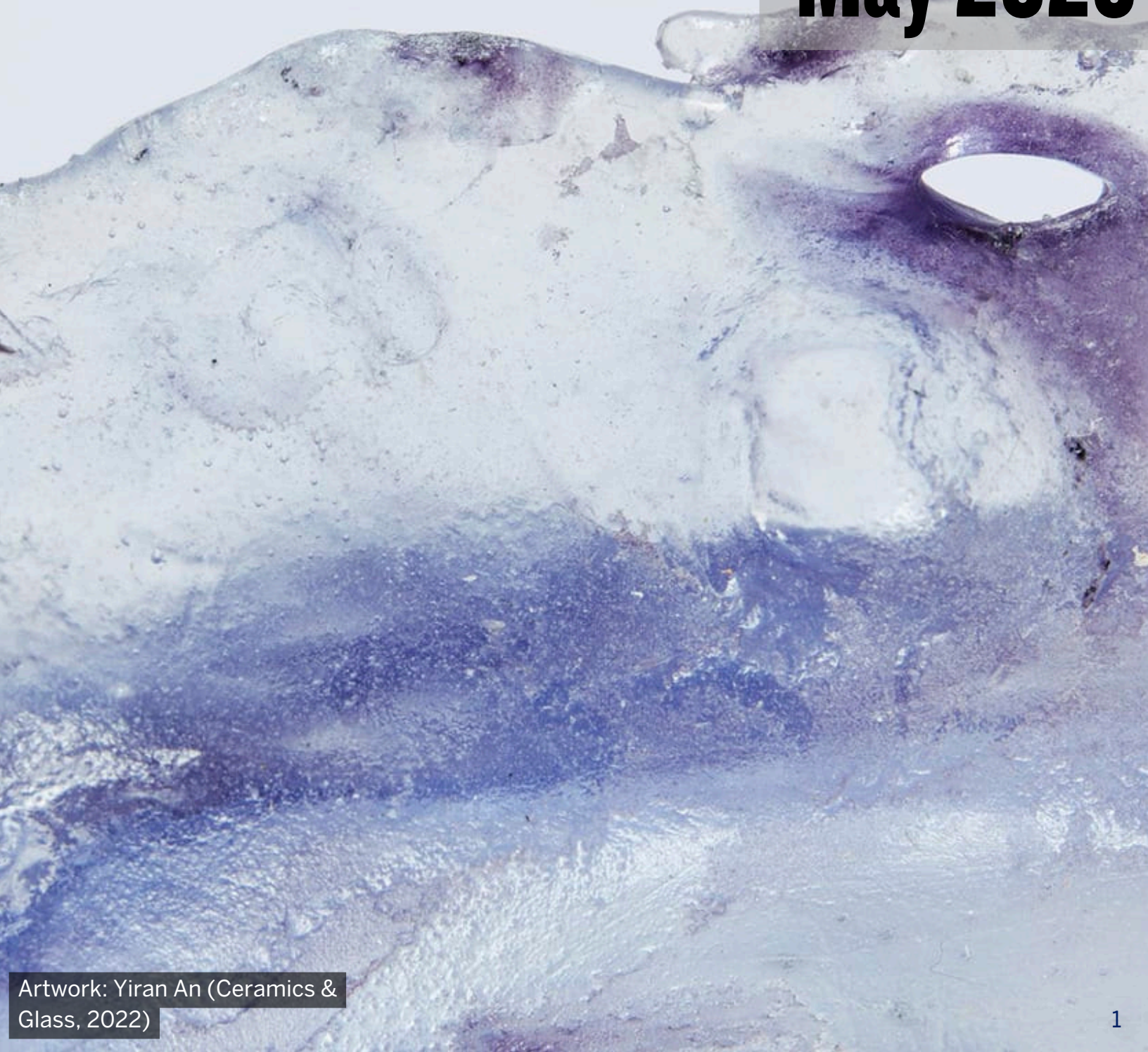


RCA

Postdoctoral Research Associate (Design Engineer) May 2026



Artwork: Yiran An (Ceramics & Glass, 2022)

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Photo: Richard Haughton

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WELCOME TO THE RCA



Photo: Iwan Baan

Founded in 1837, the Royal College of Art is the world's largest postgraduate-only community of art and design students. It has been ranked number one in the world 12 consecutive years (QS World University Rankings by Subject 2015-2026).

Studying at the RCA is the starting point for UK and global creative leaders. With more than 30,000 RCA alumni all over the world, the College's graduates form a diverse international network of artists, designers, creators and innovators.

