



**Royal College of Art**

Hola

# TELL US YOUR STORY!!

To anyone who has moved abroad,  
It's hard to be home in two  
different places at once.

Your letters can be found at  
all these RCA computers.  
Drop in your letters now  
to be part of the  
exhibit.

你好

ciao

வணக்கம்

Cześć

Привет

habari

RCA  
RCA

नमस्कार

bawoni

# Letters to the Untethered





# Our project

## What?

Create an interactive exhibition based on letters and drawings we receive from students relating and expressing their own feelings towards the theme of the project “untethered” A combination of an exhibition and a workshop that brings students together, viewing and telling their stories.

## Why?

To connect international students that feel untethered and offer them a safe space alongside students that relate to how they are feeling. Bring awareness to this feeling and hopefully help through curating a safe space. Were not trying to solve the problem, just show others theyre not alone.

## How?

Advertising the exhibition alongside letter boxes on all 3 RCA campuses, for students to see and interact with our project. They will be able to submit work in the letter boxes to show at the exhibition. Alongside the letter boxes we included posters, specifically a poster of a letter one of our curators wrote, showing that members of the team also feel untethered, and its a personal project for us as well as our audience.



# Initial project Ideas and timeline

Our initial approach to the project was understanding what our possible outcomes could be, this included:

- Book (which we decided against because of lack of interaction with an audience)
- Workshop
- Curating an exhibition

Our project slowly manifested into a combination of a workshop and exhibition with the utilisation of letters and stories from students that resonate to the project. This combination of a workshop and exhibition was key to the project as we wanted people to interact as well as view work as an audience.

Our target audience being international students living in London. A key part of the project was to make participants comfortable enough to share their experiences with us. As all of us in this group have personal experiences with moving to London, a key part of the workshop is for the participants to hear our stories, whether a piece of written text, or a series of artwork, so they can then feel comfortable expressing their own.

# Project Timeline

Across  
RCA

## WEEK 3-4

- Research existing loneliness programs or workshops in London
- Reach out to potential participants through surveys or interviews to understand their needs
- Identify potential funding sources and apply for grants if needed
- Research venue that a talk or workshop could work in



## WEEK 6 ONWARDS

- Finalise applicants to be a part of the workshop
- Conduct the loneliness response workshop
- Gather feedback from participants for evaluation and improvement. Document the workshop process and outcomes for future reference
- Documentation should include material for advertising the workshop, portfolio material, and photography that can be included in any potential online publications
- Follow up with participants to gather post-workshop feedback
- Complete a comprehensive report on the workshop, including successes, challenges, and lessons learned

## WEEK 1-2

- Research workshops and artworks showcasing loneliness
- Primary research maybe 10-20 students that could give their experience
- Record these experiences (with permission) transcribe these conversations and find common themes/learn from experiences
- Begin researching resources that can aid a workshop/talk focused on vulnerable subjects
- Begin drafting a project proposal outlining the workshop's goals, activities, and expected outcomes



## WEEK 5-6

- Develop workshop content, including discussion topics and activities
- Create materials, handouts, and any necessary visual aids
- Finalise risk assessment for the project

- Possible installation featuring soundscapes, letters from untethereds - curating a sensory experience, a replication of untethereds' experiences, that encourages resonance with other untethereds or reflection by locals



# Project Form

This is the end embodiment of our project.

Across  
RCA

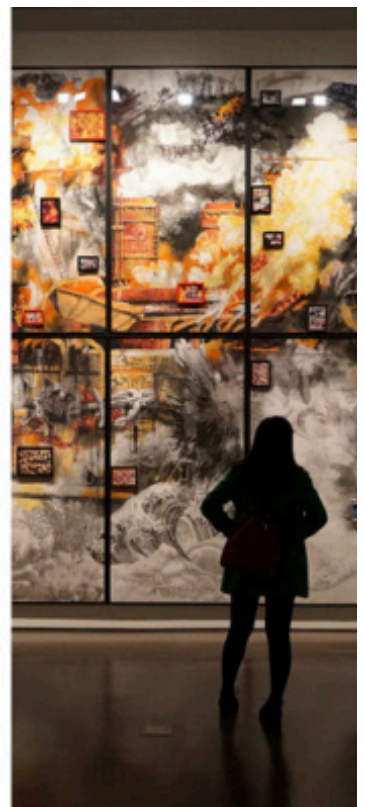


## • Possible Embodiment 01

Interactive workshop video - End here if we feel like this captures the essence of our project's mission

## • Possible Embodiment 02

Beyond the workshop - An installation featuring soundscapes, letters from untethereds - a sensory experience that encourages resonance or reflection



# Letter box curation & research

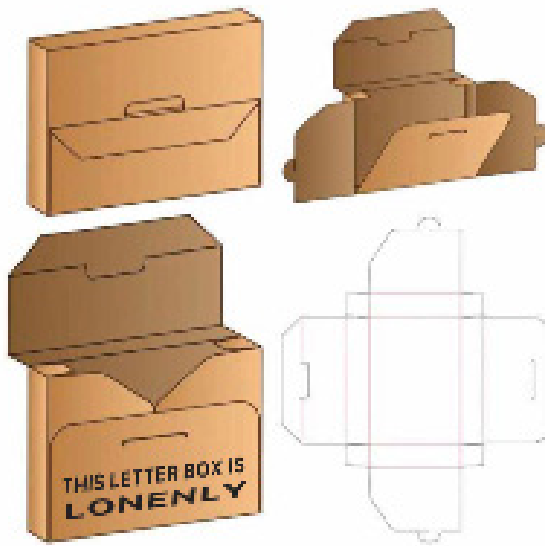
Moving forward with the concept of collecting stories from international students we researched the idea of incorporating letter boxes on each campus to collect letters from students that resonated with feeling lonely.

