

THE AESTHETICS OF RISK IN ARTISTIC PRACTICE: WHAT IS AT STAKE?

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Risk Vocabulary

The vocabulary of risk is on the rise in a world under the grip of a pandemic. Concepts of risk management, risk mitigation, risk appetite, and risk assessment have been widely discussed in socio-economic discourses.¹ However, risk did not figure as a usual suspect in the aesthetic discourse until lately. The entanglement of artistic practice with social practices in contemporary times implies that more attention should be placed on the ways in which risk is conceptualized in art. In recent decades, artists have been actively working at the cross roads of science, bio-engineering, and creative practice. Similarly, a number of artists have been working at the intersections of society and art through the forms of community-oriented, socially engaged arts practices. Needless to say, these intersectionalities often exist in conversation with each other. Interesting and unique to both these kinds of commitments within artistic practices is the power of art as a process or a method to re-envision, re-view and break through the status quo pervading our human condition.

Given that contemporary artistic practice is explicitly stepping out into unfamiliar and path-breaking ways of 'worlding' the world, the collective and institutional responsibility towards these practices also require adequate calibration in order to remain relevant to the rapidly growing discourses in art.² Equally imperative in this context, is the calibration of socio-economic and geopolitical vocabulary so that concepts are not misappropriated or bartered insensitively amidst mediators of artistic practice. One such concept that needs calibration is that of risk. In this essay, I first articulate the philosophical framework within which conceptualization of risk is generally undertaken and how this concept needs to be addressed in the context of artistic practice. I choose the figures of the artist and the curator and their interface to understand the meaning of risk in artistic practice when apprehended from the paradigm of care. These two aesthetic figures, committed to larger processes of truth-making, engage with risk in distinctly different registers. I argue that there is a need to articulate this threshold between risk and care within this aesthetic paradigm of the artist and the curator. Such an articulation will help point towards institutional ethical commitments to artistic practice, practitioners and its communities.

In disaster studies, risk is defined as a probability of loss and is dependent on hazards, vulnerability, and exposure.³ The general *modus operandi* in most engagement with risk is investigating ways in which one may mitigate, reduce, or minimize the predicted loss, harm,

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In her contribution, which draws on her background as a curator and philosopher, Srajana Kaikini writes that "risk is often understood as a knowable piece of information," yet truth and art can never be fully comprehend. As such, she argues that a new definition of risk in the artistic field must be sought out. In acknowledging the indeterminate nature of art, it is possible to draw a direct line to Elizabeth Newman's piece which, written from the perspective of an artist and trained psychoanalyst, contends that the human can never be truly known: we are inherently unknowable and unknowing. In rethinking the definition of risk through a philosophical lens, Kaikini concludes that a new definition could occasion an ethical framework of institutional care for the artist.

In fact, after encountering Kaikini's essay, we began to wonder if we could approach the curator as the conceptual technician of the artist. If the practical technician that Mark Friedlander represents in his piece makes sure that there is no physical risk posed to the human or no damage incurred to property, then perhaps the curator is busy making sure that there is no emotional or conceptual risk posed to the artist and their work. Therefore, at times, the curator has to protect the artist and the artwork from external factors that are situated beyond the exhibition itself, and in turn operate as liaison between administration and the audience. If we were to take this relation seriously, the conceptual technician and the physical technician could create a binary that sets the artwork and the artist at the centre—something often forgotten when it comes to institutional practice, despite the fact that it is after all the artist who makes the art world go round.

¹ International Organization for Standardization's Online entry on "Risk Management Vocabulary", <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:guide:73:ed-1:v1:en>.

² Helen Palmer and Vicky Hunter, "Worlding," *New Materialism* (16 March 2018), <https://newmaterialism.eu/almanac/w/worlding.html>.

³ Disaster Studies is the multidisciplinary field of research that engages with collective situations of human unrest. This field cuts across the social and natural sciences and in recent times has been actively mobilized to understand the long-term implication of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic. For more, see: Dónal P. O'Mathúna, Vilius Dranseika, and Bert Gordijn, *Disasters: Core Concepts and Ethical Theories* (Cham: Springer, 2019); David Crichton, "The risk triangle," in *Natural Disaster Management*, ed. Jon Ingleton (London: Tudor Rose, 1999), 102-103.

or 'dis-ease' that is signalled by the risk involved in any particular context. Probability is therefore the most well-known garb of risk. In general usage, one may think of risk in terms of questions like "What are the odds?" "It's too risky," "I'll take my chances," and so on.

