



# Royal College of Art

Postgraduate Art & Design

Post:	Senior Research Associate, AiDesign Lab
Department:	Research & Innovation
Grade:	7
Responsible to:	Co-PIs AiDesign Lab RP2-8 Real World AI Narratives
Term:	Fixed-term for 2 years
FTE:	1.0 (Flexible)

## Background

The Royal College of Art is the UK's only entirely postgraduate institution of art and design, dedicated to teaching, research and knowledge exchange with industry. The RCA has been ranked the number one university-level institution for art & design, internationally, for the eighth consecutive year according to the QS World University Rankings by Subject, 2021. The College currently has some 2,700 students registered for Graduate Diploma, MA, MRes, MPhil and PhD degrees, and this is set to rise to 3,000 in coming years. The majority of postgraduate teaching and research supervision is delivered by the RCA's four Schools: Architecture, Arts & Humanities; Communication; Design, with each School led by a Dean of international standing and a recognised leader in their field. 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); the Intelligent Mobility Design Centre, the HELIX Centre, and future centres in Computer Science and in Drawing. The RCA is also home to one of the UK's most successful university incubators, InnovationRCA.

## Our People

The RCA's Royal Visitor (Patron) is HRH Prince of Wales; its Chancellor is Sir Jony Ive, and the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council is Sir Peter Bazalgette. The RCA's Vice-Chancellor - the CEO of the institution - is Dr Paul Thompson. The RCA has more than 450 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 & Dinos Chapman, Christopher Bailey, Idris Khan, Chantal Joffe, Sir David Adjaye, Erdem, Monster Chetwynd, Oscar Murillo and Lina Lapelyte.

## Strategic Plan 2022-2027

The RCA is currently crafting a new strategic plan, involving all staff in a process that concluded in March 2022, 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; it will underscore our commitment to being the world's most research-intensive art & design university; and it will commit to a number of Equity and Diversity goals which will lead towards the RCA becoming an anti-racist institution.

### **Radical Matter proto-Centre: Art, Philosophy, Wild Science**

The Radical Matter proto-Centre (RCA) foregrounds a practice-led approach to Artificial and Distributed intelligence, led by contemporary art and philosophy (logics of sense, traditional, media, electronic and digital poetics, cultural and political narrative structures) alongside advances in the wild sciences (quantum physics, super positionality, non-locality). It includes the PhD research group Entanglement (30+ PhD researchers and international scholars), and the MA School unit (Radical Matter), welcoming researchers within the School of Arts and Humanities and across the College.

### **Digital Direction**

Digital Direction (RCA) addresses our urgent need for inclusive and relevant storytelling. Our programme examines the emergence of new technologies for telling stories, such as AI, VR, AR and mobile platforms, alongside the future of storytelling itself. Our purpose is to inspire communication practitioners to approach contemporary communication critically, and to discover new and meaningful ways to tell stories in our world today. The programme is not just open to practitioners from the arts but also to journalists, writers, musicians, theatre makers and anyone who wants to experiment creatively and collectively with new narrative approaches driven by ethical, environmental, epistemological and social imperatives. It is for students who want to use emerging storytelling tools and technologies critically, working with others to assemble and amplify stories that should be told and heard.

### **About AI Design Lab**

The AI-Design Lab is a major collaboration between the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (HKPU) and the RCA, funded by the 'InnoHK' programme to support collaborations between Hong Kong universities and world-leading universities around the world. Building on the research and innovation expertise of the two institutions, the AI-Design (AiD) Lab will explore how artificial intelligence and design can address some of the major challenges of the 21st century. The AiDesign Lab is built around three programmes of research, all with an interdisciplinary and industry-facing focus and opportunities for commercialising the project outcomes:

1. Using AI and 3D modelling to improve fit, customisation and performance in clothing manufacture.
2. Using AI and robotics to explore customising products and services in the cultural sector, healthcare, ageing / wellbeing, new knowledge systems and in future transport systems.
3. Using AI and machine learning to improve efficiency, quality control and sustainability in the fashion industry.

The RCA is leading seven projects across these three programmes, involving staff from the RCA's research centres and academic schools, working in collaboration with HKPU colleagues.

