

Research Statement

My research experience and modes of working are demonstrably transdisciplinary and creative, and centre on questions in posthumanist and materialist discourses relating to the practices and ethics of 'life' in entangled and precarious—but also generative and transformative—multispecies ecologies. A dual background in the sciences (B.Sc. Hons. 1 Microbiology) and the arts (practice-based Ph.D., Visual Arts) informs my research approach, and the tools and concepts it engages.

My research trajectory to this point articulates a proven capacity to move between dialogues, methods and ideas across the arts and sciences, and to explore affective means of re-narrating ideas that have particular relevance to the collective crisis of the Anthropocene, and concepts related to the 'nonhuman turn' active across multiple fields of inquiry. My doctoral research was a study in *more-than-human* artistic techniques, taking philosopher Henri Bergson's ideas about the durations and creative differentiations of matter as propositions for artistic experimentation, and for entering into transdisciplinary discourse about material and nonhuman agencies in artistic and ecological praxes. In 2013, I was invited on a funded research residency at the Senselab Montreal led by Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, whose techniques for research-creation explore ways of bringing philosophical, political and artistic practices into collaborative interactions within more-than-human ecologies. In 2014, I was selected as a participant in the Haus der Kulturen der Welt's inaugural *Anthropocene Campus*, during which I co-authored a paper articulating a more-than-human research method of feeling/following (Bhangu, Bisshop et al. 2014), later developed in my doctoral thesis. In 2017 I was commissioned to write a geofictive account of the life of marble, which drew out the messy, multispecies and ongoing stories of its geoontogenesis (Bisshop 2017). Since 2017, I have worked as a researcher in the Arachnophilia Research Group of artist Tomás Saraceno, where I seek to activate and animate the possibilities for art to propel a shift in affective relations between humans and their more-than-human ecologies. In this role, I assisted in coordinating an *Arachnosophy* symposium at Paris' Palais de Tokyo, that brought together discourse on spiders from arachnology, philosophy, ethology and media studies; curated by Filipa Ramos, with keynote by Vinciane Despret.

My doctoral thesis (completed July 2018) elaborates an ecology of compositional artistic practices that attune to the more-than-human becomings of a material world understood in terms of Bergson's vibrating 'matter-energy'. Through intuitive artistic experiments in *research-creation*, it proposes a series of 'thresholding techniques' for artistic practices that seek to become-sensitive to the fluid and temporal movements of the world's creative becomings: the *more-thans* active within the intervals of experience. Together, these experiments articulate an *aesthetics of the more-than*; proposing modes of artistic research and practice that engage the more-than-human excess within experience as a creative and generative force. In its probing of the boundaries of subjectivity and of the very genesis of the creative act, an *aesthetics of the more than* necessarily embeds an ethics of relation to material—begging that we take seriously the affective address and work of material forces, and the ways in which such movements are imbricated with our own becomings. This research opens up a pragmatics of experimentation that *asks what else is given in experience?* Rather than answering this question concretely via art works or forms, this question operates as a propositional *lure* that mobilises an open research process, which is intuitive to its own creative movements. Research from my doctoral thesis informs two scholarly publications (in progress): a paper on the threshold as a framework for artistic experimentation with material indeterminacy; and a paper elaborating the work of the possibilities of *fabulation* and *mythopoiesis* in materialist artistic and archival practices.

The affective potentials of the 'propositional lure' carry forward into my current research interests; engaging Alfred North Whitehead's idea that it is more important that something be *interesting* than *true*. Current research engages *fictioning* (Simon O'Sullivan) and *speculative fabulation* (via Donna Haraway's SF – which also includes string figures, science fiction, science fact and speculative feminism) as ways of articulating the *lure* within generative encounters with the more-than-human. In my practice, fabulation is activated as a force that explores, critiques and lures material histories and possible futures across disciplines and ideas, to imagine new configurations of knowledge production, new worlds of thought. Such speculations are not neutral, but seek to actively disrupt the hegemonic, romantic and hierarchical narratives in which the history—and story—of matter has historically been caught; narratives which cleave natures and cultures, humans and nonhumans, life and nonlife.

