

PROF KATE ELSWIT

Job title

Professor of Performance and Technology

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COURSES

Research Degrees (PhD)

PROFILE

I am an academic, dramaturg, choreographer, and curator. I trained in cultural studies, dance, and comparative literary studies at the University of Cambridge, Northwestern University, and Laban. Since then, I have taught at Stanford University, University of Bristol, California Institute of Arts (CalArts), and Laban. I sometimes explain that I teach bodies and performance to theorists and historians, and history and theory to performers, but I like it best when those get mixed up together. I am committed to multiple possibilities, both implicit and explicit, for working between practice and research. At Central, I am Head of Digital Research and co-founder of the [Centre for Performance, Technology, and Equity](#).

Together with Harmony Bench, I've been working for over ten years on the kinds of questions and problems that make the analysis and visualization of data meaningful for dance historical inquiry, funded by a Battelle Engineering, Technology, and Human Affairs (BETHA) Endowment Grant, and subsequently a project grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for *Dunham's Data: Katherine Dunham and Digital Methods for Dance Historical Inquiry* (AH/R012989/1, 2018-22), which is winner of the joint ATHE-ASTR Award for Excellence in Digital Theatre Scholarship. The next step building on this research is an AHRC Research Development and Engagement Fellowship for *Visceral Histories, Visual Arguments: Dance-Based Approaches to Data* (AH/W005034/1, 2022-2025). Based on this body of digital research, we were commissioned by the Whitney Museum of American Art to produce dance history visualizations as part of their upcoming *Edges of Ailey* exhibition (September 2024).

My first book *Watching Weimar Dance* (Oxford University Press, 2014) is about the strange things people claimed to see while watching dances in and from the Weimar Republic, and received both the Oscar G. Brockett Book Prize for Dance Research for best book in dance and the Joe A. Callaway Prize honorable mention for best book on theatre or drama. I also have a small book on the interdependence between *Theatre & Dance* (Theatre& series, 2018). My major awards for scholarly publications also include the Biennial Sally Banes Publication Prize for best publication at the intersections of theatre and dance/movement and the Gertrude Lippincott Award for best article in dance studies, which I received twice. My other major current project deals with the intersections of breath, performance, and measurement from the Victorian era to the present.

As an artist, my recent collaborations include Future Memory, as dramaturg with Rani Nair, which has been presented internationally, including at ImPulsTanz (Vienna), the Singapore International Festival of Arts (Singapore), Ignite! Festival of Contemporary Dance (New Delhi), and Dansenshus (Stockholm). I am also co-director of the Breath Catalogue project that combines dance, medicine, and technology to create a cabinet of breath curiosities in performance. In addition to my own multimedia performance work, I have performed with companies including Lucky Plush Productions, Felix Ruckert, the New Urban Naturalists, Hedwig Dances, The Chicago Moving Company, and Big Art Group.

My research has been funded by a number of other sources as well, including a Marshall Scholarship from the British government, a University Research Fellowship from the Institute for Advanced Studies at the University of Bristol, and the 2013 Lilian Karina Research Grant in Dance and Politics. I have been invited to speak around the world, including at Princeton University, Taipei National University for the Arts, Emory University, University of Oxford, Brown University, University of Cambridge, Temple University, University of Edinburgh, Kings College London, Kungliga Konsthögskolan, Hochschulübergreifendes Zentrum Tanz Berlin, University of Copenhagen, University of California Berkeley, University of California Los Angeles, Columbia University, Freie Universität, University of California Riverside, Ludwig Maximilians Universität Munich, Dansmuseet in Stockholm, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi in Lodz, The Newberry Library, and San Francisco Ballet.

I am series co-editor of the New World Choreographies book series, and also sit on the editorial boards for Performance Matters and ASAP/Journal. I am a member of the AHRC Peer Review College as well as the College of Expert Reviewers for the European Science Foundation. I have served the American Society for Theatre Research, Society of Dance History Scholars, Congress on Research in Dance, and Association for Theatre in Higher Education, and was on the commission for Germany's first practice-based masters degree in dance, MA Solo/Dance/Authorship at Hochschulübergreifendes Zentrum Tanz Berlin. I produce and convene events in the arts, including as curator for Dansbyrån (Gothenburg) and The Garage (San Francisco).

RESEARCH AREAS

- Cultural studies
- Exile and migration
- Spectatorship
- Bodies in technology and medicine
- Digital humanities
- Archives and re-enactment
- Twentieth and twenty-first century European dance theatre and performance
- Interdisciplinary performance
- Experimental practice
- Wearables
- Modernism in and beyond Europe
- Reality television

PHD SUPERVISION

I have supervised postgraduate theses on contemporary dance practice and somatics in relation to technology, medicine, and writing, as well as historical work on embodied performance and politics. Topics include touch in virtual reality, revue performance during the German Democratic Republic, creative intervention in stroke communities, multimedia storytelling with juvenile arthritis, Catalan festival, second wave feminism and British dance criticism, network analysis in histories of technical theatre, and the intersections of archival science and performance archives.

KEY PUBLICATIONS

2023. "The Body is Not (Only) A Metaphor: Rethinking Embodiment in DH" (with Harmony Bench). *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2023*, eds. Matt Gold and Lauren Klein. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

2022. ["Dancing with Coronaspheres: Expanded Breath Bodies and the Politics of Public Movement in the Age of COVID-19"](#) (2022) *Cultural Studies*.

