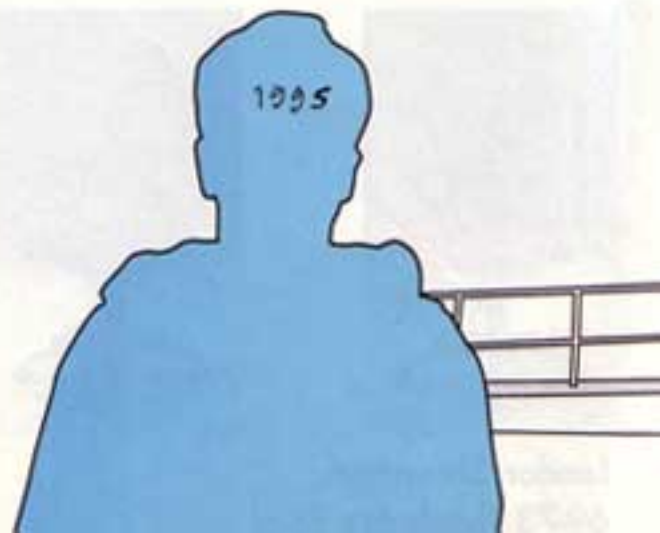
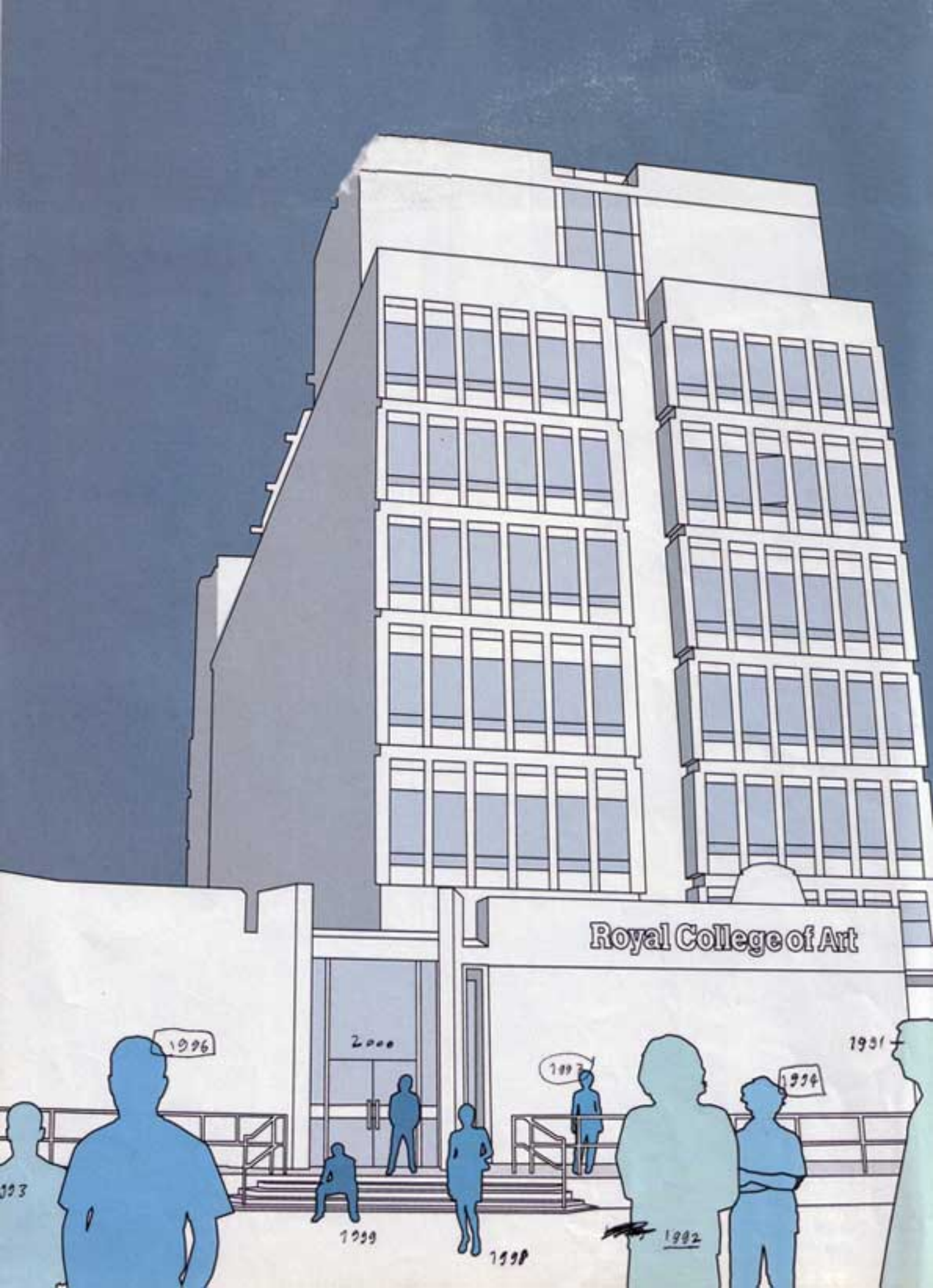