Education

- 2012 – 2018 Doctor of Philosophy (Visual Arts)
National Institute for Experimental Arts
UNSW Art & Design, Sydney
Thesis title: Articulating thresholds ~ artistic techniques for more-than-human sensitivities. (Funded by Australian Postgraduate Award).
Supervised by Professor Anna Munster and Dr. Michele Barker.
An abstract of this thesis is attached as an appendix to this CV.
- 2014 (Nov) Competitively selected student participant
Anthropocene Campus, Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) Berlin
Selected to participate in the inaugural, intensive HKW Anthropocene Campus with a cohort of global research students. Author on three papers included in the *Anthropocene Curriculum*; <http://www.anthropocene-curriculum.org/pages/root/humans/ally-bisshop/>
- 2010 – 2011 Competitively selected student participant
Institut für Räumexperimente (Class of Olafur Eliasson)
Universität der Künste, Berlin
- 2008 – 2012 Bachelor of Fine Arts
UNSW Art & Design, Sydney
- 1994 – 1999 Bachelor of Science, Honours Class 1 (Microbiology),
University of Queensland, Brisbane
Thesis title: A study of the expression of two putative outer membrane proteins of Neisseria meningitides. Supervised by Professor Mike Jennings. I was subsequently awarded an Australian Postgraduate Award on the basis of this thesis (not taken up).

Research Experience

- 2017 – present **Senior Researcher, Arachnophilia Research Group**
Studio Tomás Saraceno, Berlin
www.arachnophilia.net
As Senior Researcher and Head of the Arachnophilia Department of artist Tomás Saraceno, I create research narratives that bridge the scientific, philosophical and aesthetic elements of Saraceno's practice, especially as they relate to multispecies entanglements in the context of the Anthropocene, the collapse of species diversity and devastating shifts in climate patterns. Tasks include: authoring academic texts for art-science and humanities contexts; organising public events (Spider Salons, Jam Sessions (human-arachnid concerts) and hybrid art-science symposia); research support for exhibition concepts; experimental research planning and dissemination of results in concert with scientific collaborators at MIT and the Max Planck Institute; writing, editing and proofreading catalogue and exhibition texts. In this role, I recently organised an *Arachnosophy* symposium at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, moderated by Filipa Ramos, with keynote by Vinciane Despret.
- 2018 – 2019 **Research Assistant (Dr Petra Gemeinboeck)**
Creative Robotics Lab
UNSW Art & Design, Sydney
Reviewing, editing and drafting research proposal and associated support texts for a major round of Australian Research Council (ARC) Research Project funding. I worked intensively with Dr Gemeinboeck in drafting a research application in the interdisciplinary domain of creative robotics, bridging dance and theatre, social robotics and media arts practice.

- 2018 **Research Assistant (Dr Huyen Nguyen)**
Expanded Perception and Interaction Centre (EPICentre)
 UNSW Art & Design, Sydney
- Reviewing, editing and drafting research proposal and associated support texts for a major round of Australian Research Council (ARC) Research Project funding. I assisted Dr Nguyen in drafting a research application in the interdisciplinary domain of data visualisation and environmental science.
- 2016 – present **Research Assistant (Professor Jill Bennett)**
National Institute for Experimental Arts (NIEA); BIG Anxiety Festival
 UNSW Art & Design, Sydney
- Proofreading, editing and drafting a broad range of texts for a variety of audiences, including copyediting a multi-chapter academic book (Bloomsbury), drafting and editing peer-reviewed grant applications, and translation of academic texts and concepts into publicity material. Research and development of *The Big Anxiety* festival, a large-scale public festival initiative linking health & medical research in anxiety and other neurological disorders with artistic research and design projects.
- 2016 **Research Assistant (ARC grant application support to Faculty Researchers)**
 UNSW Art & Design, Sydney
- Reviewing, editing and drafting research proposals and associated support texts for the major round of Australian Research Council (ARC) project and early career research funding for numerous academics in the Art & Design Faculty, UNSW. This included editing proposals in media theory, visual anthropology, creative robotics, plant sentience and art, and art and contemporary politics.
- 2012 **Research Assistant (Professor Paula Dawson)**
National Institute for Experimental Arts (NIEA),
 UNSW Art & Design, Sydney
- Provided research support for holographic artist, Professor Paula Dawson. Support included grant proposal writing, and researching and authoring an academic paper, which Prof. Dawson subsequently presented at ISEA, 2014.
- 2008 – 2010;
 2004 – 2006 **Research Assistant (Professor Dennis Del Favero and Professor Jeffrey Shaw)**
iCinema Centre for Interactive Cinema Research
 UNSW, Sydney
- Provided research support for media artists and academics, Professors Dennis Del Favero and Jeffrey Shaw. Support included grant proposal writing and back-end research support, proofreading and providing research, reference and image support for academic texts, and authoring the Centre's press publications and annual reports.
- 2000 – 2001 **Research Assistant (Dr Fraser Ross)**
Pain Research Laboratory (Pharmacy Department)
 University of Queensland, Brisbane
- Planned, coordinated and undertook experiments in a study of the molecular pharmacology of δ -opioid receptors involved in mediating pain responses in vertebrate animals.

