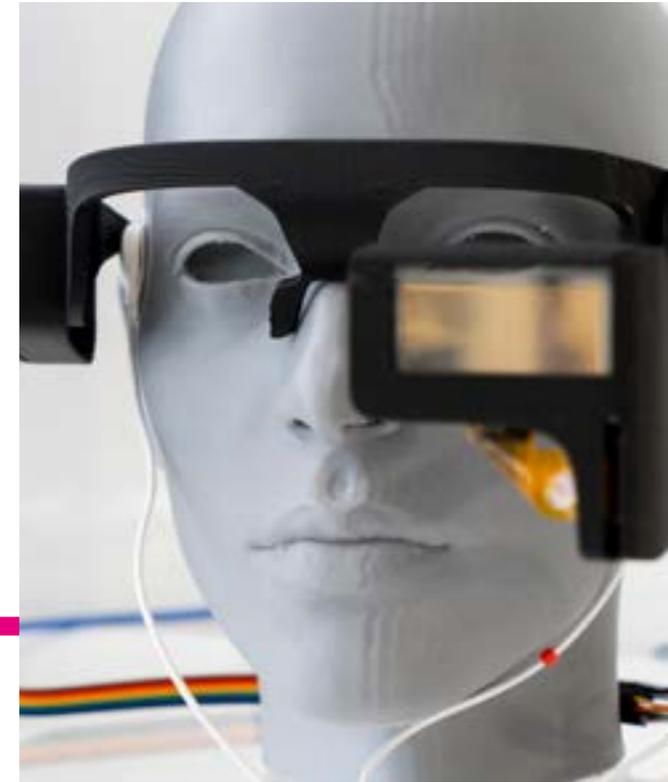


Strategic Plan 2026–2030



Royal College of Art
Postgraduate Art & Design





Photos clockwise from top left:

Alien Rhapsody, Rong Bao (MA Sculpture, 2023).

Work by Wenxi Xu (MA Fashion) at RCA2025. Photo: Thomas Moen.

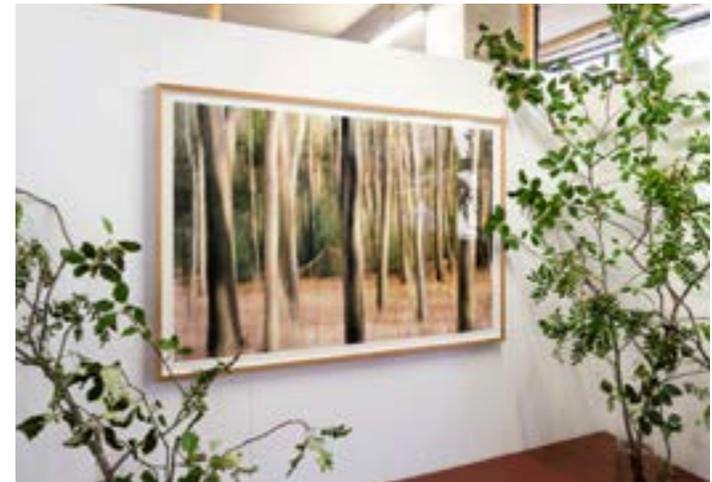
What Have You Noticed Today, Lewis Danielski (MA Visual Communication, 2024).

The Rhythm Regulation Glasses, Yueling He (MA Design Products) at RCA2025. Photo: Thomas Moen.

Without Warning, Polina Piech (MA Photography) at RCA2025. Photo: Thomas Moen.

Detail of FARIN : FOREIGN, Tyreis Holder (MA Textiles, 2025). Photo: Thomas Moen.

The Gables, Sophie Marney (MA Interior Design, 2023).





Professor Christoph Lindner

President & Vice-Chancellor
Royal College of Art

This five year Strategic Plan is the first step towards our vision of the Royal College of Art at our 200th anniversary in 2037 as the world's most influential art and design community.

Each word in that vision has importance. We will be a global institution, with research and education hubs outside of the UK for the first time. We will set the direction of art and design education – not just through our own work, but through reaching out and engaging with more partners than ever before. And our students, staff, researchers and alumni will be at the heart of everything we do.

