KEIR WILLIAMS

CREATIVE TECHNOLOGIST, EDUCATOR, RESEARCHER

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Introduction

I am a **creative technologist**, **educator** and **researcher**. Underpinning my approach to all three is a philosophy that recognises the potential for art, design and technologies to make and take on practical and effective roles in wider society and culture.

Currently I am a lecturer in design thinking at the Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the University of Bristol, UK (UoB). My time is divided between my role as creative technologist and academic. My research and practice considers **participatory processes** and structures in relation to accessibility, performance, advocacy and the potential of **'playing the fool'** in all three. Whilst there are some distinctions in the aims and approaches within both these roles, it is important that the skills and experiences acquired in one inform the others.

I have worked within higher education institutions for over 15 years; as a programme leader, senior lecturer, researcher, research assistant and technical demonstrator. This range of experience gives me the skills and passion to understand and work within the complex dynamics present in academic environments.

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Lecturer Design Thinking

I have worked as a lecturer in design thinking at the Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship a tthe University of Bristol since September 2017. In this role I work with students from thirteen different diciplines who attend our innovation programme as joint honour students. This unique course allows us to draw together cohorts of highly skilled students to solve problems in our and other people's worlds.

Engaged Learning e.g.

In my role as programme director (2016-2017) of the Digital Media at the University of Central England I developed a number of collaborations with prominent Bristol institutions and smaller SME's. I have continued these collaborations into my teaching at the University of Bristol's Centre forInnovation and Entreprenuership where I currently teach.

I devised a collaboration with the University of Bristol Theatre Collection for our PGT students' first engaged project for their 'Designing with Difference' unit. I worked with the Keep of the Live Art and Digital Live Art collection Julian Warren on an assignment that engaged our students with primary sources from a subject that was outside of all of the students' academic disciplines (previously to starting the MSc). Students were provided with 10 key objects from the collection (chosen by staff) and ask to choose one to 'create an exhibition based on the object for an audience who would not typically access the collection'.

Students exhibited their research in the Theatre Collections public gallery for two months. The public exhibition gave our students a chance to demonstrate their abilities to both internal and external audiences in an internationally accredited, museum and archive context. The keepers of the theatre collection selected three pieces of student work from the exhibition to be stored in the permanent collection.

This project `provided an opportunity for our students to engage with both practical and theoretical themes around participation, archiving, collections, live art, theatre, and curation. Our student's research led them to meet with experts in diversity at the Bristol Old Vic, community carnival experts from St Paul's and fellows of the Frank B archives. Alongside the development work with the theatre collection I visited and discussed the innovative approaches to engaged learning of two key Keepers of university special collections; Gustavo Grandal Montero - Keeper, Chelsea Special Collections & Dr. Sarah Aitchison - Keeper, UCL special collections.

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Programme Leadership

In November 2016 I was asked to take over programme leadership of the Digital Media BSc programme at UWE with my colleague **Dr Dave Meckin**. The course was on special measures and in danger of closing due to a lack of leadership by an absent programme leader. We accepted the joint position and immediately began a process of consultation and analysis of the programme with students, academics and admin staff at UWE and the **Hong Kong Design Institute** where the course is jointly run.

We identified the following three key issues: a lack of programme identity, a lack of consistency across programme teaching, and a lack of publicity both external and internal. In response to this process myself and Dave have successfully written and introduced **four new 30 credit modules** for the 2017/2018 academic year (1/3 of the programme) and developed a number of internal and external partnerships allowing for a range of live briefs, student shows (**Creative Technology Showcase**) and international student exchange and field trips (**Hong Kong**, **Transmediale, Berlin**, ITU, Copenhagen)

In February 2017 **we wrote a rational for provision** for the course and presented it to a 'critical evaluation panel' consisting of three members of the university executive. We successfully negotiated the continuation of the course, an increase in our student tariff from 25 to 40, a new senior lecturer position and a commitment to new investment in equipment and facilities for the programme. Through a recruitment drive and engagement with external FE institutions we have seen an increase in applications for the course of 61% (75 applicants 2016/2017, 121 applicants 2017/2018).

Teaching

My teaching approach is student-led and engaged. It grounds theoretical teaching within a broader base of technical skills, creative play and critical consideration of socio-political contexts. In my work I have worked with people from a wide range of abilities, cultural backgrounds and impairments, giving me the skills and knowledge to work with and learn from students, clients and staff no matter what their background or abilities.

I take an inclusive approach to teaching that recognises students' experience and knowledge as of equal importance to my own and the need to adjust teaching methods and resources to ensure all students have access to learning. As a lecturer I have developed a number of units and degree courses (see my full academic CV) for undergraduate and post-graduaste teaching.

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Senior Lecturer

In my role as senior lecturer for the 'Creative Technologies' cluster at UWE I have written and led modules in Design Thinking (new level 1 course this year), **User Experience (level 2)**, **Interaction Design** (level 3) and supervised students' creative dissertation projects in the student-led **Creative Technologies Project**.

