

## **Amelia Hawk with Roux, eden, Saffron Murray-Browne and Lily Serendipity *Searching for a space that cares* - Conclusion**

**Amelia:**

Have we found a space that has the potential to care?

**Lily:**

You create it, you don't find it. So we didn't come and find it, but we created one through the process.

**Amelia:**

It doesn't exist otherwise?

**Lily:**

I feel like it can exist otherwise, but I feel like you never just stumble into it. You still have to have, like, a conversation with that space, even if you kind of have to, like, realise that.

**Roux:**

I think there's a level of, like, you have to accept care from the space to be in the space that cares. Then also, as Lily said, also care for the space - there's an interdependence with nature. I thought, nature, well, that's like the ultimate space that cares because everything else that we have built so far, we're still not quite sure there is that, like, understanding already of entering into the ecosystem of, like, 'you are sharing'. Like being in the world that we live in at the moment, like, it's... we've lost a lot of language of care and we've lost a lot of pathways, I think, in which we have been more community minded.

**Amelia:**

I think we all highlighted nature, didn't we, as something that we felt could be a symbiotic relationship of care, where it can care for us and we can care for it. And we also highlighted other things, like objects and creating space rather than finding it and being given that space.

And we talked a lot about the relationship between safety and care and how they were different. And there was no really true safe space, but we could create a caring space.

**eden:**

Hmm... Yeah. This is something I really felt when I was working, that sort of idea that as soon as, maybe you introduce multiple people into a space, can it really be safe anymore, because we have such different metrics of safety.

One person's idea of a safe, caring space could be the complete antithesis to someone else's. And I went down this sort of rabbit hole and route of looking at sort of ritual, and the idea of creating a space with intention, and how maybe that's the only time we can create a space that cares is if we make the space actively care for us through our actions.

And similarly, like looking at nature as well. I looked at this sort of balance between rituals and nests, like nests are in nature, in nature that cares for us, but also all animals make these little caring spaces within them by choosing their objects of choice, the things that make them feel safe to build, that safe space or space that cares. Can a space care if it's not a safe space, and vice versa. Can a space be safe with like, caring?

**Saffron:**

My work actually did something similar. I'm realising now in terms of building a nest, and you look towards nature and ritual, and I sort of built a different kind of nest, but one that I'm very familiar with, which would be my bed, and brought that to somewhere new and somewhere different. So I suppose it's... it's kind of back to that, like primitive drive, isn't it? Like the need for shelter was, in a way, like our kind of base needs to be covered.

**Amelia:**

And within that primitiveness there's a humbleness as well. So when we're looking at the things that have the potential to care for us. Those things are humble things. They're not extravagant. They're not capitalist, necessarily. they're removed from that and they're very individual.

**Lily:**

Yeah, I agree, I think that is the main perspective that I took on it for my work, is how individual it is. I took it into the very personal, 'how would I provide a space that cares for myself?', because you have to build it, and it's more of a mindset or a headspace than a physical space, because you can transform almost any physical place into a space that cares. It's just finding what you need, knowing what you need, and building that. Once you project yourself onto a space of your needs and fill it with things that you want to be surrounded by that make you feel secure and cared for and loved, then it does.

**eden:**

In nature, all animals build nests. Birds, there are different birds who bring different soft things like spiderwebs and moss and things that aren't essential. They could just build them out of sticks, but they choose to seek out these different soft items that bring you joy. Similarly, like mammals, two dogs, when they nest, will get their favourite toys or their favourite blankets, but then even jumping back to something you said about earlier, about it being a head space. That was what really intrigued me about ritual, where we're talking about intention. Does the space have to or do we in the space have to intend for it to be a caring, safe space for it to be caring and or, safe. Improvising and dancing with this idea of safety was actually what I felt the most at peace. And that was kind of irrespective of where it happened, because I can make that space, my caring space through movement.

**Roux:**

Can we create caring spaces about being aware of like, what an uncaring space looks like without being aware of the gaps? Right? Because we're talking a lot about

nature, and nature of course is a vacuum, and in order for us to build these spaces of care, we have to have felt the vacuum of the spaces which have not accommodated us.

