

Duty of Care: Part Two

15 August – 9 November 2024

In the art world, there's a new emphasis on care, with a focus on gentle attentiveness and good works, and a fear of triggering hurt. Care has become a buzzword and is being used to reset policy and practice. However, too often, the complexity and troublesomeness of care are smoothed over by liberal good intentions.

Care is a murky notion. It is entangled with ugly feelings of obligation and burden, exhaustion and sacrifice. It is sometimes a mask for coercion and control. It is also co-opted by commerce as a marketing tool, rebranded and repackaged as 'wellness' and 'self care'.

In this discussion, the 'uncaring' positions—libertarians and litterers, meat eaters and gas guzzlers—are regularly overlooked. How will they be framed by—and frame—the practice of care?

An international group show, *Duty of Care* explores familial, institutional, and professional care; care and gender; care and race; care and medicine; artists as healers; extreme care; and more.

Curators

Stephanie Berlangieri, Angela Goddard, and Robert Leonard

Duty of Care is a partnership between the Institute of Modern Art and Griffith University Art Museum, encompassing two concurrent exhibitions and a symposium.

Part One: Institute of Modern Art

29 June – 22 September

Kathy Barry, Benetton/Oliviero Toscani, Joshua Citarella, Martin Creed, Julian Dashper, Florian Habicht, HOSSEI, Mike Kelley, R.D. Laing, Leigh Ledare, Teresa Margolles, Dani Marti, Dane Mitchell, Betty Muffler, Michael Parekōwhai, Tabita Rezaire/Amakaba, Michael Stevenson, The Hologram/Cassie Thornton, and Artur Żmijewski

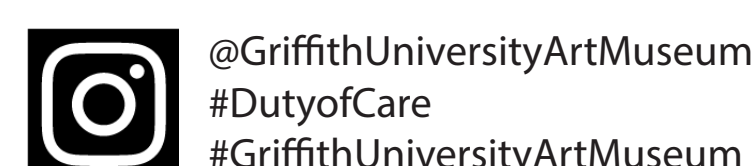
Part Two: Griffith University Art Museum

15 August – 9 November

Cem A., Jeamin Cha, Margaret Dawson, D Harding, Sally Mann, Lauren Lee McCarthy and David Leonard, Chia Moan, Tracey Moffatt, Michael Parekōwhai, Sam Petersen, David Shrigley, Sun Yuan and Peng Yu, and Johan Joseph Zoffany

Symposium

Griffith University Art Museum
17 August 2024



Sun Yuan

b.1972, Beijing, China. Lives and works Beijing

Peng Yu

b.1974, Heilongjiang, China. Lives and works Beijing

Hong Kong Intervention 2009

Archival prints on foamcore

Courtesy of the artists

Overseas Filipino workers are a vital part of the Philippine economy, contributing billions of dollars in remittances annually to support their families and communities. In Hong Kong, these workers perform a crucial role in facilitating family lifestyles.

In 2009, Sun Yuan and Peng Yu asked a hundred Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong—mostly women—to plant a toy grenade in the middle-class homes where they worked and to photograph them. They were also asked to produce a second photograph, an image of themselves with their back turned, concealing their identity.

Hong Kong Intervention addresses power imbalances between Filipino workers and their employers, revealing quiet resentments and underlying social tensions.

Michael Parekōwhai

b.1968 Porirua, Aotearoa New Zealand. Lives and works Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand

Kapa Haka (Whero) 2003

Automotive paint on fibreglass

Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art. Purchased 2009 with funds from Tim Fairfax AM through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation

Michael Parekōwhai is known for toying with prevailing cultural stereotypes related to Māori identity. 'Kapa haka' is the Māori term for traditional performing arts, encompassing dance and song.

Parekōwhai presents an 'everyman' who is recognisable as a staunch protector, but remains unidentifiable as an individual. The fact that this 'everyman' is based on the artist's own older brother, Paratene, a security guard, adds a layer of playful irony and deepens the commentary on performance and authority.

Playing on our recognition of security guards and bouncers' power and authority, Parekōwhai also notes their disenfranchisement: Security guards don't protect their own values, but their employers'.

