Bonemap Education Kit

A resource to assist learning in visual, performing and new media arts through the creative intermedia arts of Bonemap. It contains contextual and philosophical reference through artist's statements, documentation of recent works with challenging activities/questions/suggestions, web resources and artist biographies.

new move network residencies 2011

KICK
CONTEMPORARY
ARTS

DANCE TNQ
move

Bonemap

Context

Bonemap is a creative intermedia arts partnership between media designer Russell Milledge and dancer Rebecca Youdell. They often work with interdisciplinary teams of artists through collaboration and hybridity.

Since 1998 they have regularly been creating innovative projects integrating contemporary dance, new media and visual art concepts.

The evolution of Bonemap is a journey of 'shape shifting': public art commissions, brokering partnerships to present an annual dance program, curating artists into collaborative teams, designing productions, exhibiting visual arts, producing graphic design, writing articles, producing festivals...

As a regionally-based company, there are a number of strategies that Bonemap has cultivated to stay connected and further develop artform and networks. If successful these strategies contribute to an operational rhythm, although in reality and like life, the parameters keep shifting and the processes need to evolve to accommodate new operational pressures.

Initially, Bonemap had a strategy to engage in residencies and these included Australian Choreographic Centre, the Brisbane Powerhouse, Tanks Arts Centre and The Substation in Singapore. Then came a series of projects drawing on national and international networks, where each new project was collaborative, with visiting artists invited into the process. These have included international artists invited into short-term residencies as well as highly regarded practitioners from Australian urban cultural centres. These relationships have been expanded through invitations for Bonemap to participate in reciprocal projects, leading to international tours and capital city enagagements.

Skills development has been a crucial strategy in building Bonemap's regional capacity, and this has been augmented by participation in Aslialinks first interdisciplinary residency, and national 'incubator' residencies including the Australia Council's Time_Place_Space, Ausdance 'Creating Performance', Australian Network for Art and Technology's 'ANAT Summer School', Brisbane Powerhouse 'Alchemy', and a Silicon Studios QANTM Regional Scholarship.

The paradigm of being regional is always about the centre and the periphery. It is about being on the edge, on the outskirts, and this has been a particularly interesting and creative space for Bonemap to inhabit.

Bonemap's projects continue to probe the conceptual layers of the body's relationship to the environment, often by engaging in durational projects where the journey to remote locations feeds creative development. New media and visual communication skills have been important elements in bringing these exploits to wider public attention.

The action of dance in the environment is extreme, ephemeral and evocative. This is made even more palpable in the far northern tropics by the proximity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait culture.

There are two remarkable dance festivals that occur biannually, the Laura Dance Festival in Cape York and the Torres Strait Cultural Festival on Thursday Island. In these events there is clear integration of dance, music and visual arts, and this continues to be an area of insight and growing awareness for Bonemap.

Bonemap, photography Russell Milledge and Rebecca Youdell 2009

Artist Statement

The Bonemap aesthetic discipline is a hybrid mesh of performance and media arts framed by an overarching ecological philosophy placing the context of our creative practice in the environments we inhabit and often ignore. Bonemap's hybridisation is a rupture crossing between gallery, theatre and alternative platforms, and is a natural response to engagement in an intermedial creative ecology.

The idea of 'creative ecological acts' underpin Bonemap's philosophy where interrelationships permeate the creative process. The artists create works using a variety of artforms through a process that becomes the artwork. An interest in intuitive design and interfaces guide the work.

Based in the far northern tropics of Queensland, Bonemap has established national and international networks through residencies and performance tours to Asia and Europe. Residing in the unique world heritage listed wet tropics torrid zone in one of Australia's most diverse landscapes, its one of the only locations where the reef, rainforest and savannah all meet. It is transient and tropical, and proximity to this sensitive geographic environment, where the weather is a prominent feature and character informs their practice.

Working within this terrain, Bonemap has come to appreciate the ephemeral nature of performance, in that it leaves little human impact on the earth. Partly due to working with lens based mediums, and partly through the use of existing infrastructure in seeking out the exploited and messed-up environments where human intervention and industrial residue remain. This is a bid to transgress the objectified and romanticised perception of the landscape, the body and its surrounds, broadening the dialogue of the environment through the illumination of possible relationships to the land and identity. This politicised approach to Bonemap's art practice explores the boundaries of contmporary practice through the de-centred as a creative and political choice. For over a decade Bonemap's collaborative projects have focused on decentralized zones in a number of countries including Singapore, Wales, Japan and regional Australia.

