



# Royal College of Art

Postgraduate Art & Design

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AT THE RCA

### Staff and Student Engagement Strategy



The solar panels and green roof at RCA Battersea, credit: RCA / Richard Haughton

## VISION STATEMENT

We have a responsibility, through the RCA's influence and activities, to ensure that we limit our draw on resources and have a positive impact on nature, people and the planet wherever possible in order to achieve net zero by 2035.

Through teaching, research, knowledge exchange and innovation, we will make global contributions to sustainability, climate change and the circular economy, which will be reflected in our own operational behaviours and decisions.

We are committed to guiding and supporting every member of our community so that they can contribute to the collective task of tackling the climate and biodiversity emergencies. We recognise that changes in individual practices must be accompanied by structural, institutional change.

## INTRODUCTION

The values of the RCA are Integrity, Inclusion, Collaboration and Curiosity.



These values provide a framework for the way we work and operate together to deliver our vision and strategy. We believe that these attributes and values will help shape our strategic choices, our activities and our culture.

We believe that engagement with art, design and creative skills can drive the solutions society needs, across all activities and sectors of the economy, to address its most urgent challenges in the crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. This approach underpins large parts of the structure and content of the teaching and research that happens at the RCA.

Meanwhile, the RCA recognises its responsibilities to reduce the environmental impact of its activities, and constantly improve its sustainability performance. As an organisation, we contribute to global challenges of sustainability and climate change through our behaviour and activities and via the work of our staff, students, researchers, alumni and innovation start ups.

As an organisation, we contribute to solving the global challenge of climate change through our academic mission: the work of our research department through projects including the EPSRC-funded Ecological Citizen[s] and CLIMAVORE x Jameel at the RCA, the curriculum content within our taught Master's programmes, which include an MA in Environmental Architecture, the whole-College multidisciplinary initiative AcrossRCA, the Grand Challenge within the School of Design focusing on themes such as microplastics in the oceans and design resilience; as well as the nature and number of sustainability-focused start-up companies within the RCA's in-house incubator, InnovationRCA.

At an operational level, the institution has committed to achieving net zero by 2035 and is actively working towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving our environmental impact.

Our ambitions are to educate, inform, empower and inspire our community and, by extension, wider society in focusing intellectual curiosity, innovation and design on tackling the present and future challenges relating to the climate and biodiversity crises.

# SECTIONS

## Governance

The Environmental Sustainability Committee meets quarterly and oversees the environmental performance of the College. It oversees the development and implementation of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy.

Governance of the Environmental Sustainability Committee is enabled through reporting to the Senior Management Team, with oversight from the Planning and Resources Committee, Senate and RCA Council.

The work of the Environmental Sustainability Committee is enabled by the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group, which meets bi-monthly.

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## Communication

Communications designed to engage staff and students with environmental sustainability at the College is delivered in a variety of ways. A cross-College team focused on this communications workstream meets every two weeks. The methods of engagement are supported by results of the Annual Sustainability Survey - the latest edition of which was delivered at the end of 2024.

The results of the survey showed staff and students preferred to receive communications about environmental sustainability through the following methods:

### Staff Newsletters

The weekly staff newsletters regularly feature stories and updates relating to the College's environmental sustainability, relevant events and opportunities, and energy performance data. These newsletters have a very high engagement rate and are a popular way for staff to expand their knowledge of activities happening across the College.

### RCA Intranet

The RCA intranet features a dedicated Sustainability Hub which includes the latest Environmental Sustainability news from across the College as well as publishing regularly updated environmental data and energy performance details.

### All Staff Meetings

The Environmental Sustainability Manager gives regular presentations at All Staff Meetings, involving engaging anecdotal updates and analysis of energy performance data.

## Student Newsletters

The weekly student newsletters regularly feature stories and updates relating to the College's environmental sustainability, relevant academic and extra-curricular opportunities, and energy performance data.

## Initiatives and Events

A range of initiatives and events happening across the College's campuses helps to share knowledge and engage the RCA community with opportunities to collaborate and support environmental sustainability. Examples of initiatives and events are included below, within this strategy.

