

Festival for Digital Arts, Dance and Performance

Beyond Gravity Reflexionen

A symposium on *Decolonizing the Digital*
October 3–5, 2025 | Dortmund

Beyond *Gravity* Reflexionen is part of the Beyond *Gravity* Festival 2025 which is a cooperation between Theater im Depot & Academy for Theatre and Digitality in Dortmund as well as Kulturforum Witten. Together with the residency program it forms the thematic core of the 2025 festival under the title *Decolonizing the Digital*.

Across panels, keynote lectures, and lecture performances, the symposium will open a pluriversal space for dialogue at the intersection of postcolonial theory, digital humanities and artistic research. The aim is to reflect and articulate (artistic visions for) possibilities for alternate digital futures.

Programme

Friday, 3 October 2025

Studio 2 / Theater im Depot

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| 8 pm | How did we come up with the idea of the symposium?
Jens Heitjohann, Fabian Raith & Agustina Andreoletti |
| 8:30 pm | Vector 0.002: We Make with Memory
Pangea IA Collective with Marcel Gbeffa, Luis Felipe Lomeli, Vera Rivas, Lenara Verle, Oliver Walton |
| 9:30 pm | Talk on Vector 0.002 with moderation team |
| 10:30 pm | Drinks & Music in A29 |

Saturday, 4 October 2025

Lab 1 / Academy for Theatre & Digitality

12 pm	Welcome & Introduction Jens Heitjohann, Fabian Raith & Agustina Andreoletti
12:15 pm	KEYNOTE AI as cultural practice - Indigenous protocols for AI (WT) Angie Abdilla
1:15 pm	Break
2:15 pm	PERFORMANCE Sû'h Pepong Viviane Maghela, Eric Takukam & Enya Obert (KAM(noble))
2:45 pm	KEYNOTE Toward Ubuntu: Relational Intelligence for Decolonial AI Knowledge Systems Wakanyi Hoffmann
3:45 pm	PANEL Diverse technology? The knowledge systems behind AI Wakanyi Hoffmann, Angie Abdilla, Viviane Maghela, Eric Takukam & Enya Obert
4:30 pm	Break
4:45 pm	LECTURE PERFORMANCE DIGITAL anthropophagy x ALGORITMIC cannibalism: A LECTURE-PERFORMANCE IN TWO ACTS OR MORE Vanessa Ramos-Velasquez
5:30 pm	Break
5:45 pm	PANEL Slow Wisdom: Bodies, Translations, and the Contra-Colonial Possibilities of AI María Luisa Angulo & Marlon Barrios Solano (PANGAEA IA), Vanessa Ramos-Velasquez
6:30 pm	End

Evening programme at Theater im Depot

8 pm	Climb a mountain / MIRA - Julia Riera (Premiere)
9 & 9:30 pm	Turbulence / Norbert Pape & Simon Speiser
9:30 pm	Vector 0.002: We Make with Memory Pangea IA Collective with Marcel Gbeffa, Luis Felipe Lomeli, Vera Rivas, Lenara Verle, Oliver Walton

Sunday, 5 October 2025

Lab 1 / Academy for Theatre & Digitality

10:30 am	KEYNOTE Empire Keeps Playing: Code, Colonialism and Digital Games Souvik Mukherjee (Online)
11:15 am	PRESENTATION On the Performance of Counterfeit Realities at Room Temperature. Virtual bodies as Sites of Historical Confrontations Dhruv Jani / Studio Oleomingus (Online)
12 pm	Break
12:15 pm	PANEL Playful pluriverse - Videogames and decoloniality Souvik Mukherjee, Oleomingus (Online)
1 pm	Lunch Break
2 pm	KEYNOTE The many shades of Oppression and Resistance: Difference and Communality in the platform society Esteban Morales
3 pm	LECTURE PERFORMANCE African Accelerationism Mark Mushiva
3:30 pm	Break
3:45 pm	PANEL Hard Code: Excavating the Infrastructures of Tomorrow Laura Cugusi, machine yearning & Federico Zurani (EVERYTHING IS COMPUTER), Esteban Morales, Mark Mushiva
5 pm	End

Evening programme at Theater im Depot

6 pm	Climb a mountain / MIRA - Julia Riera
until 8 pm	Exhibition open

Abstracts

PANGEA IA Collective
(María Luisa Angulo & Marlon Barrios Solano) with
Marcel Gbeffa, Luis Felipe Lomeli, Vera Rivas,
Lenara Verle & Oliver Walton

PERFORMANCE

Vector 0.002: We Make with Memory

For millennia, the Indigenous peoples of Australia have designed, engineered, and governed sophisticated systems of regenerative automation and technology. Drawing on deep-time knowledge systems developed iteratively across thousands of generations, First Nations communities cultivated what European philosophers would later call “the good life.”