Royal tour

Does talent breed talent? Year on year the Royal College of Art is renowned for producing some of the UK's most talented design graduates. **Pamela Buxton** has trawled through the past decade's graduation lists and picked a 'star' for every year. But what happens once the brightest sparks leave college and face the big, bad world? Here she reports on the progress they have made since leaving the RCA. And on page 80 there's a look at the work of the best of this year's graduates

Illustrations by David Foldvari
(A star graduate from the RCA class of 2001)





Royal College of Art

2000

1996

2002

2004

2001

1993

1999

2000

2002

Caterina Fadda – 1997

Since completing her MA in ceramics and glass, Italian-born Caterina Fadda, 33, has established an international market for her tableware and furniture, selling to shops in Tokyo, the US, and all over Europe – outlets include Harrods and the Louvre Museum shop. She won a Sainsbury's Scholarship in 1998 for subsidised studio space at London's Oxo Tower and has been based there ever since. Her first products, the fluid-shaped Cellule dinner plates and Kiko serving bowls, gained her a reputation for tactile, organic designs while her salt and pepper pots show her interest in challenging perceptions of the functional. Recent work, such as the ceramic Buttstray ashtray and Amaze acrylic side-table, shows a more geometric aesthetic. She was a category winner for her Sasso light in the 1999 Peugeot Awards, and a double finalist last year.



Fadda has established an international market for her tableware and furniture, selling to shops in Tokyo, the US and all over Europe



Gitta Gschwendtner – 1998

German-born Gschwendtner had a flying start after the RCA, winning a Sainsbury Scholarship for discounted studio space at London's Oxo Tower, designing an exhibition car for the Peugeot 206, and winning acclaim for her Strangled Light student project. She has since found a manufacturer, Artificial, for the light and for her Sliding Box shelving, which is being produced by Horn, designed furniture and storage for Habitat and is working on research projects with DuPont Corian and the European Council for Vinyl Manufacturers. Now based in a shared studio in Islington, she is moving into exhibition and interior design to supplement her furniture and product design projects, completing the Industry of One exhibition and, in collaboration with Fiona Davidson, offices for creative agency Wieden & Kennedy.

Mathias Bengtsson – 1999

Danish-born Mathias Bengtsson, 30, didn't waste much time finding a manufacturer – the Keen Group – for his final year project Slice, a chair made from computer-modelled, sliced sheets of either aluminium or plywood. He had success with his 2m long amber Perspex chaise lounge, which was a category runner-up in this year's Oxo/Peugeot Awards, and has also had interest from manufacturers. A metal version has just been commissioned by Goodwood Sculpture Park. But it hasn't been all plain sailing. The design studio he set up with three other alumni on leaving the RCA, At The Third Stroke, has disbanded and he is experiencing the familiar designers' problem of turning industry and media interest into income while still finding time for his experimental furniture. He is still collaborating with Sam Buxton from At the Third Stroke, under the banner Design Laboratory which is exhibiting at the Design Museum. Projects include a merchandising system for Kenzo perfume and packaging designed by Neville Brody.



Eddy Mundy – 2000

Since gaining his MA in Design Products last year, Eddy Mundy, 27, has enjoyed media attention in the 2001 Peugeot Design Awards, winning a prize for his Light Sweep, a broom with fibre-optic bristles that light up as you sweep. Purves and Purves has expressed an interest in both the sweep and another of Mundy's student projects – a shelf made out of Alucamat plastic aluminium composite, which should go into production this year. Mundy has also been working on a research project for the RCA's Helen Hamlyn Foundation with Hewlett Packard for flexible display systems. He hopes to be able to continue developing his own projects but is mindful of the need to earn money to pay off his student debts. 'There aren't many jobs around and if you want to do your own thing it is incredibly difficult to get people interested,' he says **FX**

Tom Barker –1991

After his design engineering course at the RCA, Tom Barker joined Ove Arup & Partners to set up a product design group within the practice. He stayed for five years, working on multidisciplinary projects, such as a housing construction system with Richard Rogers and the opening mechanism for the London Eye pods with Marks Barfield. Then Barker set up his own consultancy, dca-b, within product designer firm DCA, where he continued to collaborate with architects, notably with Zaha Hadid on the surface 'skin' of the Millennium Dome's Mind Zone, and Shigeru Ban on the exhibition structure for the Common Ground zone. He left to set up b-consultants at the end of 1999, working on a range of architectural and art commissions, including a 150m Buddha in India, housing in the Elephant & Castle regeneration scheme, and a concrete installation in Folkestone with artist Lise Autogena. At the time of going to press, he was shortlisted to design the Game On exhibition of computer games at the Barbican Centre Gallery, London.