## Social Media

Feedback has indicated that students, in particular, find the RCA's social media channels a useful tool for engagement with the College's environmental sustainability activities.

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# Informal Engagement, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange

## Annual Sustainability Surveys

In late 2024, staff were invited to complete the RCA's annual sustainability survey for the second year running.

The survey included a range of Likert, multiple choice and open text questions, and covered two main topics: general sustainability and learning & development. Our aim is to ask the general sustainability questions every year to monitor changes in perception and opinions over time.

In March 2025, students were invited to participate in the student edition of the annual survey. Students were asked four general questions around sustainability at the College.

The findings of the 2024/25 survey enable us to understand priorities, ensure our actions and activities are aligned to staff and student expectations, and additionally to develop an understanding of training needs for staff.

## Community Engagement projects and visits

The Royal College of Art's [Community Engagement strategy](#) acknowledges how, as a research-led university, engagement is at the heart of all the College's academic activities – from funded research projects to individual staff and student research, knowledge exchange and local engagement with schools, neighbours, community groups and organisations.

It is the College's ambition that its engagement projects are beneficial to all those involved, acknowledging a two-way process of engagement and sharing of knowledge.

The RCA believes in the value of creativity and innovation by, with and for everyone. Through its Community Engagement work, the RCA offers events and exhibitions, outreach with schools and young people, business partnerships and knowledge exchange.

We are members of a number of external networks and groups including:

- **South Ken ZEN+:** we are working with our neighbouring cultural institutions as part of South Kensington Zero Emissions (ZE) Nature Positive (N+) to advance collaboratively on four key themes: Zero emissions, nature positive, circular economy and sustainable travel. Recent activities the RCA has participated in include developing a neighbourhood emissions baseline and a shared Supply Chain Charter.
- **EAUC:** The Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education is a member-led organisation of further and higher education institutions. EAUC supports members to share best practices and experiences through events, communities of practice and an annual conference; the RCA regularly participates in these activities.
- **London Higher Sustainability Network:** the network aims to share best practice across the higher education sector with regards to environmental sustainability. The RCA participates in the termly meetings, online and in institutions across London.

## InnovationRCA start-ups with climate change and sustainability at their core

InnovationRCA is the Royal College of Art's centre for entrepreneurship and commercialisation, providing incubation, IP and business support. InnovationRCA helps staff, students and alumni transform compelling ideas into successful businesses. In its lifetime, InnovationRCA has launched 84 start-ups, creating over 850 UK jobs. 35% of founders have been from ethnic minority backgrounds and over the last 5 years, 52% of founders have been female.

Through a focus on combining art and design with tech and innovation, a number of InnovationRCA's start-ups have been tackling issues associated with environmental sustainability and the broader categories aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

These start-ups include:

- **Aerseeds:** improve soil and support reforestation through aerodynamic nutrient and seed pods made from food waste
- **AMPHICO:** fully sustainable and recyclable alternatives to current waterproof fabrics for the outerwear market
- **Ananas Anam:** a sustainable leather alternative using natural fibres extracted from the waste leaves of pineapple plants
- **BlueNose:** developing a solution designed to significantly reduce the fuel consumption of container ships through the use of aerodynamics improvements retrofitted on board of container ships
- **BuffaloGrid:** solar powered hub for rural off-grid African towns that would otherwise be without power for decades
- **Episod Studio:** developing Race for the Arctic, a videogame using digital storytelling to explore the future of the Arctic

- **Orbital Bloom:** using data-driven artwork to catalyse the transformation of buildings into sustainable ecosystems
- **PulpaTronics:** developing a more sustainable and cost-effective alternative to single-use radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags for inventory solutions that reduce environmental impact.
- **Pyri:** a patent-pending bio-inspired and bio-based early wildfire detection system for remote and low-cost coverage.
- **The Tyre Collective:** reducing pollution from tyre wear by capturing particulars at source
- **ZELP (Zero Emissions Livestock Project):** a methane-reduction device and certification system that aims to reduce the environmental impact of methane emissions caused by the livestock industry.