### **Purpose of the Post**

RP2-8 (RCA5) 'Real World AI Narratives', led by the Radical Matter proto-Centre and Digital Direction, sets out to address gaps in community-led and collective knowledge in the conceptualisation and application of AI in digital storytelling. Investigating multimodal

generative narratives, narrative forms, and narrative structures, the project aims to explore (1) identity formation in emerging relationships between narrators, contexts and audiences, (2) community concerns, meaning making and forms of expression in digital storytelling, and (3) collective agency in interpreting or creating real-world, community-led public AI narratives. Through working directly with communities, the project aims to explore ethical dimensions, problems, and limitations of AI in digital storytelling, including narrative biases, issues associated with trust, storing and sharing collective storytelling data, and transparency, authorship and control in community-led storytelling practices. Situating these concerns in public environments and exchanges, the project seeks to examine the conditions around which ethical forms of communication, and interdisciplinary pathways to new pedagogical frameworks for collective AI narratives in digital storytelling can emerge.

### **Main Duties and Responsibilities**

- To undertake high-quality, rigorous, and (where relevant) collaborative research which lead to robust research outcomes for the AiDesign Lab project.
- To develop personal research objectives and interests that align closely with wider project plans, working with the Co-PIs to ensure these are in line with the strategic direction of the project, the lab and of the college.
- Where appropriate, to prepare and submit funding proposals in collaboration with project team members to UK and international research funders, industry partners and other funding sources, to support the lab's research agenda and the post-holder's own research career development plans.
- In collaboration with project team members, to manage the award, 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 to achieve the deliverables of the RP2-8 (RCA5) Real World AI Narratives lab.
- To support engagement with partnering companies, undertaking collaborative research and contributing to working relationships to maintain a productive partnership.
- To produce and disseminate 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, 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 lab as relevant.
- To participate in lab team meetings and activities, events and workshops, contributing ideas for development, delivery and promotion of projects.
- To contribute to the RCA Academic community through presentations or teaching in appropriate forums and participation in RCA-wide activities such as Across RCA or Committees and boards as requested.
- 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 to the lab's work, as required by senior staff.

## **Person Specification**

### **Essential**

The successful candidate must be able to demonstrate at least one of the following:

- PhD in a relevant field, specifically AI and distributed intelligence in digital storytelling, digital filmmaking, sound, creative coding and/or physical computing, and experience working with diverse communities.
- or equivalent level of experience in a different sector, specifically AI and distributed intelligence in digital storytelling, digital filmmaking, sound, creative coding and/or physical computing, and experience working with diverse communities.
- or a Masters degree and significant experience in research projects, specifically AI and distributed intelligence in digital storytelling, digital filmmaking, sound, creative coding and/or physical computing, and experience working with diverse communities.
- Experience of working in research and research projects, either academic or commercial/industrial in a topic relevant to this project (AI and distributed intelligence in digital storytelling, digital filmmaking, sound, creative coding and/or physical computing, with experience of working with diverse communities)
- Experience of working with narrative concepts and processes in relation to technical AI, XR, VR, AR development.
- Experience with deploying and testing proof of concept in selective narrative and community situations, garnering feedback and technical information.  
Experience of producing and publishing experimental methods for AI narratives for cultural, entertainment and educational application.
- 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, working constructively with senior staff and supporting the work of less experienced staff or students involved in projects.
- Evidenced flexibility and confidence to tackle a wide range of tasks, with an open, pro-active, 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.
- Genuine commitment to the aims of the project and of the lab.

### **Desirable**

- Evidenced experience of collaborative projects, preferably involving HE/industry collaborations in a relevant field.
- Evidenced experience of contributing to and reporting on projects.
- Broad knowledge of creative technologies.
- Broad knowledge of contemporary methodologies and knowledge systems relevant to AI and distributed intelligence in digital storytelling, digital filmmaking,

sound, creative coding and/or physical computing, and working with diverse communities.

### **Additional Information:**

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- Location: Kensington, Battersea and White City (all 3 sites)
- Salary working 5 days per week: £37,910 - £41,171 per annum inclusive of London Allowance. This is a fixed term role, duration 24 months.
- Normal hours will total 35 hours per week, 9.30am to 5.30pm with an hour each day for lunch.
- 25 days annual leave, plus extended breaks at Christmas and Easter at the discretion of the college.
- A contributory defined benefit pension scheme and interest free season ticket loan are available
- The Senior Research Associate will be required to spend time in Hong Kong at least once a year for the employment period.

### **MAY 2022**

#### **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. 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.

### **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.