Royal College of Art
Postgraduate Art & Design

JOB DESCRIPTION

Post:	Postdoctoral Researcher
Department:	Contemporary Art Practice, SoAH
Grade:	7, 0.4FTE
Responsible to:	Principle Investigator (Dr Aura Satz)
Duration:	Fixed-term contract - approx. 30 months

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 one art and design university for a remarkable eleven consecutive years, according to the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2025 – the worldwide survey of academic and industry opinion.

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 2021.

Studying at the RCA is the starting point for the world's creative leaders. With more than 25,000 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.

More than 2,800 students are spread across four schools and research and academic departments, studying at Graduate Diploma, MA, MFA, MDes, MArch, MEd, MRes, MPhil and PhD levels. 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 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.

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

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. The RCA's President & Vice-Chancellor – the CEO of the institution – is Professor Christoph Lindner who joined the College in April 2024.

The RCA's academic faculty bring world-leading expertise and industry knowledge to the practice-based model of teaching. There is a core academic and research workforce of 196 FTE, supported by around 215 Associate Lecturers and a wide range of Guest Lecturers who bring 'live' industry experience into the taught curriculum – for example,

Amin Taha of GrantOn design, whose work was twice shortlisted for the RIBA Stirling Prize, in 2017 and 2021, teaches in the School of Architecture; and Yao Yingjia, who is Vice President and Chief Designer at Lenovo teaches in the School of Design.

The RCA combines contemporary and industry-focused teaching perspectives. It also employs a team of 95 highly skilled technicians, many of whom themselves have postgraduate qualifications 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.

Strategic Plan 2022–2027

The RCA's Strategic Plan 2022–27 is available on the RCA website. During this time, the RCA's strategic vision is to increase its influence on the world stage of globally ranked universities, punching significantly above its weight, and attracting, supporting, and convening the world's most talented faculty, students, artists, designers and creative leaders.

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.

School of Arts & Humanities

The School of Arts & Humanities bridges research and study in the fine and applied arts together with curating, writing and the history of design. We pay attention to the arts within the everyday, and to the everyday as site of practice, and as archive and technological advance. We maintain close and productive links with numerous

organisations, world-renowned theatres, galleries, libraries and museums that depend on the Arts & Humanities, and which are central to our cultural and economic future; these links ensure that our work is relevant and public facing.

Purpose of the Post:

This AHRC-funded project Scoring Warnings (SW) will mobilise artistic practices to interrogate the instructional mode of address in disaster preparedness and crossovers in contemporary art, in order to explore the problem of emergency communication in a way that is engaging, effective and inclusive. The project is a collaboration between RCA, Warning Research Centre (WRC) at UCL, Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR), UAL Creative Research into Sound Arts Practice (CRiSAP) centre, and others. We aim to set up a dialogue between historical and contemporary instructional images, texts and sounds from the fields of risk communication (warnings) and contemporary art (scores), in order to create a critical interdisciplinary framework examining the ways in which these can reciprocally inform, resonate, and provoke one another. The post holder will be based in the School of Arts and Humanities and work closely with the PL (Dr. Aura Satz), team members and project partners across culture, industry, and community to deliver the research outcomes of the project, consisting of exhibitions, workshops, interviews and a film, alongside academic outputs. Working as a key member of the project team, the successful candidate is a highly organised and talented early-career researcher with a proven knowledge in either music/sound and/or art/artistic practice, creative practices/methodologies and effective project management and production skills. Experience of either participatory workshop methods, collaborations with NGOs in international contexts or design and communication methods and their evaluation is desirable.

Main Duties and Responsibilities:

● To undertake high-quality, rigorous, and (where relevant) collaborative research projects which lead to robust research outcomes.
To develop personal research objectives and interests that align closely with wider project, working with the team.
Conduct research to deliver the project outcomes under the supervision and direction of the PL.
● Support the PL and project team in the design and development of the research activities for the project, specifically the workshops across multiple contexts and with various project partners.
● Conduct critical literature review and primary research e.g., interviews and workshops where required, and analysing research findings to contribute to the overall research outcomes.
● Contribute to the creation of a research archive for the project, made available through the RCA library.
● Assist in the design of related documentation (e.g. workshops invitations, research posters) as well as the upkeep of social media profile of the project.
● Organise and attend meetings with project partners and, where necessary, visit labs, studios, and workspaces that support the research enquiry and delivery of outcomes.
● Write project reports and participate in project meetings and activities.

● Engage in the dissemination of the results of the research under the supervision of the PL. 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.

● Engage in the wider research and scholarly activities of the School and College. Contribute to the RCA Academic community through presentations or teaching in appropriate forums and participation in RCA-wide activities as appropriate.

● Act as an effective and collaborative member of a broader team.

● Carry out administrative and management work associated with the research project and other tasks as part of the project work, as required.

● Working with the project team, ensure that project outputs and project deliverables are properly documented and disseminated to key audiences, via reports, papers, exhibits, publications, the website etc.

● To contribute to project updates on a regular basis, working with other team members, project partners and relevant stakeholders.

● Support the development of proposals for further research funding.

● To ensure confidentiality on all matters and information obtained during the course of employment.

● 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 respect the confidentiality of data stored electronically and by other means in line with the Data Protection Act.

Person Specification:

Essential:
● Hold a recent doctorate, or are very close to acquiring a PhD, in a field relevant to the project including either sound studies, experimental/documentary film, contemporary art including practice, theory, or curation; communication and media, cultural studies, participatory practices, and disaster/risk studies.

● Have interest in and (proven) experience with a multidisciplinary approach to art, sound, societal and political themes related to the project.

● Demonstrated experience of contributing to and reporting on projects and managing resources.

● Have an excellent track record in research, preferably with a focus on research through practice; evidence of producing quality research outputs relevant to the career stage and discipline.

● Demonstrable understanding of good practice in research conduct (including in research ethics, research integrity and handling research data).

● Demonstrable ability to be a collaborative member of a broader team.

● Evidenced flexibility and confidence to tackle a wide range of tasks, with an open, proactive, creative and problem-solving approach.

● Evidenced excellent writing, communication and presentation skills, able to adopt an appropriate style for a range of specialist and non-specialist audiences.

● Evidenced strong interpersonal and team-working skills.

● Evidenced experience of handling social media and digital content for diverse activities.

Desirable:
● Relevant / relatable professional experience in a related sector (such as curating art/music, film-industry, humanitarian NGOs etc etc.).

• Evidenced experience of working on collaborative projects, preferably involving HE and industry collaborations and/or civil society in a relevant field.
• Evidenced experience or commitment to addressing access, auraldiversity and/or neurodiversity from a sound or artistic perspective in relevant professional practice.
• Evidenced experience of generating a digital audio, visual and text research archive within a HE context, that can additionally be used as a teaching resource.

Additional information

- Salary : £44,693 per annum inclusive of London Allowance.
- Normal hours will total 14 hours per week over 2 days, 9.30am to 5.30pm with an hour each day for lunch.
- 27 days annual leave per annum pro rata, plus extended breaks at Christmas and Easter.
- A contributory defined benefit pension scheme and interest free season ticket loan are available.
- Term: Fixed term until 31/08/2028

PAY & BENEFITS

Pension

The Royal College of Art is a participating institution of the Superannuation Arrangements of the University of London (SAUL). As such the College can offer all new starts 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.

Holiday

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.

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 six weeks' paternity leave entitlement at full pay.

Enhanced sick pay

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

Enhanced shared parental 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.

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.

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 dependant/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.