'On Care', *Performance Research Journal* (Vol 27, Issue 6-7) which also does not include the case of performing care in teaching.

1.5 KEY TERMS

In this section I provide a description of a range of terms that this thesis employs or proposes for the exploration of teachers' care. From the diverse perspectives and definitions of care, my methodological standpoint leans towards more 'practised' perspectives of care that emphasize its labours and embodied affectivity. From the many definitions of this elusive topic, I find useful Maurice Hamington's inclusive definition of *care* with an inclination to its lived, material aspects:

Care denotes an approach to personal and social morality that shifts ethical considerations to context, relationships, and affective knowledge in a manner that can be fully understood only if care's embodied dimension is recognised. Care is committed to the flourishing and growth of individuals yet acknowledges our interconnectedness and interdependence.
(2004: 3 italicised in original.)

⁵ This is particularly important as it situates care onto its material context and not on abstractions. It suggests notions of repair to the invisibilities and injustices of addressing care as 'natural', emotional work (Federici 1975, Graham 1983). Moreover, Milton Mayeroff (1971) in his concise account on

Seminal voices in care discussions emphasise how drawing attention to the demands and realities⁵ of its provision can prevent care's romanticisation. Prominent philosopher of care, Joan Tronto, also states that "care implicitly suggests that it will lead to some type of action" (1993: 102) while endorsing Sara Ruddick's claim that

to avoid over-idealising care is to think about it in terms of practice. When we think of care as practice, with all the necessary of the component pieces, then we must take into account the full context of caring. To think of care as a practice rather than a disposition changes dramatically how easily care is contained [] Unless we also understand care in its richer sense of a practice, we run the risk of sentimentalising and in other ways containing the scope of care in our thinking. (1993: 118)

Ruddick's argument is important as it shows how thinking outside of the actual practices of care, does not support the understanding of care and can ultimately disconnect those providing it from their

care, investigates what we actually do when we care for others and the states of being in-care. Mayeroff also argues for the primacy of the process (1971: 41) in care provision and the "major ingredients of caring" (1971: 18) patience, alternating rhythm, hope, courage, and, knowing.

experiences. This is also crucial for care in teaching, an experience that is often sentimentalized, idealised, and moralised as an asset that teachers naturally possess and provide to their students.

The project studies care and is inspired by care in teaching in diverse settings and ages but primarily explores the caring experience of primary school teachers and teachers of younger children. In this thesis, a *teacher* is defined as anyone actively invested in educating, assisting, and supporting the overall development of students in educational settings. I do not necessarily limit the role to the title of the one person in charge of teaching and learning but include and embrace the many roles and positions of people working at these settings.

These may be teaching assistants, learning support assistants, one-to-one support, and other roles. In performing these roles, my provocation is that the teacher *is* a carer. This may indeed seem as a bold claim as teachers are not necessarily secured in the public discourse as carers. By that, I mean, what for teachers is their obvious reality, that caring for students' learning while tending to their needs, *is* care.

I will, therefore, use terms such as *teacher-carer*, *caring teaching* or *teacher in-care* to demonstrate care not only as the practice that teaching involves but primarily as an embodied, affective state that the teacher experiences. The offering of this experience to the cared-for, the

student, I understand as a form of crafting and active investment on provision, thus the use of phrases such as *care making*, *creating care*, *teachers making/doing care*. As such, my examination focuses on the experience of care in its 'creation', from the side of those providing it. I relate this 'creation' to the notion of aesthetics, the area of philosophy that considers the nature and principles of beauty.

What I mean, therefore, by the phrase *caring experience* is a perspective on understanding care that alludes to the phenomenological tradition, to explore the structure of this experience, as it is subjectively lived in its performative, affective and embodied configuration. This suggests the more intimate aspect of care, considering bodies and the emotional labour of the teacher as an embodied, lived effort of the caring subject concerning their feeling, expression, gesture, speech, crafting responses or performances which incorporate the needs of the other, tending to them. For this, I endorse Hamington's argument "[c]are is a way of being in the world that the habits and behaviours of our body facilitate" (2004: 2). This is what I emphasise with this project, a practised approach which illuminates the lived experience and labour behind care making and proposes a landing of thinking around care closer to bodies, affects and the aesthetics of their making.

It thus explores how the *caring event* manifests in the ‘here and now’, as event that is situated in space and time, in ‘spaces’ such as classrooms, as well as bodies, and may imprint them permanently with the memory of care that once happened ‘there’. Performance literature will be employed to explore the nuances of care provision, especially in its ‘remains’, as affective experience for the teacher who remembers, or re-‘collects’⁶, engaging in critical discussions around the nature of performances of care to the temporal, to the body becoming an archive of (caring) memory, to questions around what is lost after-the-care, what is forgotten and what remains. For example, the project’s performative practice with a *doll’s house* (2021) and “the housing of memory” (Schneider 2011: 99) it showcased, engages in an exploration of care and whether care, as performance ‘disappears’ and ‘cannot be saved’ (Phelan 1993), yet insists on “*perform[ing]* the service of ‘saving’ (ibid., italicised in original).

The project ultimately epitomises a paradox: although insisting on holding a position of (caring) stillness, it examines how care also stretches and extends beyond the here and now and becomes caring memory of the past and caring hope for the future. It does so by

employing a form of imagination that generates caring images that indicate the vastness of care in space and time for those who care for others. Indeed, Hamington confirms how care can transcend time and distance through imagining, since “[i]f all human caring were reduced to direct bodily experience, then care ethics would be parochial. Caring would at best be limited to those of whom we have direct knowledge” (2004: 64-65). Therefore, the notion of *caring imagination* that the project proposes, enacts a resistance to a rigid categorisation of methods imagining unexpected qualities and ways of exploring care, such as undoing instead of doing, hard instead of soft, stillness instead of moving in the frantic environments of schools. In doing so, the project acknowledges that care is always informed, shaped by and expressed through diverse practices and caring styles, indeed grounded in positionalities, intersectionality and injustices around who have access to it or who are expected to perform it for others. Caring imagination interrogates assumptions even challenging the anthropocentric, animate orientation of care. In this way it explores Fisher and Tronto’s account on “paying attention to our world in such a way that we focus on continuity, maintenance and repair” (1990: 40), proposing that care

⁶ As my artistic practice with the *doll’s house* (2021), managing collections and memorabilia from my teaching practice will demonstrate.

may even exist in props, rocks, and the fabric of rooms, and exploring how the inanimate may nurture care for the human. Caring imagination expresses therefore the claim for a possibility of dreaming, a crucial perspective in response to the epidemic of burnout and unsupported teachers. Caring imagination, I suggest, can be a self-caring method operating beyond what is known and affirmed that education is constantly after, opening to the space of possibility, claiming and preserving the utopic, embracing and caring for the fragility of living. This also challenges the temporal orientation of care and the sinister megalith of education that relentlessly chases (a) future, an implication of care's temporal orientation that Tronto (2003) reminds us of in "Time's place" and the "...privileging of the future over the past" (2003: 119). While teaching is about letting go and moving forward into the future, school year after school year, this project caringly imagines and performs an insistence to stay still. Waiting without moving, it performs a disobedience, it refuses to let care go and insists on sitting with the memory of it. The project engages in an extensive exploration of this stillness, in space and time. It, therefore, considers another form of caring labour, that of managing or enduring the often-troubled relationship to time in teaching, what I term as *temporal labour*. By this, I refer not only to the lived experience of advanced intensification in schools, but further to managing a relationship to

time and what time may signify for the teacher, the relation to memory, or the navigation of future while feeling, or not feeling, hope for students.

This central for the project strand of the notion of labour, in its emotional, temporal or physical aspects, illuminates the importance of *self-care* for teachers, as an underlying principle that ultimately manifested the relational culmination of the project with the workshops with teachers. Considering how unsupported teachers are, the notion of self-care becomes crucial, and this project understands self-care in its political dimensions. It critiques self-care as a product or performance that may express and support the wellness ideology grounded in capitalist societies and relates more to practices of the radical or imagining, claiming the alternative, the otherwise. Still, even self-care does not evade the context of productivity and may become part of the professional role, a responsibility solely placed on the individual. However, "[w]hen we conceive of self-care as an individual responsibility, we are less likely to see the political dimensions of care" (Crimethinc, online: 5). Similarly, as Sara Ahmed discusses Audre Lorde's revolutionary work and famous self-care proclamation, she argues:

[Lorde] defends self-care as not about self-indulgence, but self-preservation. Self-care becomes warfare. This kind of self-care is not about one's own happiness. It is about finding ways to exist in a world that is diminishing... [in] structural inequalities [that] are deflected by being made the responsibility of individuals. (2014 online)

Considering especially how teaching is among the professions expected to 'perform health' for others, in the context of the wellness ideology, it can eventually measure this health and well-being in terms of productivity. This signals the diminishing of the politics of self-care by reducing it on the individual level and commodifying its practices. Still, as Ahmed reminds us, self-care is relational, it is a practice invested on how "[w]e reassemble ourselves through the ordinary, everyday and often painstaking work of looking after ourselves; looking after each other" (Ahmed 2014 online). The project, therefore, embraces the politics of claiming radical self-care close to Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart and Kneese's definition as "...a set of vital but underappreciated strategies for enduring precarious worlds" (2020: 2), exploring performance as a medium for understanding the experiences and dimensions of the role, that being ultimately self-caring and caring for teachers' communities.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THESIS & CHAPTER OUTLINE

The thesis explores the questions through the findings of the artistic practice of performance making and participatory work, while offering extracts from the autoethnographic and social strands of the project, from observations and interviews. The works are not presented necessarily in the chronological order that they happened but organised around their thematic relevance. They are presented in an order of firstly discussing in detail the artistic research, followed by the exploration of themes generated by the practices. The thesis centralises the aesthetic in layout choices in the documentation of the performances and events, as well as examples of artworks and artists that I am drawing on. There is also use of reflective and poetic writing, material aesthetically arranged to be presented at conferences and public sharings, as well as extracts from diaries and notebooks, that highlight the intimate, autoethnographic nature of the project. This writing, italicised and signposted, often interrupts the text. This is used intentionally to resemble the constant interruptions that teaching especially young children entails. This overall curation was another layer of care for the research as it will be discussed in the process of analysis of findings. If we might seek for the story behind the structure

that this thesis performs or tells, we could perhaps sense it as a contraction, of a pulse or of a birth: a ‘folding’ inward, a ‘closing’ in materials and miniature spaces that Chapters 4 and 5 are operating, with a subsequent ‘opening’ to humans and vast spaces, in workshops and landscapes that Chapter 6 exemplifies. More specifically, Chapter 2: *Teaching and Aesthetics of Care* contextualises the project in critical and artistic means. I pose an account of teaching, care and the aesthetic, followed by a gallery of artists and artworks’ interpretations that I draw on and find relevant to care aesthetics. The chapter validates the importance of the aesthetic for the consideration of care in teaching and proposes the notion of the caring event, as crucial for this consideration. I problematise this concept with contribution from performance theory.

Chapter 3: *Methodology* provides a detailed account of the project’s multiple, interrelated aspects. Like taking a walk in a schoolyard it frames the margins of the project, its scope and limitations. Then within these margins, it unfolds, to discuss the methodologies of this multifaceted project in both its artistic and social strands as research doings, in which I was performing and embodying specific actions and qualities, such as performing stillness and prolonged waiting. Those were ultimately perceived – by me and, in some cases, by the participants – as caring. It organises the project’s aspects and doings by

counting, as children are taught at schools from an early age. The chapter concludes with the process of analysis as a care-ful managing of findings.

Chapter 4: *Performing Care in Stillness* employs the device of stillness to discuss caring emotion and caring bodies. Encountering it in this chapter for the first time, stillness manifests in all the explorations of the project as an essential element of the performance of care.

Imagining body and emotion in care as held still by institutional regulation, I discuss my early practices with paper (2018, 2019), and *CROWNING* (2019), a performance I created with a large golden ball on my head that I imagined as a crown. The works explore and illuminate the emotional labour of care, or carrying the load of care and how these labours define caring/teaching subjectivities. The chapter establishes my consideration of the intricacy and intimacy of the experience of caring as a teacher and examines the performativity of this affective experience that often speaks with feelings of ambivalence and frustration. Furthermore, it extends and advances the discussion on the notion of the caring event.

Chapter 5: *Performing Care in Persistent Time* continues the exploration of care in relation to time which is a fundamental concept in school culture. The chapter considers remembering and holding caring memory and experiencing hope for those we care for.

Featuring a previously published chapter on my performance piece *PaperCare* (2018), the chapter also discusses my practice with a performative installation of a *doll's house* (2021). It foregrounds an intimate exploration of what it means to embody care as a teacher in uncertain times and feeling failure as implication of the expectation to experience hope for our students.

Chapter 6: *Holding Space for Self-care* starts from the metaphor of the teacher's stability and reliability as 'caring rock'. Discussing my exploration of the notion, texture and shape of rocks and my practice of performative walking in rocky landscapes (2021), the part extends to a consideration of finding self-care as a teacher in the space of the paradoxical or nonsensical. Furthermore, it follows and reflects on the workshops that I created for teachers at schools to suggest alternative, caring modes of being and (un)doing in participatory performance.

It thus discusses another caring practice of stillness, waiting for participants to show up at the workshops, and how that was contextualised in the busy context of schools. Chapter 6 highlights the caring labour behind the making of applied performance and the importance of developing frameworks for also understanding this case of performing care in relational practices.

In supporting this approach, Chapter 7 concludes with a provocation for the maintenance, advancement, and exploration of the caring

imagination for a deeper understanding of the caring experience as this can be illuminated and supported in performance.

CHAPTER 2

ARTFUL TEACHING, ARTFUL CARE

2.1 TEACHING, PERFORMANCE & AESTHETICS OF CARE

In this chapter I will explore the notion of the aesthetic and how it may relate to care in teaching. My focus will be on what the public discourse promotes around teaching and how artful or not this may be, especially in a culture of intensification in education. I will argue that teachers tending to care demands that are persistently increasing at schools, may be disconnected from their experiences and intense labour that teaching entails. For this I will propose an aestheticized perspective of the experience of care in teaching as one that embraces this experience in its embodied and affective configuration. To do so, I will relate the aesthetics of care to the fundamentals of performance theory to suggest that a conceptualisation of care as performance and event can support a better understanding of the experience of care for teachers.

Teaching is associated with care and the duty of care is one of the first principles that a teacher meets with, as soon as entering

the profession. In a way, care can be seen as a ‘method’ of teaching. Different educational cultures and contexts, different age groups of students, learning needs and abilities, different styles of teaching and pedagogies do inform how teachers express care. However, an expectation of fulfilling the principle of care is fundamental in education. A teacher must be caring towards their students, and this is often seen as a form of skill that develops perhaps with professional experience or is already there as ‘natural’, but most of all, what makes teachers distinctive, and perhaps, unforgettable. In so doing, cultural and contextual complexities shape different needs and performances of care. The moral footprint of the profession is inscribed literally on law as well as in the collective consciousness: acts and constitutions confirm teachers’ moral responsibility to operate under the duty of care⁷ and take ‘reasonable care’ while safeguarding and promoting their students’ welfare. In the daily life of teaching, framing the margins of a teacher’s care is not easy. However, the teacher knows from experience that teaching is a work of integrating a synthesis of factors

⁷ See for example the safeguarding framework *Working Together to Safeguard Children* by the Department of Education, GOV UK(2023).

concerning their students, the academic in tandem with the physical, the emotional, the social, the spiritual, and how all should be caringly and roundly nurtured and developed. The pandemic saw the duty of care manifesting in previously unimaginable territories of teaching online while tending to the mental health of children isolated inside their homes. Public caring expressions of teachers towards their students made apparent how much teachers care for their students even when they are out of school. Perhaps for the first time, key, and front-line workers, and between those, teachers, became subjects of focus in governments' policies, public discussions, and collective performances of support. However, this did not necessarily mean that care workers are valued, but certainly led to the realisation of how needed, yet, unsupported they are. For teachers these controversies often stretch even further, with discourses that oscillate between extremes of praise and blame.

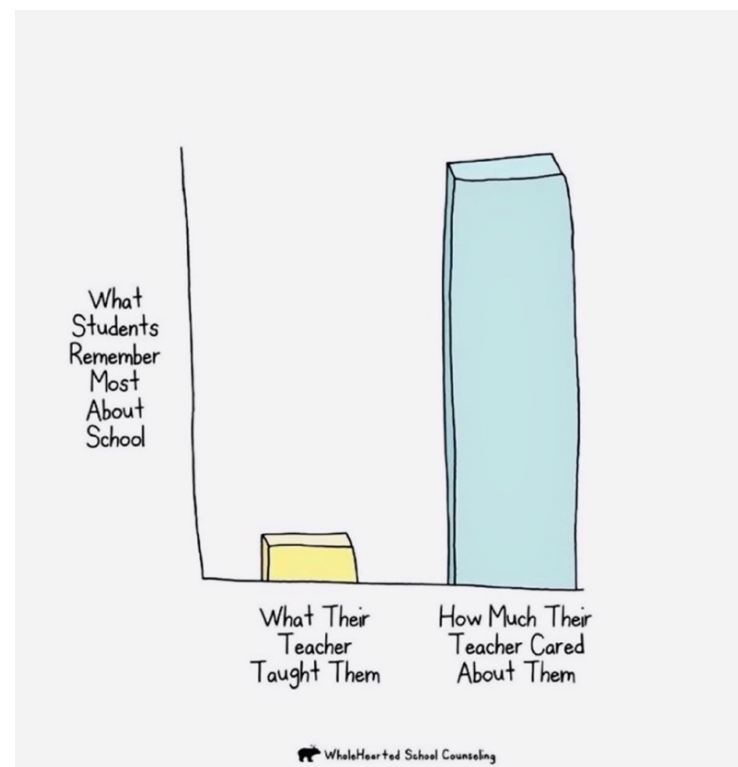


Image credit: *WholeHearted School Counselling* (2022) Facebook post 03/05.
Accessed 04/05/2022 at:
<https://www.facebook.com/WholeHeartedSchoolCounseling1/photos/pb.100052969098376.-2207520000./3075041952807465/?type=3>

The re-opening of schools with the lifting of the third lockdown in the UK in March 2021, found teachers stretched beyond any previous levels, while official inspector's Ofsted ex-head commented that "teachers should be prepared to sacrifice their lives"⁸. In the end of May 2022, the devastating news of the Uvalde school in Texas hit hard. Among the many children killed, two teachers also lost their lives. They were found embracing their students, using their bodies as shields to protect them from the shooting. Countless posts on social media called them 'heroes' while many people commented that they were already heroes, and they did not have to get killed for people to see that they actually are.

Teachers performing heroic care.

Another thing that is also going on as I am writing this thesis, is a generalised climate of unhappiness for teachers. Countless surveys and statistics in the UK and USA reveal how unsatisfied, burnt out, or

hopeless teachers are and the alarming rates of teachers leaving the job. Indeed, teaching is usually associated with safety and goodness, however, not always. The striking title of Emma Kell's (2018) book, *How to Survive in Teaching, Without Imploding, Exploding or Walking Away*, suggests that teaching may be dangerous, even life threatening for teachers.

Why? many may wonder. Perhaps, teachers are themselves in need of care? This is certainly evident in reports published on teachers' wellbeing that record alarming rates of depression and burnout in teachers⁹. At the same time, teachers' unions express a burning need for teachers to be left alone to do their job, to teach, without the intensifying intrusion of bureaucracy in all aspects of their profession. Big strike actions in 2023 in the UK showed teachers voicing those worries and claiming better conditions of work.

At the same time, schools are constantly self-conscious about their care provision as this is often linked to productivity and efficacy¹⁰.

⁸ Middleton, J. *Independent*, 26.02.2021.

⁹ See for example, Education Support (2022) *Teacher Wellbeing Index*.

¹⁰ And extensively researched as such. I draw on a broad spectrum of research and discussions around care in teaching. Among them, Jennifer Nias's (1989, 1999) whose landmark work provided a close social analysis of

how teachers understand their work, Barber's (2002), Vogt (2002) Goldstein and Freedman (2003) accounts on teachers' work, as well as more recent contributions of the use of feminist epistemologies and autoethnography on the caring work in teaching such as Langford's (2020) and Henderson's (2017).

Emphasising a ‘protectionist approach’ (Phillips 2007), care in schools is often consumed in the strengthening of policies and procedures, or even leaning towards the other end of feeding the stories of the educational panic around touch¹¹ in schools (Piper and Stronach 2008). Indeed, Pat Thomson’s (2020) latest book on scandals of school corruption can be read as a dark side of schools that want to hide their deficit of care behind neat images of order and effectiveness. Other recent publications on teaching¹² propose a better focus on the ‘emotional responsibilities’ of teachers. It could be suggested that these provocations indicate that despite the tremendous focus on supportive, caring approaches in education, something is not right, not enough, or unclear about teaching work and care. We see then that a multitude of controversial discourses on the level of efficacy, moral and professional obligation, that even extend to teachers’ salaries and

holidays, along with narratives and stereotypes around teachers that persist in many cultures and regions, seem to obscure what teachers do, or even, feel.

A set of societal, internalised beliefs, Andy Hargreaves has argued (1994: 13-14), judge teachers through romanticised views that do not allow seeing how teaching *is* also a job and intense caring labour. In this way, teachers may be disconnected from their caring experiences and not *feel* carers although performing intense care work, an experience ultimately overlooked¹³.

¹¹ At the very early stages of this project, I presented a contribution on this topic at the *Performing Care Symposium*, RCSSD, London (December 2016) with the paper ‘In Defence of Care and Intimacy in the Teaching Practice: What Performance Art Practices Can Teach to Teaching’ (Vasileiou, 2016). Find the presentation of the paper in Appendix III.

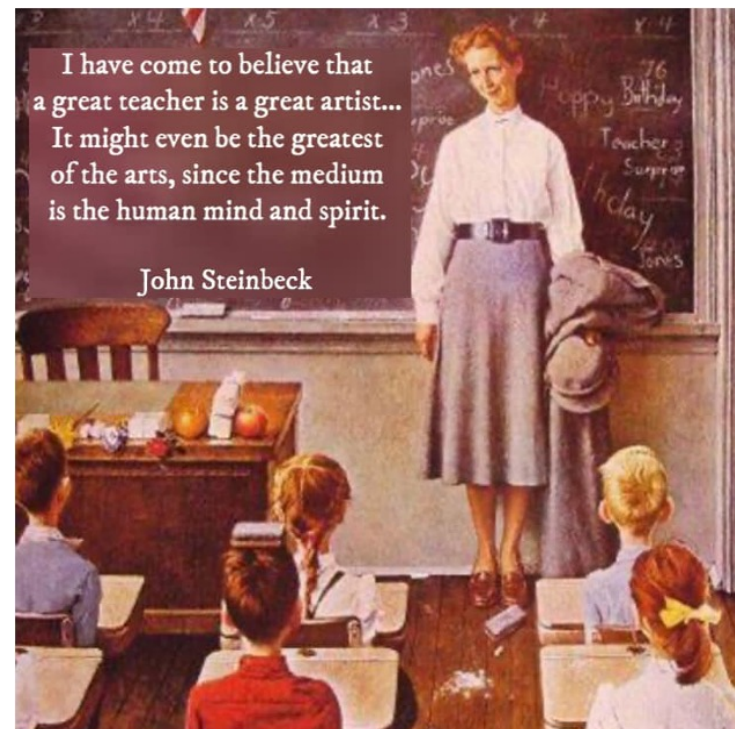
¹² See *Personal, Social and Emotional Perspectives for Educators* (2021) Bloomsbury Academic Education series (Soan, S., series editor).

¹³ Recent contributions of care scholarship such as those of Madeleine Bunting (2020) and Emma Dowling (2021) also confirm the overlook, undervalue, and misconception of care work. A rapidly deteriorating world inspires a growing interest in care initiatives that monitor care for equality

and social justice and propose it as radical suggestion for a fairer world. See for example the work of interdisciplinary and activist care networks: *Pirate Care*, *Care Collective* (and their *Care Manifesto* 2020), *Bureau of Care*, *Performance for Care*, *Ethics of Care* (for all organisations’ online material, see relevant section in bibliography). It seems that where care is in scarcity, that is a symptom of societies in sickness-and education now crucially considers the broader picture of darker aspects of the world that new generations will be called to respond to. See for example, Lysgaard, Bengtsson & Laugesen (2019) *Dark Pedagogy: Education, Horror and the Anthropocene* for pedagogies and educational perspectives that embrace an interest and care for environmental sustainability in the context of crisis.

Indeed, Ruddick (1989) suggests that collective human consciousness insists to ignore and bury the knowledge of its own preservation, that of care, while Joan Tronto also argues that “[o]ur understanding of care is fragmented in several significant ways” (1993: 112).

At the same time, the discourse around teaching often claims that ‘teaching is an art’, or that a teacher ‘shapes’ the lives of their students. Indeed, the aesthetic is applied on teacher training as technique and strategy for effectiveness in student learning¹⁴. It is used as the aspect of teaching that relates more to beauty than the technological, “that part that makes teaching an art form... a feeling process, which is difficult to translate into words” (Hall 1983: 15-16).



Artwork: Norman Rockwell. "Happy Birthday Miss Jones". *The Saturday Evening Post* (cover). 17/03/1956.

Image credit: *Garden of Bright Images* (2022) Facebook post 29/08. Accessed 30/08/2022 at:

<https://www.facebook.com/GardenofImages/photos/a.1528063010779631/3269761223276459/?type=3>

¹⁴ For example, see: Ramdhani, J. & Ramsaroop 2015; Pike 2004; Hall 1983.

This relates to the claim that beauty exists and *can* be found in the ordinary¹⁵ of the inter-relational. Especially that care “...offers a site where the ethical and the aesthetic are integrated and deeply entrenched in the management of our daily life” (Saito 2022). Current appreciations in the field of performance of care, explore the aesthetic qualities of care provision in relation to competence and eventually, artfulness (Stuart-Fisher and Thompson 2020: 7). We see therefore the aesthetic as measure for caring value and skilfulness, as form of knowledge that the carer/practitioner applies or develops with their care provision – and this affirms its practised aspect.

But what I will argue is that this provision can also be an experience intimate and/or internalised, a state, a feeling emotion that may not be necessarily expressed, yet can still be ‘present in the teacher’, very much performed, lived. Feeling care can also be remembering or worrying about students, it can be experiencing hope for them, or navigating the loss of hope. It may exist in the mundane or the troubling, in intimate and fleeting moments of care, in tying children’s

laces and helping them with their coats, in subtle caring touch, gestures and sounds. That indicates that caring in teaching can be an aesthetic experience. Thompson writes:

For an experience to be aesthetic experience, it seems to need a certain structure, an enhanced sense of crafted intent, a particular stimulus of embodied response or affective involvement, and a certain stand out feature which engages with some or all our senses in a way that shifts them from their usual axis (Thompson 2023: 31).

This suggests that the aesthetic can be a strong experience, one that even disrupts the, until now, coherent as we know it sense of the self, an experience of un-doing, resulting into a slightly or strongly disorganised, perhaps newly organised sense of the self; a self-re-structured. I propose that the re-structuring of the self is a work of aesthetic nature.

¹⁵ For example, John Dewey in his landmark examination of *Art as Experience* (1934) argues for “recovering the continuity of aesthetic experience with normal processes of living” (1934: 9). Moreover, Joe Winston, in his account of *Beauty in Education* (2010), prompts us to consider “...particularly beautiful moments in our lives as teachers” (2010: 133). Although Winston utilises the

aesthetic in education through artworks, I suggest that it may already be more accessible, already inside the classroom, crafted within caring teaching.

This is of course in line with the tradition of phenomenology that understands human subjectivity not as fixed but continuously produced by the embodied, lived experience (Merleau-Ponty 1962). This suggests not only the versatility of the caring subject but indicates the interdependent relationship to the care they create and the ways that care, as it is happening, constantly restructures the caring subject. The teacher then, may shape the life of their students, but what I will demonstrate with this thesis is that the teacher can also be deeply affected, marked by the experience of caring for them. As I consider the nature of these assertions, of ‘marking’ or ‘shaping’, I turn to performative¹⁶ frameworks to understand this experience. I am thinking what it may mean or feel like as care happens, as event that occurs with teaching. And as an event, I propose that care should be considered in its spatial and temporal qualities. Indeed, Thompson also suggests that care aesthetics should be linked to time and settings.

¹⁶ Although with important distinctions, Judith Butler’s (1988) account of gender as a social event and practice of stylised repetition, could demonstrate that care in teaching can be seen as an embodied iteration of acts and practices that are predominantly foregrounded on repetition. That the schooled subject is constituted and formed through a ritualised production of acts, a continuous process of reiteration of regulations and norms. What is not widely reflected upon though, is how this concerns not only the students but also the formation of teachers and their caring subjectivities. Indeed,

He argues that these are important factors in the experience of care “...working in and through people, extending and contracting the possibilities of body practices and one’s affective labour, and being realised in how they move, relate, and inhabit the places and times of their actions” (Thompson 2023: 133). Similarly, Amanda Stuart Fisher states that

it is impossible to conceive of caring practice outside the parameters of how it is performed. In this sense, care, like live and theatrical performance, exists only as a live encounter and within a specific juncture of time and space (2020: 7).

With my project I interrogate and extend these arguments further, to demonstrate that the experience is not only fabricated within the space and time where care is taking place, limited within the parameters of its ‘structure’ or formulation. I suggest that caring performances happen

Hamington (2012) has also applied Butler’s methodological approach on his consideration of care, as an extension of the performativity of gender. Hamington suggests that similarly to gender, care does not exist ontologically as a pre-existing essence, but as ongoing work within the caring relationship, which requires significant effort for the performances of care to be successful.

through caring imagination that “allows us to bridge the gaps between ourselves and unknown others... to traverse those distances and make caring possible” (Hamington 2004: 64-65). In the context of care provision in teaching, ‘bridging the gaps’ may then mean that the teacher is acting on something, is performing the *making of space, making of time*. We may then understand care as aesthetic force of re-producing, re-arranging experience in space and time.

My argument is that the making and crafting of care¹⁷ has (or is) affective configuration which produces new relationships of space and time – and this making or (re)producing of ‘structures’¹⁸ is aesthetic making. In this way, I suggest that we can understand care in its phenomenological, ephemeral qualities that produce similarly ephemeral caring identities out of these performances. My framework therefore illuminates care as not naturally determined but constructed, and this construction may be taking place “...under constraint, daily and incessantly, with anxiety and pleasure”¹⁹ (Butler 1988: 531). affective configurations, which constitute its performance.

This could also be true about care as a strong experience which lingers or expands in space and time through the affective power of the aesthetic for those experiencing it. Under these terms, we can understand care as aesthetic making but also aesthetic ‘happening’ to those performing it, according to Erika Fischer-Lichte’s (2008) interpretation of the aesthetic experience of performance that “...is shaped more by the experience of the liminality, instability, and elusiveness that pervades the entire event than by the attempts to understand it” (2008: 257).

I formulate therefore, the performance and event of care in both space and time, proposing that by ‘space’ in care we may consider how care unfolds, fills and marks with affectivities the physical spaces, by that meaning spaces such as classrooms, school buildings, but also ‘spaces’ of bodies filled with emotion. This suggests a spatial functioning in expansion.

¹⁷ For this project, in teaching and in applied performance practices.

¹⁸ For this conceptualisation I draw on practised models of research in post-modern understandings of how experience is contextualised in inter-relational structures and syntheses of elements, or as Mary Overlie (2016) defines them “materials” of working in practice. As I also discuss in

the methodology chapter, I draw on Overlie’s “SSTEMS materials” of space, shape, time, emotions, movement, story - even if not per se, however, as underlying axes that support the illumination of the experience of caring as a teacher.

¹⁹ I am borrowing Butler’s phrase on the performativity of gender.

I propose the same for the temporal dimensions of care: that the event of care departs from the present to temporally expand into the past as well as the future; an affectivity that overflows backwards and forward, remembering, hoping, worrying.

Thinking of space in relation to time, I suggest an embodied performance or manifestation that especially for this project expresses care, that of stillness: stillness can be suggested as ‘holding’ space and time, the holding of memory, holding caring feeling and emotion. An intervention of performing a ‘still’, unmovable response of a present relinquished to space, offered to time, fully absorbed, engulfed in the shape of space and time, can be, as I will show, a caring practice.

It was eventually applied upon care as event, in an attempt to ‘hold’ care, to keep it still and examine it, even if this is implying that care is perpetually moving, fleeting, and elusive in its unfolding in space and time.

But this brings us to a discussion that has crucial relevance here, the discussion around the ontology of performance and whether performance is only live or can be mediated, documented or re-enacted. Indeed, if we consider Amanda Stuart Fisher’s claim quoted above that “...care, like live and theatrical performance, exists only as a live encounter and within a specific juncture of time and space” (2020: 7), what does that say about the case of remembering those we cared

for, or worrying about those we have a duty of care for? How can we categorise and understand this experience, and do such performances constitute care or not, as they are projected into the past and future and not happening in the here and now? These are questions I will be returning to in the explorations of this thesis suggestion of care as event.

Of course, this relates to critical theorizations around the ontology of performance and what constitutes ‘liveness’ and ‘live’ performance, and the famous proclamations that performance disappears or vanishes. In this way, we should assume a particular resistance for the ‘here and now’ of performances of care to permit suspension for them to be examined. This will be an important point that the next chapters will explore, as it does not only constitute the subject performing care as a continuously disappearing subject, but it also affirms Rebecca Schneider’s assertion that the times that performance takes place “...are given to be multiple, layered, or crossed” (2011: 90).

Moreover, in the light of Schneider’s critical reflection on discourse around performance, ‘care’s place’ can as well be multiple and nuanced. This is indeed what this thesis will work with in exploring how artistic practices reflected upon these crucial elements of performance to consider the ‘liveness’ of care as performance and its ‘remains’.

Furthermore, care in teaching constantly imagines time and is imagined by time, it shapes and is shaped by time through practices and affects. While time in capitalist societies is constantly intensified and schools are increasingly affected by that, it is important to consider that a caring positionality usually involves for the teacher some form of temporal resistance. Tronto (2003) considers caring time in the context of intensification and remembering to argue: “Time assumes a different aspect from the standpoint of care. Time spent caring is not about mastery and control but about maintenance and nurturance” (2003:121). At the same time, schools and classrooms are buzzing sites of care filled with countless caring memories. Situated at a rather peculiar temporal point of carrying the past and proudly celebrating and remembering achievement on busy displays all around classrooms and schools, it could be argued that schools live in a merging of a constant reference to the past with a vibrant, messy, noisy present. At the same time schooling is ontologically orientated towards a/the future, something signified by what the child figure itself expresses as symbolic of the/a future (Freeman 2010, Edelman 2004). This may suggest the complexity of the temporal signification of the experience

of caring as a teacher. Feminist scholar Rita Felski, argues that our relationship to time can be aesthetic in nature as we imagine and feel it:

To envision the shape of time is to be caught up in the expansive reaches of a moral and aesthetic vision. And all are saturated with affect, testifying to time’s intricate alignment with the emotions. How we imagine time is not just a matter for speculation and abstract debate; it is tied to the flux of feeling, the heft and weight of the body, the aching prescience of our own mortality. Time knits together the subjective and the social, the personal and the public. (2002: 21-22)

This relation between the affective and the aesthetic that Felski proposes, may suggest things for the caring experience. Teachers think about their students when out of school and their care endures ‘after care’ has finished as event, indeed in a saturation of memories, and often worries. We see therefore, the teaching profession involving another complex relationship to time under the assumption that ‘care exists only in the present’²⁰: teachers ‘carry’ or extend the caring feelings for their students at home, may wake up at night thinking and

²⁰ In analogy to Peggy Phelan’s famous phrase that “[p]erformance’s only life is in the present” (1993: 146).

worrying about them, and all teachers know that ‘once a teacher of students, you are a teacher for life’. It also points to the experience of maintaining a relationship to a (caring) past: how a recollection of care and the teacher remembering their students may create affective and aesthetic expressions (and, as I will show in Chapter 5, an aesthetic relationship to the material, to objects, ephemera, and memorabilia). We could then assume that care beyond the ephemerality of its present becomes a performance of caring memory to “restage and restate the effort to remember what is lost.” (Phelan 1993: 147). We see that in the performance of care, it is important to consider the experience of caring that endures and what it may mean for care when Phelan argues that performance outside of present “becomes something other than performance” (1993: 147).

This is not without acknowledging that considering care as event and performance creates complexities. The problematics of liveness and what constitutes a live event or recording, and reenactment would apply here too. They also suggest a consideration of what constitutes real, instantaneous time, proposing the problematization of care as phenomenon related both to materiality (as I will show of bodies,

objects, space) and temporality. But I also suggest how a consideration of space in relation to care is important in the illumination of its aesthetics. The psychoanalytic, phenomenological work of Gaston Bachelard (1958, 1971) illuminates the poetics of space in ‘topoanalysis’, the study of sites of intimate lives (should we similarly talk about a ‘topoanalysis of care?’), while an emblematic phrase of psychoanalysis, that of Donald Winnicott (1953, 1971) talks about ‘holding space’²¹ on caringly accommodating, bearing, and nurturing the experience of the other.

Drawing on these perspectives, I advance and explore the notion of the ‘caring space’ artistically working with the notion of care in the forms of the house, the spaces of workshops that I claimed and prepared or transformed, and spatial, performative practices of wrapping. These also indicated ‘caring stillness’, as intentional, caring expression through absence of movement, holding movement, a stillness that manifested in all stages of this project: care-fully listening and staying still in observations or waiting for participants in workshop spaces, discovering stories of care in the stillness of a doll’s house and still mountains of rocks. Staying still: being there, waiting, holding,

²¹ Winnicott (1953, 1971) initially talked about ‘holding environment’ to describe the environment of ‘good enough’ parenting. Winnicott extended

these assertions into an analogy between parenting and the therapeutic relationship.

enduring. Suggesting it through my public and private performances, practising it in the participatory workshops, stillness was in the project an alternative caring performance at schools as busy, frantic places.

These were practices of the project that considered the ‘spaces of this stillness’: teachers’ bodies as ‘archives’ and ‘stages’ of care that the caring discourse is projected upon. I reflect on how -or if- we could imagine them ‘empty’ from the caring stories they carry.

Indeed, in her systematic analysis of the ‘materials’ of performance, Mary Overlie (2016) prompts us to consider this aspect of the ecology of performance: “Cleared of the clutter of plays [], what remains onstage?” (2016: 5). And I similarly consider what may remain from the care as this happened and is finished or complete²²?

Even more, I ask, can these ‘remains’ be held, with care? In this way, I explore questions about what it feels like ‘after-the-care’: the intense affectivity of the classroom, still lingering after the students leave at the end of the school day, to feel what is ‘left behind’. This suggests that thinking around performance suggesting that performance does not disappear but moves and shifts across bodies and matter, often

demonstrated through the human need and habit to keep remains, pertains to performance of care in teaching. Indeed, Schneider argues:

Privileging an understanding of performance as a refusal to remain, do we ignore other ways of knowing, other modes of remembering, that might be situated precisely in the ways in which performance remains, but remains differently? (Schneider 2011: 98).

The complexity and peculiarity of these experiences as performances of care in teaching will be explored in the next chapters to consider what may be lost and disappearing in care, and what ‘still’ remains after-the-care.

²² In Chapter 3, I explore further the notion of completion in care as a form of performance relating to affect and space.

2.2 MAKING ART WITH CARE

Having outlined the theoretical and critical frameworks that informed my project, I now turn to the artistic contextualization. In the section that follows I present a collection or curation of artworks and artists that I draw on with this project. These are works in performance and in visual arts, showcasing practices of wrapping, folding, maintaining, collecting, or immaterial doings of working with time, such as spending time and enduring it. Although not necessarily intended or considered as caring, or having care as their subject matter, it is my own reading of these works that identifies these artistic practices as examples of artful care towards humans and non-humans, that ultimately express the aesthetics of care. But I also want to suggest how the collection and recollection of these practices, visiting, revisiting, and putting them in dialogue, was also a caring practice of staying with them and listening to them as another caring world that nurtured this project.

Scenes from this world include:

Caring performance: The one-to-one performance work of Adrian Howells and how it teaches the artful ethics of holding and touching, while *Fevered Sleep's* show 'Men and Girls Dance' (2016) showcases the caring and ethical in participatory work.

Caring maintenance: The groundbreaking work of Mierle Laderman Ukeles that valued care work, illuminating the aesthetic behind caring maintenance, and (re)claiming the aesthetics of the mundane.

Performing time, enclosing: Tehching Hsieh's work, in which he encloses himself in a cage or ties himself with another artist in durational works that last a whole year, while Thodoris Trampas stays enclosed in a glass container to manage his relationship to a rock.

Wrapping: Janine Antoni who wraps herself in paper and engages in a physical dialogue with paper, that often looks like caring for the paper or the paper caring for her. Do So Huh's fascinating installations that hold the memory of homes and spaces by replicating them on paper or fabric that he laboriously rubs with coloured pencils, to imprint the event and time of existing somewhere. The famous, colossal work of artists Christo and Jeanne Claude, who wrap in fabric landscapes and monuments.

(Re)collecting: The works of Louise Bourgeois and Ishiuchi Miyako who caringly collect the items of loved ones (in both cases objects belonging to their mothers), and how they make this (re)collection artful. The caring maintenance and/of archiving, the relationship to the care that belongs in the past and how to caringly hold what remains.



Do Ho Suh rubs paper lovingly and patiently to give form and shape in the time he lived in the apartment. The careful touch can be seen as an embodied constitution of being, a proof, a memory, an imprint. The rubbing can be suggested as (re)producing, (re)making time, the time that he lived in the apartment by showing the layers of time on the appearance of the room. The work illustrates the embodied caring effort to keep the memory, a helpless attempt to care for that which is destined to fleet and escape our grasp.

[Reflection]

*...I similarly and lovingly rub papers with erasers, tables, books, children's shoulders.
 If only my rubbing could pause my care in time and capture its fleeting existence.*



Do Ho Suh in *Rubbing/Loving*, at the New York apartment where he lived and worked for eighteen years. Production still from the series *Art21 Exclusive*. © Art21, Inc. 2016. Cinematography: Ian Forster.



Janine Antoni rehearsing *Paper Dance* in collaboration with Anna Halprin, 2015.
 Photo: © Hugo Glendinning, 2015. Courtesy of the artists.

Janine Antoni performs with long rolls of brown paper and physically improvises with it.

We see the artist being enveloped into the massive amount of paper, struggling to manage and at the same time resigning to its embrace. The piece evokes an ambivalent sense of struggle, however strangely satisfying; the paper is unmanageable but still safe and comforting. Ambiguous roles as we don't know who is the protagonist, however, interdependent, as we often see Antoni holding the papers caringly.



Louise Bourgeois's practice spans the mediums of sculpture, knitting, sewing. A substantial part of her work deals with maintenance and repairing as forms of care were inspiring for the practices of my project. She collects objects and from loved ones to caringly keep their memory and primarily explore her relationship to them.

Especially Bourgeois' artistic preoccupation with the notion of waiting and the work *Lady in Waiting* (2003), a stitched female figure with spider legs coming out of her stomach, made from the same fabric as the chair she is sitting on, dissolving into it, waiting motionless inside a glass cell, timeless. The practice of waiting in participatory workshops and observations and my performance practice with stillness manifested crucial insights for the project.

Left: 'Cell VII' (1998). *Louise Bourgeois: The Woven Child*. (2022) [Exhibition]. Hayward Gallery, London. Right: *Lady in Waiting* (2003) Images by Christina Vasileiou.



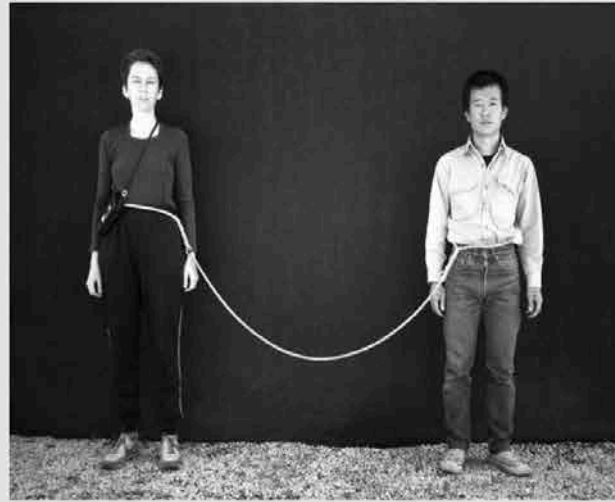


Adrian Howells 2012, *Foot Washing for the Sole*. Photographer: Hisham Suliman

Adrian Howells's one-to-one performances aestheticize practices of caregiving, touch and intimate communication, concepts that are also common in teaching. Howells's performances explore wordless confession and burden relief, actualised through touching and holding.

