Royal College of Art

Postgraduate Art and Design

Programme Specification

1.   General Information

Programme title:	Contemporary Art Practice
Award:	Masters
Qualification Framework level:	Level 7
School/Department or equivalent:	School of Arts and Humanities
Campus location(s):	Battersea
Total UK credits:	180
Date valid from/to:	2023-24

2.   Programme Philosophy

Contemporary Art Practice (CAP) at the Royal College of Art is a cutting-edge MA programme in the School of Arts & Humanities that is driven by a post-medium, critical approach to the making and reception of art, where theory and practice come together to form new ways of responding to the contemporary world. The programme supports the development of your art practice within a responsive, dialogical and critical context with an emphasis on wider political issues – interrogating art production in relation to urgent socio-political contexts as well as questioning and redefining practice.

CAP supports ambitious, exploratory and research driven artists, with programme specialisms in: critical, speculative and social art practices, moving image, performance, writing and techno-aesthetics. Our approach to Contemporary Art Practice is not determined by either technology or material, and CAP students create work using any media possible: from images, installations and moving image works, to publications and sonic art, participatory events, 3D modelling and VR, writing and performance. The programme offers a flexible environment that supports collective and peer-led learning.

The Contemporary Art Practice programme is profoundly attentive to the critical condition of our environment, humanity and the world around us and our students and graduates both contribute to and also expand the traditional roles assigned to artists to include modes of practice such as artist as activist, artist as publisher, artist as educator, artist as urban geographer and artist as community organiser. You are encouraged to situate your practice within the social, political and economic conditions of the contemporary world; identifying what art can contribute to ongoing material, critical, technological and philosophical debates.

The MA Contemporary Art Practice offers a discursive environment in which to explore contemporary issues for thinking about, making and presenting contemporary art supported by individual tutorials, group critiques, lectures, seminars and workshops that take place across the year. Each unit: *Situating Contemporary Art Practice*, *Demonstrating Contemporary Art Practice* and the *Contemporary Art Practice: Independent Research Project* is tailored to nurture the development of your art practice from the earliest manifestations of ideas through to platforms for exhibition and making-public, whilst also providing the skills required to be able to situate your practice within current dialogues and debates. Supported individual learning is complemented by generative workshops and collaborative events and exhibitions, with critical feedback offered throughout the degree from world-leading contemporary artists, writers and curators.

The MA Contemporary Art Practice is premised on an understanding that artists, makers, writers, curators, critics and historians today are concerned with the function, contribution and work of the artist and art's potential to reflect upon and intervene in the world. CAP research clusters, reading groups, collaborations, group critiques, generative workshops and seminars interconnect with one-to-one tutorials and technical support as well as the School- and College-wide teaching units to create an innovative, dynamic and responsive learning environment for new approaches to the thinking, making and exhibition of contemporary art.

3.   Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme aims

- You will be supported in the development of contemporary artworks through critical and conceptual frameworks.
- You will be provided with a learning environment which privileges experimentation and self-reflexivity in order to develop an ambitious and critical contemporary art practice.
- We will establish a dialogue between theory and practice and support you to develop a practice which negotiates received theories, engages with the ethical dimensions of working with others and demonstrates ways of understanding, articulating and shaping the future of contemporary art.
- You will be taught how to plan and produce artworks of high quality and significance both technically and conceptually.
- We will support and develop a self-reflective and critical understanding of professional practice within contemporary art.

What will I be expected to achieve?

Upon successful completion of the programme, you will be expected to meet the requirements of both the College-wide Learning Outcomes and your programme-specific Learning Outcomes.

College-Wide Learning Outcomes

You should be able to:

- Interrogate and articulate the intentions of your work in relation to the critical and conceptual context of your field(s) of study;
- Independently plan and produce work that is informed by developments at the forefront of your field(s) of study;
- Evaluate and critique the principles and methods of research in your field(s) of study, and apply these principles to your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice;
- Demonstrate originality in how you translate knowledge into practice;
- Communicate your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice to a non-specialist audience;
- Critically reflect on the likely public impact of your creative, professional and/or scholarly practice, and on your responsibilities as a practitioner;
- Define your professional ambitions and identify the challenges involved in meeting them.

Programme-Specific Learning Outcomes

You should be able to:

- Interrogate and articulate the intentions of your work in relation to the critical and conceptual context of contemporary art practice;
- Plan and produce work that is informed by contemporary art research and practice both independently and as a responsive member of the artistic and wider community;
- Position and develop your awareness of the core areas of your research and practice and how this is situated within and contributes to the wider field of contemporary art practice;
- Demonstrate originality, imagination and curiosity in how you build on existing strategies in your approach to art making;
- Clearly and appropriately communicate your practice in a variety of contexts demonstrating versatility and inclusivity with an awareness of the politics of knowledge production and discourse;
- Position and evaluate your professional identity, defining your relationship to contemporary art practice.