By 2030 we will already have made significant progress towards our bicentenary vision. Our historic Kensington home will be renovated, and the RCA will once again be on two central London campuses – bringing our community together with a new creative energy, driving cross-disciplinary exploration, and creating more connections and possibilities. New technologies and trends will shape what and how we teach, research and work. We will be at the forefront of exploring the potential of those technologies in the creative industries, as well as how we use our work to tackle urgent challenges such as climate change and inequality.

Almost all UK students with financial need and more international students than ever before will have access to scholarship support. We will interact with even more global artists, educators, designers, researchers and innovators through UK-wide and international partnerships. All of these ambitions will be realised alongside enhancing the experience of students and staff, and engaging even more actively with our extraordinary network of alumni.

Our partnerships will be vital to achieving our goals – from the commitments we make to our students, to the bonds shared between our staff, to the connections we develop with the alumni, funders, donors, academic institutions, businesses, government and regulatory partners, local communities and cultural organisations who make the RCA's work possible and meaningful.

Crucially, we will continue to provide a home for making, where people can create, reframe how we perceive the world, and bring joy to those who experience that work – because we know and deeply believe that this work matters.

We hope you share our excitement about our plans for the future and we invite you to join us in making these plans a reality.



Sir Peter Bazalgette

Pro-Chancellor and Chair
Royal College of Art

At times of great change, the social, economic and public good achieved by art and design education is more important than ever. The RCA's alumni have been innovating, experimenting and transforming the UK's powerhouse creative sector ever since its foundation nearly 200 years ago.

You may be aware of the great artists who are part of our community – among whom include David Hockney, Dame Tracey Emin, Sir Frank Bowling, Henry Moore, Bridget Riley and Chris Ofili. Perhaps you are also aware of film directors Sir Ridley and Tony Scott; fashion luminaries Dame Zandra Rhodes, Philip Treacy, Ossie Clark and Erdem; or illustrator Kate Greenaway.

But did you also know that without RCA graduates, you would not have Plasticine, the Dyson vacuum cleaner, the plastic stacking chair, the Porsche 911, the Rolling Stones' "lips" logo or the London 2012 Olympic torch and cauldron?

Our students and alumni shape our culture and world, and we could not be more proud of them. We are privileged to have been the world's number one art and design university for over a decade, but we do not take that position for granted. It is the Royal College of Art's job to ensure that the environment, teaching and support we provide each generation of students enables them to keep pushing at the boundaries of the possible; that our research makes the world a better place; that our embracing of new methods and technologies drives economic growth and supports innovation. I look forward to seeing how this Plan's ambitious changes help us deliver our goals.

The Royal College of Art at 200



The Royal College of Art was founded in 1837 as the Government School of Design, to drive forward a new approach to the possibilities of the Industrial Revolution and boost the country's economy.

We approach our 200th anniversary in a time of global challenge and rapid change, with new revolutions in creative methods and making on the horizon. It's important for the RCA to be clear on what we are here to do now – as well as what type of organisation the world needs us to be by our 200th anniversary in 2037.

Purpose

As a dedicated postgraduate art and design specialist university, our purpose is to:

- Lead globally in art and design education, research and practice.
- Advocate for the transformational impact of art and design.
- Support and create opportunity for students from all backgrounds.
- Amplify the impact of art and design in culture, communities and the economy.

Vision

Aligning our work to our purpose helps us work towards our vision of the RCA at our 200th anniversary as:

The world's most influential art and design community.

Continuously redefining creative making and experimentation, we will be the international leader for how art and design education responds to new opportunities, perspectives and technologies.

Global in outlook and grounded in London, we will be an unparalleled creative space where the bold thinking of our students, academics and researchers positively impacts the world around us.

Strategic Pillars

We will do this through focusing on three Strategic Pillars:

- 1 Creating and delivering the best art and design education, dialogue and research.
- 2 Championing a community with outstanding potential who are diverse, inclusive and connected.
- 3 Convening transformational exchanges of art and design expertise and ideas.