The ethics and aesthetics of Adrian Howells's one-to-one performances, informed the participatory practice of the project, often one-to-one as participants could only access the workshop space individually due to staff shortage and significantly demanding schedules.

These works "...were ultimately conceptualised on the basis of a mutual vulnerability for the participant and the performer that could not lead to generating connections if not based on trust and safety... [] By drawing [] parallel[s] between the teaching practice and core concepts of the one-to-one performances of Adrian Howells as exemplary cases of creating intimate and caring connections between people on intellectual, emotional and physical level, [the] values of his work can support teachers and students within the classrooms, as human beings with not only minds but with bodies and feelings as well." (Vasileiou, 2016).



Left: "Punching the Time Clock". *One Year Performance 1980-1981*, New York. Photograph by Michael Shen. Courtesy of Tehching Hsieh.
 Middle: *Art/Life One Year Performance 1983-1984*, New York. Detail from poster 11x17 in.. Courtesy of Tehching Hsieh and Linda Montano.
 Right: *One Year Performance 1978-1979*, New York. Life image, photograph by Cheng Wei Kuong. Courtesy of Tehching Hsieh.

Doing Time - Tehching Hsieh

Hsieh's work can be seen as the making of artful time, a labour of time. In a way, it manifests an impossible act, that of capturing time. As Adrian Heathfield's writes: "Hsieh makes a sacrifice: he gives excessively. He gives his time to the work of art and forms this gift as a giving" (Heathfield and Hsieh 2009: 32). I wonder if Hsieh's extraordinary preoccupation with time demonstrates how he may indeed care not only about time, but *for* time. Perhaps this is how the caring experience manifests within the self, especially when caring for young children that grow very fast.

"The work is only about the now. If you don't have present, you cannot have past or future.

Work [is] not about endurance or pain, not to make life difficult but clear as possible. Meticulous documentation.

Kept himself to himself. Continuous state of alienation.

The structures of your life are a prison. Work remained marginal, overlooked, devalued (I note, as care is).

Status: unlikely to be believed, so he became his own archival machine."

(Researcher's notes taken during a live discussion between Hsieh and Lois Keidan (LADA director at the time) at *Art Time, Life Time: Tehching Hsieh* [Public Discussion]. TATE Modern 02.12.2017.

ON WRAPPING

Practices of wrapping manifested in the project as performative attempts to hold the moments or memories of care.

My performative improvisations with materials such as paper and my performative autoethnography with a *doll's house* (2021) installation explored notions of temporality in relation to care through wrapping.

Workshop participants engaged in practices of wrapping that evoked caring and comforting feelings for them as they shared.

Wrapping practices were also common in my observations at schools with students with special needs (SEND) or with profound disabilities (PMLD), while swaddling has been a practice of caring for infants for centuries. This inspired an interest in artworks and artists who have used similar methods to explore what wrapping may suggest or imagine for care.

Artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude have created iconic works by wrapping buildings, natural landscapes, humans.

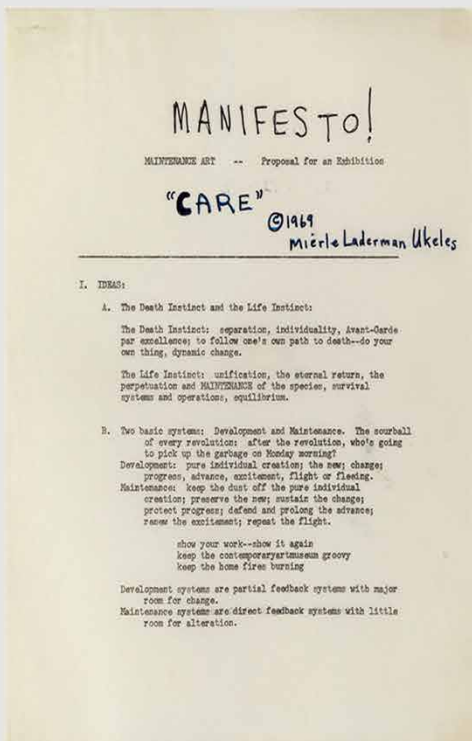
“There is nothing abstract. Everything is there. It’s corporeal, it’s tangible...The culmination [...] reaches its climax at the very moment when the package is no longer an inanimate object... but a human being... [] And this vital, magnetic moment becomes at the same time a negation of movement of their bodies. They [...] themselves become bodies suspended in a state of transit between past and future. Christo [...] freez[es] a fleeting moment of life, taking a snapshot of a moment that was and will never be again [] immortalized in a fraction of a second, in which time, becomes infinite.” (Giovanelli 2019: 88-89)



Christo wrapping model Ruth in Charles Wilp's apartment, London (1963). Still from Charles Wilp's film, 1963. Image from: *Christo Femmes 1962-1968* (2019: 89)



Christo and Jeanne-Claude (2021) *L' Arc de Triomphe Wrapped*, Paris. Images by Christina Vasileiou.



Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *MANIFESTO FOR MAINTENANCE ART, 1969!*
Proposal for an exhibition: "CARE", 1969,
 Written in Philadelphia, PA, October 1969,
 Four typewritten pages, each 8 ½ x 11 in.
 © Mierle Laderman Ukeles. Courtesy the
 artist and Ronald Feldman Gallery, New
 York.

The project draws strongly on the (self) proclamation of the aesthetics and the artistic value of the overlooked experience of women's caring maintenance work and the ways that the important heritage of feminist art originating in the 60's and 70's demonstrated this value.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles in her *Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969!* *Proposal for exhibition C A R E'* (1969) states:

"Everything I say is Art is Art. Everything I do is Art is Art.
 'We have no Art, we try to do everything well' - Balinese saying".
 Ukeles's work is ground-breaking for centering the carer, mothers and domestic workers, sanitation workers, and those who provide and do the invisible caring work that sustains the world.

This suggests a crucial standpoint in the evaluation and appreciation of caring maintenance work *as* art. It illuminates radical perceptions of who can be an artist, if a carer is an artist - and for this research, the persistent rigidity of the teacher not considered an artist although constantly being asked by the dominant discourse to 'shape' lives in a job that is often considered a form of 'art'.



Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Washing / Tracks / Maintenance: Outside,*
 1973. © Mierle Laderman Ukeles.
 Courtesy the artist and Ronald
 Feldman Gallery.



Fevered Sleep, *Men & Girls Dance*, Malmö 2018. Photo by David Thibel.

FEVERED SLEEP's participatory performance work explores questions around our shared humanity in caring, tender ways.

Men & Girls Dance (London 2018 & 2019, Brighton 2016) brings together a fragile subject with generous amounts of care that result in a particularly rewarding and releasing experience for the audience. As an audience member, and having seen the show three times, I could not escape the feeling of been cared for just by experiencing the show.

As the piece openly showcases its creative process, partly choreographed and partly improvised, we are also able to access fully exposed its 'ethics of caring making'.

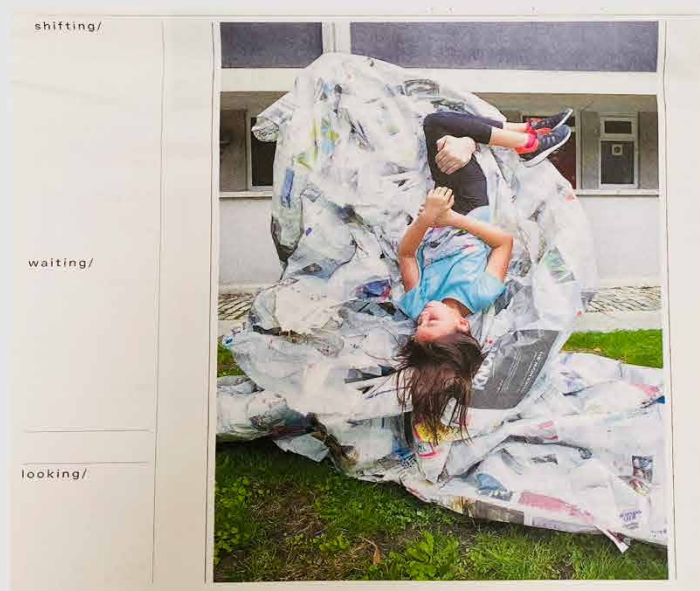
The risks of making participatory performance work take shape and form in *Men and Girls Dance*. The touching, the lifts, the embraces, the chases, giggling and screams, can all be suggested as metaphors and performative interpretations of the risks, stumbles and falls of doing participation in performance. The ingeniously caring ways of addressing, or overcoming these challenges reveal the piece as a study in the ethics and the showcasing of participatory work.

The aesthetics of the show could also be seen as relating to schools and school life, in all its (paper) messiness, disruptions, and also richness in the moment to moment connection between man and girl, teacher and student. This connection is actualised in the show as a form of witnessing, revealing the importance of 'seeing' the other in all their detail, giving the time and investing on noticing everything about them, as a form of care-ful intimacy.

Ultimately, the piece (re)claims and praises positive touch. Leaving out, perhaps intentionally, the challenging moments or failures in the interactions of adults with children, the piece becomes a celebration, a platform of voicing the joy and love of being with children. In a way, it offers a critical view of what it means to be with children, and radically interrupts narratives that focus only on the challenges of being and working with children.

(Researcher's notes on the show 26/04/2019)

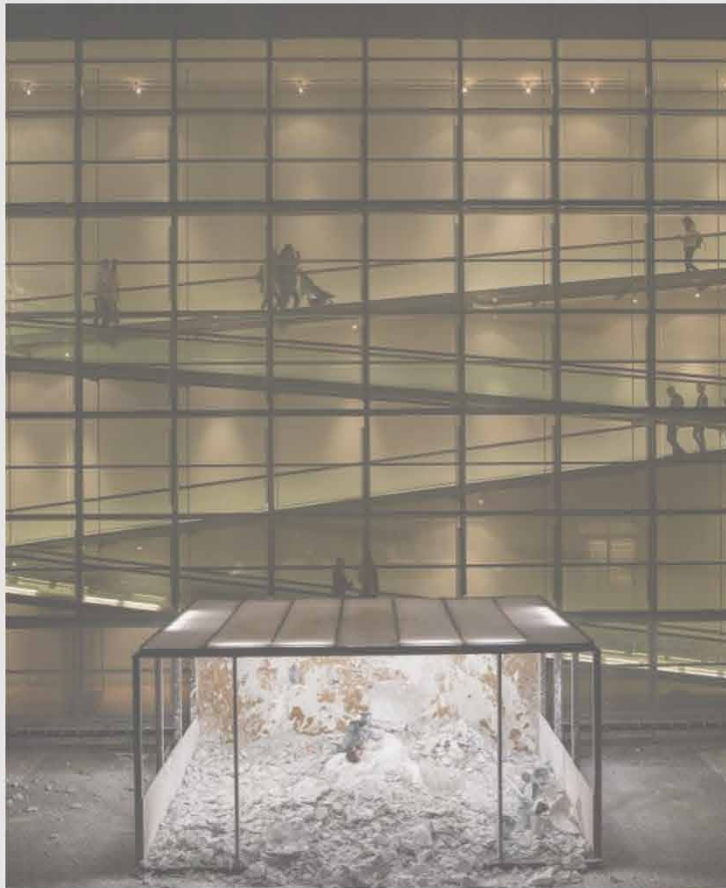
Image from
Men & Girls Dance
Newspaper, London
Edition (2017).
Ed. David Harradine
& Sam Butler.
Photography by
Karen Robinson.





Left: *Mother's* #36 [lipstick]. Right: *Mother's* #57 [shoes]. From the series *Mother's* by Ishiuchi Miyako (2001, printed 2005). Gelatin silver print.
Dimensions: Framed: 11 3/4 × 7 1/4 in. (29.8 × 18.4 cm)

What does it mean to hold loving memory? **Ishiuchi Miyako** uses photography as a means of processing grief and preserving memory. The work *Mother's* (2001-2005) manifests a caring, tender approach of photographing the belongings of a loved one, connecting the past and the present, capturing the traces of time's passage and the lived experience of holding memory. Remembering and pondering on care's 'remains' with grief and/or hope were crucially explored in the artistic practices of the project and especially the doll's house (2021) practice.



Thodoris Trampas (2016) *Pangea* (Long Durational Performance Documentary). Dir. John Nikolopoulos. Benaki Museum, Athens, 10th March -24th April 2016.

“There is something caring about performance making. You have a task to complete in front of you and you devote yourself to it. In those moments nothing else matters. You enclose yourself in the care of the performance task, you dive into it.” (Trampas 2016)

Trampas illuminates the caring aspects of performance making and how the artist relates to the work and allows a trusting surrender to it. His durational piece *Pangea* (2016) involved a (caring) relationship to matter, waiting, staying with matter for long, that I strongly draw on in my performative practices of waiting and imagining the relational and (self)caring experience by/with rocks.

Rocks that I find comforting, even caring to gaze at in the works of Wolfgang Laib and Per Bak Jensen. The notions of imagining care in paradoxical ways, allowing the images of care to emerge was epitomized in the performative *Rock Walk* (2021) that illuminated the relational and caring of matter and demonstrated what care can look and feel like beyond the anthropocentric.



Wolfgang Laib (2016) *Brahmanda*.
Black granite, sunflower oil, and black smoke
26 × 26 × 39 3/8 in. 66 × 66 × 100 cm



Per Bak Jensen. *Vandresten (Wandering Rock)* 2008. 32 x 34 cm. (12.6 x 13.4 in.)

In the chapters that follow I discuss the project as it unfolded through methodologies that draw on these practices. I am reflecting on why these works have been so crucial for me, what is it that they resonate. Although spanning different mediums I identify their between relationships and their overlaps. I see them as practices of caring holding, keeping something (still) in place in the personal or collective memory, as tender attempts to deal with caring memory, in a way as archiving or holding the memory of care, the time that something existed - that even being grief of/for care. They show me an insistence to remember or negation to forget, and that “remembering is an ethical act” (Sontag 2003). They even teach me that matter and material things, such as paper, or immaterial concepts such as time, can be caring. That the roundness and soft curves of rocks, their laborious smoothening, stillness and timelessness could also suggest a smoothening and refinement of emotion in the labour or burnout of caring for others. That the unbearably ephemeral existences, that once were there, once cared for someone, for something, may still be here-somewhere. That the care offered, endures. I provide an account of these caring efforts as the methods this project in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 THE RESEARCH

In the following sections I present the strands of the project and the practices that each entailed. In doing so, I provide a concise account of the synthesis of methodological frameworks and traditions that comprised this project's tending to the caring experience of teaching. These frameworks and traditions shaped the particular perspective of the project as a synthesis of (performative) autoethnography and practice-as-research (PaR) under a phenomenological standpoint, and social and participatory artistic research, with observations, interviews and workshops with teachers. The chapter not only discusses the project in its details but also engages in a meta-reading of the research to understand the effort behind it and make a case for it. It thus advocates for the labour that the project entailed and seeks to establish the research in terms of the time, emotion, waiting and all the practices of care that it entailed in its conducting. Ultimately, the project evolved a caring, tender treatment towards all its aspects, what I describe as a meta-caring perspective, apparent in the creative, poetic approaches to testify for it.

3.1.1 THE PERFORMATIVE AUTOETHNOGRAPHY & THE PaR

My involvement with care developed a careful, painstaking engagement with and reflection on lived experience, a phenomenological inquiry seeking “to reveal more fully the meanings and essences of human experience” (Moustakas 1994: 105). Doing phenomenology started from and stayed with the personal while engaging in a dialogue with the caring worlds of others, often in messy or fluid experiences. My phenomenology related to what Linda Finlay calls ‘postphenomenology’ that is “representing our ambivalent, fragmented, multi-colored lived worlds” (2012: 32). Starting from principles of Merleau-Pontian (1968) phenomenology, my approach revolved around the aesthetic or the poetic in phenomenology, the development of ‘poetic sensibility’ (Ashworth quoted in Finlay 2012: 27) and poetic imagination as stimulated by my readings of Gaston Bachelard’s (1958, 1971) works. Max van Manen has also affirmed that “phenomenology, not unlike poetry, is a poetizing project” (1990: 13), while Finlay describes phenomenology as ‘magical’. She states: “[t]he magic comes when we see ordinary, taken-for-granted living as something more layered, more nuanced, more unexpected and as potentially transformative; when something is revealed out of the *extra-ordinary*” (Finlay 2012: 33 emphasis in original).

There was, indeed, something poetic in the endeavour to identify *and* imagine the aesthetic in care. My approach engaged performative forms of appreciating lived experience under a framing of autoethnography (Spry 2010). Ellis and Bochner (2000) state that autoethnographers “ask their readers to feel the truth of their stories and to become coparticipants, engaging the storyline morally, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually” (2000: 745). Reflecting on my experience and asking what caring as a teacher feels like, I kept logs and diaries to report and reflect after specific incidents at work. I was noticing the role of my body, which parts of it I use more to express care and which less, monitoring my gestures and tone of voice. I also became more conscious towards moments that I might touch students to express care or when they touched me. Registering my caring thoughts and emotions as they generated and unfolded, I monitored difficult emotion such as feeling anger, guilt, despair in teaching, or the effort of not fully expressing other strong emotions such as love. In this way, I noticed my suppression of feelings as a system that regulates my experience of the work. I monitored the times that I think about students when not at school. I engaged in an inquiry in relation to my caring feeling when remembering former students, to my frustration when not being able to remember, as well as reflecting on what thinking about the/their future makes me feel.

Drawing on these autoethnographic approaches, the subject matter of my artistic practice was the felt quality of care: the emotion and mental load of care in the intense workload of teaching, the embodiment of feeling and enduring care within classrooms; other ‘compressed’ caring ‘areas’ such as caring bodies and skin; the felt experience of time when ‘making’ caring patience, in repetition and interruption in classrooms and the temporal qualities of caring affectivity when teaching finishes. I browsed presents, drawings and other ephemera offered to me by students as expressions of their feeling towards me and engaged with these collections often making art with these items. My self-reflections often spoke in visualised metaphors of scale, matter, texture and volume, movement and stillness. With the uncertainty of the pandemic, I often turned to the non-human or material to understand the humane in care, finding something humane and caring for me. My process did not necessarily start with the intention to result into ‘product’ or with a specific hypothesis, but with an urgent sometimes need to manage and process embodied, affective experience which was channelled into performance action. My performances *PaperCare* (2018) *Crowing* (2018, 2019), *Transfixed* (2018) the practice of walking in rocky landscapes (2021), my preoccupation with a performative installation of a doll’s house (2021) and my experimentations with the textural qualities of paper and rocks, were indeed processes and inquiries on

felt experience as ways I invented to navigate the experience of caring as a teacher. Testifying for the “performance-sensitive way[s] of knowing” (Conquergood 1998: 26), my artistic practice supported me in the processing of my experience of care through a PaR that was eventually self-caring. Brad Haseman (2007) has stated that “artistic praxis is ‘performative’ in that it impacts upon us, does something to us, changes us in all manner of ways” (quoted in Nelson 2013: 56). My artistic practice mobilised for me ways of understanding care which in time affected my life, supported the emergence of my artistic identity, and informed my teaching practice.

In this process, what I understand as interconnection between life/care, research and art making, does not know any hierarchies between states. Tami Spry crystallises this by arguing that in performative autoethnography emotion, experience, aesthetics, are interdependent upon one another, responsible to one another, liable to one another to represent the complex negotiations of meaning between selves and others in power laden social structures. *Here art is not a reflection of life, they are, rather, answerable to one another* (2011: 110,

emphasis in original). Therefore, my conceptual framework of care advanced models of aesthetic practice drawing on systems that understand life and art as inextricably connected. Performance was the lens that exposed the embodied, affective experience of care looking into the aesthetic language of bodies, feeling, expression.

Performance²³, as a tool for examining social behaviour and structures has also been related to institutions and embodied cultural production within them. Such systems are provided by the work of Richard Schechner (1988, 2002), Marvin Carlson (1996), and interpretations of socially observable human action by Ervin Goffman’s (1959) analysis of the ways that we present ourselves in our everyday life. Such considerations provide modes of analysis of human behaviour that exceed theoretical, abstract ways of seeing, and point to a focus on practice, also examining notions of success and completion, explicitly or implicitly. Marvin Carlson for example has stated that “when we speak of someone’s performance [] the emphasis is [] on the general success of the activity in light of some standard achievement which may not itself be precisely articulated” (2004: 4).

²³ Performance as an art form was from its very beginning preoccupied with blurring the often-sheer boundaries between art and life. Early performance works in the happenings of Alan Kaprow (2003), instruction pieces of John Cage and everyday actions in the work of Anna Halprin in the 60’s conveyed

the interest of performance in re-producing, analysing and interpreting everyday life.

Moreover, the landmark analysis of Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1991) around the ritualised disciplines and technologies of the bodies in formal education, that critically informs this research, can be read as significantly performative. Indeed, echoing Foucault's analysis, Peter McLaren (1993) provided an influential examination of schooling culture in the western world which illustrates the practices of schools as ritualised performance in which all, students and teachers alike are susceptible to. I consider this analysis especially as I am centralising notions and practices of schooled bodies that McLaren asserts as “the ultimate symbol” (1993: 206) in education. In this, the famous analogy of the teacher as performer and students as audience, as well as the problematics of this metaphor (Pineau 1994), have consumed a considerable part of the insights of this pairing. Still, another important area of scholarship looks into how performance can provide alternative frameworks to the normative structures of abstraction that isolate teachers and students from their embodied experiences and produce bodies in classrooms that are “overwhelmingly inscribed as absence[s]” (Pineau 2002: 45). These frameworks (Pineau 2002, Hamera 2005) on the notion of the pedagogical body, use traditional tools of performance, such as the focus on embodied experience, to understand better the educational event and support educators and students into a (re)connection with their agency in the shaping of these

events. These examinations are often exhausted at the level of higher education, perhaps another indicator of the infantilisation or degradation of early years (Langford 2020), primary and secondary education, which can be seen as another symptom of the devaluing of care.

3.1.2 THE WORKSHOPS

Motivated by my background in participatory art making as applied theatre practitioner, with the workshops I wanted to offer the opportunity to other teachers to explore their experiences of caring for their students through artistic means. Having myself experienced the benefits of applied performance, I knew the transformative potential of performance to explore and speak experience, even when that is overlooked and hidden. This could be interpreted perhaps as having an intention to offer something to them and support them. Helen Nicholson's (2005) assertion that applied theatre is a form of offering, the ‘gift’ of theatre, could be suggested as evident there. Kathleen Gallagher (2023) stresses that drama research happening at schools should also contribute to “nourishing teachers as well” (2023 online presentation).

In creating these workshops, I drew on the tradition of applying/ied performance to address social issues, epitomising the importance of (employing) the aesthetic in the social, and especially on recent scholarship that identifies a common, aesthetic thread between frameworks of participatory performance and care provision settings (Thompson 2015; 2023, Stuart Fisher and Thompson 2020). This also speaks with frameworks that consider the aesthetic in education, often using participatory performance with young people (Gallagher 2023, Gallagher and Freeman 2016, Winston 2010). And participation is often happening with the “intention [] to make something happen, to change what the participants [] know, feel, understand and might do as a result.” (Mermikides 2020: 4).

In the workshops my aim was to provide spaces for reflection on the caring experience. My prompts were staging a de-centering of the student, proposing a centering of the teacher. The activities were inviting participants to pay attention to their embodied experience of caring sensations and emotions. This could potentially, foster practices of attention to areas that can be overlooked in caring teaching such as bodies or emotions and inspire new understandings or changes in self-caring attitudes. In Chapter 6, I explore these intentions of applied performance as implications, especially when seen in the caring

‘effects’ of the genre towards participants, while I consider the labour in creating these practices.

Moreover, apart from offering a medium to explore experience, there was also another crucial reading, which became evident through the workshops.

The thorny logistics of setting them up in each school, made the workshops a ‘claiming’ of caring space and time (that I had to negotiate and accommodate) for the teachers-participants, when space and time were almost non-existent. In one school for example, I created workshops with ‘open door policy’ to address teachers’ limited time and space for a break, which meant that they could access the space whenever they could - possibly in one-to-one workshops with me. As I will discuss in Chapter 6, participants often reflected on this scheme of potential or possibility for workshop as caring for them. Waiting for participants to come to the workshop illuminated ‘stillness’ as a performance of care in applied performance making, as I thoroughly discuss in the next chapters. Eventually, the workshops evolved as care-fully curated spaces of caring ‘anti-doing’, allowing reflection by offering time and space for it. And that offering was a radical provocation in the context of schools as spaces of rushed time. The workshops helped to approach questions around working with lived experiences of care in applied performance, not only around the

subject matter of care, but also in investigating practices of applied performance *as* care and aesthetic, artistic labour. They were ultimately asking questions about the relation of performance and care proposing practices for both participation and facilitation that explored new possibilities of applied performance as an aesthetic practice that can also be a caring practice. This affirmed and advanced the caring aspect of working in applied performance especially in the background of discussions and calls for care in the arts (Stuart-Fisher and Thompson 2020, Hann 2021), as I discuss in Chapter 6.

3.1.3 THE SOCIAL STRAND...

The interviews started as pre-structured, filmed discussions which were designed to address the performative aspects of caring provision experience: bodies and care, touch, management of emotion. Due to the complex logistics and limited time at the schools, the interviews progressed into informal, semi-structured, audio-recorded conversations often during breaks, or at the end of the school day. In interviews, participants were discussing their views and experiences of care as part of their role. Often, interviews were taking place after observations with questions relating to the practice I had just observed. This worked as prompt to initiate discussion such as: “Can you describe what you just did? How did you experience it?”, before moving to questions around how/if they understood their role as caring, how they felt physically during and after a school day, the management of emotion as part of the role, touching and being touched by students, thinking about students when out of school. Time was usually limited for interviews, allowing little space to reach depth, however, the interviews were mostly working as opportunities to unfold, briefly but freely, thoughts and feelings towards teaching and caring - and participants were appreciative towards this opportunity. Although it was them who were offering their time and views to me, it was like those short conversations were perceived as a

form of offering to them and an acknowledgment of their work in a much-appreciated pause for reflection in the busy pace of their day. As offerings of care, opening micro-spaces of caring temporal reciprocations (teachers offering to me and me offering to teachers), the interviews also enacted temporal manifestations of my prolonged waiting for the interviewees to become available.

In observations, I was observing teachers during lessons and breaks. My interest was in the experience of care as this was felt in the classroom. Aesthetic qualities such as pace and rhythm, scale or even texture of movement that the bodies of the teachers were creating in relation to the students were my point of focus. Those were often palpable sensations of calmness or slowness, or speediness, messiness, noisiness, fullness and overwhelm - what Atkinson (2017) calls 'everyday encounters', as "own temporal frames, their cycles of events, their daily round, their distinctive rhythms" (2017: 154). Relating to Conquergood's (2002) argument for radical ways of doing social research, I was rather interested in the non-textual, or in a distancing from narrative that I could apply on the instances I was observing, gradually developing a practice of *listening to and being touched by* (Conquergood 2002: 149, emphasis in original) the felt care around me. I was therefore looking at moments when teachers were dealing with how a student was feeling rather than what/how they were learning,

looking into teachers' body language and expression of emotion through facial expression, gesture, voice, and movement. This emphasises the idea of care as labour in professional practice. For this, I draw on the work of Arlie Hochschild (1983) and her formulation of emotional labour as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display [] that produces in others the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place" (1983: 7).

Interestingly, Hochschild makes a further analogy between emotional labour and theatre as a form of deep acting (1983: 48), as effort to feel. Hochschild (1983) refers to surface acting and deep acting as stages of facial, gestural, emotional engagement in the production of socially observable states in professional practice especially in professions related to provision of services (including teaching). This can be seen as a further validation for using performance as an analytical framework for the examination of care in the teaching practice.

My interest was also in moments when teaching seemed to become difficult or more demanding by students' behaviour (for example, students expressing distress or discomfort through physical behaviour or difficulty to follow rules), or expressions of care such as touching students and being touched by students. During those moments, my focus was on what seemed like manipulation of body and emotion, something that the teacher seemed to cultivate or craft, often

undergoing or enduring. They manifested embodied configurations of time that altered what seemed like the natural pace of bodies in space. For example, they were temporal performances of sudden or ‘urgent’ caring interventions, like moving quickly to prevent students’ risky behaviour, rushing to comfort someone, waiting in stillness for long for the response of students learning something, waiting for someone to calm down or being constantly interrupted by students or the bell.

3.1.4 ...AND ITS CARING LABOURS

In this section I extend the previous part, to consider the labour pertaining to this research. I include this consideration here to provide further clarification for the methods in a project heavily invested on understanding teachers’ (caring) labour with a set of practices that required particular effort. Making labour then, while also making a case for labour, can be a methodological tending to the effort behind providing good care for students in its political signification. Considering the vast number of trainings in child protection that teachers complete every year, it also has relevance to highly

technologized and mechanised practices that target not only bodies but also the emotions of the teacher, calling for affective labour.

This points to important notions of care as technology and regulation. Performance scholar Ben Spatz argues that in the repetition of practices “we master and [are] mastered by certain kinds of technique [] absorbing it into our bodies as habitus” (Spatz 2015: 52). Under these notions, this research also considers performance as a neoliberal concept of productivity (McKenzie 2001, Verwoert 2008), a professional indicator and assessment of intensified regulation, discipline, and control in schools (Ball 2006; 2016, Ball & Olmedo 2013). More specifically, it relates care to notions of affect as “a form of ‘biopower’ that induces, transmits, and amplifies one’s capacity to affect and be affected” (Kostogriz 2012: 402, referencing Hardt and Negri 2004, Massumi 2002). Indeed, a body of scholarship explores these qualities in relation to the institutional conditioning and regulations in schools. With the project’s exploration of affect in care, I draw on perspectives that embrace both intellect and body as creators of the educational events, relating also to the complex elusiveness of the multiple factors taking place in the classroom (Zembylas and Schultz 2016, Kostogriz 2012, Anderson 2012).

Radical, political considerations of affect and its power inform the research both as mobilisation of value in societies that profit from the

affective employment of its members (Ahmed 2004), as well as the “power of [its] appropriation” (Negri and Hardt 1999: 85). With a culture and ethic of care seen as the antipode of the neoliberal doctrine, it is also suggested that a focus on the affectivities of teaching can guarantee practices of resistance to the neoliberal wave by performing undisturbed, affective care in the privacy of the classroom. However, centralising the notion of affective labour as the elusive ‘space’ or quality upon and through which the teacher can create ‘spaces’ of radical practice, may have implications. Affective labour is either seen as the ephemeral aspect of teaching (Falter 2016) or through its resistant qualities, at an “important position [] that is both outside and beyond accountability and performativity measures” (Kostogriz 2012: 397). I think that this argument raises some considerable complexities, and I will particularly contribute to what I understand as a crucially missing element here with my problematization around the ontology and production of affective labour. The notion of affective resistance is indeed critical; however, the production of affects should not be treated as given. As the research operates a continuous focus on affects, it will show how the generation and use of affect in teaching as both caring and learning tool, involves the performance of multiple, painstaking labours (physical, temporal, aesthetic) from the teacher (and I also

address this in an analogy to the applied performance making and facilitating). Overlooking the efforts and pains of affective production in the draining cultures of education contributes to burnout (Bodenheimer and Shuster 2020) and affirms the invisibility of labour. I will thus maintain, that suggesting caring labours as feminist or ‘feminine’ expression of resistance to the ‘masculine’ neoliberal educational trends, only continues to affirm gendered views and injustices around care. Not only that but also insists to widely overlook the depths and complexities of teachers’ caring experiences sentencing teachers to a culture of endless giving - which is also responsible for the devastating levels of burnout in the profession.

I was observing and considering therefore a broad spectrum of embodied experiences and practices. Depending on the setting, those practices could be the embodied effects of caring patience, performing physical tasks such as folding/wrapping in physical restriction, hoisting students in special needs settings, or performing mundane and repetitive caring micro practices, such as tying laces, helping with coats and food, walking backwards to lead students walking in line, counting students again and again. Other times, they could be getting physically hurt by students intentionally or not, for example getting hit kicked, pushed, bitten. These moments seemed to entail a fine, skilful

navigation for the teaching professional, an active form of discipline which develops into an ability to access and interfere with the most primal human response, as for example the response to pain (which however, the education professional must control for the sake of their practice and their students). At the same time, the other end of ‘difficulty’ could also mean the emotional and affective management for the teacher in the intensity of positive emotions of love and unbearable tenderness for students that had to be controlled, withheld, and not fully expressed.

Ultimately, watching and waiting for long for things to occur, the observations became a manifestation of caring waiting in (literal) stillness for me, a patient, generous relinquishing of the self into the caring event, an immersion into diverse worlds of care.

The research practised a caring ethos and a sensitive approach towards the many challenges that the teaching day entails. As principles of social research remind us that “observation is not a morally neutral enterprise [] plac[ing] the observer into the moral domain” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000: 315-316), care provision in classrooms can be particularly sensitive ethically, especially when being observed by outsiders, as I was in some schools. Understanding how “observer effects can be considerable” (ibid.), I developed different strategies in observations to minimise these effects (see below part 3.2.2). Still,

especially when students were upset teachers’ interventions and management of ‘crises’ would manifest intense, rich performances of care. However, when these were scrutinised, they would often also disclose the distress of those who are vulnerable – and these raises further ethical implications. Observing, witnessing, noting and selecting data with gentleness suggest then something ethical or caring. Reflecting on the observational and autoethnographic data in their whole I could also see how challenging it was to stay with the teacher’s action and reaction and lived experience – even mine- without slipping into the student’s experience. This highlighted the risk of diverting from the focus of the research and has been some sort of resistance in processing the findings of the field research, having to ‘overcome’ their great richness, in striking cases of students’ vulnerability and pain, by critically interrogating, who is the event about, the student, or the teacher?

It turns out that there were often cases that were showcasing more the student’s experience and less that of the teacher, and although incredibly interesting and revealing a lot about care in schools, they suggested a loss of focus on the topic. Making the choice to stay with this picture when there may be other colours to portray the project with, perhaps is I realise an ethical stance towards the shared moments in care.

This means a caring approach towards moments of pain and distress, physical and/or emotional, to be held with care. It does justice to all participants, teachers and students, their struggles, their pains, their smiles and cuddles, their shared care. The sensations that have endured and stay at the end become then another struggle, that of managing memory of something finished, gone, however once existing and belonging somewhere as event, connecting teachers and students in a caring time which once wrapped us and held us closely.

3.2 COUNTING

This section demonstrates three different ways of counting the endeavours of this research, one standard and numeral, one visual and lastly one that is subjective and self-reflective. I engage in counting to provide an ac-count for the project, using a familiar, persistent practice that denotes care in teaching: counting students, counting notebooks and mistakes for marking students' work, counting time.

1. Five public performances and an ongoing practice of private performance projects as exploration and reflection on the experience of care provision as a teacher: Three performance art/shows (five performances): *PaperCare* (2018), performances with paper: *Transfixed* (2018) & *Paper Performance at HUMAN* exhibition (2019), *Crowning* (2018 & 2019), performance and rehearsal times approximately 100 hours.
2. *Doll's house* (2021- ongoing), performative installation (30 x 50 x 120cm), approximately 100 hours.
3. Paper practice: physical improvisations with paper, cutting and stitching papers, sewing machine practice with paper (totalling approximately 300 hours and around 200m. of plain white and brown wrapping paper and baking paper).
4. Walking practice: *Rock Walk* (2021) 40 hours.
5. *Screaming piece*: three short performances of prolonged screaming (three audio and video documentations: 2min 19sec, 1min, 53sec) performed and recorded at Guildhall School of Music and Drama studios (08/07/2021).
6. The domestic(ation) of classrooms: cleaning classrooms practice, archiving memorabilia and presents from students, collecting ephemera, such as drawings and pencil shavings (approximately 1,500 hours).

7. Twelve (12) participatory performance workshops with teachers at three different schools (mainstream primary, PRU, Greek primary) between 2017 – 2019.
8. Sixty-four (64) autoethnographic self-reflections in diary entries of narrative and poetic form, from working at five different work settings teaching full-time and part-time as supply teacher.
9. Thirty-four (34) observations at schools and nineteen (19) interviews with teachers.
10. The schools²⁴/settings involved: one mainstream primary school in London, one primary and secondary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in Southeast London, a primary and secondary school for students with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD) in West Sussex, different Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provisions in

London for students between four and twenty years old in which I worked as part-time, supply teaching assistant between 2017 and 2018.

11. Full-time work as a teacher between 2018 and 2022 at a Greek primary and two community/Greek language schools in West and North London.

²⁴ In the social strand of the project, teachers chose not to mention the names of their schools. The PRU schools (New Directions and RIET at Newham, East London), preferred to be named in favour of promoting the work they do. My choice of naming the Greek School of London is justified based on demonstrating more clearly the diversity of practices I was engaging with in different curriculums and school cultures and how I was navigating my experience of working in multiple settings. Having an initial training and background in mainstream, primary education, I knew from experience that including a range of different settings and practices would bring richness and depth to the project and aimed for field research in settings that would span

the mainstream and special needs education in a range of students' ages. At the same time my own teaching work in different roles and schools enriched the range of experience. The choice of field research settings was therefore made with the intention of inclusivity and diversity and the collaboration with schools was arranged through personal and professional acquaintances as well as contacts made at academic events. The schools were also diverse in terms of socioeconomic conditions of the areas they were situated, their culture and language.

3.2.1 VISUAL COUNTING

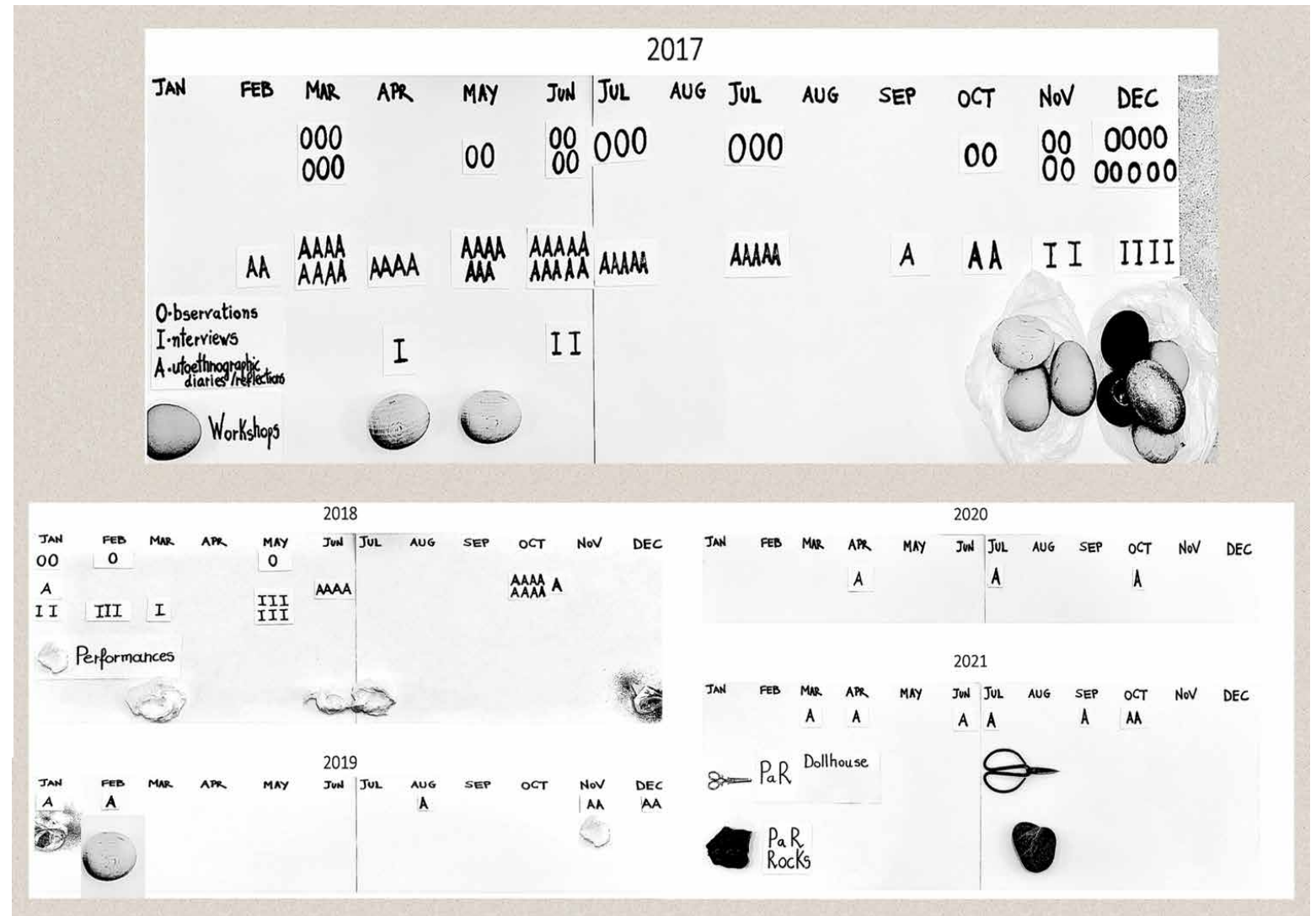
A visual representation of the project,

A map, mapping practices and time.

A counting assisted by objects, as a practice common in early years teaching.

Props from the artistic research assisting the counting:

Paper nests and eggs from *PaperCare* (2018), scissors and rocks from PaR with *doll's house* (2021) and *Rock Walk* (2021).



3.2.2 REFLECTIVE COUNTING

An Indicative List of My Everyday Life Doing Research at Schools

<i>preparation of classrooms: laying out chairs and tables, tidying up classrooms</i>	<i>cooking at my home for interview participants preparing dinners and special meals that they will like</i>
<i>preparation for workshops: carrying materials and equipment, cleaning and</i>	<i>waiting for trains and buses and taking long commutes to field research schools</i>
<i>arranging rooms, covering windows with dark paper, displaying materials, teaching</i>	<i>sitting and waiting, waiting, waiting in observations and workshops</i>
<i>assistant role, helping with learning</i>	<i>listening, listening, listening</i>
<i>participating in assemblies, in circle time, in singing</i>	<i>making time for writing my autoethnographic reflections after teaching</i>
<i>spending time in playgrounds during breaks</i>	<i>making effort during teaching to not forget incidents, feelings, and sensations and note them down after class</i>
<i>helping with arts and crafts and face painting</i>	<i>keeping memorabilia and creating an archive of findings, taking care of this archive</i>
<i>preparing and serving breakfast, tea, and dinners for students at schools</i>	<i>sitting with the archive, feeling the findings</i>
	<i>staying with paper, staying with a golden ball, staying with a doll's house, walking, and staying with rocks</i>
	<i>allowing care to speak to me, making time and space for it</i>

3.3 SCOPE & LIMITATIONS

The project focuses mainly, although not exclusively, on teaching primary school children, aged four to twelve years, while also representing a smaller picture of teaching adolescents and young people. All experiences and settings of the project took place in the UK where I was living and working in the five years of the project but happened in a range of different schools, such as schools of the Greek community where I was working as a Greek immigrant in the UK, and PRUs and SEND schools. This also relates to the language I am using in writing about this project in this thesis, knowing that “language is also a place of struggle” (hooks 1989: 15), especially for someone like me who conducted the research and writes about it in a language that is not my native tongue.

The project had the privilege and blessing to be welcomed at schools and settings that, as a teacher trained for mainstream education, I had little experience of. It is research contextualised in the UK and specifically in London and in distinct settings because this is what felt right to do for representing a range of practices and experiences, and this is what was practically feasible for a working teacher. Still, the schools I researched and worked at during those years, were different

in their practices, regulations, students, language, and culture. Having initially studied pedagogy for mainstream education with most of my teaching experience in mainstream and two mainstream schools represented as well in the research, it is not only a hope that this research was well balanced in its representation giving a glimpse of the broad experiences that care may shape in teaching.

This variety of contexts offered a polyphony and revealed a significantly rich range of experiences, which however, had to be limited in time due to what was practically possible for me but also the schools’ limitations in time and space. I suppose the possibility of spending more time in classrooms and in workshops, or at fewer settings, or offering myself more time for performance practice, may have yielded different or deeper insights. It is also with the hope that the intricacies, beauties, and sensations of what it means to care have been honoured with this project.

Moreover, the project started a dialogue with a range of areas in scholarship which was not possible to be fully expanded on. However, the links to fields and areas such as scenography, materialities (of care) and the relation to the post-human, further associations to the affective and the ritualistic, as well as connections to feminist and queer studies are identified as important links and will remain inspiring and stimulating for further consideration.