This is why mushrooms are so cool because mushrooms turn shit into something amazing and they transform, yeah, like what is rotten into something new, and like we also always do that. Like whenever we are moving from place to space, whether or not like we are seeking safety, I think is like the first kind of like baseline need, like trying to get ourselves out of fight or flight, which then allows you to then the in a space which cares because caring, there's a tenderness, there's an awareness of what it is that you need.

Mushrooms are kind of like... one of the most caring organisms in my mind because they move non-hierarchically, they are fully interdependent on the ecosystem and like, always aware of where resources are being placed and whether there is scarcity. And they will fill that scarcity and accommodate for it.

**Lily:**

What is not caring for me because mine was also like literally building an idealised version of like, my bedroom space. I've only ever lived in rented houses that all had black mould in the bathrooms and bedrooms. So I know immediately like, I want a space that is clean, that is safe in those aspects, and that helps you build the foundation of your idea is knowing exactly what is not caring for you. And then from that, you're able to build up the structure of what does care for you.

**Amelia:**

I think I was really interested in the moment when we all highlighted the things that we needed to care for us, and water came out of that, which I could never have anticipated coming out. And it was really interesting to find that. And since having conversations with people about water, the fact that people find that cleansing and washing away like a reset on the body, it's very tactile, it's very physical. The fact that this massive other body, this water body has a capacity to care, I think is really interesting. And it comes back to that cycle of nature and how nature can potentially care for us.

**Roux:**

And water always fills up a negative space, like no matter what the containment of water is, it feels like it has to do that.

**Saffron:**

I mean, in my piece, I like filled the bed that I had with this, with the video of us both, which was filmed separately and then brought them together and they kind of interacted in ways that was surprising to me. But yeah, it was definitely this feeling throughout my whole investigation into this, of the fact that spaces will kind of change and you'll move, but it's the people who really care about you that make the space for you. They're the ones who create that space that cares.

**Lily:**

I find it really interesting that both of our work focuses on bedrooms or bed spaces, but there's a very different perspective on that. Whereas yours is focused on a person or a relationship with somebody and that kind of support from somebody, whereas mine is being able to be alone, not isolation, but feeling comfortable by yourself. And I feel like that is also a kind of support from people that care for you, acknowledging that you need your alone time, that you need space.

**Roux:**

When we were doing open studios, we had some people write some like reflections that they posted in, and one of them is, 'I care about people I love, I care about good coffee. I care about being soft, and I care about freedom'. Like it's all of those really humble things which make your environment feel like personalised, and feel full and feel tactile and feel pleasurable as well.

**Amelia:**

One of the others says 'to do the things I do for others, for myself'.

**Lily:**

I feel like that is really the approach that I took. I literally created a soft, gentle version of myself. I had to create a version of myself that was able to accept care, before creating this space that cares.

**eden:**

I think that sort of speaks to our conversations at the start of this process about whether or not we would make one piece together or if we would work as individuals. But like you're saying that people's ideas of care, of safety are so individualised and that we have such specific things that make us feel safe and cared for, that it was important for us to go down these different but not so different avenues. We have beds, we have beds, we have nests, we have nests, we have nature, we have nature, we have water.

They're all in conversation while still being individual and also still holding space for one another to care.

**Roux:**

Yes. So, a little addition on the end of the reflection... Finding a space that cares is kind of impossible right now because of a variety of reasons like health, like disabilities, but like, also being in this country as like a trans person, a queer person, and growing up here as a trans person. I've spend so much of my discovering myself and discovering what it is I needed and feeling cared for, then being rejected by all of the places that were meant to create a safe space that were meant to provide for me, that were meant to care for me. Currently grieving so much for our community and also like our international community, for how little care seems to be afforded to us, from all the bodies that should be caring for us. And how much needs to come out of community, like, and sometimes in places where there are no resources, there is nothing.

I really do have hope that like we are transforming into a more caring world, but like right now, where everything feels so scarce, it's like really difficult to remind yourself there are still all of these like small moments of care which are keeping you going. It's made this project was really, really useful, really wonderfully reflective, and that helps me be more genuine with the realities of the situation, not just be like toxically positive. It's... not been easy always, when you are in a place where you are feeling, you are being attacked and like you're not being cared for in your bottom to the corner, that you kind of do see the light, the other side, the mushrooms, the life, the things which are coming from that rot.