Our key word started out as “lonely” and we based our research on art work depicting loneliness.

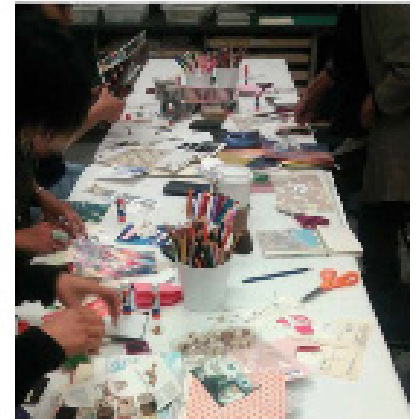
The word loneliness then eventually became untethered, as we felt it described the feeling we wanted to portray better than lonely, which tends to have a negative connotation and risked distancing subjects from the project.



# LETTER BOX DESIGN IDEAS



- Creating letterbox/envelopes and placing them around the campus for students to interact with
- Coming up with conversation building statements to go with the envelope design
- Plan a workshop with international students to create a platform to share and connect on local issues.



# LETTER CURATION IDEAS



On the wall connected with a space to write on it.



As a folded publication

As a 3d structure made of paper



While away on assignment, the cartoonist and illustrator Alfred Joseph Frush would send letters home to his wife Guisette Fanzouli. Through collage, cuts and structural folds, Frush demonstrates quite liberally how space can be constructed through letter-writing, as the page forms the walls of a gallery.

Image by Alfred Joseph Frush, 1910. From the book 'The Art of Letterpress' by Simon Ståhl.



# Process of creating letterboxes

Letters to the Untethered

The letter boxes were created by repurposing laser cut scraps. This introduced green art into the project and rehoming materials instead of discarding found paper. Not only did this introduce green art and sustainability to the project, but also goes hand in hand with our philosophy of the project of students finding new homes during their studies.

Caring Society

Each box differentiated in size, as did the letters we received from students. Offering similarities and also a juxtaposition between our means to receive the letters, and the letters themselves. Finding beauty in what is left behind, for example scrap materials, and reminding us to look back and utilise what we have.

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AcrossRCA

We painted the leftover laser-cut pieces to mark the presence of everyone in that shared space, symbolizing our collective creation. This connected us to the space and each other throughout the exhibition. Colouring the laser cuts at the end was also a poignant way to signify the exhibition's end.



# Outcome of prints and letterboxes

The letter boxes were an innovative way of drawing attention, an interactive aspect that we wanted throughout the project, not just during the exhibition. As well as the boxes and the posters we used one of our letters as a separate poster, to show our audience that we also feel the same as them.

From a marketing perspective using the letter posters alongside a QR code for an online submission option was a separate entity in itself, those who didn't feel comfortable being seen writing a letter or interacting with the letter box could do everything digitally through the QR code.

The curators' entry letter poster hung off the wall like a book so our posters didn't drown in the sea of posters, allowing spectators to view it as something different to the conventional advertising poster.

The boxes are also a way to keep the project alive beyond the exhibition. We're looking into reinstalling the boxes now that we're through with the exhibition, leaving a space/void for people to express themselves all term.



