



**Royal College of Art**  
Postgraduate Art & Design

## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

**Post:** Postdoctoral Research Associate, CLIMAVORE x Jameel at RCA  
**School:** School of Architecture  
**Grade:** 7  
**Tenure:** FT 3-Year Fixed Term  
**Responsible to:** Principal Investigator

## **Background**

Founded in 1837, the Royal College of Art is the world's largest community of postgraduate art and design students. It is also the oldest art and design university in continuous operation and has been ranked as the world's number 1 art & design university for a remarkable eight consecutive years (QS World Subject Rankings 2015-2022).

The RCA is research-led, and recognised in the UK-wide REF (Research Excellence Framework) as the UK's most research-intensive institution – with an increased proportion of the College's outputs classed as 'internationally excellent' and 'world-leading' in the most recent REF assessment of 2022.

Studying at the RCA is the starting point for the world's creative leaders. With more than 20,000 RCA alumni across the globe, the RCA's graduates form a unique international network of artists, designers, creators and innovators. Every year, RCA alumni are recognised as leaders in their discipline, making national and international headlines for their work, which shapes the world we live in. Its graduate start-up incubator, InnovationRCA, is one of the most successful in the country with a high proportion of female start-up founders and a high 'survival' percentage after five years of trading.

Over 2,700 students are spread across four schools, studying at Graduate Diploma, MA, MPhil, MRes and PhD levels, with plans for this to rise to 3,300 by 2027. The College's mix of professionalism and creative freedom, together with its renowned academic community and rigorous academic framework provides the ecosystem in which students flourish and achieve their highest potential.

In addition, the RCA has a number of established and planned research centres: the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design; the Material Science Research Centre (which includes the Burberry Materials Futures Research Group and the Textiles Circularity Centre); the Intelligent Mobility Design Centre, Computer Science Research Centre, and a future centre in Drawing. The RCA is also home to one of the UK's most successful university incubators, InnovationRCA.



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The RCA espouses a hybrid approach, supporting 'traditional' making and technical skills in fine and applied art and design alongside the foundational sciences, engineering and technology which underpin designers' ability to solve today's global challenges. The RCA champions the value of interdisciplinary learning, and was the first art and design university in the world to implement a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Design and Mathematics) academic vision, with investment in new faculty posts in Materials Science; Computer Science and Robotics alongside art and design disciplines. By applying creative insights to evidence-based science, its staff, students, researchers and start-ups are addressing major global challenges such as rapid urbanisation and transport; loss of biodiversity; ageing populations; unsustainable consumption and production; and the rise of AI.

## **Our People**

Prior to the death of Her Majesty, the RCA's Royal Visitor (Patron) was HRH Prince of Wales; however, His Majesty King Charles III's office has yet to confirm which institutions he will continue to serve as a Patron, following his ascension to the throne. The RCA's Chancellor is Sir Jony Ive, and the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council is Sir Peter Bazalgette (please see link to Council independent members' biographies). The RCA's Vice-Chancellor - the CEO of the institution - is Dr Paul Thompson, who joined the College in 2009.

The RCA has more than 500 permanent staff, including internationally renowned artists, designers, architects, theorists and curators. These staff, together with an innovative pedagogy, world-class technical facilities and research centres, all contribute to an exceptional environment and a remarkable record of graduate employment. Generations of eminent graduates have created far-reaching impact and influence, such as Barbara Hepworth, Bridget Riley, David Hockney, Sir Ridley Scott, Sir James Dyson OM, Asif Kapadia, Thomas Heatherwick, Chris Ofili, Tracey Emin, Jake and Dinos Chapman, Christopher Bailey, Idris Khan, Chantal Joffe, Sir David Adjaye, Erdem, Philip Treacey, Monster Chetwynd, Oscar Murillo and Lina Lapelyte.

## **Strategic Plan 2022–2027**

The RCA has developed a new strategic plan with the publication of a new Strategic Vision and Plan for the next five years, and the appointment of our new Chair of Council, Sir Peter Bazalgette.

This plan will embrace the roll out of a new model of delivery for our taught postgraduate programmes to support access and flexibility; it will underscore our commitment to being the world's most research-intensive art and design university; and it will commit to a number of



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Equity and Diversity goals which will lead towards the RCA becoming an anti-racist institution.