David Shrigley

b.1968 Macclesfield, United Kingdom. Lives and works Brighton, United Kingdom

Illustrations for The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing Inquiry Report, Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing – Second Edition Short Report 2017

16 A4 pages

Courtesy of the artist

David Shrigley has described himself as a ‘nasty person with a sense of humour’. He is known for his drawings executed in a naïve style, cleverly distilling complex ideas with a characteristic dry wit. In 2017, he was commissioned to create a series of illustrations for a British government report aimed at promoting awareness of the benefits of the arts to health and wellbeing.

Shrigley’s drawings appear to poke fun at governmental initiatives that use arts and culture to address societal issues, often diverting attention from tackling their systemic root causes. Should the arts be tasked with curing social ills? It remains unclear whether the commissioning agency endorsed or fully understood his tongue-in-cheek approach.

For display only. Please feel free to gently flick through the report.

Cem A.

Untitled (20 December 2023) 2023

Internet meme

Courtesy of the artist

Cem A. is a semi-anonymous artist and curator known for the art meme Instagram account @freeze_magazine which has over 170,000 followers. Since its launch in 2019, the platform has gained popularity for its incisive critique of the art world, exposing its many hypocrisies, namely its penchant for moral posturing and virtue signalling. Cem has extended his practice into physical spaces, where he adapts online formats into what he calls 'situated memes' and other ways of engaging with the public.

In a meme posted on 20 December 2023, Cem uses the familiar 'two booths' format. One booth, labelled 'exhibitions about care', draws a snaking line of eager patrons, while the other, representing care proper, remains empty, staffed by a hapless exhibitor. Cem critiques the recent surge in care-themed exhibitions, arguing that they often amount to empty rhetoric and do little to bring about meaningful change in institutional practice.

D Harding

b.1982 Moranbah, Queensland, Bidjara, Ghungalu and Garingbal peoples.
Lives and works Brisbane, Queensland

white collared, baby bells 1 – 3 2015

Found rattles, rawhide, thread, brass

Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 2015

D Harding's maternal ancestry originates from Carnarvon Gorge in the Central Highlands of Queensland, a region marked by the violence and persecution of Aboriginal people.

From 1897 to the mid-twentieth century, the Queensland Government governed all aspects of the lives of First Nations people through *The Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act*, and subsequent amending Acts. Children were forcibly separated from their parents in an effort to sever cultural ties and prepare them for lives of servitude, primarily on rural farms. Two generations of Harding's family—their grandmother, and great-grandmother—worked as domestic servants in a system of indentured labour.

In *white collared, baby bells*, Harding addresses how governmental policies exert control over lives of Aboriginal people, often under the guise of paternalistic care. The collars, crafted from raw bovine hide and embellished with found rattles and buckles, suggest they are to be worn by infants. Resembling miniature cow bells, the work reminds us of how Aboriginal people were institutionalised from birth and monitored in a manner akin to livestock. These adornments also recall the colonial practice of awarding breastplates to Aboriginal leaders, influential figures and loyal workers, another means of identifying and controlling Aboriginal bodies.

Jeamin Cha

b.1986 Seoul, South Korea. Lives and works Seoul

Sound Garden 2019

Single channel video installation, FHD video, colour, 3-channel sound, 30 minutes

Courtesy of the artist

Sound Garden pairs footage of pine trees being cultivated and relocated from a plantation to urban areas with the voices of four female counsellors. The women are employed in various settings: as a helpline operator, a Buddhist priest volunteering in activist spaces, a university counsellor, and a therapist working for a private corporation.

We hear the ambivalence with which the women reflect on their roles and experiences with their 'clients'. On the one hand, counselling can help individuals process traumatic events and find healing in a supportive and non-judgmental environment. On the other, it can be wielded as a quick-fix by governments and employers to quicken individuals' return to optimal productivity.

By combining the women's reflections with the tree imagery, Cha draws parallels between contemporary psychological treatment and tree farming. In the context of late capitalism—and under the guise of care—both are extractive processes aimed at harnessing resources, be they cognitive or natural.

