

Research Centre  
Postdigital Cultures



# Centre for Postdigital Cultures (CPC)

Postgraduate Research

Concrete Cinema by Miriam De Rosa (CPC).  
Pioneer House, Hillfields, Coventry, September 2019.

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# Welcome to the Centre for Postdigital Cultures

The Centre for Postdigital Cultures (CPC) adopts an innovative stance to exploring digital culture. It is our position that the 'digital' cannot be understood as a separate domain of culture. If we actually examine the digital - rather than taking for granted we already know what it means - we see that today, digital information processing is present in every aspect of our lives. This includes our global communication, entertainment, education, energy, banking, health, transport, manufacturing, food and water-supply systems. We need to turn our attention from 'the digital' to the various overlapping processes and infrastructures that shape and organise it, along with those that the digital helps to shape and organise in turn. CPC investigates such enmeshed models of culture and society for the 21st century 'postdigital' world.

**Professor Gary Hall**  
Executive Director



Dr Jacqueline Cawston, Shakespeare's New Place XR.  
Thanks to the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.  
Photo: Michael Loizou, ARPS



The Lanchester Interactive Archive, Coventry University.  
Photo: Paul Henderson



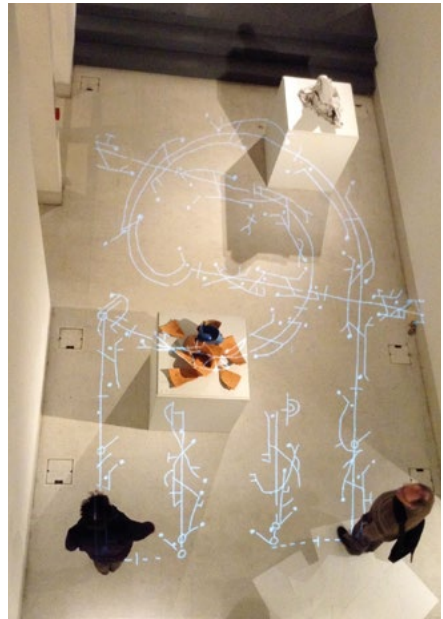
Shakespeare's New Place XR, an experiment in mixed virtual and augmented reality, led by Dr Jacqueline Cawston in collaboration with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and AiSolve.  
Photo: AiSolve

# About CPC

CPC has as its mission the establishment of a more socially just and sustainable 'post-capitalist' society. It brings together postdigital media theorists, practitioners, activists and artists from more than 15 countries to critically investigate some of the core foundational concepts and values of the arts and humanities. In the process, by drawing on cross-disciplinary ideas associated with open, disruptive and immersive media, the posthuman, posthumanities and the Anthropocene, we endeavour to help 21st century society and its cultural institutions (galleries, archives, museums, libraries, etc.) respond to the challenges faced in relation to the postdigital at a global, national and local level.

CPC does this through an interdisciplinary research agenda that extends from computing, through the humanities and social sciences, to open education, political activism and art practice. This agenda explores how intellectual, community and civic engagement can prefigure different ways of being together. We study and participate in creative experiments in social reproduction, and in repurposing tools, techniques and resources for cooperative living. We utilise contemporary art practices and techniques of cultural production for social change. We also experiment with horizontal and decentralised ways of working and organisation, using the distributed web and related technologies to create new infrastructures for the postdigital world.

Our research is funded by the UKRI (Research England, AHRC, GCRF), the European Union, Jisc, and the National Lottery Fund. CPC members participate in the editorial boards of peer-reviewed journals such as Cultural Studies, Culture Machine, Journal of Visual Art Practice, and Art and the Public Sphere, and in developing innovative organisations such as Open Humanities Press and the Radical Open Access Collective.



Gallery choreography experiment by Kevin Walker (CPC). Hockney Gallery/Royal College of Art, 2013, part of the research group Low Tech High Tech with University of the Arts London.

# Research themes

## Digital arts, humanities and posthumanities

CPC uses experimental writing, publishing and making to critically and creatively rethink the arts and humanities in the context of the digital, along with many of the concepts, ideas and values we have inherited with them. They include the virtuoso author, the real name, the signature, the book, originality, the fixed and finishable object, copyright, even the human itself. Hence our interest in the 'posthumanities' or 'inhumanities'. In line with the theory-performance or practice-based ethos of our research, this has resulted in the CPC helping to build various postdigital organisations, exhibitions, journals, presses and libraries, such as Living Books About Life, the Mandela27 DIY Exhibition, ScholarLed and the Radical Open Access Collective.