# Curating the exhibition

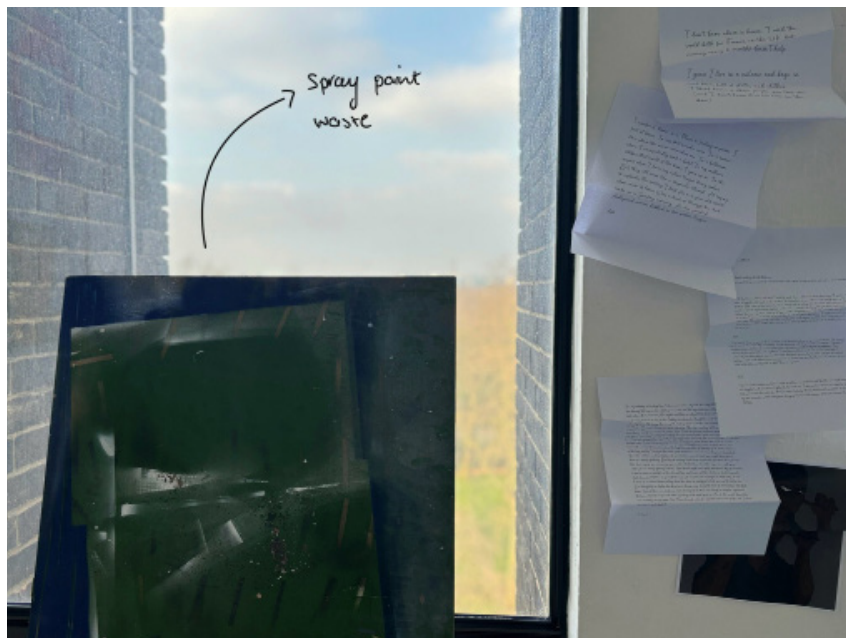
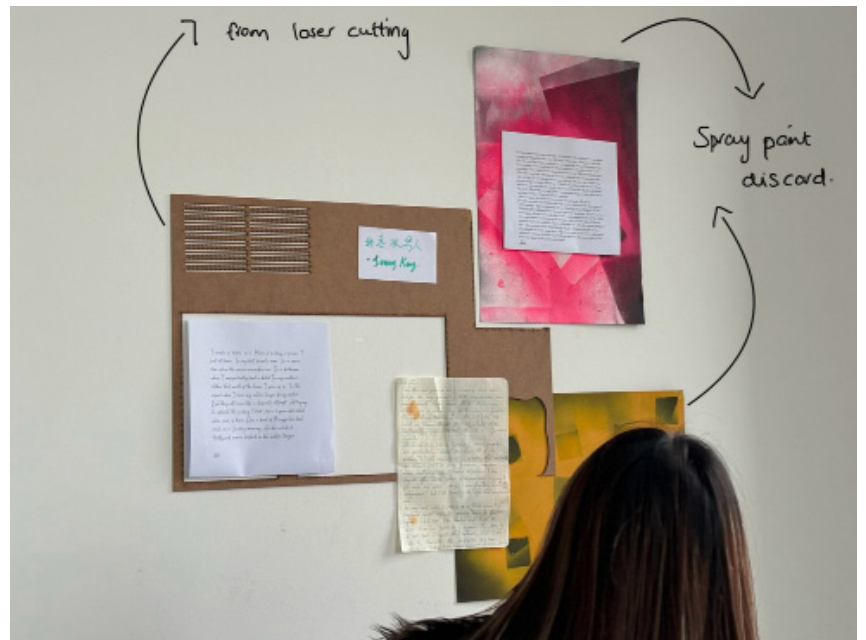
Letters to the Untethered

The idea of green art in the project began during the construction of the letter boxes, in which we used discarded laser cut material to create them. We decided to utilise this idea and incorporate green art and reusing material through the curation of the exhibition as well

Caring Society

Initially our idea was to create a background for all the letters, using painting, graphics, and drawings. However during our time spray painting our letter boxes we found discarded scraps covered in spray paint, which we used as background for our letters during the exhibition.

AcrossRCA



I've lived in quite a few places before London, and I've never been able to find one where the thing about being back home that was better than anywhere else.

Africa isn't generally as glamorous as other colonies might be and people often make the mistake of thinking that the quality of African people lives adversely affects their happiness, but they couldn't be more wrong. The people back there love life and live love. They're really happy.

Every year the price for flight tickets to African continents like West is terribly cheap, the day forward, African people scrambling to get away from the weary, lonely lives that the people live here. It's more expensive to go to Africa during Christmas than to go to New Zealand two times over. Indeed, I couldn't go back this year as it was out of my budget. I was devastated. There's just something about being there. I didn't realise until I left. And the more I move around, the more I appreciate heritage.

I believe every race of people have their own struggles. Love is more Strategy, loyalty to another. But love is love. Not romantic, not ideal, not one friendship, but at least that's true. Community, joy, happiness. These are ours. We learn to see that people live here or individually around the world, and die without having ever experienced communal love. It's hard to explain. Being loved because you're a neighbor's daughter. Your friend's friend's child being your cousin. And everyone's your family whether you like it or not.

To try to make it clear, Reply 1985 is a African drama my friends here loved about 4 or 5000. Proud, because it's beautiful.

And someone they said I wished it and never than any like they were. I wondered again what was so mind blowing about it really, when it hit me that the magic of being life that way isn't accessible to anyone. Not even understood, it's not anyone's culture. It's a great world for anyone looking to understand what I mean by communal love. Being helped isn't because you have to be worth it, or worth anyone's love, but just because you're here. Just because you're alive and you're connected in some way. Because you're someone's something.

It's not all love though. Like I said Strategy is our main strength. But her love was a why it's been common and the world still takes advantage of the African continent, no questions asked, savagely with no justice. They just take it. And get me wrong, the African people have fought in there, it's just very little. Other races definitely have love, maybe it's just little? It's what it is.

Every day I grow in understanding of the fascination of what I left behind. I have so many people around me here, people I love and who love me. It's not the same. They don't know what living that way is. Most of the African people don't even realize it either to be fair, it's so ingrained in us that we don't realize it's suddenly what we leave, looking for life in other places, and it becomes clear how fascinating that way of being is. How it feels, how it connects, how hard it is to experience that and then love it. You realize that loneliness (not talking about being alone) is how life is lived in other places and you have to adapt to that too. That's the catch, the struggle that you only know after you leave.

