



Programme Specification

1. General Information

Title:	Curating Contemporary Art
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

Curating is a creative, dynamic and diverse practice, constantly changing in relation to its context, to the work of artists and a range of cultural practitioners, and to the interests and expectations of audiences. When you join the Curating Contemporary Art MA (CCA) you join a well-established and highly influential programme and community of students actively contributing to how curating is understood, practiced and thought about across the globe. As a highly international programme, designed to develop your critical awareness of curating in a global context, we also place real importance on working collaboratively, peer-to-peer, as a way of learning together and sharing knowledges and cultures, and testing ideas. When you graduate you will join a network of over 500 CCA alumni from across 47 different countries, many still working together, collectively shaping the practice of curating contemporary art and the spaces and places in which it is encountered.

In the first term, you will engage with 'Curatorial Thinking', through talks and lectures by visiting curators, readings, seminars, and workshops, you will engage with genealogies of curating and contemporary issues affecting its production and organisation, such as globalization and migration, the digital and networked culture, urbanization and use of space, and changing understandings of publics. Alongside this, in 'Ecologies of Curating', through site visits, lectures and workshops you will gain a curatorial insight into the complex and diverse range of spaces and places, galleries, museums and organisations, in which curating and programming takes place and on which the contemporary art ecology is dependent. Together these two units allow you to identify the relation between theory and practice in curating and programming, and prepare you for unit 3.

In the second term, for unit 3, 'Curating in a Collaborative Context', you will learn how to work collaboratively in peer groups on a live project brief set with an external partner with a focus on generating curatorial proposals to professional standards of Shortlist and Stage 1 Feasibility. Mastering the skills of proposal development, including the commissioning of artists, designers,

programmers, you will learn the role and value of project research and planning, presentation, mediation, and advocacy. The final project proposal will be presented to the external partners for response and critical evaluation.

In the final term, as part of the Independent Research Project (IRP), you will work in your groups to curate a display of your project proposal and deliver a public-facing event, designed to generate audiences and critical debate. Additionally, the IRP supports each student to establish their own critical position in the field through the development of either a critical research essay or a creative project development plan.

3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme aims

- to develop your skills of observation, interpretation and critical analysis of curatorial projects in relation to wider social, geo-political, economic, technological issues and debates.
- to develop your knowledge and understanding of a range of research tools and methods, theoretical models and conceptual frameworks which may be applied to the study of contemporary curating and art in relation to publics.
- to enable you to critically and creatively respond to a range of institutional contexts and challenges in galleries, museums, urban space, online networked cultures, and commissioning / event-based organisations.
- to develop your ability to critically and creatively contribute to the fields of curating and public programming through written, verbal, visual and curatorial presentation and event programming.
- to develop your understanding of professional ethics and of a curator's responsibilities in relation to works of art, creative practitioners, organisational and social/political contexts and audiences.

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:

- Demonstrate, through the use of advanced research methods, an understanding of the critical and curatorial context of debates within particular institutional, geographic and social contexts and identify your practice within it;
- Effectively apply cultural and critical theory to the analysis of curatorial practice by integrating and articulating the relationship between theory and practice in relation to wider cultural, social, economic and political issues;
- Integrate thought, creativity and technical understanding in your curatorial practice in the context of publics, audience and the ethics of engagement;
- Identify appropriate formats, media, platforms and technologies to successfully deliver a public programme event;
- Demonstrate the combined skills of curatorial analysis and critical engagement through sector-standard programming and creative problem-solving;
- Demonstrate an ability to work collaboratively and effectively communicate across different media, disciplines, platforms, sectors and audiences to identify and realise the potential of every opportunity.