Over a period of time the artists have diversified their skills and production location to conduct a sustainable art practice. Access to less urban infrastructure highlights entrepreneurial, efficiency and resourcefulness in operating. Technology is an expensive tool, and Bonemap is observing the carbon footprint it takes to create and produce art.

Bonemap's work focuses on taking the temporal and ephemeral and reinterpreting moments to seek a transformative experience for the audience. The process is a trajectory of becoming... knowing and unknowing. Within this there is an inherent multiplicity - multiple artforms, collaborators, readings and partners, and through developing the creative process the art product is distilled.

Its an Organic process utilising embodied research through fieldwork expeditions, field studies, observing and cross-cultural artistic exchange.

Recent projects and research has included media and performance festivals, audience interactive performance interfaces, computer vision systems for show controls and projection mapping, augmented reality interfaces, and mixed reality networked performance.

Bonemap is finding ways for audience to engage physically and not be sedentary or passive in their work. In a steady and constant way Bonemap's research seeks to reveal interaction in low and high fidelity environments between people, their senses and objects. This lineage comes from producing various performances and environments, and observing audience interaction.

An example of this evolution is the process of observing the audience, when they know or don't know that they are being watched. This provides the collaborators with insight into empathetic relationships - and demonstrates how people are engaging with simulated environments and with objects that the artists are selectively revealing.

Bonemap likes to challenge the perspective of the viewer. Theatrical and simulated environments and actions can fracture reality through the use of illusion, as can technology. Bonemap uses technology to assist in transposing environments and manipulating time and place in a bid to provoke perceptual experience and empathy.

Their artworks provide degrees of agency for participants. As creative producers they set parameters with flexibility for engaging with the concept and creativity of the work. A synchronus strategy in line with the phenomenon of user generated content for the performance environment.

A reflective practice, Bonemap questions, What is the preference of the screen to object / person ratio? Where does the audiences attention lie or go? Are the audience more cerebral and less physical because of the sedentary nature of paying attention to a screen? The more one interacts virtually the less they are interacting on the physical plane, or are they? Can we engage people through virtual and physical space spanning distance between worlds?

This methodology investigates the relationship between body, environment, and time, partly through observing the macro environment (that larger than the human body) and the micro environment (smaller than the body).

In creating simulated environments conducive to authentic movement - participants engage in spontaneous expressive movement exploration in or with the interface. There is a constant switching from passive to active viewing, which induces a heightened spatial awareness of self, and a more internal sense of the spatial, physical and conceptual relationship.

The body is our interface with the world. It's the first perception of experience with the world. The body in/as environment.

Dance is constantly evolving as a 'living' form of culture. The book, *The Brain That Changes Itself* investigates neuroplasticity:

". . . the brain is structured by its constant collaboration with the world, and it is not only the parts of the brain most exposed to the world, such as our senses, that are shaped by experience. Plastic change, caused by our experience, travels deep into the brain and ultimately into our genes, molding them as well . . ." Plasticity is a term referring to the brain's unique ability to constantly change, grow, and remap itself. The "plastic" in this sense refers to "moldable", as it can constantly adapt itself to deal with new input and information.
Every time the brain encounters information, it reworks itself to accommodate it, and creates a map of the information it contains so that it can readily retrieve information. (Norman Doidge, MD 2007)

Human plasticity provides potential for interactivity and dance, in that we are making intuitive body / mind design interfaces "art" to facilitate transformative experiences, while participating in social, political and cultural dialogue. Humans are not hardwired, as exposure to what we creatively produce influences the development of the body and human endeavour.

Select Works 2008-2011

Exquisite Resonance of Memory
media arts installation: KickArts Galleries, 2008

A room that pulsates with a world in reverse. Suitcases serve as places of accumulation and as an emblem for events and relationships of the past, each with its history of journey, memory and circumstance. Objects of provenance and museum stasis take on the aura of traditional icons.

The work dramatises the way memory functions through association, leaps, or dislocates out of time and space and how the more profound of these occurrences can give us a new understanding of our relationship with the world.

Video wallpaper adorns the room with a theatrical representation of the temporal body caught in the multiple and inconsistent life of mirrors, where through the poetics of surprise a sinister metamorphosis occurs.

