



## Programme Specification

Please note that this specification is subject to change, in line with the national guidance on the response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

### 1. General information

<b>Awarding institution:</b>	Royal College of Art
<b>Programme title:</b>	MA History of Design
<b>Award:</b>	Masters (15-month) (18-month)
<b>Qualification framework level:</b>	Level 7
<b>School/Department or equivalent:</b>	School of Art and Humanities & Victoria and Albert Museum
<b>Programme duration:</b>	15-months/18-months
<b>Total UK credits:</b>	240 credits
<b>Mode of study:</b>	Full time/ Part time (Unit 5)
<b>Partner(s) (if applicable):</b>	Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A)
<b>Date valid from/to:</b>	2020-21

### 2. Programme Philosophy

V&A/RCA MA History of Design offers ground-breaking tools and approaches for studying the history and material culture of design, performance and photography in everyday life, across a global geography from 1400 to the present. The MA is jointly offered by two world-leading centres for scholarship and creativity, the RCA and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), and draws on the extensive resources of both institutions and our location in London.

We embrace history that is public-facing, experimental and committed to scholarly excellence, as befits our location in the public museum and the art school. We use artefact analysis – of services, interactions, policies, institutions and legal and technical systems as well as physical objects and environments – alongside more conventional historical methods to generate new perspectives on large historical questions. We employ a distinctly global outlook to historical questions, whether this means placing local histories in comparative context or tracing global networks through material culture.

The **Design and Material Culture pathway** employs artefact analysis – of services, interactions, policies, institutions and legal and technical systems as well as physical objects and spaces – alongside more conventional historical methods to generate new perspectives on major historical questions. Tutors’ research and teaching expertise range from the early modern to the contemporary, with particular area expertise in the UK/Europe, North America and East Asia.

By engaging with a wide range of materials from the National Collection of Performing Arts at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the **Performance pathway** explores how the material remains of performance inform our understanding of the performing arts, historically and today. Jointly offered with the V&A’s ground-breaking Theatre and Performance Department, the pathway offers collections-based teaching with one of the world’s most diverse collections of material documenting current practice and the history of performance. It draws on curatorial, industry and

academic expertise and experience to provide new insights into the culture, economics and politics of performance.

The **Photography pathway** employs collections-based teaching with the V&A's extensive photography collections to consider photography as a set of material practices, processes and artefacts. Jointly offered with the V&A Photography Centre, the pathway emphasises diverse methods for understanding photographs as variously artistic, scientific, technological and social artefacts, and for exploring historical and contemporary issues - including questions of global history and empire - through photography as material culture.

### 3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

#### **Programme aims**

V&A/RCA MA History of Design (Design and Material Culture, Performance, Photography) aims to provide you with a postgraduate education in a range of relevant research methods and approaches for the history and material culture of design, performance and photography, for application across a variety of professional challenges.

To this end, the programme's aims are to enable you to develop:

- skills in historical research and interpretation from both primary and secondary evidence;
- your ability to identify and employ relevant research methods for studying the history and material culture of design, performance and photography, with particular emphasis on artefact analysis;
- your ability to identify, assess and engage critically with relevant existing research in the history and material culture of design, performance, photography and their related areas;
- your ability to identify and critically employ theoretical concepts and approaches for the analysis of practices and material cultures of design, performance and photography, past and present.
- confidence in using empirically-researched data and theoretically-informed ideas in conjunction with each other.
- skills for presenting an articulate, reasoned and compelling argument in written and oral form, to diverse audiences;
- understanding of the conventions and mechanisms involved in presenting written and oral work at postgraduate level;
- your ability to critically contribute to social and environmental sustainability as a design historian.

#### **What will I be expected to achieve?**

By the end of the period of study, we aim for you to have achieved the programme's objectives, which can be summarised as follows: To enable you to emerge as a fully-fledged historian of the practices and material cultures of design, performance and photography, equipped with the necessary intellectual skills to pursue advanced research in these areas and to apply them across professional contexts, both academic and non-academic, within a variety of self-defined career paths.