I don't know what suddenly made me go off on the 20 randomly, but I'm sure of one thing. I've done to several places. I'm in my twenties, love to strategy, hard looking for opportunities and to make a difference. The people back there showed me so, said I needed to go to school to get on in the world and make them proud. I think I'd give it all away though, for the life back home. It's not an easy life at all but I'd love. Unfortunately they expected a lot from me. One thing has said with their friends. I'll give my way then for you, make them proud. Maybe I will, maybe I won't. But in either case, I'll make sure I love it here!



I've lived abroad my entire adult life. At this point, I'm a foreigner in my home country of Poland as well as the UK where I live now. Throughout this time I've observed how being a minority has increased my sense of belonging to my home country. I now look back to Polish traditions and culture in my work - something I don't think I'd be doing had I not moved. This isn't the first time I've experienced this. Growing up, I went to a Jewish school (only one in the city) and my Jewish identity was stronger than my Christian one (despite my parents being practicing Christians). I think some of that is due to how I was perceived - for most friends outside of my school, I was the only Jewish friend they had. This perhaps is why I feel so comfortable living in other places than my home country - I was an outsider anyways.

After moving to the UK, I met one of my closest friends. His great grandparents were Polish Jews who emigrated to Brazil at the beginning of 20th century. My friend growing up loved learning about Poland. He has a Polish passport although never learned to speak the language. He grew up in a much bigger Jewish community than I did - and perhaps because of that didn't have much interest in that part of his identity. And so until today, if there's a question on Jewish traditions, origins of holidays etc - I'm the expert among us too. Any questions about Polish history though - I direct straight to him. I've thought about this many times. Why do we relate to the more 'suppressed' identities? At times, it makes me feel like an imposter. But more often I just think that 'home' is not a place, just people.

-Rita.

Dear Lu,

I was born and grew up in a country that was foreign to my parents. In 2010, they decided our family would move back. At the time, my brother was a baby, my sister was six years old, and I was twelve. I am the only one who lived in France longer than anywhere else. Culturally, I am the only French in a German family.

We moved to a city in Germany, where peoples are particularly closed minded. All of the sudden, I was considered a weirdo. As I neither new how to read or write German, teachers were bullying me. I started to believe I am stupid. After three years of desperately trying to fit into my peer group, I was finally socially integrated - but I was bored by the life that surrounded me.

The way out was to move to a third country. England cured me. So I tried to move to Germany again. I did not like Berlin and hope to never live in Germany again. My family is sad that I reject that culture, but I can't help it. However, this migration has been enriching. I also love Germany. Lots of Love, Sonia.

There aren't a lot of cats here.

Back in China, there are a lot of cats on campus (And we have very cheap dormitories on campus) and restaurants

My mom had a cat after I moved abroad

it's so cute! I want to play with it so much. But the only thing I can do is watch all those videos my mom films in our family group chat. (squeeze it <sup>my</sup> face in its fur)

8/Mar  
Hello!!  
This is Molly  
Today is my holiday (maybe also yours)  
emmmmmmmmm

I want to be happy recently, especially today.  
I'm going to find something to do,  
instead of agonising over across rca's personal  
statement. ☹️

I'm gonna go out. Bye. 🙋

By the way, send you a sentence I love  
"I am perfectly perfect who I am"

(I don't know why, but I felt better when  
I wrote this sentences 😊)  
(I need to write it 100 times everyday)

from my role model  
Amber Liu

I moved here 10 years ago and attended University a couple years ago. Being a 'mature' student was weird as everyone was 18 and I was 21. Therefore I felt instantly a bit dim. However I learned that uni was a more welcoming environment, taking it more serious than my peers, therefore creating relationships with my lecturers and fellow classmates. Society here can be a bit cold and I struggled to fit in. Making a couple of friends here and there but nothing like home. Coming from Cyprus everyone is incredibly welcoming and a more collectivist society. I don't think I'll ever find something like that here, maybe that's the beauty of it. Home will always be home. I talk to my dad and family back home over FaceTime and viber. I miss them a lot and sometimes think to myself that maybe I'm in the wrong place. The future at the moment is quite uncertain for a lot of young people especially students. Life why am I investing so much time if there are wars peaking their heads round the corner and so many unjust things happening in the world.

I've lived abroad my entire adult life. At this point, I'm a foreigner in my home country of Poland as well as the UK where I live now. Throughout this time I've observed how being a minority has increased my sense of belonging to my home country. I now look back to Polish traditions and culture in my work something I don't think I'd be doing had I not moved. This isn't the first time I've experienced this. Growing up I went to a Jewish school (only one in the city) and my Jewish identity was stronger than my Christian one (despite my parents being practicing Christians). I think some of that is due to how I was perceived - for most friends outside of my school I was the only Jewish friend they had. This perhaps is why I feel so comfortable living in other places than my home country - I was an outsider anyway.

After moving to the UK I met one of my closest friends. His great grandparents were Polish Jews who emigrated to Brazil at the beginning of 20th century. My friend growing up loved learning about Poland. He has a Polish passport although never learned to speak the language. He grew up in a much bigger Jewish community than I did - and perhaps because of that didn't have much interest in that part of his identity. And so until today, if there's a question on Jewish traditions, origins of holidays etc - I'm the expert among us two. Any questions about Polish history though - I direct straight to him. I've thought about this many times. Why do we relate to the more 'suppressed' identities? At times, it makes me feel like an imposter. But more often I just think that 'home' is not a place, just people.