Johan Joseph Zoffany

b.1733 Frankfurt am Main, Hesse, Germany d.1810 London, England

Roman Charity c.1769

Oil on canvas

Collection: National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Felton Bequest, 1932

Roman Charity, or Cimon and Pero, is a moral tale of filial duty from ancient Greek and Roman times. In this story, a daughter secretly breastfeeds her father who is facing starvation in prison. Moved by her selfless act of devotion, the authorities pardon her and release her father.

Combining a moral lesson with a suggestive subtext, *Roman Charity* has been a widely depicted subject in Western art, particularly in the Baroque period. The earliest modern depictions of *Pero and Cimon* emerged independently of each other in Southern Germany and Northern Italy around 1525, and the subject was later popularised by Peter Paul Rubens and his followers in the early 1600s. It has also been painted by Caravaggio and Artemisia Gentileschi. *Roman Charity* underscores the enduring societal expectation that women—mothers, wives, and pious daughters—fulfill caregiving roles, all the while satisfying the desirous male gaze.

Sally Mann

b.1951, Lexington, Virginia, US. Lives and works Lexington, Virginia

Damaged Child 1984

Silver gelatin print

© Sally Mann. Courtesy Gagolian

In the mid 1980s, Sally Mann began documenting her children growing up in idyllic, rural Virginia. Her photographs explore their emerging independence and sexuality, but are haunted by suggestions of abuse—interpretations that ultimately lie in the viewer's perception.

At the risk of being labelled a bad mother, Mann toys with her viewers. Her large-format black-and-white images are designed to provoke anxieties about protecting children. In one of the earliest photographs, *Damaged Child*, daughter Jesse appears to have been beaten, though her face is actually swollen from gnat bites. Other images show her son Emmett with a bloody nose and her daughter Virginia covered in dog scratches.

Mann draws on a tradition of depicting forlorn and damaged children with its roots in the Victorian era. During that period, these images flattered audiences by eliciting a strong emotional response and affirming their capacity for empathy. Here, Mann confronts the paradoxical allure of images depicting suffering children that enable a sense of moral righteousness.

Chia Moan

b.1936, Adelaide, South Australia. Lives and works Blue Mountains, New South Wales

Dale Street Women's Health Centre

'In the pink' series c.1985

Nine offset lithograph posters

Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 1987

This series of public health campaign posters were made for the Dale Street Women's Health Centre in Port Adelaide in the 1980s. Each features vibrant imagery and uplifting quotes and slogans focused on women's health.

One poster prominently displays a quote from anthropologist Margaret Mead: 'The most creative force in the world is the menopausal woman', encouraging older women to embrace life to the fullest. The posters include several translations of the main texts into various languages.

The images reflect the feminist ethos of the 1980s, when public messaging on women's issues emphasised positivity, empowerment, and the idea of women balancing multiple roles—including what we would now call self-care.

This series was sponsored by Dale Street Women's Health Centre and supported by the Community and Visual Arts Boards of the Australia Council, and the South Australian Department for the Arts, demonstrating when government support was directly made to community arts projects by federal and state governments in Australia.

Margaret Dawson

b.1950 Blenheim, Aotearoa New Zealand. Lives and works Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand

the men from uncle 1998

25 selenium toned, silver gelatin photographs

Courtesy of the artist and Jonathan Smart Gallery, Aotearoa New Zealand

In the 1990s, artist Margaret Dawson became a carer for her uncle Hugh, who was suffering from dementia. With the appearance of a stately patriarch, he was the ideal photographic subject and supported her project, as have many friends, flatmates and family that have modelled for Dawson throughout her career.

Dawson spent her days styling and photographing Hugh in the manner of famous images. The various personas she crafted for her uncle speak to the condition of dementia, which can often silence and erode an individual's sense of self. Aware of the power dynamics at play in photography, Dawson acknowledges there was never an intention to demean or make Hugh look foolish. Was this project an attempt at quid pro quo for the care she provided, or exploitive feminist table turning? What are the expectations for reciprocity in caregiving relationships?

Tracey Moffatt

b.1960 Brisbane, Queensland. Lives and works Sydney, New South Wales

‘Scarred for life’ series 1994

Nine offset prints

Griffith University Art Collection. Purchased 2018

Tracey Moffatt’s *Scarred for Life* series portrays moments of pathos and trauma in everyday life, particularly within family and close relationships. The photo-essay format of this series is borrowed from *LIFE* magazine during the 1960s, lending the works a heightened sense of drama tinged with subtle irony.

