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Royal College of Art

Appointment of Director, Helen Hamlyn

Centre for Design

Candidate brochure draft text – May 2025



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Welcome from the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research & Innovation

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Director of the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design at the Royal College of Art.

The Royal College of Art was founded in 1837 as the world's first publicly funded Government School of Design. Today, we are the world's largest community of postgraduate art and design students. We are also the world's most influential postgraduate art and design school, ranked first in the world for eleven consecutive years by QS Rankings. The most talented students come to us to push the boundaries of their fields and learn from leading faculty.

We are the only UK art and design university where all academics are research active – meaning everything we teach is informed by cutting-edge research. Our approach is founded on the premise that art, design, creative thinking, science, engineering, and technology must all collaborate to solve today's global challenges.

Research at the RCA is rooted in creative practice and focused on addressing issues from climate change and the circular economy to a healthy ageing society and the future of AI. Our distinctive research culture interrogates the systems that integrate design into daily life, dealing with designed objects, services, and the ways in which they are produced and used. Established over 30 years ago to explore inclusive design for an ageing population, the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design (HHCD) is the RCA's longest-running research centre and increasingly relevant in this complex world. Our partners include national and international universities, businesses such as Tata Consulting Services, charities such as Dunhill Medical Trust, and government departments such as the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development office.

The HHCD examines inclusive design within the themes of healthcare, age, and ability, delivering positive impact for individuals and society, healthcare, and wellbeing providers, third sector organisations and business, ranging from insurance companies to NHS trusts.

Our staff and students design futures that include people across the age spectrum and all dimensions of diversity; they work with patients and medical professionals to tackle healthcare challenges; and they apply practice-led inclusive design thinking and research to industry and society to open up new commercial markets and address social issues.

It is in this context that the RCA now seeks to appoint a new Director for the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design. Reporting to the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research & Innovation, this role will continue to bring vision and leadership to the Helen Hamlyn Centre, promoting excellence in research with impact, ensuring it remains the world's leading centre for inclusive design.

The ideal candidate will bring a proven track record in inclusive design, research leadership, grant capture and external relationships. They will be an academic leader at reader, associate professor, or professorial level, with an internationally recognised research profile in a discipline relevant to the Centre's inclusive design focus. They will be able to demonstrate innovation, vision, creativity, and drive to enhance research capacity and maximise potential, supporting and collaborating with colleagues.

The Royal College of Art is a welcoming, dynamic, and global art and design university based in one of the most exciting capital cities in the world. We are committed to creating an environment of mutual respect, where differences are valued and respected, and where innovation, creativity, and diversity can flourish.

This is a hugely exciting opportunity to join the world's most influential postgraduate institution of art and design to generate change now for a sustainable, inclusive future everywhere.

We hope you share our excitement about the role, and we look forward to receiving your application.

Dr Emma Wakelin

Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research & Innovation

About the RCA

The RCA is research-led and recognised in the UK-wide REF (Research Excellence Framework) as a world-leading 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.

Studying at the RCA is the starting point for the world’s creative leaders. With more than 30,000 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 disciplines, 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 and has a global reach, having delivered consulting and training across the world, including South Korea, the Middle East and Japan.

Over 2,500 students are spread across four schools, four research centres and two Directorates – Architecture, Arts & Humanities, Communication and Design – studying at Graduate Diploma, MA, MPhil, MRes and PhD level. The College also offers a suite of MFA, MDes, MArch, MRes and MEd programmes. 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.

The RCA combines support for, and training in, the ‘traditional’ craft and professional skills of art and design, with the belief that art, design, science, and technology all play a part in solving today’s global challenges. The RCA champions the value of interdisciplinary learning and was one of the first art and design universities 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 and 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.

The RCA’s academic approach is based in active problem-solving and learning-by-doing, with current ‘real world’ practices of our disciplines fully integrated into our

teaching delivery and student learning. All of our teaching is based on a research-driven approach, with research providing skills, tools, techniques, and new knowledge, as well as forming the basis of the global problems that our students solve. Students work in an open environment with the ability to learn through others with cross-disciplinary environments and projects.

