

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

PARTICULARS OF APPOINTMENT

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

SCHOOL OF ARTS, LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

DIVISION OF DRAMA

RESEARCH ASSOCIATE (AHRC CARE PROJECT)

VACANCY REF: HUM-025893

Salary:	Grade 6: £36,024 per annum
Hours:	Full Time (1 FTE)
Duration:	Fixed Term For 6 Months (1st October 2024 until 31st March 2025)
Location:	Oxford Road, Manchester

Enquiries about the vacancy, shortlisting and interviews:

Name: Professor James Thompson

Email: james.thompson@manchester.ac.uk

Summary

The School of Arts, Languages and Cultures at the University of Manchester invites applications from suitably qualified candidates for a full time, temporary post of postdoctoral research associate, tenable from 1st October 2024 until 31st March 2025 for the **Care Aesthetics: Research Exploration (CARE)** project funded by the AHRC. This is a replacement post for the last six months of the project.

The successful candidate will have a record of excellence in one or more of the following areas:

- Care ethics/aesthetics
- Socially engaged arts
- Applied theatre in care or health contexts
- Health or social care (in particular in dementia care)

The successful candidate will join a team of researchers led by PI Professor James Thompson, supported by Co-Is Professor John Keady (University of Manchester/Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust), Dr Jackie Kindell (University of Manchester), Dr Kerry Harman (Birkbeck, University of London) and PDRA Dr Réka Polonyi (University of Manchester). The PDRA will contribute to the final 6 months of a three-year research project exploring *care aesthetics* in contexts of the arts, health and social care, and in community responses to the Covid

pandemic. The PDRA will be located in the Drama Department but will have access to the resources and teams of the other Co-Is.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Key Responsibilities, Accountabilities or Duties:

- To be research-active in one or more of the research areas listed above. We are particularly looking for individuals who are comfortable working in a multidisciplinary way and can work across these boundaries
- To lead the delivery of the project's final case study – 'The aesthetics of community care: food sharing practices during COVID-19 lockdowns in the UK' including research interviews, data analysis and writing up
- To work with the research team and external participants and organisations in the development of the programme for the Care Lab (the key public engagement vehicle for the project)
- To work with the PI, Co-Is and existing PDRA in developing and writing the research outputs from the project, including peer reviewed articles, blog posts and book projects
- To work with the research team on the professional management of the project, including supporting the reporting activities to the AHRC
- To contribute to the work of the Drama Department, the School and the University and work in a collegial manner with academic and professional support staff

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Essential Knowledge, Skills and Experience:

- Hold (or have recently submitted) a PhD in Socially Engaged Arts, Health and Social Care, Dementia care and/or similar areas
- Have an interest in and an emerging track record of excellence in research on care ethics/aesthetics, socially engaged arts and/or health and social care
- Have a proven commitment to and a record of delivery of activities and initiatives that translate research into beneficial activity or public engagement in the wider community
- Have a proven ability to work with community groups, external cultural bodies and/or social/care/health organisations, including an ability to communicate and develop supportive relationships with elders, their families and a range of health and social care staff
- Have strong IT skills, with ability to maintain and process data in different formats
- Have strong organisational skills, excellent interpersonal skills, enthusiasm, and a proven ability to work collegially within a team

Desirable Knowledge, Skills and Experience

- Have a record of active participation in externally funded research
- Have a record of peer reviewed publications and dissemination of research
- Have an artistic practice or health professional practice that might enhance the overall project

FURTHER INFORMATION

Project summary [Please note this is the full summary - we are currently in year 2 of this project]

Care Aesthetics: Research Exploration (CARE) will create the first comprehensive and multidisciplinary investigation into the concept of care aesthetics, applying research outcomes to develop new practices of artful care designed for contemporary arts, health and social care settings.

CARE starts from the hypothesis that care as a practice can be understood to have an aesthetic dimension - that is a crafted, sensory and embodied character.

The project explores how we might understand care in new ways if we attend to its aesthetics, and how we might understand arts practices in new ways if we ask how they contribute to interhuman care.

Drawing on care ethicists' analysis of interdependent human relations as a foundation for a situated version of social justice, the project asks how an attention to care aesthetics might provide new insights and new practices that run counter to the inequalities of a sometimes careless society.

Investigating how care operates in contemporary socially engaged arts practice, with particular attention to applied theatre projects, the research asks how a focus on care aesthetics provides new approaches to these practices.

Simultaneously, working with health and social care researchers, the project will investigate a range of contemporary social and health care practices, to examine how a focus on aesthetics might reevaluate the skills of staff who are often at the forefront of the crises that exist in health and social care settings.

