

concept and image, jessica.jenkins@network.rca.ac.uk



the rca children's centre



kide, designed by **Dejan Mitrovic** – a unique tool which allows children to design and make 3D printed toys through playing a creative game.



Colouring suitcase created by **Hina Thibaud** enabling children to rebuild their world through utilitarian items and feel more comfortable in an unfamiliar place.



Plane brooch by jewellery designer **Rowena Murray** inspired by children's stories.

A toy that grows with you as you grow and becomes a clock, created for all age groups by designers of **Chromosome Lab**, littlebang.info.



Animations made together with children from the centre, and picture books written and illustrated by **Tereza Stehlikova**.

Textile Props to encourage touch, movement and play created by **Katie Gaudion**.



Knitted forms with endless constellations for exploring and experimenting designed by **Claire-Anne O'Brien**.



A flexible, interactive furniture concept that enables children to build their own world of pattern, colour and fun, created by **Susie Foster**.



Narrative print textiles for cushions and curtains created by **Jonna Saarinen**.



Portable washing point reducing the set up costs of the centre by allowing flexible use of space, invented by **Emil Rosen**.

Lots of cups for little drinks by **Prapat Jiwangsan**.



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small is grateful to the artists and designers of the royal college of art for providing their work to the children's centre, an initiative which aims to think radically about how our most imaginative citizens can be placed at the centre of creative practice.

<http://nosmallmatter.wordpress.com/>
all designers can be contacted via name.surname@network.rca.ac.uk

SOMETHING HAS GONE WRONG
Nursery fees are more expensive than public schools: in London, the average family pays £22,100 for full-time nurseries over the course of the year, equivalent to the most expensive private day school fees in England. (Study by the Daycare Trust charity, February 2010). Why has having a child become a crippling expense? Why does it now seem impossible to have children and pursue personal ambitions in our twenties and thirties? Why are we so afraid of the threat children pose to our professional lives? And why have we created an x-rated adult world that seems too dangerous for children to move freely in? Children in today's Britain seem to be thought of only in terms of the threat they pose to our activities and the threat posed to them by aberrant adults. RCA parents talk frankly about their experiences of trying to be a good student and a good parent at the same time:

When I started my research degree at the RCA earlier this year, I was 7 months pregnant. My supervisors and department have been supportive and helpful in enabling me to carry on studying, even with demands on my time beyond college. Facilities at the college as a whole though, to ease any kind of access while pregnant or while with a young baby, have been pretty non-existent. The few there are, only become available if you seek them out. After an introductory talk by Student Services on disability and access in the orientation sessions in the Autumn, I approached them with my "condition", thinking there would be offers of creches, subsidised childcare (I grew up in Canada - I naively didn't realise this was unheard of here), networks of parents etc., I was hit with a reality check to find none of that. Nothing formal to help parents or pregnant students. I had my baby in December and came back to seminars when she was 8 weeks old. I brought her with me, and her grand-mother would take her for walks in Hyde Park and then bring her in so I could feed her in the canteen. When I was pregnant, occupational health had advised me against bringing the baby in to college due to swine flu. This put me under a bit of strain trying to get her to take a bottle when she was 6 weeks old, so I could leave her at home. But she was breast fed only, and refused a bottle, so I brought her with me. All was fine. The common mentality seems to be to just get on with it. I find it difficult with the current set-up (or lack of) at college to be on site as much as I would like. But having a baby daughter has motivated me for my studies and work more than ever before. I've learnt to be more flexible, adaptable, and work in small, focused bursts when I get the chance. I'm hopeful the college can bring facilities and mentalities up to date, so that other parents of young babies and children, and so that the primary carer, who is often but not always a woman, can see post-graduate study as something which can compliment their life and work. Enabling parents to work and study will only benefit the college and it's reach in the future. Babies are not a barrier to anything, but outdated structures can make it seem so. / It is good to find out that someone else at college has children