This keynote explores governance systems grounded in collective responsibility rather than hierarchical leadership, emphasising principles of reciprocity, relationality, and regeneration. Indigenous ways of seeing, being, knowing, and doing enabled complex automated systems that encoded social and environmental values directly into their design, allowing them to flourish even within Australia’s most seemingly inhospitable environments.

Through this story, we consider how technology, understood as cultural practice, offers profound lessons for contemporary challenges. This enduring and dynamic approach demonstrates how AI governance and innovation can be mutually reinforcing while nurturing deep care for Country and community.

Angie Abdilla

KEYNOTE

AI as cultural practice - Indigenous protocols for AI (WT)

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KEYNOTE

Toward Ubuntu: Relational Intelligence for Decolonial AI Knowledge Systems

Most AI today functions like a kaleidoscope—rearranging fragments of data into dazzling but curated illusions shaped by hidden algorithms. These outputs rarely reflect a multiplicity of values or diverse ways of knowing and understanding the world.

This keynote introduces Clariscopic Ubuntu Vision: a way of seeing that moves beyond illusions to recognise patterns of interconnection as they truly appear. Drawing on the Ubuntu philosophy, expressed in the saying “I am because we are,” Wakanyi Hoffman will demonstrate how African relational intelligence can serve as a protocol for reducing bias in creative and artistic expression in AI, promoting cultural inclusivity, and transforming communities from mere “data sources” into co-creators and storytellers.

Rather than algorithms that endlessly extract data, Ubuntu ethics encourage dialogical, purpose-driven design—embedding dignity, collective wisdom, and intercultural harmony into the development of small models that interact and share collective ancestral intelligence. Participants will discover how AI can be reimaged as a kinship technology: an African marketplace of ideas, vibrant with exchange and reciprocity, capable of nurturing pluriversal futures where multiple worlds and ways of knowing coexist and thrive.

Wakanyi Hoffmann, Angie Abdilla, Viviane Maghela,
Eric Takukam & Enya Obert

PANEL

Diverse technology? The knowledge systems behind AI

When we talk about AI, whose knowledge do we see represented? What opportunities exist to change these systems? How can different ways of understanding and perceiving the world be included in technological development?

This panel will explore diverse approaches to building a more pluriversal representation of the knowledge systems that underpin AI and discusses alternate paradigms of knowledge within technology.

Vanessa Ramos-Velasquez

LECTURE PERFORMANCE

D1G1TAL anthropophagy x ALGØRITHMIC cannibalism: A LECTURE-PERFORMANCE IN TWO ACTS OR MORE

Vanessa Ramos-Velasquez explores the devouring impetus latent in humans and their/our creations. 'Anthropophagy' and 'cannibalism' are often used as synonyms to describe the consumption of another human, but the two terms get differentiated in the Brazilian avant-garde Antropofagia of Oswald de Andrade's Manifesto Antropófago (1928)—which devours both Brazilian colonial history and European cultural imports to spew a unique philosophy. Indigenous cultures played a significant role to inspire the moderns, but in the industrialization that followed, their cultural importance was considered an 'obstacle' to imported ill-fitting models of development. This lecture-performance therefore, dishes critique through a decolonial lens, discussing newer forms of colonization: in cyberspace, ranging from digital anthropophagy to extreme forms of algorithmic power and agency. Algorithmic cannibalism becomes more than a metaphor embedded into a cannibal capitalism that devours Nature, humans included. The performance-lecture thus, reflects on westernized monocultural mindsets that lack swarm intelligence to react appropriately, while the question remains: who is eating who?

María Luisa Angulo & Marlon Barrios Solano (PANGAEA IA),
Vanessa Ramos-Velasquez

PANEL

Slow Wisdom: Bodies, Translations, and the Contra-Colonial Possibilities of AI

In an era of algorithmic acceleration, what forms of knowledge resist the extractive speed of artificial intelligence? This panel brings together artists whose embodied practices challenge AI technologies and propose strategies for liberation. María Luisa Angulo and Marlon Barrios Solano of PANGAEA IA approach AI as contested territory, weaving dance, technology, and critical theory to disrupt dominant narratives. Vanessa Ramos Velasquez explores „digital anthropophagy“ and „algorithmic cannibalism,“ drawing on Brazilian modern philosophy and Amazonian knowledges to confront technological colonization. Together, they consider how migrant bodies navigate digital territories, how movement challenges algorithmic logics, and what strategies empower marginalized epistemologies. This conversation imagines possibilities for AIs that honor multiplicity, embrace slow knowledge productions and disseminations, and actively oppose homogenizing forces.