Within disaster studies, researchers have articulated a loose and interchangeable use of words like natural disaster, risk, and hazard. In disaster management, vocabulary has resulted in glaring ethical insufficiencies in disaster relief work.⁴ This gap between the methodologies adopted by social and natural scientists has led to several problematic repercussions on the ground. These include the now well-documented phenomenon of 'ethics dumping' in bio and eco-research. Ethics dumping refers to the several ethical imbalances perceived when data and field research collected from the globally vulnerable regions enable the results of this research work in globally privileged regions. This only foregrounds the gross ethical ironies in research across the Global North and South.⁵ Disaster studies undertake a deep engagement with risk purely in terms of risk mitigation and management. Assessing risk, thereby is often understood as a quantified process — one that is aimed at determining how a certain situation, event, or action will manifest or unfold within ascertained conditions with predicted probable outcomes indicated

by the risk statistics. The definition of risk from this framework, therefore necessarily seems to anticipate disaster. However, before we ascribe any kind of value to the concept of risk, it may be helpful to understand the metaphysical implications of risk-oriented vocabulary.

Philosophers have paid attention to risk only very recently, and mostly in the domains of epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophy of technology, ethics, politics, and philosophy of economics.⁶ Aesthetics figures only in the margins of such an engagement.⁷ This gap is reflective of the differences in methodologies that inform the concept of risk. While the discourses in all these domains are committed to a desire for certainty and complete knowledge of the future, aesthetics offers a way of suspending such desire, embracing all those situations where certain knowledge and its possibility may be unimaginable. Can risk be experiential in a way that is not connected to the future? Can risk be committed to the encounter of the 'now' instead of this thrust towards the future?

An important distinction must be made between the concept of risk and the concept of uncertainty in the wake of precarious conditions. While precarity is often felt as an experience, risk is often understood as a knowable piece of information. In other words, the private subjective feelings faced in the wake of uncertainty get translated into a larger universalizable objective theory

of action in the concept of risk. Risk, in common sense, appears to encompass the consequences of precarious conditions but is not meant to address the experiences associated with such conditions. A managerial vocabulary of risk is interested solely in knowable pieces of information, such as statistical data or numbers. These numbers tell us the probability of some undesirable events that may occur, or the possibility of disasters, harm and so on, but leave us with few cues that enable, empower or, motivate our actions and responses. The vocabulary of consumption is peculiar — concepts of risk appetite, risk tolerance, etc., seem to be testing a community's *hunger* for risk, further hinting at the recognition that there can be no risk-free scenario in the foreseeable horizon, following which, one is compelled to consider cohabiting with risk as an unlikely neighbour.⁸

Experience and Knowledge of Risk

This forced cohabitation with uncertainty, precarity and a general sense of 'dis-ease' in communities globally has sharply foregrounded the criticality of ethics in our social lives. This is especially prescient in the context of the paradigm changes underway as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Generally, the risks associated with pandemics are not just to life and health but also to dignity and quality of life. The invisibility of the source of 'dis-ease' makes this risk a rather strange cohabitant in our virus-induced paradigm.⁹ If you were standing on the edge of a cliff, you would more likely know that you are at risk of toppling off. However, in case of a virus, for instance, you would not know when or how you get infected, because this knowledge is simply unavailable to your immediate perception. The consequence of such a scenario is one of perpetual anxiety, not knowing if you have in fact taken the risk, overcome it, or avoided it completely.¹⁰

In the natural or social sciences, risk data conceptually capture *consequences* of actions and unfold the implications of causal chains of actions and sequences. It is this very notion of risk that has given birth to the economy of insurance. The idea of insurance taps into that margin of excess one is ready to afford in order to avoid the full impact of risk. It is also that strange concept wherein all things become quantifiable and evaluated, including life. While this may not seem too out of place in practices that engage with the concept of risk as data, these ideas and concepts become difficult to navigate experientially when framed by this transactional paradigm of data.

The experience of risk and the knowledge of risk are very different in nature. The economy of risk which operates in social communities is specifically oriented towards mitigating risk. Such a paradigm of risk foresees an inevitably unfavorable condition to come in the

⁴ J.C. Gaillard and Lori Peek, "Disaster-zone research needs a code of conduct," *Nature* (2019), <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03534-z>; Ksenia Chmutina and Jason von Meding, "A Dilemma of Language: "Natural Disasters" in Academic Literature," *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science* 10, (2019): 283–92, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13753-019-00232-2>.

