

Cravtivism Project

Handina and Melina

Self Care in times of Covid - a metaphorical quilt

Liminality has become our central reality since the covid 19 pandemic. It has defined our everyday life and spooked us into an alienating social withdrawal. The pandemic „has dramatically and tragically highlighted many of the essential functions that are crucial for our web of life to be sustained“ , the Care Collective (Chatzidakis, Littler, Rottenberg, and Segal) establish in their collectively written *Care Manifesto* published in 2020. The unpleasant realization of global structural insufficiencies, have left us with the potential to shift our perspective on constructions of care.

The involuntary time spent at home in isolation and social distance, has in many ways relocated our attention inwards, onto the self and its preservation. The realities of the pandemic have thus helped promote *Self Care* as a trendy term and concept. In this context the Care Collective reflect that „ideas of social welfare and community [have] been pushed aside for individualised notions of resilience, wellness and self-improvement“, fostered by a neoliberal market to nurture „a ballooning ‚selfcare‘ industry which relegates care to something we are supposed to buy for ourselves on a personal basis“ (2020,10). This statement resonates with the experiences we (Melina and Handina) have made on social media. Digital spaces were and still are filled with tips, tricks and patronizing beauty-advice for successful self care. Since the beginning of covid, people have begun baking their own bread, sharing their recipes, their morning routines and diy-projects. It might sound cynical to say, that this often occurred in a self promoting manner, concealing the experiences of mental distress that most of us have faced at one point or another in this period of time. However in many instances, the intentions of these contents were meant to inspire one other in finding activities to do. While online yoga, nail art, interior design and indoor planting conquered our Instagram feeds, the intimidation was real. The abundance of these contents overshadows the point that self-care, as well as community care, has not been considered enough in the political decision-making processes. It has been left in the responsibility of individuals and their immediate surroundings.

But what is self care really about? Not to say that yoga, self-baked bread, indoor planting and a nice interior design, are illegitimate forms of self care. But to really care for oneself, to not only survive, but to live a confident and fulfilling life, is something not everybody can solve with homemade bread.

Self Care, to us, is embraces the question: What do I need?

This question is to be asked consequently and regularly. Sometimes it can be exhausting, because *Self Care* is not always comfortable. Sometimes it means answering letters of your insurance-services, or looking for a job. Sometimes it is therapy or setting boundaries. In times of limited social contact, spending time in good company, having a nice talk or a coffee can be an act of *Self Care* too.

This is what our project stands for. We formulated an invitation: let us quilt communion. We invited friends and friends' friends and strangers to bring a picnic blanket and to have a picnic in plain publicity. Everyone was invited to bring themselves, something to do or eat or drink. The borders of each blanket metaphorically mark the space of the individual. This stands for the need of every individual to care for themselves, the responsibility to care for their own wellbeing. The gathering of several blankets transports the hopeful notion, that *we are all in this together*. By placing the blankets next to each other, seam to seam, we can create the image of a big quilt.

Reference:

Hakim, J., Chatzidakis, A., Littler, J., Rottenberg, C., & Segal, L. (2020). *The Care Manifesto*. Verso Books.