If institutional care has become overly instrumental and technically focused, the project asks how a reorientation to embodied and sensory practices by care practitioners will offer new approaches with the potential to improve the quality of care in different settings.

The research in social and health settings and the analysis in socially engaged arts contexts will cross-pollinate with researchers from the arts working in the former and researchers from health and social care contributing to the latter. This will include an extended case study on care aesthetics and coronavirus which will document the responses to the pandemic that exist both in a care and artistic register, to examine how a focus on the aesthetics of interhuman caring relations might illuminate powerful community-based means for dealing with the difficulties of the crisis.

The project will establish the Care Aesthetics Lab in year one to act as the engagement and dissemination vehicle for the research and enable the development of exploratory practices that will bring multidisciplinary teams of professionals, artists, educationalists and researchers

together, including opportunities for broader public and practitioner engagement. It will ensure involvement of practitioner communities in the process of research and help develop new approaches informed by care aesthetics, meeting the urgency of our contemporary crisis in care.

Project Objectives

The overarching objective of CARE is to create the comprehensive and multidisciplinary investigation into the concept of care aesthetics. To fulfil this, there are six additional objectives:

1. To examine care aesthetics in practice through analysis of contemporary applied theatre and socially engaged arts programmes, focusing specifically on arts projects in health and social care settings. This will include an analysis of contemporary socially engaged arts practices, focused on the UK, and the commissioning of a major case study in an elder care home with professional arts practitioners. The objective is to extend and enhance the concept of care aesthetics, exploring how a care aesthetics framework creates new insights into the practice of socially engaged arts
2. To examine care aesthetics in practice through analysis of the experience of care and work of carers in contemporary health and social care settings. This will include an analysis of sensory or embodied accounts of care workers' skills, and conducting two major case studies, one of home care workers and one of 'unqualified' NHS staff working on specialist dementia assessment wards. As in (1), the aim is to extend and enhance the concept of care aesthetics, exploring how focus on the embodied and sensory aspects of care creates new insights into health and social care practices
3. To examine care aesthetics in practice through analysis of community-based responses to the coronavirus pandemic where care with a degree of artfulness and art with a degree of carefulness were demonstrated. The ambition is to create new insights into the creative and caring responses to the pandemic and its legacy, that are brought into dialogue with the case studies under (1) and (2)
4. To establish a Care Aesthetics Lab in the first year to engage with socially engaged arts practitioners and health and social care professionals enabling these groups to contribute to the research. The Lab will be hosted at the University of Manchester as a virtual and 'real life' impact vehicle creating an iterative and practical exploration of care aesthetics through the three years of the project. In year one it will host four project roundtables, in year two a series of four practitioner online events offering feedback on emerging themes from the case studies, and in the final year it will host a project conference and two practitioner seminars and three workshops. The aim is to stimulate debate and practice-based exploration of care aesthetics, increasing the value given to embodied skills in care work, and creating new sensory practices of care applicable to art and health/social care settings. These events will bring together the research team with professionals, participants and researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds enabling an exploration of care aesthetics in and between different contexts
5. To bring the research outcomes above into dialogue to create a multidisciplinary account of care aesthetics as a concept that enhances socially engaged arts programmes through a new attention to the importance of care, and to encourage greater valuing of care practices through emphasis on embodied and sensory skills. The multidisciplinary research team will develop this through analysis of the outcomes of objectives 1-4, leading to research articles for different disciplinary audiences and two major project books
6. To provide an exemplary career development opportunity for two PDRAs, including them in all aspects of research and valuing them as vital resources for the intellectual and practical development of the project. This will include naming them in project research outputs,

supporting the development of their own independent research careers and ensuring their voice is central to the future development of the field of care aesthetics

CARE is seeking a new PDRA for the final 6 months of the project to replace a colleague who has successfully moved to a full time, permanent academic position.

The successful candidate will be appointed for 6 months to start as close to 1st October 2024, as possible. We welcome candidates who work in multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary ways between the different fields mentioned above.

The main responsibilities of the new PDRA will be to lead on the final case study (which has already received favourable ethics clearance). This study is exploring 'the aesthetics of community care' in particular 'food sharing practices during COVID-19 lockdowns in the UK'.

The aim of this study is to examine community initiatives during the pandemic lockdowns that provided, distributed, and shared food items and meals among local residents. It plans to explore the relationship between community-organised care and food sharing practices in times of crisis, in particular with older residents. The successful candidate will also contribute to the development of the Care Lab, currently based at the Whitworth Art Gallery, in particular the Festival of Care planned for November 2024. They will also, with the rest of the team, be involved in the data analysis and writing up of the other project case studies.