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Trust and the Artist-Curator Relationship
for C Magazine Special Issue 139, September 2018, on Trust
by Helena Reckitt

A high-profile curator, known for supporting female and POC artists, is sacked on grounds of undermining the museum's mission. An emerging curator is denounced on social media for exhibiting an artist accused of sexual harassment. A student withdraws from a gallery's programme after the space plans a talk series promoting alt-right thinkers. As these recent anecdotes show, in the art world, the lack of 'trust' is palpable. The art world increasingly does not take care of its own.

So, it was rewarding in 2017 to participate as one of several guest curators in Blackwood Gallery's curatorial project *Take Care*. Here, an emphasis on trust and support featured both in the content of artworks and in how the year-long project was conducted. This was the only time my curatorial fee has ever been increased, after the extent of my responsibilities became clear.

For London-based artist Raju Rage, the gallery's commitment to curating with care was reflected in their response to Rage's desire to avoid the physical toll of crossing continents and performing live. As a result, at the *Care Crisis, Care Connective* forum, Rage performed a self-care ritual from a gender-neutral toilet by Skype.

Cultural workers increasingly share the Precarious Workers Brigade's frustration with exhibitions that present radicalism on a gestural level without seeking to change the inequitable conditions under which such projects occur. For the PWB, it was *Take Care's* grounding in social movement struggle and collaborations with activists that persuaded them to take part.

How trust and care might be prioritized in a sector where so much labour is undervalued remains an enigma. Blackwood's Director, Christine Shaw, has questioned through this program how relationships between curators and those whose work they support might become more reciprocal. The danger otherwise is that curatorial labour is treated as yet another exploitable resource and taken for granted in ways that are unsustainable.