Teaching experience

- 2017 – **Supervisor, Research interns**
Arachnophilia Research Department, Studio Tomás Saraceno
- Supervisor for research interns (3 x three-month placements of German Masters students in Art History, Anthropology, and Architecture).

1998 – 1999

Head Tutor, Soil Microbiology Laboratory

University of Queensland, Department of Microbiology (Professor Lindsay Sly)

Head tutor responsible for leading and teaching a practical laboratory in soil microbiology for agricultural science students. Teaching an established curriculum, organising materials and equipment for each biweekly class, supervising and instructing students, setting and grading practical examinations and assignments.

Publications

Books & Theses

Bisshop, A. (2018). *Articulating Thresholds ~ artistic techniques for more-than-human sensitivities*. Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a Doctor in Philosophy. UNSW Sydney. **Awarded two level 'A' passes, accepted without amendment.**

Bisshop, A. (2018). *Possible vehicles for time travel*. Risograph printed artist book. Berlin: wemakeit.

Bisshop, A. (2017). *Marble*. Hobart: A Published Event.

Book chapters

Saraceno, T., Bisshop, A., Mühlethaler, R. (2019). 'Arachnid Orchestras: artistic research in vibrational interspecies communication'. In *Biotremology: Studying Vibrational Behavior*. Eds. Peggy Hill et al., **Routledge** series: Animal Signals and Communication.

Articles

De Paiva, J., Bisshop, A., Mühlethaler, R. (2019). 'Le silence de l'araignée: Tomás Saraceno ou l'art de s'accorder'. *Billebaude*, Paris: Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature.

Su, I., Qin, Z., Saraceno, S., Krell, A., Mühlethaler, R., Bisshop, A. and M. J. Buehler (2018). 'Imaging and analysis of a three-dimensional spider web architecture', *J. Roy. Soc. Int.* 15(146).

Bhangu, S., Bisshop, A., Engelmann, S., Muehleemanns, G., Reinert, H., Thibault-Picazzo, Y. (2015). 'Feeling/Following: Creative experimentation and material play'. *Anthropocene curriculum*, Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der Welt.

Conference Presentations

Bisshop, A. (June 2020). 'Queering the wound: zoetic figurations of nonhuman life as tools for rethinking death'. Accepted Paper. *SLSAeu 2020: Anthropocene(s)*, Museum Śląskie, Poland.

Bisshop, A. (November 2019). 'Arachnomadology: Queer cartographies of arachnid death, sex, life'. Accepted Paper. *Queer Death Studies*, Karlstad University, Sweden.

Bisshop, A. (April 2019). 'What of the spider remains in the web?' Accepted paper. *Animal Remains*, University of Sheffield, UK.

Bisshop, A. (October 2018). 'Intersections: interspecies communication with invertebrate animals'. Invited presentation. *Earthbound: a multispecies paradigm*, Aarhus: Aarhus university.

