

**Knowings and Knots**

*Methodologies and Ecologies in Research-Creation*

Natalie Loveless, Editor

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# Dialogues

## **The Intimacies of Doing Research-Creation**

*Sarah E. Truman in Conversation with  
Natalie Loveless, Erin Manning, Natasha  
Myers, and Stephanie Springgay*

The following roundtable conversation, initiated by Sarah E. Truman, activates a discussion on research-creation's potential and limitations as a research method/methodology, complicates cursory references to it, and demonstrates the already robust and nuanced theorizations of research-creation within Canada.

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SARAH E. TRUMAN: I organized this roundtable conversation in response to the increasing number of references to research-creation in the social sciences and humanities internationally. In qualitative research publications and conference presentations, research-creation has begun to be employed as both a methodology (the theoretical underpinnings that inform empirical research), and a method (a procedure for doing empirical research). However, how/what/and when research-creation is/does is rarely unpacked and often undertheorized in the social sciences. It is my hope that this exchange between some of Canada's leading research-creation scholars will point to the complex, multiple, and ethico-political

ways that research-creation is theorized, problematized, and enacted.

To orient our readers to your diverse fields of scholarship, could you please say a little bit about who you are, your discipline(s), where you are situated in the academy and the arts, and which communities you currently research-create with?

ERIN MANNING: I am a professor at Concordia University (Montreal) in the faculty of fine arts where I teach at the intersection of modes of artistic practice and process philosophy. I am also the director of SenseLab, a laboratory that experiments at the intersection of art, philosophy, and the political, which I began in 2003 ([www.senselab.ca](http://www.senselab.ca)). My own practice crosses philosophy and artistic creation. My artistic work tends to be textile-oriented and is interested in activating fields of relation. For the past five or six years, I have been exploring the synesthetic interstices between colour, smell, and movement. In my writing, I work to develop philosophical concepts and am concerned with questions of neurodiversity, movement, perception, value, and the political. Recently, I have been exploring the concept of black life (Fred Moten) in relation to neurodiversity.

STEPHANIE SPRINGGAY: I am an associate professor at the University of Toronto, and an artist and curator. My academic work has focused on developing research-creation methodologies with an attention to walking, affect, feminist new materialisms and posthumanisms, queer theory, and contemporary art and pedagogy. I am the co-director of WalkingLab ([www.walkinglab.org](http://www.walkinglab.org)), a walking research-creation collective. Rupturing commonplace understandings of what it means to move, WalkingLab's walking research-creation projects are attentive to gender, sexuality, race, disability, and Indigeneity in order to contest, complicate, and expose universal constructions of the human/inhuman divide. Our work has specifically aimed to disrupt the overused tropes of the *flâneur* and the *dérive*, tropes that

invoke a fraternity that is predicated on autonomy, ability, whiteness, masculinity, and as such a capacity to walk anywhere detached from the immediate surroundings. I also curate The Pedagogical Impulse, a research-creation project at the intersections between social practice, knowledge production, and pedagogy ([www.thepedagogicalimpulse.com](http://www.thepedagogicalimpulse.com)). The project has initiated a number of experimental, critical, and collaborative projects, including a series of artist residencies in public schools and community spaces in Toronto, and more recently a series of research-creation events that activate archives from the 1960s and 1970s Fluxus teaching materials.

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DIALOGUES

NATALIE LOVELESS: I am an associate professor in the Department of Art and Design at the University of Alberta, where I also run the Research-Creation and Social Justice CoLABoratory ([www.research-creation.ca](http://www.research-creation.ca)). I teach contemporary art history and theory, with a focus on feminist, social practice, and performance art. I am also an artist and curator. My recent research has been on feminist art and the maternal ([www.newmaternalisms.com](http://www.newmaternalisms.com)) and current work is at the intersection of art and ecology, specifically teasing out the distinction between art *on* ecology and art that takes *ecological form*. That project is (for now) called Sensing the Anthropocene: Aesthetic Attunement in an Age of Urgency and explores four artistic methods (walking practices, listening practices, instruction pieces, and durational performance) in practice and theory. It is nested within a larger multi-year, interdisciplinary, collaborative project, that I co-direct called Speculative Energy Futures (<http://speculativeenergyfutures.ca/>) that brings a research-creational, feminist, decolonial approach to climate change and energy transition research and activism.