⁵ Doris Schroeder, Julie Cook Lucas, François Hirsch, Solveig Fenet, and Vasantha Muthuswamy, *Ethics dumping: Case studies from North-South Research Collaborations* (Cham: Springer, 2018).

⁶ Sven Ove Hansson, "Risk," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/risk/>. Philosophers like Mouffe, Dufourmantelle, and Butler can be considered as voices from the Global North, constantly trying to bring the risk discourse into the aesthetic through political thought.

⁷ Literature on risk in aesthetics points at precisely the insufficiencies that probability poses in the realm of aesthetic encounters which are not restricted to the arts but also extend to areas of sports and gaming. For more see Duncan Pritchard, "Aesthetic Risk," *Think*, 17, no.48 (2018): 11–24, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S147717561700029X>; Mark Stranger, "The Aesthetics of Risk," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 34, no. 3 (1999): 265–276, <https://doi.org/10.1177/101269099034003003>.

⁸ David Hillson and Ruth Murray-Webster, *A Short Guide to Risk Appetite*, (London: Taylor & Francis, 2017).

⁹ This resonates with Haraway's concept of the 'Chthulucene', where we are kin with 'other than human' beings. For more see: Donna Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin," in *Environmental Humanities*, 6 (2015): 159–65.

¹⁰ Sometimes, the consequence of risk-taking unfolds over time and may not be immediately palpable. One may take the risk of jumping the red light while rushing someplace but they may or may not end up getting penalized by the traffic police despite the surveillance camera. Here one has taken their chances because they place a higher wager on reaching that place they are rushing to. In this scenario one cannot afford to be late to that meeting, hence one chooses to risk getting penalized. The other known yet unaccounted risk in this case is that of death by accident, which may be the biggest factor in the way in which one decides to take the lesser risk. The way in which the concept of risk appears to you is through this notions of choice, action, and affordance, whereby you are trying to sieve through a series of possible actions you could take and, in the end, choose one over the other accordingly.

future. This anticipation of risk relief, in turn, necessitates organization of relief systems based in the economy of care.¹¹ It is this economy of care, of which the insurance companies and health organizations are arguably part, that makes providing care, assurance, and a sense of safety and well-being to its community their business.¹² However, the aesthetic translations of these economies of risk and care happen with different commitments. Here I draw upon the articulation of the aesthetic figure as one of the four truthful subjects as seen by Alain Badiou in the formation of various kinds of subject through four truth procedures — that of art, science, love, and politics.¹³ Aesthetic commitments within artistic practice lie particularly towards enabling truth making and truth-bearing in a manner that places truth as something that is not just understood but more importantly experienced. The engagement with risk therefore does not logically imply the necessity of relief in this paradigm, but calibration of it in relation to this commitment to the experiences of truth.

The two aesthetic figures I am concerned with emerge from these two aforementioned conceptual paradigms of risk and care. The artist practices in the paradigm of risk and the curator practices in the paradigm of care, both being contingently situated yet fluid roles.

Moving over and beyond traditional understandings of the figure of the artist and the figure of the curator, I adhere to a contemporary radical conception of these two figures as aesthetic figures that are bearers and enablers of truth respectively.¹⁴ This truth, be it new ways of 'worlding,' imagining, breaking and/or rearranging the given, emerges as an ethical experience. This is not a deductive or an argumentative truth, but a persuasive, reflexive, questioning and path-making truth which pushes boundaries of known and unknown experiences, indulging in an infinite multiplication or profusion of voices, beings, and worlds.

In this process of truth formations, what role does risk play? In the *enabling* of these truths, what role does care play?¹⁵ At the threshold of these two paradigms lie institutions, be it formal or informal, which negotiate or become that site where the artists and curators together collaborate in a manner that is both geared towards the world and to its economies. This also makes the institution the site of possible violence — given that it becomes the ground for truth, subjectivities, and value-systems to encounter and often inhabit an agonistic space with each other.¹⁶

Two Truth Paradigms: The Artist and the Curator

An explicit engagement with risk in artistic practice does not garner a significant place in avant-gardist artistic discourse. Generally, the notions that *do* appear of greater significance in artistic practices are ideas of freedom, agency, and expression. The tussle here is that when institutions perform as sites, harboring artistic practice, they tend to be seen more often than not as obstacles, deterrents, or at worst censors to artistic expression. This is particularly true in linear heteronormative art histories coming from the Global North where art as a radical act was second nature to avant-garde movements and the institution was very easily the site of contestation, rupture, and critique. The unrecorded, divergent, or lesser heard histories that were obfuscated by these narratives had, arguably, very different kinds of affordances, urgencies, and stakes.