Bisshop, A. (October 2017). 'Articulating Thresholds: The Threshold as a Framework for Artistic Experimentation with Indeterminacy'. Accepted paper. *DARE: Aberrant Nuptials*, Orpheus Institute, Ghent.

Catalogue Texts

Bisshop, A., Gertler, A., Schiesser, A. (2019). 'The Episode of the Madeleine: Cake, Memory and Social Artistic Practice'. In *Sonntag*. Berlin: The Green Box.

Bisshop, A. (2014). 'A conversation in four acts'. In *Landscape Too*. Sydney: MOP projects.

Other outputs (exhibitions)

- 2019 (July) Installation and lecture performance (Holobiosonics: Ally Bisshop & Lucy Powell)
In the community of clones, Bergstraße 22, Berlin-Mitte
Collaborative art-science salon on plant sentience, sex and memory for the festival *Interiors to Being*, curated by Pauline Doutreluingne. Lecture performance and installation including bespoke scent, sound work, plants, Plexiglas, steel, inflatable.
- 2018 (May) Solo exhibition
It Matters What Moves, ADSpace, UNSW Paddington, Sydney.
Solo exhibition for the practical component of my doctoral thesis. Installation, including *The bees will tell us* (film and sound work), *Possible vehicles for time travel* (book), *{~} I+II*, *Durational monochrome Blue I* (digital prints on silk), *Durational monochrome Blue II* (custom-blown glass chamber, copper sulphate solution), *Untraceable topographies* (lenticular print), *Under the weight of this interval* (digital prints on matt fibre), *Schwellen (some wave movements)* (custom-blown glass resonant chambers, Plexiglas, plants, developing photo paper), *There are patterns only visible* (geodes, Plexiglas), *Inter/ruptions* (neon, Plexiglas).
- 2017 (October) Selected artist
Festival of Future Nows, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin
Exhibiting artist in three-day *Festival of Future Nows*, curated by Studio Olafur Eliasson at the Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin. Three sculptural installations: *The bird sings with its fingers*, *Silence goes quickly when played backwards*, *A single glass of water lights the world* (custom-blown glass resonant chambers, plant, Plexiglas, metal, timber, sound work, meteorite).
- 2017 (August) Invited Artist
The Seekers, tête, Berlin
Group show curated by Jai McKenzie, with Elsa Salonen, Jennifer Danos, Deborah Ligorio, Maria Torres. Installation: *We were dead and didn't notice* (custom-blown glass resonant chambers, Plexiglas, metal, timber, digital print on rag).
- 2016 (July) Selected Artist
A gathering of inner (s)helves, Agora, Berlin
'The Institute for Endotic Research (TIER)' residency curated by Lorenzo Sandoval. Installation: *Room drawing machine* (stones, rope, wood, paper, stylus).
- 2015 (August) Selected Artist
es gibt keinen neuschnee, Hilbertraum, Berlin
Group show with Max Sudhaus, Lena von Gödeke, Selket Chlupka. Sculptural installation, including: *There are patterns only visible* (geodes, Plexiglas), *There was never a dull moment* (soapstone, wood), *It matters what moves, and how you move* (memory foam, cast concrete, glass, egg).
- 2015 (June) Open studio
Cité des Arts, Paris (selected resident).
Open studio exhibition, including installation: *Let the Sun drag itself out into a long ray* (sunlight, copper, Plexiglas, timber).
- 2014 (October) Selected artist
Festival of Future Nows, Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin
Selected artist in the inaugural *Festival of Future Nows*, curated by Eliasson, Christina Werner and Fotini Lazaridou-Hatzigoga at the Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin. Three sound works: *Untitled sound works 1968-2014*, with Clara Jo.
- 2014 (Mar-Apr) Selected artist
SafARI Festival, various venues, Sydney
With artist Spence Messih, invitation to participate in the SafARI festival for emerging artists, Sydney. Exhibited at The Corner Co-operative: *Eventually the Sun*

will consume the Earth (artist book) and *Sunset serenade* (choral performance).
Sculptural works exhibited at *Alaska Projects: The sun is not a circle* (powder-coated perforated steel), *Everything wants to fall* (powder-coated steel poles, beeswax).