## RCA Staff awards

The annual RCA Staff Awards recognise the contribution and achievements of our academic, research, technical, professional services, estates and support staff, at every level. These awards are designed to not only celebrate the hard work that goes on across the RCA but also to give colleagues a unique opportunity to thank and acknowledge their peers, by nominating them for an award.

The Environmental Sustainability Champion award is given to a person who embodies environmental sustainability within their work and/or has led an initiative to improve environmental sustainability in the College. This award provides an opportunity to recognise the important impact of dedicated and collaborative practice in the environmental sustainability space beyond the College's formal Environmental Sustainability workstream.

## Green Futures Group

The Green Futures Group is an informal cross-union collective, established in 2022 by RCA academic staff to gather information and swap ideas on environmental sustainability throughout the RCA community. In the face of the climate crisis, it has become imperative to make profound changes to how we conduct our working practices, and so the group welcomes input from everyone: students, academic staff, union representatives, facilities and administration staff, estates and campus operations managers, external contractors, technicians, members of the RCA Senior Management Team, and local organisations.

The group meets several times a term and is constantly collecting and passing on information, identifying problems, canvassing for solutions and connecting people working towards the same goal across the RCA community. Green Futures Group members are also part of the RCA's Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group and members of the Environmental Sustainability Committee, working with the operations and communications teams on a coherent strategy that is inclusive and positively productive within the community.

There is also a rolling programme of Green Futures events and projects which promote awareness and good practice among students and staff, including technical and academic



staff forums, a termly repair café run by student and staff volunteers and an annual Ecolleegy! Festival, with workshops and stalls focussed on practical skills that support an equitable transition to a decarbonised and sustainable society.

## Teaching, Research and Academic Engagement

### AcrossRCA, with one of the four themes set on Climate Change

[AcrossRCA](#) is an ambitious, interdisciplinary, College-wide unit that brings together students from all RCA MAs, as well as being an elective option on other taught programmes. Situated at the very core of the RCA experience, AcrossRCA draws on expertise from within and beyond the institution, providing a unique added dimension to discipline-specific study.

Working in collaborative teams spanning the four RCA Schools encourages a peer-focused cross-fertilisation of ideas and thinking beyond the discourses in art, architecture, communication and design. Students are encouraged to develop an innovative and disruptive approach, critically reflecting on their responsibilities as creative practitioners, and demonstrating the contribution that the creative arts can make to our understanding and experience of the world.

In their teams, students will respond to one of a number of urgent contemporary themes. Each of these supports students to respond to the complexity of an uncertain, changing world. They identify their own set of critical questions that arise from their proposed inquiry, and develop the process and skills needed to participate, respond and realise project outcomes.

The subject matter, response and outcome are entirely decided by the student teams, shaped by peer feedback with tutor support. AcrossRCA is an open, ambiguous, and challenging unit without prescribed subject matter or briefs. It allows students to form friendships and networks outside of their programmes, forging relationships that span and allow them to thrive beyond graduation.

At its conclusion, students are required to disseminate project ideas and processes on [a public platform](#) for others to learn from them.

One ongoing area of focus since the launch of AcrossRCA in 2023 is the [Climate Crisis](#).

AcrossRCA is a compulsory unit for all MA programmes and an elective option for MFA, MRes, MDes, MArch and MEd programmes. It is delivered online and in person.

### Curriculum content for Master's courses

Environmental sustainability is a core component of the College's Strategic Plan 2022-27. The RCA aims to make global contributions to sustainability, climate change and the circular economy through research, knowledge exchange and the circular economy.



In addition to AcrossRCA, many of the programmes at the College have a specific focus on sustainable development, including:

- MA Environmental Architecture: a 1 year design-led and field-focused course that emphasises a transdisciplinary approach to design research, bringing together architectural and ethnographic research methods.
- MArch Design Practice: a 1 year programme that supports architects, designers, and spatial practitioners' creative and critical engagement with the design of the built environment, with climate as a central focus
- MA/MSc Innovation Design Engineering: a double Master's programme run jointly between the RCA and Imperial College London that promotes innovation through synergy between creativity, science and technology to create value for society.
- MDes Design Futures: a 1 year programme which explores how design futures can address complex social and environmental challenges, through strong research methodologies and a transdisciplinary approach.