The Royal College of Art excels in world-leading art and design research with real-world impact. Our research is characterised by its roots in creative and innovative practice, by engagement with partners in business, industry, government, and communities, by a focus on addressing today's global challenges, and by collaboration across disciplines, particularly in science, engineering, technology, and medicine.

The RCA community operates in line with four agreed values:

- **Curiosity** – We have a tenacious commitment to innovation and openness to change. We positively interrogate ideas, assumptions, and plans and welcome the honest scrutiny that is alive in a learning community.
- **Inclusion** – We celebrate diversity and embrace difference as a source of strength. We strive for an inclusive RCA community, removing barriers and challenging exclusionary and discriminatory practices.
- **Collaboration** – We value what happens together and we help and support each other to achieve our collective goals. We work in partnership with our students, staff, alumni, institutions, and communities across the globe to make a lasting difference.
- **Integrity** – We are always willing to listen, we offer constructive feedback, and we promote accountability, building relationships of mutual trust and respect. We are resilient in the face of challenges, pursuing outcomes with individual, cultural, societal, and economic impact.

Our People

The role of Royal Visitor to the RCA was taken on by the former Prince of Wales – now His Majesty The King – in 2018. The announcement of HM The King’s retained Patronage of the RCA marks the first anniversary of Their Majesties’ Coronation. As part of the official Coronation Concert in May 2023, the Royal College of Art along with the Royal Ballet, the Royal Opera, the Royal Shakespeare Company, and the Royal College of Music came together for the first time ever to create a spectacular one-off performance, with a striking visual backdrop of specially-designed artworks contributed by students from the Royal College of Art.

The RCA’s Chancellor is Sir Jony Ive and the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council is Sir Peter Bazalgette ([Independent members' biographies](#)). The RCA’s President & Vice-Chancellor – the CEO of the institution – is Professor Christoph Lindner who joined the College in April 2024.

Our academic and technical staff

The RCA’s academic faculty bring world-leading expertise and industry knowledge to the tutorial-based model of teaching. All faculty, even at senior management level, are research-active and 100 per cent are included in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) submission.

The RCA has a total academic and research workforce of 400 people, which includes Associate Lecturers and Guest Lecturers who bring live industry experience into the taught curriculum – for example, Cathy Hawley in the School of Architecture is a RIBA Stirling Prize winner and Mark Titchner in the School of Arts & Humanities a former Turner prize nominee; Andrea Edmunds brings over 30 years of experience to MA Service Design, including heading up Service Design at IDEO; and Adrian Shaughnessy brings insight as a leading design writer and founder of a multi-award winning design group to MA Visual Communication.

The RCA also employs a team of over 100 highly skilled technicians, many of whom themselves have postgraduate qualifications and are well established and recognised practitioners in their fields of specialism, which range from rapid prototyping and subtractive manufacturing to film and sound engineering, and from digital modelling to metal fabrication and jewellery making. Our skilled technical staff and technical resources are integral to delivering an interdisciplinary approach which

is a key part of the student experience. Our expert staff provide technical consultations on project development and emerging methodologies, materials and processes for students and researchers to explore further.

Our alumni

RCA alumni, numbering more than 30,000 all over the world, are recognised as leaders in their disciplines, making national and international headlines for shaping the world we live in. They are highly prominent in a wide range of industries, from the Apple design studio in Cupertino, California, to the automotive sector in Sweden and Germany, to fashion in India and Italy. Alumni include such major figures as Henry Moore OM, Dame Barbara Hepworth, Bridget Riley, David Hockney OM, Sir Ridley Scott, Dame Zandra Rhodes, Sir Frank Bowling, Sir James Dyson OM, Dame Tracey Emin RA, Chris Ofili CBE, Christopher Bailey CBE, and Thomas Heatherwick RDI, CBE.

The Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design

The Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design is a global leader in Inclusive Design. With a three-decade history, it is the longest-running centre for design research at the Royal College of Art. It is one of four discrete research centres at the RCA and is housed in the purpose-built Rausing building designed by Herzog de Meuron, which opened in 2022.