3.4 ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

My relationship to the project reflected an analogy to my teaching practice: having to stop myself from doing more, not always knowing when to stop, not always knowing why I do so much, experiencing consuming guilt for doing too much. The large scale of the project in practices, strands and length of time, could then be interpreted as an expression of how teachers often relate to their practice, gathering materials, resources, stationary, students' memorabilia, memories. The attachment to this collection and re-collection as an evident expression of the idiosyncrasy of how teachers often relate to their role was significantly reflected on my anxiety for processing the extensive volume of findings. My approach in analysis was an amalgamation of phenomenological analysis in the landmark examples of Van Manen (1990), Giorgi (1985), Moustakas (1994), and performative autoethnography (Spry 2011) that centralises critical and performative ways of reflecting on analysing experience. Those modes developed further with the input of practice-based, creative methods (Rendell 2010, Hilevaara & Orley 2018) of interpreting findings, by using or inventing alternative languages, looking for a language that could speak care, in form, shape, scale, texture, in images and actions. The analysis became a series of epistemological steps that I present below – again

formatted as list/counting. What is more, the process was self-reflective, invested on a caring, tender treatment of the findings, identifying something performative even relational in approaching them:

Findings' / materials: Documentation of public and private performances (images, videos, artefacts), self-reflections, observation reports, interview recordings, doll's house installation, ephemera, memorabilia and students' presents.

Analysis: Critically and systematically examining and understanding better the 'information' generated by all the activities and processes to make sense of the principles of the experience of caring as a teacher.

Handling an 'archive of care': A caring relationship to findings. Attachment to findings, painful selection decisions, a felt responsibility to be able to 'hold space' without them 'falling or collapsing', painstaking contemplation on them, utter frustration when I could not always 'make sense' of them - findings were unruly, findings were misbehaving (as often students do). A practice of accumulation, a practice of care-ful selection. A practice of sitting with the findings to feel them, listen to them. Resistance. Stillness. Sitting with memory.

<p>The emotional experience is ambivalent</p> <p>And great in scale to manage { big small dollhouse }</p> <p>There is something embodied to it like a stretch balance load</p> <p>1</p>	<p>THERE IS A STRETCH</p> <p>+ Something unresolved</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Bodies and affect are important in the experience</p> <p>& require productive management discipline of</p> <p>WHAT HAPPENS WITH CARE SPEAKS TO UNRESOLVED</p> <p>THERE IS A STRETCH</p> <p>OR SUCCESS TO BE EFFICIENT</p>	<p>The experience is related to</p> <p>SPACE → fitting accommodating emotion holding memory managing affectivity body displace</p> <p>TIME -</p>	<p>Performance & care</p> <p>Gathering staying in the present [I am now the teacher, I will remember in the future]</p> <p>counterproductive meaningless to only insist the present to not project to the future</p> <p>poetics its frustration</p> <p>performance that shows the complexity of the experience</p>	<p>It is always a utopia</p> <p>It is fragmented interrupted repeated + absurd</p> <p>It is in the now but comes from the past + projects to the future</p> <p>It is lived + it is repeated / it looks elsewhere not in the here + now</p>	<p>Performance to capture quality ambivalence stretch pull-push failure despair guilt balance filling load long just left out bird house effective loading</p> <p>stretch</p> <p>pull-push</p> <p>failure</p> <p>despair</p> <p>guilt</p> <p>balance</p> <p>filling</p> <p>load</p> <p>long</p> <p>just</p> <p>left</p> <p>out</p> <p>bird</p> <p>house</p> <p>effective</p> <p>loading</p>
<p>The unresolved speaks with failure towards that that you cannot care for or change</p> <p>Failure is hidden but speaks through the</p> <p>Emotion you must NOT show</p> <p>in stretch form overarching system</p>	<p>There is something stuffed a loading that we want to keep</p> <p>Enclosed (memory) either good or bad (emotion)</p> <p>Tendency to hold keep freeze to trap - space</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Ambivalence in relation to temporality as well</p> <p>might to stay in the present</p> <p>carrying the past - holding it in memory</p> <p>not future = failure</p> <p>6</p>	<p>Looking for</p> <p>alternative time space in instituting through performance</p> <p>THE ABSURD as disruption or discrepancy to the experience is in the consensical = uniquely absurd</p> <p>absurd to consider bodies stillness + slowness many loudness</p> <p>the non-human in paradox</p>	<p>Alternative temporalities of caring teaching</p> <p>Alternative temporalities of applied performance</p> <p>Alternative spatializations of performing [rethinking] care</p> <p>the applied spaces / room the dollhouse the house of paper care the in this gorge</p>	<p>The material vibrational affective qualities of care that in shifts today</p> <p>In the present care's agency</p> <p>Staying as back also stillness in time</p> <p>repeating rocks the force</p> <p>Silence</p>	<p>Performance to capture quality ambivalence stretch pull-push failure despair guilt balance filling load long just left out bird house effective loading</p> <p>stretch</p> <p>pull-push</p> <p>failure</p> <p>despair</p> <p>guilt</p> <p>balance</p> <p>filling</p> <p>load</p> <p>long</p> <p>just</p> <p>left</p> <p>out</p> <p>bird</p> <p>house</p> <p>effective</p> <p>loading</p>

Documentation of interpreting the findings.

Process of analysis:

1. Several readings of fieldwork data: observation reports, interview transcripts, self-reflections from autoethnography, field work documentation (images).
2. Clustering of artistic practice documentation²⁵ (workshops, PaR) and artistic practice reflections.
3. Sitting with the findings, with the discomfort and difficulty of the extent of findings. Feeling the findings.
4. Identifying findings (extracts, artworks, visuals) that were most relevant to the themes of body, emotion, labour, space and time as the underpinning themes relating to the research questions around the felt qualities of the lived experience of care provision.
5. Selecting relevant extracts from autoethnographic notes, observations extracts, interview transcripts, and artworks of any form (performance, visual, mixed media).
6. Further ethical application on decision making on what will be included to keep focus on teacher without exposing students.

7. Focusing on ‘finer’ and subtler qualities of the embodied, the temporal, the spatial, textures and form of care. Considering how the findings speak with each other.
8. Horizontal reading of autoethnography, ethnography, artistic findings for extracting themes (in no particular order):
 - Retained and retaining: to not show emotion, holding, loading (paper).
 - To hold, to keep, to freeze: stillness (body, emotion, time).
 - Being there for students as a rock: stillness in body and in time, persistence, insistence, enduring emotion and physical pain in performance (*Transfixed, Crowning*).
 - Being there for participants in workshops, waiting.
 - Waiting: making patience as a teacher, waiting for participants to come to the workshop room, waiting in observations and interviews.
 - Temporal liminality in-care, occupying an in-between space in caring past (memory), present, future (hope/despair).
 - Interrupted and fragmented time.

²⁵ All documentation images shared with permission from photographers. All images courtesy of Christina Vasileiou.

- Something troubled or unresolved: failure and guilt, hopeful and hopeless, effort and labour.
 - Ambivalence: in emotion, in scale (big/small: rock landscape and mountains/doll's house miniature).
 - The paradoxical and nonsensical in institutional regulation with the counterproductive and absurd in artistic works, being cared for by rocks, caring for participants in workshops that do not really happen.
 - Alternative, radical (or utopic) temporalities: offering time as care in teaching and in applied performance.
 - Alternative, radical or utopic spatialities, offering space as care: caring bodies, creating caring spaces in applied performance: workshop rooms, rocky landscapes, spaces of caring memory: classrooms, the caring space/house form in *PaperCare*(2018), the *doll's house* (2021).
9. Viewing from above on what the analysis themes express about caring experience: a performance event situated in space and time.
 10. Considering the performance of care as: embodied, spatial, temporal performance as ambivalent and dis/mislocated, fragmented, retained, un-performed, expressing an intimate, yet frustrated relation to the past and future, often with an

intention to stay still or 'stuck' between them, performing a stillness. Expressing paradoxical qualities to be approached through imagination (e.g. caring as a rock, caring by waiting in stillness without doing something).

Considering these qualities through caring imagination we could then think of the aesthetics of care in teaching as an experience characterized by retention and holding, holding bodies still, holding emotion, often in overwhelm. We could even imagine affectivities and materialities overloaded and stuffed, wrapped, enclosed in (class)rooms and spaces that hold stories of care, still enduring. These performances of care in teaching will be considered in the next chapters in their artistic exploration.

AN ODE TO CARING TIME

A patient researcher waiting, motionless.

The time it took for all to unfold, to manifest, to grow.

In stillness

The space it took to absorb.

Waiting for something that might not come or happen.

To feel and peel layer, after layer

-this is teaching anyway –

After layer

Finding the time.

The time it took, to write.

The time to collect and preserve.

The care it took.

The time it took to sit with them.

Care is time.

The time it took to listen.

Hold on.

CHAPTER 4

PERFORMING CARE IN STILLNESS

4.1 STILLNESS

This chapter introduces stillness, a concept central for this research and foregrounds a relationship between this embodiment and the affectivity of care in teaching. The chapter considers the performance of stillness in its connotations to control, discipline, or ‘stasis’ of emotion. It explores how this may speak with the teacher as a ‘still’ figure enduring emotion and what may be expected by them to express emotionally. The chapter discusses my performance improvisations with paper (2018, 2019) and the performance piece *CROWNING* (2019) as works around the notion of emotional labour and the affectivity of care. Those were performances that showcased improvisations with specific materials that would ultimately restrict my movement while performing, forcing me to stay still. With this chapter, I am exploring this device of physical performance to understand the complex landscape of emotion as lived experience in teaching and its management as a form of caring struggle, prioritizing and tending to the needs of the students.

Education is preoccupied with stillness as discipline from the young age of pupils to produce the schooled, still bodies that will be able to focus and absorb information. Although physical stillness at schools is critically seen by Michel Foucault (1991) as discipline and imposition of power and control through rules and regulations, more recent scholarship (Noble and Watkins 2009) contends that stillness can also be an artful pedagogical practice that could promote self-discipline²⁶ and effective learning. This could mean that keeping (others) still may be suggestive of care/ing for them.

Performance is another field and practice concerned with stillness in many traditions and methods of performers’ training with the method of Tadashi Suzuki being famous for its advancement of stillness as skill that optimizes performance. Ellen Lauren argues on her experience with the Suzuki training method that stillness “...restores us to our senses [and]...reminds us that past, present and the eternal coexist in each moment” (2013 online), suggesting that we may hold something more than the body when we hold the body still.

²⁶ Traditions and disciplines of meditation use stillness as the method of quieting and observing the mind and body to promote self-awareness. This works with the paradoxical idea that self-imposed stillness on the outside can

allow the flowing or emergence (and this *is* movement) of an expanded sense of awareness and deeper connection with the self and the world, all departing from a point of (physical and mental) stillness.

Anthony Howell (1999) also considers stillness and its importance for the development of performance art as a key factor initially used by visual artists who devised actions of stillness perhaps with the intention to evoke the qualities of the static, two-dimensional painting. This played with the qualities of time and the idea that a moving human imposes on themselves the paradox of immobility, of inertia. Howell argues that encountering the durational stillness of a performer can create an unfamiliar, uncanny effect for the viewer as it can make us “doubt whether the being is really alive” (1999: 5) or “suggest an indifference to time” (ibid.). He adds: “We speak of a stilled position as a freeze, and indeed, there is an aspect to stillness which suggests coldness – not only the coldness of the lake turning to ice but also the coldness of statues, the coldness of stone” (ibid.). This may be seen as ‘lowering of temperature’, perhaps in resistance or denial to allow affectivities to move inside bodies. In that sense, we can also consider these configurations as performances of ‘stasis’ of emotion, stopping or hindering its flowing. What I suggest with this chapter’s exploration is that we can also identify an interesting link between stillness and how the teacher figure may be perceived in experiencing emotion. Teachers may indeed ‘remain still’ because they are idealised in the collective consciousness, staying unchangeable and enduring, perhaps ultimately inanimate or beyond human. This suggests that the

distancing from emotion and sensation, that they are expected to perform, and may also demote the alienation from bodies and feeling. But further than this notable cost of emotional work that the emotional labour theory illuminates, and which I discuss further, I also suggest this form of labour as a form of performance of care. With this chapter I therefore introduce my consideration of what could be revealed if we thought of care in relation to stillness, and especially of stillness as a form of caring performance. I argue that this could enable further considerations of what the body stages and (with)holds, what it balances and carries, what it holds in stillness of expression in performing care. Moreover, of the ways that care manifests as experience by (with)holding emotion, or by experiencing a complex relationship to time, as the following chapters will discuss, by remembering students or (non)hoping for the future. Centralising this relationship of emotion in teachers’ work to performance, I engage in a performance-related discussion on notions of reproduction of emotion. I foreground the notion of caring event in space and time, as significant in considering care as lived experience and performance.

[Reflection] [Interruption]

Uses of Holding Stillness

To hold: to keep inside, to enclose, to trap, to wrap.

To hold still: paper wrapping, enclosed in a doll's house, enclosed between rocks.

To hold: to preserve what is fleeting, the time that care happened, the nostalgia of care.

To consider that it existed.

To hold a tender -or painful- memory.

Crafting a space for holding and letting go, carving, sculpting, sculptors of space and time in care, that space being within the self.

Holding on: performances of waiting, staying, staying still.

To hold on, to perform patience.

To hold it together - in struggle, being pulled into different directions — hold still as matter, as rock.

To hold, to retain, to withhold emotion, to freeze emotion — stay, still.

4.2 PAPER (2018, 2019)

This part introduces my performances with paper, a series of works that emerged from my private improvisations that I was practising as a form of embodied self-reflection on intense experiences of teaching and researching. Those works evolved into two performances presented publicly at galleries, and as a more extended performance that utilised large amounts of paper (*PaperCare* 2018) which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The initial interest in working with paper started in 2017 when I was running a performance improvisation group for Greek women in London. One of the things we explored in the group was making costumes made with baking paper, playing with strong connotations to domesticity and its sculptural qualities, the semi-transparency and its property of enduring high temperatures without burning – a metaphor for the challenges that care entails. Almost a year after those improvisations, returning home after a particularly intensive - emotionally and physically- day of research at the PRU school, I was feeling restless. I was broken by a sense of despair for the future of [those] children, a despair that education (and even my research) was futile. I was feeling failed.

Taking a long piece of paper, I instinctively crunched it up and rolled it in the shape of a cone. Drawn by its texture and shape, I placed it on my head. It became a hat, or a crown, a burden. I did not really mind what it was, for me it was the load of my caring worries and the despair I was carrying at the time.

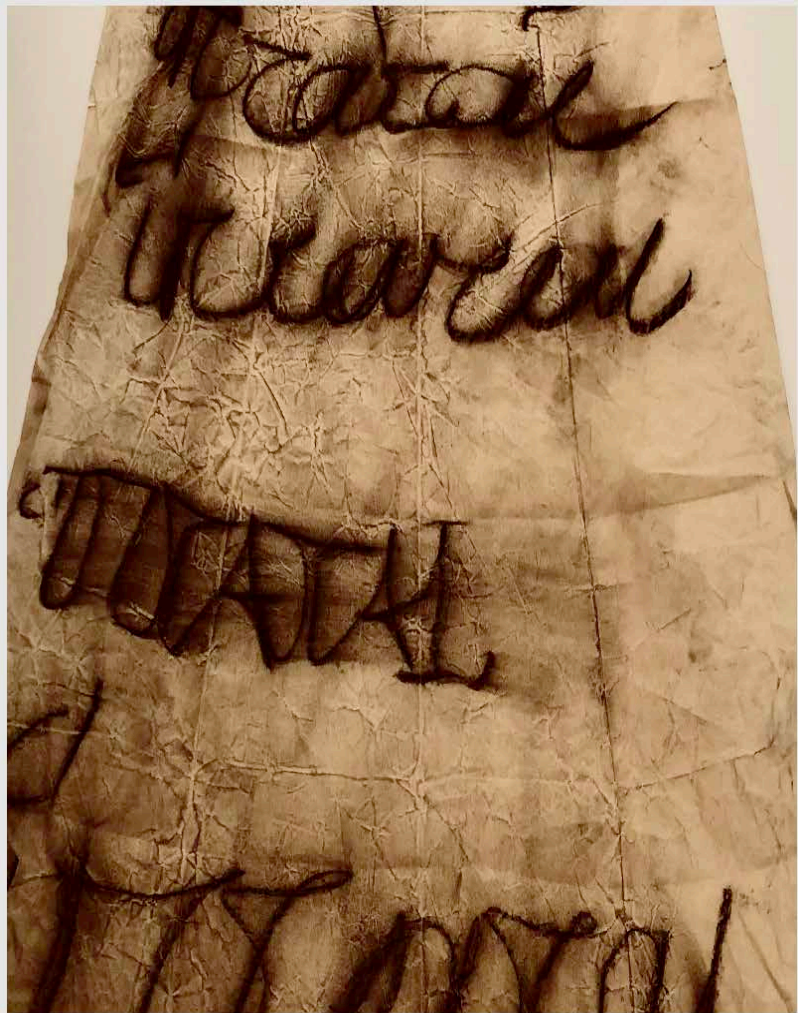
I had to be very careful to balance it on my head without it falling, I had to be disciplined. The hat was lightweight, its paper almost transparent - an existence ambivalent, under negotiation. I saw it as a strong signifier of something that could be overlooked, noisily, 'loudly' voicing that care is considered given, a labour rendered invisible.

And then I wrote:

"I am nothing. I am a piece of paper. You can scrunch me up and throw me away."

On another piece of paper, I repetitively wrote with charcoal the Greek word 'ιπτата' (*iptatai*) which means 'elevating', 'floating' or 'hovering': a strong sensation of tension in my body that seemed that to elevate me, not allowing me to be grounded

"...that my caring worries force me to live in my headspace, that I live outside my body, that I float, that I am fluid, thrown out of the world, helplessly elevated, not belonging." (Poetic self-reflection extract 25/11/2017)



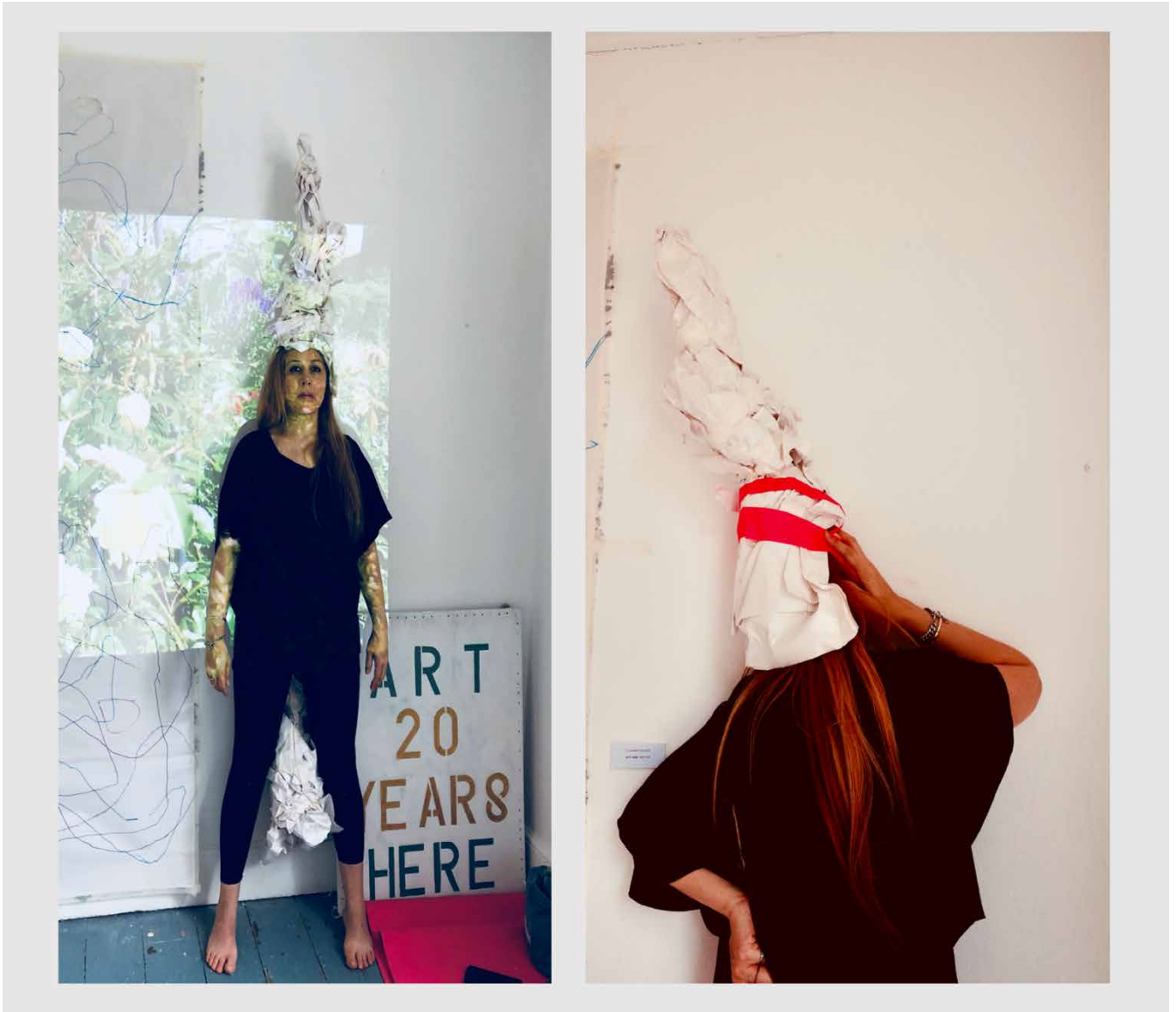
Detail of artefact from *IPTATAI* private improvisation (2017).
Charcoal on baking paper. Dimensions: 1,65x50cm.
Image by Christina Vasileiou.

Still, holding this ‘volume of care’ on my head, felt supportive as it was ‘holding’ in turn me and my emotion by forcing me into a discipline of having to stay still. This private performance marked the beginning of an exploration into care through materials, working with the symbolism of their volume and their imposition of stillness on the body.

In June 2018, I collaborated with the arts collective *Desperate Artwives* (UK) for a series of workshops they ran for mother artists. The works produced during the workshops were presented as a collective exhibition of feminist visual art and live performances, firstly at the space of the workshops, Platform 1 Gallery, London, and in the next month at Leyden Gallery, London. Audiences were invited at both events and especially the Leyden Gallery event was widely advertised and attracted a big audience of feminist art enthusiasts. The work that I presented was the performance *Transfixed* (2018) which involved the live making of large shapes and forms made of paper and other materials, such as clear plastic film and twine. As with my first improvisation with paper, there was something channelled through my manipulation of paper that seemed to enclose my care for those I care for, family members, students, the world. The shapes were large pointy cones other times resembling infants, other times phallic shapes.

These material formations restricted my movement or negated any movement, as I was tying them from a rope on my waist to a nail on the gallery wall. I was indeed transfixed, enduring this performative reflection on my caring experience as I was standing there motionless, mesmerised, enduring the experience of care.

Transfixed (2018) Performance with paper. Collaboration with Desperate Artwives, Platform 1 Gallery, London. Images by Ema Mano Epps.



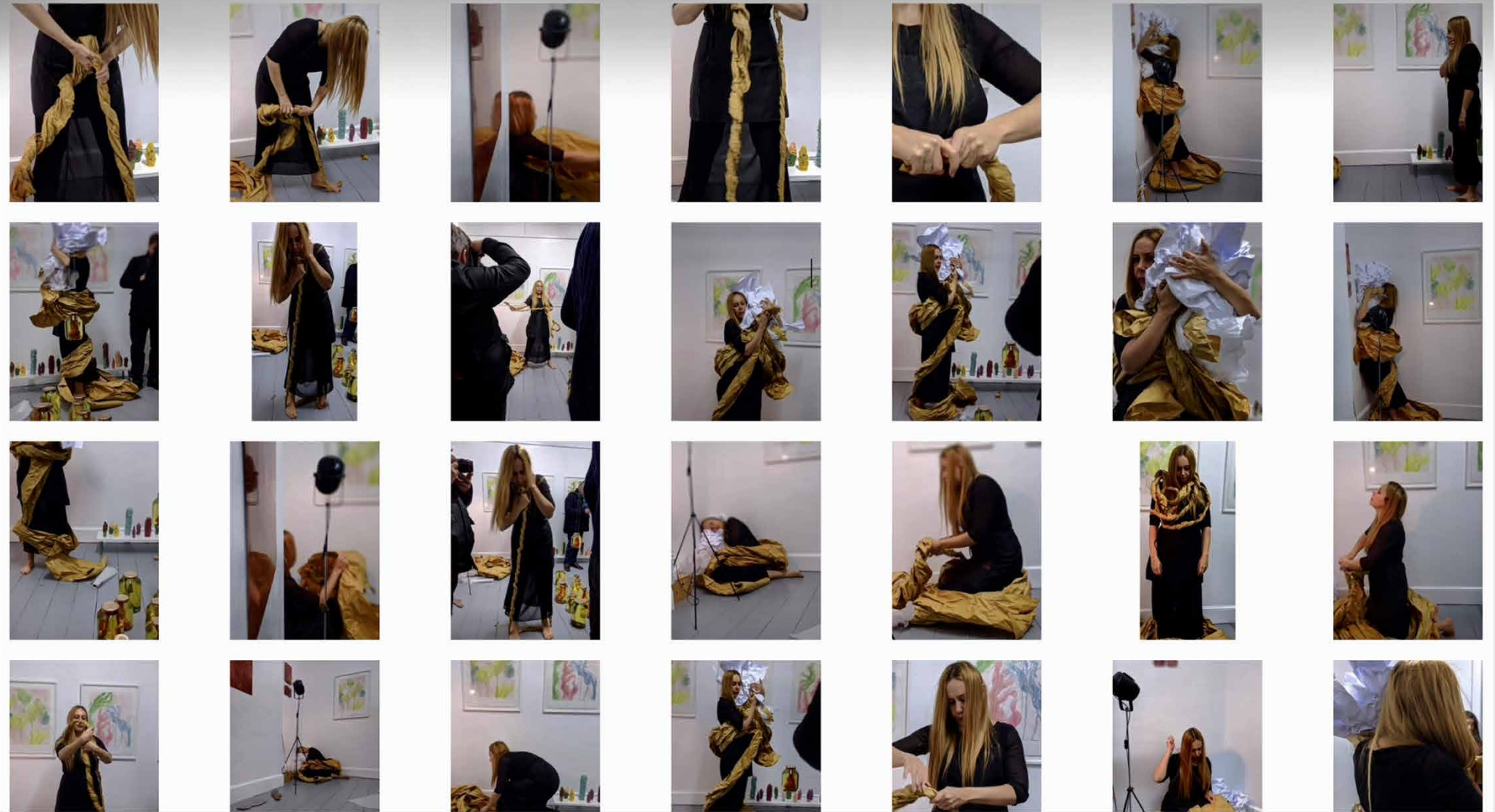
In November 2019 I was commissioned to present another improvisation with paper for the private view of the 'HUMAN' exhibition at Platform 1 Gallery, London, a visual art exhibition on artistic process and its materialities. This time my improvisation worked more with laying the paper, wrapping myself with it and stitching a large blanket with it²⁷. The space of the gallery was very small, and the paper was much bigger, longer, and wider this time. It felt that the paper was covering me, consuming me, perhaps becoming one with me, instead of dominating me, meeting me in an emotion that was feeling steadier and firmer. The firmness was followed by tightness, a paper twisted tightly, an intense holding that could denote the boundaries of care, or that could also resemble skin, considering the complexities of caring touch in the role of the teacher.

The performance practices with paper consolidated a particular way of working with performative metaphors seeking to explore the experience of care through materials. As the next section and chapters will demonstrate, this preoccupation supported the exploration of care as affective, embodied experience that may often be nuanced, gentle or delicate like paper, yet large, powerful, overflowing.



Performance with paper (2019) 'HUMAN' Exhibition PV. Platform 1 Gallery, London. Images: Marilena Mavroviti.

²⁷ See Appendix I for the performance score.



Performance with paper (2019) 'HUMAN' Exhibition PV. Platform 1
Gallery, London. Images: Marilena Mavroviti.



PAPER

You are clean, you are tender
You are weak
Thinning my experience
Transparent to disappearance, to disappear me
Ephemeral, my ephemeral, anxious subjectivity
You speak about the load I carry
You envelop, and stuff and suffocate me
You cover me
Pretend to care for me
You carry stories and histories
Efforts and affects
You are always discarded, humble
You are ripped into pieces
Torn and chopped
Scrunched up
You are a regret

Impossible task

TO Feel the weight of a paper
TO Consider a Heart Thin as a Paper
TO Not hurt a paper
TO Honour a paper

Prompt presented at International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR) 2021
'Performance-as-Research Working Group'



4.3 CROWNING (2018)

In this part, I explore another performance that I created again with use of materials. The piece extended my work with the affective landscape of care exploring more closely what a performative relationship to care as worry or burden may look and feel like. Towards the end of 2018, an urge to create something that could enclose me, something that I could even enter, emerged. Mashing up and squeezing my papers altogether, I rolled them into a large ball and covered them with a layer of a golden material, like a warm, golden blanket. The ball might seem heavy from a distance, resembling a large rock, but it was lightweight and malleable. Moving it around and playing with it, I started digging a small hole in it with my hands. As I opened it a bit more, I saw that I could possibly fit my head in there in an urge ‘to enter’ the artwork. What seemed strange as an impulse to me, artist and psychoanalyst Patricia Townsend argues in *Creative States of Mind* (2019), is common in the artistic process, that the artist unconsciously wants to ‘enter’ the artwork and be enclosed in it, possibly consume it, or to be consumed by it. As I wonder about the psychoanalytic connotations of these expressions, I am indeed reminded of the performance piece

Passagem (Passage) (1979) in which the artist Celeida Tostes is enclosed into a vat, in a ritual that resembles the reverse process of birthing. In the twenty-one photographs that document the piece, Tostes is covered in liquid clay with the help of two other women, and slowly enclosed in a large clay vat that could be seen as a womb – that I find suggestive of matter as caring. She then stays in there for some time before knocking on the vat’s walls to break it and come out. Similarly, I slowly and gradually enter the space of this large ball. It feels strangely quiet and comfortable in here. I raise my head and the ball sits on my body, as an enormous head, or golden crown. The small opening allows a supply of air, therefore, I can breathe and stay like that for long. Of course, I have no eyesight that would allow me to move, apart from short moments that I can take a quick glance on the floor looking down from the small opening. Moving and walking very slowly is again another exercise on discipline and control, but mostly on letting go of control. I am completely unsure about what I am doing, resigning, collapsing, into the artwork. This unsure burden is shaking on my head, indicating the risk of failure or collapse, that I see as both literal and metaphorical. Still, this enclosing feels good, as it contains me, I feel like being cared for by this ‘rock’.

I performed this piece as a public performance at Leyden Gallery, London, in December 2018. The piece was part of a curation I co-organised with the *Desperate Artwives* for the “She Shares” event, which attracted audiences interested in feminist art and feminist performance.

My performance started from the street next to the gallery in a long, exhausting process of slowly and gently rolling the ball until reaching and entering²⁸ the space of the gallery and going down on a staircase to enter the main performance space. In there, I again squeezed my head into the ball and wore it on my head as an oversized golden crown.

Lastly, in a blind walk, I left the performance space.

While bringing the audience who were following me into the gallery by rolling and walking the ball was slow, patient and tiring, like helping a little child in their first steps, and the rolling of the ball down the stairs was even slower and careful, the final part of the performance where I squeeze the ball to create a small opening and finally enter it, lift my head and stand up, happened rather quickly. These two modes of

performing, from slowly and carefully to fast and riskily, created different, opposite rhythms and affects in the room.

The feedback of audience members talking to me after the show was positive as the piece attracted particular interest and generated questions: What is the meaning of this ball? How does it feel staying in there? Will I admit that it was suffocating? It seemed that the performance inspired for the audience a caring response for me, the performer, and if I was alright ‘in there’, as well as a reflection on the risk of being ‘suffocated’ by the burden.

“The responsibility of these children [outside of the protection of the school] is a weight on me.” (Mainstream Primary Teacher A.—Interview extract)

²⁸ See video documentation at: <https://christinavasileiou.com/video/>
Video by Stella Koupadi.



“That can be quite tough, and I think I do take, it’s hard not to take stuff home with you, you do end up going home and thinking about it at night and then obviously can find it hard to sleep if you are thinking about things that happened in the day... And physically can be quite draining ...we do a lot of physical work ... so that can be tough sometimes and tiring.”

(PMLD TA S.-Interview extract)

CROWNING (2018) Leyden Gallery, London.
Image by Stelios Mastrokalos.



CROWNING is a series of performance works that draw on an examination of care as bearing and endurance.

I am performing a materialized take on my care through the form of a handmade headpiece that forces me into certain physical and emotional expression, into being present and care-ful. The crown represents the bearing and precariousness of my caring identity and caring practice and also my strength.

(Press synopsis for *CROWNING* performance).

'SHE SHOWS' event with *Desperate Artwives*, 07/12/2018. Leyden Gallery, London.

In collaboration with Leyden Gallery.

As women we are programmed, both genetically and socially, to endure. We endure growing up in a world made by and for men. We endure physical discomfort on a regular basis. We endure pressures around our appearance. We regularly endure unwanted sexual comments and advances, so much so that we learn to take it in our stride. We endure the responsibility of sexual pleasure and the possibility of pregnancy. We endure the judgements made about us from the reproductive choices we make. We endure caring responsibilities for children and family members and the domestic space. We endure interruptions, noise and physical exhaustion, the responsibility of emotional labour and the tension between public and private that comes with raising children to adulthood and beyond. We endure invisibility. Endurance shows resilience. Resilience is a strength. Strength and resilience are powerful.

Come and tell your story of endurance.

Applications are welcomed from all women, young and old, mothers, carers, LGBTQIA and non-binary artists. Your work should identify with the concepts of endurance, bearing and power, in relation to women and girls and the female experience, working in the medium of performance, spoken word, music, dance, film and video. Submission deadline: midnight 20th november

submission deadline midnight
 20/11/2018

www.desperateartwives.co.uk



Desperate Artwives (2018) 'SHE SHOWS'. Event advertising.



CROWNING (2018) Leyden Gallery, London Left and centre images by Stelios Mastrokalos. Image on the right by Sharon Reeves.



CROWNING (2018) Leyden Gallery, London. Images by Stelios Mastrokalos.

In the next month, January 2019, I performed the piece again as a durational, public performance that I documented for the needs of an application for a performance art festival. In the visual documentation, the work seems to evoke something absurd and counterproductive, as I, a figure that does not make much sense, crowned with this large ball, am wandering in the urban and natural landscape of a park in northwest London.

In my notes on the piece, I discuss how

eventually, my 'somatic costume' re-writes my body and the spaces it travels through and generates specific body-mind experiences for both audiences and me [...] My golden crown represents the bearing and precariousness of my caring identity and also my strength [...] By performing my exhausting and often painful repetition of rolling the prop, by handling my golden prop with care, and bearing it [...] like a crown that blinds and/or suffocates me, the piece [...] discusses the political considerations of bearing our caring identities. *CROWNING* triggers and beckons these identities, emerging with its golden shine as hopeful and inspiring, as in another meaning of crowing: of a baby's head during labour, fully appearing in the vaginal opening prior to emerging²⁹.

CROWNING (2018) suggested again how performance language can speak about care and 'carry care' as another Atlas. Similarly to my performance practice with paper, it explored the caring experience, bringing my inquiry into an even closer experience with the material. Through the juxtaposition of a prop that seemed hard, heavy and cold, but was soft, light and embracing, it suggested the idea of care in relation to the material as burden, while inspiring the consideration of the counterproductive or the absurd in care, that my following works would explore. Furthermore, the protective enclosing within the prop and the reflection on notions of hardness stimulated the exploration of self-care through performance, finding the agency to do so in the action of walking – although practically blindfolded with an assemblage of materials on my head. Those antitheses, hard or soft, light or heavy, suffocating or protective, were more than suggestive. They were showcasing a careful balancing act of practising the simultaneous holding of conflictual qualities of caring feeling. And this could extend to holding conflictual emotions, as the following analysis of this chapter's performances explores.

²⁹ This is an edited extract from the description of the piece in my application for the *Altofest Festival*, Naples, 2019. The work was not selected.



CROWNING (2019) Public performance, London.
Images by Stelios Mastrolalos.



CROWNING (2019) Public performance, London.
Images by Stelios Mastrokalos.



CROWNING (2019) Public performance, London.
Video stills. Video by Stelios Mastrokalos.

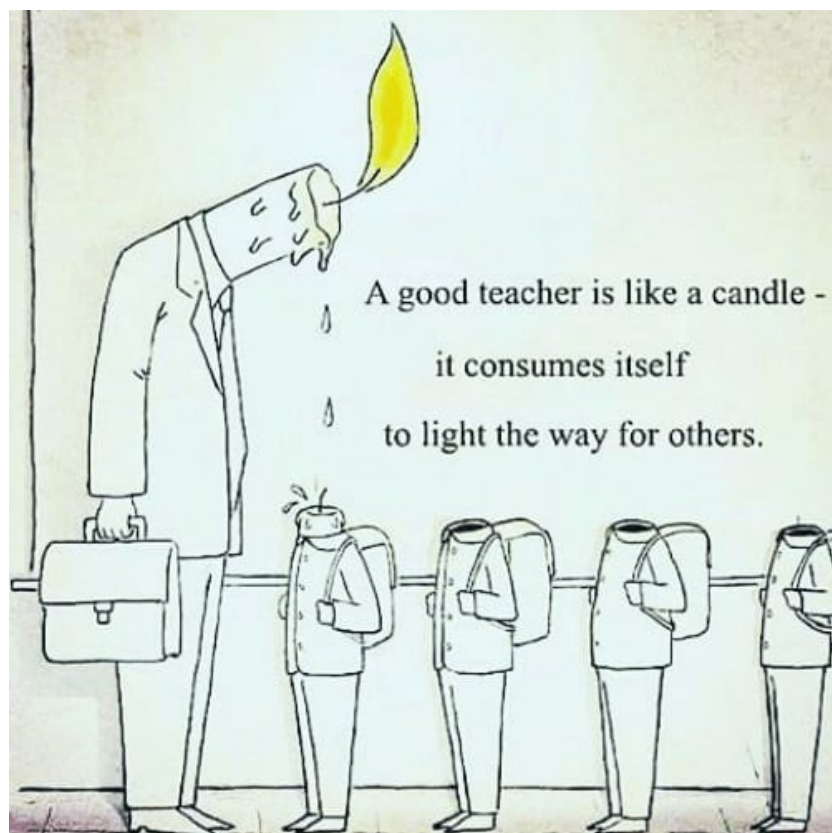
4.4 STILL BODIES, STILL EMOTION

With this chapter I approach the aesthetics of care in a discussion that concerns emotion, affectivity and embodiment of care in teaching. I will be doing so through a performance framework, to explore what teachers may or may not experience or perform in doing and feeling care. Contextualising care as event I want to consider the above performances in their spatial structure and their forms of staging care. My aim is to work with a holistic approach to space, from classrooms to 'bodies' and understand the intimacy of these 'spaces', as well as what they are allowed to manifest or 'stage' by educational culture. Problematizing notions of temporality, 'liveness' or re-enactment that I put in dialogue with the well-known emotional labour theory, I will approach the area of emotion in teaching to suggest a particular image and embodied performance as expressing and aestheticizing care, that of holding stillness in emotional ambivalence.

In doing so, I firstly want to consider the/my/teacher's body as the primal 'space' or 'stage' that the experience of care manifests, a perspective that can ask critical questions about care's 'staging' upon those bodies. Looking at the body of the teacher not only as disciplined and technologized but primarily as discursive under the

institutional gaze, we could approach the scale of the discourse applied on the caring bodies of teachers and the felt qualities that the discourse denotes.

Frameworks of institutional power and regulation produce teaching caring bodies in representations and associations of docility, passivity, and endurance. It could be suggested that, although in constant movement inside schools, the body of the teacher is kept still by educational discourse that applies its projection and practices of power upon it. In doing so, we could understand teachers as 'objects' or 'stages' of emotion employing Sara Ahmed's (2014: 13) critical reading of emotion. We could also relate my improvisations in keeping myself still with materials, with what the caring discourse demands to 'hold' upon or within those 'stages'. The discourse may suppose and impose the holding of these 'stages' 'still', in this case meaning firm, solid and secure, landscapes for the care of students to unfold, for students to blossom upon. It is important to see then, how these narratives eventually inform and shape the performances and experiences of care in teaching.



“True teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross; then, having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create their own.”

NIKOS KAZANTZAKIS

Examples of popular discourse on teaching indicating embodied narratives of care.

Left: *ACT Leading Education Hub* (2021) Facebook post 18/02. Accessed 30/05/2021 at:

<https://www.facebook.com/1StopEducation/photos/a.158145848168557/745916329391503/?type=3>

Right: *Education is Powerful* (2020) Facebook post 18/02. Accessed 31/03/2021 at:

<https://www.facebook.com/EducationIsPowerful/photos/a.1453268664980001/2199324603707733/?type=3>.

Education suffers however, from forms of ‘somatophobia’ and the intensive regimes and technologies that teachers and students are imposed to in institutions only promote a dis-engagement from bodies (Hamera 2005, Pineau 2002). Michel Foucault (1991), Ivan Illich (1971), Peter McLaren (1993) have prominently shown how control in societies starts firstly in schools with the conditioning and manipulation of bodies. Moreover, feminist thinking such as that of Elizabeth Grosz (1994) on the social signification of (female) bodies as sites of compliance, in the context of subjugation to disciplines and technologies in education is relevant as also crucial. As Jo Winning argues “it is the materiality of an existence shaped by doing and making, the work of the body, which modulates the way that intellectual work is undertaken” (2018: 3).

As educational discourses endorse certain assumptions as well as inscriptions of the “caring body” in terms of gender, physical ability, and caring performances, it is important to understand how this culture may contribute to the silencing of experience and even prevent it from been registered as experience. For example, school intensification often advances little to no-touch policies and stories of the panic of touch in schools (Piper and Stronach 2008) to avoid the implications of physical contact between students and teachers, and

this is only one aspect of a demanding physical repertoire of care that is often controlled and disciplined.



Henry Jules Jean Geoffroy (French, 1853-1924) *The Teacher's Touch*. Oil on canvas. 26 x 22 inches (66.0 x 55.9 cm).

Looking at bodies staging care we can then consider the performances that institutional disciplines and regulations produce: bodies held still by being controlled, bodies frustrated to negotiate touch in disciplines of physical contact, bodies fragmented by relentless interruption by students, structured schedules and breaks, bodies trying to render themselves invisible and with no physical needs, caring bodies that may experience pain and discomfort while offering comfort to students. Expanding the space of the body to be more, to feel more, to have more to offer, to accommodate and contain more, developing vigilant eyes all around the body, pulling and stretching hands and arms to ‘embrace’ all students, stretching ears to listen attentively, compartmentalising and emphasising certain body parts while tabooing other parts, create for the teacher an experience that is interrupted, suspended or muted, an experience that is only partially felt inside those body-spaces.

³⁰ According to Ahmed (2014), expression of emotion is circulation of emotion.

What I argue, is that an experience partially felt, carries an in-betweenness, an ambivalence of sensation, feeling but not fully feeling, a bearing but not expressing. The affective stories, the embodied archives of care remain hidden and unvoiced in this context rendering the experience as dis-embodied and alienated and questioning even the agency and ownership of the caring performance. I want to further consider the form of these nuances: when these are performances of an experience suppressed, unarticulated, and un-circulated³⁰, minimised of their full unfolding, the compression of the experience can be suggested as the actual manifestation of the experience, and what the experience *is*.

As most of the teachers, that I spoke to, shared about their caring practice being ultimately articulated as a (with)holding of emotion, we could say that these performances are completed in regression or eclipse; they are complete in being unfinished. The research interviews³¹ were indeed ‘filled’ with descriptions of ‘big’ emotions handled with caution to primarily be retained, to not escape, to hold still.

³¹ See relevant extracts throughout the thesis and especially extracts in Appendix I.

This takes us to the area of emotion to consider the ways that emotional labour scholarship contends that emotion is laboured and extracted in the service professions (Hochschild 1983), I suggest that we can understand the theory as suggesting two types of intervention on emotion: the production or extraction of emotion that was not previously or already there, done with effort as part of the job, and the suppression of emotion that is there as response, perhaps part of being human. The latter may relate to the more ‘difficult’ emotions, such as anger, whereas the former may relate to cultivating warmth and kindness considered necessary for service professions. Indeed, teaching can be a territory of intense and varied emotion, while the virtuosity of managing emotion as a teacher can be considered a skill that may be often seen as expressing care. This may extend to educators’ emotions seeming taboo as “there even seems to be a common perception that education is inherently anti-emotional work.” (Lawless 2018: 88). Hochschild talks about how in “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display [] the worker can become estranged or alienated from an aspect of self – either the body or the margins of the soul – that is *used* to do the work.” (1983: 7, emphasis in original).