## Textiles Circularity Centre

The [Textiles Circularity Centre](#) (TCC) proposes materials security for the UK by circularising resource flows of textiles. It is led by the team from the RCA's Materials Science Research Centre.

The Textiles Circularity Centre envisions a future where bio waste is used to manufacture textiles to build a UK supply chain of circular biomaterials for the SME apparel-fashion industry; where cooperation replaces competition between brands who differentiate themselves using advanced manufacturing; where citizens are no longer consumers, but custodians.

This will stimulate innovation and economic growth in the UK textile manufacturing, SME apparel and creative technology sectors, whilst reducing reliance on imported and environmentally and ethically impactful materials, and diversifying supply chains. The TCC is providing underpinning research understanding to enable the transition to a more circular economy that supports the brand 'designed and made in the UK'. To enact this vision, it is catalysing growth in the fashion and textiles sector by supporting the SME fashion-apparel community with innovations in materials and product manufacturing, supply chain design, and consumer experiences.

Led by the RCA's Professor Sharon Baurley, with Professor Phil Purnell (University of Leeds) as co-director, and working in collaboration with Cranfield University, University of Cambridge, University College London, University of Manchester and University of York, the Textiles Circularity Centre supports better social, economic and environmental outcomes – working also with a wide range of partners from industry, the NGO sector, and the public sector, including Wandsworth Borough Council, ReLondon, UKFT, WRAP and Idea amongst many others.

The TCC is a four year award of £5.4m; one of five circular economy centres funded by the UK Research and Innovation ([UKRI](#)) National Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Centres Research programme, and coordinated by the [Circular Economy Hub](#).

## Terra Carta Design Lab

The Royal College of Art partnered for a second time with the Sustainable Markets Initiative's Terra Carta Design Lab, to discover student led, high impact solutions to the climate crisis - following on from the global success of the 2022 edition.

The Sustainable Markets Initiative invited students and recent alumni (who had graduated in the previous five years) from the RCA and three other prestigious international design schools to address the devastating damage being done to our planet and create breakthrough solutions for Nature, People and Planet, inspired by its guiding mandate - the Terra Carta.

His Majesty King Charles III, in his former role as HRH The Prince of Wales, and Sir Jony Ive launched the Terra Carta Design Lab in 2021, in partnership with the Royal College of Art. The recent Design Lab expanded its reach to also partner with Dubai Institute of Design and Innovation (UAE), National Institute of Design (India) and Rhode Island School of Design (USA).

The Terra Carta Design Lab harnessed the expertise of the RCA and the other three universities, with the power of the Sustainable Markets Initiative's network of private sector supporters to bring to light innovative, scalable solutions, highlighting the urgent need to focus on the creative collaboration between art, science, design, and engineering. More detail about the second Terra Carta Design Lab can be found in the case study below.

## Major Academic Research Projects

[Ecological Citizen\(s\)](#) is a 4 year Network+ based at the RCA in collaboration with University of York's Stockholm Environment Institute and Wrexham University. Its mission is to catalyse Ecological Citizenship for positive climate action. Funding is currently being distributed through the network to develop Ecological Citizenship projects across the UK.

As an ever growing research network, Ecological Citizen(s) mobilises diverse groups of people to make impactful change through accessible technology and community-focused approaches – including citizen science, activism, collective learning, advocacy, design strategies, creative arts, manufacturing, environmental science and engineering practices. As a pro-active collaborative community, the network has the potential to cover a wide range of pressing topics from biomaterials and wildlife corridors to local manufacturing and repair, and will draw on expertise from across the RCA, as well as other academic, business and civil society partners.

Expanding the work of CLIMAVORE on food systems in the climate crisis, [CLIMAVORE x Jameel at the Royal College of Art](#) is a research initiative that reimagines foodways for drylands and wetlands. A partnership between CLIMAVORE and Community Jameel at the RCA, it advances ecological networks to produce new knowledge and action towards spatial justice. Based in the School of Architecture, the three-year partnership has two focused research projects, Water Buffalo Commons and Monoculture Meltdown, which are

complemented by two research grants - the Food Action Awards - given to researchers to develop CLIMAVORE projects worldwide.