2022. ["Visceral Data for Dance Histories: Katherine Dunham's People, Places, and Pieces"](#) (with Harmony Bench). *TDR: The Drama Review* 66.1, 37-61.

2021. ["Performative Measure"](#) In *Uncertain Archives: Critical Keywords for Big Data*, eds. Nanna Bonde Thylstrup, Daniela Agostinho, Annie Ring, Catherine D'Ignazio and Kristin Veel. Cambridge: MIT Press.

2020. [Katherine Dunham's Global Method and the Embodied Politics of Dance's Everyday](#) (with Harmony Bench). *Theatre Survey* 61.3, 305-330

2019. ["A Living Cabinet of Breath Curiosities: Somatics, Bio-media, and the Archive."](#) *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media*, 15.3, 340-59

2018. *Theatre & Dance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan Theatre & series).

*Biennial Sally Banes Publication Prize honorable mention, for best book at the intersections of theatre and dance/movement.

2018. "Performing Anti-Nationalism: Solidarity, Glitter, and No Borders Politics with the *Europa Europa* Cabaret." *Theatre Research International* 43.1, 25-44

2017. ["The Micropolitics of Exchange: Exile and Otherness After the Nation"](#). In *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Politics*, eds. Randy Martin, Rebekah Kowal, and Gerald Siegmund. New York: Oxford University Press, 417-438

2017. ["Letters to Lila and Dramaturg's Notes on Future Memory: Inheriting Dance's Alternative Histories"](#) (with Rani Nair). In *The Handbook of Dance and Re-enactment* (2017), ed. Mark Franko. New York: Oxford University Press, 177-214

2016. ["Mapping Movement on the Move: Dance Touring and Digital Methods"](#) (with Harmony Bench). *Theatre Journal*, 68.4, 575-596

2014. *Watching Weimar Dance* (New York: Oxford University Press)

*Oscar G. Brockett Book Prize for Dance Research for best book on dance published during the previous three years

*Joe A. Callaway Prize honourable mention, for best book on drama or theater published during the previous two years

2014. ["Inheriting Dance's Alternative Histories"](#). *Dance Research Journal*, 46.1, 3-22.

2013. ["Ten Evenings with Pina: Bausch's 'Late' Style and the Cultural Politics of Co-Production"](#). *Theatre Journal*, 65.2, 215-233.

2012. "Back Again? Valeska Gert's Exiles". In *New German Dance Studies*, eds. Susan Manning and Lucia Ruprecht (Champaign: University of Illinois Press), 113-129.

*Abridged German translation "Wieder zurück? Die Exile der Valeska Gert" in *Valeska Gert Tanz Fotografien* (2013), ed. Hedwig Müller.

2012. "[So You Think You Can Dance Does Dance Studies](#)". *TDR/The Drama Review*, 56.1, 133-142.

2009. "[Accessing Unison in the Age of its Mechanical Reproducibility](#)". *Art Journal*, 68.2, 50-61.

2009. "[Berlin ... Your Dance Partner is Death](#)". *TDR/The Drama Review*, 53.1, 73-92.

*Gertrude Lippincott Award from the Society of Dance History Scholars

2008. "[The Some of the Parts: Prosthesis and Function in Bertolt Brecht, Oskar Schlemmer, and Kurt Jooss](#)". *Modern Drama*, 51.3, Theatre and Medicine, 389-410

* Biennial Sally Banes Publication Prize from the American Society for Theatre Research

2008. "[Petrified? Some Thoughts on Practical Research and Dance Historiography](#)". *Performance Research*, 13.1, On Choreography, 61-69.

I also write online, among other places at [Dunham's Data research blog](#) and [Breath Catalogue](#).

PRACTICE

My work involves collaborations on curatorial work, dramaturgy, and choreography.

I currently collaborate with Swedish choreographer Rani Nair as dramaturg and historian on [Future Memory](#), based on her inheritance of the German choreographer Kurt Jooss's last dance, which was given to Swedish-based Indian dancer Lilavati Häger. *Future Memory* has been shown at ImPulsTanz Festival in Vienna, the IGNITE! Festival in New Delhi, the Singapore International Festival of Arts, Dansens Hus in Stockholm, the Scenkonst Biennalen in Jönköping, and SEAD in Salzburg. Check out [an interview](#) with us about the project, [selected reviews](#), and [an essay](#) I wrote. For a full list of performances and other related events, see [Upcoming](#). We are also in the early stages of a [new project](#) with Astad Deboo.

My other current performance project is [Breath Catalogue](#), which combines choreographic methods with medical technology to create a cabinet of breath curiosities in performance. The [first performance](#) phase of the project was in collaboration with artist/scholar [Megan Nicely](#), digital interaction designer [Ben Gimpert](#), and composer [Daniel Thomas Davis](#). In the first phase of the project, we worked with prototypes of breath monitors from the San Francisco-based start-up [Spire](#). I am currently developing the second phase of this work using capacitance-based resistance bands, in connection with the Wellcome Trust-funded [Life of Breath](#) project, and the Respiratory Unit at Southmead Hospital, with sponsorship from [StretchSense](#) in Auckland. *Breath Catalogue* has been shown in San Francisco, Cotati, London, Bristol, and Copenhagen. For a full list of events, see [our calendar](#).