#### **Programme-Specific Learning Outcomes**

Able to:	<b>A. Intellectual Engagement</b>
A1.	INNOVATION: develop innovative ways to approach the history and material culture of

	design, performance and photography, including artefact-based research.
A2.	CONTEXT: demonstrate an advanced understanding of the practices, processes and materials of historical and contemporary design, performance and photography, as well as their cultural, economic, political, social, technological and historical contexts and dynamics.
A3.	EXPERIMENTATION AND RISK-TAKING: experiment in the use of research methods, topics, modes of presentation, collaborators and audiences for the history and material culture of design, performance or photography.
A4.	CRITICALITY: demonstrate the ability to critically assess the relevance and rigour of existing and emergent arguments, debates and bodies of research around the history and material culture of design, performance and photography, and to engage as a critical, reasoned manner with them.

Able to:	<b>B. Technical Skills</b>
B1.	RESEARCH: display a mastery of the research skills necessary for developing, testing and substantiating a sound academic argument from primary, secondary and theoretical sources, including artefact analysis and archival skills
B2.	PRODUCTION: present written and oral arguments at an advanced level appropriate for postgraduate work.
B3.	COMMUNICATION: articulate and debate ideas in a professional, reasoned and effective manner to diverse audiences.
B4.	PRESENTATION: Present written and oral work to standards expected at postgraduate level.

Able to:	<b>C. Professional Development</b>
C1.	INDEPENDENCE: work independently to initiate, manage and complete research in a timely manner, including collections-led projects and external collaborations.
C2.	COLLABORATION: participate as a reasoned and respectful member of group projects, workshops and seminars, including collaborations with external partners.
C3.	IDENTITY: define and demonstrate the ability to reflect on a professional identity as a historian and researcher through the articulation of professional values and skills, in relation to chosen subfields and disciplines.

#### 4. What will I learn?

##### **Programme Units and Credit Weightings**

**HoD1 (Pathway): Research in Context 40 credits**

HoD2 (Programme): Artefacts in Context 40 credits

HoD3 (Programme): History as Public Practice 40 credits

HoD4 (Pathway): Research Methods 20 credits

HoD5 (Programme): Independent Research Project (Dissertation) 60 credits  
 SoAH School Unit: 20 credits  
 College-wide Unit: 20 credits

## Curriculum Map

V&A/RCA History of Design 15-Month Programme (Full-time) 18-Month Programme (Part-time)		Term 1				Year 1				Term 3				Year 2 (Full-time)				Year 2 (Part-Time)			
		Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
History of Design Unit 1 (40 Credits)	Research In Context: - Theory, Skills, Methods (TSM) - 2 x Specialist Seminar Course Options - Research Seminar				Assessment: Essay																
History of Design Unit 2 (40 Credits)						Artefacts in Context: - Object Stories - Theory, Skills, Methods (TSM) - Specialist Seminar Course Option															
History of Design Unit 3 (40 Credits)						History as Public Practice											Assessment: VIVA				
History of Design Unit 4 (20 Credits)										Research Methods	Assessment: Proposal										
History of Design Unit 5 (60 Credits)										Final Major Project (Dissertation)						Assessment: (Full-time Dis. + VIVA)	Final Major Project (Dissertation)	Assessment: (Part-time Dis. + VIVA)			
RCA College Unit (20 Credits)	SoAH College Unit (CHS)																				
RCA School Unit (20 Credits)	School of Arts & Humanities (SOAH) School Unit																				

## 5. How will I learn?

Please note that these are subject to change, in line with the national guidance on the Covid-19 response.

### Seminars

Seminars consist of group discussion of particular historical themes, provocations, practices or issues based on set readings for each session, led by the tutor, a visiting lecturer or students. Seminars will often include small group projects and presentations. Seminar overviews, schedules and other reading lists are made available online in advance of each term. You are expected to keep up with the reading and to take an active part in discussion and group work.