- Ruta

I was reading this book called a forced migration and it said 'Estrangement is the price to pay for higher spheres of life'. I feel somewhat the same, while I have come here for the perceived 'better life', the price to pay for that is being away from my family - the one I miss very much.

I have been to London before and I loved it then but living in a place vs visiting is very different. I had found it very charming during my last visit but now the charm is lost on me. While I live in a very nice area, with manicured gardens and clean roads and giant supermarkets, the isolation that comes with living on my own and being in a individualistic society overpowers the beauty in my surroundings.

I constantly seem to be questioning this idea of a better life. Is being with the people you love a better life? Or is access to clean environments, infrastructure a better life?

I moved here 10 years ago and attended University a couple of years ago. Being a 'mature' student was weird as everyone was 18 and I was 21. Therefore I felt instantly a bit dim. However I learned that uni was a more welcoming environment, taking it more serious than my fears. Therefore creating relationships with my lecturers and fellow classmates. Society here can be a bit cold and I struggled to fit in. Making a couple of friends here and there but nothing like home. Coming from Cyprus everyone is incredibly welcoming and a more collectivist society. I don't think I'll ever find something like that here, maybe that's the beauty of it. Home will always be home. I talk to my dad and family back home over Facetime and iMessage. I miss them a lot and sometimes think to myself that maybe I'm in the wrong place. The future at the moment is quite uncertain for a lot of young people especially students. Like why <sup>am</sup> I investing so much time if there are wars breaking their heads round the corner and so many unjust things happening in the world.

I MISS MY CATS SOOO MUCH !!!

It's tough to be away from home I guess. I used to live in London for 4 years, and went back home for 2 years. It's pretty weird, I miss home ~~at~~ at London, and I miss London at home... I guess I have parts of me ~~in~~ at home and London at the same time?

To the untethered

I

I stopped counting after the third one. visa, passport stamps, some find of a transport ticket, and a place to lay my head, yet again. I was elsewhere.

II

I still don't know what to write when I read the words 'home address' in all of those forms. My phone does not either. It suggests a list of places I've visited. It's truncated, of course, there is not enough space in the screen to fit them. Still, some of them feels relevant. I always end up writing after Facebook stops and second thoughts sometimes I find myself writing absolute random ones. I wouldn't be lying though, there is not much difference between the ones my phone wants me to type and the imaginary ones. I heartily remember some streets I lived in. People I have never heard of now rest their heads at night in those places. I might never put a foot on them ever again. The only imprints of me there are the ghosts I left behind, and the place I lay my head at night is not my home address neither, this is not my home. It is my shelter. A tent made of concrete. An overly long note of postage.

III

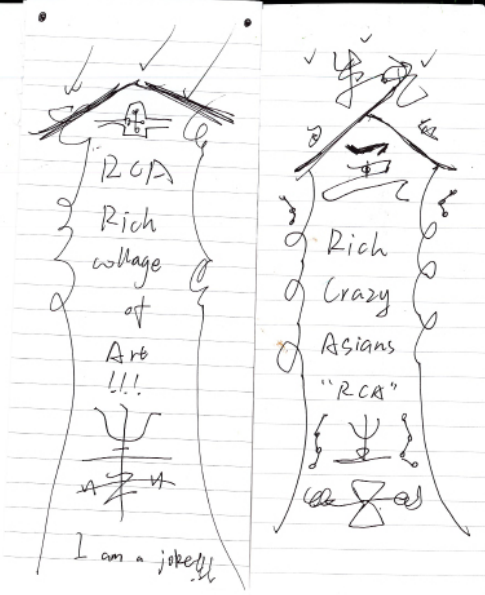
I am named. I am immigrant. I am in transit. I am built from the pieces of many landscapes. I've learned how to surround them when they are lacking. I walk my journey with the great shoes of ambition. I thought I was going to grow out of them. I execute quantum jumps, my presence is scattered beyond my substance. I am sustained by the spirits of those who enlighten me. I carry those multitudes inside and I never walk alone. I continuously miss these physical expressions, the hectic abundance of proximity. I wished I stopped the constant nostalgia, rooted in the broken dream of omnipresence. I learned from pain that the liminal existences are as valid as the static ones they told us about. These are my selves.

IV

I became used to reduce my life to a couple of suitcases: one of them is red, the other one, bright orange, that one struggles to roll. I believe it's gotten tired from the use. I also sometimes think it is a projection of myself, telling me to stop the erratic flow that I've done it already, that I should not to precipitate to build a home, my suit incarnates in that rolling piece of luggage to pass on this message. I think it's because I don't dare to.   
-PPGA

I've been moving around countries with different cultures. Even though I enjoy the experiences of traveling around, getting to know new people, trying new food, I sometimes feel very cut up, scattered around, starting to question who I am, where I belong. You start to search for the idea of home when you left one.