The Exquisite Resonance of Memory has allowed the artists Russell Milledge, Rebecca Youdell and Steven Campbell to explore the Baroque and Surrealist genres in the context of Media Arts practice.
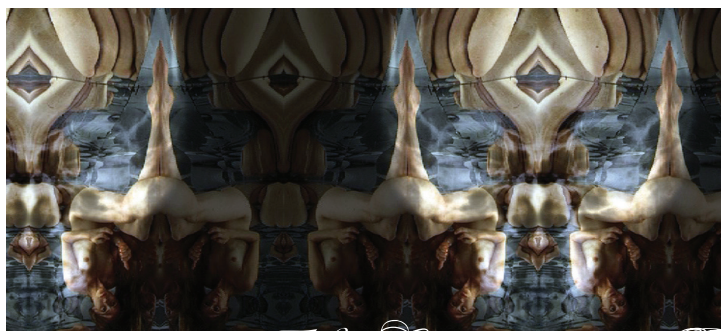
Whispering Limbs
digitally augmented performance: JUTE Theatre Centre of Contemporary Arts Cairns as a component of On Edge: Contemporary Media + Performance Festival Cairns, 2009

The 'Whispering Limbs' residency considered the role of environmental representation in the construction of identity. This was extended through each artists engagement and comittment to the unique situtation and cultural diversity of Indigenous and Pacific identity, tourism and the environment.

An inherent collaborative interdisciplinary framework through fieldwork and installation allowed research and innovation in set design and technical theatre, along with new methodologies for live performance and contemporary dance to evolve.

Russell Milledge and Rebecca Youdell artistic co-directors of Bonemap in collaboration with performers Lisa Fa'alafi, Fez Fa'anana, Earl Rosas, Leah Shelton, sound Steven Campbell, technical manager Steve Barton, and technical assistance from Paul Barron and Alex Cuffe


Cove
JUTE Theatre, Centre of Contemporary Arts Cairns, 2010

Cove is a work that takes the relationship of sculpture and performance to a new level by engaging an infrared tracking system allowing the audience's movements to interact with projected light in the space. While the research funding for this work has focused on technical innovation, audiences entering the work will be navigating their way through sculptural vapour screens, engaging dance performance and spatial surround sound.

A subtle interactive space filled with ephemeral light sources, projection and sound. Ethereal impressions reminiscent of meteorological effects create a transformative environment inhabited by Bonemap performers. Large forms are seamlessly integrated into the work as both sculptural elements and projection surfaces. Through the reinterpretation and creative visualisation of ancient landmass and fleeting atmospheric effects the work represents the sanctuary of a 'cove'. Sculptural representations of sea passages and landing sites integrate with media and performance to complete the immersive quality of the installation.

Created as an interactive media arts experience that transforms the interior of the theatre into an immersive space that places the audience at the centre of an imaginary geography. The work uses a topographical metaphor where historical and contemporary art intersect in an expression of new media.

Russell Milledge and Rebecca Youdell in collaboration with sound artist Steven Campbell, computer programmer Jason Holdsworth and other creative artists to construct an innovative work dealing with the nature of space, the cultural significance and ephemeral quality of light and performance – dancing light.
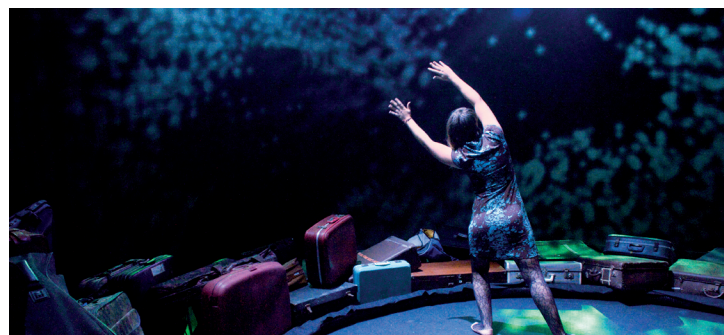

The Sweet Spot
The Space, Centre of Contemporary Arts Cairns, 2011

The Sweet Spot project encompasses research design and structural development of a media and sonic environment in reference to the way interactivity may be configured around certain generative actions.

The idea of 'the sweet spot' derives from references to desirable situations in which the opportune solution occurs. It's not a tangible or physical spot, it's a numerical, indicative state. Sport and musical instruments, refer to the "sweet spot" as having an affinity with the center of percussion, oscillation and other equations, presenting the ultimate highly desirable set of circumstance or sweet state.