4.   What will I learn?

Curriculum Map

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Situating Contemporary Art Practice **(45 credits)**	**Urgency of the Arts (15 credits)**	**Independent Research Project (60 credits)**
	Demonstrating Contemporary Art Practice **(30 credits)**	

AcrossRCA (30 credits)	

Programme Structure

Unit Title	Term	Credit Value	Core or Elective?
Situating Contemporary Art Practice	1	45	Core
Demonstrating Contemporary Art Practice	2	30	Core
Independent Research Project	3	60	Core
Urgency of the Arts (School-Wide Unit)	2	15	Core
AcrossRCA (College-wide Unit)	1 & 2	30	Core

Situating Contemporary Art Practice

This introductory unit provides the practical and theoretical foundations of the programme. A series of programme lectures, technical and generative workshops and seminars, individual tutorials and group critiques will support you in artwork production and experimentation, helping you to position and situate your practice within contemporary dialogues and debates.

AcrossRCA

Across **terms 1 and 2**, you will participate in **AcrossRCA**. This unit aims to support you to meet the challenges of a complex, uncertain and changing world by bringing you together to work collaboratively in interdisciplinary teams on a series of themed projects informed by expertise within and beyond the College. These projects will challenge you to use your intellect and imagination to address key cultural, social, environmental and economic challenges. In doing so, you will develop and reflect on the abilities required to translate knowledge into action, and help demonstrate the contribution that the creative arts can make to our understanding and experience of the world.

Demonstrating Contemporary Art Practice

This unit engages with modes of making-public and with collaborative practices. You will have the opportunity to expand professional networks and engage with sites and contexts of art production and reception. You will be supported in your learning through individual and group tutorials, lectures, workshops and reading groups. You will also have the opportunity to collaborate with peers across all aspects of planning and exhibition of a series of public projects and events involving external partners and deliver a presentation of your work in the form of an artist talk.

Urgency of the Arts

In **term 2**, School of Arts and Humanities Masters' students will participate in a School-wide unit called "The Urgency of the Arts." In this unit we ask how arts and humanities research and practice can engage with our current socio-political climate, and how might it shape, be necessary and essential in contemporary cultural debates.

The unit introduces students to a diverse range of perspectives, approaches and methods relevant

to contemporary practice and thought in the arts and humanities. The delivery, predominantly based on workshops and featuring specialist presentations by leading artists, aims to assist students in recognizing, questioning, expanding, and reevaluating their own artistic practices and disciplinary assumptions. Through interactions with staff and students from across the School, as well as through a variety of methodological approaches, students will develop an understanding of the contemporary concerns that shape and influence artistic practice. Students will be supported in understanding the possibilities, complexities and impact of their own work. They will be encouraged to contextualise it within broad cultural landscapes to recognise and emphasise its potential and also the complex ways in which their work may be received and understood.

Independent Research Project
The 60credit Independent Research Project (IRP) is an opportunity to build a body of work that addresses the key ambitions of your research and practice. You will work towards presenting a work or works in the IRP Public Exhibition, which enables you to explore how you can activate your work in a public context, experiment with the most appropriate forms of realising your ideas and gain critical feedback. The IRP exhibition takes place mid-way through the unit and will be followed by a period of reflection and further development, which emphasises planning for continued practice and research post-graduation.

You will produce a final artwork for presentation in a public exhibition. You will be supported through individual and group tutorials and one-to-one technical support, alongside a series of programme specific and School-wide professional practice lectures and workshops, with critical feedback on your work via an external group of arts professionals.

5.   How will I learn?

Briefings
Briefing sessions presenting key information about teaching, learning, assessment and core programme activities are presented at the start of each CAP programme unit.

Lectures
The Contemporary Art Practice Lecture series features presentations from leading practitioners in the field.

Seminars and Workshops
Contemporary Art Practice seminars are designed to inform your practice, encourage collaborations and to support and enhance your professional practical skills.

Individual Tutorials
One-to-one tutorials offer opportunities for formative feedback throughout the duration of your studies. You will have a personal tutor assigned to monitor your progress and offer support and you will also have the opportunity to sign up for one-to-one tutorials with visiting lecturers, artists, critics and curators.

Group Tutorials and Critiques
Group tutorials and critiques offer peer-to-peer and tutor feedback on your work in progress, also developing your skills in articulating critical feedback and demonstrating good practice in the ethical considerations of dialogue with others.

Presentations
Presentations throughout the degree are designed to develop skills in articulating and evaluating your work with feedback from tutors, peers and visiting lecturers.

Exhibitions and Events
Opportunities for making-public and experimenting with work-in-progress across a number of platforms are offered throughout the MA and in the final unit you will take part in a group exhibition.

Self-Assessment
You will be supported in developing your skills in self-reflexivity throughout your studies, helping you to consider your own performance according to the programme learning outcomes and to develop your professional practice skills.

Viva Voce Examination
The Viva Voce Examinations take place during the final unit and allow for a platform to contextualise, evaluate and communicate your work presented for the Independent Research Project.

Technical and Studio Orientation and Inductions
IT, Library and Technical Services welcome inductions and studio orientations take place at the beginning of the academic year.

Technical Workshops
Opportunities for self-selected technical workshops for support on specific projects or a self-selected masterclass focusing on a particular process or skill take place during units 1 and 2.

