

# Digital Bodies + Virtual Spaces

A one day symposium exploring performance and digital world building

January 24<sup>th</sup> 2025

Anselm Studio 1

Canterbury Christ Church University

Book tickets:



**Canterbury  
Christ Church  
University**

## Contributing Artists

### AΦE (AE)

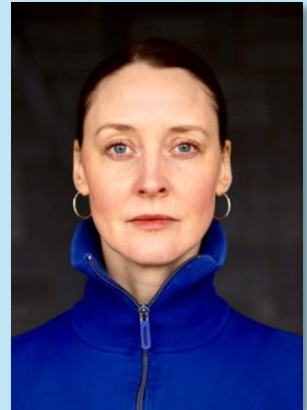
AΦE (AE) is a Medway/Kent (UK) based dance company founded by Aoi Nakamura and Esteban Lecoq. Their uniqueness lies in the use of technology to completely reinvent audience participation by touring their productions worldwide. AΦE is an associate artist of the Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries – University of Kent (iCCi) and in 2022 they launched A+E Lab, a cultural and technology hub located at Historic Dockyard Chatham, UK, producing innovative productions and delivering community and artist engagement programmes related to technology and culture. Across all their work, they engaged over 101,000 live audiences and participants internationally.



## Pell Ensemble



Rebecca Evans has created digital dance experiences since 2014 in the UK and abroad. Her work uses interactive and immersive technologies combined with dance including live streamed motion capture in augmented reality headset experiences (*Hinterlands* 2023). Through her work Rebecca continues to explore how digital and movement offer ways to appreciate our mutual dependency as part of a human, environmental and technological ecology to speculate on new futures and ways of being. This is often done through dystopian/utopian worlds that play with time underpinned by a neurodiverse perspective considering different intelligences and ways of sensing.



## Dr Boyd Branch

As a theatre artist and designer Boyd is interested in how digital technologies can extend the reach of live performance. He works with theatre directors, art centres, museums, universities, climate scientists, sustainability engineers, military veterans and other groups that share a desire to connect more profoundly with others. His work involves engineering digital environments that augment live performance with the reach of the web, the memory of hard drives, and the expressiveness of technical imagery.

Boyd teaches at Coventry University delivering courses in design, digital media for live performance, science communication, and improvisation. By teaching artists how to think and design with the formal strategies of digital technology, and scientists how to abandon formal strategies for communication and to speak artistically he novel spaces of human freedom can be discovered.



## Katie Dale-Everett Dance



Katie Dale-Everett Dance is a Sussex based dance company committed to community engagement, education, and artistic excellence. They work with technology and dance to bring communities together to explore playfulness and to question the world around us. Working across schools, homeless shelters, libraries and youth centres their work creates space for people to try new things, build new relationships and escape the everyday. Supporters of their work include Arts Council England National Lottery funding, the British Council, Manchester City of Literature and Studio Wayne McGregor.



## Programme

- 09.30 – Arrive and Welcome – Anselm Studio 1
- 10.00 - Introduction: Dr Andy Hurst, Nina Atkinson, James Middleton
- 10.30 – Dr Boyd Branch (Coventry University): Digital Theatre of the Oppressed: Agency in the Age of Artificial Bodies
- 11.15 – Aoi Nakamura, Esteban Lecoq (AΦE): *AI Immersive Storytelling: LILITH.AEON lecture Performance*
- 12.00 – Katie Dale-Everett (KDE Dance): *Playscape: How to Build a Galaxy*
- 12.45 - Lunch
- 13.30 – Rebecca Evans (Pell Ensemble): *Embodied Practitioners and the Development of Future Spaces*
- 14.15 - Break
- 14.30 – KDE Dance Performance: *Playscape: How to Build a Galaxy* followed by 'have a go' workshop places (limited slots)
- 15.15 – Round table discussion
- 16.00 – Networking opportunity and chance to watch James Middleton workshop

## Pell Ensemble

Pell Ensemble is led by choreographer Rebecca Evans creating genre-defying cross-disciplinary digital dance works for stage and beyond. With collaborators, Rebecca explores ways to appreciate our mutual dependency as part of a human, environmental and technological ecology to speculate on new futures and ways of being.

## AΦE (AE)

Explore 'LILITH.AEON', AΦE's AI-enhanced XR dance odyssey. See cutting-edge tech and raw emotion fuse as we probe life, death, and immortality through AI-generated choreography. Inspired by the youngest cryogenically frozen person, we use Motion Capture, Machine Learning, and Unreal Engine to redefine immersive storytelling. Learn about our creative process and how to integrate these technologies into immersive productions. Delivered performatively, this session reveals the secrets of merging art and tech, electrifying audiences with the future of performance art!

## Katie Dale-Everett Dance

We focus on creating positive impact through projects that inspire change, big and small, in individuals, groups and communities. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, we support people to improve their mental and physical wellbeing through dance, verbatim theatre and emergent technologies, such as motion capture and VR.

Led by Artistic Director, Katie Dale-Everett, we collaboratively work with real people and their experiences to investigate how we can use the arts to develop their wellbeing and sense of community.

## Dr Boyd Branch

This lecture-workshop explores how Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed techniques can be reimagined for the digital age, engaging with the artificial and digital bodies that permeate our lives. Dr Boyd Branch will present two case studies from his Digital Theatre of the Oppressed (DTO), demonstrating how theatre artists can engage with technologies such as smartphones, motion capture, game engines, and virtual reality to reveal hidden systems of control. Participants will explore how these tools can be transformed into platforms for restoring agency, creativity, and complexity to individuals and communities. Through play, interaction, and transformation, the workshop illuminates how both the opportunities and coercions of technology can be placed in dialectical form for meaningful engagement and collective empowerment.