She argues that “[t]here is a cost to emotion work: it affects the degree to which we listen to feeling and sometimes our very capacity to feel” (1983: 20). I reflect on how these claims become crucial when thought in relation to teaching/caring, especially in the background of Hochschild’s formulation of ‘real’ and ‘acted’ self in emotional work. These also suggest further complexities in relation to care’s association to ‘natural’ qualities of feeling and which are usually regarded as virtues of the teacher/carer.

Moreover, Madeleine Grumet, in her seminal examination of the feminisation of teaching, *Bitter Milk* (1988), argues that “[w]e have burdened the teaching profession with contradictions and betrayals that have alienated teachers from our experience, from our bodies, our memories, our dreams, from each other, from children”. (1988: 57). Bearing in mind Hochschild’s (1983) epitomizing of alienation from emotion it is important to consider how the experience of care is implicated in this context.

“We are the role models [of managing emotion] ... It is more honest to say I am feeling this emotion, I don’t know how to deal with it, than not to deal with it at all...” (PRU Headteacher I.-Interview extract)

Considering these provocations and their ontology, it is important to examine what the emotional labour theory may imply on the sequential relationship between caring emotion and caring event.

I suggest that if we bring emotional labour theory in relation to performance, an analogy to the problem that Erika Fischer-Lichte poses for the “unpredictable perceptual shifts between the order of representation and the order of presence” (2008: 157) for the ontology of performance is also crucially relevant for the performance of care. Emotional labour theory could then be seen as implying that emotion happens *because* of the caring event and during it and, most likely, ends with the end of the event. Indeed, in care ethics, Noddings’s (1984) analysis of a care directed towards ‘completion’, suggests that we should expect no after-effects from care after its completion in the here and now.

Moreover, emotional labour theory looks at the after-effect of emotional work as estrangement from feeling and does not really consider how ‘produced’ emotion may endure and be managed by the person providing the service (or care) after the service.

Neither does it ponder on the crucial issue of the actuality of the event of emotion, and whether managed and controlled emotion, unexpressed in its embodied configuration, is still emotion and constitutes experience. In other words, if an event is constituted in space and time what happens with the experience of caring, when this remains partially hidden, controlled, and retained, when feeling is not expressed? Does it still ‘count’ or ‘matter’ as experience if extending and enduring *after the event*? These are questions to be considered employing performance theory for care in the classroom and outside of it, pertaining to notions of temporality and re-enactment, considering what may remain after the performance, as especially the next chapter will demonstrate. There are implications therefore to be considered on the event of care as experience that is largely internalised and as performance that is particularly fleeting due to the resistance in which it is experienced. Can we dare to ask therefore if care in teaching really and fully happens? When it is experienced in a capacity lesser than its affective potential, and, as I will further demonstrate, its temporality is either orientated towards the memory of the past or future-directed, its affectivity and effectivity manipulated, technologized, and controlled by forces of productivity, fabricated in the name of the duty of care - what may be its embodied and temporal configuration in terms of its agency and, even, ownership? These

questions pose important provocations for the performance of care as event. We can indeed think of teachers' care as an embodied experience with spatial properties: as performances of 'fitting' and 'filling' with emotion and then again 'emptying' out of emotion, of 'holding space' for the experience of the student, of holding/occupying the position of staying still in the middle of emotional ambivalence. The limitations of this thesis do not allow me to account for the full range of experience that caring emotion involves in the ways that it relates to education. Still, it is important to consider here critical and feminist theorisations of the intimate nature of teaching and reflect on how it may pertain to emotion. For example, Illich (1971) in his radical examination of schooling, suggests the metaphor of classroom as a womb that prepares and nurtures children, in finite time before 'throwing' them out into the world. This environment, Illich argues, "removes children from the everyday world of Western culture and plunges them into an environment far more primitive, magical, and deadly serious" (1971: 32). Therefore, he adds, "[s]chool touches us so intimately that none of us can expect to be liberated from it" (1971: 47).

Grumet also epitomizes the intimacy of teaching, to the level of secrecy, arguing that teachers 'hide' their work just as artists stack their

artwork in attics, and although deeply caring for it "our experience of this work is hidden...hidden from our students, our colleagues, even from ourselves" (1988: xv). She states that:

'Behind the classroom door' used to be the phrase that stood for the domain where the teacher ran the show. The closing of the door, the drawing of a line: Now it begins. This is what matters. Now we are together. This is our space. (1988: 91).

Grumet proposes teaching as a practice particularly sensitive to affects, temporalities and spaces which ultimately nurture students to "lead the children from first to second nature" (1988: 186). As the 'leader' who facilitates and navigates this liminal experience for the students, Grumet argues for the implications for the teacher who nurtures students in the context of intensified capitalist practices. She examines how this may be experienced by the teacher as distress or even, betrayal towards her students, with the guilt and frustration of having to work with caring intimacy, therefore manipulating something 'pure' and valuable, in the context of over-regulation and instrumentalization of education. As she claims that "...increasingly mechanized and impersonal most of classrooms cannot sustain human relationships of sufficient intimacy to support the risks, the trust, and the expression

that learning requires” (1988: 56), it seems that there is something there, for Grumet, as it is suggested also by Illich, that needs nurturance and support to be ‘held’ in the space of the classroom, something to be managed to ‘fit’ in there.

Indeed, care became evident as a performance of containing³² and holding, as I will discuss in the next chapter, enclosed in the ‘house/home’ structure in *PaperCare* (2018) and the doll’s house (2021), in wrapping practices in workshops and works expressing the intention to be enclosed inside rocks (2021), in teachers’ reflections on ‘holding’ their emotion and how the event of care itself ‘still holds’ and endures in thinking about students outside of school - all expressing qualities of

dealing with something own, intimate and personal that teachers may want *to hold still* - or *still hold*.

This could also suggest the experience of balancing or managing conflicting emotions of strength or fragility, of ‘containing’ nurturance or being entrapped in the danger of burnout, the often expressed failing to deal with the feelings of care, which we could relate to another form of stillness, that of stickiness. It would relate then, to what is indeed expressed in the alarming reports³³ of the situation that teaching has become, and how teachers feel indeed ‘stuck’ in doing something that they love but does not give them satisfaction anymore. The peculiarity of these performances of stickiness is apparent in the

³² On underlying intentions behind these stages of my artistic research portraying teachers as ready to relinquish open the ‘space’ of their bodies and psyches to be ‘filled’ with the caring event as ‘other-mothers’: seeing the caring mother as container of care and for what the child cannot yet contain, have been fundamental theories of psychoanalysis, as in the famous work of Donald Winnicott and Wilfred Bion.

I acknowledge the relevance of these interpretations, and the justified analogies on the common ground between teaching and mothering and find them helpful, especially for teaching pre-school children. Evidently, teaching and mothering have been closely related and very often researched as such in an important and wide area of scholarship. See for example Shaw’s (1995) extensive analysis of the ‘in loco parentis’/ ‘in place of parent’ doctrine around teaching as well as more recent contributions by Hauver James (2010) and Mohammed, Gbenu and Lawal (2014). Moreover, crucial elements of

maternal nurturance can be easily identified, or admitted, in care ethics scholarship such as Noddings’s (1984, 1992). Indeed, relating teaching to the maternal was crucial for a long period of my research and artistic practice as well, in unpacking the complexity and ambivalence of emotion in caring teaching. However, I eventually distanced my project from teaching as mothering, on the basis that teaching is not contextualised in the domestic but somewhere between the domestic and the public. It is a profession and as such contextualised in markets and economies, in rigorously and methodically systematised practices that differ from mothering, and which create its distinct frameworks of complexity and peculiarity.

³³ For example, see recent reports by *Education Support* (2017-2022).

feminist psychoanalytic account of sociology scholar Jenny Shaw who argues that teaching can relate or lead to work anxieties of “...being ‘stuck’, of being ‘second-rate’ or being ‘only’ a semi-profession, of being undervalued, of not being ‘good-enough’, or of losing control” (1995: 57), while on the other hand, living in fantasies of omnipotence and heroism – fantasies pervasive in the discourse around teaching. Difficult emotions do feel ‘sticky’ in their phenomenological articulation as Ahmed (2014) suggests. At the same time, the social component, especially in uncertain times creates for teachers “...an anguished consciousness, an inner uncertainty and confusion which characterizes human subjectivity” (Bartky 1990: 14 quoted in Boler 1999: 112). And uncertainty and confusion can leave us unable to move forward, perhaps crushed under emotions³⁴ that “...accumulate over time, as a form of affective value” (Ahmed 2014: 11). The frustrating relationship to deep caring feeling, crucially characterised by an increasing ambivalence can be seen as analogous to the constantly intensified frustration that systematised neoliberal practices in education produce for teachers (Bodenheimer and Shuster 2020).

This intricate position, seen as a form of stuck stubbornness that can also be tender and caring, is crucial, I claim, as a performance of care. These ‘stuck’ performances could then be seen as occupying a place of unwillingness to move. They could express the fundamental principle of ambivalence that I believe is crucial for understanding teaching caring subjectivities and my device of stillness in examining them. Ambivalence, a concept initially explored in psychoanalysis and the maternal, could be useful for a broader understanding of the experience of care, such as Marian Barnes’s (2012) research in care in everyday life, that attests that ambivalence is characteristic of care work. Psychoanalyst Barbara Almond (2010) defines ambivalence as

a conflicted mental state, in which one has both loving and hating feelings... it characterizes all human relationships, not just that of mother and child. Being able to tolerate both kinds of feelings...without having one feeling destroy the other, is a sign of good mental health. Having to deny or suppress either love or hate leads to depleted and rigid relationships in which the other person is not experienced in his or her *full* emotional reality. (Almond 2010: 8, both emphases in original)

³⁴ Both performances *Transfixed* (2018) and *CROWNING* (2018, 2019) relate to this with the stillness performed in wearing my paper hats and golden bubble.

Indeed, Donald Winnicott's (1949) theory of maternal ambivalence contends that the mother's hate for her baby is necessary to develop love for it. Considering that Winnicott published his ground-breaking article to explore the taboo of hate in an analogy to the caring relationship between therapist and client, it makes us consider that caring relationships may (as they do) involve a range of conflicting emotions. But I do not necessarily want to consider this important theory as the emotional experience of teachers' potentially conflicting emotions towards students' difficult behaviour, or towards their role in all its socio-political implications. Relating back to Grumet's and Illich's arguments of the intimacy and liminality of teaching, I want to bring those provocations together with care as accommodation of holding a conflictual experience.

This is the intimate nature of the work and perhaps the nature of care in its tender and gentle shades that mark the teacher, because of her relationship to her students. Grumet (1988) discusses the peculiar intimacy of this experience as she argues that teaching takes place in an idiosyncratic, liminal space, situated somewhere between the domestic/private and the public and in "...extended rituals that we call schooling" (1988: 32). This important perspective -which clearly resonates with performance – highlights how a maintenance of

isolation in teaching, creates practices that teach and model order through the body and the (ambivalent) feeling of the teacher.

In this ambivalent context however, the job still involves effort to "...camouflage the illegitimate pleasure that the woman who teaches finds in the work itself." (Grumet 1988: 86). Jill Dolan (2001) and Elizabeth Freeman (2005) have also spoken about and claimed for the space to allow consideration of the affective desires in classrooms, even if this remains a taboo subject for education.

We understand therefore, an experience of a subjectivity felt lesser than human, as participants also contended, often robotic, which brings us into questioning to what extent we own these performances when our agency on them is layered and instrumentalised.

Emotion emerges as the ultimate battleground and its management can be artful. Emotions are not only good and bad, easy and difficult, but primarily, emotions speak in scale that must be manipulated and managed, often guarded to not open up, to release and reveal the true experience, in its full size– and that is seen as unruly, and therefore, risky.

Indeed, Maurice Hamington has talked about the risk in care, how in caring for the other I risk parts of myself that I may not want to risk, because being caring may mean addressing the difficulty, the struggle and pain of the other (2016 *Performing Care Symposium*, RCSSD

Keynote). Disclosure of emotion may be seen by teachers as ‘failure’ of care and betrayal of the caring relationship and the duty of care. The risk of releasing or unleashing affectivity, even in positive emotional and physical expression, terrorises with the risk of harming children or the risk of harming the self, by ‘running out’ of emotion, with nothing to remain for the depleted self. In these cases, meeting with emotion is experienced as failure – as well as not meeting with it also does.

Affectivities pertaining to care have then something unresolved and frustrated/ing. And even considering approaching this frustration can be risky. Megan Boler has argued about the discomfort and risk of emotion work within classrooms and how it can be like “...living at the edge of our skin” (1999: 200). With the performativity of this statement evident, it is worth asking what this experience of the skin may be. And it can indeed suggest the interrupting/ed in the continuity of feeling an experience fully. It can even express the absurdity of feeling *as* interrupted in the overwhelm of regulations, instructions and displays in school environments. Indeed, Tronto (1993: 128) as famously talks about care as the ‘suspension’ of the self in the attentiveness of care, we could consider the shape and form of this suspension.

“I am perceived as almost a robotic worker in a very artificial way, that I am just being there for children, that I am totally cut in this moment out of being as an adult who actually is with children and is ensuring my humanity and experience as an adult person. But no, I am just a worker. For me it was way too much that instead I am with the children, and we exchange experiences, and I work, and I care for them’ there is a lot of me cut out, I am just a worker.”

(Supply TA I.-Interview extract)

“Trying to think when I got my poker face. You learn not to show your expressions on your face. Not to show your emotion. When I started doing youth work, I didn’t have it... I’ve heard some horrific things over the years of doing youth work and I hope that my emotions haven’t shown on my face ... even if my heart is breaking... I was rewarded for this.”

(PRU TA J.-Interview extract)

With this chapter I have considered ‘doing emotion’ in teaching by framing emotions in their social and critical articulation and the educational culture of sentencing them to a non-space of the unexperienced or negated, which may be eventually a source of burnout. This does not mean, of course, that teachers should fully

express without filter or ‘care’ any emotion they experience in classrooms. Nor is it about portraying the experience as difficult or ugly, implying an intention to fetishize the difficulties of care. It does, however, enable an understanding of affectivities as performances and events that are not fully happening, refusing to circulate and move, with important after-effects that linger and constitute temporality as another crucial aspect of the performance of care in teaching, as I discuss in the next chapter. This reading of ambivalent experience as a story of resistance, perhaps suggests that the story of care could be a story of making and claiming (caring) space to feel, as for example the participatory workshops of the project demonstrated. And it may be that this space allows the holding of contradictions of care in stillness that can indeed be a caring performance of the teacher for their students. A further consideration of ‘holding’ (still) difficult emotions such as hopelessness, grief, or failure, as I provide in the chapters that follow, address the depth of ambivalence in the caring teaching experience. It also demonstrates that stillness may extend beyond affectivities to temporality, in another (hopeless) performance of the caring teacher, that of holding time in stillness, animated by caring imagination: the evocative, absurd image of a teacher waiting in stillness showcasing the aesthetics of care, as the next chapter explores.

[Reflection] [Interruption]

Ambivalence: a back-and-forth movement, a rhythm perhaps?

Could we then identify some form of spatial signification in performing care?

Scale, threshold, release into space, circulate – caring emotion as spatial practice.

The oscillatory motion of a needle piercing paper could express the felt experience of being suspended again and again and again, repeatedly interrupted in care.



Performance with paper
(2019) ‘HUMAN’
Exhibition PV.
Platform 1 Gallery,
London. Image:
Marilena Mavroviti.

CHAPTER 5

PERFORMING CARE IN PERSISTENT TIME

*“I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love,
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.”*

(Extract from *East Coker*, T. S. Eliot, 1940)

Building on the previous chapter's critical and artistic exploration of stillness of emotion, I will now move to the notion of time and how that speaks with care in teaching. With my provocation for the experience of care as performance event contextualised in space and time, I want to further consider the stillness of the spatial in relation to the temporal. Care is in constant dialogue with time in the shaping of temporal practices, in the fragmented time of interruption and stretched time of repetition, in patiently waiting. Repetition is psychoanalytically related to feminine organisation of life cycles and domestic practices (Felski 2002, Freeman 2010) while, along with them, interruption and waiting epitomize the temporality of caring/maternal practices (Baraitser 2009). But we can identify the relevance of these patterns to school care and how it is organised around certain temporal modes. In addition to this, increasingly intensified curriculums, practices and goals at schools result in time feeling compressed and ever accelerated. Hargreaves suggests that time is experienced in antithetical ways by teachers – and this points to another form of ambivalence around teaching: he talks about 'monochronic' timeframes that prioritise schedules and task completion with restricted sensitivity to context on the one hand, and the 'polychronic' time on the other, which emphasises people-orientation and the rhythms of their interrelation in their context, on

the other (Hargreaves 1994: 102-103). On this crucial examination of the complexities and pressures of school administration exercising control over the temporalities of classrooms, I want to extend a more focused look on the ways that these ambivalences may speak with the caring teaching experience.

In this chapter, I consider these aspects of caring teaching in its relation to time as demonstrated through the experiences that the findings of both the artistic and the field research highlighted. My discussion will be engaging with two cases of work, that both worked around the form and notion of the house, a private performative practice with an old *doll's house* (2021) and my public performance *PaperCare* (2018), a show that centralised the form of a house or a building that could also be a school. As I explore in the chapter, both artistic works were created as responses to feeling care as a teacher and as means to process emotion through performance. The private practices and improvisations that resulted in a show were staging and 'housing' my care in its intensity of ambivalent emotion that were both physically performed in stillness.

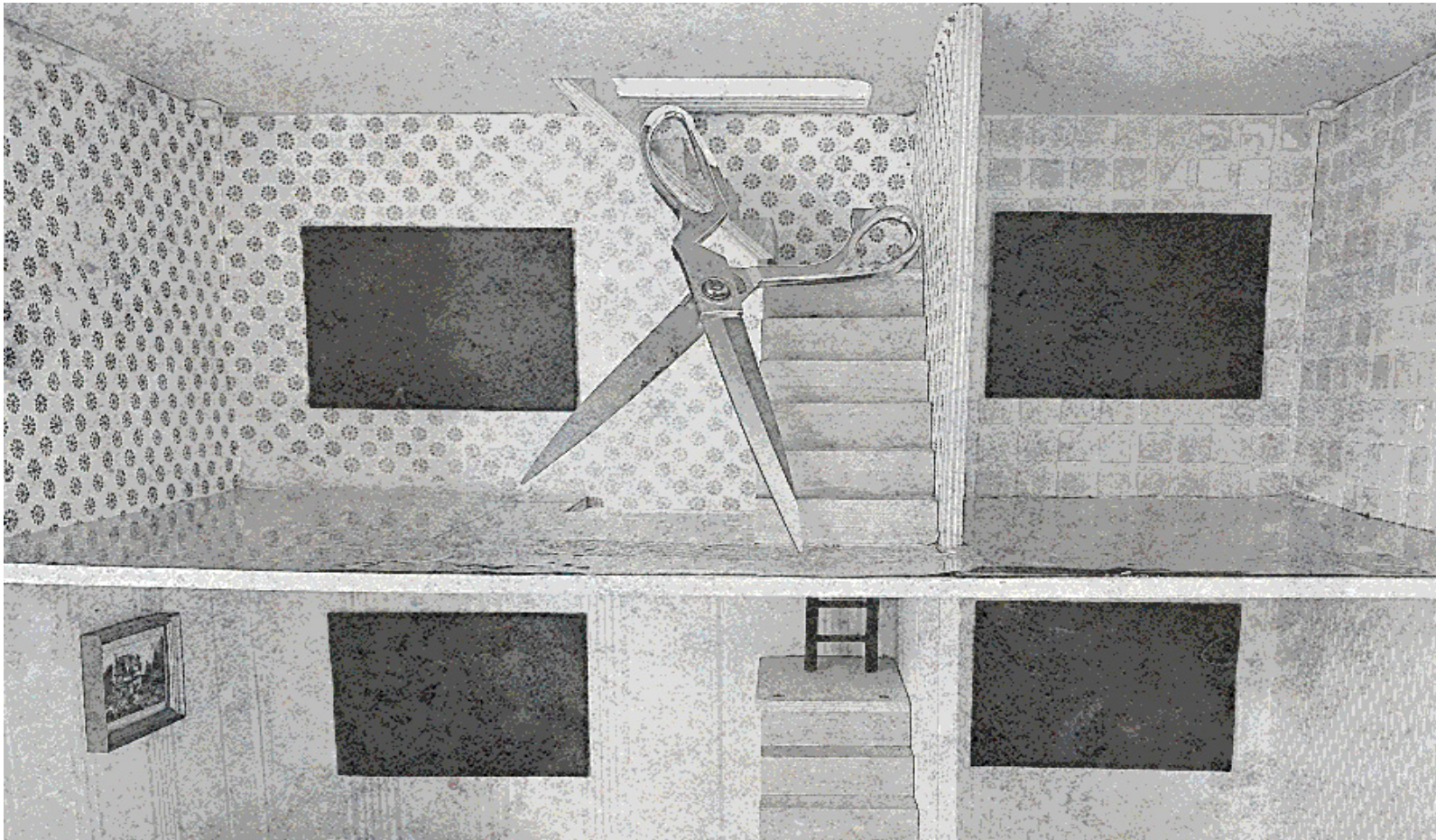
In *PaperCare* (2018) my studio improvisations started with little to no movement, restricted by loads of paper as the previous chapter demonstrated, as I also was practising with the *doll's house* (2021) barely moving small objects sitting for long by it. Yet, although this stillness initiated with similar intention to process care as event in the here and now, the practices of this chapters were invested as I will show in a dialogue with temporal dimensions. Firstly, the experience of accumulation of caring memory and how this indicates and at the same time performs an expression of stillness, as similar, somewhat more nuanced insistence to stay in the present. While the stillness of the previous chapter was perhaps imposed, an institutionalised effect of absence of movement or performing emotion and holding it still, the still space that this chapter aims to occupy expresses a temporal positionality of disobedience, a negation to let go.

This place, I argue in what follows, is a space co-created by the dialogue of the past with the future, it is a constant struggle of what the teacher may embody in holding, indeed housing conflictual emotions around the past and the future. The works explored the frustration of insisting to remember or negating to forget students, memories, in the peculiar position of a teacher staying still. In this way, the chapter discusses what is the temporal work, the inscription of time on the teacher figure, and how does it feel to become memory for the

students. The device of caring imagination is employed here to aesthetically access this experience of the teacher who remembers and is remembered. The caring imagination accommodates therefore, not only the management of memory and what remains from care, but also suggests a relationship to the future, for the teacher who thinks about and embodies the future, indeed as the subject who may or will be remembered, possibly for their care. This points to the notion of hope, a concept pivotal in education and any area related to children. As hope is also an essential component of care, this chapter explores the complex, nuanced experience of hoping as a teacher. Therefore, the argument moves into how the stillness insistence may signify an internalised or taboo experience for the teacher who, in precarious times, does not believe or cannot envision hope for the future, and how that may speak for the teacher as experience of failing in care. For this, I explore in parallel an analysis of moments of feeling failing in my artistic practice in *PaperCare* (2018), along with a discussion of how the artistic sector initiates such conversations. These will be employed to engage in a consideration of the notion of failure as feeling and experience in teaching, further than academic goals but rather in the experiencing failure in forgetting or, asking if we 'still' care when not being able to hope, experiences that are yet to be explored in educational research.

The chapter therefore approaches more deeply the lived experience of feeling care as a teacher, aestheticizing what for the teacher may be a frustration, indeed what I call, a temporal labour. And this may again express the force or precarity of a resistance to move, to not let go of a past, to not step into a future, and if this 'still' positionality may signify care.

5.1 THE DOLL'S HOUSE³⁵



³⁵ An earlier version of sections 5.1, 5.2 and 5.4 was presented at the *TaPRA Postgraduate Symposium* (24/06/2022) with the paper “(Re)Imagining Utopias

for the Lived Experience of Caring Practices: The Doll’s house” (Vasileiou 2022).

The doll's house performative practice initiated as a response to the shifting, alienating ways of online teaching during the pandemic. In a way it acted as a self-reflective tool or device for me to understand my experience of teaching and myself as a teacher while caring for my students remotely. As I was performing the practice sitting almost still for long hours, even in silence between lessons, the experience of stillness and waiting emerged as significant in the performance of care in teaching.

I got the doll's house at a nursery that I used to work at a few years ago and practically saved it from the garbage bin that it was thrown when it became too old for use and was replaced by a new, plastic one. At the nursery, the doll's house had staged multiple caring performances of enclosing children's laughter, their playful hands, and often their heads that they were trying to fit in its small rooms. Taking it out of the garbage, I carried it in buses, I took it home, cleaned it, renovated its floors. The cleaning involved a lot of washing and rubbing laboriously the floors to remove the old, damaged material that covered walls and floors. Doing so, I was reminded of Do Ho Suh, the artist who gently rubs with coloured pencil whole apartments that he firstly covers in paper, to maintain memory, reminded also of Mierle Laderman Ukeles's iconic performances in which she rubbed, washed and cleaned

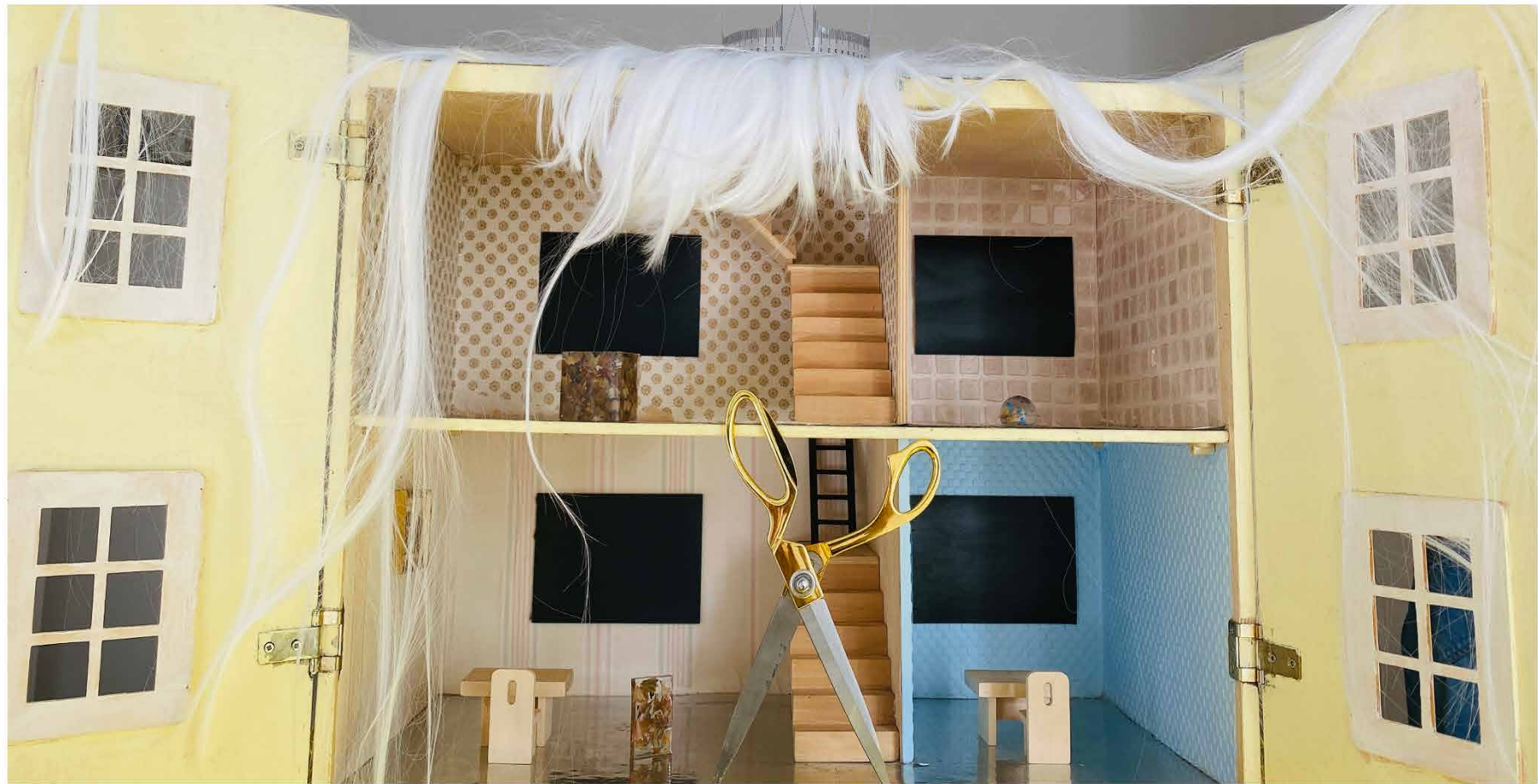
museums, galleries and their staircases, radically (re)claiming the aesthetic value of caring maintenance that housework is.

The old and tired, discarded, and unwanted doll's house got a new life after being taken care of. At my home, it became another little kingdom of care and similarly staged countless hours of play and imagination for my own child and her friends.

I can't clearly remember why I took it out of a cupboard in the spring of 2021 and what I was looking for with it. Placing it at the top of my desk behind my computer, in the room I was working and teaching long online hours during the pandemic, it offered something like a getaway. Whatever it was, I was looking forward to it as it was calling me to play with it and with its tiny pieces of furniture, or with artefacts that I had created from ephemera collected from teaching and memorabilia I was given by my students. I started engaging with it during my very short breaks and it became a self-reflective, autoethnographic tool. The practice resembled a performance improvisation, and there was something ritualistic and liminal about it. Here time performed differently, or it was me who had a different agency on time. The doll's house space was performing care upon the intensified time of teaching long hours, it afforded me abundance of time and held space for my experience.

[Reflection][Interruption]

The doll's house doors opened in an angle, like two arms inviting me to come in, to hold and embrace me. Being drawn to stillness and enclosing(s) persists.



Doll's house (PaR 2021- ongoing). Performative installation (30 x 50 x 120cm). All documentation images by Christina Vasileiou.



DOLL'S HOUSE PROPS AS CHARACTERS:

Miniature chairs, tables, blackboards, chalk dust.

A long white wig: sovereign, surveillance, institution - protagonist.

A golden and extra-large pair of scissors – protagonist.

Daughter's collected hair and baby teeth.

A bell that denotes interruption, fragmentation, institutionalisation.

Pencil and rubber shavings collected from students at school - frozen in resin – in stillness.

Paper sculptures made from cutting papers. Paper claws - doubting the gentleness of hands.

Loving souvenirs from students 'thank you' cards and ephemera, little paper birds – ready to fly away.

Cutting papers, making paper sculptures. Keep going. Keeping things moving, moving, moving. Counting.

Interruption.

Keeping things still, holding them for long.

I again catch myself to want to stuff, to fill – the doll's house this time.

To fully cover it with the long wig. Paradoxically, I sense this load as bigger when I look at it empty.

I refuse to see the space as empty even when I am removing all the props.

Perhaps it is then that I can better listen to the stories of the space echoed in its small, empty rooms.

I empty it but I wrap it, layers and layers of paper and twine closing it firmly. To keep everything in.

To keep the care still.

To keep care in there. Somewhere.

(Self-reflection on doll's house practice 25/06/2021)



Filling, emptying, and moving things around in the space of the doll's house, I was re-enacting, staging memory reflecting on questions around care and if it 'disappears' after it is performed. I was engaging in analogies about the assumptions around caring spaces, classrooms, and bodies, as I was practising my play almost sitting still, absorbed in a 'still' daydreaming located at its small rooms and corners³⁶, also teaching online sitting still, my scissors standing still like legs going en pointe, denoting effort and hard work. This play, looking for meaning in the floors and rooms of the doll's house, performed a layering of my teaching in past and present, 'staging' my processing of experience, telling different stories every time I rearranged the props.

There is significant meaning and narrative attached to objects kept that are reminiscent of care. Remembering may be proof that care was once there, that it existed in the past and its traces still linger and that may even "*perform*[] the service of 'saving'" (Schneider 2011: 99 italicised in original). This suggests another layering of caring performance in an intention to "challenge[] loss" (Schneider 2011: 102), to insist that

performance "does remain, does leave 'residue'" (ibid.: 100). Material remains then become the hosts of memory and re-enact in resistance what is assumed as disappearance. In this way, care extends its effect to the present and is even projected through the caring thinking about the future. This precisely positions remembering and the habitual practice of keeping remains in a relation to a hopeful future (or not), a relation that the next section will expand on. It suggests Jacques Derrida's thinking on archiving, that "[t]he question of the archive is not, [] a question of the past [...] It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, or a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow" (Derrida 1995 quoted in Schneider 2011: 108). It constitutes then the remembering subject as a performing subject, that being what Liedeke Plate and Anneke Smelik suggest in *Performing Memory* "an act of identity formation that serves to narrate and produce the self" (2013: 3). In this re-narration and re-production of the self, caring remembering can be seen then as another form of caring labour.

³⁶ Bachelard writes about the experience of the confined space and the corner: "The corner is a haven that ensures us one of the things we prize most highly – immobility" (Bachelard 1958: 156).

Indeed, the doll's house (2021) practice staged the futile struggle of the inevitable fragmentation of forgetting or the experience of a self ruptured in the process of becoming a memory for past students, that eventually the teaching subject subjects to or endures.

[Reflection][Interruption]

How could this practice remind us of the caring stories of classrooms and schools? How can it interrogate assumptions about schools as caring spaces, how we consider them and ourselves as teachers within them?

What is left behind in these spaces after being busy with care, with props, schedules, lessons, students? Where am I in this, and what is left, of me?

If care is a struggle between holding or controlling and letting go, how can I let go of the caring things collected and arranged in the space of my doll's house, and even more, in the space of my memory? Could the arranging of them be a caring re-writing and re-constituting of them in time and space? Am I re-writing, re-constituting myself in this way? Is letting go possible or impossible?





“... I still had not grasped the nature of this material [] I knew that Time itself seemed to be only defined by an outward activity. The questions kept hovering around me; there seemed to be a more basic level of Time that was eluding me. What was the inner connection, past activities, that thing that lies waiting for you on the stage even before you enter?[] I knew that the question was still: how to go about apprehending Time?” (Overlie 2016: 23)

Similarly to performance, the performing subject is assumed to disappearance although retaining caring presences and absences in their bodies as archives of caring memory. I considered myself and how during my teaching, I was being present for my students. I started having an embodied sensation that at that very moment that my teaching was happening, I was perhaps becoming a memory for my students. Teachers know that they may become memories for their students. But what may this feel as actual sensation and phenomenon for the caring teacher, knowing that you may become a memory in the minds of your students? And how may that affect or condition the care you offer? The embodied sensation of a self, stretched between present and future becomes almost palpable for me, holding time, being time, becoming an image blurred in time, as I am, equally, holding in my mind the image of my teachers, when I was a student.

I consider what it is that makes or does not make a teacher a memory and what care may have to do with that. As I remember mostly sensations especially from my teachers of early age, hands, bodies, smiles, looks, tone of voices, perhaps their caring dispositions, I am wondering if the same applies to me as well.

[Reflection][Interruption]

As I am turning to look at my reflection on the shiny material that I use for the renovation of the doll's house, I look blurry, unclear, like a distant memory.

If I am becoming a memory, I wonder how do I perform memory or intervene on memory? What will be left of me and what will endure in time?

Is there an end in care?

How can I enclose myself in here, in this doll's house, and freeze the care I have invested in it, and all the care it carries, how can I make it everlasting – or do I want to?



Student's 'Thank you' (2017) Print on paper 30x40cm.

Am I more caring if my care remains and insists to stay, as Lisa Baraitser argues for remaining as:

A persistence of time through a peculiar form of withdrawal, an elongated interval that neither develops nor unfolds but takes the form of shrinking [] This form of time does not 'pass'... [it] persists through material and affective attachments [] that in their turn function as practices of care. (2017: 166)

My students' presents, the 'thank you' cards, their countless notes and drawings promise the opposite, they promise they will always remember me - and my care. Although teachers can occupy ambivalent positions in the memory of their students, it is, still, a privilege to know that you may endure to exist in the memory of others, in the memory of much more many people than the average person. A privilege for the teacher carer to endure, to remain, at the same time, as a figure perhaps beyond human, a figure idealised, indeed unapproachable and everlasting, timeless.

Yet, I know that I will still be fragmented in the relentless fragmentation of institutional time and space, but also fragmented in the relentless, merciless workings of time upon memory. The place where only fragments of the caring teacher remain in the memory of others, and piece by piece they gradually slip away, and a name or a glimpse or a trace of affect, or not even any of that, remain at the end. Perhaps with that, signalling the end of care.



“And when everyone was leaving... [] how beautiful it was to know that you were there like an oasis... [] and that you lasted, you were more than time, you were the one who did not leave...” (Extract from Julio Cortázar’s poem ‘After the Party’, *Save the Twilight*, 2016)



Becoming a Memory, PaR 2021

5.2 INSISTING ON A CARING PRESENT

With the *doll's house* (2021) practice, I proposed an analogy between the staging of memory that the doll's house enacted and imagining teachers as bearers of caring memory, remembering the children they have taught and cared for. As such, their hearts and bodies can be seen as repositories, archives of stories about students that every teacher has to share, and which regardless of their years of teaching, are endless. These 'archives' of care are usually expressions of the teacher's style of attachment (Olson 2014) and their individual way of relating to their students. But the management of caring memory and attachment of the teacher to these memories can also be an intricate and intimate experience and performance. Often, this is expressed through a connection to objects related to teaching or given by students. But the notion and practice of archiving, the recollection and re-enactment of remains relate to foundational discussions in performance theory – and this is what I want to think about in this part.

The collection and arrangement of caring memorabilia, little presents, cards, notes, drawings and ephemera from students, group/class photos, the insistence to keep them and the difficult decisions of letting go, of decluttering, as 'disappearing', the special meaning and memory of these items as vessels of caring memory, are common practices between teachers.

There is significant meaning therefore, narrative and description to memories, objects kept and forgotten that “remind us how loss acquires meaning and generates recovery – not only of and for the object but for the one who remembers [] it rehearses and repeats the disappearance of the subject who longs always to be remembered” (Phelan 1993: 147). If we apply Phelan's argument to the care of the teacher, it may indicate how teachers remember because they know they will be remembered (for their care) or want to be so. The embodied sensation of the promise that you will be remembered by your students is a charged sensation, perhaps expressed in the affective force that mementos carry.

[Reflection][Interruption]

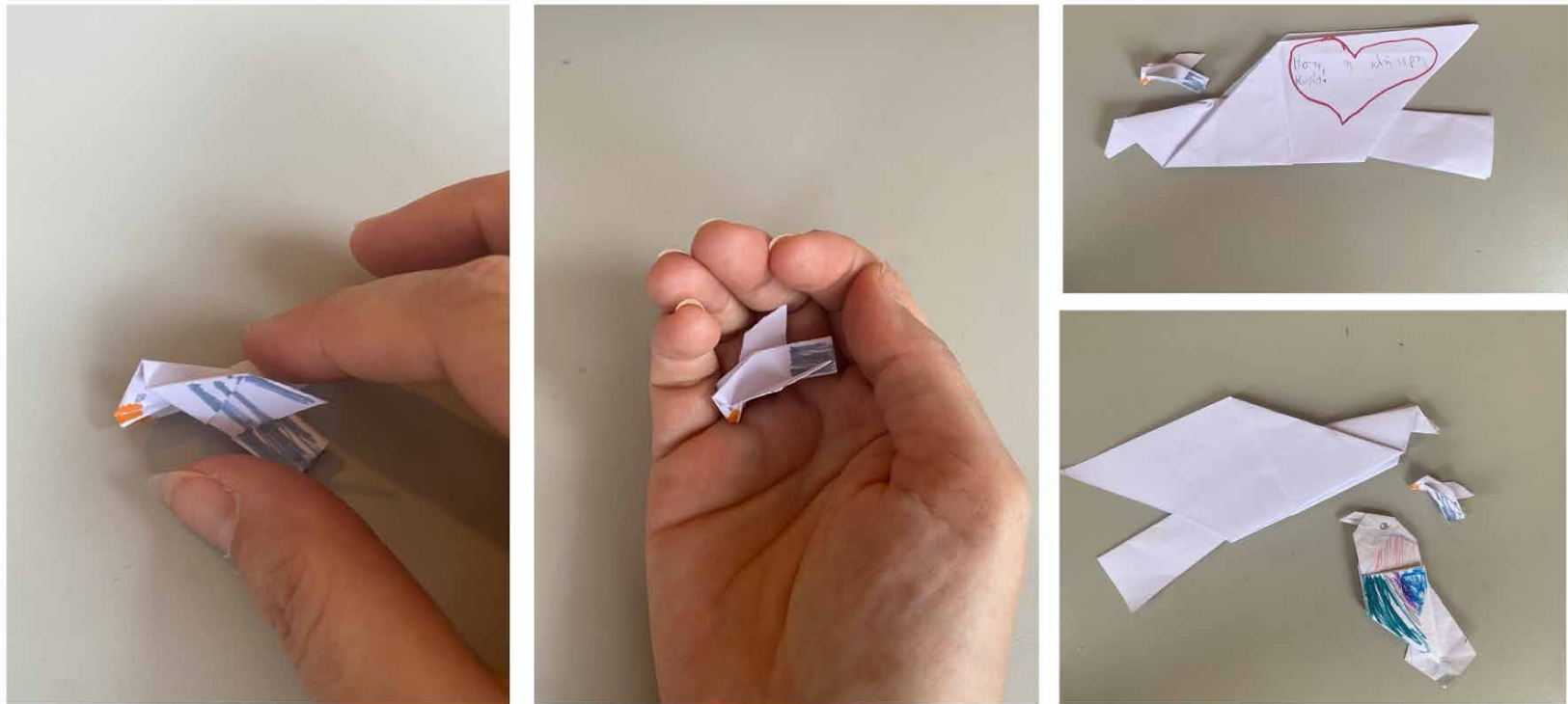
Can I consider my own material and affective attachments to my caring memorabilia, the denial to let time 'unfold', as modes of shrinking time in the shrinking space of my doll's house, as caring practices of remaining?

How may a practice of caring remaining as a teacher look and feel?

Could we think that the care of the 'remaining' teacher imprints the spaces they worked in and offered this care meaning that care may still endure there?

Can we still assume that care exists/ed if the teacher forgets about the student - as the names and faces of my many students become vague with the years?

Could the practice of sitting with a doll's house filled with caring memory be ultimately seen as a practice of capturing and preserving performances of care?



Holding Memory, PaR 2021

This force may be the proof that care was once there, and that it existed in the past and its traces linger. That care extends its effect to the present and is projected through the caring thinking of the teacher for the future, as transcendent care. This form of memory work suggests how we want something to stay after it or from it, a memory to hold, to retain to close or to wrap ‘still’. The cultural practice of a teacher engaging in the recollection and collection of caring mementos may then be “even [a] practice of remembering the act of memory itself” (Plate and Smelik 2013: 5).

In this re-narration and re-production of the self, in the caring remembering of students, the teacher can then be seen as performing another form of caring labour, *performing caring memory*. And as Plate and Smelik state “memory is hard work [and] fundamentally processual and dynamic” (2013: 3). Indeed, this is also a futile struggle with the inevitable temporal fragmentation of forgetting or in another layering of performance’s vanishing, that of the teacher becoming a memory for students.

But this collection of re-collection can also be seen as a practice of temporal resistance, an insistence on a preoccupation with the past, in the present, a resistance to forget – and be forgotten. It suggests crucial questions for care as another performance event about what exists and who we are before and after it. As Howell (1999) writes for performance:

Where are we [] prior to our performance? And where are we when we are not performing? Where shall we sit, stand, crouch or perch initially, and perhaps after that as a matter of custom (as if forever?) Where indeed shall we place ourselves to be as forgotten-to-be-there [] ? (1999: 8)

I still consider how the discourse that wants teachers to be ‘teachers for life’, long after the caring teaching event has finished, illuminates the importance of the above questions and the relevance of caring teaching to performance.

[Reflection][Interruption]

Teacher is/ as a performed memory:

Solid - void

Real - unreal

Did she ever exist?