Established over 30 years ago to explore design for an ageing population, the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design (HHCD) now leads research in inclusive design across key societal challenges, including population ageing, the prevalence of disability, and healthcare. Its work positively impacts individuals and wider society, collaborating with partners from the third sector and businesses, including insurance companies and NHS trusts.

The Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design's budget and staffing fluctuates with project delivery: recent years have seen annual budgets of between £1m and £3m, and staff numbers ranging from 13 and 30, with a small number of PhD students.

The Centre is supported with a generous annual grant from the Helen Hamlyn Trust. In 2008, to coincide with the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design (HHCD) being written for the first time into the College's ordinances, the Trust endowed the Chair of Design with a permanent endowment, the first academic Chair in the history of the RCA.

The Helen Hamlyn Trust, established in 2001 by Lady Helen Hamlyn CBE, initiates major projects with leading organisations and individuals to nurture innovation. The Trust's grant-making focuses on medicine, arts and culture, education, welfare, healthy ageing, humanitarian affairs, and heritage conservation in India. Major projects include The Hamlyn Centre & Chair of Surgery at Imperial College London, The Panufnik Composition Scheme with the London Symphony Orchestra, the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Pedagogy at UCL, and the ARCHiOx and EPIC Networks at Oxford University.

The Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design asks questions such as:

- How can designers shape a future that includes people across the age spectrum and all dimensions of diversity?
- How can designers work with patients and medical professionals to meet healthcare challenges for the 21st century?
- How can Inclusive Design thinking, research and practice impact and open up new pathways for business, industry, and global markets?
- How can Inclusive Design be used to work with individuals and communities addressing social issues?

Our Research

Specialising in Inclusive Design, the Centre undertakes research and knowledge exchange projects in collaboration with business, industry, government, and community partners, and delivers a programme of executive education, supervises PhD candidates, and offers short courses to clients around the world.

Research and Impact Spotlight

In 2016, Professor Myerson worked with Professor Lord Ara Darzi OM of Imperial College to submit a proposal to the Higher Education Funding Council for England to establish The Helix Centre at St Mary's Hospital, in partnership with Imperial College. The Centre brings clinicians, designers, healthcare professionals, patients, and their families together to develop design-led solutions in medical and health settings.

Gianpaolo Fusari and Matt Harrison of the HHCD were the first of several designers to work at Helix and the incoming Helen Hamlyn Director will be expected to maintain close links with Helix and provide leadership as required in research bid submissions and advice to the Helix team.

The Centre excels in translational and applied research focused on real-world application and impact. A recently completed PhD candidate, Dr Laura Salisbury, researched and devised a smart knitted textile which stimulates nerve endings in stroke patients in order to enhance recovery. Dr Salisbury won a £1.2m UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship in 2021 to support the further development of her patented textile and to establish a Wearable MedTech Lab within the Centre. She is also developing her ideas as a start-up founder of the company Knitregen based in InnovationRCA, the RCA's commercialisation and business incubator.

Over the years, the Centre has excelled in a number of areas with landmark research projects. To visit the HHCD's research repository, please click [here](#).



Designing out Medical Error



The Great British Toilet Map



Redesigning the Emergency
Ambulance



Advanced Taxi for London



Driverless Futures



Our Future Foyle



SloMo: Digital support to improve
wellbeing and thinking habits



Pioneering Architecture for Later
Life Sector (PALLS)



Design Age Institute

Role Description

Job Title: Director of the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design

Location: Royal College of Art (RCA), London, UK

Reports To: Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research & Innovation

Key Responsibilities

Academic Leadership

- To work closely with the Co-Chairs of the Centre to promote excellence in research with impact to ensure that the Helen Hamlyn Centre remains the world's leading centre for inclusive design
- Bring continuing vision and leadership to the Helen Hamlyn Centre's research and knowledge exchange activity
- Shape and promote the strategic vision of the Centre and the College and encourage creativity and drive to maximise research potential
- Advance the Centre's global reputation for evidence-based design research in the areas of population ageing, prevalence of disability and health and social care
- Position the Centre externally in terms of influencing policy, funders, and research schemes
- Enhance the Centre's profile nationally and internationally through partnerships, projects, and events outside the UK and by networking with experts internationally.