I moved to the UK 4 years ago and there are days and moments where I still struggle to think of it as 'HOME'.  
Home for me doesn't have a fixed meaning... maybe I'm just used to being "in the middle" now. Maybe it'll come with time.  
☺  
I'm comfortable for now.



I wonder if 'home' is a Place or feeling or person I  
feel at home In my best friend's arms In a corner  
store where the owner remembers me In a bathroom  
where I unexpectedly find a bidet In my mother's  
clothes that smell of the home I grew up in In the  
airport when I hear my native tongue being spoken  
But they all seem like a desperate attempt At trying  
to replicate the feeling I had As a 6 year old child  
whose sense of home Was a bowl of Maggi her dad  
made on a Sunday morning As she watched  
Hollywood movies dubbed in her native tongue

kpb

It is my birthday in two days time. I have never made a big deal out of my birthdays, but it felt nice knowing that my parents would buy me a cake and that my friends from college would without fail, video call me at 12:00 AM together and then we will just talk about random stuff. We never made a big deal out of any of this. Nobody ever planned or thought too much about it. It came naturally to us. The loving, the caring, the looking out for each other was as much a part of me as breathing. Moving to London has been liberating. The city is exciting, bustling with life, and there's always something new around the corner. But I miss the grandly decorated birthday cake from the local bakery and I miss my friends making the same overused jokes again and again (we still laugh ever time). I miss talking to the lady at the small corner store down the road every time I walk past her. I miss the horribly hot and humid weather. It made me sweat buckets but it was so so warm. I remember when I first arrived at London one of my first thoughts was 'Wow everyone here is super nice!'. It was a breath of fresh air from the tough love you often get growing up in India. However, as the days went by I realized that while people back home were never nice, they were always kind. Your older relatives would probably make some tasteless comment about your weight when you see them in a family gathering. But they be running to put heaps of food onto your plate when you visit their home saying, you are growing you need to eat lots (does not matter if you are a full grown adult, you are always growing to them). Your parents might never fully understand why you decided to pick a career as unstable as the arts and they would voice out their disdain in heated moments. But when you tell them of you tell them you got accepted into a foreign art school, they do not hesitate for a moment before putting down their house for mortgage to help you pay the tuition fee. Even though life in London has been fun in its own way, I miss the sense of community I had back home. Even if there were people you did not truly liked, there was always an unspoken agreement that you will look out for each other. Existing in the same space as a ton of other people physically and mentally was my norm. Now I have to make calendar appointments to meet people and I don't know how to feel about it.

cattadyr26

# Our exhibition

Our main objective was to create a soothing experience with relaxing music, to create the perfect space to let the audience resonate with the letters and create a reflective atmosphere.

We worked to make the exhibition space feel warm and inviting, using scattered posters from around campus to cover one white wall. We were mindful of not creating waste, opting to reuse and upcycle materials wherever possible, incorporating our philosophy of green art.

This wasn't your average exhibition; we aimed to create a space for rest, reflection, and connection for students, in line with our caring theme. Visitors could share their thoughts on the pieces and even take a piece of the exhibition home with them.

Seeing how deeply the exhibition touched people, the conversations we had, the hugs - it was heartwarming. Many admired the pieces and engaged in conversations. We "reflection tickets" measured success, the fact that some suggested making it an annual event spoke volumes. We had around 40-45 attendees and received 25 submissions.

From the outset, our objective was clear: to provide a safe space for international students and to create an archive of this process through documentation. We aimed to ensure that students in the future could look back, reflect, and feel seen, fostering a sense of belonging and connection across cultures. This aspect of the exhibition was particularly fulfilling, knowing that it would leave a lasting impact beyond its physical presence, through documentation and preserving the project digitally (website) and physically (zine)



The main structure of the exhibition was the engagement through art and letters we received from international students. They shared how hard it was for them to adjust to life in a new place, far from home. Reading those letters reminded us of the real people behind the art, as well as reminding us about our own feelings towards moving abroad.

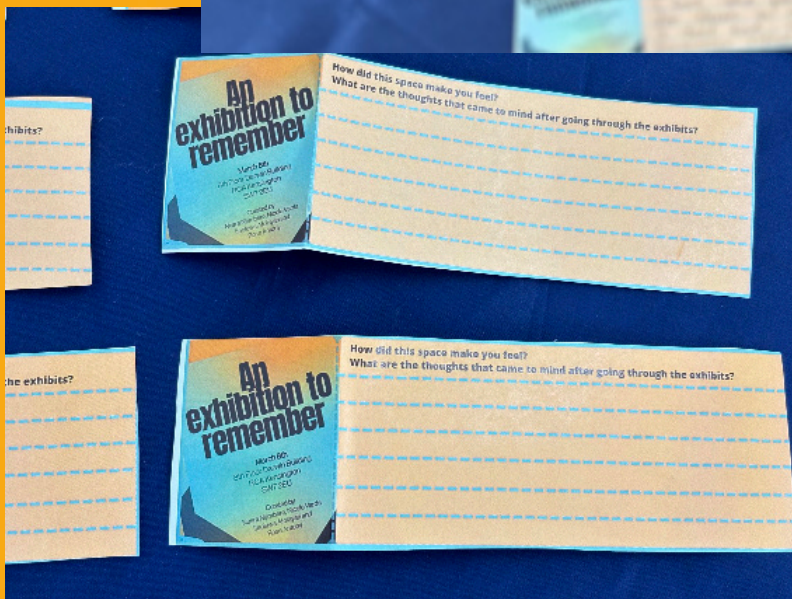
One letter stood out. The student had mentioned their birthday was coming up, and we assumed it would be around the day of the exhibition. One of our team members took it upon themselves to bake a cake unsure of if the owner would turn up. Watching the expression of the letter writer was so heartening, reminding us and our audience that the event was a personal experience for all.





