

KEIR WILLIAMS

CREATIVE TECHNOLOGIST, EDUCATOR, RESEARCHER

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 senior lecturer in creative technologies and the programme leader of the Digital Media BSc at the University of the West of England (UWE). 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 12 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.

Contact

Dr Keir Williams MA MSc PGCert
keir.williams@uwe.ac.uk
07762613760
keirwilliams.com/me

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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. 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 rationale 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 non-didactic and broadly Constructivist (Papert:1991) and incorporates elements of the Bauhaus teaching approach (Itten, J.:1975). My approach grounds theoretical teaching within a broader base of technical skills, creative play and a critical consideration of socio-political contexts. It focuses on student-led and project based learning.

In my work as a researcher, educator and workshop facilitator I have worked with students with 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.

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Job Reference: Teaching Fellow in Design Thinking (Full Time)

Senior Lecturer

I make use of a range of digital and non-digital tools in my teaching. I use my industry and research experience to ensure my students engage with current industry approaches to collaboration, documentation and dissemination of their work. My recent use of digital systems in teaching includes using and collating students' **Twitter, GitHub, Trello, YouTube**, Dribbble accounts and blogs as a means to disseminate and discuss students' work in and out of teaching sessions.

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.

Associate Lecturer

I was employed by Camberwell College of Arts as a part-time associate lecturer where I led and devised lectures, tutorials, seminars, assessments and workshops for the Visual Art MA programme. I devised and taught a module on interaction design with a focus on critical design and interface prototyping. As part of my teaching I have taught a range of creative technology related tools and systems including: Adobe CC, Touch Designer, MAX/MSP, Processing, Modul8, Mad Mapper, Arduino and various other web development technologies and platforms. The Fine Art Digital MA course which was the focus of my teaching at Camberwell, is the longest running MA course within the UK with both an online and offline full-time cohort of students. Working on this course has given me the opportunity to work with students working in a range of international locations.

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Research

My research approach is broadly qualitative, design-led and participatory. I have recently been made a member of the DCRC research group at the Pervasive Media Lab, Bristol. I am an international research partner with the 'Robotics4SEN' research project at the VTC Hong Kong and will be presenting research from my Arctic Dialogues project this year at the TaPRA 2017 conference in Salford.

My EPSRC funded PhD study was completed at the CS department of Queen Mary University. The research was concerned with the use of participatory design methods for developing creative technologies within a UK Special Educational Needs (SEN) school. As part of my longitudinal and broadly ethnographic approach I embedded myself within a SEN school in Bath for four years, working as a researcher, teaching assistant and artist. Alongside this I worked as part of Newcastle Universities **Open Lab** at a special educational needs school in the North West of England. Throughout my PhD research, **I used a range of qualitative and quantitative methodologies** and methods within my participant schools' and universities' ethical frameworks. This has given me a strong grounding in the conceptual and practical applications of research methodologies required for conducting design-led research in sensitive and challenging research environments.

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.

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Technical Demonstrator

This summer and **last summer** I have organised and participated in a 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 have recently been commissioned by Bristol's MShed to produce an interactive exhibit for the 'Bristol Music' exhibition in summer 2018. I have exhibited my work in a range of contexts including galleries, residencies, festivals and larger arts institutions including Grizedale Arts, UK, **PS1 Gallery, NY**, TATE Modern, **TATE Britain**, Chapter Arts, Cardiff, The Instituto de Artes, Brazil and the **ICA, London**.

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.

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Citations

Itten, J. (1975). Design and form: The basic course at the Bauhaus and later. John Wiley & Sons.

Papert, S., & Harel, I. (1991). Situating constructionism. Constructionism, 36(2), 1-11.

Supporting Links

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Personal Website: About me

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Level 3 Interaction Design module: examples and materials

Level 2 User Experience module: examples and materials

Level 1 Design Thinking module: examples of teaching materials

Level 3 Creative Technologies Project: Supervision examples

Arctic Dialogue Exhibition Catalogue

Student Berlin Field Trip (student made film)

Student Hong Kong Field Trip (student made film)

Keir Williams at Grizedale Arts

Critical Review Document (Keir Williams & Dave Meckin)

Critical Review supporting documents including new modules specifications, course structure, open day slides, course material templates (by Keir Williams)