



Programme Specification

1. General Information

Programme title:	Photography
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:	2022-23

2. Programme Philosophy

Photography plays a crucial role in contemporary art. The Photography programme at the RCA aims to provide a critical and educational environment in which you can develop as an artist with photography at the core of your practice. We have a fluid approach to image making. Whether still or moving, analogue or digital, the image is, for us, thoughtful as well as playful: an allegorical and thoroughly visual form.

The programme understands photography as a discourse that encompasses and extends across multiple practices. This disregard for a fixed essence is photography's strength: no aesthetic purity but a range of rhetorical forms used for the creation of fact, fiction and fantasy. Equally the boundary between the still and the moving image is fluid and porous, enabling new forms of image making to be created and disseminated.

An informed practice of photography acknowledges the heterogeneous traditions of fine art and visual culture. It engages with practices of reading and writing about the image. On our programme, theory and practice inform each other and this dialogue characterises your committed study at postgraduate level. The Photography programme is within the School of Arts and Humanities and relates to studio practices and theories of contemporary art, rather than to media and communication studies.

3. Educational Aims and Outcomes of the Programme

Programme aims

- To provide a learning environment which encourages and cultivates experimentation and self-reflexivity in order to expand the practice and understanding of photography within contemporary art;
- To enable you to plan and produce artworks that are challenging and technically and conceptually innovative;
- To situate photography within the context of contemporary art practices and theories;

- To establish a dialogue in your practice that negotiates received theories;
- To enrich your experience by facilitating interdisciplinarity across the postgraduate culture of the School Arts and Humanities.

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:

- Situate your practice in relation to contemporary cultural discourses and demonstrate how your work is innovative within your chosen field;
- Develop material knowledge through ongoing experimentation in practice, engaging in continual critical reflection through active and responsive evaluation;
- Independently create a body of work that experiments with, and is informed by photographic practices and discourses at the forefront of contemporary art;
- Communicate the aims and intentions of your practice selecting appropriate strategies for both specialist and non-specialist audiences alike;
- Develop a clear understanding of what it means to be a responsible practitioner, critically engaging with the implications of making your practice public;
- Define your professional ambitions and identify strategies needed to implement them.

4. What will I learn?

Curriculum Map

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3

Situating Photography - Practice and Discourse (45 units)	Urgency of the Arts (School-wide Unit, 15 credits)	Independent Research Project (60 credits)
	Making Public (30 credits)	
AcrossRCA (College-wide Unit, 30 credits)		

Programme Structure

Unit Title	Term	Credit Value	Core or Elective?
Situating Photography - Practice and Discourse.	1	45	Core
Making Public	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 Photography - Practice and Discourse

The first unit orientates you through resource inductions and workshops. You will be introduced to the programme community in student and staff presentations.

Making Public

This unit situates photography as an expanded and expanding field in contemporary art. Particular attention is placed on the materiality and performativity of the image.

AcrossRCA (College-wide unit)

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 (School-wide Unit)

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 (IRP)

The 60-credit 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 come together to make an exhibition exploring the practical and conceptual implications of staging, making public, and working in conjunction with others.

The making of the exhibition is a reflexive site for innovation and development. A viva voce takes place in the exhibition when you will present your work to a staff panel. After this, the exhibition opens to the public.

Part A: Independent practice

You will explore ways to make your independent research project public, working towards an exhibition of your artwork. You will work autonomously towards an understanding of practice-led methodologies, critical reflection and exhibition.

Part B: Public Exhibition

You will come together to make an exhibition exploring the practical and conceptual implications of staging, making public, and working in conjunction with others. The making of the exhibition is a reflexive site for innovation and development. A viva voce takes place in the exhibition when you will present your work to a panel of personal and senior tutors. After this, the exhibition opens to the public.

Part C: Professional Practice

After the exhibition there will be a programme of professional practice seminars that will be predominantly staffed by arts professionals. These seminars provide a context to explore ideas of reception, dissemination and professional identity.