Like the phenomenon of the Fibonacci number pattern occurring frequently in nature, its sweet spot is identified by patterning found throughout natures flora
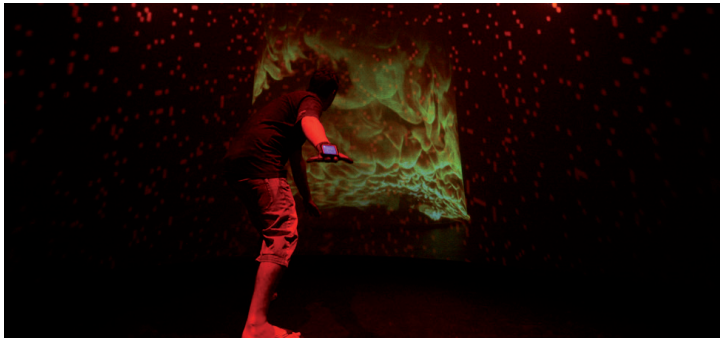
and fauna. Shells, fruit, plants and organic forms are diverse yet have deeper implication and meaning beyond human perception.

In this development phase we'll be using mixed reality and augmented technologies programmed through ubiquitous hand held devices in place of sophisticated motion tracking systems for human movement capture; locative spacialised environmental position GPS; and a personalised computer vision system to integrate choreographic and site specific aesthetic concerns.

Key Project Elements:

• **Currency that the audience can respond to.**

Technology that has meaning for the audience (like the mobile device) and is relatively accessible (cheap and available).

• **Expand the theatrical environment.**

Mobile environments: Ability to take the outside in and transpose environments. The studio or theatrical environment has relevance to audience. Audience unfamiliar with contemporary dance language and/or arts dialogue can still respond to movement imagery. Performers inhabiting the urban landscape wearing GPS enabled mobile device technology for live motion capture as a choreographic tool. Narratives unfold as participants respond to and with movement, which is translated into large scale outdoor projection mapping in a static audience zone.

• **Seeking the sweet spot of interactivity.**

Through the measured performance of hand held devices, we are looking for insight into empathetic space and providing transformative experiences for the audience.

Russell Milledge (media design) and Rebecca Youdell (performer)
Steven Campbell (sound), Jason Holdsworth (programming)

Bonemap Showreel
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fss_kgFx_jM
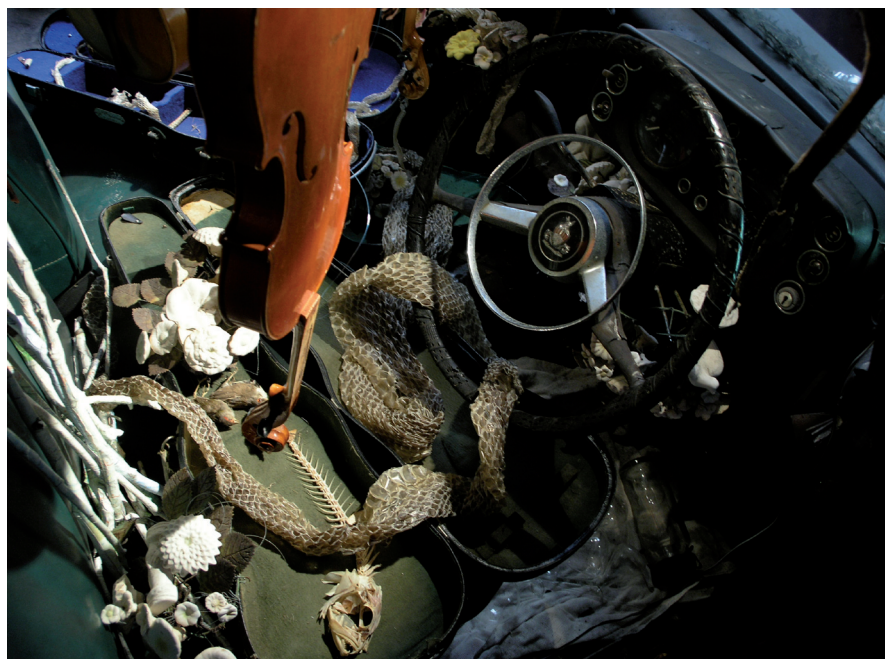
www.bonemap.com

Opposite page top left: 'Exquisite Resonance of Memory' Russell Milledge and Rebecca Youdell 2008
Opposite page bottom left: 'Whispering Limbs' photo Russell Milledge of performers 2009
Opposite page right: 'Cove' photo Suzon Fuks of audience member 2010
Bottom right: 'Brink' site specific installation with found objects 2005

'Cove' photo Suzon Fuks, Russell Milledge and Rebecca Youdell 2010

DANCE AND PHYSICAL THEATRE

Respond and Reflect
Using technologies

- Before you attend the residency, list the possible ways that you could use technology in the dance classroom, with the tools currently at your disposal. The following links might be useful:

http://danceeducationweb.org/technology.html

http://www.dmoz.org/Arts/Performing_Arts/Dance/Dance_Technology/Software/

http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/digital_rev/creative/dance/index.htm

- After the performance, identify any ideas in the list above that would enable students to engage with ideas and create work that:

- Encourages the audience to be involved in the performance, i.e. not to be static: http://www.stompin.net/pub/index.php?c=19

- Challenges the perspective of the viewer?