Strategic Plan 2026–2030 A summary

The Royal College of Art at 200
The world's most influential
art and design community.

We will work towards delivery
of this vision over the next
five years through a focus on
three Strategic Pillars:

1

Strategic Pillar One

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

Achieved through:

- Excellence in art and design teaching.
- Academic portfolio and School structure for a changing world.
- Strategic approaches to world-leading research.
- Continuous innovation, embracing emerging technologies.

2

Strategic Pillar Two

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

Achieved through:

- Attracting the broadest range of people.
- Vibrant and inspiring student experience.
- Diverse, equitable and inclusive work and study environment.
- Outstanding work and professional growth.
- Connected global alumni community.

3

Strategic Pillar Three

Convening transformational
exchanges of art and design
expertise and ideas.

Achieved through:

- Partnerships for global impact.
- Purposeful collaboration for societal benefit.
- Professional support for successful art and design education and innovation.
- Being a positive local and global neighbour.



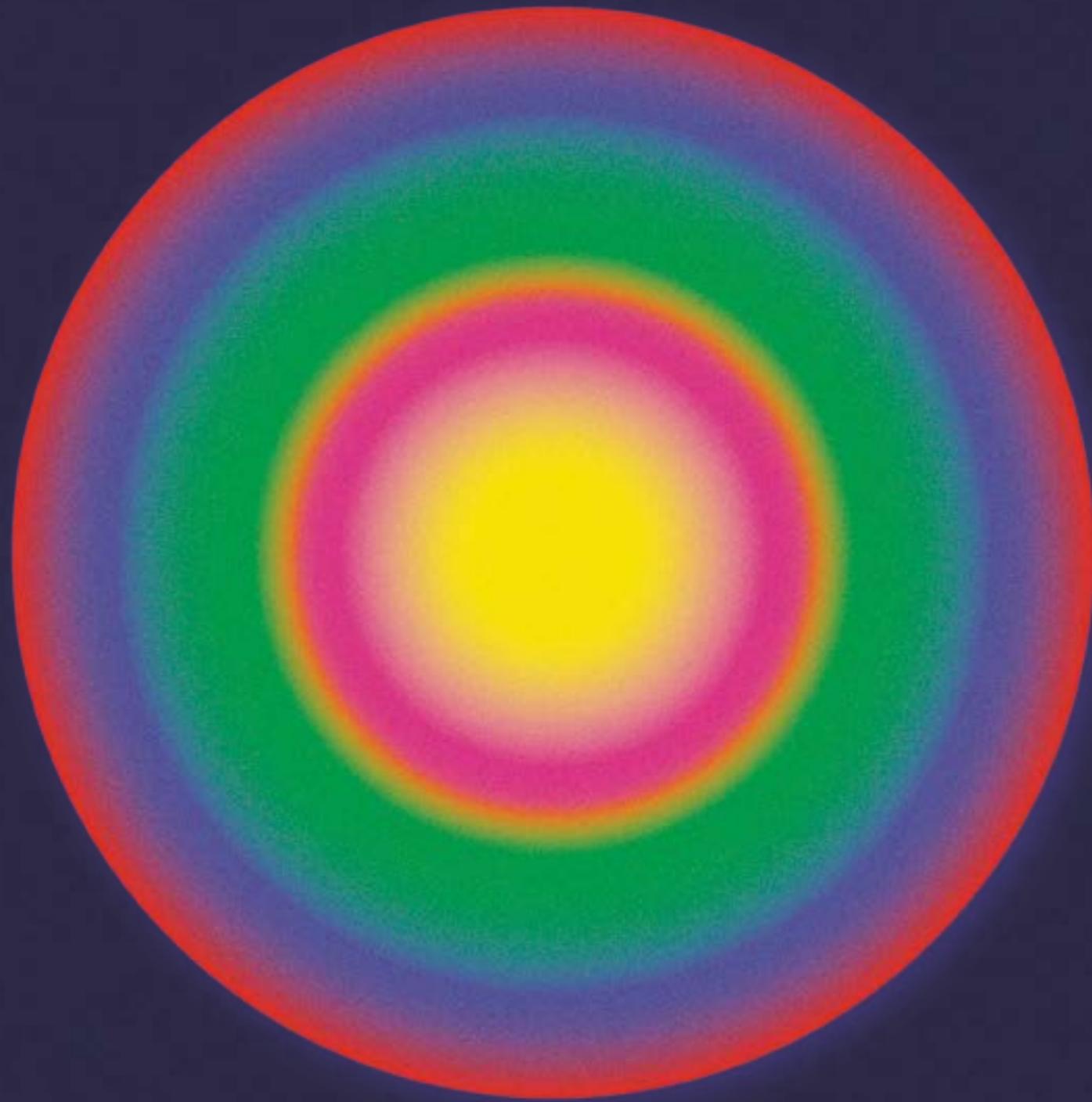
How we will work

The vision of the Royal College of Art that we are working towards will maintain at its heart the ethos and culture that has made us so successful to date – the institution is our talented community of staff, students, researchers, innovators and alumni. All of our work will be done in line with the RCA's values of Collaboration, Curiosity, Inclusion and Integrity.

The delivery of our ambitions will be enabled by:

- Creating dynamic new spaces to innovate, question and discover through our RCA Together programme and the move from three to two campuses.
- Harnessing technology to adapt to a fast-evolving world – in particular the emerging potential of AI.
- Prioritising long-term financial and organisational resilience to maintain academic excellence.
- Supporting the wellbeing and professional growth of both staff and students.

A number of supporting strategies will sit underneath this Plan, setting out more detailed action we will take in specific areas of our work. Delivery against these strategies and the Plan overall will be regularly reviewed by the RCA Executive Board and RCA Council.



RCA Ethos

Portals of transformation