### **About the post**

CLIMAVORE x Jameel at RCA reimagines foodways for drylands and wetlands in the climate crisis. It advances ecological networks to produce critical knowledge and action towards spatial justice. Developing two research projects, this three-year position engages with methodologies that use architectural and artistic investigative tools, education and action to advance ecologically regenerative and socially reparative food systems.

Initiated by the project's Principal Investigators Daniel Fernández Pascual & Alon Schwabe (Cooking Sections) in 2015, CLIMAVORE asks how we eat as humans change climates. It recognises that new anthropogenic 'seasons' are emerging. The lines between spring, summer, autumn and winter, or rainy and dry seasons, are increasingly blurred, while periods of polluted oceans, soil exhaustion, subsidence and droughts are becoming more prevalent. CLIMAVORE's site-responsive iterations anticipate future scenarios that embrace the agency of humans and more-than-humans towards more equitable environments.

Continuing the work of CLIMAVORE, this position within CLIMAVORE x Jameel at RCA runs for a three year period and seeks to develop new approaches that have a real impact on communities, ecosystems and policy-making.

### **The Project**

#### **Monoculture Meltdown**

Most of the driest winters since the beginning of the 20th century around the Mediterranean Sea have been experienced in the past two decades. Yet the struggle to cultivate edible produce in water-scarce territories is not new. Over centuries, complex technologies have been developed to squeeze the terrain to the last drop, such as tunnels, cisterns, and terraces to channel and retain water or air humidity. In Italy, places like Pantelleria, an island between Sicily and Tunisia without any freshwater sources, developed dry irrigation techniques by building gardens with dry-stone walls. These systems consisted of microclimates to 'water without water,' which ultimately emancipated orange and lemon trees from water-dependency. As the heat frontier moves northwards, increasing labour exploitation of North African and Eastern European workers continues to be driven by access to water for harvesting 'affordable' tomatoes, grapes, or blood oranges. Through the study of dryland microclimates, the project aims to experiment with alternative farming methods in drought conditions by seeking to diversify former monoculture crops that are failing to cope with climatic changes.

## **Purpose of Post**

Working as a key member of the project team, the successful candidate is an accomplished early career researcher with a proven knowledge of agroecological practices, food policy, social and spatial justice. The post holder will have a deep interest in the built environment and will work closely with the PIs (Alon Schwabe and Daniel Fernández Pascual), team members and partners across farming communities, public bodies, policy makers and cultural institutions to deliver the research outcomes of the project. This is an exciting opportunity to be a key member in a research project of international importance, supporting the investigation and testing of nature-based actions within food systems that proactively address the climate emergency. Working from the RCA, the researcher will be supported by an Italy-based research assistant on the ground with whom they will work remotely or in person when travel is required.

## **Main Duties and Responsibilities**

- To work closely with the PIs and the Project Manager to deliver high-quality, rigorous, and collaborative research which lead to robust research outcomes.
- To develop personal research objectives and interests that align closely with wider project plans, working with the PIs to ensure these are in line with the strategic direction of the project.
- Conduct critical literature and primary research eg interviews, workshops and design research when required, analysing findings to contribute to overall research outcomes.
- To produce and disseminate research outputs that are effectively shared with the world through appropriate channels (for example books, peer-reviewed journals, conferences).
- To conduct all research reflecting best practice in ethics, integrity, research data management, and research governance, ensuring compliance with RCA policies and external funding terms and conditions and sector standards.
- To work with academic, industry and third sector partners, including local communities, food businesses, academic institutions and arts organisations on collaborative research and knowledge exchange projects to maintain productive partnerships.
- To produce research outputs. These outputs may be suitable for submission to the national Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise, with a quality of at least 3\* as per the REF definition.



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- To support communication of research outcomes to a wide variety of audiences, including through public engagement, tailoring content and style to a broad range of specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- To participate in relevant academic, industry, government and policy networks as appropriate, presenting the work of, and representing the project
- To participate in team meetings and activities, events and workshops, contributing ideas for development, delivery and promotion of the project.
- To ensure confidentiality of sensitive project information is maintained, through appropriate project data protection.
- To support the application of funding proposals in collaboration with the PIs members to UK and international research funders, industry partners and other funding sources, to support the research agenda and the post-holder's own research career development plans.
- In collaboration with team members, to ensure execution of proposed research, efficient management of resources, and effective delivery of research outcomes and impacts.
- Where appropriate to assist the PIs in supervision of junior researchers or project workers ensuring they are equipped to deliver outputs within agreed timescales and are undertaking work at an appropriate level.
- To ensure compliance with RCA processes and procedures in relation to procurement and use of equipment and facilities, including health and safety policies, working with relevant departments across RCA.
- To contribute to the RCA Academic community through presentations in appropriate forums.
- To undertake general administrative and other tasks relevant as part of the team's and the project's work, as required by senior staff.