## Affirmative disruption and open media

CPC uses 'affirmative disruption' in the sense Roberto Esposito writes of an 'affirmative biopolitics that is not defined negatively with respect to the dispositifs of modern power/knowledge but is rather situated along the line of tension that traverses and displaces them'. The CPC's work in this area involves experimenting with a wide range of practices aimed at removing barriers around knowledge and research, and promoting collaboration with 'others' (understood in geographical terms and in terms of BAME, LGBTQI, working class and other nonconforming identities). This has led us to generate projects that address open access, open data and open education, through the sharing and gig economies, to media activism and so-called internet piracy, as well as ideas of the commons and commoning.

## Immersive cultures and international heritage

CPC examines how extended reality technologies (augmented reality/virtual reality) offer new immersive ways of presenting and preserving cultural archives, collections, objects and artefacts. Incorporating methods from computing (e.g. artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning) into the humanities, we explore how new postdigital media technologies can help us to interpret cultural heritage while democratising the creative industries. Our work contributes to the development of interactive archives and multimedia museum exhibits that can help cultural institutions manage their collections. These enable people to creatively engage with their cultural heritage - but also challenge dominant narratives through their remixing of personal stories and archives.

## Postdigital intimacies

CPC's research into postdigital intimacies explores the reshaping of subjectivity by digital technologies. As the digital is now invisibly naturalised in how we think, act and feel, paying attention to the postdigital has the potential to change, fundamentally, how we understand ourselves, others and the worlds around us. Drawing on feminist theory, CPC's researchers explore how this new intimacy is performed and experienced across a range of spaces and through a variety of media forms, screens and practices from Instagram to Femtech. Our aim is to study how we value life - what it means to live a good life - when the old distinctions between the digital and non-digital, and even the public and private, no longer apply.

**The CPC is also looking to expand its research agenda by recruiting PhD students in the following areas:**

### **Art, space and the city**

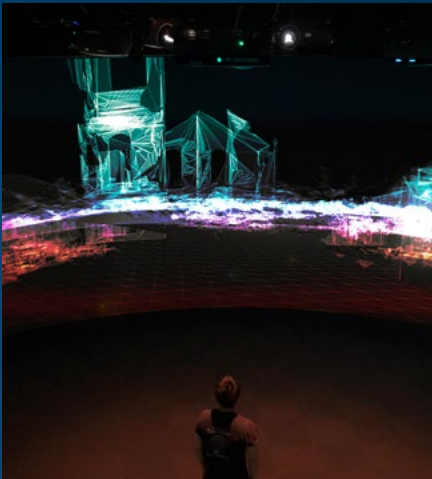
Art, space and the city enquires into the function of art and culture for better ways to live together. Utilising a mixture of practices: urban studies, urban humanities, media studies, screen media, black studies, geography, activism, art, design and architecture we propose democratic techniques in which to imagine citizen-based urban centres. We use cultural practices to intervene within the space of the city and connect with the communities that live there. We will rely on radical thinking to inform our understanding of art, space and the city and we draw on: art history and theory; theories of the commons; public sphere theory; human ecologies; decoloniality theory; eco-cities and radical care.

### **AI and algorithmic cultures**

CPC explores novel ways of understanding algorithmic cultures and of responding critically and creatively to them. We study the impact of algorithms, big data, artificial intelligence and machine learning on our lives. We focus on how everyday practices change through our engagement with these disruptive technologies, and on the companies that develop and deploy them (e.g. Amazon, Google, Facebook). This area of our research goes beyond current definitions of disruptive technology. The emphasis of CPC is not on helping to create new markets by doing things the market does not expect. It is rather on disrupting the market itself by exploring the new, alternative and more socially just economic and cultural models that are made possible by pre-emptive, cognitive and contextual computing.

### **Data cities and the politics of care**

CPC investigates how data-driven urbanism is reshaping cities through the harvesting, processing and refinement of increasing amounts of personal data. The focus is both on agonistic, grassroots responses developed by various publics (e.g. our work on Pirate Care), and on the use of the (post)humanities to reimagine the city and to challenge dominant imaginaries such as those founded on surveillance capitalism (as exemplified by various smart city initiatives). CPC develops creative experiments around social reproduction; we build new infrastructures and we explore alternative ways for cooperative living - all with a view to reinventing sociality while promoting a radical bottom-up approach to the future of cities.