Towards the end of the unit, using skills gained from the professional practice seminars, you will consolidate the work presented in your exhibition and work towards developing a digital platform or

a small print publication. This can be done independently or in collaboration and will establish your professional identity supporting the further dissemination of your practice beyond the institution.

5. How will I learn?

Situating Photography

Lexicon

- **Orientation:** Introduction to the culture and philosophy of the programme, programme staff, the locations and facilities.
- **Briefing:** Introductory sessions present the aims, objectives, delivery and assessment procedures of each unit.
- **Induction:** Mandatory inductions to various imaging-related technical areas, including darkrooms (film development and printing), photographic studios, lighting, digital workspaces and workflow.
- **Lecture:** A series of lectures attending to current debates in contemporary photography delivered by visiting speakers, artists, curators and theorists.
- **Seminar:** A series of seminars that explore the discourses of photography.
- **Individual Tutorial:** One-to-one conversations discussing your practice and progress.
- **Group Tutorial:** Small group meetings led by a Tutor and focused upon a specific topic or theme.
- **Critical Reflection:** A short text accompanied by artwork that reflects on your progress across the unit and includes an evaluation of your practice.

Making Public

Lexicon

- **Group Tutorial:** Small group meetings led by a Tutor and focused upon a specific topic or theme.
- **Sign-up Tutorial:** You select a Programme Tutor, other than your Personal Tutor, for a one-to-one tutorial.
- **Open Studio Crit:** You install and present your work to your peers and a Tutor.
- **Lecture:** A series of lectures attending to current debates in contemporary photography delivered by visiting speakers, artists, curators and theorists.
- **Seminar Programme:** A series of seminars that explore the discourses of photography.
- **Select Workshops:** These might include Bookmaking, Online Publishing, Sustainability in Photography, AI platforms.

Independent Research Project

Lexicon

- **Personal Tutorial:** One-to-one conversations discussing your practice and progress towards making your practice public.
- **Sign-up Tutorial:** You select a Programme Tutor, other than your Personal Tutor, for a one-to-one tutorial.
- **Exhibition Install:** Together with academic and technical staff support.

- **Viva Voce:** The viva voce examination allows you to present and contextualise your work in exhibition to a panel of Personal and Senior Tutors.
- **Exhibition Group Crit:** This is led by invited external arts professionals.
- **Professional Practice Seminars:** You will be introduced to skills that will support the reception and dissemination of your work on a number of platforms. These will help to consolidate your practice beyond the institution.

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 Photography

Assessment type: online submission

Assessment pattern: Formative and summative assessment takes place in the form of dialogic assessment tutorials in which you will discuss how your work is meeting the learning outcomes for the unit. You will have a formative assessment tutorial early in the term during which you will present a practice and research plan, which will be agreed between you and your tutor. The plan should set out your goals for the unit outlining the ideas you will explore, your work's connection to your group tutorials and the practical processes you intend to deploy to explore these ideas. Your summative assessment tutorial at the end of the term will ask you to present your developing body of work (as set out in your practice and research plan) and critically reflect on the success of the work. Your tutor will give you verbal feedback at the assessment tutorial. Following the summative assessment tutorial, you will write up assessment feedback discussed during the tutorial, including agreed actions for development of your work in the next unit.

Making Public

Assessment type: online submission

Assessment pattern: On completion of unit submission, you will submit an online Critical Reflection. This can be in the form of a website, podcast, interview, video, personal statement, blog, performance, talk, collaborative event or portfolio. In addition, you will be asked to write a brief outline of your proposal for your IRP.

Independent Research Project

Assessment Type: There are two points of assessment. The first assessment point takes place as a viva in the exhibition. The second assessment point is either an online or print submission.

Assessment pattern: In part 2 (Public Exhibition) a viva will take place within your exhibition in front of a panel. In part 3 (Professional Practice), you will work towards a digital presence or print publication. You will submit online (a publication will be submitted as a PDF). Programme staff will evaluate these submissions and conclude the assessment of unit 3.

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/photography-ma/#requirements>