2013 (Jan-Mar) Selected Artist
Sarai Reader 09 Festival, Delhi
 Participant in the Sarai Festival, curated by RAQS Media collective. Sculptural work with Elliot Hughes: *Possible vehicles for time travel* (Plexiglas, light, timber)

Grants, awards & nominations

2019 **Research Stipend in Visual Art** (*Recherchestipendium Bildende Kunst*)
 Berlin Senate artistic research grant for the collaborative artistic project *Holobiosonics* with Lucy Powell, Senate Department for Culture and Europe, € 8.000,00

2017 (April) **Book commission** (*Lost Rocks* book series, Australia)
 10,000 word materialist fiction on 'marble' commissioned by art-publishing group *a published event*, \$AUD 1,000 <http://www.apublishedevent.net/projects/lost-rocks>

2017 **Continuation Scholarship**
 Australian Research Training Program Stipend, \$AUD 12,500

2013 **Immediations Art-Research grant**
 Research Council of Canada, \$CAD 5,000

2012 **Australian Postgraduate Award**
 Three year doctoral student funding, \$AUD 75,000

2011 **NSW Artists' Grant**
 Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, \$AUD 5,000

2010 **Faculty Grant**
 College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales Sydney, \$AUD 2,000

2010 **International selection and academic prize**
 International Sculpture Exhibition of Outstanding Art College Graduates, Beijing, China.

2010 **Gloria and Max Melville Travel Fellowship**
 UNSW Art & Design, Sydney, \$AUD 10,000

2009 **Marrickville Contemporary Art Prize** (First prize)
 Marrickville Arts Council, \$AUD 1,000

2009 **Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Award** (Finalist)

Competitive artistic & research residencies

2016 (June) Selected participant
AFFECT: Agora Berlin Residency
 Selected artist in the AFFECT residency: *The Institute for Endotic Research: Reading Bodies*, curated by Lorenzo Sandoval.

2015 (Apr-Jun) Selected resident
Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris
 Awarded competitive three-month studio residency at the Cité des Arts, Paris.

2014 (Dec) Invited participant
Senselab Immediations: research creation event, Sydney
 Invitation and funding to participate in a 3-week research-creation event led by Erin Manning and Brian Massumi. Immediations events included movement workshops

at Artspace Sydney, reading groups exploring the nexus of arts, philosophy and political economy, artistic and spatial experiments in the COFA Galleries, Sydney.

2013 (Oct-Dec) **Invited resident**
Senselab, Montreal
Invitation and funding to undertake a three-month research residency at the Senselab (Concordia University) Montreal. Led by Erin Manning, Senselab engages process philosophy in dialogue with artistic practice and movement experiments.

Other Professional Experience

2012 – present **Freelance Academic Editor**
Since 2012 I have offered freelance academic editing services, and have successfully sculpted and edited a range of academic texts, including Edited Academic Books (Bloomsbury Philosophy series), academic papers, and PhD and Masters dissertations in fields ranging from law, economics and history to classical archaeology, media arts and visual anthropology.

2007 – 2008 **Senior Policy Analyst**
Department of Community Services (DoCS), NSW
Provided high-level research support and strategic advice to DoCS in the **Services and Funding Strategy Department**. My role included the drafting/editing and proofreading of service guidelines, policy papers, formal correspondence, legal tenders, funding agreements, public service announcements, briefing notes and speech notes.

2001 – 2004 **Principal Analyst for Biotechnology; Senior Policy Officer**
NSW Department of Health; Ministry for Science & Medical Research
Provided high-level research support and strategic advice to the **Research & Development Policy Department**, NSW Health/Ministry for Science & Medical Research. Coordinated the \$60 million Infrastructure Grants Program for NSW health & medical research organisations. My role included industry liaison, oversight and coordination of a review and restructure of the funding program, oversight and coordination of the peer-reviewed grant application process and legal funding contracts. Drafted, proofed and edited texts for various audiences, including program funding rules, funding agreements, Ministerial correspondence, position papers for high-level committees, public announcements, policy papers, research papers, briefing notes and speech notes.