Further, the Global South rarely featured in the linear avant-garde art historical narrative, making the concepts of art institutions rather uni-dimensional with their first world inheritance.¹⁷ This also makes the nature of institutional critique equally uni-dimensional. In other words, the nature of conflicts or contestations is not immune to heteronormative global forms of legitimization. Initiatives like the *School of Instituting Otherwise* (IO) helmed by curator Meenakshi Thirukode, *Party Office* helmed by artist Vidisha Fadescha (fig. 1), and *Allies for the Uncertain Futures* curated by Shaunak Mahbubani (fig. 2) are some of the several curatorial and artistic figures attempting to consciously break this heteronormative colonial hold on the story of arts practice in their own ways, driven through personal politics and collective desires.¹⁸ Another notable practice that has actively embedded ideas of risk and care amongst other forces is that of the artist-curators Raqs Media Collective in their curation of *Afterglow*, the 7th edition of the Yokohama Triennale 2020 (fig. 3), whereby they address this cohabitation and afterlife of being alongside toxicity, time ridden by constant risk, and the precarity of such a cohabitation across time and space.¹⁹

In this highly rendered, pluralist, and complex weave of artistic practice across the globe, what then would we mean by talking about risk and in turn care? Given the deeply divergent histories and contexts at play in artistic practice, how then can we hope to justifiably arrive at a universal discourse of risk and care? Further, in such situations, what role do artists, curators, and institutions play? What are the ways in which this threshold can be justified in its purpose as a liaising ground between a subject and her audience? Before we understand this, it would be imperative to first understand the object of risk in the creative paradigm.

¹¹ The 'economy of care' as used here is a very explicit reference to the actual economic transactional world care without any symbolism. While the sociological discourse of care-based ethics may inform these economies, in this paper, I am concerned only with the ways in which the economies manifest and inform our experiences. So, even when I look at the aesthetic economy of care, I am concerned with what happens once artistic and institutional forces are already at play.

¹² We can argue that the education sector is a part of the care economy given the curatorial turn in education. For more on this see: Claudia Ruitenberg, "Toward a Curatorial Turn in Education," in *Art's Teachings, Teaching's Art. Contemporary Philosophies and Theories in Education*, eds. Tyson Lewis and Megan Laverty (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-7191-7_16.

¹³ Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II*, trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

¹⁴ Boris Groys traces the transition of the curatorial figure from within the institution of the museum to outside of it mainly located form within the globalized art economy. For more on this see: Boris Groys, "On the Curatorship," in *Art Power* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008). In non-professional and informal processes, often seen in the decentralized life of artistic practice across the world, the curatorial figure takes up different avatars. Regardless of these contingencies, the curatorial figure is institutional by way of being embedded in the relational network of artistic work.

The institutional space, in this essay, encompasses that artistic network — be it a museum, an artist run space, a cafeteria or a book shop.

¹⁵ Care is critical as a new paradigm for truth formation, as I have argued in my paper "The Appearance of Truth in the Practice of Care" presented at the Deleuze and Guattari World Congress 2020 on *Encountering the Social: Masquerades, Fluidities, and Becomings of Postcapitalism*, organized by Centre for Culture, Media and Governance, Jamia Millia Islamia & Deleuze and Guattari Studies in India Collective, February 20–22 2020.

¹⁶ Chantal Mouffe and Elke Wagner, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (London: Verso, 2013).

¹⁷ The artist Hank Willis' recent revisionary map of art history *Colonialism and Abstract Art* (2020) as a response to Alfred H. Barr, Jr.'s *Cubism and Abstract Art* (1936) is a step in such corrective measures in art history that are being undertaken. See: <https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/421>

¹⁸ In Vidisha's own words, "I come from a backward caste, and identify within the trans umbrella so the work is then different from that of some of the other organizations mentioned, as this is a personal politics of asking for accountability from many sociopolitical systems, especially of caste, and also taking space to be able to tell our story the way we want to and create opportunity for others from the Bahujan & Trans community." Email communication with author dated November 21, 2020.

¹⁹ See: Raqs Media Collective eds., *Sourcebook for the Yokohama Triennale* (Yokohama: Organizing committee for Yokohama Triennale, 2020).

What is at Stake?

