FWF-Postdoc "Performing Postsocialism in 21st Century China", Vienna

University of Vienna, Austria, Jan 1, 2026–Dec 31, 2027
Application deadline: Jul 4, 2025

Yizhuo Li

Postdoc position on FWF-funded project "Performing Postsocialism in Twenty-First-Century China" at the University of Vienna, 45 Faculty of Philological and Cultural Studies.

The postdoctoral researcher will join the Chinese Studies (Sinology) section of the Department of East Asian Studies to work on the project “Performing Postsocialism in Twenty-First-Century China”. They will be part of a team of researchers led by Professor Rossella Ferrari (PI).

- The project is funded by the Austrian Science Fund/Österreichischer Wissenschaftsfonds FWF (grant DOI 10.55776/PAT9791923).
- The duration of the postdoc contract is of 2 years (24 months, 30h/week), from January 1, 2026 until December 31, 2027.
- The language of the project is English.

The project introduces the framework of “performing postsocialism” to explore both how China’s postsocialist condition has affected Chinese performance since the postmillennial period and how examining Chinese postsocialism through a performance lens can enrich knowledge of postmillennial China. The project adopts a broad definition of performance: not only as a creative practice, but also as a manifestation of social and cultural behaviour, and as a methodology.

Consequently, the research focuses both on artworks that reflect China’s postsocialist condition and on performance as a way of understanding postsocialist China. It examines theatre, dance, media, and performance art works by independent performing and visual artists as well as forms of activism through the arts. This production encapsulates the cultural, ideological, and socioeconomic ambivalences of Chinese postsocialism and its complex temporalities, as it reflects on the socialist past, responds to current realities, and envisions potential futures.

On the one hand, postsocialist performance is analysed in the context of the postmillennial expansion and commercialisation of the cultural and creative industries. On the other hand, the research explores the challenges posed by stricter policy regulations and increased state monitoring of culture and the arts, as well as shifts occurred since the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it investigates how the meaning of performing postsocialism can extend beyond art and aesthetics to reflect, more broadly, on politics, society, and everyday life. For further details on the project themes, research questions, and objectives visit: https://ucrisportal.univie.ac.at/en/projects/performance-und-postsozialismus-im-china-des-21-ja

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As part of the project team, the post holder's tasks and responsibilities will include:
- Developing innovative research on cultures and practices of performance-making in twenty-first-century China (PRC) within the conceptual framework of the project
- Pursuing an independent research agenda in accordance with the aims of the project
- Delivering publications for peer-reviewed journals and high-quality academic publishers
- Conducting fieldwork and data collection in China (funding will be provided for this purpose)
- Participating in academic conferences
- Organizing research and dissemination activities (workshops, seminars, public events) independently and in cooperation with the project team
- Contributing to the dissemination of project results to both academic and broader audiences
- Undertaking administrative tasks related to the project

Required qualifications (essential criteria):
- Completed doctoral/PhD studies by the start date
- A research specialization in a subject relevant to the project: Chinese/East Asian Studies, Theatre and Performance Studies, Art History and Visual Cultures, Cultural Studies, Media Studies, or related fields
- Proven theoretical and methodological foundations in the study of Chinese arts and cultures
- Proven experience in conducting research in China (PRC)
- Advanced research skills and proven experience of independent scholarly writing at a high academic level
- Proven ability or demonstrable potential to publish in peer-reviewed international journals
- Experience in presenting at international academic conferences
- Advanced English proficiency (written and spoken, equivalent to C1 level)
- Advanced Chinese proficiency (written and spoken)
- Organizational, administrative, and teamwork skills

Additional qualifications (desirable but non-essential criteria):
- Experience in event organization
- Experience in data management
- Experience in designing and managing websites, databases, and datasets
- Working knowledge of German (for administrative/communication purposes within the university)

What we offer:
- Work-life balance: Our employees enjoy flexible working hours, remote/hybrid and/or part-time work (upon agreement)
- Inspiring working atmosphere: You are a part of an international academic team in a healthy and fair working environment
- Good public transport connections: Your workplace in the center of beautiful Vienna is easily accessible by public transport
- Internal further training & Coaching: Opportunity to deepen your skills on an ongoing basis. There are over 600 courses to choose from – free of charge
- Fixed-term contract and fair salary: The basic salary of EUR 4,932,90 (14 times a year, based on

fulltime) for a period of 2 years / 24 months increases if we can credit professional experience

Equal opportunities for all:
We welcome every additional/new personality to the team!

The application package should include the following:
- Motivation letter in English explaining how you meet the selection criteria and how your previous experience is relevant to the position (max. 2 pages)
- Academic CV including a list of conference presentations, a list of publications (if available), and the names and contact details of two potential referees (reference letters are not required)
- Summary of the PhD thesis in English (1 page)
- Copy of PhD degree certificate, or clear indication of when this will become available (the degree must be in hand before the start date)
- Copies of language certificates or other proof of advanced language proficiency in English and Chinese (if available)
- One academic writing sample (e.g., thesis chapter, book chapter, journal article)
- Publication plan deliverable within the timeframe of the project (1 page, with details of at least 2 publications)
- Postdoctoral research proposal in English (2 pages), that should:
focus on a topic related to performance in twenty-first-century China (PRC). The topic can be in the performing arts, the visual arts, or address broader cultural practices that can be investigated through performance theories and method align with the key themes, research questions, and objectives of the project, as detailed in the description above demonstrating engagement:
- with debates, theories, practices, and methods related to performance research in twenty-first--century China,
- demonstrate familiarity with scholarship on China
- demonstrate familiarity with performance theories and methods

Please submit your application through the provided job portal of the University of Vienna until July 4, 2025:
https://jobs.univie.ac.at/job/Scientific-project-assistant-postdoc/1210420601/

Contact info:
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Reference:
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