Throughout my modules I have worked with a range of local and national organisations to develop live-briefs, guest lectures and public showings of student work. Guests have included: Dr Rob Phillips (Head of Designing Products at RCA), Lisa Long (VP of Product Management at Telenor), Jess Thom and Matthew Poutney (touretteshero) Lalya Gaye (creative technologist), Dave Ellender (senior UX consultant), George Rowe (Aardman Interactive), Lee Hutchinson & Becky Peters (MShed curators). Further examples of live briefs developed by my third-year students' can be seen **here**.

For all the modules I teach at UWE I use a project based approach where I provide students with the theoretical, technical and contextual tools to conduct user-centred design processes.

Research

My research approach is qualitative, design-led, and participatory. It focuses on how we construct spaces for people to be creative and advocate for matters that affect them. Since the completion of my doctoral thesis, I have worked as an international **research partner**ship with the HSBC funded 'Robotics4SEN' research project at the VTC Hong Kong, as a lead researcher working with former prisoners as part of the EPSRC funded Pheonix Innovation project, a continuing longitudinal action research project between Bristol and the Norwegian Arctic.

My EPRSC funded MSc and Ph.D. research was concerned with the use of participatory design methods for developing creative technologies within a UK Special Educational Needs school. I embedded myself within a Special Educational Needs school in Bath for four years, working as a researcher, teaching assistant, and artist. During my Ph.D., I also worked on a joint research project at a special educational needs school in Newcastle with Culture Lab's (Newcastle University) SIDE project (Social Inclusion through Digital Economy's). During my research, I used a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods and methodologies, giving me a firm grounding in the conceptual and practical applications of research methodologies within interaction

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design as well as the actual programming and engineering skills required for designing in these challenging environments.

During my Ph.D., I have co-published and presented papers for international conferences and journals, including the Interaction Design and Children Conference (IDC) and Digital Interactive Systems (DIS). I have also had a paper accepted in both performance studies and music technology research conferences. I believe that writing, no matter what the audience should be clear and concise and accessible to a wide range of readers.

Research Assistant

I have worked as a research assistant in various academic contexts including: the **Visualisation Research Unit (VRU)**, BCU, Birmingham; The **Fine Art Digital Environment (FADE)** research group at Chelsea College of Arts and for the **Sociology department at Warwick University** (in collaboration with the **FIERCE live art festival**). I had multiple roles in these positions including supporting researchers in collecting, analysing and disseminating data, managing resources and liaising with other institutions and commercial partners in addition to building prototype systems for researchers. These projects enabled me to develop a range of methodological approaches to practice-led inquiry, analysis and dissemination.

Creative Technologist

My work as a creative technologist is integral to my wider professional practice. I use a range of tools and mediums to realise my work but have a strong attraction to the potential of performance, and play mediated through technology as a means to open up creative and discursive spaces for myself and those I work with. I use digital technology in much of my work but this does not define my work. Rather I see the tools and opportunities that digital technologies provide as one of a set of resources that I can call on as a practitioner.

Over the last four years I have organised and participated in on going residency, exhibition and performance with eight international visual artists and composers in the Arctic Circle. This was funded by a range of organisations including the British Council, Arts Council England and Arts Council Norway. In the UK I was commission by Bristol's MShed to produce an interactive exhibit for the 'Bristol Music' exhibition in summer 2018. In 2019 I installed a major exhibition at the 'We the Curious Gallery' with our Live Digital Design collective. I have exhibited my work in a range of contexts including galleries, residencies, festivals and larger arts institutions including Grizedale Arts, UK, **PS1 Gallery,**

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NY, TATE Modern, **TATE Britain**, Chapter Arts, Cardiff, The Instituto de Artes, Brazil and the **ICA, London**.

Technical Demonstrator

My experiences as a Technical Demonstrator at Birmingham City University, and at the London College of Fashion have given me the ability to teach within a range of technical areas with a specific focus on digital media production, programming for interaction design and rapid-prototyping. I have worked with participants in both open access and structured teaching environments where I have supported staff and students in a range of digital tools including: Adobe CC, Final Cut Studio, high level coding languages and hardware platforms and designing for and using rapid prototyping tools such as laser cutting, CNC and 3D printing.

Summary

In all my professional roles, I have to constantly maintain high levels of self-motivation, communication skills and time management, prioritising conflicting demands on my time in order to ensure my work is of an excellent standard and completed within deadlines. As a creative technologist, I exhibit my work nationally and internationally in fine art, design and performance contexts. I have developed and maintained a wide range of partnerships and collaborations across a spectrum of creative industries and institutions. I am excited by this unparalleled opportunity to work and help shape what to me is truly a world-class, ground-breaking and inclusive teaching environment.