Conceived as a portal, this work embodies the RCA's ethos of transformation and progression. Seven colours represent the College's three strategic pillars and four values, anchored in its institutional blue. Through the psychology and weight of colour, the composition generates an optical illusion of motion, reflecting both innovation and continuity. Referencing the RCA's position as home to the UK's largest colour library, the work frames colour as both language and ethos: emotional and intellectual, stable and dynamic.

As the eye moves, the work itself seems to shift, echoing the RCA's ethos as a place where change is constant and creativity always in motion. It is a rhythmic vision to be felt and embodied, inviting viewers not simply to look, but to step through – into the ethos of the RCA.

Developed by RCA alumna and Associate Lecturer Julia Mahrer (MA Visual Communication, 2019), supported by a cross-College group of staff and the RCA Students' Union.

“The RCA is not a place you enter, it is a portal you move through.”

Strategic Pillars

Strategic Pillar One

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

Our ambition

Our world-leading approach to critical thinking and creative making champions interdisciplinarity and collaboration – 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.



To achieve this, we will:

- Create new ways of thinking about pedagogical excellence in art and design.
- Deliver an academic portfolio and School structure designed for a changing world.
- Drive a strategic and integrated approach to world-leading research.
- Practice continuous innovation, embracing emerging technologies.

Examples of how we will work towards this in the next five years:

- Drive pedagogical excellence by developing pedagogical reflection structures and programmes that ensure we stay at the forefront of good practice – culminating in a biennial RCA Global Art and Design Summit.
- Launch a new Research and Innovation Strategy for 2026–30, bringing interdisciplinary researchers together across the College to build on our strengths, and focus on where we can make the most difference.
- Create two new College-wide Research Institutes focused on sustainability and regenerative practice, and the impacts of future technologies and convergence science; and new cross-College Research Groups and Labs.
- Conduct a review of our Schools to ensure our structure represents the changing nature of our disciplines.
- Curate and update our portfolio of taught postgraduate programmes to ensure they keep us at the cutting edge of our disciplines, technologies and practices, informed by the research of our teaching faculty.
- Explore adaptations for environments affected by climate change, through teaching, research and collaboration with industry.