Aligning with the RCA's [New Economic Models for the Ocean \(NEMO\)](#) project, the College has been named a [UN Ocean Decade Implementing Partner](#), working on three Ocean Decade Challenges:

- Protect and restore ecosystems and biodiversity
- Develop a sustainable and equitable ocean economy
- Change humanity's relationship with the ocean

Using its strong links to the scientific community and expertise in design, participatory science, and stakeholder engagement, the RCA will generate measurable, sustainable and human-centred impact on the health of the ocean.

Running for three years from April 2025, **Circular Robot 5.0: Industry-Wide Data-Driven Circular Economy of Industrial Robots**, is funded with £1.8m awarded by UKRI's [Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council \(EPSRC\)](#). The Circular Robot 5.0 project is focused around leveraging AI-driven predictive maintenance, tamper-proof blockchain traceability, robust life-cycle assessments and more, in order to extend the operational lifespan of industrial robots, while enabling end-of-life remanufacturing and recycling of critical raw materials. In doing this, the project hopes to lay the groundwork for a truly circular economy in industrial robotics.

## Sustainability Statements of Intent

A Sustainability Statement of Intent (SSI) is a working manifesto to be discussed and contributed to by technicians, teaching staff and students. The aim is to clarify what sustainability means in the particular practical context of a given programme or medium, acknowledging the responsibility of academics, technicians and students to support and pursue sustainable practices, and to approach each programme's materials, processes and production with a critical understanding of their impact on climate and biodiversity. SSIs are a component currently used within the RCA's School of Arts and Humanities.

## The RCA Grand Challenge

Established in 2016, the RCA Grand Challenge is an interdisciplinary event that runs each year across the entire School of Design, bringing together over 500 students to tackle key global challenges through collaboration.

The Grand Challenge gives postgraduate designers the opportunity to work together across a range of disciplines – including Design Products, Fashion, Innovation Design Engineering, Intelligent Mobility, Service Design and Textiles – as well as with leading industry partners, such as Logitech and CERN.

For the 2024/25 Grand Challenge, themed around Design Resilience, students explored all 32 London boroughs to present distinctly resilient and robust design solutions to the most pressing socio-economic and ecological challenges facing local communities and stakeholders.

Find out more about the winning designs on the dedicated news page: [The Grand Challenge 2024/25: Design Resilience](#).

## Staff Development

In 2024, the RCA ran a series of events, called *Dialogue*, which was designed to share good practice in teaching and learning, student experience, research, and knowledge exchange. One session included

As a next step in our Staff Development journey, we are using the findings from the Annual Sustainability Survey to identify training needs and establish a sustainability training plan for staff at the RCA.

## Staff Sustainability Network and Lunch & Learns

The RCA has a Staff Sustainability Network which is open to all staff to join. Termly Sustainability Lunch & Learns are organised for the Network. Sustainability Lunch & Learn is a series of informal talks on the topic of sustainability at the RCA - from operations to teaching to research.

In 2024/25, topics have covered:

- Ecological Citizen[s]
- AI-Fixer
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy
- CLIMAVORE x Jameel
- Growing Colour Garden

## Student Engagement

### SustainLab

SustainLab is a society of the Royal College of Art Students' Union.

SustainLab is a collaborative and cross-disciplinary platform for all RCA students to engage with, in exploring what sustainability is and how it can be embedded as part of their creative practice. It is a forum for ideas to be investigated, challenged, and shared with the intention of facilitating experimentation and knowledge-building with our creative practices.

SustainLab organises talks, open-crits, workshops and conversations for students to develop their knowledge of sustainability and how to incorporate it into their creative processes. Some of these events are also open to the public.

SustainLab was founded in September 2017 by RCA students, with the intention of supporting and inspiring the work of fellow students who have an interest in sustainability.

SustainLab hosts regular exhibitions, showcasing the work of its members.

## Environmental Sustainability Student Network

In 2023, the RCA Students' Union launched the Environmental Sustainability Student Network in partnership with the Environmental Sustainability team, aiming to empower the student body to champion environmental sustainability on campus and beyond. The SU and Environmental Sustainability team share regular updates on events and activities with the Network.

