

NCAD Leads the World with Three Winners at the Prestigious International Royal Society of Arts Student Design Awards

Thursday 17 June 2021 – Students from Ireland’s National College of Art and Design (NCAD) have won three awards at the prestigious 97th Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Student Design Awards.

This makes NCAD the most decorated education institution globally at this year’s awards, which set the global standard for student design, receiving entries from all the leading design institutions around the world.

The winning projects include an animation exploring climate change, a digital tool to help migrant community organisations grow, and proposals for a more sustainable business model for restaurants.

Founded in 1764, the London-based Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce is an internationally renowned, leading professional and educational institution committed to finding innovative practical solutions to today’s social and environmental challenges.

Now in its 97th year, the RSA’s *Student Design Awards* is an annual competition for higher education students and recent graduates. The awards recognise outstanding responses from emerging designers to a range of design briefs based around social and environmental challenges.

The RSA’s competition is the longest running of its kind in the world. Past winners of the accolade include former Apple chief design officer Jony Ive, former Nike head of innovation Richard Clarke and co-founder of IDEO and designer of the first laptop Bill Moggridge.

Three NCAD students won awards in both the product design and communication design categories, and NCAD students also received Highly Commended recognitions in several categories ([Images and details of some of the students’ projects are available here](#)):

- **Zoe McCarthy** (BA Illustration, NCAD Dublin) won an RSA Student Design Award in the Moving Pictures category for her project [How To Be A Good Ancestor](#).

Zoe’s animation explores climate change through an ancestor character and their society, highlighting our impact on the world around us and the message that we can leave it better than we found it.

- **Liana O’Cleirigh and Renata Dima** (BA Interaction Design, NCAD Dublin) won an award in the For The Long Time category for their design project **Granted**.

This is a digital tool to help migrant community organisations grow by guiding them through the process of funding, capacity building, and handover. Migrant organisations play an important role in supporting their community members to navigate society and giving them a collective voice, however many of these organisations struggle with longevity and are at high risk of closing down when key leaders exit. Granted is a digital platform that supports these organisations to access necessary grant funding to sustain their work, but also track their activity and celebrate milestones. The platform provides the organisations with greater stability so they can plan further into the future and, when the time comes for a transition of

leadership, the synthesised record of activity allows organisations to more seamlessly handover to the next generation of leaders.

- **Sarah Heffernan** (MA Service Design, NCAD Dublin) won an award in the For The Long Time category for her design project ***The Futures of Food***.

This is a speculative design project applying long time thinking to our food culture and ecosystem, to shift the restaurant industry model towards a circular, regenerative collective. Food production in Ireland has increasingly shifted off the island and many of the traditional communal agricultural practices are being lost. The Future of Food focuses on the restaurant industry specifically and how to encourage respect for the restorative traditions of our past food systems and care for the needs of future generations. Using speculative storytelling, through a pseudo-documentary, website, and 'official' government letters, participants are able to understand how their actions now have consequences in the future. Once the problems are clearly shown, an alternate restaurant business model is proposed that incorporates sustainable practices and promotes food sovereignty and security for all.

- **Lauren O'Brien** (BA Graphic Design, NCAD Dublin) was Highly Commended in the Moving Pictures category for her animation ***Choose Your Future***.

The animation is set in a game show world that highlights the personal burden felt by having to make a choice for your own future and for the future of the planet.

- **Aaron Conneely and Enya Carroll** (BA Product Design, NCAD Dublin) were Commended in the Right to Breathe category for their project ***RePlace***. Aaron and Enya created an alternative solution to traditional home hearths, which requires direct user interaction and acts as a social space and homage to our heritage.
- **Monique Wiesner and Lorcan Looney**, (BA Product Design, NCAD Dublin) were Highly Commended in the Material World category for their project ***Denim Soul***, a shoe-making kit for the creative consumer that enables them to upcycle used denim into fresh custom footwear.

Professor Sarah Glennie, Director, NCAD commented, *"NCAD could not be prouder of our graduates who consistently inspire us with their creative vision and ambition to make the world a better place. We are delighted to see the extraordinary work of this group of students gain the international recognition they deserve and I would like to pay tribute to them and also to the NCAD staff who supported and mentored them during their time with us."*

Professor Alex Milton, Head of the School of Design, NCAD, commented, *"The School of Design at NCAD seeks to demonstrate the potential of design to unravel complex problems, and it's fantastic to see our students being recognised by the RSA as the next generation of changemakers. To have three winners from a single college is unprecedented, and makes NCAD the most decorated institution globally in this year's highly prestigious international awards."*

Sam Russell, Head of Department of Product Design commented, *"It's fantastic to see Sarah, Liana and Renata's design work recognised in this year's RSA awards with two category wins. Sarah studied on our new MA Service Design and Liana and Renata are graduates of the BA Interaction Design programme in NCAD. They all excelled despite the challenging circumstances this year and we look forward to seeing the impact they can have as they graduate and start their careers in design."*

John Paul Dowling, Head of Department of Communication Design, commented, *"We are delighted to see both Zoe and Lauren's work being recognised at one of the world's most coveted design awards. It is testament to their hard work and creative practice. The awards further reinforce the quality of teaching and delivery of Moving Image Design content in the Department of Communication Design here at NCAD. In particular I wish to acknowledge the role of staff member Rory Hanhraham, who was instrumental in guiding the students towards their respective success."*

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