However, performances and affectivities of caring ‘remains’ suggest a persistence to bring the past care into the present. They render care as event imprinted on bodies, that bodies hold as “flesh memory” (Schneider 2011: 100) that can be re-enacted in the present, triggered by matter of objects kept from teaching. Furthermore, even the careful handling and arrangement of these objects, their careful preservation, and, as in the doll’s house practice, careful curation, suggests another layer and practice of care, another insistence to remember, or painfully and guiltily acknowledge details that inevitably evade memory. In the almost twenty years of my teaching, my pictures with my students, the faces that I always remember, the presents, letters, and drawings that I still keep, still carry an affective force for and on me. In *Enduring Time* (2017) Lisa Baraitser discusses the art of Arthur ‘Bispo’ do Rosario, an undocumented, unregistered artist who was institutionalised in ‘mental hospitals’ for most parts of his life. Bispo spent his life collecting, wrapping, organising, reorganising, and naming discarded objects, and

making sculptural artworks with them, a practice of constituting the unregistered, the unnamed, perhaps the forgotten, producing in this way a remarkable body of work during his institutionalised life. This work enacts a form of agency on what is overlooked and fleeting, by caringly collecting and thus, holding upon relationships with objects - as I did too in the doll’s house. In this way, it manifests a dialogue between the spatial, the material and the temporal. And this dialogue speaks with belief: we collect because we believe, because it matters, indeed, to use the famous phrase of Karen Barad (2003), ‘matter matters’. Schools and classrooms featuring overloaded displays of class projects, show not only the pride in students’ works, but perhaps suggest the temporal insistence to keep memory and bring it constantly into the present. And this indicates the importance of affectivity in relation to the material and the meaning and memory it carries, as well as how the caring space of the classroom retains the stories of caring experience and layers time upon time, imprinted by them, to constantly re-enact the performances they suggest. Collecting and working with the memory of paper, pencil and rubber shavings, curating memorabilia, using what is not only forgotten but what is literally discarded (as the doll’s house itself was), becomes then a practice of telling a story of a/the care that once happened, to imagine or feel

what existed beyond the care for learning, and to not let it go forgotten.

It invests time on caring maintenance of things that do not necessarily ‘matter’ in the fast, productive temporalities of schools, and embrace the time of caring maintenance as valued. Lisa Baraitser (2018, *ICI* online) argues about the assumptions of maintenance time as wasted time relating her argument to the exemplary performance maintenance work of Mierle Laderman Ukeles. Care in teaching is also the work of maintenance on material and immaterial level, with significant time afforded to things that are not directly related to learning, such as play, distributing material, helping with equipment, comforting, listening to or telling stories that do not have to do with lessons, joking and laughing, cleaning and tidying up spaces and desks. This time is time of care and should not be disregarded, discarded, or deemed unproductive. Baraitser states that maintenance/Ukeles’s work:

provides a corrective to seeing that the only way of engaging with [] structures is through the lens of agency, resilience, resistance or the unfolding of the event in relation to the object [...] maintenance time points us towards time involved in maintaining connections with one

another and hence indeed with the time that we share (2018, *ICI* online 41.17)

Similarly, the practices that this project demonstrated in the performances, such as *PaperCare* (2018), discussed below, and the exercises the workshops suggested (see Chapter 6), could be seen as maintenance practices. That the use of materials expressed another intention to perform a holding of/on time, by keeping literally still materials, objects, the bodies of workshop participants³⁷, me as the teacher/performer wrapped in paper, all wrapped (as we wrap something fragile to protect it from breaking), maintained, preserved in memory.

³⁷ See practices of wrapping in workshops in Chapter 6.

The practices of caring memory perform a disruption on the continuity of dominant temporalities that are only future-oriented by suggesting alternative continuities, those that merge past and future in an insistence to stay in the present. In this way they illuminate that performance *can* remain as a “repeated act of securing memory [in which]...we are asked, again to (re)found ourselves – to find ourselves in repetition” (Schneider 2011: 104-105). They perform a present of recollected past, not necessarily out of nostalgia, but as performances of belief in the power of care. They also express what may have been retained, ‘held still’ and not fully felt at the event of care, to be projected and released at different places and times, allowed to surface this time fully, gloriously unhindered, channelled into the act of browsing a collection of students’ memorabilia and ephemera of love. The collection of re-collection as a practice of temporal resistance, a resistance to forget – and be forgotten, suggests then, crucial questions about who we are before and after care bringing the past in a dialogue with the future. Plate and Smelik argue that “a performance of memory not only grounds the present in the past but also helps to orient us towards the future” (2013: 4). In this way, the time of care may feel complete, when we still manage to carry the past into the present and perhaps project it to the future. It is then, that care endures in time and space, such as in a doll’s house loaded with objects of care, and this

caring filling of space, may also feel fulfilling the caring teacher’s disposition.

In a way, as in its emotional configuration, caring teaching, is revealed also ambivalent in its temporal performativity, misplaced, or displaced between past, present and future, or even occupying a utopic temporal positionality of their merging. These gentle insistences on the affective and the material signify the temporal positionality of teacher care and the nuances of thinking about time in care. They speak about the embodied sensation of the teacher who caringly remembers feeling stretched between past, present and future, holding time, ultimately a figure and memory blurred in time. The *doll’s house* (2021) artistic practice extended the notion of affective stillness of the previous chapter into an embodied performance that foregrounded the relation of teachers’ care to the temporal in its intricate, nuanced positionality. The next section explores further the affective relationship to a/the caring future to suggest another alternative, caring performance of stillness. It showcases how the teacher figure may insist on ‘remaining’, perpetually staying, inhabited by the performances of care.



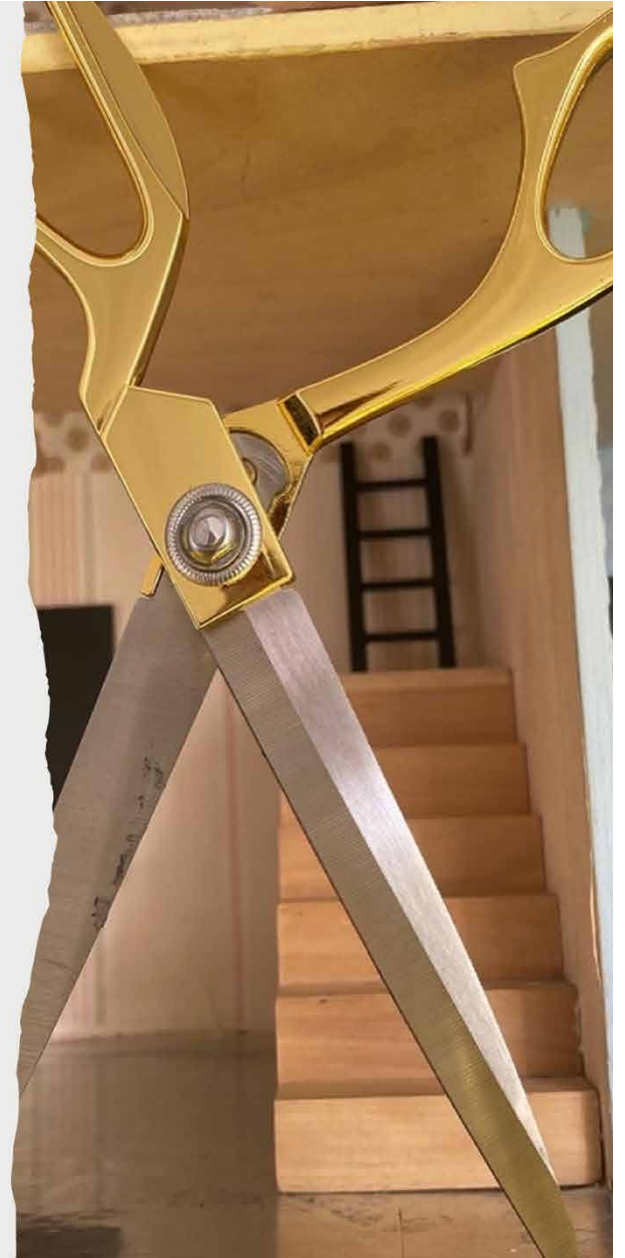
SCISSORS

The expression of my repeatedly interrupted subjectivity in care
And my effort of repetition.
Scissors may allow something to emerge through their opening or may not
The trap. The freeze. The cut.
They constitute time, the timed-subjects carers are.
The study of time in-care
[Wanting something to remain.](#) A memory.
To keep it, freeze it, hold it- still.
We want stillness.
Care constitutes time. Care shapes time. Faster, slower.
Wait. Wait. Wait.
Cutting time all the time – being cut by time.
Care as the rhythm of the world.
A caring rhythm in my body
A caring rhythm in my emotion.
I am an interruption. I am a cancellation.
Obedient time. Disobedient time.
Thick time. Flowing time.
Clean time. Crystal time.

Impossible task

TO Honour a moment
TO Stretch a moment
TO Fit something in a moment

Prompt presented at International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR) 2021
'Performance-as-Research Working Group'



5.3 PAPER CARE (2018)

In this part, I discuss a performance show I created as a product of a series of private improvisation or performative self-reflections during conducting social research in parallel to my teaching work.

PaperCare (2018) was a performance show presented as part of the Barbican *OpenFest*³⁸ festival in March 2018, a festival celebrating diversity and creativity also targeted at family audiences. The show was advertised as an invitation for audiences to (re)visit the experience of feeling the care of (a) teacher(s) and around forty people, adults and children aged between four and eleven attended the show. In what I see retrospectively as a gentle and tender show, the piece was an exploration of the experience of being a teacher and an attempt to talk about this experience through performance, aiming to illuminate the intimate side of teaching, re-enacting what the figure of the teacher may trigger for each of us and what may remain from the experience of

being taught and cared for by teachers. *PaperCare* (2018) was created upon repetitive circles as rituals of actions: collecting papers and eggs, laying papers as walls of a metallic house structure that was framing the show, writing on papers, washing papers, making of paper nests, folding and wrapping papers. These actions were devised during a four-month period of studio improvisations as embodied self-reflection and processing of the emotional labour of performing patience as a teacher, of enduring repetition and interruption in classrooms, and the difficult feelings of guilt, failure, or despair for my work. While my previously published chapter³⁹ that complements this section provides documentation and a short reflection on the piece, I also provide here a spine of questions and notes that guided me in the show development, along with post-performance reflections that illuminate how performance making can also be a form of care-making as well as a voicing of care-related struggles.

³⁸ See how the show was advertised at: <https://www.barbican.org.uk/whatson/2018/event/family-music-drama-workshops>

³⁹ Find the documentation of the show at: <https://christinavasileiou.com/video/>

Find previously published chapter “‘PaperCare’: Performance Art Making as Voicing and Representation of the Feminine Caring Teaching Experience”. In

Deepwell, K. (ed.) 2020. *Feminist Art Activisms and Artivisms*, at: <https://christinavasileiou.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/ChristinaVasileiou.PaperCare.pdf>



PaperCare (2018) Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London.
Image by Stelios Mastrokalos.

Context of show

Where am I?

It is not clear where the show is situated in place and time. It evokes a sense of immersion, or atmosphere of dream, although it is not an immersive piece, there is something hypnotic about it, perhaps something that makes me (and the audience?) dream of school life. The soft lights, and the distant sounds create a dreamlike environment, a space that seems poetic, metaphorical. Sounds playing in loop resemble the sounds that whales make, somehow this seeming like a soothing caring sound – but there is also the loud bell sound that the woman/teacher rings repetitively. Lots of paper all around (me), creating an enclosing environment, a nest, a cocoon, enveloping me. Paper multiplies, becomes too much, it could be seen as suffocating. The piece is centered around a metallic structure of a house or a school, something that could be seen as the frame of a building without walls and which I eventually enter.

Who, what, how am I?

The focus is on me, a woman, a teacher, a m-other.
I am: exposed and vulnerable - all eyes on me, like my students do, transparent, strong, determined to complete my tasks.

Not-belonging, in limbo, being everywhere and nowhere, being timed and timeless.

I try too much, I force myself to repetitive, obsessive actions,
I become drained.

My effort becomes a discipline, I am disciplined, focused, I use water,
I am cleansed – of emotion.

When (am I)?

Timescale depicted not clear.

It may be a day in the life of a teacher, a school day, it may be night,
when all students are at their homes and the school is empty, but
sensations of the care that happened during the day may still linger.

However, the piece has a rhythm, as it is built around cycles of
repetition and interruption. It echoes performance art pieces that
work⁴⁰ with felt time as subject matter.

Content of show

What am I doing?

The audience find me collecting papers and eggs scattered around,
a devoted worker. As I collect the scattered papers, I also step on
them, my walking becomes slippery. As I am sliding on papers, I need
to be very careful. My task is to gather all the papers and clean the
room. Cleanliness and neatness concern me. My obsessiveness with
order commands that I carefully wash some the papers in a bucket
filled with water.

Interruption: BELL RINGING

I continue to collect, securing every paper on my body, all in my lap.
Everything must be gathered and fit on me. I may look ridiculous in
this impossible task of carrying a mountain of papers. When some
papers fall, inevitably, I try to gather them again, but I feel I have failed
them, like failing to attend to a child, or to an emotion - I also think I
disappoint my audience.

⁴⁰ Tehching Hsieh's famous "Time Clock Piece" (One Year Performance 1980 -1981) involved Hsieh punching a clock, every hour, twenty-four hours

a day, for an entire year while keeping a detailed documentation of the action on every day's timecards.

Interruption: BELL RINGING

I even ask the audience to support me in my unusual task. I think they feel intrigued by this action and somehow relate papers and eggs to something human, perhaps children. When I drop an egg by accident, I hear a few gasps. Another fail.

Interruption: BELL RINGING

I have eventually collected everything, and enter the house-school, or school-house. I am gently letting all the paper to fall on the floor and all around me. The metallic frame is now full of paper.

I take pieces of the scrunched paper and straighten them on my body with my hands carefully and patiently. I lay them on the sides of the structure, they become the walls – of the institution. *REPETITION*

Interruption: BELL RINGING

I make the roof and the side walls; I make the shelves.

I make the books, all in line on the floor, good books, well behaved.

I practise spellings in repetition and effort, I am right-handed, but I am writing with my left hand.

REPETITION

I am making nests out of paper that I lay on the shelves.

REPETITION

I place an egg in each nest.

REPETITION

Interruption: BELL RINGING

I am watering the paper nests as if they are thirsty or something could grow out of them.

REPETITION

I am putting on them bows I make with twine, tying careful knots.

REPETITION

Tying knots: a need to control or hold, even in this absurdity of actions, as I have previously untied and tied neatly the shoelaces of some children in the audience.

REPETITION

Interruption: BELL RINGING

“...It is a relationship that you cannot cut, [or] release, it is a Gordian knot, a Sisyphbean task⁴¹ you do all the time, and you cannot stop... and it is a pressure for both sides ... it has these two sides... is it ever resolved or is it in the nature of care to be draining?” (Independent Primary School Teacher M.-Extract from post-workshop group reflection at independent mainstream school with teachers)

When all books, walls, nests, and eggs are neatly organized, I still have a big mess of paper all around me in the small space of the metallic structure. I start gathering and folding the paper, wrapping it in a large, elongated shape, that is (again) resembling a little child or a baby, as in my early performances with paper. In closing the show, something breaks, something bleeds as I am holding this shape like a baby, something shines like a heartbeat at its centre.

Interruption: BELL RINGING

With *PaperCare* (2018) I consider what the aesthetics or poetics of my intimate enclosing inside the metallic frame of the school/house can suggest for holding and managing emotion.

By this, I want to point to how my metallic structure was not only framing the show. It was testing the limits of what it can fit or accommodate (in it), the feeling, the filling, and being filled with emotion, carrying (emotion) or the qualities and sensations of being stretched or limited by emotion in space. There is perhaps something primordial and comforting in the impulse to be enclosed, that suggests the importance of considering space in relation to care. In his extraordinary, poetic *topoanalysis* of the intimate processing of memory through space, Gaston Bachelard argues about the “...primitiveness of the refuge...show[ing] that a human being likes to ‘withdraw into his corner,’ and that gives him physical pleasure to do so” (1958: 112).

⁴¹ I am using here the known expression, but the participant used the Greek expression which instead of ‘task’ uses the word ‘martyriō’, which in Greek translates as ‘torment’ or ‘torture’.

Being enclosed in the house structure, stuffing, and filling with papers, wrapping papers and making nests and hats, evoke sensations or intentions of enclosing and to be enclosed. The submission into this enclosing could suggest a retention of lived experience, an intention to intimately revisit it or hold it in the curling up inside the house/school frame or inside the caring signification of the nests – themes I have already explored in the restriction of movement or stillness of the performances with materials (2018, 2019) and doll's house (2021) performative improvisation. With my following analysis I want to develop further my proposal for the imaginative in considering care in teaching. I will stay with elements and moments of *PaperCare* (2018) to open to the absurd or unexpected, to that which may not make sense as linear and rational, indeed that which may not be productive, that which may fail.

5. 4 PERFORMING CARING FUTURES (FAILURES OF CARE)

The intimate performance *PaperCare* (2018) did not exhaust itself in self-absorption, it was also invested in the audience, if and how they felt cared for. I could also see myself as emotional labourer, a performer labouring the affectivity of gentle interaction with the audience in tender caring actions like prompting them to assist me in the careful gathering of papers, offering them the paper nests I make, or asking for permission to untie and tie their shoelaces.

Although I still embrace the affectivity of the show, I want also to identify how, in what has stayed with me as a gentle performance, I can read elements of the unexpected or not making sense. Moving beyond the gentle and tender features of the show, as usually associated to care, in this section, I want to explore what we could read behind the absurdity of actions such as washing papers, watering nests, or repetitively untying and then tying back the shoelaces of audience members. I will use these elements of pointlessness or unproductiveness to consider what happens when care seems unproductive or even failing - an existing yet unadmitted aspect of caring as a teacher.

Indeed, I consider the arrangement of the space of the show: the audience sit at one side of the room. This is what the shape of the room allows me to do, in the very limited time for preparation I am offered with. This arrangement makes me feel like a teacher who gives up trying to find inventive and creative ways for the seating arrangements of their classroom but retracts to the standard way of all students and desks facing the teacher. I almost feel shame as an artist - as I sometimes do as a teacher - when I am that un-inventive, perhaps boring, or simply too exhausted to be more creative.

This points to important aspects of the performance of care that I will subsequently consider, how successful the show was in caring for the audience, how caring performance can be for audiences and participants, and the artistic caring labour behind them.

Failing – again. I am thinking about the countless times that I have felt failure as a teacher, in the face of that which I cannot control, not because of my teaching, but because a further sense of responsibility that I cannot fulfil. There is only so much that I can do. Failure, rage, grief.

I feel again the same sense of despair that all is hopeless, a futile utopia. This feeling I have been having since last week that even my research is useless because their life structures are far more powerful, and these children are already damaged.

PRU 14/06/17-Autoethnography extract

Standard seating arrangement, dropping eggs, dropping papers, I have in my mind the list of all my failures in this performance. Similarly, I carry the failures of my caring teaching, not as mistakes of delivering my lessons and reaching learning targets, but in the moments that I felt that my care towards my students was manipulated and controlled, even distorted by systems and regulations. With the phenomenon and experience of failure yet being a much-anticipated discussion to be initiated in education, I am wondering how this feeling speaks with the normative conceptions that are deeply embedded in education. When educational care is highly regulated, what is for the teacher the emotional accommodation of that that escapes control, what happens with the ‘papers and eggs’ that fall from our arms, with the nests that it is futile to water? I will argue that considering the intensity of this stretching and ambivalence in emotion could perhaps, support a deeper understanding of teachers’ burnout. These perceptions could point to feelings of failure, that especially my practice explored further in unpacking crucial realisations around the emotional and embodied

subjectivity of the teacher. Thinking about *PaperCare* (2018), I wonder how we can consider failure in feeling caring emotion, and what the performance of a teacher stuffed with papers or emotion, stuck and motionless, indeed transfixed, invested in unproductive tasks that resist meaning, or progress, obsessively and repetitively collecting papers, making nests, and washing papers can reveal about their care.

I want to further consider the temporal experience of care as it projects onto the future as hope and belief, the notions-pillars of educational culture. Educational care is strongly attached to ideals and visions of the future, and schooling is founded upon aims and goals in reference to an ideal of future progress in mind. Consciously or not, the teacher envisions a future for their students with hope and with the best progress for them in mind, inspires and invites them closer to it every day with their teaching. Indeed, educational research follows recent developments in hope studies in sociology and philosophy and explores the relation between hope and teaching in their close interrelation⁴².

⁴² From the different connotations of hope in teaching, see for: hope’s crucial role in the formation of teaching identity and its role in sustaining meaning in the lived experience of teaching work (Li, Mitton-Kükner & Yeom 2008; Eren 2014; Schaefer & Clandinin 2019), hope as stance and emotion related to practice excellence and vision in teachers’ development (Greenlee &

Dedeugd 2002; Daoud & Parsons 2021), struggles to find and sustain hope in times of crisis (Ali-Khan & Wesley White 2020), the importance of hope for (re)imagining social justice in educational policy and practice (McInerney 2007; Singh & Han 2007), or even ambivalent orientations towards hope in teacher experiences of guilt for hoping as unrealistic view of a world that seems broken (Estola 2003).

These contributions underline the importance of hope in the formation of teaching identities and the nurturing of positive visions for a/the future. Singh and Han, for example argue that “...robust hope is understood [...] as integral to realising any vision for a decent future [and] educators require the imagination that makes hope robust” (2007: 223). As the word ‘imagination’ implies, perhaps it is not possible to have hope without the ability to imagine a future beyond the complexities and challenges of current climates of crisis.

A relation to the future, being able to hope, is not only an indication but also an ingredient of care as Ruddick (1989) suggests. This suggests the complexity of temporal orientation of care, that we want care to result into something, to produce something and with it, to actualise a future, even if we may not be there to witness it. At the same time, it expresses a sense of redemption, a ‘paying off’, a form of fulfilment projected onto the future. This constitutes a certain orientation or perspective, what Felski states for hope as “orientation to the future, or what we sometimes call belief in progress” (Felski 2002: 22). It may indeed indicate a relation to emotions of fulfilment and a positive disposition or the well-known rewarding experience of caring, especially as this is expressed through teachers’ hope for students’ ‘progress’.

Nevertheless, Ahmed’s (2010) critical feminist thinking suggests hope and the chasing of happiness as a conditioning. She argues that “...happiness is crucial to education, which can be considered an orientation device [...] to educate is to orient...” (2010: 54). On this basis, therefore, the duty of care could translate as a duty to hope. And that may not be far from what Jack Halberstam calls ‘disciplinary correctness’ as conditioning in modern power (2011: 7). Although, I do not suggest that all teachers are “caught up in a rush of joyous anticipation and the thrill of expectancy” (Felski 2002: 22), I do believe that a sense or amount of optimism is necessary for teaching to happen.

Studies of the future on the other hand, examine how in the face of uncertain times, time and hope for the future may seem to be coming to an end and consider the possibility of reimagining a future beyond normative understandings and promises of happiness. Felski argues: “Progress, of course, is now a sadly tarnished and diminished idea [...] The future [] is not what it used to be. There is much talk nowadays of the death of the future and its replacement by an extended present” (2002: 22-23), while Giorgio Agamben (2002) considers the ‘time that is left for us’, with the possibility for no time to be left. Still, in the structural collapse that these arguments express, the systemic organisation around notions of hope and progress continues to have

value. It can be suggested that especially for certain practices such as teaching (as well as the making of socially engaged art which will be discussed in the next chapter) we are directed towards understandings and practices of another form of (emotional) labour, what Kathleen Kuehn and Thomas Corrigan (2013) call ‘hope labour’ as the practice of having to look forward to a desired future, while Cook & Cuervo (2019) consider the implication of developing a lack of agency that passively accepts the future. But how can hopeless, burnt-out teachers (or unsupported artists) find hope in times of crisis that ask them to care relentlessly? What happens if we do not see a future - are we uncaring then?

And teachers may experience hopelessness when social and economic injustices are sadly reflected in classrooms, as they always do, leading to painful realisations that there is very little that you can do for some children that are ‘broken’ (a word many research participants used) or when you, the teacher, are broken. But there are many times that

teachers must break bad news to their students, stories of school communities undergoing collective trauma and grief, and in all these situations the figure of the teacher, must become the source of hope for students⁴³.

[Reflection][Interruption]

Do we fail in hope? How can a practice of insisting to remain in a caring present relate to that?

The authors of *Dark Pedagogy* (2019) argue that

the darkness of our times is uncanny [...] darkness highlights a feeling of loss of place-based identity and culturally safe-guarding context [...] tell[ing] us something of profound significance concerning the ideals of the beautiful soul at the core of Western Enlightenment thought and conceptions of education (2019: 11).

⁴³ This was clearly demonstrated in the news and the stories of teachers caring for their students during the pandemic lockdowns, travelling long distances to deliver school meals, supporting students’ families, inspiring and performing hope (for examples see Appendix IV). These stories were many and often making the news headlines, especially in the first lockdowns in 2020, featuring the tremendous efforts of many teachers to show how they

‘still’ cared for their students (in the ‘stillness’ of lockdowns). However moving and hopeful those examples are, they are still contextualised not only in a pandemic but in an overall collapse of the structures of a world in deep environmental and socioeconomic crisis.

In this grief of bearing the knowledge of pain in the world, it is unclear if teachers are allowed to grieve without being seen as failing. It suggests that admitting ambivalence towards a (gloomy) future may be experienced as failure to be able to embody future and hope. And grief may indicate, not only the end of times, but the end of care, as we know it, signalling an urgent call for re-imagining what constitutes success in caring practices. It suggests a politics of hope. Ahmed writes:

If we give up hope, of course, then there is no hope [...] To give up hope would be to accept that a desired future is not possible. Without hope, the future would become impossible [...] But thinking along these lines shows how the politics of hope may be frustrated precisely by its over-estimation of the individual will; as if the future were dependent upon whether or not I felt it to be possible. (2014: 185)

We see therefore, the pessimistic or despaired practitioner, as failing because they betray the principle of a trust in a promising future, and that may be the collapse of their care. Failure may also mean

⁴⁴ Cultural sector projects such as Tim Etchells' *The Institute of Failure* (2001) and more recent *FailSpace* (2020) ask questions around the ontology of failure, trying to destigmatise the experience and open up constructive discussions around it. The manifesto of *Glitch Feminism* (Russell 2020) also elucidates how

succeeding in escaping the dominance of the neoliberal narratives (as the non-mainstream settings of this research expressed with more relaxed teaching and learning goals and an emphasis on cultivating caring relationships and balancing behaviour) but working however, within a context of 'contamination' by the failures of the capitalist world which caused the reasons that children are sent to these special settings in the first place.

These discussions, missing in educational scholarship, are starting however to be provided by the artistic sector⁴⁴. Yet, these may affirm that perhaps it is only in the arts that failure, glitch, error, imperfection, are only allowed to be considered and addressed as the driving force of creativity and eventually, success. Even the aesthetics of care discussion overlooks the performances of caring failures and what these can contribute to our understandings of the performance of care. As Thompson directs our attention to "aesthetic criteria to judge the exceptional in [...] care" (2015: 432), we may understand the risk of bringing high standards in assessing the aesthetics of care that would

the 'error' in a world that is already disturbed by injustice and violence may be helpful as a mode of resistance. (Find all online material in relevant section in bibliography).

leave out a range of deeply caring practices and experiences that look or feel different than ‘artful’ or ‘beautiful’ but concern caring experiences that can nevertheless be exceptionally refined and sensitive. For example, my teaching work in settings other than mainstream education manifested a world of alternative performances of care, that might deviate from the form and shape of typical, ‘normal’ or ‘neat’ care. Performances that, with normative criteria, may constitute ‘failure’ for the teachers - as well as the researcher in a project heavily marked by a substantial period of (auto)ethnographic immersion in many experiences and stories of despair and hopelessness. These would be performances of physical restriction in devising strategies to address the shock and violence of students snapping, teachers absorbing their students’ trauma, students’ literal or metaphorical denial to move (forward, perhaps, someone might interpret), teachers performing elongating present in waiting for responses that would perhaps never come, mine and their struggles to find care while recovering from burnout and crises caused by school administrations, or, experiencing a strong confrontation with grief in seeing the love and care for my/their students simply being fruitless and pointless in front of the broken conditions that some children live(d) in.

Still, I want to suggest these not as examples of bad practice or indifference to caring hope, but as performances of caring subjectivities in struggle and ambivalence that illuminate how hard it is to care for others in the end of hope, and what that may feel like. I do not think that during those times, teachers remain(ed) hopeful for the future, but this does not make us less caring. Performances of care in the face of despair may not be conventionally artful, yet they still express caring beauty as a sensitive, lived method of social justice. They create aesthetic experiences that exist neither in success nor failure of care, but, perhaps, in artful failure. They suggest that a care that insists to stay in the present, and not in constant reference to the future, may emerge as more present and fully devoted to its practices. And that may mean, an alternative caring success.

With this chapter I have foregrounded how holding hope or holding failure can provide new frameworks of imagining care in teaching, as the artistic practices in the *doll's house* (2021) and *PaperCare* (2018) house suggested. This can support an understanding of the phenomenon of care as it happens in the here and now, as it may signify something unresolved and withheld, ambivalent towards success or failure, towards hope and future. I have shown how performances that may insist on a caring now can speak of a care that is present, fully embodied and invested on a preoccupation with the mundane and quotidian, instead of the abstract, the anticipated or the wishful. These alternative frameworks of understanding progress can support the understanding of the experience of caring/care in failure and offer us the tools to embrace diverse performances of care that dominant discourses of educational practice would reject. They can express a disobedience towards power, and reverse or jettison authority altogether, taking the form of ritualistic tea breaks prepared in the school kitchen and served by teachers for students only⁴⁵, as an artful caring present that can imagine and embody a better future.

⁴⁵ This refers to a surprise organised by a teacher for her students at the PRU school which I also helped to prepare.

Halberstam argues that “...while failure certainly comes accompanied by a host of negative affects, such as disappointment, disillusionment, and despair, it also provides the opportunity to use these negative affects to poke holes in the toxic positivity of contemporary life” (2010: 3). Imagining therefore, how care could speak of a different future, could then be another practice that crucially responds to the caring deficit of our times and speaks honestly about care’s realities. In the teaching practice this would look as holding space for the counterproductive and the alternative without marking it as failure and lack of progress. But most of all, it would express a claim for the right of teachers themselves to decide what happiness and satisfaction, or progress may mean for our students and ourselves, without the dominance of the discourse of reward at any cost, it would mean the right to not overlook the difficult feelings and learn from them. It would open to the possibility for a different sense of hope and suggest that “...what deviates from happiness is to open up possibility, to be alive to possibility” (Ahmed 2010: 196). After all, to paraphrase Ahmed’s thinking around hoping in feminism (2014: 187-188), a caring hope that is sustained not only despite of, but

just because of a degree of caring stubbornness, is eventually a choice to care in the present with or without a future. And this I think brings us closer to different ways of being *with* hope as Phelan suggests: “We perform Hope but we do not perhaps believe enough in her any longer. What would it take to *be* her rather than (merely) enact her, resist her, flirt with her?” (1993: 178 emphasis and capital in original). As I will argue in the next chapter, this is what the workshops and the *Rock Walk* (2021) allowed me to explore with their framing around imagining and performing alternative orientations of time and progress. These artistic practices advanced models of collective care for teacher participants while also considering the ethics and politics of making participatory work for practitioners. They ultimately showcase how care can re-imagine the relational even beyond what is human.

CHAPTER 6

HOLDING SPACE FOR SELF-CARE

*“There is no need to add an extra narrative into performance,
because performance is a dialogue with the natural elements themselves.”*

(Overlie 2016: preface)

In the previous chapters I demonstrated the nuances of teachers' care and the ways that employing aesthetic approaches in caringly imagine the affective and temporal signification can advance deeper understandings of this experience. With this chapter, I will extend my exploration to discuss how the project eventually (re)imagined care in creating relational workshops and performing walking practices of self-care. Exploring these practices, I arrive at an affirmation that the unexpected, the alternative, or the absurd may carry the possibility to be caring for the self and others. What I mean by this, is that these practices created experiences of feeling cared for in unexpected ways such as walking through rocks, and interrupted assumptions and expectations around creating caring participatory performance by facilitating and waiting in un-doing. These two distinctive practices, one private and self-directed, and the other communal and shared, worked however in similar ways in illuminating the caring in imagining care beyond the obvious, allowing the relational to appear in the unexpected. This means that the artistic practices that the chapter presents invite an understanding of what may indeed work and be productive in the seemingly unproductive, proposing the making of space for considering for example, that rocks may care for humans, or that a facilitator doing nothing but waiting, may, however, offer something caring for participants in relational practice.

The theme of stillness will be identified in these practices as well to suggest notions that can be read as paradoxically caring, as similarly the stillness of emotion in Chapter 4 or stillness of time in Chapter 5 showcased. Thus, in this chapter, the still property of rocks works in a relational and self-caring manner, and participatory workshops that are not really happening but are however, offered to teachers as a possibility, work without happening or, when they do happen, illuminate the caring potential of performance in inviting participants to embrace stillness, in practices such as folding, wrapping, waiting. Moreover, the practices that the chapter showcases, point again to the notion of labour as essential in the story that this project tells, unfolding it through emotional, temporal and hope labour in the previous chapters, to this chapter's physical labour of walking and climbing, as well as the aesthetic labour of making participatory performance. Seeing in parallel the labour behind teaching and creating participatory performance, the chapter discusses the implications of the labour behind designing and delivering participatory performance practices, even in waiting and in inviting participation in undoing. This suggests that the metaphorical provocation for considering the qualities of hardness and stillness around care, when care is stagnant and stubborn, and refuses to 'flow' and stays 'still', when it is not gentle and soft, as the anthropocentric understanding of care prescribes, may

then be useful for posing 'hard', difficult questions around self-care for teachers, in times that caring in teaching is indeed, hard. Similarly to the ambivalent, (un)performances of emotion and stagnant performances of the temporal that the previous chapters explored, the chapter proposes the caring potential of un-doing around what may be retained or enduring in the performance of care and the labour behind this un-doing.

6.1 ROCK WALK (2021)

In this section I explore the private performance practice of a walk in a rocky landscape. The section is distinctly autoethnographical with pronounced use of poetic writing, to tell a story of finding self-care in paradoxical ways. The *Rock Walk* (2021) manifests the vital need for self-care for those providing care to others. It was conceptualised and evolved as the culmination of my explorations of care during the pandemic, in a time that the needs for care and self-care were extremely heightened. The *Rock Walk* (2021) explores and performs self-care by endorsing the argument for caring imagination. Building on the previous chapters' accounts for holding stillness and waiting as performances of care, it extends the claim for imagining care in the space of the paradoxical, even in proposing rocks as caring for the human, in understanding the relational in matter.

Although the practical aspects of the walk had to be carefully researched and planned, the decision behind the practice was a dynamic response to feelings of burnout and corresponding qualities I was embodying during this period that illuminated an interest and preoccupation with rocks that emerged in the first months of 2020. As I was recovering from a particularly challenging period at work, the pandemic happened, launching a long period of turbulent shifting into

unknown areas of teaching and managing classes online. The needs of students were intensified, as they needed more support than ever in the transition to a previously unimaginable uncertainty.

At the same time, the caring needs of my family and domestic life were also extremely heightened. This period marked a tough experience of burnout which I was only able to alleviate by practising a strong commitment to an inner reflection on my multiple caring roles.

It was during those reflections on that period of 'intensive caring' for others that the idea of hardness emerged; that a more distant care, perhaps less attached or undisturbed from the 'troubles' of emotion, would be 'better' care. A more 'disciplined', rigid stance for my care seemed the only solution for preserving my mental health and my ability to still be able to care for others. I am not sure if that idea was only concerned with the effectiveness of my care or emerged as a response of self-preservation in the context of immense caring worries that threatened to engulf me. The qualities of rigidity or hardness became of interest to me. I reminded myself how Antonin Artaud (2013) was perhaps also looking for something useful in the qualities of hardness, as in Greek the word 'cruelty' from the famous phrase 'theatre of cruelty' translates as 'hardness – *skeli.ro.ti.ta*': what could I find in the qualities of hardness and how could that be useful for me in understanding, feeling, doing care better- doing better care?



Claude Cahun, *I Extend My Arms*, 1931 or 1932.
Courtesy: The Estate of Claude Cahun.

How could I apply opposite qualities on the concept and feeling of care that is traditionally related to qualities of gentleness and softness?

How could I relate hardness to stillness?

What may be the appropriate medium or tool to consider that?

Rocks seem still and immovable, however, nothing is truly static. Rocks move too and vibrate, having a rhythm of their own, the rhythm of earth and all vibrating matter in the universe.

What may exist in the space of this periodic back-and-forth motion and how can we reconsider what we read as apparently still?

Could then the analogy between rocks and teachers, those who are deemed 'still' be 'solidified' more in this way?

Human becoming rock, rock becoming human.

(Self-reflection note 22/03/2021)

In what felt like a release, I thought about rocks, ‘entering’ the notion of rock as space and staying there, to inhabit the space of rock as warm and caring, to imagine a caring enclosing inside rocks.

This spoke of a care that may be less invested into caring emotion, a caring stillness, perhaps reflecting the stillness of the outside world in lockdown, a desire to get lost inside the stillness of rock and stay in there forgotten from the burdens of the world.

Gaston Bachelard advocates for poetic or material imagination as a “*function of unreality* having as much psychological usefulness as the *function of reality*” (1971: 13 italicised in original). In the light of Bachelard’s ‘beauty of matter’, as form of creation of images in imagination, I was dreaming about rocks, and this was a ‘function of unreality’ vital for my self-preservation in those uncertain times.

My poetic imagination about rocks was rooted in visceral knowledge that I could easily recall, the warm, caring stones that I used to lie upon under the summer sun during my childhood in Greece. But my reverie was not only a walk through images, it was a travelling within sensations. Bachelard states: “[v]ision makes [*direct* images of *matter*], but the hand knows them [] they have weight, they are a heart” (1971: 11 italicised in original).

My visceral longing for the matter of the stone was consolidated as intention for a practice of embodied self-care through performance in and with rocks, what later became my PaR walk, while my previous performance, *Crowning* (2018), was re-interpreted under this new light as a performance showcasing the carrying of a rock on my head. This rock practice I was longing for, was a be-longing, ultimately rendering the quest for place as the caring work in itself, extending my argument for situating inquiries around care in relation to space, time, stillness.

*“They crushed my joy underfoot and locked it in a stone
and they finally left me with the stone,
my terrifying image.
They pound it with a heavy axe, they pierce it with a hard drill,
they bruise it with a bitter chisel, my stone.”⁴⁶*



Rock Walk (2021) Rintomo, Peloponnese, Greece.
All images by Stelios Mastrokalos, unless stated otherwise.

⁴⁶ Extract from *Axion Esti* by Odysseus Elytis (1974) translated by Edmund Keely and George Savidis.

My practice of crossing a rocky landscape in the summer of 2021 was designed as a response to what felt like a calling to act on a form of pilgrimage as exploration of care, walking in/through places that would again sort of enclose me inside their scale. This would and did frame a practice of walking, literally ‘stepping into’ an inquiry around care and self-care and considering how those may be found in rocks.

After researching different landscapes and discussing with expert guides, a place that sounded ideal was found. The gorge of ‘Rintomo’ located in southern Peloponnese, Greece, at the peaks of Taygetus mountain, seemed to combine the imposing beauty with its depth and narrowness and, as a place relatively unknown to tourists, the quietness that I needed for my crossing.

I visited the place on the 23rd of August 2021. Hiking across the steep ravines at 2,031metres altitude was not easy for a relatively inexperienced hiker like me, as well as my partner and collaborator who was documenting the practice. However, our guide was very experienced and rather caring in his gentle but firm guidance.

Interestingly, I found that his facilitation of guiding us had many similarities to that of facilitating a careful and supportive participatory performance, one-to-one performance, or the practice of (psycho)therapy. We were given directions but (safely) left on our own terms to discover the place and our own enactments, or limits.

When we reached the depth of the gorge, I asked for some time alone. I started crossing by myself, my goal being to cover a small distance of about two hundred metres which eventually took me more than thirty minutes to cover. The narrow opening of the gorge was full of enormous rocks that required climbing over them rather than walking. This was not the most comfortable or easy location to be, however, I did not experience the particularly narrow landscape as hostile, it rather evoked feelings of being inside a cave. There was so much rock around and everywhere. I wanted to feel these rocks, sit with them, stay with them. I wished I could allow the (im)possibility of the rock to fit inside me, to feel the rock and listen to it. I understood that this was a task to be approached with stillness, mental and physical. It evoked a potentiality or even hope that rocks might help me understand the experience and who I am in-care, by being with them and listening attentively. What could they possibly whisper?

*Look at the mountains how big they are
And how they stand still, still stand
They do not break.*
(Poetic self-reflection 30/03/2021)





Feel their wisdom and their beauty

They are not affected

They are not doubted.

Unnegotiable.

(Poetic self-reflection 30/03/2021)

There are notions of power, identified here, that I relate to. In *Performing Mountains* (2020) Jonathan Pitches considers the notion of power that mountains express and reflects on mountains' particular agency and force as spaces of transition and transformation (2020: 68). I could similarly, sense what Jane Bennett describes as the 'force of things' and matter's "ability to make things happen, to produce effects" (2010: 5) as I felt that I could be consumed by this scale. Still, I was contemplating on my longing to feel this force. A willingness to experience this force may, I find, relate again to other notions of space, caring notions, caring spaces and caring 'stages', the willingness to open up to care, what Nel Noddings (1984) famously calls 'motivational displacement' in caring. Noddings describes the one-caring as 'fully receiving' in teaching, "the cared-for 'fill[ing] the firmament'" (1984: 176), and she turns to Martin Buber (2008) to develop her provocation of the teacher's caring 'inclusion' of the student in 'completeness' and 'totality'. I again identify something suggestive of a language that can be seen as performative, indicative of form and space here. There is space to be performed and accommodated in care, perhaps 'inside the space' of the teacher. As there is also in the intensity of my, gigantic in scale, experience inside the rocks. I engage in a framework of senses to unpack it:

See – I see gigantic volume and scale, I see wilderness, I see breaking and mending. I see lots of opposites in harmony, such as hardness in sharp angles and soft curves, along with the smoothness and softness of huge boulders eroded by water – and time. There is light and there is darkness, there is vibrance and less colour, dullness. I can see living nature and absence of life, rocks naked of life, I can see life and I can see death, the carcass of a goat, the remains of past life.

Touch – I feel soft shapes and sharp shapes, shapes with inviting openings, other openings that do not allow anyone or anything in. I feel the warmth, the coolness of the touch, the invigorating chilliness of some water dripping from somewhere. I want to feel the textures with my whole body, I try to fit my body in the shapes of the rocks to take in their shape and fit it - fill it. When I do not fit inside the openings, I wonder what is it that does not fit, the body or the emotion. Other rocks seem to wait for me to lie on them. I rest on them fully trusting on them the weight of my body. As I curl around them it seems that they are filling me from the inside. That feels restful and calming.

Smell – Nothing, the animals that passed, the goat.

Hear – Silence. I listen to the silence. I craved for this silence, this is what I dream about, silent mountains, visual silence of vast landscapes, a silent future. I do not hear anything, a complete silence that feels full, though - of something. I am not sure what it is full of, but I feel something, maybe the creatures that lived here and I can still see their traces. It is a different language that I do not understand intellectually but I feel viscerally -the recurring theme of fullness in the emptiness. The rocks themselves are saying something that I think I can hear (because I care to sense it?) I can connect, I can be a rock too:

we are here, we are always here, stay with us, be humble, trust, be a rock, trust the hardness.





ROCK

The notion of rhythm and order of the rock
 Rock tender, simple rock, the rock is pure, the rock is clean
 To give to a rock, the rock knows how to receive
 Rock receiving
 Rock grateful
 Rock humble.

Its' paradox - soft and caring
 Its' impossibility
 Liminal rock
 Truthful and insightful
 Valuable and valueless
 Comes from a form of extraction
 Or resignation – a letting go
 Carved to become artful
 Hard but it can break
 It is always there, it endures.
 Ultimate movement
 Seemingly motionless but moves, has pulse and rhythm
 Smash: it can smash, it can smash you and shatter you into pieces.

A rock is still and quiet, it knows how to listen, it can listen to you
 It can comfort you
 Take care of you.
 In the summer it is warm and comforting
 You can rest on it.
 A rock is alive, it is the will to live, the will to love.
 Holly rock.

Impossible task

TO honour a rock
 TO befriend a rock
 TO become a rock

Prompt presented at International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR) 2021
 'Performance-as-Research Working Group'

*Constant rocks, a resignation to rocks, a letting go
Allowing them to work their caring healing on me.
Not to manipulate the matter, but to be the matter.
To be as matter.*

I am care as I am matter.