Most of the photographs depict incidents within domestic settings, and their captions sharply articulate the transgressions of the scene—often family members perpetrating physical or emotional abuse—from minor cruelties to criminal acts.

While these scenes are fictional, they resonate with the childhood experiences of many. Growing up inevitably involves moments of trauma, often at the hands of those closest to us. *Scarred for Life* prompts reflection on how caregiving dynamics can become entangled with issues of power, control, and emotional vulnerability within the family unit.

Lauren Lee McCarthy

b.1987 Boston, Massachusetts, US. Lives and works Los Angeles, US

David Leonard

b.1977 Los Angeles, US. Lives and works Los Angeles, US

I.A. Suzie 2019

Video installation (screen), sound, 9.04 minutes, orthopaedic chair

Courtesy of the artists

In a week-long durational performance, artists Lauren Lee McCarthy and David Leonard operated as an AI assistant in the home of eighty-year-old Mary-Ann, attending to her care needs. Remotely monitoring her twenty-four hours a day, they communicated with her and controlled a network of smart devices including household appliances, lighting, and heating and cooling systems. Mary-Ann affectionately named the system 'I.A. Suzie'. This video documents the performance, positioning the viewer as AI surveillant.

The use value of an AI assistant is clear in Mary-Ann's case, living in a new city with her only nearby relatives being frequently away. *I.A. Suzie* not only responded to Mary-Ann's health needs, but also provided social interaction, engaging in small talk and providing a listening ear. Soon, conversations between the assistant and its user turned to more serious topics: the upcoming Democratic debates, death and the afterlife, and the future role of AI in people's lives. Could *I.A. Suzie* offer a potential solution to our aged care crisis, or are her services a dehumanising consequence of cost-cutting amid the decline of the welfare state?

Sam Petersen (opposite wall)

b. 1984, so called Australia. Lives and works Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung lands/Melbourne, Victoria

Care 2021

Video, sound, 12.41 minutes

Courtesy of the artist

This video is part of artist Sam Petersen's ongoing series of 'rants'; impassioned speeches addressing the frustrations of living in an ableist world. Petersen critiques the rhetorical use of the word 'care', which, although often used with good intent, can inadvertently patronise and undermine people's agency. The use of 'care' language, too, often masks a lack of material support for people with disabilities.

Petersen argues that care proper cannot be purchased or outsourced. It is rooted in close interpersonal relationships and emotional investments cultivated over time:

'To have anyone paid to take care of you is an oxymoron. / They are being paid to do a job. / You can't pay your emotions to care! / The fact that you care should not come into it.'

Petersen suggests that paid labour typically classified as care work should be named for the actual tasks performed, rather than using a word laden with moral implications.

Top shelf

Vaginal speculums c.1900s

From the collection of Marks-Hirschfeld Museum of Medical History

When gynaecology became a medical speciality in the mid-late 1800s it was dominated by men and took over from traditional women-led care. While some physicians praised the diagnostic innovation of speculums, others argued that any visibility gained was unnecessary and impacted patient modesty. Women were accused of becoming 'addicted' to the vaginal speculum, and that speculum use made them promiscuous.

Speculums were also used to 'prove' virginity—often destroying the sought proof in the process. They tell a story of power—the intention was always to 'care' but often these instruments were used without consent.

Second shelf

Calves' teats c.1840

Animal skin, glass, paper, cork

Infant feeders

Glass, ceramic

From the collection of Marks-Hirschfeld Museum of Medical History

Calf teats were commercialised in 1826 by Parisian midwife Madame Breton, at a time when bottle feeding was not considered 'natural' or 'normal'. The teats were soaked in water to recover their suppleness and tied around the neck of a bottle, like these glass and ceramic infant feeders.

The use of animal teats preceded the discovery of pathogenic bacteria. Advertised to last weeks or even months, and without proper sterilisation, there was a significant build-up of bacteria, believed to have resulted in one-third of infant deaths in their first year of life.