### Workshops

Workshops offer an intensive learning experience focused on a particular topic or problem. They are concentrated in a short time, often but not exclusively in a one-week block, and will often involve experimental research and learning methods, working to a brief and group work. Workshop overviews, schedules and reading lists are made available online in advance of each term. You are expected to keep up with the reading and to take an active part in workshop activities, including contributions to discussion and to group work.

### Lectures

As conventionally understood, and may take place online, as required. Lectures ordinarily include time for questions and discussion, either as a full group or in smaller discussion sections. Lectures may include screenings or performances.

## Tutorials

Teaching on the MA is supported by 1:1 tutorials for solo independent work, and by group tutorials in the case of group projects. Tutorials take the form of a focused discussion between you, or a group of students and a tutor, on a topic agreed in advance. Tutorials are used predominantly for the following purposes:

- To discuss choices for essay, dissertation, project and other independent work; to suggest areas of research focus and reading material; to provide feedback on draft material; to discuss challenges and opportunities presented by your research and project work; to provide mentoring;
- To present and discuss feedback on submitted work after assessment;
- To discuss more general issues with the programme material and coursework.

You are expected to prepare for each tutorial and take a proactive role in them. It is good practice to make a list of action points following each tutorial, and to check these with tutors.

## Research Seminar Series

Speakers are drawn from the staff team and wider community present talks relating to their current research. Some speakers work within the history and material culture of design, performance and photography; others represent cutting-edge, relevant research in related areas such as theatre and performance studies, anthropology, economic history, geography, the history of art and architecture, medical humanities and the history of science and technology. Seminar details are publicised internally to the V&A and RCA communities and externally, to researchers and students working in similar or related fields.

You are expected to participate fully in the research seminars, attending regularly and asking questions. Participation is an important part of professional development, and allows you to meet other specialists and make contacts beyond the RCA and V&A.

## Site Visits

Site visits in person and/or online give you the opportunity to apply methods and perspectives gained in taught sessions to the analysis of performances, spaces, buildings, historical sites, exhibitions and environments in London and elsewhere in the UK. Some site visits are organised and led by staff, others are organised by students, supported by tutors, as part of coursework. Site visits may have advance reading and include a discussion of issues generated by the reading.

## 6. Assessment and feedback

### Assessment

All assessment in V&A/RCA MA History of Design is summative, unless otherwise indicated

Termly self-assessment forms, progress tutorials with your personal tutor and progress report forms completed by the personal tutor support you in recognising your attainment of programme learning outcomes beyond formal assessment points.

### Unit 1 Essay

This c. 6,000-word essay assesses competing explanations of change in the artefacts, environments or other aspects of material culture of design and performance. The essay should demonstrate three intellectual skills. Firstly, the ability to identify patterns of historical change in the design or realisation of a particular aspect of the history and material culture of design or performance; secondly, and understanding of the relevant historical reasons for change over time, among them social, cultural, gendered, political and technological forces; and thirdly, the ability to evaluate different forms of explanation for change, and to apply them in a critical way.

### **Unit 2 Essay**

This c. 6,000-word essay is expected to develop three main intellectual skills. First, the ability to locate and interpret archival sources; second, the ability to explore different ways of interpreting a single object; third, the ability to relate archival evidence to a wider context, and to demonstrate an understanding of an object's social and ideological context.

### **Unit 3 Presentation and Oral Examination**

Following completion of the Unit 3 Project Portfolio, you prepare a pre-recorded oral and visual presentation, which addresses accomplishments, skills learnt and challenges met during Unit 3 Project Portfolio work, in relation to programme learning outcomes and supported by material, visual and/or textual documentation of projects. As outlined in the Unit 3 Descriptor, optional participation in the Work In Progress show can be considered towards the Project Portfolio assessment method. The presentation will be used as the basis of questions in a viva voce format to an exam board composed of staff team members who have taught you. This examination takes place concurrently with the Unit 5 Examination and may be held in person or online.