When artists work, what are the supposed 'risks' involved? Who, firstly, is at risk, and what is the risk to? In other words, what exactly is at stake in artistic practice? The figure of the artist often presupposes precarity — a condition often seen as the context for creating artistic work. This precarity — far from being a romantic notion — is more sweat, grime, and often ugly. It involves grappling with uncertain, uncharted processes, non-existent infrastructure, lack of financial stability, lack of community, and many other unseen, unknowable, intimate turmoils. As a human condition, this state of precarity is not desirable. It is but necessary to negotiate this intangibility of precarity through metaphorical and figurative imaginations that help articulate precarity experientially. In "Precarious Life: The Powers Of Mourning And Violence", contemporary thinker Judith Butler invokes the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas' preoccupation with the 'face' as the metaphor for "the extreme precariousness of the other" and the risk that we strive to take for the sake of a desired human condition.²⁰ Butler reads the encounter with 'the face' as a way of being "awake to what is precarious in another life," as one which makes the face "belong to the sphere of ethics."²¹ This precarious life (something that Levinas suggest is an inevitable invocation of the 'Other') as a concept, seldom integrates harmoniously with the human condition. One finds it hard to accommodate precarity as an acceptable state of affairs, the strife being to constantly try and overcome precarity and its anxieties.

The figure of the artist conventionally has been one that is constantly denying this harmonious rendering of the human condition. Historically, the figure of the artist seems to have a greater degree of affordance towards precarity, uncertainty, and its likes, in 'his' attempt to break into something new, create works of art, and offer new utterances in the world that had not existed before. This was explicit in the intentions of artists and art movements, be it the surrealists or the conceptualists, who consciously pushed at the fold of precarity. There was also a larger notion of transcendence that underlined the works. Risk as a concept to reckon with, rarely appeared of significant concern in these works. It was the affect and the purpose of the work that took precedence and most importantly:



fig. 1 *Party Office*, a space for trans-feminist and anti-caste dialogue, run by artist curator Vidisha Fadescha. Image courtesy: Vidisha Fadescha.

²⁰ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers Of Mourning And Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), 134.

²¹ Ibid.

²² For more on the curatorial turn, see: O'Neill, Paul, "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse"; in *Issues in Curating, Contemporary Art and Performance*, ed. Judith Rugg, (Chicago and Bristol: Intellect Books, 2007). For more on the decolonial turn see: Muniz-Reed, Ivan, "Thoughts on Curatorial Practices in the Decolonial Turn," *onCurating.org. Decolonizing Art Institutions*, 35 (December 2017): 99-105.

the artist's voice. The more 'risk' involved in the work, the more value was ascribed to the work and the artist's voice. Needless to say, this blindsiding then may well have resulted in the upsurge in contemporary #lists such as #metoo and its likes throwing bare the otherwise hidden processes behind risky practices or practitioners understood from this heteronormative globally disparate art history where privileged practices afforded lesser risk than the not so privileged.

However, the curatorial and subsequent decolonial turn have brought about varied kinds of artistic practices whose intentions, desires, and cartographies are distinctly pluralist, collective and non-singular.²² Artistic practice is now widely recognized as a valid form of academic practice as well as being considered actively as a community practice bringing about sociological transformation. These signpost an emancipation of art from museum-like spaces into the non-exhibitory yet discursive and transformative social fold. This revisionary move can be read alongside the ways in which the heteronormative grip of art history has paved way for a fluid queering of artistic practice; a queering that, in a way, affirms the elusive nature of curatorial practice more than it affirms the seemingly graspable nature of artistic practice. In other words, the self-defining nature of curatorial practice which is continually and relationally rendering its own boundaries, emerges as a process that can only be possible through the queering of the nature of artistic practice, both socio-geographically as well as conceptually. Very simply speaking, this foregrounds more fervently the question of ethics in curatorial discourse.²³ Risk then resurfaces as a concern because artistic practice is seen first and foremost as an ethical practice and not as a transcendental one, as reflected in the erstwhile paradigm.

Risk, Care, and Its Interstices

The ethical primacy of artistic practice is a curatorial inheritance, thereby bringing the paradigm of care in conversation with risk. By way of curating being that relational process that enables any kind of aesthetic paradigm, ethical action is but inevitably the foundation for curation, and thereby curatorially informed artistic



fig. 2 Smita Urmila Rajmane's *Swachh Vision Mission (2018)* in *Saavdhan: The Regimes of Truth / Allies for the Uncertain Futures Part 2 (2018)* curated by Shaunak Mahbubani, supported by apexart. Photo by Polina Schapova. Image courtesy: Shaunak Mahbubani.