# Audience response to exhibition

We designed “reflection tickets” doubling as a tool to measure the success of the project and allow for audience to reflect but also a way for the audience to take the exhibition physically home with them through our website where more letters will continue to reside.



Letters to the Untethered

Caring Society

AcrossRCA

How did this space make you feel?

What are the thoughts that came to mind after going through the exhibits?

As an international student, loneliness is a constant feeling, so much so that it doesn't feel too out of place anymore. It was more like a feeling kept aside maybe for a while now, but this project/space made it feel more validated. Really accepting x

How did this space make you feel?

What are the thoughts that came to mind after going through the exhibits?

It made me feel not alone. It's lovely to hear what everyone's thoughts about "home" are. ~~It's~~ sending love to everyone feeling unmoored <3.

How did this space make you feel?

What are the thoughts that came to mind after going through the exhibits?

Very cozy. Free and comfortable

I want your group to continue this workshop in this year. As a place for community of international students. My suggestion is to create some thing for audience, like "painting together".

How did this space make you feel?

What are the thoughts that came to mind after going through the exhibits?

It reminded me of my in-between-ness, of not fitting in anywhere. And that I am not alone in this thought.

How did this space make you feel?

What are the thoughts that came to mind after going through the exhibits?

Resonated with others' thoughts!  
Definitely the definition of home had changed for me, don't know if it's a place anymore but more like an emotion or some special moments!



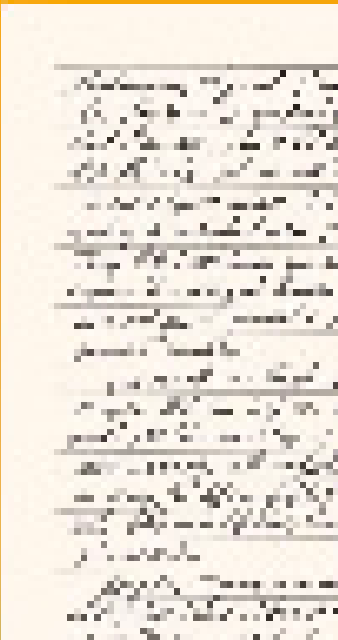
The conversations and interactions that took place

Looking ahead, we aim to preserve the legacy of the ex... providing a space for continuing letters. By capturing... we hope to create a lasting impact that extends far be... future generations of students can look back, reflect, their experiences of untetheredness. We are also in ta... for more RCA cohorts to come. We see -

# LETTERS TO T

Letter #1: Medical Criminal

to: [Name] | [Address] | [City, State, Zip] | [Phone Number]



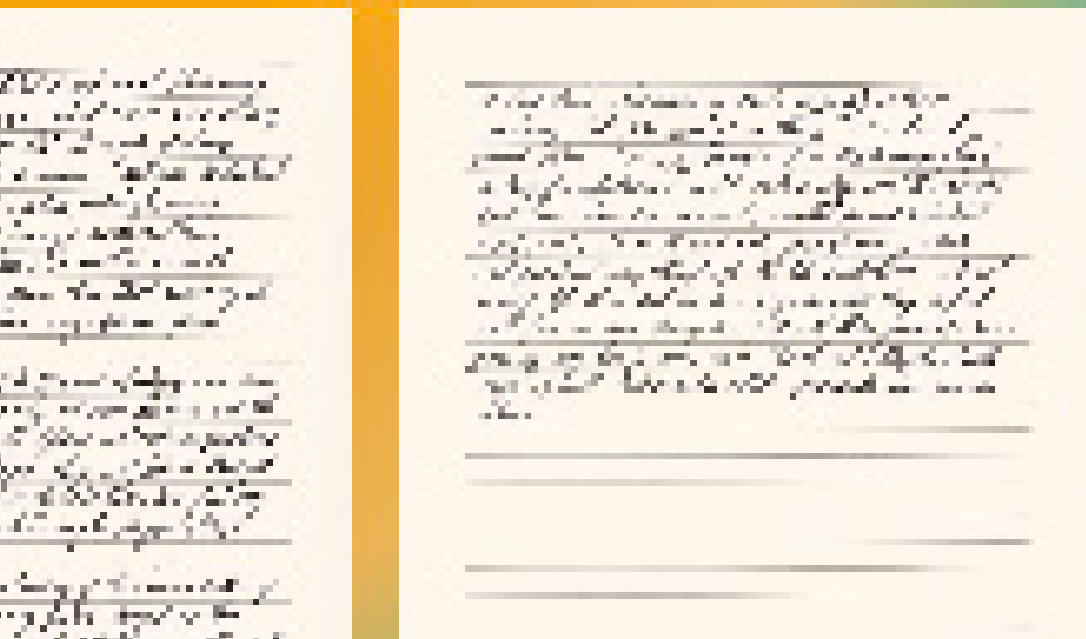
...e during the event were particularly heartwarming.