- I thought I was the only one. / In spite of the seventies, childcare remains in the domain of women, this situation is kept in place by our laws where women are given 9 months maternity leave while men get only 2 weeks, like some kind of bad joke. Financial imperatives keep our ideas of biological determinism in place, putting women's careers at risk from day one. The arena of art and design is somewhat different. Designers can work freelance and most artists are self employed. This allows a greater freedom when deciding how and by whom the child might be looked after. In my experience a significant number artists are able to share childcare equally between both parents. With the age of the average student going up I think that the RCA can expect to be taking in an increasing number of parents. The lack of childcare facilities expose the anachronistic nature of what should be an avant-garde college. The impression is that this is a patriarchal institution where childcare is simple not a concern; childcare is just not something that the several men who run this place have had to think about, because some one else was doing it for them. If this Royal College wants to be taken seriously in the future it is these details that will reflect if it able to move with the times. / I think it is a great idea to get the college to even acknowledge that their may be some students in this situation. I have found the college's attitude towards children rather unreasonable with regards to admitting them into the studios. There have been times when I have needed to collect something on the weekend and I could not because of the college policy. / My biggest disappointment has been not being able to study part-time, which would have allowed me to combine both studies and family responsibilities successfully. Instead, I have paid and signed up to a full-time course, but have only been able to give a part-time commitment to my course and have found it to be mind-numbing and absolutely exhausting to have to combine both. My children have suffered terribly from the experience and I have been disappointed by the RCA's attitude. I have aged 10 years in the process. / The average cost of childcare per day seems to be in the £40 to £70 range. / I have not been able to participate in the fun, party life of the other students and have found it to be a rather alienating and demoralising experience. / I would absolutely LOVE some form of childcare support from the RCA - the nursery provided at the Imperial College, has been booked out for a while with priority given to Imperial staff and students. / It might be a nice idea to have more children events at the RCA/V&A for staff and students on occasional weekends. community-building. / My real issue is with the cost of childcare which can go well above £1000 for a month. Plus of course the quality that comes with it (or not). I also think that there are loads of childcare providers around the South Kensington area with whom the college could tie-up. / I have a five year old boy and have had quite a lot of childcare problems since starting the course. It can be very stressful and I don't feel I can talk about these issues with other students on my course. / I think it is wrong that children are not legally

allowed into Howie Street, even into the canteen, computer room or loo. This discrimination against those with children, especially single parents and adds up to a big disadvantage. Also I would like my daughter to have an idea of what I do, and where I work. I understand for health and safety reasons parts of the college need to be child free but this general rule does not apply to the main site, so why for Howie Street? I am sure this is in place for insurance reasons, not wanting to pay more to cover children in the building. / Childcare at the college would be enormously helpful especially for students, I did try to get my daughter into the Imperial nursery but they are restricted to Imperial staff and students only. One thing I would say though is as an employee it is far easier for me to put my child in nursery nearer my home then travel into work but obviously as a student you are not getting paid to be at the college and childcare is very expensive. A drop off creche is a very good idea as there are occasions when I have to come to work and have no childcare provision so she has to come too, although I try to avoid this if at all possible. As with access to the college I have never had a problem with it as you can access both gallery levels from outside and there is a baby changing facility on the lower ground floor. / A drop off creche for occasional use would be very helpful as I sometimes work additional days if I'm working on a busy project or attending a course. / I haven't encountered problems relating to having children at the college however I don't often bring the children into work, only sometimes to visit at pre-arranged times. My colleagues have been helpful and supportive (I am working in an office rather than a workshop or studio). There is accessible baby changing in the disabled toilet near Jay Mews Reception and I have fed my 2 when they were babies in the Student Union café, the canteen and in occupational health department (facilities are available there for expressing milk as well if required). I've brought my children into exhibitions too without any problems, and my youngest loves the space and tends to run off gleefully now! I think the college offers good opportunities for flexible working to combine parenting with work however I don't know what the balance is like for students and whether part time study options are available. / Children aren't allowed access to the studios and offices, so this is a problem if I need to pop in quickly for some reason and I have my daughter with me. I totally understand the health and safety issues, and that you shouldn't bring your kids to work or college, but an outright ban is just daft. I hope concerns are dealt with seriously by the college, and that some progress can be made towards assisting with the complex issues of working or studying as a parent. / I think that it would be an excellent idea to have childcare facilities at college. Travelling across London is time consuming and 2 hours of precious childcare are spent on the tube, so having an on college site could solve that problem. I met someone in the summer before RCA speaking to a woman whose parents had been at the college 30 years before when there was childcare. Plus I am sure that an on site creche would attract more parents to apply for courses.