Around 2,500 students are spread across four schools – Architecture, Arts & Humanities, Communication and Design - and in the RCA's Research Centres. The College creates an environment that champions exploration, collaboration and interdisciplinary learning - using art and design to reframe the possibilities of the humanities, technology, and ethics; and equipping graduates for new futures and opportunities

Research is at the heart of the RCA's impact. In active discussion with the world, the College brings interdisciplinary researchers and partners together in vital areas such as climate and sustainability, technology and society, and leads the field in practice-based research. As a result, the RCA is ranked as one of the most research-intensive specialist art and design universities in the UK [under the Research Excellence Framework 2014 and 2021].



Photo: Richard Haughton

The RCA champions exploration, collaboration and interdisciplinary learning - using art and design to reframe the possibilities of the humanities, technology, and ethics. We experiment, question and discover, putting research and practice at our heart, to equip students for new futures and opportunities and build on current knowledge.

Current 'real world' practices of our disciplines are fully integrated into our teaching delivery and student learning. The RCA model also consciously uses both the high research active levels of faculty, and the absence of undergraduate provision, to provide concentration and focus, in order to use research to creatively 'disrupt' the learning experience.

Our People



Photo: Richard Haughton

The strength of the RCA lies in its people: our students, academic community, researchers, technical specialists, professional services teams and our global network of alumni and partners.

The RCA's Chancellor is Sir Jony Ive, one of the world's most influential designers. The Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council is Sir Peter Bazalgette, and the President & Vice-Chancellor — the College's Chief Executive — is Professor Christoph Lindner, who joined the RCA in 2024.

The RCA's academic faculty bring world-leading expertise and industry knowledge to the College's model of teaching. All faculty are actively engaged in their relevant industries and professional practice beyond academia, and the RCA is the only specialist art and design university where all of our permanent academic staff are also research active and included in the RCA's submissions to the UK Research Excellence Framework.

The RCA has a total academic and research workforce of over 400 people, which includes Associate Lecturers, Visiting Professors and Guest Lecturers who bring 'live industry' experience into the taught curriculum

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. Our skilled technical staff and technical resources are integral to delivering an interdisciplinary approach which is a key part of the student experience.



OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION: TOWARDS THE RCA AT 200 (2026–2030)

The RCA's new Strategic Plan sets out a transformational five-year phase as we begin our journey towards our bicentenary in 2037. Our ambition is to become the world's most influential art and design community, with a global footprint and a renewed approach to research, education, partnerships and organisational culture.

By 2030:

- The College will operate across two revitalised central London campuses, including a reimagined Darwin Building at Kensington.
- We will establish research and education hubs outside the UK for the first time.
- We will strengthen our global partnerships, increase access to scholarships and widen participation for students from all backgrounds.
- We will be recognised for leadership in emerging creative technologies, especially AI, and for our contribution to sustainability, regenerative practice and public good.

Our work is underpinned by the RCA's four values — Collaboration, Curiosity, Inclusion and Integrity — and by commitments to long-term resilience, financial sustainability, staff and student wellbeing, and a culture where creativity and innovation thrive.



The College's ambitions will be delivered through three Strategic Pillars:

Strategic Pillar One

Creating and delivering the best art and design education, dialogue and research.

Strategic Pillar Two

Championing a community with outstanding potential who are diverse, inclusive and connected.

Strategic Pillar Three

Convening transformational exchanges of art and design expertise and ideas.

Our Values



Photo: Shaun James

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.

Postdoctoral Research Associate (Design Engineer)



Purpose of the post

This post provides applied design engineering and co-design expertise to a new research project that builds on the school of design's design for safety at sea and New Economic Models for the Oceans (NEMO) research.

Developing Low-cost Co-Designed Navigation Aids for SIDS & LDC's is a new funded research project in the school of design. Aids to navigation should conform to IALA global standards enabling vessels at sea to navigate safely and avoid risks. The aids to navigation currently supplied are industrially manufactured to meet IALA standards but the cost can be prohibitive for small islands, developing states and least developed countries. Our project aims to collaboratively design, prototype and test low cost aids to navigation made using local, sustainable and circular materials. The outcome will provide a case study for a new application of IALA standards recorded in a joint publication to reduce risks to seafarers/passengers in SIDS/LDCs, improve trade and employment.

We are seeking a highly motivated design engineer to join an interdisciplinary team working with local communities in SIDS/LDC's to lead the design and building of sustainable low cost aids to navigation. The post holder will have a track record of applied design engineering work ideally in a marine context or applicable to it. They should be familiar with using research methods, working to international specifications and standards, engaging with stakeholders and co-design alongside physical design and making. Experience or familiarity with circular sustainable materials processes is an advantage. The role requires travel and fieldwork in a variety of climates and developing states.