...hibition through documentation and digital archiving and  
...g the stories and experiences shared during the event,  
...eyond its physical presence. Our goal is to ensure that  
... and find comfort in knowing that they are not alone in  
...lks with the student Union to have this on the intranet  
...them, we are them and we care for them.

## THE UNTETHERED

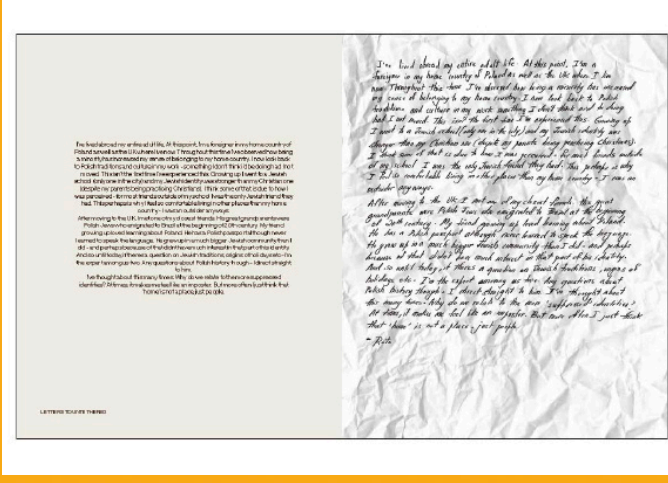
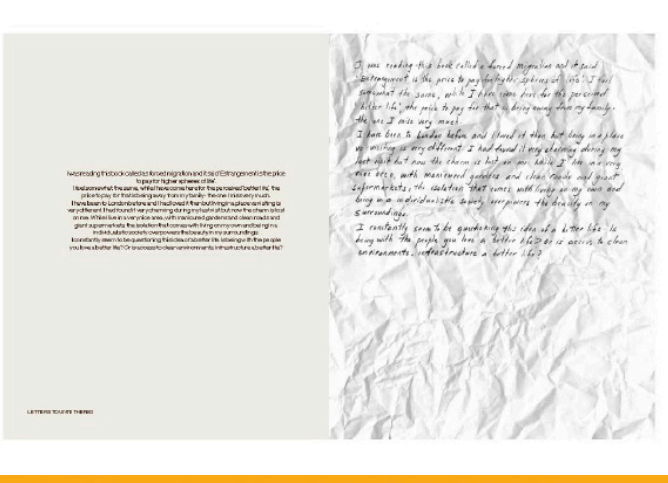
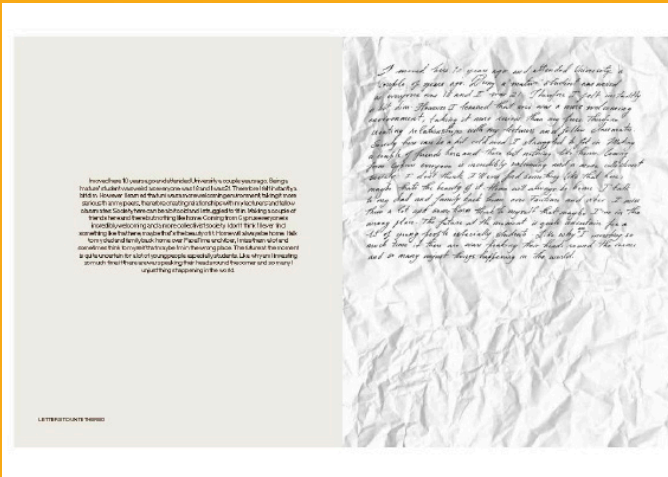
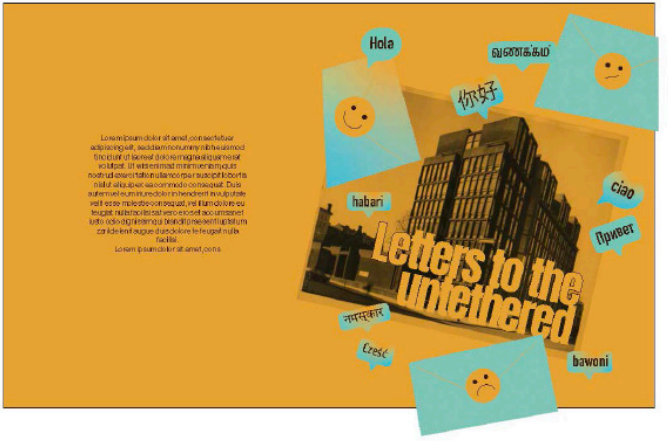
...edi that would be used

...long it takes to make them possible.



# The Zine to be placed in the libraries across campus - Another avenue we are continuing the impact of the exhibition.

Letters to the Untethered



Caring Society



AcrossRCA