Service to profession

2013 – 2016 **Editorial Board Member**
Runway Journal for Experimental Arts, www.runway.org.au
Editorial Board member of *Runway*: peer-reviewed journal for contemporary art practice and writing, run by Australian artists /arts workers. Developing issue themes, drafting call-outs for contributions from artists/writers, vetting submitted proposals, authoring blog posts, and working collaboratively with journal contributors and board members to edit, proofread, and upload content.

Professional affiliations

2013 – present **Member**
Senselab: a laboratory for research-creation, <https://senselab.ca/wp2/>
Research member of Senselab, an international network of artists and academics from diverse fields, collaborating in research-creation projects at the crossroads of philosophy, art, and activism. Senselab was initiated by Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, and is based in Montreal and with nodes in Australia and Europe.

References

Professor Jill Bennett

Director, National Institute for Experimental Arts
UNSW Sydney
e. j.bennett@unsw.edu.au

I have worked with Professor Bennett as a Research Assistant toward numerous research projects across the fields of arts-health and art-science since 2013.

Professor Anna Munster

Deputy Director, National Institute for Experimental Arts
UNSW Sydney
e. a.munster@unsw.edu.au

Professor Munster was a primary supervisor of my doctoral thesis.

Professor Pia Ednie-Brown

Professor of Architecture and Creative Practice Research
Director, School of Architecture and Built Environment
University of Newcastle, NSW
e. Pia.EdnieBrown@newcastle.edu.au

Professor Ednie-Brown was an examiner of my doctoral thesis.

Professor Anna Gibbs

Professor, Writing & Society Research Centre & Digital
Humanities Research Group, School of Humanities and
Communication Arts, Western Sydney University NSW
e. A.Gibbs@westernsydney.edu.au

Professor Gibbs was an examiner of my doctoral thesis.

Articulating thresholds ~ artistic techniques for more-than-human sensitivities

Abstract

This practice-based research proposes thresholding techniques as a contribution to processual artistic practices. It argues that such practices engage matter not as readymade form, but as a flux of creative becomings, active within compositional processes. Following Henri Bergson, it proposes that such becomings are 'more-than-human', habitually eliding 'human' perception. This project engages process-based philosophy and process as ways of encountering matter's movements, through and beyond human 'subjects' and material 'objects'.

Through this research, I develop an image of the threshold as the field through which 'bodies' are linked and elaborated, via matter's creative becomings. The investigation of these concepts engages Erin Manning and Brian Massumi's artistic process of research-creation, where the intersection of thinking and doing is a generative threshold for the invention of techniques. Through artistic experimentation, I propose four thresholding techniques for composing in relation to material-force, and for opening on to more-than-human experience.

My own techniques are developed in concert with an analysis of those at work in artistic praxes engaging process as compositional force: Pierre Huyghe; Nina Canell; Olafur Eliasson; Senselab (space for collective research-creation).

Pausing~displacing proposes a technique for expanding the interval of duration, and accessing the more-than-human rhythms that it fields. It is elaborated through my initial multimodal sculptural experiments that slow and attend to different temporalities. Holding~circling proposes a technique for thresholding the tensions between framing/deframing. It emerges from sculptural/performative experiments in framing the event of sunset, and opening thresholds to new fields of relation. Feeling~following proposes an intuitive engagement with matter's more-than-human movements. This technique emerges across sculptural/installation works that follow material lures for composing. Through further sculptural and textual experiments, swelling~spilling is proposed as a technique for amplifying the virtual potentials of material-forces within experiential thresholds, and making their difference felt.

Thresholding techniques offer artistic propositions for becoming-sensitive to material becomings, such that matter is understood as creative force. They therefore articulate an ethics that situates the creative act as emergent from thresholds of relation. This project proposes a new understanding of processual practice as a mode of encountering more-than-human material becomings, and contributes research-creation techniques for engaging this relational threshold.

Full thesis available:

<http://unsworks.unsw.edu.au/fapi/datastream/unsworks:52742/SOURCE02?view=true>