## Annual SU Green Week

The RCA Students' Union organises an annual Green Week, with events across all three campuses celebrating the role that art and design universities like the RCA can play in addressing the climate emergency. The events vary each year, and 2024's edition included:

- Pollination FreeBee - a pop-up in celebration of World Bee Day in which participants were invited to grow their own plants providing a welcoming habitat for bees.
- Urban Foraging and Mapping the Anthropocene Workshop - an exploration of Hyde Park discovering edible plants, observing urban wildlife, and learning how to recognise and address the impacts of human activity on our daily city life and natural surroundings.
- Hand me Down day - a sustainable clothes swap event inviting the RCA community to discover the joy of upcycling clothes and jewellery, reducing waste and giving new life to pre-loved pieces.

## SU Newsletter

The weekly RCA Students' Union newsletter frequently features a Sustainability segment, to share details of materials exchanges, clothes swaps, sustainability initiatives, events and other activities across the student body.

It also includes details of academic and non-academic opportunities relating to sustainability, and encourages students to take part in the annual Student Sustainability Survey to support the RCA's data collection around its environmental impact and College-wide priorities.

## Student Induction presentations

Sustainability forms a crucial element of students' induction to life at the RCA. Students are invited to learn more about sustainability at the College, including the Environmental Policy, before arrival on the [FAQ page](#). A more detailed induction takes place during Welcome Week delivered by the Environmental Sustainability team, which is publicised to incoming students over the summer.



## Case Studies

### Materials Exchange and Technical Services Materials Showcase

It's the nature of art and design to create and iterate, but there are ways to limit our use of precious natural resources. The RCA has been trialling Materials Exchange pop-ups to try to save materials from the bin and give them a second life. Students are encouraged to bring along any materials they no longer need and discover new items to use in their practice. Items exchanged range from paper and card, to fabric and even a projector screen.



A snapshot of the items available at the Materials Exchange

In March 2024, we combined the Materials Exchange with Sustainable Showcase from Technical Services. Our passionate and knowledgeable technicians ran a showcase of sustainable materials and processes. Our technicians are a font of knowledge when it comes to how to make your practice more sustainable - from alternatives to MDF to natural dying.

Based on these pilots, the Sustainable Showcase has now been built into the delivery of multiple programmes, while a permanent Reuse Station has been established at RCA Kensington.

### SustainLab Annual Exhibition

SustainLab hosts an annual exhibition of work by its members, focusing on environmental sustainability. *Ancestral Utopias* is the 2025 edition of the society's annual exhibition, taking place between 29 April and 1 May 2025 in the Battersea campus.

In *Ancestral Utopias*, 39 current RCA students from across programmes unite in an interdisciplinary, interactive ceremonial display spanning digital media, installation, sculpture, painting, bio-lab and cultural developments, jewellery, print, ceramics, participatory performance, and sound.

Reimagining sustainability through the lens of ancestral intelligence, the exhibition asks: *What have we forgotten? What must be brought to the surface? What might healed kinship with the land look, feel, taste, smell and sound like?*

This collective enquiry reminds and reveals the intergenerational knowledge systems to confront the enduring legacies of ecological slow violence. Through indigenous ties, ancestral wisdom and rituals of care and reciprocity, artists resurrect disembodied knowledge of the past, offering a chance for transformation that is built with future generations in mind.

In a moment when fast solutions often eclipse relational ones, *Ancestral Utopias* proposes slowness not as a delay, but as a method, an intentional, reverent pace for imagining the futures we inherit and create.



SustainLab's 2023 Annual Exhibition, *Legacy*, at RCA Kensington.

## Terra Carta Design Lab 2023 / 2024

His Majesty King Charles III, in his former role as HRH The Prince of Wales, and Sir Jony Ive launched the Terra Carta Design Lab in 2021, in partnership with the Royal College of Art.





