

The Carer (2016)

The Carer is a short drama commissioned for the *Shine a Light* series of short films. Under the scheme, funded by Derby QUAD and the Esmee Fairbairn Arts Foundation, several filmmakers from around the UK were briefed to illuminate the experiences of people little seen on screen. In this case, writer-director Christine Parker took inspiration from *Seen Ya Rights*, a group of elderly LGBT activists to realize a story that addresses their current concerns and experiences.

Director's Statement

The Carer explores what happens when an elderly man feels pressured to return to the closet in his dying days. I have taken visual points of reference from classic gay texts such as Jean Genet and Mapplethorpe in the film, (such as the use of flowers), which is about finding a way to survive and even thrive, when your very identity is under threat. In that sense, it mirrors the struggle we all have to find a way to come to terms with who we are and retain continuity of identity.

The people of *Seen Ya Rights* lived through times when homosexuality was illegal, through the aids epidemic, and have spent a lifetime battling for the right to be out, to be themselves. They feared that in old age they would lose this hard-won identity. However, they also wanted a story that did not portray a Gay character as a victim. So, in *The Carer*, I set out to celebrate the survival and wisdom of our elders, and to pay tribute to their love and generosity. Students and staff of the University were involved in the project as well as industry practitioners, so it was a great way to integrate research into teaching.

The Carer debuted in Official competition at Palm Springs International SSF in June 2016. It went on to win eight international awards including an *Award of Excellence* and a *Humanitarian Award of Distinction* from US based Best Shorts Competition (<http://bestshorts.net>) and the *Premio Labor 2017 Award* from the *Festival Internazionale Immagine d'Autore* (FIIA) (<http://filmcommission.regione.sardegna.it/en/filmfestival/vart/>)

"A delicate and powerful film, neatly crafted to its smallest details, and masterfully directed. A great cast completes this cinematographic jewel that moves the audience, with an invitation to look beyond what it "pictures", beyond the daily mundane routine."
Giovanni Coda, Festival Director (FIIA)

Shortlisted for *The Iris Prize Best British Short Film* (<https://www.irisprize.org>), winning a special commendation, it toured UK cinemas with '*The Best of Iris*' in 2017. Long-listed for BAFTA, the film has screened at festivals around the world from Oscar qualifying *Edmonton ISFF* (<http://esff.ca>) to The Shropshire Rainbow Film Festival, (<http://www.rainbowfilmfestival.org.uk/planet-love/>) where it won the Audience Award.

Further research using the film will be conducted, to explore the experience LGBTQ residents in Care Homes, and to explore attitudes of Care Home staff towards them.