Third shelf

Cupping set c.1850

S. Maw & Son & Thompson, London

Scarificator c.1900s

Weiss, London

Scarificator c.1900s

Maker unknown

Scarificator c.1900s

Arnold and Sons, London

Spirit burner c.1900s

From the collection of Marks-Hirschfeld Museum of Medical History

Until the 19th century doctors believed the body comprised four ‘humours’—blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. A healthy person had a balance of these humours, and illnesses such as fever and inflammation were a result of an imbalance, or excess of one of the humours.

The practice of phlebotomy (bloodletting) was one way to remove this excess. The scarificator, known as the new ‘mechanical leech’, incised a row of 3mm deep cuts in the skin. The spirit burner was then used to warm the glass cups, placed onto the skin to create a vacuum, which then drew blood from the scarificator cuts.

Bloodletting has its origins in ancient Greek Galenic anatomy and physiology. Even as 16th century discoveries exposed its harms, bloodletting continued as an established practice until the 19th century, demonstrating the influences social, economic, and intellectual pressures have on medical practices.

Bottom shelf

Enuresis machine (bed-wetting alarm) c.1950

Watson Victor, Australia

From the collection of Marks-Hirschfeld Museum of Medical History

A team at Adelaide University developed and mass-produced this machine to treat enuresis (bed-wetting). By wrapping an electrical stimulator around the loin of the sleeper, the ensuing shock was intended to “reinforce the natural method of building up inhibitory tone necessary for continence”.

Top shelf

Tonsillar guillotine c.1860

From the collection of Marks-Hirschfeld Museum of Medical History

The removal of tonsils (tonsillectomy) has been a popular procedure since the late 19th century. Noteworthy on this particular tool is the two-pronged spear, which pierced the tonsils for the guillotine, and prevented them from obstructing the airway once cut.

Without anaesthetics and with an assistant holding the head still, these new tools focused on efficiency, and a surgeon's skill was measured by the speed of the procedure.

Dr Petz's stomach stapler c.1925

Jetter and Scheerer, Germany

From the collection of Marks-Hirschfeld Museum of Medical History

It wasn't until the 1920s that abdominal surgeries were safe enough to be considered anything other than a last resort, due to the size of incisions required and the risks of infection and leaking.

Dr Aladár Petz improved on the first stapler released in 1908, making it lighter, easier to use, and more affordable. The Von Petz stapler was adopted globally and used until the 1970s.

Second shelf

Lithotomy set c.1890

Evans & Wormull, London

From the collection of Marks-Hirschfeld Museum of Medical History

Lithotomy is a surgical procedure to remove stones from the urinary tract or bladder, and has been now largely substituted by modern, less invasive, procedures. The lithotomy set comprises one knife, three sizes of lithotomy forceps and six lithotomy staffs, which are grooved to guide the knife through the perineum towards the stone. Emphasis was placed on the swiftness of the surgery, before the widespread and consistent use of anaesthesia.

Third shelf

Marin Marais “Pieces de Viole Livre 5” 1725

From the collection of Marks-Hirschfeld Museum of Medical History

The title of this musical piece translates to ‘A description of the operation of the stone’ and is a step-by-step account of a lithotomy operation. Composed by viola da gamba virtuoso Marin Marais, a member of Louis XIV’s court orchestra, it is found in the last of five volumes of music he wrote for viols and harpsichord.

The details of the surgery and the physical and emotional experience of the patient are conveyed both in words—there are 14 pithy annotations—and in the music. The patient ‘trembles at the sight’ of the ‘apparatus’ (operating table); his arms and legs are secured with ‘silk restraints’, and forceps are ‘introduced’. Marais drew upon first-hand experience; he underwent the surgery in 1720 (aged 64) and lived to the age of 72. In the pre-anaesthetic era, this must have been extremely painful.

This intersection of music and medicine prompts us to reflect on the relationship between the arts and care, and how one might illuminate the other.

Listen to the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra perform this piece of music:



Bottom shelf

Lithotomy crutch c.1890

From the collection of Marks-Hirschfeld Museum of Medical History

The lithotomy crutch was used to hold the patient in position during a lithotomy operation. The patient would lie on their back with their buttocks positioned at the end of the operating table. The hips and knees were fully bent and the feet locked into position using the crutch, strapped around each ankle and over one shoulder.