Research and Knowledge Exchange Funding

- Identify and build external collaborations leading to funding bids
- Lead and contribute to bids for research funding as Principal Investigator/Co-Investigator
- Manage funded projects and/or research groups with a national and international profile

- Identify opportunities for collaboration across the research centres and Schools within the RCA, and with external partners
- Work with the Research Office team to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the Centre

Knowledge Exchange and Impact

- Manage the bridge between academic enquiry and knowledge exchange with business and industry to ensure that research leads to practical real-world outcomes, impact, and where appropriate exploitable IP
- Work with colleagues to develop new opportunities for collaborations with industry, business, statutory and third sector organisations
- Maintain a senior role in innovation and knowledge exchange for the College ensuring that Helen Hamlyn design research is developed and advanced with external partners
- Disseminate research outputs in an appropriate manner internally and externally, including the production of published works, major reports, through exhibition, presenting at conferences, advising relevant national bodies
- Take a strategic role within the Centre in shaping the contribution made by the team to Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercises.
- Identify and deliver appropriate opportunities for income diversification, including through the development of short courses for executive education, contributions to the RCA's postgraduate taught programmes, and commercialisation opportunities.

Personal Effectiveness and Team Development

- Motivate, encourage, and nurture the research team to promote strong-working relationships
- Support the research activity of colleagues, providing mentoring support to increase research capability
- Work with the Helen Hamlyn Co-Chairs to create an early career researcher programme focused on the development of future research leaders in inclusive design

- Build a pipeline of future design researchers through the development of new programmes of study at PGR and PGT level, executive education, and flexible learning opportunities, including in collaboration with other RCA schools and external partners
- Develop and sustain positive relationships with Helen Hamlyn and the Helen Hamlyn Trust, and ensure the Trust's values are upheld and its expectations met, working closely with the Chairs and the College's Advancement & Alumni team in doing so
- Work constructively with the College's Research Office and other professional service teams.

Contributions to the vibrancy of the wider College

- To contribute to the development and implementation of College policy and strategy through membership of appropriate committees
- To contribute to the achievement of organisational goals and strategic objectives in research.

Research and Scholarly Activity

- Participate as a member of national or international committees, editorial boards, professional bodies, and/or specialist groups relevant to the subject area as appropriate

Person Specification

- An academic leader at reader, associate professor, or professorial level, with an internationally recognised research profile in a discipline relevant to the Centre's Inclusive Design focus
- Demonstrable ability to set agendas, lead thinking and initiate research and innovative practice in design disciplines
- Ability to think strategically, provide clear business focus and develop creative solutions to support the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design's objectives
- Able to demonstrate innovation, vision, creativity, and drive to enhance research capacity and maximise potential
- Excellent team building ability to lead and motivate staff to continue to develop the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design
- Track record of providing proactive academic mentorship and support to colleagues' personal and professional development
- Evidence of supervising postgraduate and postdoctoral research students and of acting as an external examiner
- A track record of securing research grant funding and collaborative research projects with business, industry, community and other partners, and experience of leading programmes of research and knowledge exchange in a university or sector-related environment, including managing staff and budgets
- A thorough understanding of the UK research environment, including UKRI and Research England priorities and funding, the Research Excellence Framework (REF), and of European and other international research and knowledge exchange funding opportunities
- Proven ability to leverage core funding and to attract significant external financial support for the Centre's projects, working with the Helen Hamlyn Chairs of Design to secure the Centre's long-term financial sustainability

- Proven track record in attracting and working with business and other external partners to advance projects with evidence of identifying and delivering opportunities for development and growth
- Able to demonstrate outstanding achievement as a scholar with an excellent record of research output through publications, exhibitions etc., with sustained quality and impact that will contribute to REF
- Resilient and self-motivated with the highest standards of professionalism and integrity
- Collaborative leadership style with proven ability to work effectively within complex organisational structures while maintaining clear direction
- Well-developed interpersonal and communication skills with the ability to establish professional credibility with a range of stakeholders, external advisers, and senior colleagues
- Excellent planning and organisational skills with the ability to work under own initiative, manage conflicting demands and meet deadlines
- Committed to upholding the College's values and the principles of ethical and responsible research
- Willing to work flexibly including travel in the UK and overseas as required