**Jane Atfield – 1992**

After her MA in Furniture Design, Jane Atfield continued to experiment with unusual materials for her work before finding considerable success pioneering the use of recycled plastics in furniture through her company Made of Waste, which has wound up. Since then she has been experimenting with straw, rope, bamboo and textiles, establishing the textile company UP with her artist husband Robert Shepherd. UP sells tea towels and aprons through SCP and American Retro and plans to extend the range to larger household fabric items. Last year she designed a multifunctional trolley for the children's furniture company Oreka and she is currently working on more children's furniture for Ikea, as well as looking after her two young children. Her work has recently been exhibited in the Crafts Council show Industry of One and in the British Council touring exhibitions Home Sweet Home and Cause and Effect.

Atfield has been experimenting with straw, rope, bamboo and textiles, establishing the textile company UP

**Michael Marriott –1993**

By the time Michael Marriott, now 38, came to study furniture design at the RCA he'd already tried his hand at space planning, graphics, lighting, interior design and architectural draughtsmanship as well as gaining an HND at the London College of Furniture. Marriott met Sheridan Coakley of SCP at his RCA degree show, an introduction that eventually led to a regular collaboration, with Marriott now producing a piece for SCP about once a year. He gained a reputation for a DIY aesthetic by using inexpensive or reclaimed materials, and in 1999 won the prestigious £15,000 Jerwood Prize for Applied Arts: Furniture. Current projects include a metal lighting project for Mathmos (see page 16). He is a tutor on the RCA's design products course, which took over from the furniture and industrial design courses that were offered when he was a student; he says it is the type of integrated course he would have preferred to have done himself.

Marriott gained a reputation for a DIY aesthetic by using inexpensive or reclaimed materials, and in 1999 won the prestigious £15,000 Jerwood Prize

1994



Thomas Heatherwick –1994

Thomas Heatherwick has made a name for himself with temporary but spectacular 3D projects, such as his ribbon-like installation in and out of Harvey Nichols' 12 display windows for London Fashion Week in 1997; Materials House, a giant sandwich of tactile materials at the Science Museum, and his design for Glasgow 1999 Year of Architecture & Design's Identity Crisis exhibition, which utilised more than 120km of cling film. He says that over the past few years he has moved towards more permanent projects, such as a public square in Newcastle, where he's embedding fibre optics into a carpet of blue glass, and a 10m-high installation for cooling vents in Paternoster Square, London. His latest project is a Buddhist temple facing a volcano in Japan, which is in collaboration with a local architectural practice. 'I'm always interested in doing different things,' he says.

Crosbie co-founded Inflate, this year's top prize winner in the Oxo/Peugeot Design Awards with its Snoozy modular plastic bed

Heatherwick's latest project is a Buddhist temple facing a volcano in Japan, which is in collaboration with a local architectural practice

Nick Crosbie –1995

After the RCA, Nick Crosbie co-founded Inflate, dedicated to producing fun, functional and affordable design for the home. It swiftly grabbed media attention with its quirky inflatable products ranging from egg-cups and salt and pepper pots, to a moulded sink plunger for Habitat and an inflatable table light. It went on to work on a larger scale, most notably with Ron Arad on the quirky Memo inflatable chair. Recently Inflate has diversified into other materials, finding success with the Snoozy modular plastic bed platform, which this summer won the £16,000 top prize in the Oxo/Peugeot Design Awards. Inflate is also working on a prototype metal light for Mathmos and has recently opened an Inflate shop on London's Exmouth Market, displaying the full range of Inflate products. Crosbie also teaches part-time at the RCA.



1995

1996



Alexander Hellum –1996

Alexander Hellum left Norway to study furniture design at Buckinghamshire Chiltern University and the RCA and never went back. After his MA, he found work doing private domestic commissions for one-off pieces of furniture before collaborating on retail interiors with an interior design company. Now 35, he lives in Hertford and divides his time between teaching furniture part-time at Buckinghamshire Chiltern and his own projects, which include door handles for the Handles and Fittings Company, which is also putting his degree show project – an extendable beech table – into production. His MDF Trojan chair, produced in batches of four, is sold through the 20/21 store in London's Islington. He took part in the Woody exhibition last year at Contemporary Applied Arts and is currently working on a research project for the Architecture Foundation, exploring furniture design for staff in healthcare environments.