### **Unit 4 Research Proposal**

A research proposal presented in writing, using a pro forma outlining research topic, objectives, archives, methods and theoretical approaches, existing literature, key challenges, budget, timeline and other relevant aspects, and in oral presentation.

**Unit 5 Dissertation:** An 18-20,000-word dissertation on an original topic, based on original primary and secondary research, employing relevant methods and theoretical frameworks to generate and substantiate an academically-sound argument at postgraduate level.

### **Unit 5 Oral Examination**

Following completion of Unit 5, you are examined on the dissertation's achievements in relation to unit and programme learning outcomes, by a panel of staff team members who have taught you. You have the option to begin the examination with a five-minute presentation but are not required to do so. This examination takes place concurrently with the Unit 3 Examination and may be held in person, online and/or via a pre-recorded presentation

### **SoAH School Unit Portfolio**

Assessment: Critical Reflection

You will be required to produce a 1000-2000-word critical reflection on your learning from the School Unit. This written response offers the opportunity to consider the question of The Urgency of the Arts in relation to your own thinking and practice. The critical reflection should contextualise your work in relation to contemporary debates and needs to include:

- A reference to at least one speaker from the SoAH School Unit Lecture Series
- A reference to a text / concept / theme that was covered during the MA School Group that you attended
- Up to 3 images (max. 5mb each) relating to your participation in the School Crit with some evaluative commentary

This will be submitted to the joint assessment panel for the Joint Unit 2B / School Unit Exam, taking place toward the end of the academic year.

### **Critical and Historical Studies (20 credits)**

Students are required to submit one or two pieces of writing based on the lectures, seminars, reading groups, and resources from CHS scheduled in Weeks 7–12. Students are invited to join these sessions, where their programme timetable allows; they will also be expected to draw upon the materials and resources provided online in preparing their work for assessment.

The students can decide to pick either one task, or both; in either case, the total submission should consist of 3,000 words, with an overarching reflective summary that sets out what each text aims to communicate, its intended audience, and its potential impact upon its reader(s).

The tasks are as follows:

#### **1. Position**

Write a response to one of the texts distributed for the CHS Reading Groups, identifying how the author has articulated their 'position' within it.

You might respond to the following questions:

- What is the author's topic?
- What is the author's opinion on this topic?
- How do they persuade you to take their view?
- What is the author's writing style?
- Does it appeal to you?
- How would you write it differently?

#### **2. Voice**

Choose another text from those distributed for the CHS Reading Groups. Pair it with an image or object of your choice.

Write a response to the question of what makes this pairing so interesting and convincing.

You might respond to the following questions:

- In your opinion, how does the image/object relate to the text?
- Why have you brought them together?
- How can you persuade me of their relationship?
- Can you find any other writing to back up your opinion?

Please note that for this element of the submission, you are required to provide footnotes for the sources you reference. (You may include footnotes for 'Position' also, though this is not mandatory.)

Your work will be submitted at the beginning of Term 2; following this it will be assessed by members of the Programme staff, who will respond with a brief written report.

**Information regarding individual assessments will be included in the Unit Descriptors, and will be available to students at the beginning of the academic year.**

## **7. What award can I get?**

To be awarded an RCA MA degree you need to gain 240 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 you will be awarded the credits for that unit. If you are unsuccessful, you can not 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 course 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 course 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 Tier 4 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.

Applications are considered chronologically by date and time of final portfolio submission. Whilst a programme still has vacancies, successful candidates will be made an offer of a place. Once a programme becomes full, subsequent successful applicants will be placed on a waiting list, and may be made a firm offer should a place become available for them.

### **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/schools/school-of-arts-humanities/hod/ma-entrance/>