NATASHA MYERS: I have been teaching in the Department of Anthropology at York University since graduating from MIT's History



| Anthropology | Science, Technology, and Society Program in 2007. My path here was rather circuitous: I was trained as a dancer in classical ballet and contemporary dance, and I continued dancing throughout my graduate training in molecular biology at McGill University, where I conducted research into the developmental biology of plants. I organize a number of projects at the intersection of art, science, ecology, and social justice, including serving as convener for the Politics of Evidence Working Group, directing the Plant Studies Collaboratory, co-organizing Toronto's Technoscience Salon, and co-founding the Write2Know Project. My first book, *Rendering Life Molecular: Models, Modelers, and Excitable Matter* (Duke University Press, 2015) is an ethnography of the embodied arts of an interdisciplinary group of scientists who make living substance come to matter at the molecular scale. My current ethnographic and research-creation projects span investigations of the arts and sciences of vegetal sensing and sentience, the politics and aesthetics of garden enclosures in a time of climate change, and most recently, I have launched a long-term project on restoration ecology and enduring colonial violence in Toronto's High Park oak savannahs. This is the site of an ongoing experiment with award-winning filmmaker and dancer Ayelen Liberona, in which we detune and re-attune the arts of ecological attention through a research-creation project called *Becoming Sensor* (<http://becomingsensor.com>). This project engages art and anthropology to design protocols for an "ungrid-able ecology" grounded in decolonial feminist praxis.

TRUMAN: Can you describe how you understand the concept research-creation?

LOVELESS: I understand research-creation as an interdisciplinary theory-practice that mobilizes artistic methodologies but is not limited to the arts proper (visual or otherwise). My approach to research-creation is grounded in interdisciplinary, feminist, queer,

decolonial, and critical race interventions into how we do what we do in the academy and for whom (*Cui bono?*, as Susan Leigh Star poignantly asked).

The political and interdisciplinary training that I received during my PhD (History of Consciousness, University of California, Santa Cruz) built on my experiences in theatre conservatories, art schools, and universities before that, and ended up being central to the approach to research-creation that I then began to develop when I returned to Canada to work at the University of Alberta. My dissertation (“Acts of Pedagogy: Art, Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Ethics”) was an analysis of feminist, psychoanalytic, and interdisciplinary contributions to radical and critical pedagogy, and these continue to inform my approach to research-creation: I work with research-creation, first and foremost, as an intervention into the contemporary university landscape, one that is interdisciplinary and centers feminist, queer, decolonial, and critical race interventions while working committedly across practice/theory lines, both methodologically and theoretically.

That said, I am trained in and teach in a department of art and design, specializing in contemporary art theory and history. So, when I think about research-creation in my local contexts, I find myself drawing a relatively sharp distinction between “research-based art” and “research-creation.” For me, there is a difference between densely theoretical and research-based artwork such as that of conceptual artists Mary Kelly and Hans Haacke, and research-creation as an intervention into *academic* discourse and production. This line is quite muddy in practice. But as a conceptual lure, articulating a commitment to those spaces of knowledge production we call the university—spaces that are ever “in ruins” and overrun by neoliberal administrative eviscerations—the line matters to me. My basic argument is that research-creation is genealogically tied to earlier interdisciplinary and social justice interventions into the university landscape that worked to challenge which research

methods and vocalities could be understood as scholarly (one really simple and commonplace example here might be the personal voice championed within performative writing and emerging from feminist calls to claim the personal as political). Research-creation (as I mobilize it) names a set of methodological and epistemological innovations into what counts as scholarly research, drawing on fine arts literacies but not limited to those only working in the fine arts; it names a methodology that is experimental and that transforms the ways we do and disseminate our research as academics.

SPRINGGAY: Like Natalie, my approach to research-creation is informed by intersectional queer, feminist, black, Indigenous, and critical disability scholarship/contemporary art practices. Research-creation is a way of *doing* theory/thinking that is bodily, experimental, and considers research (knowledge making) as a (speculative) *event* emerging from a practice, rather than preformed or predetermined. The way I often figure out how concepts work is through contemporary art—my own practice and/or work by contemporary artists. Art helps me get inside a concept rather than approaching it from outside. This is not a practice of interpretation. Rather, I have always understood particular forms of contemporary art as instantiating theory; or, in other words, they are theoretical in and of themselves. They are not metaphors, nor representations of theoretical concepts; rather, some works of art *event* concepts. In thinking and shaping how to do research-creation I have been influenced by the history and practices of queer, feminist performance art, the Fluxus movement, and social practice art, amongst other practices of contemporary art. What these art practices share is a desire to challenge dominant taxonomies of knowledges and bodies, neoliberal conceptualizations of space and time, institutional power, capitalism, and white supremacy, and to consider other ways of being in relation, and other ways of thinking-making-doing that are not confined to normative logics of the institution. For me,

research-creation is a methodological framework for doing scholarly research. It is grounded not in a set of prescriptive criteria but ontological, epistemological, ethical, and political attunements to creating a different world.