## **Personal Specification**

### **Essential**

- The successful candidate must be able to demonstrate at least one of the following
  - PhD in a relevant discipline,
  - or equivalent level of experience in a different sector
  - or a Masters degree and significant experience in research projects
- Have an excellent track record of experience in multidisciplinary research approaches to food systems, food policy, agroecology, social justice and the built environment
- Evidenced experience of working in research and on research projects at post-doctoral level



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- Experience working on collaborative projects ideally involving agriculture, food system design, and food policy
- Evidence of producing quality research outputs relevant to the career stage and discipline; for example, at least two outputs of published work
- Evidenced experience of contributing to and reporting on projects.
- Demonstrable understanding of good practice in research conduct (including in research ethics, research integrity and handling research data)
- Experience planning international field trips
- Flexibility and confidence to tackle a wide range of tasks with an open, proactive, creative approach to problem solving
- Experience planning information gathering and dissemination events for a range of different participants and audiences
- Excellent written communication skills, oral presentation skills and ability to adopt an appropriate style to a range of range of specialist and non specialist audiences
- Strong interpersonal and team working skills
- Ability to be an effective and collaborative member of a broader team working constructively with staff members and community collaborators alike
- Genuine commitment to the aims of the project

### **Desirable Experience and Skills**

- Affinity with changing food systems to tackle human induced climatic changes
- Knowledge of drought prevention in mediterranean climates
- Proven ability to work across a range of sectors with a cross section of individuals both academic and non academic
- Project communication experience
- Experience managing a budget
- Experience in spatial representation and mapping
- Experience with design software: GiS, Autocad, Adobe suite
- Proficient in Italian. Basic knowledge of French

### **Additional Information**

- £39,670 - £43,029 working 5 days per week, per annum pro rata inclusive of London Allowance
- Normal working hours will be 35 per week over 5 days from 9.30- 5.30pm with an hour each day for lunch
- Term: Fixed 36 months



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## **PAY & BENEFITS**

### **Pension**

The Royal College of Art is a member of the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London (SAUL) which is a contributory defined benefit pension scheme. The college will contribute a sum equal to 19% of your salary while you pay 6%.

### **Holiday**

5 weeks (25 days) paid leave a year plus bank and public holidays normally observed in England and Wales. In addition, the college is normally closed for six days a year, one day either side of Easter and the remainder between Christmas and New Year, at the discretion of the college. Part-time staff will be entitled to the pro rata equivalent.

### **Season ticket loans**

Interest-free loans are available for staff to purchase annual season tickets.

### **Enhanced maternity and adoption pay**

Qualifying employees are entitled to enhanced maternity/adoption pay: 26 weeks' full pay, 13 weeks Statutory Maternity/Adoption Pay. This compares to the statutory provision of 90% of average pay for 6 weeks followed by Statutory Maternity/Adoption Pay for 33 weeks.

### **Enhanced paternity pay**

Qualifying employees are entitled to two weeks' paternity leave entitlement at full pay. This compares to the statutory provision of two weeks' pay at the statutory rate.

### **Enhanced sick pay**

Occupational sick pay after six months' service is three months' full pay/three months' half pay.

### **24/7 confidential support**

Staff and family members in their household have access to a free, external confidential support service for work, financial, legal, family and personal problems 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

### **Occupational health**

Occupational Health support for the College is provided by Imperial College's occupational health service at their South Kensington Campus.





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### **Cycle to Work Scheme**

The Royal College of Art has signed up to the Cycle to Work Scheme – part of the government's Green Transport Initiative – which allows employees to make significant savings on purchasing new bikes and safety equipment.

### **Life Cover**

Active members of the SAUL pension scheme automatically receive life cover. A lump sum of four times your salary together with a refund of your contributions and a 2/3 pension for your dependent/spouse is payable should you die whilst in employment.

### **Library**

All staff are welcome to join the college library.

### **Events**

All staff are welcome to attend exhibitions, lectures and private views held by academic schools and programmes.