- Review Technical Services provision to ensure a student-focused, academically integrated offer that embraces the opportunities of new technologies.

This work will be enabled by:

- Investing in the historic Darwin building to put creative energy back at the heart of our traditional Kensington home, and ensure world-leading facilities.
- Enhancing our research culture, including improving academic and research career development.
- Researching, innovating with and defining the role of AI and emerging technologies, both as a creative tool and as a practical tool to improve staff and student experience.
- Ensuring sustainability and regenerative practices are embedded in our programmes, as well as in our cross-programme and cross-School units.
- Creating resources and structures to support academic professional development.
- Expanding the range of research funders supporting the College's world-leading work, including scaling up business and philanthropic support.
- Building links between research, student learning and entrepreneurship to create more successful creative start-ups through an enhanced engagement programme.

Photos from top:

Drought Nursery at SeminAzioni in Lecce, Puglia from Rights to Seeds, Rights of Seeds, part of the CLIMAVORE x Jameel at RCA Monoculture Meltdown project.

RCA Robotics Lab.

Lecture at the RCA. Photo: Richard Haughton.

Textiles Circularity Centre. Photo: Chris Lee.

2

Strategic Pillar Two

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

Our ambition

A transformative and equitable space for free-thinking and collaboration, the RCA nurtures those with the most potential from all backgrounds. In active discussion with the world, our students, staff and researchers create a supportive community known as a world-leading place to study, work and explore.

On graduating, our students are welcomed into a global alumni community, building diverse networks and linking generations as they progress in their careers.

To achieve this, we will:

- Attract the broadest possible field of students and staff from across the UK and the world.
- Ensure a vibrant and inspiring student experience, equipping our students for post-study success.
- Make meaningful progress in creating a diverse, equitable and inclusive work and study environment.
- Create a connected community that supports outstanding work and professional growth.
- Strengthen connections with the RCA global alumni community.

Examples of how we will work towards this in the next five years:

- Launch a fundraising campaign to ensure that 80% of UK students with financial need can receive scholarship support and to increase scholarships available for international students.
- Implement a new Student Recruitment Strategy, creating a student body of approximately 2,600–2,800 of the UK and the world's best art and design students.
- Expand access to the RCA through Executive Education, Short Courses and opportunities for lifelong learning.
- Undertake a comprehensive review of the student journey and experience, delivering excellence and encouraging a sense of belonging, with an additional focus on enhanced career support and our students' contribution to the UK creative sector.
- Deliver a comprehensive People Strategy to enhance staff development and wellbeing, supported by a co-created Better Workplace Action Plan.



- Launch a refreshed Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Strategy which prioritises inclusive recruitment and practices, as well as delivery activity to achieve Disability Confident Level 3 and Race Equality Charter Bronze status.
- Launch a new global Alumni Strategy with additional investment in alumni support.

This work will be enabled by:

- Building the RCA Endowment to diversify revenues and provide sustainable support for future students.
- Consolidating the RCA across two campuses – creating new spaces for networking, exploration and community-wide events.
- Creating a new Virtual Learning Environment to improve digital student experience.
- Implementing new approaches to academic and professional services career progression.
- Improving staff workload pressures through a comprehensive review of processes aligned to the review of Schools and Technical Services provision.

Photo from top:

Fashion students at RCA2025.
Photo: Thomas Moen.

Wolfson Printmaking Hall. Photo: Richard Haughton.

Tyries Holder (Virgil Abloh Foundation Scholar) with Dame Zandra Rhodes on her visit to the Textiles studios.

3

Strategic Pillar Three

Convening transformational exchanges of art and design expertise and ideas.

Our ambition

The RCA's perspectives and relationships are global, with our history and heritage grounded in London.

We create mutual partnerships that benefit communities, boost the economy and advocate for the arts.

We champion the international exchange of thinking around art and design, creating cultural and societal value and addressing challenges and opportunities for people and planet.

To achieve this, we will:

- Create meaningful international partnerships to grow our global outlook and impact.
- Drive purposeful collaboration to boost the economy and benefit people and planet.
- Expand professional support for successful global art and design education, innovation and research.
- Be a positive local and global neighbour.