Research Project

- 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 plans, working with the project PI/Director to ensure these are in line with the strategic direction of the project and of the College as a whole.
- To prepare and submit funding proposals (if requested) in collaboration with project team members to UK and international research funders, industry partners and other funding sources, to support the project's research agenda and the post-holder's own research career development plans.
- In collaboration with team members, to manage any awards won, ensuring execution of proposed research, efficient management of resources, and effective delivery of research outcomes and impacts.
- To work with academic, industry and third sector partners as appropriate on collaborative research and knowledge exchange projects.
- To support engagement with any sponsor companies, undertaking collaborative research projects and contributing to working relationships to maintain a productive partnership



Sharing Findings Widely

- To produce and disseminate research outputs that are effectively shared with the world through appropriate channels (for example books, peer-reviewed journals, conferences and reports) to the discipline.
- 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.
- To support communication of research outcomes to a wide variety of audiences, including through public engagement, reports, 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 project team meetings and activities, events and workshops, contributing ideas for development, delivery and promotion of projects.



Supporting people and ensuring best practice

- Where appropriate and relevant, to assist the project Director/PI in supervision of junior researchers or project workers engaged in projects, ensure they are equipped to deliver outputs within agreed timescales and are undertaking work at an appropriate level.
- 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 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 ensure confidentiality of sensitive project information is maintained, through appropriate project data protection.
- To undertake general administrative and other tasks relevant as part of the team's and the Centre's work, as required by senior staff.



Skills, knowledge and experience

Essential Skills:

- The successful candidate must be able to demonstrate at least one of the following: PhD in design engineering or a related field, or a Masters degree and significant applied experience in design engineering or related project areas.
- Experience of being part of collaborative projects, preferably involving HE/industry collaborations in a relevant field.
- Experience of managing and reporting on projects, including managing a budget
- An understanding of the importance of good practice in research conduct (including research ethics, research integrity and handling of research data)
- Ability to be an effective and collaborative member of a broader team, able to work constructively with senior staff and to support the work of any research students and interns involved in projects
- Flexibility and willingness to tackle a wide range of tasks, with a pro-active, open, creative and problem-solving approach
- Excellent writing, communication and presentation skills, able to adopt an appropriate style for a range of specialist and non-specialist audiences
- Strong interpersonal and team-working skills



Desirable skills:

- Publication record in recognised academic journals in the areas of design research, industrial design or design engineering.
- Knowledge of marine engineering practices
- Knowledge of ocean navigation systems
- Experience of working on collaborative projects, preferably involving HE/industry collaborations in a relevant field.
- Knowledge of and commitment to interdisciplinary design led approaches to research and design.



Pay & Benefits

Additional Information:

- Full time salary: Grade 7 £44,693- £48,269 per annum including London Allowance. 3rd year salary will be pro rata at 0.3fte.
- 30 days annual leave plus extended breaks at Christmas and Easter, at the discretion of the College. Pro rata for part time employees
- A contributory defined benefit pension scheme and interest-free season ticket loan are available alongside many other benefits
- Location: Kensington & Battersea
- Department: School of Design
- 1 fte (35hours per week) 3 year post (NB - 3rd year is 0.3fte)
- Responsible to: AtoN Principal Investigator
- Working hours 9.30am to 5.30pm with an hour each day for lunch.
- Time to conduct research will be allocated to the person appointed on the basis of the College's Academic Employment Framework. This stipulates a minimum of 20% research time for a research academic.



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 16% of your salary while you pay 6%.

Holiday

30 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 on either side of Easter and the remainder between Christmas and New Year. 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 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.

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.

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.



Equality, diversity and inclusion - Disability and neurodiversity

Disability Confident

RCA is a Disability Confident Committed employer. You may recognise the logo from our job adverts.

Disability Confident is a government scheme designed to encourage employers to recruit, retain, and develop disabled people. RCA was originally awarded the Disability Confident certificate in October 2022, which broadens and deepens our existing commitment as an employer.

As a Disability Confident Committed employer, we commit to the below core activities:

- ensure our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible
- communicating and promoting vacancies
- offering an interview to disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the job
- anticipating and providing reasonable adjustments as required
- supporting any existing employee who acquires a disability or long-term health condition, enabling them to stay in work
- at least one activity that will make a difference for disabled people



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12 YEARS as the world's
N°1 University for Art & Design

QS World University Rankings by Subject 2015-26

Together, the RCA community can generate change now for a sustainable future everywhere.