4. What will I learn?

Curriculum Map	
AcrossRCA (College-wide unit) (30 credits)	
Ecologies of Curating (15 credits)	Curating in a Collaborative Context (30 credits)
Curatorial Thinking (30 credits)	
	Urgency of the Arts
IRP (60 credits)	

	(School-wide unit) (15 credits)	
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Programme Structure

Unit Title	Term	Credit Value	Core or Elective?
Curatorial Thinking	1	30	Core
Ecologies of Curating	1	15	Core
AcrossRCA (College-wide unit)	1&2	30	Core
Curating in a Collaborative Context	2	30	Core
Urgency of the Arts (School-wide unit)	2	15	Core
Independent Research Project	3	60	Core

Unit 1: Curatorial Thinking (30 credits)

Curatorial Thinking introduces you to current and dominant positions and histories within curatorial studies, whilst exploring how the curatorial may be understood as a broader cultural phenomenon, as well as an approach to critically engaging with our contemporary moment. The aim of this unit is to develop your critical analytical skills, so you can establish your own understanding of what curating might mean as a practice, approach and way of thinking in and of our time. Taught through lectures, seminar discussion and the close reading of texts, assessed by a comparative textual analysis and thematic essay, the unit aims to develop your confidence in approaching theoretical texts and applying theory to the analysis of practice and vice versa.

Unit 2: Ecologies of Curating (15 credits)

Ecologies of Curating enables you to develop an understanding of the contemporary arts ecology, equipping you in the process with the skills to critically examine the inter-relation between curating, programming and the spaces and places in which contemporary art is generated, displayed, mediated and promoted. Focused on specific typologies of practice, organisations and platforms you will think through in groups how the conditions in which these exist determine and define what is produced and curated, and who for. The unit runs in parallel with unit 1, 'Curatorial Thinking', allowing a further insight to the relation between theory and practice.

AcrossRCA (30 credits)

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.

Urgency of the Arts (15 credits)

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.

Unit 3: Curating in a Collaborative Context (30 credits)

Curating in a Collaborative Context aims to develop your research-based and practice-orientated curatorial skills of analysis, conceptualisation and communication through collaborative, group project work. Working in response to a specific project brief set by an external partner arts organisation, you will work with your peers to develop a curatorial proposal to Shortlist / Feasibility Stage of sector standards for presentation and feedback to your external partner. The unit follows the stages of proposal development from analysis of the project brief, research into context of the brief, identifying curatorial and programming opportunities towards commissioning, context analysis, audience projection, visualisation and documentation, presentation and advocacy.

Independent Research Project (60 credits)

The final unit provides you with the opportunity to curate a public display of a collaboratively created curatorial proposal and programme a public event that tests the ideas of the proposal. Aiming to extend your understanding of the relationship between critical reflection, practice and research, you will individually explore an element of your proposal through an extended piece of research.

5. How will I learn?

The programme is taught through a combination of lectures from staff and guest speakers from the field of curating and programming, seminars, group and one to one tutorials, group project work with external partners, site visits and public presentations and events at the RCA.

In addition to unit summative assessment (detailed below), the programme uses presentations to give critical feedback on work in progress. The IRP is supported through group tutorials, workshops, tutorials and feedback on early drafts of written work.

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

Assessment overview:

The programme is assessed through a combination of critical writing, presentations, curatorial practice (display and public programming) and critical reflection, produced individually and in groups. The assessment is designed to develop students' critical writing and analysis skills, research and presentation skills, creative and practical project development and delivery skills and their ability to present and defend their ideas within professional contexts.

Curatorial Thinking

For this unit you will be asked to write a comparative review of texts under discussion.

Ecologies of Curating

This unit asks you to contribute to a group presentation mapping London's visual arts ecology and an individual visual/oral presentation of spaces visited beyond session site visits mapping personal curatorial concerns and interests.

Curating in a Collaborative Context

For this unit you will develop a collaborative project proposal and presentation and independently, critically reflect on it through a text submission.

Independent Research Proposal

This will be based on a collaborative curatorial display and public programming event, a collaborative project proposal and an extended essay or creative project development plan.

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/curating-contemporary-art-ma/#requirements>