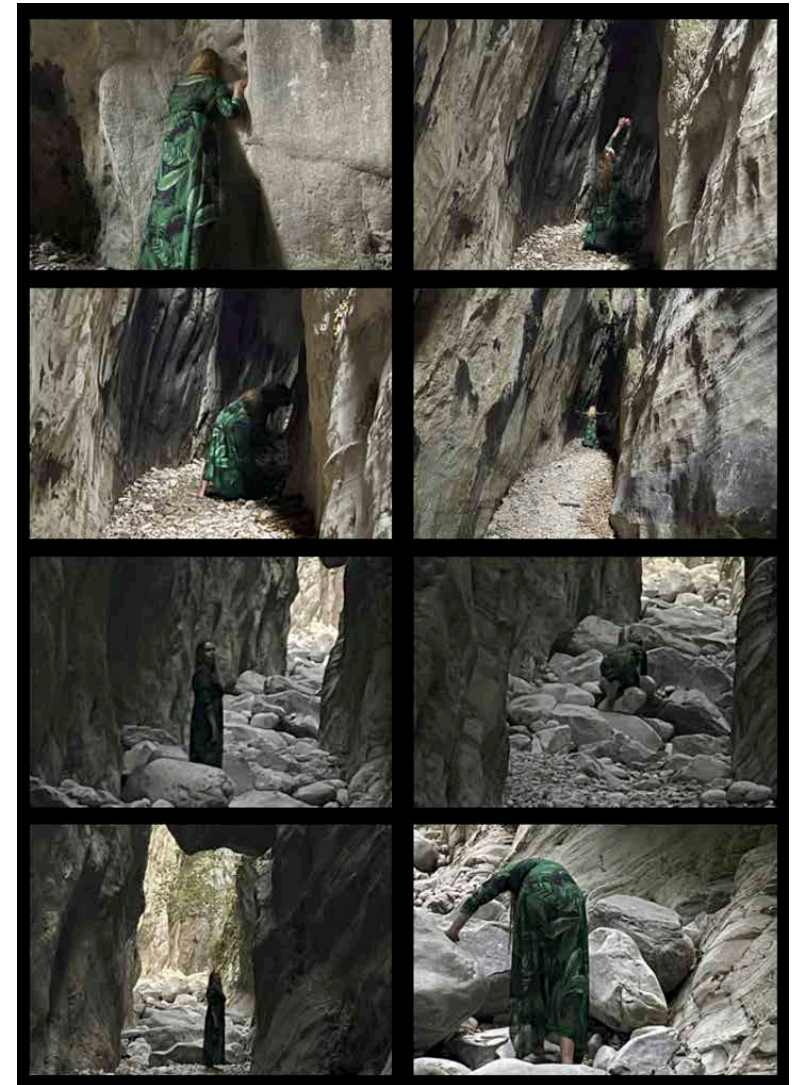
*Care tamed to become artful, beautiful, productive, effective.
Matter cannot be tamed, it exceeds you it is unruly, vast.
Being a rock*

Being an organ of care

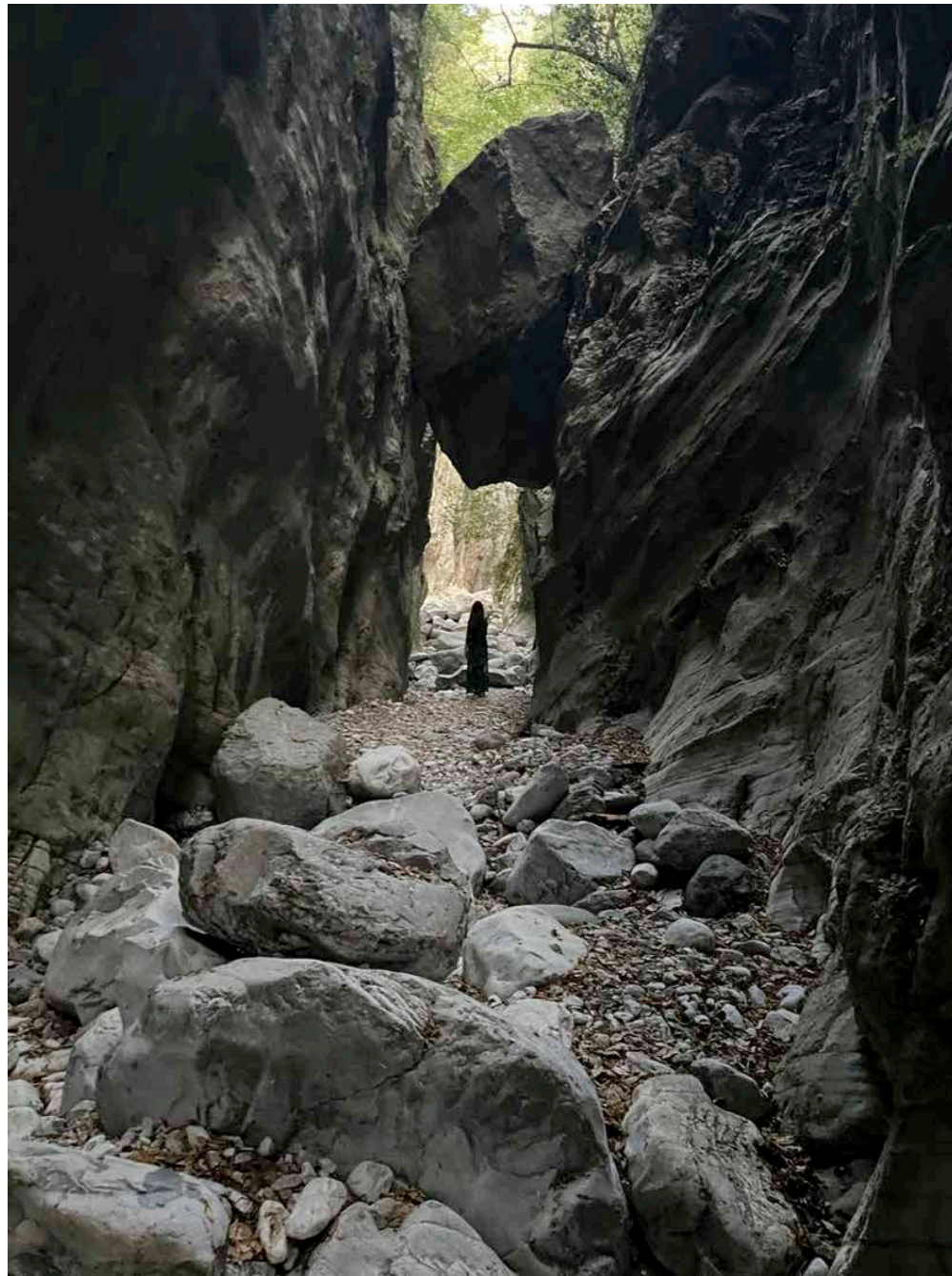
Wild

Untamed

(Poetic self-reflection 30/03/2021)



Rock Walk (2021) Rintomo, Peloponnese, Greece.
Photo collage by Christina Vasileiou and Stelios Mastrokalos.





“Their reading of Shape logic is something we naturally practise when hiking in mountains or sailing on the ocean. We notice the patterns of the waves, the peaks, the snowflakes as a way of taking readings to know what is happening or what has happened long ago. Shape is a natural element in all sciences from geography to physics. Interrogating this material through a particle level for awareness, that is to say outside a preordained learned vocabulary, the performer is in a dialogue with Shape as an expansive form of communication.”
(Overlie 2016: 17)

Crossing this immense weight, I feel like this weight concerns me like I must do something about it, I must respond to it. I feel 'full', 'stuffed' just by encountering this immense volume of matter. I do not 'fit in' the space of the rock openings, the space does not fit inside me as experience – it can 'devour' me. I relate this to moments that I feel that my own care does not fit inside me when it is overwhelming and fills or blows the space of my mind. It is a stretch into facing a fear of bearing or dealing with the unbearable weight of the mountains, of being intimidated in awe, triggering my anxiety as I walk in around fifteen to twenty metres depth of this colossal scale and the mass of matter filling me. I continue the walk or climb, although I feel tired, and my legs hurt. I persist in an exercise that is both physical and mental, following an urge to make it, a stubborn insistence to overcome, to conquer while I am conquered, to control – what is impossible to control.

I return to the notion of control in care and how it is a practice of letting go, eventually letting go of the self. Care can be hard until you surrender, it demands a level of resignation and humility to let go.

My feeling of fear, of what seems scary and unmanageable, gradually gives way to a growing sense of calmness, which becomes clearer and more stable as my crossing continues. This grows even more into a

settled state and with time it becomes a sense of caring protection, being nurtured in the protective and caring embrace of the rock. I welcome or celebrate this shift as achievement of making it to be there. It eventually feels like experiencing a sense of awakening and rebirth, an earned sense of accomplishment and fulfilment, feeling content, cleansed. A feeling of a self-renewed, or re-assembled, like all my pieces were broken and put back together again, that the 'order' of the rock supported this process of finding 'order' within me. My settling inside the rocks, reflects a settling of my caring burnout and a form of healing. It seems that I found what I was looking for in rocks, as I had envisioned, I found a rocky care that welcomed my worries and reflected them back to me, overcome, resolved.

There was something liminal in this situated practice which allowed, supported or initiated a transition and transformation in the ways that I encountered and 'digested' the landscape from initial resistance to finding care inside it. In a way, the liminality of the landscape indicates not only the actual passing of a physical border but also an inner crossing within me, that of arriving at a place of self-care.

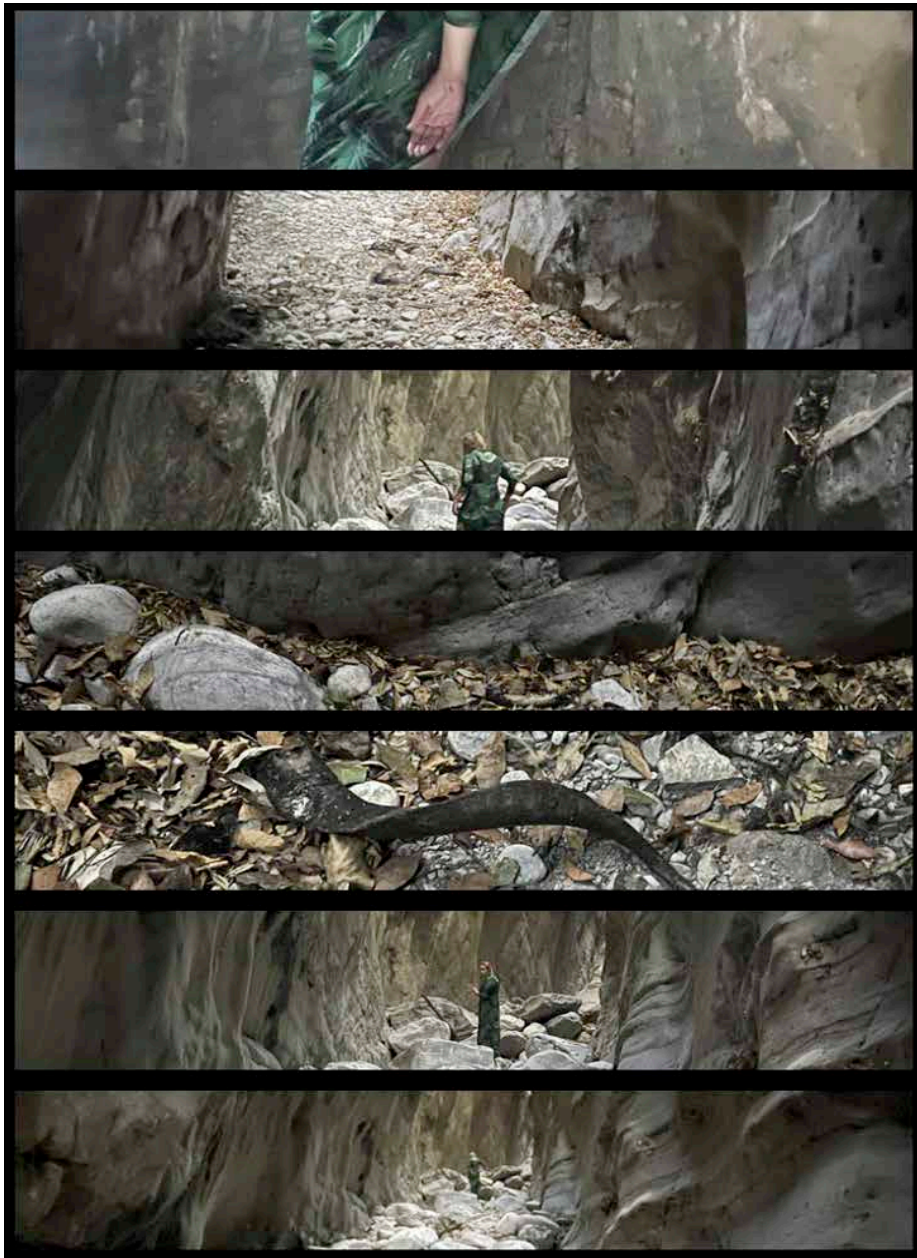
The crossing of the gorge was a practice of self-care, of finding strength, an intimate ritual and performance that gave rise to a grown sense of identity, nurtured in the potential of ritual, as established by

Richard Schechner (2002) and Victor Turner (1969), indeed something enacted by the gorge. Pitches speaks of mountains as ‘active agents’ that “*are* clearly acting on their participants” (2020: 68 emphasis in original). With their liminality and in in-betweenness they

represent places of great danger but encourage the developments of skills and techniques that mitigate that danger [...] they separate us from known communities and circumstances as we climb them, before ‘reincorporating’ us into those contexts on our return, modestly or massively transformed. (Pitches 2020: 69)

The rocky landscape was enacting something that helped me to manage the unsettled. I returned transformed, indeed, nurtured by rocks, by the affirmation of what can happen when “the penetration of...hardened objects of conceptualization”⁴⁷, allow the ‘unrealistic imagination’ or possibility to speak of gentle rocks that care.

⁴⁷ I am slightly paraphrasing an extract of Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics* (1973: 52), quoted in Bennett (2010: 15).



Rock Walk (2021) Rintomo, Peloponnese, Greece.
Photo collage by Christina Vasileiou and Stelios Mastrokalos.

*What was released or channelled and I was able to enter the rock and stay there?
Befriend the rocks and sit, stay with them.
I now inhabit this space, the rock, the warm caring rock.*

To be a landscape of care.

I am a landscape of care with all caring formations as earth formations. I have mountains, I have caves, I have canyons, I have fields, I have lakes and seas, I have climate and ecosystems, I have weather, sunshines and terrible storms, I have silent bright snow.

Introducing the self as rock

To be someone - to have an identity: teacher identities as rocks - unknown, invisible, always present, timeless, in-body, bearing weight, slight imperceptible movement.

TO BE, to dare to be, being a rock, being as rock.

21/06/2021 Practice notes before the Rock PaR

Rocks: a rite of passage A path to be walked fully, completely.

*The experience of crossing, the passing. Relates to the experience of care as another passing.
A pilgrimage.*

A passing through hardness, literal and metaphorical.

Trespassing the layers of harness, embracing hardness.

The experience of undergoing a passing of turbulent times and turbulent matter.

Rintomo gorge, next day: I do not even want to write reflection. State: content.

They have absorbed me fully; I have no words left. Clarity beyond words.

Immersed into care. Nurtured. By rocks. Walking care, step by step, a practice in care, a study in self-care.

An inquiry around the care narrative. Necessary. Essential. For those bearing the weight of the world like Atlases.

24/08/2021 Self-reflection after the Rock PaR

6.2 CARING ROCKS: REMAINING



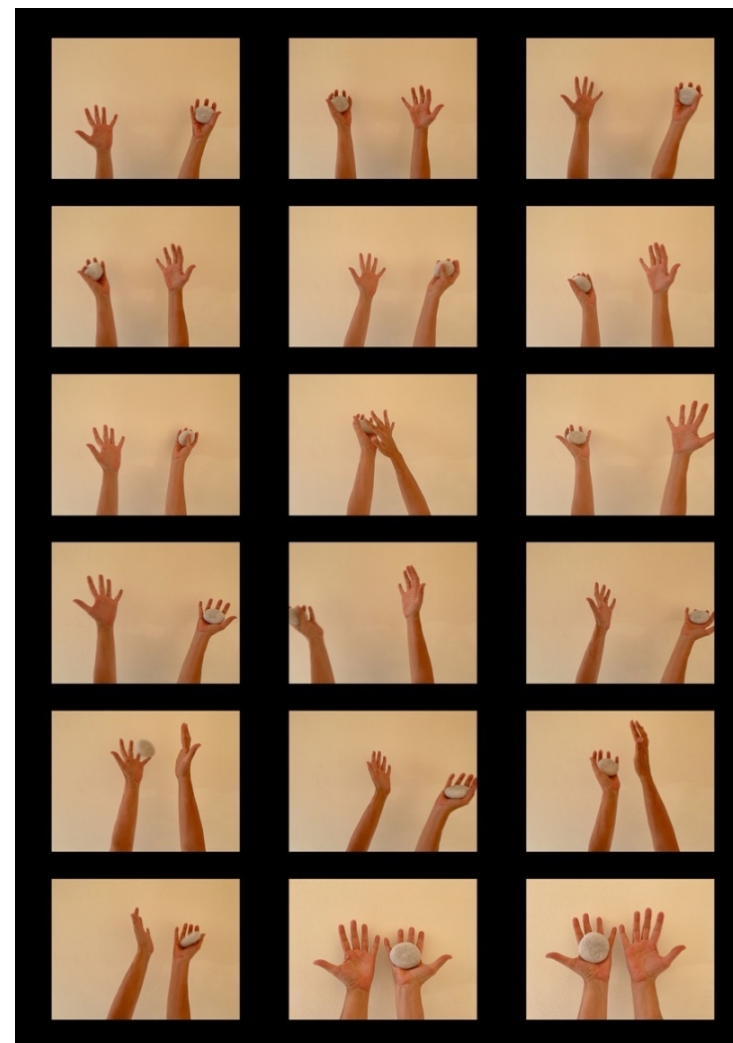
In January 2022, the story of Justina Kolberg, a hillwalker from Edinburgh, made the BBC⁴⁸ headlines, as she stayed overnight at the Shelter Stone at Loch Avon, under a huge rock that saved her life. If anything, this illustrates the caring properties of matter actively expressed in the offering of protection and preserving life. We may see then that the idea of caring rocks may not be absurd after all. What I suggest is allowing this unreasonable possibility of being taken care by rocks to be imagined. This demonstrates not a story applied on matter, but the importance of the lived experience *of* matter. That, I argue, requires a releasing and letting go of the insistence on the anthropocentric, on the logical and linear. With this section, I explored how the rock walk illuminated an unmediated experience of care that is raw, organic. The silence of the rocks suggested something vaguely existent, a void about something that feels as being there but does not appear - or escapes our perception. Like the caring structures and networks of our lives that although invisible, continue to work and sustain us, quiet, gentle, subtle but persisting. Approaching this depth of feeling and sensation, brings

us into contact with the depths of our own experience and imagination, and that may be experienced as nurturing.

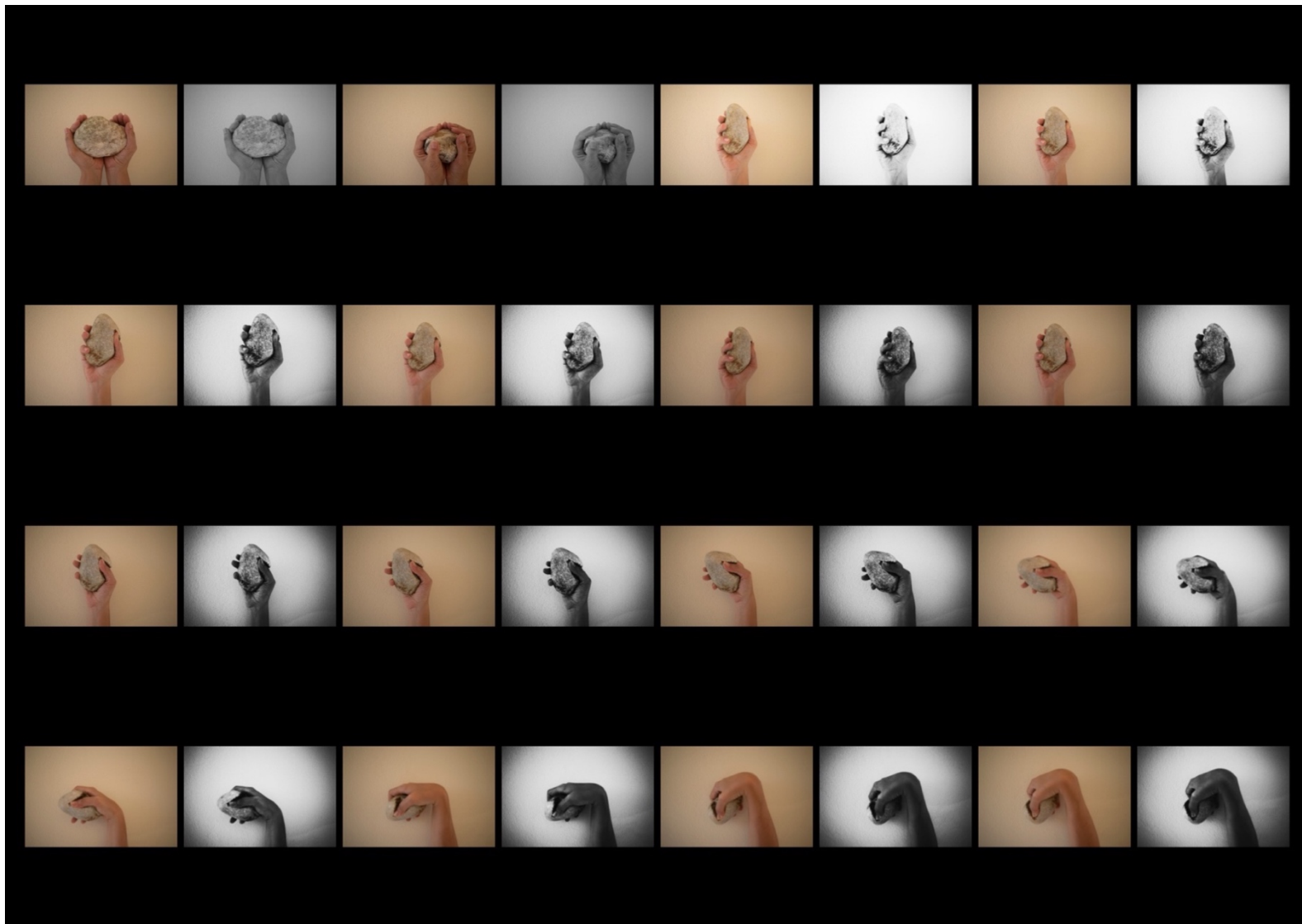
⁴⁸ See: McKenzie, S. (2022) 'Missing Walker: I Have Never Been This Close to Death'. *BBC News*, 28th January. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-60170927> .

I propose that we fully listen to this suggestive quietness and feel it – something may reveal itself, something forgotten or overlooked. I propose that rocks can offer us an example of caringly hosting this practice. Perhaps as the most appropriate hosts for it, as the most invisible although visible entities, that few notice and observe, that we all consider as given, forgetting that our world is situated on a rock and lighted by another. But rocks insist to caringly remain, insist to be there timeless, a proof of the world continuing to exist or still standing, standing still. Being with rocks or as rocks, suggests radical and alternative ways of caring for others and the self, and reclaims the agency of our care provision, and this, illuminates the politics of care and self-care in teaching. Indeed, looking even at the cracks of rocks, can be a practice of looking at the cracks of the dominant discourse in care, allowing something different and novel to emerge from these cracks, reminding us that care may exist and indeed exists in the most unpredictable places and moments. This illuminates that rock still(ness) as insistence to remain in-care is perhaps its crucial commitment to the continuity of life. Allowing to feel the vibratory nature of matter (Bennett 2010) may mean that similarly we can become better in care if we allow this connection on the level of our shared materialities and imagine, or indeed, recognise them as embedded in a web of vibrations and connections with the inanimate

or with other than human modes of self-organisation. And this suggests and affirms the relational in care, as I demonstrate in the next section with the discussion of the project's workshops and how they evolved into shared, communal practices of care and self-care for teachers.



Rock, PaR (2021) Photo collage by Christina Vasileiou and Stelios Mastrokalos.



Rock, PaR (2021) Photo collage by Christina Vasileiou and Stelios Mastrokalos.

6.3 THE WORKSHOPS

In this section I discuss the participatory performance strand of the project and the way that this evolved during a period of two years and in three distinct educational settings. Discussed as the last artistic practice of the project, I will demonstrate how the workshops consolidated a consideration of space and time in the exploration – and in this case, in participation – of care, by claiming the space and time for their actualization. Chronologically, the workshops started in the first years of the project and developed along with it. Evolving a practice of participatory performance, the workshops were aiming to create spaces of self-care for teachers that could be shared and inter-relational. This practice has importance for notions of participation, facilitation and artistic labour in applied performance. Moreover, it also connects to and affirms the thread of imagining care differently, to propose that participatory performance can be caring in unexpected ways of slow facilitation, in stillness and waiting, in spaces of un-doing instead of doing.

The section discusses the workshops in the details of their aims and practices, providing participants' feedback and engaging in a rather autoethnographic description from the facilitator's perspective. This means that although the experience of participants is the underlying

principle, I am also considering my own experience in creating the workshops as a caring offering to teachers. My discussion therefore includes the details of designing and delivering the workshops and the labour of claiming and making space and time for teachers to participate. I consider this labour in the process of evolving and refining a practice seeking to find self-care for participants and myself.

6.3.1 TWO WORKSHOPS WITH TEACHERS AT A MAINSTREAM PRIMARY SCHOOL, LONDON (May & June 2017)

AIMS

To introduce what is professionally useful but different, novel. To express experiences, perceptions, feelings, responses, intuitions about care, care as lived experience.

To introduce mindful ways of cultivating and practising attention and connecting to the body, the moment, to others. To explore how to pay attention as a caring practice.

To problematize and explore the ways that care can be expressed through image, body, sensation. To progressively take the moment to pause and take care of ourselves.

To introduce participants into drama/performance work and basic techniques of processing concepts, ideas, and experiences through performance.

(Extracts from preliminary workshop plans at Mainstream Primary School)

ACTIVITIES

Mindful warm up (breathe, noticing body and breath, notice shapes, colours, textures, smells, sounds inside the room and outside, on objects, on others).

Practice walking and intentions in groups and pairs, start developing patient eye of attention.

Create lists of care: What is care to you, How it looks, How it sounds, How it smells, How it tastes, How it feels, How does it act, caring actions.

Moment(s) that I have felt the care for my students on my body, where on/in my body

Do you continue to care for your students when you go home? How does that feel, how does it manifest itself? Try to visualize these sensations and show them on the paper in any form, freely.

Today my hand & my caring body, caring hands: writing drawing, presenting in pairs with eye contact and movement, mirroring.

Re-enacting a caring action you have done today which involved at least one body part. Use your memory as a resource, to tell the story which your body already contains. (Extracts from preliminary workshop plans at Mainstream Primary School).

WORKSHOP 1

Space: school classroom.

Time: forty-five minutes (although provisionally given one hour and fifteen minutes)

Participants were interested but the limitation of time was crucial.

Some planned exercises were not done or done quickly, not enough time for a deeper exploration.

WORKSHOP 2

Space: staff room, space limited.

Time: one hour.

Participants engaged more genuinely than in the first workshop, did not want to leave the room

Questions to explore:

Enduring: How does care last? Do I carry it with me?

How do I care for myself?

Sensation on the body as information.

The artistry in our practice. The artistry of care.

Care Presence Attention Offering Repair

[Examples of workshop prompts 26/04/2017]

“The workshop is quite restful for us... very therapeutic, very calming.”

“There is lots of value in it.”

“Time is the biggest restriction.”

“This could be part of our training, how to self-regulate, how to understand what caring is because this is what it is all about.”

[Participants' feedback]



Workshops at a Mainstream Primary School, London (2017). Documentation images by Christina Vasileiou.

Two preliminary workshops took place at a mainstream, primary London school, in April and May 2017. The school was a Church of England mainstream school located in north-west London, a rather small school with one class for each year group. After a few meetings with the headteacher and having already spent a couple of months observing most of the classes, the workshops were scheduled and labelled by the school as non-compulsory staff training. The participatory practice of the project started gradually, unsurely, hesitantly, for both participants and me - resembling how practising care often feels in the beginning. The participants had no prior experience in performance making, and although I was experienced as a facilitator, I was also new in the role of the researcher.

There were ten people participating in the first workshop and six in the second. The time offered was limited to one hour, or less, as it eventually turned out even more limited than initially agreed. Space was also limited both in the sense of restriction to intervene in the setting up of the space, as also in the literal sense of tightness in the

second workshop for which we were moved in the staff room. The room of the first workshop was spacious and allowed more movement and intervention by moving around chairs and tables and putting up some signs and images on the walls. The second workshop space was a rather narrow rectangular room next to the school's busy and noisy kitchen, with most of the space occupied by lockers and chairs. As the second series of workshops took also place in the staff room, it is indeed interesting to consider how that speaks with what is presupposed or expected from staff rooms as spaces that perform and evoke certain experiences.

The notions of space and time became central in the participatory practice of the project, and rooms given for the workshops were either staff rooms or classrooms, my practice reflected on how spaces care for us, how much time are we given for our self-care as teachers in schools and how participatory performance can potentially respond to these questions⁴⁹.

⁴⁹ The practice-based research project *Manual Labours* (2013, ongoing) is a multi-disciplinary research project which explores “physical and emotional relationships to work” (*Manual Labours* 2023 online) asking similar questions from an architectural and embodied perspective. Through workshops, podcasts and resources, the project investigates the discourses and narratives of workplaces and staff rooms, and the performances that these create for

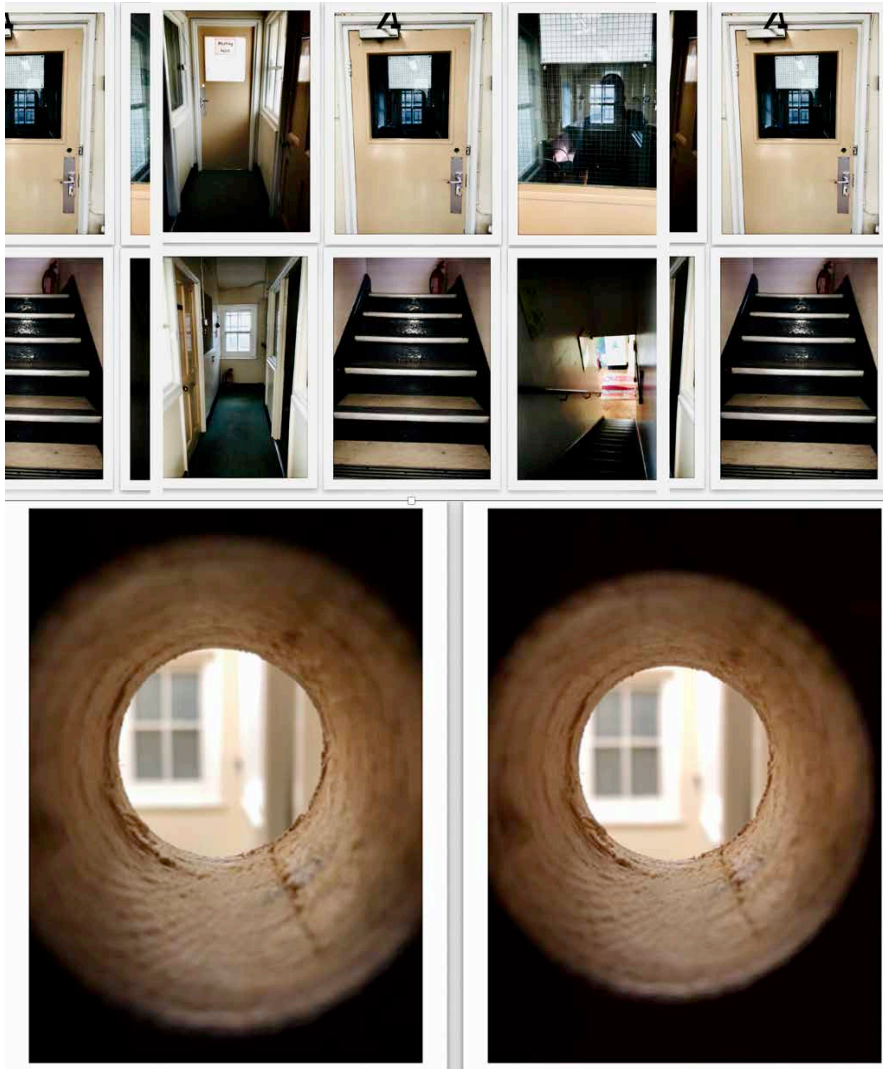
bodies and emotions for professionals. In this, the project explores how spatial structures create understandings of productivity and staff well-being - that those spaces ultimately stage. What I will suggest with my discussion of the project's workshops is that these considerations are crucial for applied performance as well, in its design, politics, ethics and aesthetics.

The short time given would pass very quickly and therefore, rather than necessarily exhausting all the exercises of my workshop plans, the focus was lying more on making participants feel comfortable and inspiring them around the ideas of the project. The first workshop centred more physical exercises and reflection on the role of the body in teaching, experimenting with walking in different pace and rhythms and mirroring exercises.

As with the other sets of workshops, and although not clearly identified then, there was a patience practised in my facilitation, a labour of gentleness for the participants to connect to themselves, to others, to their practice. In the second workshop we were able to dive deeper into notions of trust and non-verbal communication, working in pairs and leading by the hand with eyes closed, reflecting on the sensations of care and the need for educators for spaces of reflection on their roles and experiences. The first workshop provided space but not time as things were rushed and often interrupted, whereas the second workshop provided more time and more targeted practices in less space. This tightness, although restricting physicality, was experienced as calming for the participants. The practices were

paradoxically expanding more in a small narrow room with a small window and noise from outside, and time seemed to stretch and elongate. The group was taking long pauses in speech and movement, there was stillness and silence, but this did not feel as void, it was filled with something which felt intimately caring, and the participants did not want to leave the room. The preliminary phase of workshops illuminated the cruciality of space and time for participatory work with teachers at schools. There were significant changes on what was initially planned, by restrictions in space and time that impacted both workshops. However, the initial aim of offering a platform for exploration in the first workshop, developed into a shared experience of relaxation and self-care in the second. Teacher-participants highlighted the importance of potentially being offered such opportunities that support them in the understanding of their role and that this can be experienced as caring for them.

The time offered and the slow pace of activities set principles for the development of the following workshops.



Workshops at PRU, London (2017). Staircase and workshop entrance.
All documentation images by Christina Vasileiou.

6.3.2 SECOND SERIES – WORKSHOPS AT THE PRU (December 2017)

Space: Staff room. Working with transforming the space completely, preparing the space in the morning taking everything down in the afternoon, for a series of eight workshops.

Time: Setting up from 10.00, space ready at 11.00am. Workshops taking place during teaching hours mostly. Waiting for participants to join in their free time during their breaks, for one-to-one workshop. Waiting until 15.00pm, taking everything down by 16.00pm.

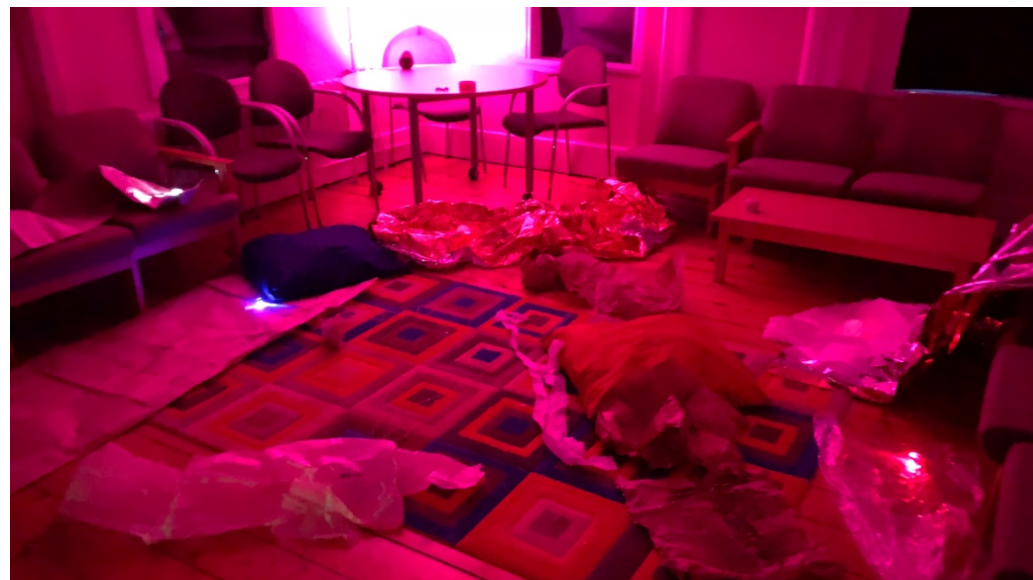
Abundance of space and time. I have freedom – and I notice the change of register. Shortage of participants due to their busy schedules.

As part of the study, the workshops are looking into teachers' understandings of care and aim to explore these artistically through theatre/drama and performance techniques. In the workshops you will be helping me:

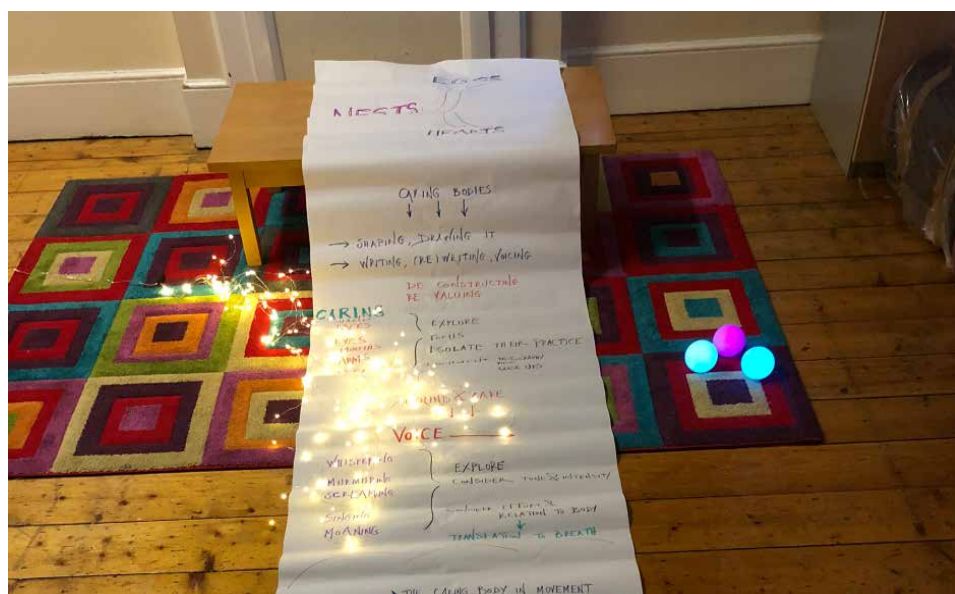
- *to find out more about the experiences of teachers as carers.*
- *to develop training techniques for teachers, to support their well-being.*

The activities aim to create a safe and comfortable environment of expression and communication. I will be providing you with choices and initial stimuli of ideas on activities, and together we will be developing them. I also hope that through the workshop(s), you will be supported in the demands of your caring role; this may ultimately help students in better learning.

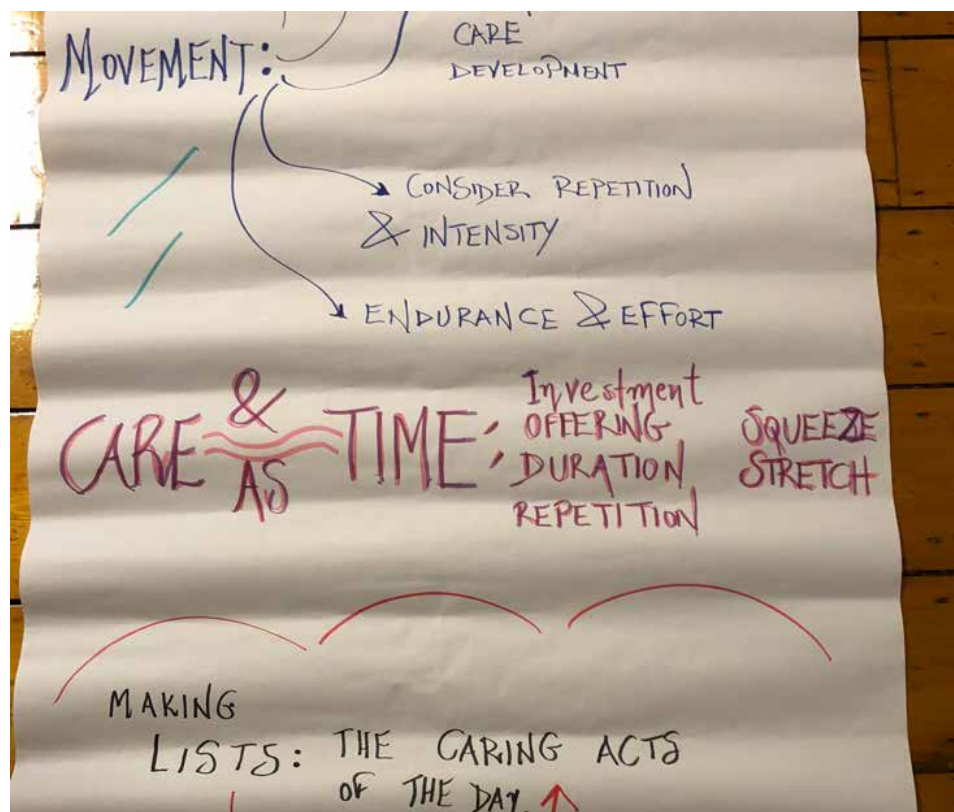
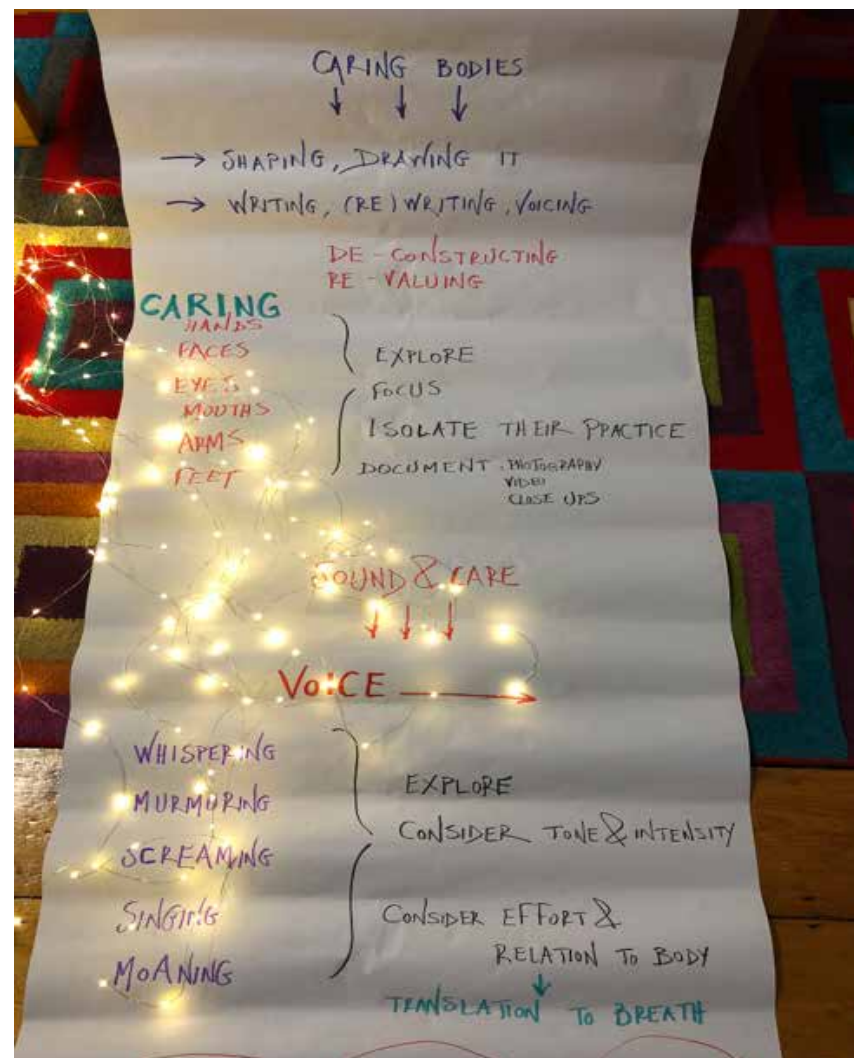
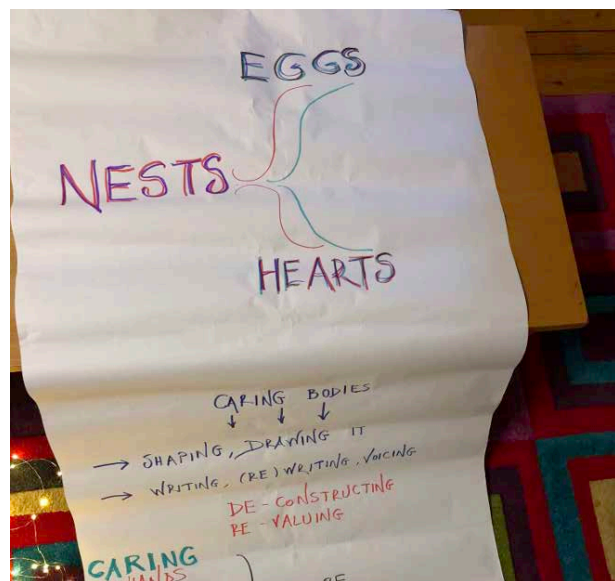
(Extract from consent form description of workshops)



Workshops at PRU, London (2017). Staff room and workshop room.