KEYNOTE

Empire Keeps Playing: Code, Colonialism and Digital Games

In the Performing Arts today, the world of digital games is often approached with either skeptical distance or intense absorption. Yet, with rapid advances in artificial intelligence, computer-generated graphics, and the colossal growth of the gaming industry, there is increasing interest in the potential of digital games as a rich narrative and cultural medium.

What often goes unnoticed, however, is the deep-seated colonial bias and orientalist tropes—both overt and covert—that many of these games perpetuate. This talk examines how such biases are embedded in what is arguably the newest form of narrative and performance media, and highlights alternative approaches that resist and reimagine these stereotypes, or “cybertypes.”

Dhruv Jani / Studio Oleomingus

PRESENTATION

On the Performance of Counterfeit Realities at Room Temperature.

Virtual bodies as Sites of Historical Confrontations

The talk is an exploration of how interactive-fiction creates room for virtual bodies that can confront a singular and imperial expectation of presence, identity and private-history. Poised between marches of liberation and bodies in desperate exile, the talk will seek to read simulated movement as a form of Counter-History. Here it will examine the significance of virtual bodies and virtual gestures as forms of anti-extractivist performance and occupation amidst the netherworlds of contemporary digital archives and simulations. Drawing from literary and game texts, Dhruv will advocate for the dignity of incompleteness, the utility of erasure, and the power of deliberately incoherent worlds that open space for multiple identities, histories, ruderal voices, and counter-narratives to exist.

Souvik Mukherjee, Oleomingus

PANEL

Playful pluriverse - Videogames and decoloniality

Video games often reproduce colonial thinking—through mechanics built on extraction, progression systems driven by conquest, or narratives that frame domination and discovery as primary goals. These patterns are so deeply embedded in design traditions that they frequently go unnoticed. Yet games also hold the potential to resist and reimagine these habits: they can foreground collaboration, care, and reciprocity rather than conquest, and center plural forms of storytelling and agency.

This panel explores how shifting authorship and rethinking design methods can transform games into tools for decolonial imagination.

Esteban Morales

KEYNOTE

The many shades of Oppression and Resistance: Difference and Communalism in the platform society

This talk explores digital colonialism as a global force whose effects are unevenly lived and contested. Drawing on experiences of citizens and communities across Latin America, I illustrate how people confront and navigate power in their everyday engagements with technology. These practices reveal alternative ways of relating to and through digital infrastructures that unsettle the totalizing logics of colonialism, opening pathways to design concepts and tools that make visible, transform, or even reject the abuses embedded in our technological environments.

Mark Mushiva

LECTURE PERFORMANCE

African Accelerationism

This lecture-performance introduces African Accelerationism (AA), a conceptual framework that challenges dominant paradigms of technological progress by imagining futures grounded in African liberation and self-determination.

Through an essayistic lecture style interwoven with spoken word, Dr. Mushiva unpacks the theoretical foundations of AA, exploring how rethinking design patterns can open new forms of agency over used hardware and digital systems.

The performance culminates in the presentation of a homemade wearable electronic sound instrument—an invention by Dr. Mushiva that embodies AA's principles through practice, creation, and performance.

Laura Cugusi, machine yearning & Federico Zurani
(EVERYTHING IS COMPUTER),
Esteban Morales, Mark Mushiva

PANEL

Hard Code: Excavating the Infrastructures of Tomorrow

Contemporary technologies operate through multiple infrastructural layers: the material networks of cables and servers, the governance structures of platforms and protocols, and the ideological architectures of belief systems that legitimize technological development. These infrastructures are never neutral, they carry histories of colonialism, encode particular visions of progress, and distribute power unevenly across communities and geographies. Yet they also contain possibilities for rebellion, refusal, subversion, self-determination, transformation, and resilience.

This panel examines how technological infrastructures are shaped by—and in turn shape—the people who design, use, and contest them, with all their desires, doubts, and decision-making powers. Bringing together artists and researchers Laura Cugusi, machine yearning, Federico Zurani (Everything is Computer), Esteban Morales, and Mark Mushiva, the discussion explores practices at the intersection of critique, immediacy, and speculation to reveal the hidden layers that determine whose ideas are imagined and built.