The winning teams of the inaugural Terra Carta Design Lab

The four winners of the 2022 Terra Carta Design Lab - Aerseeds, Amphico, The Tyre Collective and ZELP - have already raised £18 million in investments and grants to date and have been supported by the RCA's centre for entrepreneurship and incubation, InnovationRCA. In addition, projects from the 20-strong shortlist have gone on to make impact: most notably Notpla, packaging made from seaweed, winning the prestigious £1m Earthshot Prize in December 2022.

For 2023/24, the Sustainable Markets Initiative's [Terra Carta Design Lab](#) returned for a second time, with the Royal College of Art participating again, alongside three other higher education institutions from around the globe to contribute innovative design solutions to the climate crisis.



Terra Carta Design Lab exhibition showcasing 10 RCA finalists at RCA Battersea, September 2024

In December 2024, eight global winners from the RCA, Rhode Island School of Design (USA), Dubai Institute of Design and Innovation (UAE) and National Institute of Design (India), were selected by the judges to receive £100,000 to scale their projects and take them to market. The RCA's two winning projects were **Pyri** - an innovative solution to managing the ongoing increase in wildfires that are destroying ecosystems, harming human health and releasing emissions that exacerbate climate change, in a compounding cycle. It features a low-cost wildfire detection system designed with remote and vulnerable communities in mind - and **BlueNose** - developing a solution designed to reduce fuel consumption of containerships by up to 5% through the use of aerodynamic improvements retrofitted on board. The shape of these aerodynamic structures are found through the use of iterative processing algorithms.

In early March 2025, the Sustainable Markets Initiative hosted the Terra Carta Roundtables and Exhibition at Hampton Court Palace. RCA faculty member Nick de Leon led a 90 minute plenary session to present some of the Terra Carta Design Lab projects from 2022 and 2024. This was accompanied by an exhibition of Terra Carta Design Lab projects, including 2024 winners BlueNose and Pyri, as well as 2022 finalists Notpla and Shellworks. The exhibiting companies had the opportunity to meet delegates from the SMI's global network, as well as His Majesty The King who visited the exhibition and spoke with the teams about their innovations.