Workshops at PRU, London (2017). Workshop prompts.



Workshops at PRU, London (2017). Workshop prompts.

I have already spent two months at the school doing observations in classrooms. I have talked in length with the teachers on the experience of care, on bodies and emotions in care and they have all become very interested in the workshops.

I am again given the staff room, located on the upstairs floor, a space mostly used for meetings, as staff prefer to use the kitchen as staff room. The space is big with lots of light, but it has noise. Lots of noise from the downstairs classrooms, noise from the busy airport nearby—but I can do whatever I want with it, and I have it for around four hours each time. We mark eight days on the calendar, and I start the preparations. The plan is that the workshops will be happening during class hours, and the teachers will join during their breaks. I feel more confident to dive into the practices and experiences of these educators, and they seem more open to the workshops than in the mainstream school.

Every morning, I start with helping in classrooms and doing observations, and later I move to the space upstairs to prepare the workshop. Setting up the space is quite some work: I cover the windows and the door with black paper to darken the room, I set up lights and music, a standing camera, a paper with a long list of

ideas/exercises as prompts and loads of materials all around, papers, wrapping materials, threads, colours for drawing.

The space is transformed. It could seem like an arts and crafts workshop but with dim lights and music, a relaxing space.

I am satisfied with this work, and I imagine their reaction when they enter the space. It feels like preparing a nice surprise. I believe they will like it, and I feel pleased with that.

Then, I wait, every day I wait. I do not know if, when, or how many participants will come.

I wait, I listen to the aurality of the environment, I absorb all noises from the classrooms, voices of celebration, of praising, or trouble, I hear laughter, I hear cries. It feels like a practice of caring waiting.

I am here, the workshop lady is here. Fully engaged in an embodied absorbing of all that is happening around, absorbing the whole school.

The workshops are happening without happening – I can feel that I have created an in-between, liminal situation which I inhabit for more than four hours every day, waiting for teachers to inhabit too.

[Reflection] [Interruption]

Stillness.

I am becoming caring space by waiting.

I am not sure how time manages to pass. I often feel stuck in here, a self-imposed submission to a stillness of waiting. It is seemingly a still space, not much happening in here, however, I feel that the space and me vibrate together, like the walls of the room and me are absorbing the frequency of the aurality of the school. And then, it seems that this vibration is palpable or transmittable, that there is something happening or growing, radiating from the space of my workshop as caring centre.

Teachers want to come; they reassure me, but they are too busy. When they eventually come, it is usually on their own only, so it must be one-to-one workshop most of the times. I present the prompts, and we discuss; I explain how they are free to choose any activity/ies that they want and how I will support them in this. They want to sense the space and the tranquillity of the room. They engage in gentle,

movement and voice exercises exploring their caring practice. They experiment with materials.

We chat, I do not even have to ask many questions, just suggest some areas, caring emotion, caring bodies, thinking about students out of school, time and caring memory, and they start right away, they have so much that they want to share. They talk about how comforted they feel as soon as entering the space, like opening within them a space of a much-needed pause, a space of stillness perhaps. They all stress how important this space is and how it must exist in schools. They comment that they feel cared for even only by knowing that the workshop *is* upstairs, even with the idea of it.

My facilitation is gentle in the sense that it is stripped into the bare minimum of instruction. This feels more right in the context of an institution saturated with instructions and worries about following rules⁵⁰. This gentleness is also I feel the appropriate response to the intense stimulation of the environment and how it is experienced physically with lots of noise and frequent physical interventions and restrictions. I instinctively feel that to connect with and share their

⁵⁰ I am saying ‘worries’, because the notion of instructions was of particular focus and importance at the specific setting. The most common phrase,

heard countless times a day at the school, when students were misbehaving, was “Did you follow instructions?”

experience, the participants need less instruction. I want to offer the opportunity to just sit, stay with someone, even in silence.

On the last day of the workshop series, four participants come together at the end of the school day and welcome my suggestion to work together as a group. They use materials and little lights and physically improvise making nests for a few minutes. The short improvisation comes into a group closing, in a hug, which for some is moving and makes them emotional. They are amazed by the opportunity to be offered this and want to make sure that the people next door, in the secondary PRU, will also be offered this. They want to make this a permanent scheme at the schools. I am humbled. It seems that this has been caring for them. They share their feedback and talk about how the workshops enable them to talk, to release, to value, to be supported.



Workshops at PRU, London (2017). Documentation image by Christina Vasileiou.

“Feeling safe that I am here.”

“During the day, I want/need to come up.”

“A place to calm down and relax. A place to reflect, a place to connect.”

“[The workshops] should be offered on a permanent basis, should be here all the time.” - All participants had the same response for workshops to become official and funded.

“Your presence and only knowing that you were in the room for us, was itself very comforting and caring for us.”

[Enabling participants] to talk, to value, to support, to release.

Appreciation and thanking. Involving the next-door school (secondary) as a gesture of supporting them as well.

[Participants’ feedback]

“Start with materials, do not put people in like in ‘empty’ space.

People need context, leave out the guilt of providing context.

Reflect on what it took to get ‘here’.

Time, persistence (claiming time and space, reading the need for this),

consistency, trust, offering, paying attention, listening – for long

Practice = care = the whole practice being caring

Attention, tending to things, being attentive on the spot.

Gentle, kind, warm, open, honest, approachable/ing, persevering.

Provide sensuous info, ‘feed the senses’, like someone who takes care of them, for them to be able to care for the students.

Silence

Stillness

Doing nothing

Holding time

Waiting for participants to come. Waiting as a form of care, being there for them, even if they would not manage to come.

Waiting being the ultimate practice of care for participants.”

[Researcher’s self-reflection notes on practice after the completion of workshops]

6.3.3 WORKSHOP AT INDEPENDENT MAINSTREAM SCHOOL (FEBRUARY 2019)

With these realisations I design the last workshop of the project one year later. It is at the school I am working as a teacher and the context varies in many ways. An independent, primary school for children of the Greek community in London, teaching a Greek curriculum.

I am given the art room which is also used for assemblies and storage.

The workshop takes space after a day trip, and I only have about forty-five minutes to set up. It will be a group of nine participants. I have given the participants information about the workshop from previous days, and we have discussed a lot on what they may expect. This is my place of work, and the participants are my colleagues that I see and talk to every day, but this may only make it easier at some points.

They again, have little to no prior experience of performance making and it is the end of a very stressful and draining day, they are tired and may prefer to go home. I am also one of the teachers, returning to the school exhausted after the school trip – but I must prepare and run the workshop.

We only have the space for two hours before the cleaners come - and participants would not commit to staying more anyway.

I am more ambitious for the activities I want to propose, staying with principles of slow, low-key facilitation and use of materials, as with previous workshops, taking an even bigger step back and devising ways to facilitate without talking. I have even brought the golden bubble that I use in my *Crowning* (2018) performance.

I have prepared a booklet for each of the participants, which acts both as a pool of activities to choose from and as notebook for writing their reflections. Things I am proposing this time: I invite participants to practise caring actions of hand washing, feeding, and dressing each other, tying shoelaces, experimenting with materials, wrapping each other in materials, all to choose from single person exercises, pair exercises or group exercises.

A few days earlier, I had put lots of time and effort in designing the suggested activities and treated the preparation of each booklet with particular care. When the books are ready, I enjoy looking at them, putting them upright, they remind me of a group of small children, a class following me.



Documentation of workshop material preparation (2019). Image by Christina Vasileiou.

EXTRACTS FROM WORKSHOP PROMPTS MATERIAL

Choose tasks to complete.
 You decide how much time you spend on each task.
 Capture your response on the paper.
 Forget meaning and interpretations. Leave time for observation.
 Keep yourself in a state of not knowing necessarily what it is you are doing.
 Enhance what is already happening. Pause judgement.
 Don't stress about time.
 Attention is a caring practice.

ONE PERSON EXERCISES

Make boats.
 Make nests.
 Tie the laces in loop.
 Today my hand.
 Where is care on the body? Make 'a load of care', put it on the body, carry it.

PAIR WORK

Put the coat on the other person, many times and taking turns.
 Wrap the other person in something.
 Wash the hands of the other person.
 Feed the other person.

ONE OR TWO PERSON EXERCISES

Respond to the following phrases in any way you want and/or by using materials: 'care load', 'care labour'.

It feels like a sprint to prepare the room in good time and to welcome the participants. I feel it is important to support a disassociation at least for some time, from the colleague (me) that they know and meet every day, from the person inviting them to operate differently, still within the school space that we all share and work with, yet outside of its conventions. This I find necessary for them to connect to the workshop and to not extend the usual rapport we have every day in the space of the workshop. I greet them by opening slightly the door of the room, and silently handing them a small object, an egg, or a rock. I welcome participants in one at a time and softly whisper some information about the booklet that I hand them.

The room does it all for them, it is, as they later say, like entering another world in the world of the school they already know.

It is sort of immersive in the sense that the environment is incredibly rich in stimuli with all the activity stations and the materials scattered around.

“We entered a different world. In there, you forgot who you are.”
(Participant’s feedback)

At the same time, it does not necessarily demand anything from participants - if we assume that doing nothing is easy. This has been an epiphany for some of the participants as they write in their reflections, being in a space within the school which asks from them to do nothing. This is as they state, what they find most alluring, and they do not want to leave the room even when the workshop finishes.

Other participants fully engage either with others or individually, and the room becomes busy quickly, but in a way that feels different than the institutionally busy way. Participants allow a different way of being busy and seem, similarly to the workshops at the previous school, eager to share, to reflect, to play.

There is freedom, there is no judgement, there is permission to just be. Repetition exercises like putting on and taking off a heavy winter coat many times, tying and untying shoelaces, and noting down the actions of a hand on a day, promote a connection to the quotidian and the repetitive in teaching, and a reflection on the realities and emotional landscape of institutional caring practices. Some find it challenging and feel the safety to openly admit and share it.

I am wearing the golden bubble, I feel permitted to do it here, as most of the participants have already seen me presenting the piece at the gallery and will not surprise them. They remember the 'bubble' and are inspired by it. I want to extend here a conversation started at the gallery, that I presented the piece, about what this bubble represents and what is the experience of wearing it. Without intending to impose, or patronise, I would like them to experience it as well. I do not even need to suggest it, they are already keen to try it.

Participants' reflections connect the 'golden' of the ball to the 'value' of care, others state that there is some loneliness or isolation for the person wearing it, evoking feelings of protection towards them.

When I later see a documentation image where a participant sits next to me when I am wearing the bubble and holds my hand, it is particularly moving for me. It seems that the golden bubble inspires a need to protect the other, to care for the other, while at the same it feels self-sufficient and content inside the bubble.

While some participants want to practise all proposed activities, others prefer to try only a few. The prompt to use materials to create an object and position it where they feel the caring effort on their body, interests many of the participants and reveals insights about the embodiment of care. The sounds of the gentle washing each other's

hands, and the soft dripping of water are satisfying, while the giggles and whispers of people feeding and dressing each other in the coat, assure me that people engage with interest and pleasure. Apart from these pleasant, soft noises, what also prevails is silence. It feels that my choice of almost silent facilitation, reflects the need for silent environments that especially teachers of younger ages crave for. This combination of silence and doing nothing shapes an affective stillness, a pause in time, in movement and perhaps in emotion. It performs alternative states of being within the spatial and temporal structure of the/a school.

There is something enclosing in the space, it feels like a hug, as pleasure to enjoy the intimate enclosing of this space. With its dim and colourful lighting and the shadows, it encloses but mysteriously unleashes a playful, exploratory disposition. It seems that it allures the participants to replicate this sensation by engaging in one of the activities I propose, wrapping.

The noise and the energy of wrapping fills the room. I am observing. It seems that those who chose to be wrapped experience comfort, they ask those wrapping them to wrap them more fully and leave them like that for long. They seem to just want to lie still absorbing the stillness, reminding the practice of swaddling, the ancient method of wrapping and restricting the movement of infants to help calm and sleep.

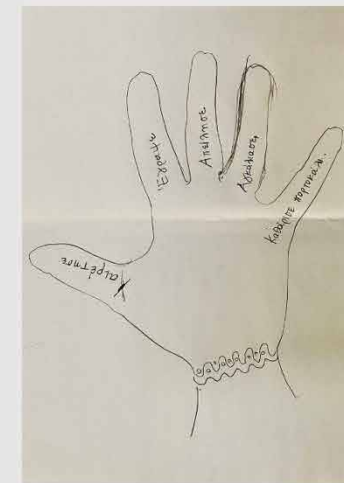
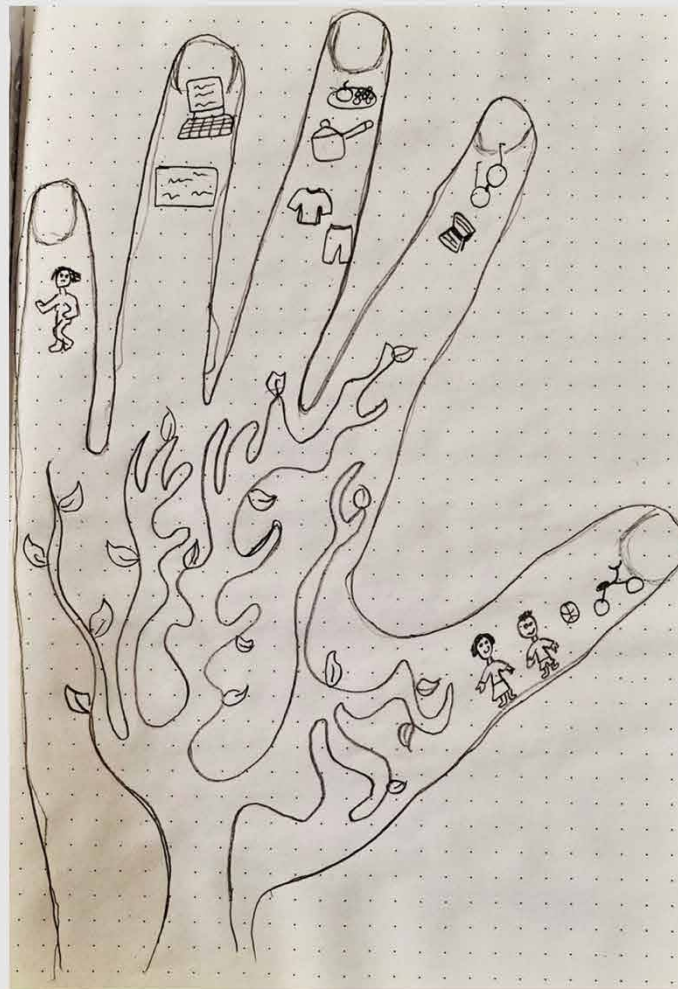
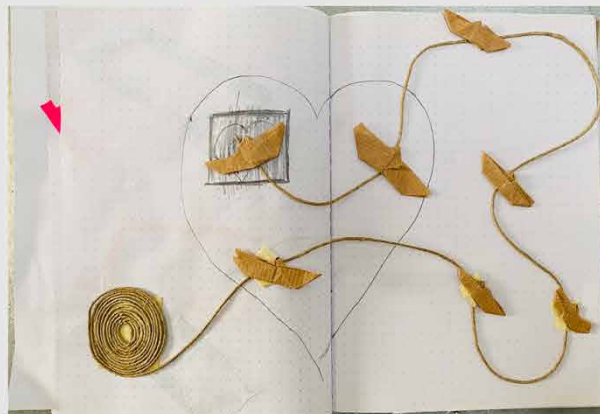
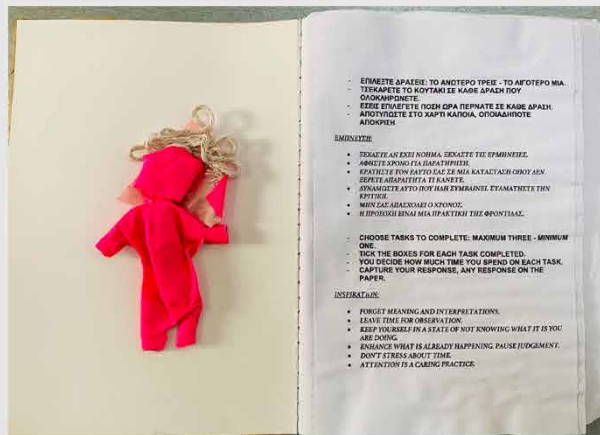


Workshop at independent primary school, London (2019).

All documentation by: Christina Vasileiou, the workshop participants and a camera placed on a tripod programmed on interval timer (3') shooting.

Find the documentation and creative work on documentation by Christina Vasileiou at:

<https://christinavasileiou.com/video/>



"Today my hand..."

Greeted.
Wrote.
Threatened.
Hugged.
Peeled an orange.



Tied a child's laces.
Helped a child to
wear their coat.
Kissed a child
tenderly.
Rubbed a colleague's
back to help them
feel better.
Cleaned the stairs
from litter to prevent
accidents.

(Images of participants' workshop artefacts. Translated and shared with permission.)

1. Αχ η υπελα
 2. Πως δημιο-πρω. Σαν κατασκευη
 3. Διαφορετικα ραβδια δειχνει
 4. Πως φορεσ παντα να ραβδω
 5. Φορα θελω να το ραβδω
 παω ση συνδεετα
 σε αδασημ συνδεετα
 6. Θελω αυτω τη ραχ-
 ηνη να τεχνων
 Σηχος μου ειναι το ID
 7. Αρχιζω να ραβδω
 λοθη. Διο λωνω.
 8. Βαρειφε Δω ερκα
 τα λωνω. Σηχω τα δοντια
 κρηολεκτα,

9. Νιωθω κεν σαν λωνα
 Μω φαμετα αυτου
 Νιωθω γεμ. Παρεμω
 10. Τη δινωσα θελω να
 φωγω. Δω χαλωπα
 Ανασεμω. Με ναεμω
 οι δωω τον Εννομη.

1. Oh, how nice.
2. Very creative, like a craft.
3. Different ways of tying.
4. How many times do I have to do it?
5. I want to throw it on a colleague, a colleague I love.
6. I want to increase the speed, to finish. My goal is ten.
7. I start making mistakes. I correct them.
8. I am bored. I do not give up. I clench my teeth. Literally.
9. I feel something like hunger. It seems pointless. I feel heat. I flush.
10. I finished. I want to leave. I am not satisfied. I sigh. I am irritated by the people around me. I scratch myself.

Workshop participant's notes on chosen exercise on repetition: *Tie the laces, again and again, in loop.* (Translated and shared with permission.)

αγίστευσης χαλάρωσης
αυτόματα, με την είσοδό μου
γενν αὐθουα - χαμηλοί φωτισμοί
- μουσική που ηρεμεί το πνεῦμα
και το σώμα.

Άφρα κινιτό εκτός αὐθουας
παρόλο που έχω αναφέρει τη
φροντίδα των παιδιών σε φιλική
οικογένεια.

Ξεκινά με μικρές και με

“Sensation of relief and incredible relaxation immediately when entering the space – dim lights and music that calms the spirit and body...”

προσπαθώ να
διατηρώμαι αι
αμετακίνητος στο
παιχνίδι της ζωής
και προσπαθώ να
βρω και εφευρεθεί
αυτά που...

Αυτά τα πράγματα να
εμφανίζονται με μεγάλη
απλότητα, για να τα γράφω
σε κάποια μέση μέση
να τα ταξινομήσω στα
πλάι μου ... όπου η φύση
και ο άνθρωπος να συν
βούν στο μυαλό μου.

Είπαμε την προσέγγιση και
την γαλήνη, όταν η ανόρεξη
βιάς μου με τράβηξε με το
διαφανές περιβάλλον και το
τελειοποιήθηκε με μια πολύ
απλή και ταπεινή (το αχ-
τημένο μου χαμολί) ελπίδα
όταν έχω το περιβάλλον
που συνέκρινε ότι είχε φρά-

“I felt the care and tranquility when my colleague wrapped me in the material... it reminded me of a hat that my mother made for me...”

η γλυκύτητα χεριών η μια είναι
άλλη.

Συζητήσαμε ως παλιές
η μια ως αίτης δηλώνοντας
τη φροντίδα / φροντίδες που
έχουν αναλάβει τα χέρια
μας όσες φορές με τη
διδασκαλία - συνύπαρξη
με τους μαθητές μας.

In the meantime, noone
wants to leave the room. It's
just too relaxing to abandon

“... We washed each others’ hands... In the meantime , no one wants to leave the room. It’s just too relaxing to abandon. We slowly gather around each other.”

[illegible]

“When [X] wore the metallic bubble on her head, I felt that she was unprotected. I wanted to help her to not fall down... When she sat down at a corner by herself, I felt her loneliness. Perhaps she needed company and security.”

“I see [X] with the golden sphere that she is enclosed in, she evokes calmness and that she leaves everything in there, and it all becomes glowing.”

(Images of participants' reflections. Translated and shared with permission.)

Participants' feedback

"I think we need to do it again... this to happen every now and then... it helped me, and I think all of us... This ultimate relaxation of absorbing the environment ... that it was without an aim... much better than other self-care means (for example, exercising). It was also connecting to others ... Leaving caring for others out and focusing on the care of myself."

"I came from a very tense space/ state and thought I would not be able to participate... The atmosphere, music, lights, lowering the pace of the group, helped me and I was able to join very quickly."

"When we feel better this will be transferred to the student (if we could have this [workshop] more at schools)."

"I think it is more needed for us [than the students]."

"I have tried other ways to focus [not working] [with this] my mind was here, my body was present, my mind was present."

"We must be able to reflect ... when we are overwhelmed, we must have a practice in our everyday routine time, in our school, and in our personal life, to be able to reflect... to be able to stop."

"Very creative, beautiful emotions. I needed more time — to stay until late in the evening if possible..."

"I felt it like a situation to think deeply and realise what it is that I give every day and at the end of the day I am exhausted, what is it that I do... This space gave me the connection of pieces for me concluding about my inner situation, the materials, that I could be without shoes and lie down, the music and the low lighting, the relaxing atmosphere that you created allowed me to enter this state."

"I think we need to do it again... this to happen every now and then... it helped me, and I think all of us... This ultimate relaxation of absorbing the environment ... that it was without an aim... much better than other self-care means (for example, exercising). It was also connecting to others ... Leaving caring for others out and focusing on the care of myself."

6.4 CARING APPLIED PERFORMANCE

In this last section I want to problematise the making of applied performance, the labour and the politics of labour behind them. The workshops of the project enacted a caring ‘holding’ for teachers as they were invited to take care of themselves, instead of caring for children only. Expressing forms of stillness, they proposed forms of not-doing or un-doing in the school context of constant moving. They suggested the absurdity and radicality of silence in the noisy school environments, an invitation to deep caring listening, what Erling Kagge suggests as “*the silence around us* [and] something even more important, [] *the silence within us*” (2018: 4 both emphases in original). Alternative or reversed modes of power dynamics were also enacted by blurring and troubling the boundaries between participation and facilitation evident in my choices of facilitation, perhaps interpreted as another form of caring ‘stubbornness’, another reluctance to ‘move’ or do. The open-ended interpretation of proposed activities and a facilitation that worked on a care-ful balance between holding and letting go of instruction, allowed care not only to be explored, but to be felt deeply. Pauses empty of sound, of instruction, or doing, allowed something else to emerge.

Sue Mayo (2021) writes about participatory work and the importance of letting go of control and creating space for the collective care of the groups to emerge. As I have also previously suggested, Mayo relates this to the ability of caringly ‘holding’ boundaries in uncertainty in psychotherapeutic contexts, proposing an embracing of an approach that de-centralises facilitators’ instructions and allows the caring dynamic that the groups can create to emerge. After all, as Mayo and Laughton discuss, perhaps it is only a matter of whether “a theatre practitioner [can] simply provide and then hold a space in a spirit of willingness to host conflicting, simultaneous, potential identities, and use the creative language of drama to explore them” (Mayo 2021: 190). We can see then practices of collective care emerging as radical experiences of caring imagination where the affective and aesthetic dimension of care is not only discussed or explored, but primarily, felt. This transgresses boundaries and power dynamics between facilitator(s) and participants and renders these performances as embodied experiences of collective care. This became evident for example, in the moment that a participant came to sit with me and leaned on my shoulder, as a gesture of supporting me, as she later expressed. This signalled a moment of un-doing, reversing assumptions of facilitation that reminds us that as

children at schools often take care of us teachers⁵¹, participants *can* care for the facilitator, that being a moment and action of deep relational exploration.

This alternative mode of caring in participation was also profoundly evident in the caring potential of the second series of workshops without these even happening. It was exemplified in the space of the caring imagination that they activated, in preparing and offering a room of waiting for participants, without them necessarily entering it. This signified a form of offering to participants, a literal ‘holding (of) space’ for them, which, as it turned out inspired a reflection on and participation in self-care, by a given sense of being taken care of, even without participating. It stimulated an imagination around caring space, what the participants shared as a stimulation of their imagination of what the (caring) space I had prepared for them would be, what care might look and feel like. In *Enduring Time* (2017) Lisa Baraitser discusses *The House that Herman Built* (2006), a project that was actualised through the correspondence of many years between Herman Wallace, a prison inmate of forty-years sentence and founder and

member of the ‘Angola Three’, and multidisciplinary artist and activist Jackie Sumell. Sumell initiated the correspondence by asking Wallace what kind of house a man who has lived in solitary confinement for over thirty years would dream of. Writing to each other Wallace and Sumell were imagining and designing Wallace’s dream house. Baraitser argues that the process of imagining the house was caring for Wallace and it “was not about the future for him, but the now” (Sumell and Baraitser 2015). She writes: “In one way, this imaginative space, through which he could move, eat, sleep, talk, meet and organize, forced time to pass within the incarcerated time of his cell” (Baraitser 2017: 130) and thus, offered him a mode of care that was sustained and sustaining through the years. The house was not eventually built and only existed in virtual form, but the practice of imagining it and writing about it, the offering of the potential of it, the dreaming and possibility of it becoming some time, somewhere, was caring and supportive for Wallace.

⁵¹ This is an important aspect of care. See Little (2022) for new perspectives that can be provided by the re-orientation of children taking care roles, especially in and through performance. The article was published in

Performance Research Journal (2022) issue ‘On Care’ (Vol 27, Issue 6-7) at the time of this thesis’ submission.

Although I do not intend to parallel experiences of imprisonment with teaching, I can still identify similarities in imagining something that may wait (for me) to happen. I can see the workshops for the participants enacting similarly a form of caring imagination that signified something or someone ‘being there for them’, and even if they would not manage to come, the important thing was that it was ‘still’ offered, there. The possibility, or ‘promise’ of participation, was thus, important and caring for those teachers. This perhaps signified an ‘opening’, a crucial space of compressed possibility in the face of trouble and exhaustion in their challenging everyday life at the school. And it could be argued that this hope was indeed effective as it was affective because it was situated, although fleeting and abstract, sitting still and waiting, a promise of care compressed within the spaces of the workshops.

Then working with time by merely being *with* time, the practice of waiting for participants, suggests again an element of unpredictability: after all, workshops and participatory practices are supposed to be happening and to be experienced by those creating and participating. In the navigation of waiting, indeed in the insistence to wait in the context of frantic school temporality, I was offering generously, even, potentially, as a gesture that did not expect response, my time. And this gesture was potentially imagining alternative modes of temporality. This practice of potential, of not-yet becoming had a caring significance, as indeed, waiting can suggest care, particularly “...in times dominated by acceleration, immediacy, and political short-termism [...] offer[ing] a fundamental re-conceptualisation of the relation between time and care” (*Waiting Times*⁵², online). And waiting brings us again at the notion of stillness as caring resistance. Waiting as the practice of making caring patience, is a principal practice in teaching. In their frantic schedules and busy days, teachers do practice ‘waitings’ because they do patience, waiting for students’ responses, for students to get ready for tasks, for moments of

⁵² The *Waiting Times* (2023) project explores the relation between care and time. It considers the experience of waiting in healthcare contexts “talking to health professionals, patients, and many different publics, asking what it

means to wait and to care in times dominated by acceleration, immediacy, and political short-termism.” (*Waiting Times*, online)

difficulty to end, moments in which time seems to elongate and pass slowly through an embodied stagnant sensation. But caring waiting in performance making at schools can suggest a radical resistance to the limitation of time, to the dominant narrative of running out of time.

A resistance to the temporal fragmentation and relentless interruption at schools and a reclaiming of a time that may be slower, fuller, and undirected, as the temporality of workshops signified. Offering therefore, the workshops within the space of the institution performed a temporal disruption in the rhythm of the schools. As Berg and Seeber argue, the movement of slowness “has not yet found its way into education” (2016, xviii). Although Berg and Seeber’s initiation of this discussion is contextualised in higher education, I would still argue that imagining different⁵³ rhythms within institutions could be an instigating response to the crucial need to pay attention to what the felt rhythms of teaching and learning inside schools are. I would argue that we can imagine spaces of temporal and affective interruption and suggest stillness in the middle of constant circulation.

⁵³ This could relate to the important consideration of alternative, caring temporalities as suggested by Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) whose work in *Matters of Care*, considers care beyond the human. My suggestion of alternative, caring temporalities at schools, as well as my exploration of care as an experience which operates beyond linear time and brings together the

[Reflection][Interruption]

How can we imagine feeling the care of spaces and school buildings, tending to their caring or un-caring rhythms?

Slower or still time, I argue, is a caring expression of agency upon time that imagines a different continuity in institutional temporality, offering eventually a caring reassurance that we can indeed ‘make’ time, that we *have* time. Or that, I, as facilitator ‘have time’, that I ‘make more’ time, multiply or expand time, out of the limited time I am given for the workshops - and I offer it generously and caringly to participants. Moreover, in their ambiguity between being and not-being, doing and not-doing, the workshops eventually supported a resonance with care’s intricate ambivalence, as I suggested in Chapter 3 on emotion. These alternative accommodations of the ambivalent can become caring utopias for teachers that constitute differently space and time within the institutional, performing agency on what caring space and time is and feels like. Beyond the ‘time binds’ that Freeman states as

present with the past and the future in simultaneous and complex performances (as the previous chapter demonstrated) echoes Puig de la Bellacasa’s reflection “on how care time entails ‘making time’ to get involved with a diversity of timelines” (2017: 171).

“...ordinary tempos and routines, which in turn organize the value and meaning of time”, (Freeman 2010: 3), they can operate as reminders that what is not ‘productive’ may still be immensely caring in dreaming and imagination. And as I suggest in the next section, the making of undoing may still require intense labour in its making, as a form of resistance that reminds us that going against norms of over-productivity can be laborious and exhausting. Ultimately, these resistances can provide crucial insights in tender, gentle treatments of understanding and imagining participation, facilitation, and their representation. They may shape new narratives about how participatory performance should be imagined, designed and actualised, how it may look and feel like, showing that even the undoing or that which is not fully happening or accomplishing, may be *still* caring in socially engaged art, as long as it *still* shows up.

6.5 CARE LABOUR & SELF-CARE

In this last section, I want now to consider the process of creating the workshops and problematise the labour behind them. I want to start with the spaces of the workshops and consider that, as spaces within schools they happened are spaces filled with caring affectivities. A sensing of care and pondering on its stories after it has finished, does not only signal important insights for the ephemerality or not of care, as Chapter 5 demonstrated, it also suggests it as spatial and material practice that stretches beyond bodies. Anyone who has felt the environment of a classroom right after children leave it at the end of the school day, can indeed feel the intense affectivity that lingers in the space for long.

I want to consider this and unpack my practice more, thinking about what it means to approach school spaces or classrooms as workshop spaces and ‘sets’ for participatory, relational performance. In doing so, what do we assume about the school spaces and the caring history they carry – or do we see them as empty?

Scenography scholar Rachel Hann argues for the assumptions with which we may enter theatrical spaces, often overlooking the experience and stories they carry. Hann challenges the idea of ‘empty spaces’ as a practice of colonial imagination, an idea that suggests that place and space can be ‘emptied’ and which ignores, or even ‘cleanses’ spaces of identities and their histories again and again (Hann 2021, online). She argues that “place and space are already full and our [scenographers] task is to negotiate that fullness [] in ways that we can connect spaces in compassionate and careful ways” (ibid).

I relate to Hann’s provocation, as, similarly my practice involves the embracing of the past, the history and memory of classroom spaces, and what can be imagined about them. In this care-ful merging I seek the ethos of this theatre practice that starts from the felt affectivity of the spaces to build upon it participatory practices that respond to their stories with care – and my creative video work *Traces of Care* (2019) on the workshop documentation above explores these ideas, with the presences of teacher-participants, lingering, ‘imprinting’ the spaces. Moreover, Hann’s manifesto asks, “what would a decolonial scenography feel like?” and it responds, “as a big hug” (ibid).

I am wondering what it means to start with that and what it could look like in participatory performance. As theatre designer, Rosie Elnile (2020) suggests: “Sets are active spaces for acts of transformation. Sets

could be where we test out, in small ways, the most radical or hopeful version of how a space might operate. They are really good spaces to try to imagine politics that feel impossible” (Elnile 2020, online).

In the spaces I was given for the research workshops, my interventions resembled a scenographic practice and epitomised imagining different caring ways of operating in the spaces as different politics and aesthetics. But thinking about space in relation to care, does not only identify important links with the area of scenography that I argue that should be considered (as for example was also demonstrated with the doll’s house practice). It asks how we ontologically situate care, and where we imagine that it exists. It leads us to think again about ‘resources’ or ‘repositories’ of care and where we potentially assume that care amply exists, from spaces, to matter, to humans, to bodies, the animate and inanimate.

Applied performance⁵⁴ is reliant upon spaces that can inspire an imagining of care differently, beyond, and outside of utilitarian and transactional modes. But this common narrative between teaching, and designing and facilitating artistic practices, takes us back to the issue of caring assumptions around practices of care, for teachers, performers, facilitators. Although I fully endorse Hann's (2021) assertion of caring approach to theatre making, I want to consider it from my experience of the practitioner, who is asked to care. I am troubled between care as a more sensitive approach in theatre making that releases us from agendas, and the fear that this may become another agenda that we actively impose on space, time and ultimately upon the artist/practitioner. There are, therefore, crucial things to think about here around the caring rhetoric in the arts which points to the direction of artistic labour. For example, in the performance of care scholarship, the caring rhetoric is particularly strong in participatory work. Stuart Fisher (2020) reflects on the political dimension of this work, writing that

[p]erformance that engages with different processes and settings, or that seeks to enact a mode of care for others, often finds itself within a tricky negotiation of the lived experience of participants marked by a *lack* of care and care services that are struggling to make ends meet... often positioned as vehicles for overcoming shortfalls of care and for providing (temporary) solutions to this. (2020: 12 emphasis in original)

I am thinking about both my teaching and performing/facilitating practice and the exhaustion they involve. Creating experiences that may potentially shift perspectives in applied performance is not an aspect of the practice that should be easily overlooked or dismissed. Although the performance of care scholarship explores the ethics and politics of socially engaged practice in care-related contexts that performance treats with care, it does not examine the labour behind this caring making for communities, the experience and implications for the person who provides the (caring) practice.

⁵⁴ For example, the recent work of youth theatre scholar Kathleen Gallagher (2022, 2023) explores how youth theatre can be a practice and source of care, cultural citizenship and ultimately, hope for young people.

Applied theatre scholar Sheila Preston explores the emotional labour of facilitation and what can often be described as moral distress for practitioners as “...as they face contradictions in the front line relating to failures of resourcing, the ongoing needs of participants, short-termism and lack of support” (2013: 243). As I find great relevance in this to the challenges of teaching, I want to advocate for emotional labour as caring labour. I want to further reflect on what we may mean when calling for caring approaches in the arts and where these will be resourced from. When Hann (2021) describes theatre as a hug, and *LADA*’s newly appointed co-directors in 2022 reflect on the organisation’s vision, emphasising their caring approach as *LADA*’s organisational principle “towards shaping a culture of care” (*LADA* 2022, online), I am wondering where this care will come from.

This indicates how practitioners in socially engaged art in the context of care may be assumed to be bringing a surplus of care to balance the deficit of the over-worked, over-caring carers that they may work with, especially in applied performance in health care contexts. Subtly and unperceivably, I argue, this points towards another risk of caring injustice.

Making and delivering workshops can be a practice of intense labour. Designing and individually tailoring workshops to schools, setting up spaces, experiencing worry and stress about shortage of time and

space, the numbers of participants and success of activities, outcomes and the development and future of a scheme of a self-funded project (created by an immigrant in the UK, full-time working teacher) were for me a form of labour that resembled a lot the caring labour that I am familiar with from my teaching and mothering practice (although all are chosen and intentional). And this labour required determination and discipline, that was caring towards participants. They also required a lot of courage in the vulnerability of creating a practice of facilitation that was stepping back to bring the participants to the forefront. And this often came with the emotional experience of self-doubt and ambivalence towards my own practice, as another manifestation of vulnerability in the preoccupation with how I can make my practice more caring, which perhaps eventually made it so.

In one-to-one performance, Adrian Howells had admitted similar feelings towards his performances and a frustrating ambivalence around the authenticity of his work when this had to be repeated many times with different participants (Iball in Heddon and Johnson 2016: 199). Moreover, Iball discusses the labour of intimate one-to-one performance stating that “the practitioner is vulnerable to exhaustion, to the pressures imposed by self-regulation” (Iball in Heddon and Johnson 2016: 198).

This shows that, even in the case of exquisite work, as Howells's work was, the experience of labour is important and should be considered and not overlooked. As with the teacher, the mother, the carer, the nurse and the doctor, we understand therefore how we need to disrupt the idea of the artist/facilitator as caring 'hero' and promote deeper understandings of the experience of the practitioner in the labour of applying performance - with care.

Mojisola Adebayo in her chapter in *Applied Theatre: Aesthetics* (White 2015) debates crucial issues about applied theatre (a term she also debates) and unpacks some of the complexities around the practice. Adebayo argues that

in a feminist analysis, women are seen as those there to service, help, fix and attend to need []. It may be that men are not being attracted to MAs in Applied Theatre because it is seen as a vocation, like nursing, rather than an artistic subject in a creative setting (Adebayo in White 2015: 126).

⁵⁵ In the context of a work that she sees as commodified and 'a method of correcting the other', Adebayo reflects on how fewer men than women apply to UK universities for MA courses in Applied Theatre, as she problematises the nature or assumptions around it. This is endorsed by research on gender

This indicates how crucial implications may 'apply' in the 'application' of theatre and the labour, artistic and caring, and which could also become another form of invisible (caring) work and romanticised, invisible labour⁵⁵.

The affective and care aesthetics turn (if we could call it that) in applied performance (Stuart Fisher and Thompson 2020, Thompson 2009; 2015; 2023, White 2015), are developments that contribute to the growth, deepening and refinement of the practice that also advance the ethical and political components of the sector. However, caring practices may mean, imply, and cost in labour which will still have to be provided by practitioners and this is a form of artistic labour, aesthetic, affective *and* caring. As Adebayo (2015) argues that it is not usually the practitioners who write and discuss the practice as they are too busy making it, teachers are similarly disregarded in the creation of policies and crumbled under administration systems that do not necessarily understand their work. It is important then to remember to ask who is making judgements and calls and who is represented and included or not in the discussions and the voicing of these calls.

balance in the arts and health world, that is also relevant (see for example *Arts for Everybody*, 2024 online) while the labour behind artistic research is increasingly considered.

Enabling wider discussions around the practice and its complexities, could challenge assumptions around artistic labour as immaterial labour and what is expected from the arts to care for, if so, in a damaged world.

Furthermore, considering the making of caring relational work, teaching or participatory performance, suggests a further politics of self-care within affective economies. And this also points to the affective labour in teaching and the strong correlation of teaching as a labour of love (Zembylas 2005; Patience 2008; Skattebol 2010). Although preoccupied mostly with how “affective labour has been rationalized by standards-based accountability and performativity measures” (Kostogriz 2012: 399), these discussions still remind us of the dynamic of the affective as a force that can be exploited and commodified susceptible to domination. At the same time, affect can be a creative force that can escape control, it can be a power of freedom, as Antonio Negri famously proclaims its ‘expansive power’

⁵⁶Relating this to my suggestion of un/non-doing in the workshops and my practices of stillness and waiting, in my proposal of holding space for ‘just being’, I relate to the *Nap Ministry*, a project created by performance artist, theologian and activist Tricia Hersey, that suggests rest as a radical form of resistance towards the exploitations of labour in the capitalist world. The *Nap Ministry* proposes a de-programming and resistance to doing, rest and sleep as

(Negri and Hardt 1999: 86) - and being expansive suggests a relation to space. The affective then may be a force that starts from the embodied to imagine something different for the political and the social⁵⁶. With teachers at breaking point, the spaces of rest, nurturing self-reflection and repair that the project proposes with the workshops, offer insights for self-care in teaching. Indeed, in neoliberal terms being a good teacher means that you must also practice good self-care. Manuals⁵⁷ of self-help stress the importance of committing to self-care rituals of self-preservation and nurturance to face the ever-growing demands of teaching. Self-care then becomes another box to check in the endless list of responsibilities for the teacher, and the responsibility of self-sustainment and being resourceful is placed on the individual. However, this has crucial implications as Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart and Kneese argue: “[t]hose who fail to practice self-care may indeed be labelled “noncompliant” and thus less deserving of care” (2020: 4), indeed rendering self-care a “neoliberal model of care as one of moralized self-management” (ibid.). But self-care can be troubling,

forms of individual and collective self-care, which ultimately enacts a reclaiming of the right to dream, to “create sacred spaces where the liberatory, restorative, and disruptive power of rest can take hold” (*Nap Ministry*, 2023 online.)

⁵⁷ See for example *Education Support* (2022) and their resources on staff self-care and wellbeing.

radical, or unsettling, it can even be paradoxical, as was the anomaly of experiencing the soft, gentle care of hard rocks. This demonstrates that self-care may indeed involve the opening of a space to access something ‘hard’, something unsettling, that dares to ask questions about the “work of discomfort, unease, and trouble in matters of care” (Murphy 2015: 721). We see then that self-care, as care, involves a certain political capacity or even imagination to understand how “care does not happen in a vacuum” (Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart and Kneese 2020: 6) but is intertwined in a complex set of systems and relations. Preserving self-care in the space of imagination can also be caring imagination that manifests through the affective. If we see teaching like that, we return then to the space of what is still taboo, that which Freeman (2005) and Dolan (2001) call ‘desire’ in the classroom, something that affirms the “unruly forms of relationality” (Freeman 2005: 94) in classrooms. It can also be related to what Audre Lorde (2007) calls ‘the erotic’ and she clearly differentiates from the distorted and sexualised, to praise it as the core feminine force of creating. And for sustaining this energy, as Ahmed (2014 online) analyses Lorde’s work on self-care, we need the relational and through the relational we can find care for others and care for the self. Therefore, this kind of self-care is not about one’s own happiness. It is about finding ways to exist in a world that is diminishing” (Ahmed

2014, online). Caring practices of teaching, performing, facilitating, can then enact caring modes of resistance and apply another layer of care upon the caring work, sustaining its authenticity and caring, political, and aesthetic potential. What this chapter exemplified is the labour behind relational practices. It argued that this labour is also aesthetic, that caring making entails the aesthetic. It advanced the provocations of the previous chapters around the labour in teaching to affirm that the labour of another relational practice, that of participatory making, can also be nurtured in the aesthetic, in allowing the possibility of imagining and dreaming in-care. This is what the next, concluding chapter will claim.