Andrew Yip, Metascape: Villers Bretonneux, full body immersive environment, 2018. Image courtesy of Andrew Yip.

# Postgraduate offer

CPC has a vibrant postgraduate research (PGR) community working on a wide range of topics: experimental publishing; postdigital archive practices; knowledge production and climate change; visual culture and screen media in the postdigital age; experience in immersive technology environments; self-representation and postdigital intimacies; forage culture; and social reproduction. PGR students are allocated two supervisors and a director of studies for academic support. Additionally, CPC has two members of staff whose role is dedicated to supporting PGR students. [Professor Mel Jordan](#) and [Dr Miriam De Rosa](#) will help applicants with the admission process, as well as assist with technical and pastoral issues after enrolment.

Along with conventional humanities methods, we support a range of mixed methods, including various practice-orientated methodologies, visual argumentation, case study and ethnography. We support PGR students in their examinations of the ontology of digital culture as an analytical pursuit, therefore we expect them to bring a critical perspective to their PhD study.

As our success in receiving Coventry University's (the university's) inaugural Outstanding Supervisory Team of the Year 2019 Award demonstrated, PGR students value the exceptional academic expertise and pastoral care characterising the style of work of our staff. Students also value staff's capacity to create productive collaborations across research excellences within the university for the benefit of our doctoral candidates.

With a vibrant and heavily international team of supervisors, CPC offers supervision and welcomes projects revolving around the above themes. CPC organises numerous events, from international conferences and symposia to reading groups, workshops and research seminars. A budget is available for us to bring in external speakers, which include artists, activists and scholars. The content of our events programme is generated through the interests of our researchers and the ongoing CPC projects – PGR students are expected to contribute to the programming as well as attend the various sessions. We host an annual international conference which explores a central topic in detail. Past conferences include Radical Open Access (2018) and Pirate Care (2019).



**'As a PGR, I have thrived in CPC. It promotes creative - and often radical - thinking, while offering valuable practical and pastoral care. This has allowed for my research to develop in ways I could never have had expected.'**

**Darren Berkland**  
Final Year PhD in CPC

# CPC staff and PhD students joint projects

## **Berkland, D. (2019)**

'Selfie-screen-sphere: Examining the selfie as a complex, embodying gesture' NECSUS, special issue 'Gesture' Miriam De Rosa (ed.), 16 (1), <https://necsus-ejms.org/selfie-screen-sphere-examining-the-selfie-as-a-complex-embodying-gesture/>

## **Diaz Fernandez, S. and Evans, A. (2019)**

'Lad Culture as a sticky atmosphere: Navigating sexism and misogyny in the student-centred nighttime economy' Gender, Place and Culture, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2019.1612853>

## **Fragnito, M. and Medak, T. (2020)**

'Care: Solidarity is Disobedience'. Talk. MoneyLab #8 Minting a Fair Society. Live streaming series. <https://aksioma.org/pirate-care-cassie-thornton-maddalena-fragnito-care-solidarity-is-disobedience>

## **Graziano, V., Mars, M. and Medak, T. (2019)**

'Learning from #Syllabus, in State Machines: Reflections and Actions at the Edge of Digital Citizenship, Finance, and Art', Yiannis Colakides, Marc Garrett, Inte Gloerich (eds.), Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, [http://networkcultures.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/StateMachines\\_v14\\_zondermarks-1.pdf](http://networkcultures.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/StateMachines_v14_zondermarks-1.pdf)

## **Graziano, V.; Mars, M. and Medak, T. (2020)**

'Flatten the Curve, Grow the Care': a collective note-taking that documents grass-roots efforts and offers practical guidance and inspiration for care collectives, combatting major issues posed by the pandemic. The initiative was supported by the following CPC PGRs: Tomislav Medak, Rebekka Kiesewetter and Maddalena Fragnito.

## **Graziano, V.; Mars, M. and Medak, T. (2019)**

'Pirate Care': a project mapping collective practices that respond to crises of care, and activates collective learning processes from these practices.



Social Montage: Speak-Act-Print-Publish! Documentation (slogan-box mash-up), Partisan Social Club by Mel Jordan (CPC). Project at Edinburgh Printmakers, 2019. With thanks to Kate Davis, Lorenzo Robinson, Madeleine Wood, Jack Whitelock. Photo: Andy Hewitt

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 @CovUni\_CPC

**PGR enquiries**

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