Rewards, Benefits, and Additional Information

- Competitive salary commensurate with level of experience.
- The RCA is a participating institution of the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London (SAUL). As such, the College can offer all new starters joining on or after 1 April 2023 membership of SAUL START, a new contributory, defined contribution, pension scheme. The College will contribute a sum equal to 16% of your salary while you pay 6%.
 - SAUL is not able to enrol any new Members in its defined contribution scheme (SAUL CARE), however, if you are currently a member of SAUL's CARE scheme or believe you have historical entitlement to join SAUL CARE, please inform the HR team on accepting an offer of employment.
- 5 weeks (27 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. 27 days from 1/10/24.
- Interest-free loans are available for staff to purchase annual season tickets.
- 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.
- Qualifying employees are entitled to six weeks' paternity leave entitlement at full pay.
- Occupational sick pay after three months' service is three months' full pay/three months' half pay.
- Qualifying employees are entitled to enhanced shared parental pay: up to 24 weeks paid at the full rate of the employee's normal pay (only in the first 26 weeks following the start of maternity/adoption leave), followed by 13 weeks Statutory Shared Parental Pay. This compares to the statutory provision of up

to 37 weeks paid at the statutory rate or 90% of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower.

- 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 support for the College is provided by Imperial College's occupational health service at their South Kensington Campus.
- 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.
- 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 dependant/spouse is payable should you die whilst in employment.
- All staff are welcome to join the college library.
- All staff are welcome to attend exhibitions, lectures and private views held by academic schools and programmes.

Process

For further details on how to apply, please visit

<https://candidates.perrettlaver.com/vacancies> quoting reference number **7848**.

Candidates wishing to apply should submit a CV (including comprehensive details of key achievements and responsibilities) along with a covering letter which fully addresses the competencies outlined in the role description and person specification.

The closing date for applications is **9:00 BST on Tuesday 27th May**.

The Royal College of Art will be supported in this appointment by executive search firm Perrett Laver. Any initial enquiries should be directed to Arshya Dayal on Arshya.Dayal@perrettlaver.com or +44 (0)20 3928 7392.

Accessibility

For a conversation in confidence or should you require access to these documents in alternative formats, please contact Xavier. If you require any reasonable adjustments to assist you in the selection process, please advise us of these so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

If you have comments that would support us to improve access to documentation, or our application processes more generally, please do not hesitate to contact us via accessibility@perrettlaver.com.

Inclusion

Perrett Laver believes that excellence will be achieved through recognising the value of every individual. A broad range of perspectives, backgrounds and opinions amongst our global community of colleagues is crucial in maintaining our culture of openness, intellectual curiosity, and creativity. We take an active role in supporting under-represented communities and groups in becoming better and more fairly represented in the leadership of all organisations. We also know that diverse and inclusive teams have a positive impact on our ability to identify, engage and secure candidates from these groups.

Our commitment to inclusion across race, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, identity, and experience drives us every day – for clients, for candidate identification and in the recruitment, development and retention of colleagues.

To ensure inclusion on the basis of age, disability, ethnic or national origin, family circumstance, gender, gender identity, marital status, nationality, political or religious beliefs, race, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, we would like to specifically invite applications from under-represented groups.

Data Protection and Privacy

Protecting your personal data is of the utmost importance to Perrett Laver and we take this responsibility very seriously. Any information obtained by our trading divisions is held and processed in accordance with the relevant data protection legislation. The data you provide us with is securely stored on our computerised database and transferred to our clients for the purposes of presenting you as a candidate and/or considering your suitability for a role you have registered interest in.

As defined under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Perrett Laver is a Data Controller and a Data Processor, and our legal basis for processing your personal data is 'Legitimate Interests'. You have the right to object to us processing your data in this way. For more information about this, your rights, and our approach to Data Protection and Privacy, please visit our website <http://www.perrettlaver.com/information/privacy/>.

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