CHAPTER 7

DREAMING OF CARE

Throughout the project, I have consistently sought ways in which to engage with the felt experience of caring in teaching using performance and relational practices. I have foregrounded teachers' lived experiences of caring, highlighting their affective and aesthetic qualities. In other words, I have put forward the argument that the labour of care is one that can and should be considered aesthetically. In relation to the first research question on what is the felt experience of caring in teaching, I have revealed that the experience of caring in teaching has form which speaks in spatial and temporal qualities. Sometimes it can be akin to a state of stillness, one in which space and time is held, or offered to be inhabited by others. Classrooms and bodies are then, illuminated as still, held spaces, and their temporalities are layered and fused: their past, present and future are brought together. With the exploration of my relational performance practice (workshops) and the aesthetic lens in addressing care, I have established the relevance and contribution of the project to the field of performance of care and aesthetics of care⁵⁸. I have also shown that a practice of caring relational performance for those who provide care can be another practice of aesthetic labour and a production of the

temporal and the affective that especially institutional spaces denote. The insights from this thesis have indicated that employing the perspective of aesthetics has also significance for educational policy making and educational discussions, as well as the health and social care sectors where socially engaged art is employed. As a model and provocation for the lived experience of care the study can therefore exemplify a re-conceptualisation of care for sectors that care is provided showing that carers are also humans, crafting their care in labour and resistance, in ambivalence between loss and hope, between holding and letting go.

As such, the practices and framework of the project supported the living and understanding of care as the multi-faceted labour it is: emotional, physical, temporal, affective, aesthetic. My attempt to explore and talk about this experience that is lived, but not necessarily perceived or talked about as such at schools, required my formulation of an aesthetic language for understanding care. This language emerged through interdisciplinary ways of exploring care and spoke of a continuum of care in all practices of teaching, performing, designing

⁵⁸ Especially identified with the publication of *Care Aesthetics* (Thompson 2023) during the time of writing.

other relational practices such as participatory performance, and facilitating, researching and writing about care.

In a way, this expressed another aspect of ‘stillness’ as an insistence to stay *with* care or staying *in-care* whatever the modes that this multi-dimensional project entailed. It manifested an extensive practice of caringly inquiring about the experience of teachers - in a way, performing care on performing care, a *meta-caring* for the whole ecosystem of the research. And this was supported by a caring imagination that inspired the unfolding of these practices.

In this last section, I will discuss further my initial proposal for the ‘caring imagination’ as an essential quality for the teacher-carer. Over the course of the project, I explored the embodied, affective language of caring as aesthetic and illuminated how these are lived, vibrant states of being in-care, springing from and filled with caring labour and affect. Affirming this vibrancy can then be a form of disobedience, a disruption to the linear narrative of the carer who gives endlessly, ‘naturally’, passively. It can allow a rethinking of the performance of care as a language of beautiful struggles, also enabling an equal dialogue between artistic practices and teaching based on their similar,

relational language of care. And this shows that care ‘can imagine’ and become artful. It can suggest an intimate, tender gaze instead of the institutional gaze to allow *a flowing of caring images* from the experience of the teacher. And this is radical and vital in teaching, as much as it may be rationalised, regulated or appropriated. It is something to be claimed and have agency upon and it can be inspired by working with children and caring for them, making time and space for the dream to emerge.

Indeed, as I mentioned earlier⁵⁹, Hamington (2004) talks about imagination as crucial for understanding the needs of others when caring for them. My argument contributes to this aspect of care and extends it. I propose that the caring imagination is necessary to preserve the potential to dream, to visualise and create things, gestures, experiences. The caring imagination is one that invites an aesthetic response. To care is to be able to dream. And by that, I mean to be open to wonder, *to indeed practise wondering about and in our care*, as by dreaming I mean an engagement with a language of the symbolic. This can nurture the artful in care and preserve it contrary to its commodification. What if then, we were to extend the ‘aesthetics’ of

⁵⁹ See section 1. 5.

care, to a ‘dream-ics’ of care? Just as dreams can be unpredictable and paradoxical, they can find and catch you when you least expect them...

...as they unexpectedly came on an early morning in Athens between tall, ugly buildings and spoke of caring immensely for a class that I least expected that I would have the courage or inspiration to care for. And I am entering this new space, this new land of care.

(Unexpected inspiration, self-reflection 06/10/2022)

“Η ‘ονειρική’ της φροντίδας - I ‘oniriki’ tis frontidas – The ‘dream/ics’ of care”

The caring imagination may then perform and support a reverie and (day)dreaming about care – and that *is* caring *for* teachers. The nurturing of caring imagination is, therefore, my further suggestion for the performance of care field, through participatory performance practices with educators and socially engaged art at schools. Ultimately, for educational policy in times of alarming reports about teachers’ well-being and satisfaction with their work.

Robin Nelson has argued that “the arts and their modes of knowing enrich lives in ways without which they would not be livable” (2013: 51), demonstrating that the aesthetic is a way for self-sustenance. Indeed, caring self-sustenance in this project created spaces for the preservation and an engagement with the language of caring imagination within institutions. This was often shown by an intention to keep care *still*, illuminating that care may have a strong, even ontological relation to space, to the longing to inhabit, to enclose. The forms of the house and the nest, the practice of wrapping, the tracing and locating of care on the body, manifest that care may be lived and provided not only ‘in’ but ‘as’ spatial structure. The house form, common in the structure of *PaperCare* (2018) and the *doll’s house* (2021), indeed denoted institutions as spaces that produce phenomena and practices that materialise care.

The spaces, walls, doors⁶⁰ of these house forms identified relevance to the public/private distinction of the intimate practice of teaching and its liminality of existing in a ‘space’ between the two (Grumet 1984, Hargreaves 1994, Bergdahl and Langmann 2017).

This intimate, creative consideration of being, living, working, and caring as a teacher in these spaces and states of liminality was indeed, a form of dreaming. In *PaperCare* (2018) the metallic house frame had no walls, transparent and ambivalent towards its existence, perhaps ready to be uplifted in the air and fly or fleet, whereas the *doll's house* (2021), also ambivalent if it is a public or private space, opening and closing its doors, ended up firmly wrapped in paper and tied with twine. Dreaming and creating images about these spaces was for me a practice of enduring and also preserving my care, in ways that might be unexpected, ways that seemed unproductive or paradoxical, however, caring.

This “creation of new images” (Bachelard 1971: liv), could count as poetic work upon care. If we therefore consider the poetics of caring

⁶⁰ This precarious positionality became also evident in considering specific doors during the project. For example, an old door that was replaced by a new, mechanic gate, at one of the schools I was working – as demanded by OFSTED- and which signified with its replacement an opening into a

imagination, it is equally important to reflect on how these can be inspired and sustained. When Bachelard argues that “...an image is a plant which needs earth and sky, substance and form... images [] evolve slowly, laboriously...” (1971: 12), we understand something generative and distinctly caring for a practice of sustaining imagination. We also see that imagination requires not only ‘seeing well’ but ‘dreaming well’, the *function of unreality* being equally vital as the *function of reality* (1971: 13). It is then that we can create images “which go beyond reality, which *sing* reality” (1971: 15 emphasis in original). It is this that I ultimately identify for this project, an intention to dream, to produce images of care, an intention *to sing the poetics of care*.

Bachelard writes: “Imagination is always considered to be the faculty of *forming* images. But it is rather the faculty of *deforming* the images offered by perception, of freeing ourselves from the immediate images” (1971: 19 emphasis in original). Indeed, the caring imagination of de-forming in this project was expressed through the paradox of

different, complex and technical world. Also, the door of the workshop room at the PRU school, which attracted attention during the ethics approval of the workshops. Those doors made meaning for me as signifiers and thresholds of caring spaces.

being taken care of by rocks, in the un/not-doing in the midst of the frantic context of schools, in the insistence to ‘remain’ within the capitalist collapse through the stubborn immobility of a body ‘still standing/standing still’, in waiting in the constantly circulating, in the paradox or anathema of claiming time and space not only for the student but for the teacher too, in the realisation that the practice of caring for children can animate the teachers’ dreaming.

I call therefore, for an acknowledgment of the caring imagination as a creative necessity. It nurtures the dreaming of how we can take care of ourselves and others within school environments.

It can support the ‘de-forming of imagining’ beyond the intensified, commodified and controlled. Although seemingly a private process, caring imagination affirms that “[a]n ethic of care names care as a political as well as a private issue” (Barnes 2012: 59). It can then mobilise the claiming of caring reveries as interruptions of the speedy, fast school time by imagining alternative rhythms and orientations to embodied experience other than rigid orientations of productivity and success. These suspensions can place demands for a present that is fully felt, a claim that those participating in education can have ownership and agency over, that they *can* shape their care. And this affirms how a focus on the aesthetic can indicate or even ensure social justice, far from normative accounts and external forces of judgement

or assessment. It can indeed mean, as Thompson affirms, that experiences of care

can be aesthetically crafted, deeply sensory, and sensitive actions from one to another, a continuity between people, objects, and the world, but an assessment of their quality is dependent on those involved in the total experience and the sensory worlds in which they take place. (Thompson 2023: 41)

And these configurations that assert the embodied and the intimate as source of knowledge, can happen in ‘dreaming space and time’, in not-fully places, or places of dis-or mis-placement of emotion and time, places not fully existent, therefore, utopic. Still, the utopic space of caring imagination, opened by the aesthetic as method of exploration, enables an understanding and engagement with the ambiguity of caring emotion, to the relationship to time, memory, and the orientation to future and suggests the embracing of care as something further than the human. Working in the space of the aesthetic, as shape, form and action, care can imagine and be imagined as beauty, contrary to “relations too often diminished in an aesthetically degraded world” (Thompson 2023: 43). And this space may reveal (an)other utopia that can still envision and provide a caring future, even when it cannot sustain (caring) hope for the future.

Discovering the aesthetics of care's diverse orientations, has then crucial things to suggest about care and visions of a caring future. This can promote wider perspectives that embrace the affective, the material and temporal in the classroom and schooling environments as the living and breathing ecosystems that they are and can offer practices for exploring and supporting the experience as event in time and space. Affirming Ahmed's assertion that "...the question of future is an affective one; it is a question of hope for what we might yet be" (Ahmed 2014: 183), it can imagine alternative caring futures beyond the dominance of the anthropocentric as honest care in classrooms, as small caring utopias that vibrate with caring force.

Therefore, caring imagination *can* propose, offer, and sustain the 'troubling' of the caring experience allowing it to be performed and lived with qualities that may not be associated with it, stuck in the present and stillness instead of moving forward, with emotions of despair instead of hope, with a generosity of time instead of scarcity. It foregrounds the close, intimate study of embodied experience in its forces of contraction and labour, in the tension and in the friction of care, which works in volume and scale, in holding and releasing, in managing the often-heart-breaking beauty of watching the unfolding of time when you see children growing in front of your eyes, and you

assist them in their growth holding this passing of time tenderly and caringly in your hands.

This is what teachers' caring imagination ultimately does:

It suggests a caring rhythm and invites us to feel it:

it is tender, a tender spatial and temporal practice.

It operates a pause that is a radical act and

an intentional failure

to comply to narratives of productivity, of fast doing and fast caring.

It is an active, creative resistance to care as commodity, *a resistance* to discard or forget how care existed somewhere, sometime, and continues to exist everyday around us and by us.

It insists on staying and waiting, *still*.

It insists on hoping in hopelessness, *still*.

It insists on showing up for what needs care in the world.

It insists on dreaming.

ON THE RESIDENCY OF CARE

Where does care live?

What is the shape of its home?

What does its space look like?

Is it whole

Or fragmented?

What does its time feel like?

What happens to it when it is completed?

How could we communicate with the care(s)

That happened in the past?

Do they still exist there?

I feel that mine do.

*Can we bring them into the present, pull them and stretch them to reach the now,
look at them?*

Can we listen with a stethoscope

And see

How they breathe

If they still breathe?

I want to speak with an old care of mine

That I still love

But it lives in the yesterday

Our communication is broken

I am dreaming of a care

I build a bridge

And walk to there

I sit with her

And feel her

She holds my hand

She tells me

Of those things

That I barely remember

She lets me stay for a while

In her narrow

Warm home

She shows me

My care of tomorrow

And helps me build

Her home.



Doll's house (PaR 2021- ongoing). Performative installation (30 x 50 x 120cm). Image by Christina Vasileiou.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: EXTRACTS FROM AUTOETHNOGRAPHY, ETHNOGRAPHY & ARTISTIC PRACTICE

BODIES

Assembling chairs during playtime - I am helping too. We remove the usual chairs and prepare the sofa chairs. I place the chairs and teacher says they're a bit too far back, 'I want them a bit closer to me', she says and pulls them closer, then says 'now they're too close to me but that's okay, it's cosy'.

Same day, later: They provide fully their bodies to the children, to play 'on' them, to fully engage, to play dressing up, TA lets three little children play on him, provides his body for them to 'perform medical acts' on him. 06/10/17 PRU Observation

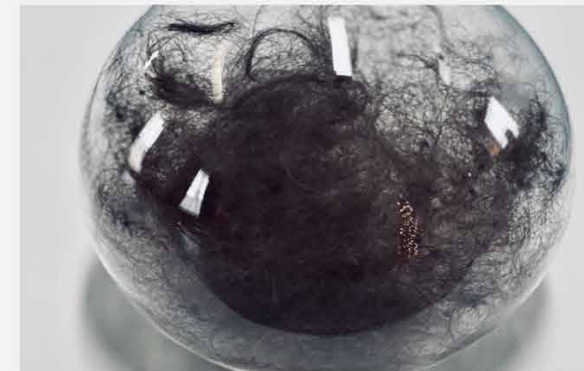
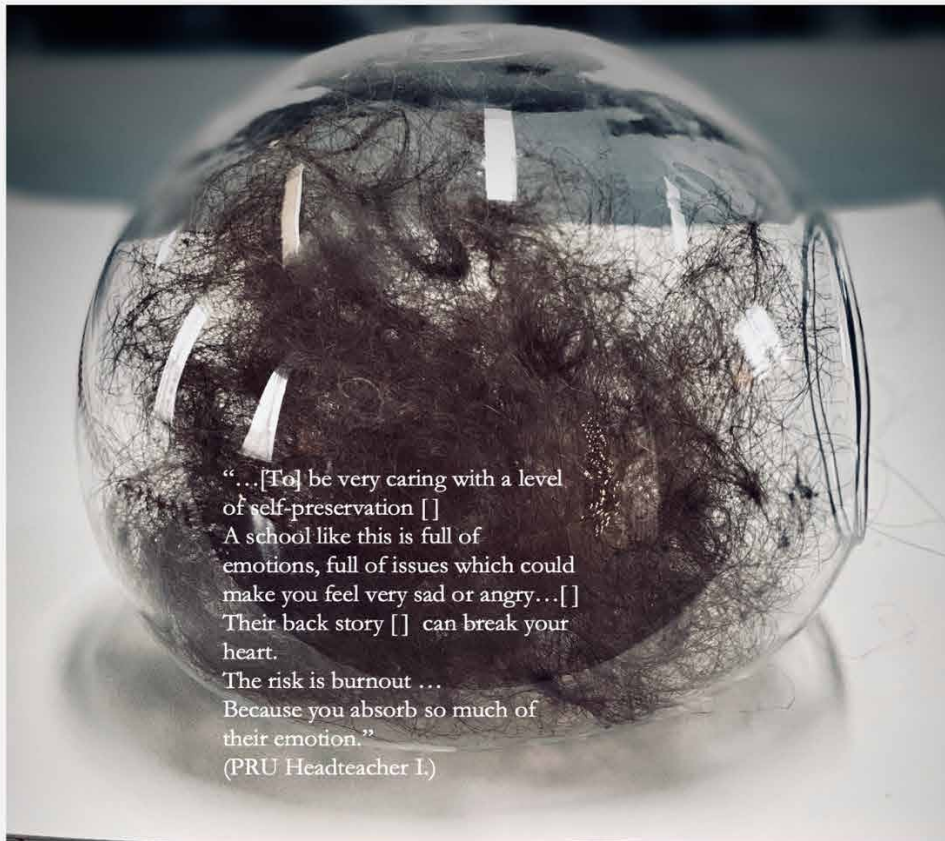
The caring body is caring because it allows things happening to it: the teacher trips on child's foot - child was careless. Child says I'm sorry but does move their foot. Something that in a different setting would make someone angry, it is not for the teacher. Body space, invisible. 23/02/17 Mainstream primary Observation

You are approaching me backwards without looking; you know I'm sitting behind you. You are sitting on my lap. You use this sitting as protection and 'shelter' when you do not want to do something or want to avoid someone. I am a safe chair. 11/07/2018 Nursery Autoethnography



Chairs at the PRU school (2017). Photographed by the researcher, with kind permission from the school.

ABSORBING



“I am an intervenor. I have to intervene; I have to communicate everything through me .
[Being skin to skin with the student so that the student feels the vibrations of the body]
[I have to be] Very attentive to recognise responses because they can be tiny... subtle...
You kind of feel like you are in a bubble sometimes when you're working, when you are really working, it's just you and them...
you have to shut off everything else...” PMLD Intervenor L.

Artwork: Vasileiou, C. (2021) *Untitled*. [Human hair in glass. Dimensions 25x25cm]. Photography by Christina Vasileiou.

“I do absorb what's going on... if there's a certain feeling in the room, I absorb it quite quickly and I am quite aware if the level of tension or anxiety in the room is quite high, I find it hard to centre myself sometimes [] to ground yourself and separate yourself sometimes...
We load up all day... [if I would describe it as a picture] stuffed, really full, it is quite foggy it is quite thick I am imagining the inside of me... It is not a burden because it is too mixed up, so it is almost it is like quite rich [] It fills me up as well, so there is something about it that completes me in its own way, so it leaves no spaces which could be seen both good and bad. So, it could be seen as overwhelming sometimes but sometimes it's what makes me feel whole, yes, it's like a black cloud which sounds quite dark, but it doesn't feel sinister, it feels, like complete [] it's like thick smoke, [it's moving] it's alive [if I wanted to unload] I would blow it out, but when it comes out it's not dark anymore, it's light... it just makes me a bit lighter again and then I am ready for more [] I think it's already there... I can't imagine it not being there...” Mainstream Primary TA T.

WELL



Artwork: Vasileiou, C. (2021) *Untitled*.
[Glass container. Dimensions 60x30x30cm.]
Photography by Christina Vasileiou.

"Since starting working with children... I feel more strong...
When you know another life depends on you [] you try to become more cold in emotion because you have a big responsibility, you have the responsibility of another life [] I just accept that it is part of life, that there is lot of sadness in this world in general."
SEND TA R.

"Experienced teachers know when to take a breath
The more experienced you get the better you get at standing when your blood is boiling." Participant,
Workshop 1

"I felt drained every day. I had nothing left to give to my own children. I needed some kind of balance. It's just I know how to put on a face." PRU Teacher C.



WRAPPING - NESTING

The wrap denotes the closing, the holding. It reveals how care can be seen as a closed system, hermetically closed, even in school classrooms protecting everyone in there, even the teachers. Nursery practice: putting children in the buggy to calm down. Body nests: Using my body as a nest and a cocoon when children are upset especially in soft play and sensory room.

Student very agitated and upset. Teachers spend an hour holding the student in different wraps... Student must be held and have a body next to their body, holding, covering, wrapping the student with their body. I can see how the tension gives way to a relaxed posture and body, and then back to tension and back to relaxing and so on. The teacher's body absorbs all this, it is like an absorbing nest, a space serving the calming down... [] it is exhausting and draining... teachers have so much patience. The waiting, the painstaking waiting. Both teachers have a look, they look ahead with no focus, body firm, a firm nesting, wrapping, a practice, a discipline, an 'education'.

In waiting. The waiting body. I wonder on what other situation does someone use their body as a site of control - pressure - holding - absorbing tension - a site of calming down another body and all this through waiting? What may be the levels of energy and effort required to reach, accomplish the desired levels of calmness? How do they feel before, during, after?

On break, holding again a little one now. We engage in a casual chat as she's holding the child, she is sitting on the sofa holding his crossed arms between her legs with child on the floor. She is talking cheerfully. She's laughing engaged in the chat and at the same time holding the upset child. Child seems calmer and comforted.

I cannot imagine how physically exhausted she must be after three hours of teaching and holding at the same time. Earlier in the staff room we were chatting while she was preparing a nice art and craft. All so natural like an extension of her body and herself. 11/12/17 PRU Observation

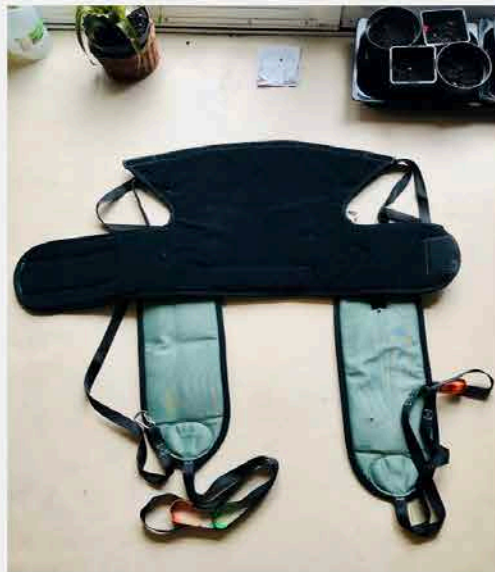
"If the staff is calm then they are transferring this calmness ... the child is showing resistance ... it is communication through the body rather than communication through language... the teacher is saying it's ok you're safe, but I have to hold you until you feel calmer...

I think those two in that moment they are moving into another space but through communicating through the body..." PRU Headteacher I.

"There was no time for nurturing in their house so they liked the cuddling the holding of the hand the stroking () because mom didn't have time to do that... Some children like the wrapping because it feels like a cuddle at the beginning and I think it relaxes them because obviously they don't get that at home." PRU TA J.

WRAPPING - NESTING

The emotionally overwhelming for me process of observing the gentle hoisting of students. The helplessness and resignation, the gentle and caring manipulation of the other body, the need to fully trust yourself to do it. PMLD School Observation / reflection report 12/01/2018



Equipment used to assist students' mobility at PMLD schools (2018). Photographed by the researcher, with kind permission from the school.

"Some of the times the hugs and the wrap or double elbow (physical restraint) were used because I needed to hold onto them. I guess reflecting back to those moments, I also used it because I too needed it.

I needed them to physically feel that I'm there to contain them against themselves... to keep myself sane and journey back to balance with them. [] I am not an educator, I am not a teacher, I am not a facilitator, I am a body who extends their arms most of the time to either give hugs or to physically restrain." PRU TA G.

In KS1 teacher attempting to read a book, student seems very upset physically, kicking and hitting the others. Teacher pulls student towards her, student is fighting, pulling, pushing, kicking, he's on the floor teacher is not letting student, student is trying to bite, she's physically reacting pulling her hand gently pushing students head to the other side. The whole idea seems that she's not commenting on this physical struggle, keeping on what she's doing trying to teach and read a book. My body is struggling. I am tense watching this. It is literally a battle, she's teaching reading asking students questions while wrestling, but she's not letting the student go, she's calm and silent about this struggle, like it is not happening. The student body becomes an extension of her body as she's teaching connected together in a violent bonding, her body absorbing the tension and violence of a child's body accepting it with silence and a form of understanding and compassion.

A literal physical way to tell the student I am with you in this struggle.

05/12/2017 PRU Observation

TIME



Classroom clocks. Photographed by the researcher and researcher's colleagues, with kind permission to share.

I am thinking of them when I go home. Always wondering what they may be doing at this time. Particularly thinking of them when they are asleep, and this is overwhelming for me. The songs we sing in class play on my mind all the time. They exhaust me.

24/02 Nursery – Autoethnography

“You have to have the patience of a saint ... if you are being impatient with them, then they are more likely to play up... A lot of it is repetition and persistence... Just keep doing the same thing, the same thing ... It could be quite a long process... you could be working on it for anywhere up to a year just to get that one tiny movement. But then it's just a massive reward.

You have to have the patience ingrained in you.”

(PMLD TA R.)

Engaging with time, timing students' quick responses, timing the lesson, double math.

Time time time time.

Monitor time, looking at stopwatch, to measure progress.

A battle with time, who will win (?).

Mainstream Primary Observation 23/03/2017



Χρόνου Φείδου. Translation: *To Be Sparing with Time*.
Photograph of Stitching on fabric. Source Unknown.

BECOMING A MEMORY

How does it feel when you know that you will be a memory in so many people's hearts and minds - as very few other people in the life of a person? People remembering you as feeling, as sensation, as care, the affect and effect of your care towards students?. To be a lived sensation enduring in the hearts and minds of others. How does it feel to become a memory?

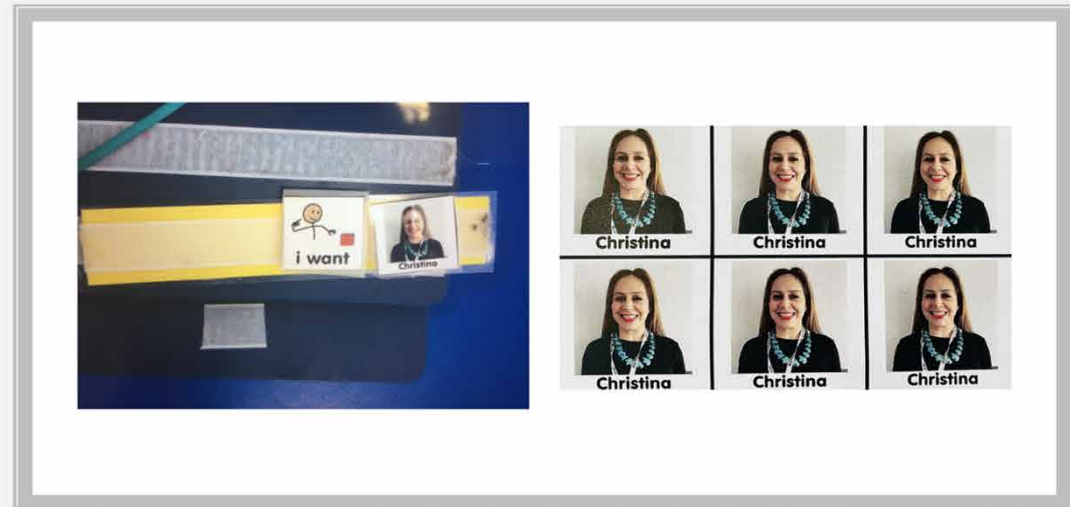
To 'work' towards this completion?

How does it feel to stay still for a moment and consider the lived sensation that you are already becoming a memory?

To meet students in the present 'her and now' knowing that you are becoming a memory of tomorrow?

**IF YOU ARE A TEACHER,
SOME DAY 50 YEARS
FROM NOW, SOMEONE
WILL THINK OF YOU AND
SAY YOUR NAME.
LET THAT SINK IN.**

Durkan, J. (2021) [Twitter] 11/07. Available at:
<https://twitter.com/DurkanJack/status/1414008206263738370>. Accessed 05/08/2021.



Experimenting with memory fading, PaR 2021

CARING FUTURES

“It is very important for children, especially here, that they know that I am their rock. I am something that is solid, and I am here and they can always depend on me.... (becomes emotional)

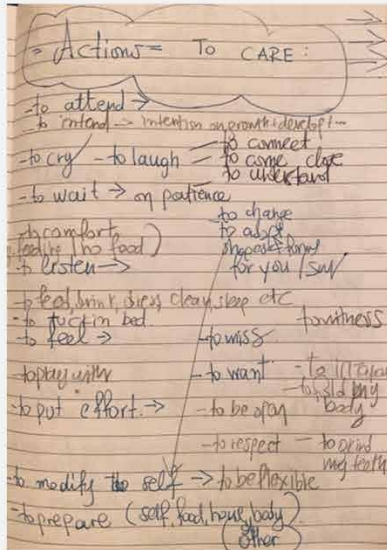
This is the only place where children feel secure. You go through a lot with them And it is hard to say goodbye sometimes, but you have to, you have to because you know they do eventually have to move on But most of the time I do sort of hope that I brought them into a state where they can kind of manage through the stuff that is not working well for them at home and get to that point where they can move on by themselves and just try stay as focused as they can until they are old enough to go, to leave all ... And I sort of am saying that because that, all of this is very close to me because that's how I was, that was my life and so I don't want anybody else to kind of be in that position... Sometimes it is very upsetting and maybe sometimes I do invest too much... I had to learn ... to switch off at times to make sure that I don't take anything home with me because I was doing that before ... [] For my own sanity I've got to be able to switch off and know that I can only do so much, I can't do everything or help everyone or save everyone... I kind of broke at one point... I think care can be dangerous, I think you can care too much... you've got to be fully regulated within yourself to be able to be effective enough for somebody else.. []

I've learned that.. kind of learned it the hard way, but I have learned it, I do care, I don't sort of care any less, but you need to have a break... I know how to deal with it now, I think before I didn't know how to deal with it, everything, I just took on board, so I had everybody's problems carrying them around with me and thinking about all these different children, all these different problems and ... just made my brain crash... I know how to deal with it better now... that the children and the children's issues don't cause me major problems at the moment... I do take that time out to breathe.”
PRU Teacher M.

happen to him when he leaves here and it started playing on my mind... and I have more or less made up my mind that I want to be part of his life now forever, I guess I worry a little bit about him. I don't get consumed by it, but I have started certainly in the past months thinking about it... what happens if anything happened to mum? ... I said I'd like to volunteer to have him... really got to me...” PMLD TA L.

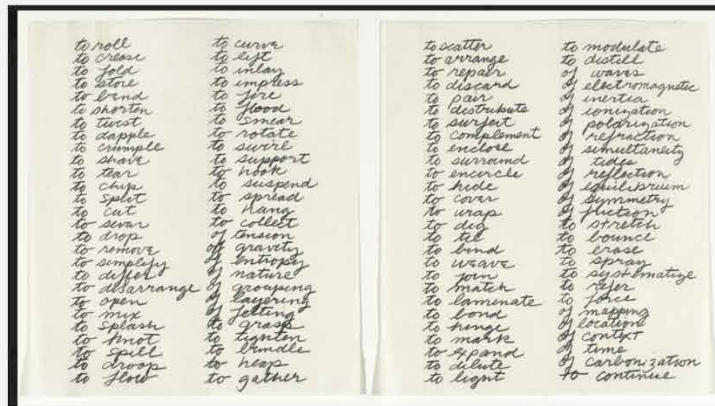
“Definitely it is maybe a bit banal but people who work with children they should be passionate about themselves and think what these kids will be in the future and what impact you have on them and your moods and your behaviour and everything you do and instead of thinking what can I do with a school like that, a system like that, I am tired and I am not well paid, you just really need to do the best you can because at the end of the day there is you and those children and then there is the future because you don't know and you can't maybe rely on the state, on the society, on their parents maybe they don't even have parents and it is really about you doing the best you know is the best and believe in them.”

LISTS OF CARE: UNDERSTANDING THE CARING PRACTICE



To Notice To Pay attention To be Attentive To Watch To Contemplate To Reflect To Think of To Self-reflect To be Patient To be Persistent To have Perseverance To Trust To Stand by someone's side To Listen To Look at To Smell To Touch To Feel To Make with/for To Create with/for To Wait To Break (for) To Cry with To Laugh with All the above with To want to get to know To Hear stories carefully To Collect stories To Pray To Thank To Affirm the self/other To Dress To Take care of clothes, Washing, ironing, folding	To Feed To Water To Sleep To Hold To Reassure To Comfort To Dream with To Dream alone about To Wash To Declutter To Tidy up toys, to organize them To develop Resilience – care for the self To Prepare meals with love To Pay attention to detail To Remember the detail To Try to Remember the detail To Remember the feel To Create art To Do real politics To Care for the body To Check-in with self To Worry To Get to know To Repair all and the self To Breathe together in hug To Cuddle To Cuddle for long To Walk hand in hand To Measure the distance and how far apart we are for safe To have Humility To allow Humiliation from some To apply Pressure
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“To Care: What Is The Doing Of The Doing?”
(Autoethnography documentation 2017 -2018)



Verblist, 1967. Pencil on paper 25.4 X 21.6 cm. 2025
© Richard Serra / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

In his piece *Verblist* (1967) sculptor Richard Serra deals with questions around the nature of his artistic practice.

A list of verbs which meticulously monitor his process led to creating a series of works as responses to his inquiry about what is the actual doing of his artistic doing. Serra states: “I think one constantly tries to invent ways of seeing into what one is doing.” (Art21, 2013).

Performance score for
Performance with Paper (2019) 'HUMAN' Exhibition PV, Platform 1
Gallery, London.

- Scrunching up from the roll.
I cut pieces of paper and lay them down like rugs.
I cut a piece and place it in standing position. It stands.
I take in my hands in a cuddle. I rock it.
- I am folding myself inside it like in a pipe.
I slowly take it off.
But my leg stays in. I walk.
I go into the pipe, I hide.
I stay there.
I come out, take it off and stand it.
I stand, I wait.
I start again. I repeat the same circle of actions many times until exhaustion.
- I carry the papers like rocks, stand and hold them.
I pile them up and load myself.
I wrap them with twine and make a weight.
I wear the weight on my back.
It looks like angel's wings.
I stay with the weight for long, sitting or standing.
I take it off and leave it on the floor with the others.
- I fill me up, stuff myself, I over-stuff.
I make a folding crown for my head.
I make a thin cord like umbilical cord and tie it on my waist.
I continue to turn it I make it big and long.
I share it with the audience and stretch it with someone from audience or tie it somewhere.
I/we feel the tension.
I unfold slowly in reverse, and it stays on the floor.
I tie it into smaller knots.
- I stretch some papers and sew them together for long.
I make a blanket.
I go under it. I stay there.



THE CARING POTENTIAL OF PERFORMANCE

Participatory Performances of Care

The caring potential of performance should also be noted as subject matter in works that may use (theatrical) performance as their operating medium but also other artistic forms such as music, again affirming that performance can not only explore care but also be caring for audiences. For example, in *Sleep* (2018 - ongoing) performance/concert, composer Max Richter invites audiences to spend the night in spaces especially accommodated to host a sleeping audience, listening to the live concert of the composer overnight.



Left: 'BEDS', participatory exercise from the Marina Abramovic Method'. Film still from *Marina Abramović: The Rothschild Foundation Lecture* (2019) Royal Academy of Arts, London, 18th November.
Right: Max Richter, *Sleep*. Barbican, 06/05/2017. Image by Mark Allan/Barbican.

THE CARING POTENTIAL OF PERFORMANCE

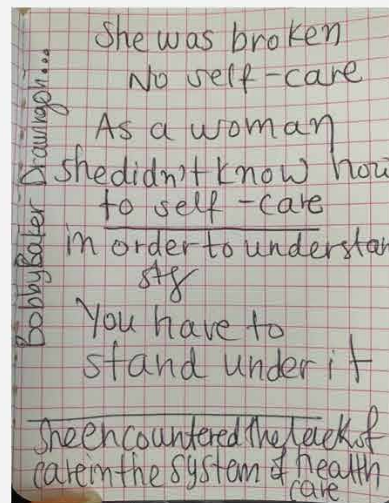


Bobby Baker in *Drawing on a (Grand)Mother's Experience*. Southbank Centre, 08.03.2020. Image by Christina Vasileiou.

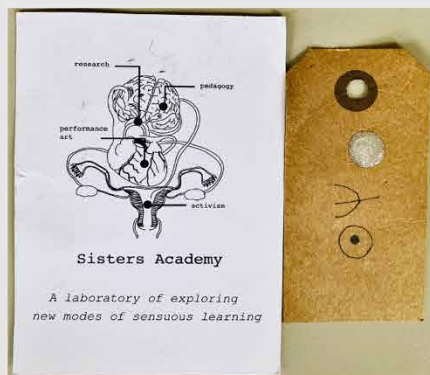
Bobby Baker has described her art as a means of therapy and self-sustaining in her evocative approaches to de-stigmatise mental health through art making (foreword in Walsh 2013).

I relate to how Baker explores the frustrations that care contains while at the same time celebrating caring labour.

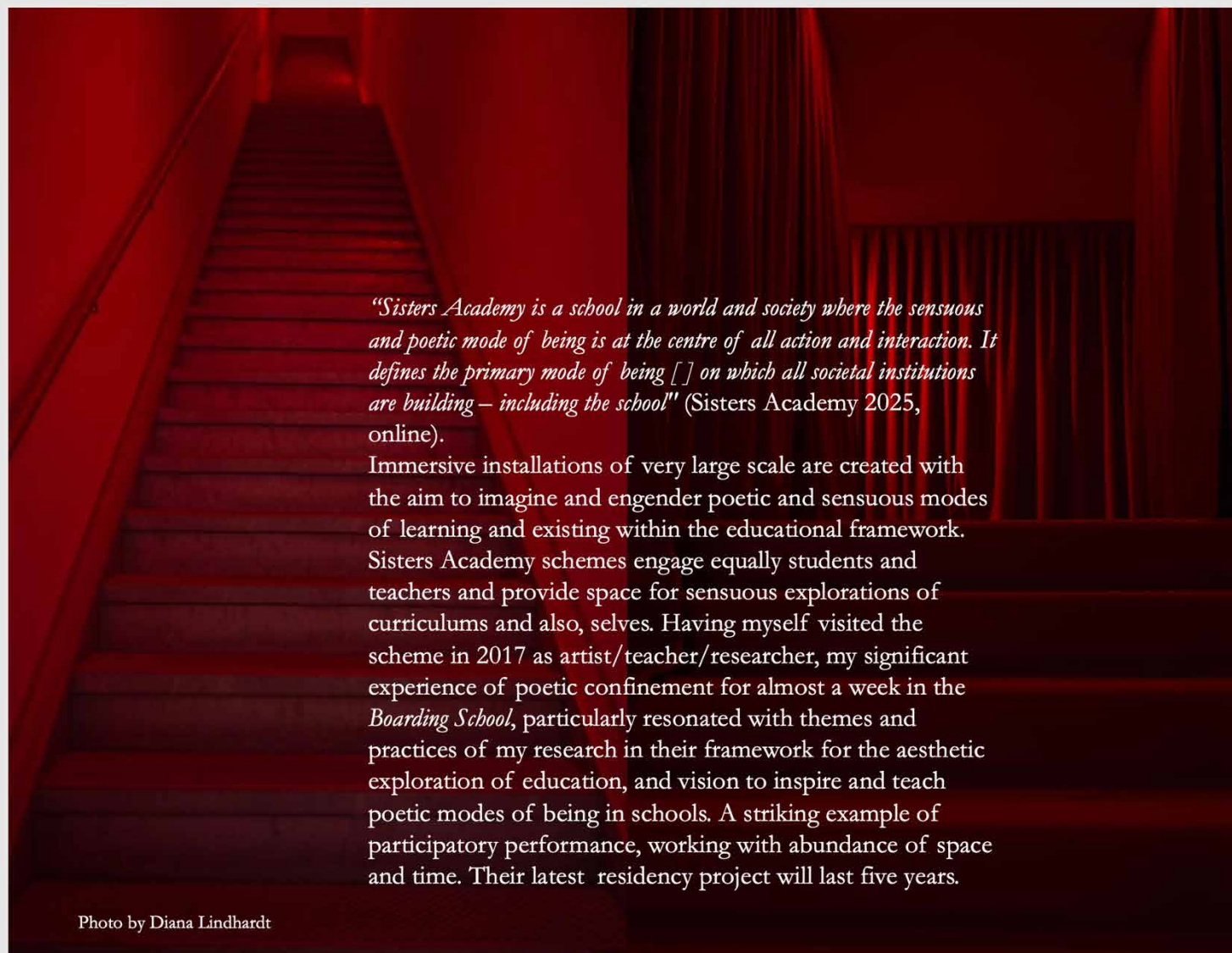
What Baker foregrounds with her work is a radical, aesthetic comment on the social and political value and the representation of care provision, bringing forward the importance of this lived experience.



Researcher's note during Bobby Baker's performance *Drawing on a (Grand)Mother's Experience*, Southbank Centre, 08.03.2020.



Researcher's cards from residency at Sisters Academy, *Boarding School No 3*, Copenhagen, Denmark, 23-26/09/2017.



"Sisters Academy is a school in a world and society where the sensuous and poetic mode of being is at the centre of all action and interaction. It defines the primary mode of being [] on which all societal institutions are building – including the school" (Sisters Academy 2025, online).

Immersive installations of very large scale are created with the aim to imagine and engender poetic and sensuous modes of learning and existing within the educational framework. Sisters Academy schemes engage equally students and teachers and provide space for sensuous explorations of curriculums and also, selves. Having myself visited the scheme in 2017 as artist/teacher/researcher, my significant experience of poetic confinement for almost a week in the *Boarding School*, particularly resonated with themes and practices of my research in their framework for the aesthetic exploration of education, and vision to inspire and teach poetic modes of being in schools. A striking example of participatory performance, working with abundance of space and time. Their latest residency project will last five years.

Photo by Diana Lindhardt

APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

CARE & TEACHING

1. Do you understand your profession as caring? In what ways?
2. What is care for you? How do we “do” care?
3. Would you perceive yourself as educator or carer? What distinguishes the two?
4. What makes the “caring” teacher? What kind of behaviour?
5. Do you think it is important for a teacher to care and show this care? Why?
6. Are there more caring and less caring teachers? What makes the difference?

RESTRICTIONS & LIMITATIONS

7. Have there been times that you have experienced conflict or limitations in the ways that you wanted to express your care towards (a) student(s) but for various reasons you could not? Can you describe how you experienced this contradiction or limitation?
8. Can you briefly state what are in your opinion the reasons for these conflicts or limitations?
9. Do you think that in certain situations you need to regulate or shape your actions or your feelings according to what you should do or feel?
10. Do you understand this as a form of labour of care?
11. Could you recall if this experience had any physical manifestations?
12. Do you believe that your physical expressions are different in school than in your non-professional life? Do you believe that teachers’ or/and students’ bodies change in their physical

expressions as been subject to education and “schooling”? Why?

13. Do/have you have/had any students that you deeply care about but you do not show or tell them? What prevents you from doing that?

TOUCH

14. How do you feel towards touching students as a way of showing care?
15. How do you feel towards children’s physical expressions of affection towards teachers?
16. How do you feel towards teachers’ physical expressions of affection towards students?
17. Are there cases that it is needed?
18. How do you feel about your students touching each other in order to show affection?
19. Do you think that teachers model for their students ways of expressing care and affection?

PERFORMING CARE/ THE CARING BODY

20. What role does your body play in the ways that you express your care towards your students?
21. Would you argue that you use your body as caring tool? Could you describe in what ways?
22. What are the demands for your body in your caring role? How are you experiencing these demands, how do they manifest themselves, can you provide examples?
23. Is care situated anywhere specifically in your/the body?
24. How do you think you express care in your role, what do you have to employ in order to express care?
25. How are you experiencing your body in the class and in school?

CARE IN ABSENCE

26. Do you find yourself thinking about your students when you leave the school?
27. Have you ever experienced particular concern about (a) certain child(ren) that was extending into your private life?
28. Without naming the child(ren), can you describe the experience emotionally and physically? How did this concern manifest itself?
29. Would you like to show us a part of the body that this concern was perhaps situated or a physical image that describes the experience?

CLOSING

30. Can you look at the camera and think of a student that you particularly care about? (You can stay like that for as long as you wish, you may also say something to them if you want to/ Or make a gesture or sound for them)

SEND Education

Would you perceive yourself as educator or carer? What distinguishes the two?

What is the role of the body in caring? How is your body used or manipulated in its caring role?

Can you give some examples of practices that your body is subjected to from other bodies as part of your professional practices and caring role?

Can you give some examples of practices that your body may 'perform' on other bodies as part of your professional role?

Examples: scrutinizing the children's bodies for signs of injury, feeding, cleaning, intervening on the appearance: making the hair, checking the overall appearance.

How would you describe the impact of your work as both an educator and carer on you on physical and emotional level?

APPENDIX III: CONFERENCE PRESENTATION at:

<https://christinavasileiou.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Performing-Care-Symposium-Presentation-RCSSD-2016.pdf>

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APPENDIX IV: TEACHERS' INSPIRING STORIES OF CARE DURING THE PANDEMIC

BBC (2020) *Coronavirus: Calverton teacher inflating happiness during lockdown*. (online) Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-52443899> (Accessed 10/06/2020).

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[children-and-parents-through-covid-19-school-closures-181380](#)
(Accessed 31/10/2022).

APPENDIX V: ETHICS APPROVAL at:

<https://christinavasileiou.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Ethics-Approval-letter.pdf>