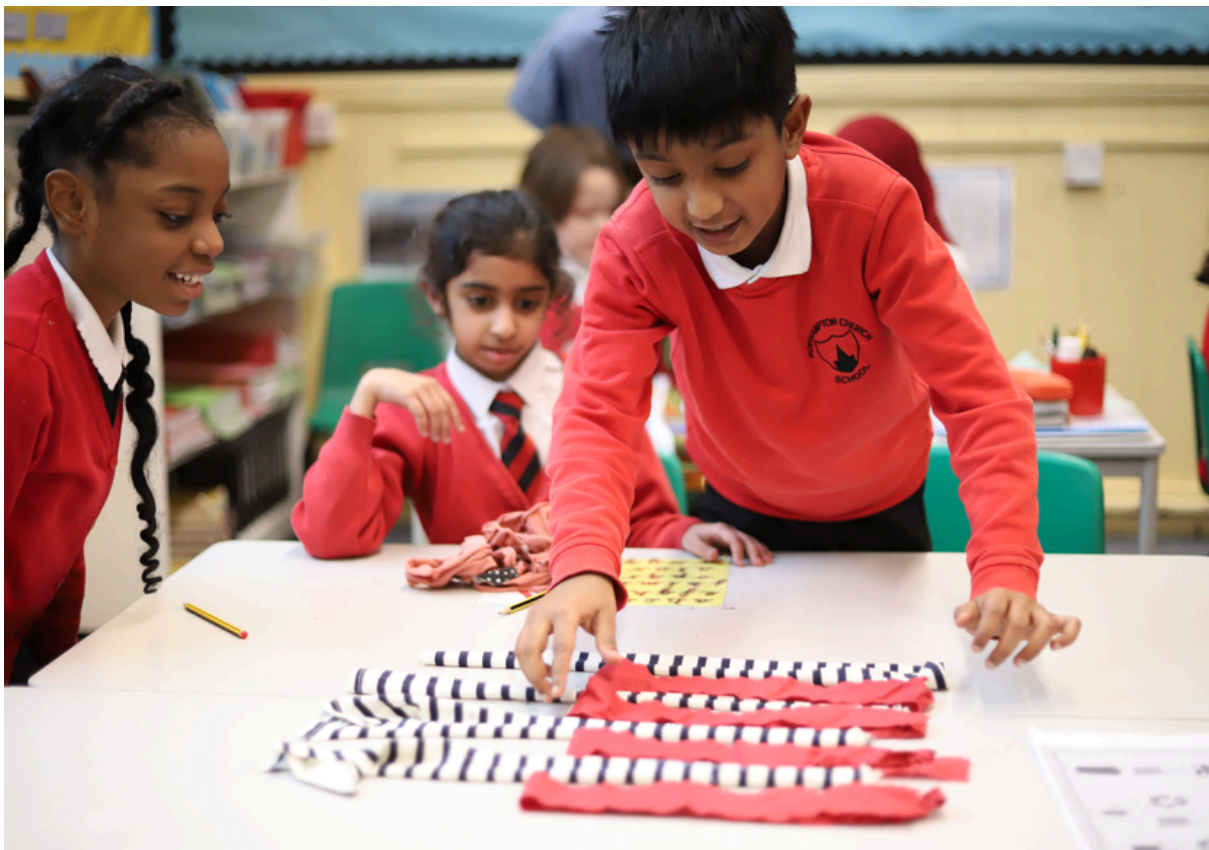


## Community Engagement project - Climate Crisis Awareness with Wandsworth Primary Schools

Our Community Engagement programme has an ongoing collaboration with Wandsworth Council's Arts Service on a series of projects with primary schools across the borough that have all aimed to inspire climate change awareness through the use of art and design.

During February and March 2024, children in years 4 & 5 from up to 40 primary schools across Wandsworth created artworks exploring the impact of textile waste on the planet. Following artist-led teacher training, each class created a woven piece for a collaborative exhibition which opened to the public during April and May 2024, alongside a programme of creative workshops for visitors.

RCA MA Fashion alumna Caroline Lauvetz devised and delivered the project, drawing upon inspiration from Wandsworth's rich history of textile manufacturing along the Wandle River. Each pupil practised weaving techniques on Wandsworth-sourced reclaimed fabrics to create their individual and unique piece of cloth. Across the borough, each participating pupil's upcycled, woven cloth was joined together to create a textile river. Our pupil-built river flowed through the exhibition space in Wandsworth's Southside Shopping Centre, referencing the Wandle's historic textile manufacturing and today's polluted rivers worldwide.



A workshop with pupils as part of Weaving Out Waste

Through the project pupils learned about the life cycle of a garment to understand the environmental impact of the current industrial systems in the fashion industry and discover

sustainable methods of consuming and manufacturing clothing. As well as this environmental education, pupils developed their creative skills such as drawing, sketching, cutting, weaving, and creating patterns with colours.

Overall, 1,323 children participated in the workshops and the exhibition attracted 2,462 visitors.

## Growing Colour Garden

The RCA is creating the Growing Colour Garden in 2025 in collaboration with the Design Museum. We will be growing dye plants which can be used for dying and experimentation in the RCA Textiles workshops.

The Growing Colour Garden emerged from a pilot project to establish a dye garden in the Kensington campus. As part of this project, a team of Textiles technicians grew a range of dye plants in small planters; this included indigo which was then harvested and used to dye yarn.

The Growing Colour Garden builds on the pilot project to create a dye garden in five large planters in the Design Museum garden in Kensington. There are three core objectives for the project:

1. To grow plants which can be used for dyeing and experimentation in the RCA Textiles workshops
2. To educate students about the end-to-end process of growing and using plants for dyeing
3. To provide a wellbeing opportunity for staff and students through community gardening

An RCA Gardening Club has been established who will work together, alongside the Design Museum Urban Gardener and community volunteers, to maintain the Growing Colour Garden.

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## Measuring progress

The Royal College of Art uses a range of different metrics to measure progress in relation to staff and student engagement. These metrics vary between activities, and include: attendees to events, survey response, newsletter open rates and intranet clicks.

## Members of staff responsible for this strategy

Environmental Sustainability Manager  
Senior Communications Manager

**This strategy will be reviewed every 12 months.**

**Last updated April 2025.**