Examples of how we will work towards this in the next five years:

- Establish new international RCA “hubs” in support of wider objectives for recruitment, consultancy, revenue diversification, Knowledge Exchange, Executive Education, philanthropy and alumni support.
- Trial progression agreements with world-leading international education partners.
- Engage with the art, design and cultural professional worlds and communities, shaping the future of these sectors through high-quality knowledge exchange and integrated cross-College research approaches.
- Drive UK economic growth by enhancing support for creative start-up incubation through InnovationRCA and by supporting early stage start-ups through attracting additional investors to the RCA Design & Innovation S/EIS Fund.
- Deliver an annual programme of art and design education outreach – including the launch of the RCA Saturday Club and a Biennial Community Festival.
- Support local training and employment through paid interns and apprenticeships.

- Scale up capacity to share new practice in art and design education development and creative start-up implementation.
- Minimise the impact of our activities on the wider world through reducing the environmental impact of our buildings and operating model, working towards a zero carbon future.

This work will be enabled by:

- Rolling out a new Global Engagement Strategy.
- Establishing an RCA Consultancy Unit to support long-term financial sustainability.
- Embedding ethical guidelines for partnerships to ensure that our work is in line with our values.
- Supporting RCA staff with volunteering and community engagement.
- Opening up our campuses, and bringing the public in to experience student and academic work and events.
- Championing the positive impacts of our UK and international students.
- Celebrating the end of the RCA's time in White City together with the local community, and maintaining links with the area.

Photos from top:

Community Engagement Creative Bricks Workshop. Photo: Angus Main.

Notpla, an InnovationRCA Start-up.

Symposium, Research Biennale 2025. Photo: Chris Lee.





How we will know if we have been successful

By 2030, we will have taken major steps towards our vision of the RCA at 200, by:

- Maintaining our annual position in the QS Rankings as the world's number 1 art and design university.
- Attracting an annual student body of 2,600–2,800 students that is geographically, ethnically and socially diverse.
- Ensuring finance is not a barrier to postgraduate art and design study through:
 - Supporting 80% of UK students in financial need through scholarships and bursaries by 2030.
 - Growing externally funded scholarships for international students by 30% by 2030.
 - Increase the number of doctoral students supported by external funding by 10% by 2030.
- Increasing global engagement through:
 - The creation of three international RCA Hubs by 2030.
 - The trialling of two progression agreements with world-leading international education partners by 2030.
- Continuing to increase student satisfaction as monitored by PTES and PRES surveys.
- Increasing research quality, with the number of outputs scoring 3 and 4 stars in REF 2029 rising by 10%.
- 70% of staff recommending the RCA as a good place to work by 2030.

- Continuing to create an inclusive, equitable and welcoming work and study environment through the achievement of Bronze in the Advance HE Race Equality Charter and Disability Confident Level 3.
- Reducing core student fees as a proportion of our overall budget by 2030, through:
 - Increasing research funding.
 - Significantly increasing Knowledge Exchange, Executive Education and Consultancy funding.
 - Increasing philanthropic funding annually.
 - Supporting ongoing financial stability by growing our endowment.
- Supporting our alumni community by increasing the number of graduates reached through activities and events year-on-year.
- Supporting start-up success and the UK creative industries by increasing the proportion of InnovationRCA start-ups benefiting from the RCA's Design & Innovation S/EIS Fund by 2030.
- Completing the exit of White City, and the first phase of works at RCA Kensington by 2027.
- Broadening community engagement by increasing the number of people reached by RCA art and design activity by 20% by 2030.
- Improving our social and environmental footprint through increasing our People & Planet score by 10% by 2030.

Royal College of Art

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www.rca.ac.uk

The RCA is an exempt charity
and a body incorporated
by Royal Charter
Number RC000456.

Previous page photo:
Terra Carta Design Lab exhibition.
Photo: Chris Lee.

Photos right and back cover:
Richard Haughton.





Royal College of Art
Postgraduate Art & Design