Negotiated Technical Learning
Appointments for one-to-one or small group instruction to support a specific piece of work are scheduled throughout each unit.

6.   Assessment and feedback

Regulations
Regulations for assessment and progression can be found here. Please note that College regulations are subject to annual updates and amendments.
Unit assessment

Situating Contemporary Art Practice

Formative assessment takes place in the form of 1:1 and peer-to-peer feedback throughout the programme series of personal tutorials, group seminars, workshops and critiques that support student development in unit 1. Students submit a Self-Assessment Report that contextualises their practice and evaluates progress and receive feedback on the report, along with performance indicators assessed according to the learning outcomes of the unit.

Demonstrating Contemporary Art Practice

Formative assessment takes place in the form of 1:1 and peer-to-peer feedback throughout the programme series of personal tutorials, group seminars, workshops and critiques that continue to support student development throughout unit 2. Summative assessment includes presentations of work with feedback from tutors, peers and leading professionals within the field of contemporary art practice.

Independent Research Project

Formative assessment during the IRP takes place in the form of 1:1 and peer-to-peer feedback delivered through individual and group tutorials. Summative assessment takes the form assessment of the work presented for the public exhibition and an accompanying viva voce examination. Students will present their work in the form of an oral presentation that is accompanied by a Portfolio of Research and Practice that contextualises, evaluates and effectively communicates the Independent Research Project.

7.   What award can I get?

To be awarded an RCA MA degree you need to gain 180 credits at level 7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). This will involve successfully completing all units.

If you fail a unit at the first attempt, you will be offered an opportunity to resit the unit. If you are successful at resit you will be awarded the credits for that unit. If you are unsuccessful, you cannot progress further in your programme.

Exit awards:
If you have gained at least 120 credits at level 7 of the FHEQ, you may be eligible for the exit award of Postgraduate Diploma. An exit award is a final award from the College and cannot be rescinded.

For more detailed information about the College's assessment, progression and awards policies see the Regulations.

8.   Admissions

Cross-College requirements

Academic Entry Requirements

Candidates must normally have obtained a good relevant undergraduate degree or an equivalent qualification. The College recognises as an equivalent qualification any degree, diploma, certificate or other evidence of formal qualification awarded by a university or other higher education establishment where the award is made following the successful completion of a programme of at least three years' study, the programme of study being open, as a general rule, only to persons holding a certificate awarded on the successful completion of a full programme of upper secondary education.

Other qualifications may be approved, providing that the College's Academic Board for Concessions and Discipline (ABCD) is satisfied that the applicant has the ability to pursue the programme of study successfully. The ABCD is empowered to make judgements about the extent to which qualifications or experience gained elsewhere may be accepted in partial fulfilment of its requirements.

Portfolio

All applicants are required to submit a portfolio as part of the application process. A portfolio is a showcase of an applicant's work as an artist or designer and can be made up of images, videos or writing examples. The portfolio helps us to better understand the applicant and allows them to show evidence of their ability and motivation to undertake a given programme.

Each programme is looking for different things in a portfolio; each Head of Programme provides specific advice on portfolio requirements in the online application system. We advise prospective students to consider these requirements carefully before submitting their application.

Applicant Qualities

Generally, we are looking for applicants to demonstrate their:

- creativity, imagination and innovation;

- ability to articulate the intentions of the work;

- intellectual engagement in areas relevant to the work;

- technical skills appropriate to the work;

- potential to benefit from the programme and achieve MA standards overall.

English Language

Applicants who are not a national of a majority English-speaking country will need to demonstrate their English language proficiency. The College accepts a range of English language qualifications. The full list can be seen at https://www.rca.ac.uk/studying-at-the-rca/apply/entrance-requirements/english-language-requirements/

Applicants are exempt from this requirement if they have received a 2.1 degree or above from a university in a majority English-speaking nation within the last two years.

If a student would need a Student Visa visa to study at the RCA, they will also need to meet the Home Office's minimum requirements for entry clearance.

Admission Process
Applications must be made directly to the College through our online application portal:
https://www.rca.ac.uk/studying-at-the-rca/apply/application-process/ma-application-process/

Upon completion of that first stage of the application process, candidates will be invited to submit a portfolio of their work, a 300-word statement of intent and a video communicating clearly their motivations, personal interests and why they are pursuing a Masters degree at the Royal College of Art. These materials are reviewed by members of the programme team who will communicate an academic decision to the College Registry, who manage the process of offer-making in line with the College's recruitment targets. In some cases, where the programme team is not able to make an admission decision based solely upon the work submitted by the applicant, we may invite the candidate to undertake an interview with us.

Whilst there are still spaces available, successful candidates will be made an offer of a place. If there is no vacancy for a subsequent successful applicant, the candidate will be placed on a waiting list, and may be made a firm offer should a place become available.

Programme-Specific requirements

Specific advice on programme portfolio requirements is provided by the Head of Programme in the online application system. Please consult the College website for further information on programme-specific admission and portfolio requirements:
https://www.rca.ac.uk/study/programme-finder/contemporary-art-practice-ma/#requirements