**Amelia:**

Let's reflect for a second, because actually finding a space that cares is complicated. And maybe we haven't a really found that space that cares if we're being totally honest. Or maybe it's slightly different for every one of us. Maybe we have found things that care or totems or virtues.

**Roux:**

A space that cares is complicated because really, I don't believe that humans have built it yet. Unilaterally, as a trans person, I have not been afforded that much space that cares for me yet. I do believe it's there. And like I believe that in order to be able to find a space that cares, for a lot of us, I do have to like, fight for it and carve it out and like really build it and like building a space that cares needs very strong foundations. People who also know, like a language of care that you can communicate with too. And that's the complicated-ness of how individually building your space that cares looks like. All of us need so many different things, but also because of the world that we live in, we have all been given a lot of very specific things, which then also informs what we need in order to build that space that cares.

**Lily:**

Just the concept of care alone and what it is that you need to be cared for day to day changes. So the space that you're in needs to constantly evolve. And that takes also, a lot of work that you have to put into it, and the other people put into it through supporting you.

**eden:**

I'm sure there'll be people listening to this who think, 'I have a space to care. So I have space within my family unit that cares for me or my friends'. But the standardisation of care is actually antithetical to what care should be and what care needs the capacity to be. Like in recovery, a book that we've all read excerpts from, they talk about how the standardisation of care, and specifically health care, has actually eliminated the care that people need. And similarly, in my experience, my lived experience as a queer person, I do not have access to familial care. I do not have access to those building blocks of care that other people may have.

**Roux:**

If when we're talking about the individualism of care, there's a heteronormativity and a monoculture to the care that we're sold and that we should be having. And

that's why nature, like, is one of the only very few, like, genuinely caring spaces, because you can be so different. You can be like, not the most like ideal, like, version of that species, or not the most "productive", and you're still in the central integral part of that ecosystem. And yet, there is a danger in the monoculture of care. Like I think that whilst it's really fantastic that we have a free health care service that is centralised there's also some dangers from it, like there has been like so many marginalised communities who experience neglect because of like, a wider generalisation of what care, like means for us all. But yeah, it is tender, and personalised and different.

**Amelia:**

And I think that's made this project quite difficult, because it has been so self-reflecting and we've really looked at our lack of care in places to find out how we might be cared for. So it's been really challenging for us in ways that maybe we didn't anticipate when we jumped feet in.

**Lily:**

Yeah, I feel like it's very important still to identify that there are spaces that care and you find them and build them every day. They're everywhere. But I think truly, a space that cares, at least currently, you can't exist in constantly. There are small pockets of space and support that you have quite infrequently, but that also is what makes and feel so special and makes you feel able to be vulnerable and safe. It is impossible to constantly be in a space that cares

**eden:**

And we keep talking about, for us, turning to nature as a way of finding care. But even in the natural world, animals only build nests for a short while. They are situational. There is still an impermanence in the safe spaces within nature, and that goes back to that individualism of care, 'the nest will work for now. It will not work for later. It will have to disappear, so a new one can be made for a new space that cares.'

And this is how we can learn to use mushrooms to help inform how we create spaces that care. Because they are constantly regenerating, they are comfortable in decay, like they're comfortable in the world. They're comfortable in like the gaps, and they still create life from it, and this project has been a really beautiful space of care that I have felt very honoured to participate in. It is time contained and it's transient, but like it's given me nourishment that will be with me for the rest of my life and the rest of my practice.

**Amelia:**

We had a moment of reflection and wanted to add in an appendix.

**eden:**

I think. Yeah, it's an ongoing exploration. It's an idea that unfolds like if we've decided that care is individual, that means, care changes. And I think there is no firm conclusion to this.

We're also limited in the representation we carry. We're only saying what we can care for. We're not being authoritarian in our stance on care

Roux:

And also limited by some of our perspectives too, because we're all majority white in this room. 'A space that cares' - we have not yet got a pathway, or a sampling structure even, for that yet too.