Dyson, C (2009). The 'Authentic Dancer' as a Tool for Audience Engagement, Dance Dialogues: Conversations across cultures, artforms and practices, Ausdance National. Available online at: http://www.ausdance.org.au/resources/publications/dance-dialogues/papers/the-authentic-dancer-as-a-tool-for-audience-engagement.pdf

- Incorporates audience/user generated material, i.e. set up a booth/dance space where passersby photograph/film/record themselves: http://www.move-me.com/

- Engages the audience physically- challenge the idea that it is less physical because it is virtual

Parrish, Mila Dr.(2007). Speak Out: Dancing into Problem-Based Learning. Journal for Learning through the Arts, 3(1). Retrieved from: http://escholarship.org/uc/item/7rb9g6v0

- Creates more authentic movement, movement that is spontaneous: http://danceexchange.org/toolbox/home.html

Thinking and Discussing

- Read the background paper as a group, focus on the key words (in bold) what do you think they mean? Use the key words to compose questions for the artist's forum.

- After seeing the performance, what do you understand/believe is the choreographer's intent? How would you explain that to your students?

- How would you describe the movement style generated in the performance, or rather what philosophy of movement informs it?

- How important are the non-movement components in this work i.e. the aural, visual, technical and technological, participatory elements? Can the choreographic intent of Bonemap be identified in these elements?

- To what extent can the elements be seen as separate entities (i.e can be analyzed separately)?

- What are the key differences between this performance and other dance performances you have seen?

- Develop three questions you would like to ask the artists about this work, their creative and performance experience and/or their artistic training and background.

Create and Present
Challenging the rules of performance

- Create a short performance event, by setting up a live video feed to a projector and large screen (with a blue screen background if possible, so that backgrounds can be added) send dance instructions to the student body (e.g. on the school intranet). Set the event in a public place, and allow open participation, with the results screened live.

- Set up a performance environment using recycled materials as screens and a variety of surfaces, devise movements for dancers to move in front of and behind the screens, project selected filmed mages e.g. of natural and man-made environments etc.

- Conduct a dance workshop e.g. in authentic movement/improvisation

simultaneously with a class in another school using Elluminate video web conferencing or similar technologies.

- Choreograph a dance to be performed in a natural/man-made/ unusual environment, film it in the environment. Use video software to manipulate the images to create different perspectives about the relationship and attitude to the environment i.e. portray it as antagonistic, violent, decayed, vibrant etc.

- Use mobile technologies to choreograph a flash mob dance, about an environmental or social issue to be performed in a public place or in shared spaces in the school/university.

See the flash mob video created by the climate action coalition
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhOhQ5G71tw
and another flashmob dance by in Sydney by Dance students
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebcfFg2ihYw&feature=related

VISUAL ARTS AND MEDIA

Appraising and Responding

Investigate the following through questions asked at the artist's forum/ talks, discussion with your class and research.

- What steps are involved in the planning and production of this work?

- In what ways can Bonemap's practice be seen as cross-disciplinary.

- In what ways does the audience contribute content to and/or complete the work? Discuss in relation to specific examples/moments/aspects of the work?

- What does Bonemap's practice have to say about how we view art and how we encounter art? Include a discussion of such issues as the differentiation between the virtual and the visceral (or physical and embodied) and the role of the artist and the audience.

- What new forms of media, or ideas about information and literacy e.g. interactive and social media, would help an audience understand and access this work?

- In what ways is the work interactive? Discuss with reference to a specific moment in the work.

- Does this performance shift the parameters of art from appreciation of an object to having an experience?

- Discuss the title of the work, and the explanation given in the notes. What themes or connections do they evoke for you?

- How might the work relate to ideas that are being brought about by new technologies such as virtual realities and online social networks?

- How and why is the work responsive to the Far North Queensland environment, both natural and man-made?

- Research the work of other artists who explore the use of interactive and hybrid technologies in performance.