²³ Snajana Kaikini, "Book Review: Curatorial Activism: Towards an Ethics of Curating," *Ethical Perspectives*, 25 (2018): 571-75.

²⁴ For a thorough engagement with the critical role of ethics in curatorial practice see: Victor Misiano ed. *Manifesta Journal Special Issue: Ethics*, 12 (2012).

practice.²⁴ The figure of the curator as a truth enabler presupposes the practice of care. The curatorial self cares for artistic practice probably in a way that even the artistic self would not. In other words, by being that ally of the artistic self, who is immersed in her practice in a way that the risks she takes appear implicit and often invisible, the curatorial figure helps articulate all the stakes and the risks involved in a way that preserves artistic intention as well as the work's aesthetic translation to the world. This need not mean the two figures are always necessarily different; both selves can inhabit a single truth-subject, the artist-curator being one such subject. The figure of the curator is also one that is deeply committed to the aesthesis of artistic work, implying that a curator has no role without an audience or perceiver figure. This necessary relational pre-condition for the curatorial state to exist implies that the artistic work is also necessarily bound to this relationality. The 'vector of kinship' of artistic work, therefore, is always committed to the perceiving world, the artist included.²⁵ This very commitment is a testimony to the promise of care; the social expectation from the work and the audience is that they both mutually care for each other.

In such a paradigm, how and where does the notion of risk arise? Given the above articulation of paradigms, it follows that the idea of risk needs to be considered from layered perspectives. Firstly, risk needs to be understood from within the paradigm of artistic practice where the risks that emerge in the process of artistic practice are considered in relation to the artists, their quality and dignity of life. For example, the curatorial framing of an artist's identity (be it derived from gender, caste, region, religion) has deep implications on the ways in which the work is received by the audience.

Secondly, the concept of risk needs to be understood from within the paradigm of care wherein the risks that emerge to the curator in the process of caring for the practice and the work involve a radical renegotiation of any kinds of a normative understanding of ideals. In this world, the articulation of aesthetic values also appears as radical re-negotiations of the self as a role that enables other selves to emerge and co-habit shared realities and worlds.

Thirdly, risk must be understood from within the space of the institution that balances on the threshold of these two paradigms with its overarching commitment to its audiences. The institution, therefore, has the most delicate and indispensable task of balancing its ethical commitment to its artists, curators, artworks and the audience. The concept of risk, therefore, when considered in this paradigm, needs to be articulated in a manner that is not merely a code of conduct borrowed from any other institution, but rather a reflection of conditional sensitivity to the nature of artistic practice which does justice to the specificity of the various objects at risk in this relational network.

Given that the ideal institution is equally committed to the curatorial intention of enabling the artists as truthful subjects, the recognition of the objects of risk must be assessed from all sides: the truth perceivers (audience), the truth enablers (curators and/or artists), as well as the truth bearers (artworks and/or artists).

²⁵ Here, I allude to my own curatorial work 'Vectors of Kinship' at the 11th Shanghai Biennale which engaged with the diverse ways in which creative kinship occurs in the world. See: <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/61969/why-not-ask-again-arguments-counter-arguments-and-stories/>.



The institution, as the social site of the aesthesis of truth, needs to assess the imminent risk to this multi-layered emergence of truths in light of the truth perceiver who may or may not perceive truths in universally uniform ways. When the institution fails to recognize this ethical commitment to risk in artistic practice, it generates subtle ambient pressure on the curators and artists to alter these truths under the garb of 'risk mitigation' for the perceiver. This kind of risk to the integrity of the artistic work and the artistic self may not be immediately perceivable by parameters that are outside of the aesthetic economy. Nevertheless, it needs to be accounted for and articulated contextually. The affect and the consequences of possible harm to truth processes in this complex of relationships between artist, curator, artwork, and audience must figure in assessing risks within the aesthetic paradigm.

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fig. 3 Make or Break (Connie Anthes and Rebecca Gallo), *Care for Bridges* (2020). *Afterglow*, at the 7th Edition of the Yokohama Triennale (2020) curated by Raqs Media Collective, was particularly interested in how practices of care now constituted risk through touching surfaces that are public, looking at polishing or preserving as an act of care but also destruction and by inviting audiences to gently participate in the slow destruction of an institutional art object. Image courtesy the artists.