- What are the implications of these new arforms for your own practice and how might these mediums influence your artistic decisions and process?

Kate Sands, K (n.d). Craig Walsh: Digital Odyssey: Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. Available online at: http://www.mca.com.au/ general/Digital%20Odyssey%20Education%20Kit.pdf

Weblinks
http://www.aliennationcompany.com/
http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/
http://www.bonemap.com/
http://www.chunkymove.com/
http://www.craigwalsh.net/
http://www.dance-tech.net/
http://www.digitalodyssey.com.au/
http://www.embodiedmedia.com/
http://www.igneous.org.au/
http://www.pvicollective.com/
http://www.palindrome.de/
http://www.reeldance.org.au/
http://www.realtimearts.net/
http://suzonfuks.net/
http://www.tinagonsalves.com/
http://www.troikaranch.org/

## Publications
http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/resources/reports_and_ publications/artforms/dance/in_repertoire_a_guide_to_australian_ contemporary_dance

http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/resources/reports_and_ publications/artforms/digital,_new_media_and_film/in_ repertoire_a_guide_to_australian_new_media_art

Contributor Miriam Torzillo BA Dip ED, Grad Cert RM, MA candidate

'Cove' photo Suzon Fuks, Russell Milledge and Rebecca Youdell 2010
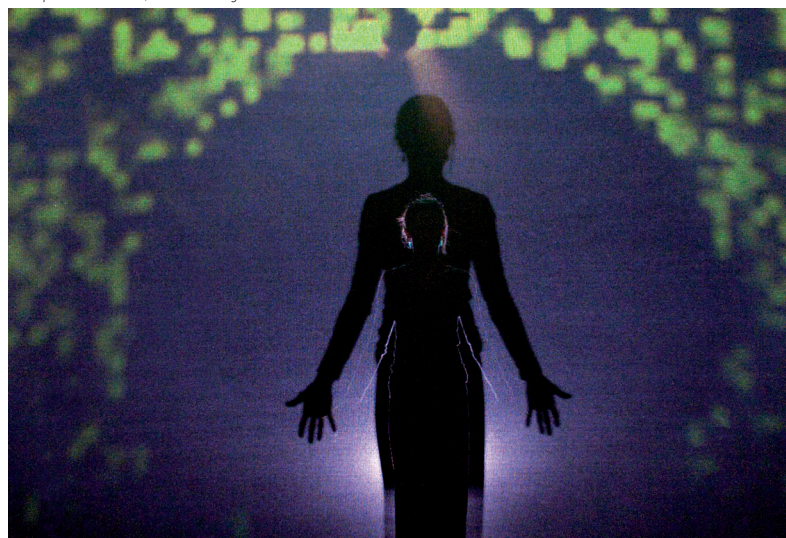
Russell Milledge focuses his practice around interdisciplinary collaborations and intercultural exchange. He has received awards across the fields of performing arts, new media and visual arts. He has contributed to many site-specific and media based projects and partnerships. His visual art practice is represented in major collections and Galleries. He has a Master of Fine Arts from Queensland University of Technology and a PhD candidate at the School of Creative Arts, James Cook University. He is a Founder, Board Director of KickArts, Cairns. Currently Lecturer and Coordinator of the Bachelor of Creative Industries JCU.

Rebecca Youdell is a choreographer and performer working via site-specific interdisciplinary collaborations. She has toured and performed work internationally and received numerous awards both in Australia and overseas. She has a BFA (Dance), an MA (Visual/Performing Arts) and has diversified her practice to integrate media installations through collaborations with the Bureau of Meteorology and the use of medical diagnostic imaging technology, x-ray and ultrasound. A focus on movement language through new media sees her involved in screen and sound based works, live art, temporal media and contemporary performance.

Dr Jason Holdsworth's interest in multiple programming languages and platforms sees him specialising in mobile learning and location based applications, Software Development and System Integration. He is a founding member of NerdJam a collective of Information Technology creative professionals. His interest in music, dance and creative programming sees his specialties ideally suited to the innovative application of mobile technologies in creative contexts. These include the development and deployment of programming interfaces and systems scaffolding into the working environments of art and technology.

Dr Steven Campbell's formal training is in music. He has performed extensively as a guitarist and on double bass, and as a composer has a focus on electronic and computer music. This composition focus has led to his development of a proprietary music technology system called PLaY+SPaCE, and the development of compositions specifically for this system. He is currently Director of Research and Postgraduate Studies in the School of Creative Arts at James Cook University where he teaches music technology, music theory and sound in new media.