MYERS: I can't say that I have spent much time theorizing the concept of research-creation. Rather, I have experimented with forms of inquiry and modes of storytelling that are recognized as research-creation, and documented where and when and how research creation takes shape for others. I have generally approached research-creation as both method (protocols, techniques, and practices for doing research) and as things or events, that is, the creations that are the outputs of research. My methodologies (theories about how and why and what to research) are generally informed by feminist technoscience and anthropology. Concepts like Donna Haraway's material-semiosis and situated knowledge still motivate me, grounding me in research methodologies that propel me to the arts to expand and disrupt all-too-disciplined modes of inquiry. Material semiosis helps me see the creative and ethical work involved in making matter come to matter, and also helps me see that there is no necessary divide between art and science, or between scholarly research and artistic practice. Making matter come to matter differently through art practices helps me activate new research questions. And staying with the partiality and limitations of situated knowledges forces me to confront the limits of knowledge, what we can know and what we cannot know, and the accountabilities required to take stock of how we know. For me, research-creation is a mode of inquiry—a way of getting interested and involved in the world—that takes seriously embodied knowledge, craft, creativity, aesthetics, and practices of making as immanent to the processes of making knowledge and telling stories about both what is known and what remains unknown.

MANNING: SenseLab has been concerned with the concept of research-creation since 2003. Our main focus initially was to problematize what we saw as a too-easy tendency to situate research-creation in the realm of creative capital (which was happening in the earliest period of research-creation being mobilized as a research category for funding applications in Canada) and to mobilize artists to contribute to industry (thereby valuing their output). As research-creation gained currency in Canada we were also focused on foregrounding how philosophical work also carries a creative potential, thereby working to subvert the notion that research-creation needed to be situated in the realm of artistic work per se. Our concern was also to trouble the too-easy hyphen between theory and practice, exploring the differential between making and thinking across art and philosophy. This was not meant to conflate the two—we see philosophy and art as mobilizing knowledge and creativity in radically different ways—but to ask how the hyphen can work to activate new modes of inquiry and experimentation. There was little to no work on research-creation when we began our exploration. More recently, we have turned to Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's concept of study as an ally in our conceptual explorations. This turn is a way to emphasize the shift away from institutionalization, which, arguably, is the direction research-creation is taking: as Moten and Harney underscore in *The Undercommons*, the concept of study cannot be limited to the university (in fact, it is a rare occurrence in the university, where learning is evaluated according to preexisting categories of value). Study is that which engages with learning for its own sake, outside of the models of value that seek to domesticate it.

TRUMAN: (How) would you distinguish research-creation from other forms of arts-based research?

MANNING: I think there are overlaps—I feel close, for instance, to the way northern Europe (Finland, Norway, Sweden, Netherlands)

approaches art-based research, but more distanced from the ways it tends to be deployed in the UK. The main issue for me is that research-creation does not mean describing, in theoretical terms, an artistic practice. It involves pushing knowledge to a revaluation, asking what else is moving at its linguistic limit. In doing so, I think it is important to underscore the importance of understanding that research-creation is *not* a method (I argue this in detail in my chapter “Against Method” in *The Minor Gesture*). It is a mode of inquiry that calls for new forms of valuation. Research-creation (or study) pushes us to ask how thinking happens, and how that which doesn’t register directly as thought (or as productivity) nonetheless makes a difference (in Gregory Bateson’s terms, I am interested in the difference that makes a difference). This is how I understand study: the modality of engagement with life that moves beyond the walls of the classroom to learn through and with the world. If research-creation as a concept does its work, it should therefore be dismantling modes of pedagogy as they are instituted both in the institutional context of the university and in the art market and its limited forms of valuing artistic process.

LOVELESS: I agree with Erin about the importance of understanding research-creation as a pedagogical intervention. As I mentioned above, when teaching, I generally start off by making distinctions between research-creation, theoretical reflections on artistic practice by artists, research-based art, and the (too often) weak modes of “artification” that sometimes emerge from social sciences or humanities scholarship that has not taken the time to be attentive enough to artistic disciplinary literacy. I often follow this up with Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuk’s well-circulated 2012 essay “Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis, and ‘Family Resemblances,’” which is a really great teaching tool (Kathrin Busch’s 2009 “Artistic Research and the Poetics of Knowledge” is excellent as well in this regard). Chapman and Sawchuk’s essay offers the following four valences for

research-creation: “research-for-creation” (the production of an art or design object as the outcome of an extensive research process); “research-from-creation” (a written text that relies upon artistic methodological experiments); “creative presentations of research” (a monograph or essay, in text or hypertext, that plays significantly and poetically with linguistic form—think Barthes); and, lastly, “creation-as-research.” It is this last category that, the authors contend, speaks most powerfully to research-creation as a unique contribution to the contemporary university landscape. By situating the creation process at the heart of the research strategy, and understanding artistic form as capable of being a legitimate mode of research dissemination (via a performance, exhibition, etc.), commonplace assumptions regarding scholarship in the academy are upended and challenged.

I use this and other essays and examples to try to get students to see imbricated relationships between form and content as central to research-creation, highlighting the importance of not seeing the content of our research (what we are bringing attention to) as divisible from its form (from how we are saying it). To return to the example given above, the academic scholarly history that suggests that the “objective voice” is a “neutral” voice, a transparent container for the research, is racist and sexist. Critical race, decolonial, and feminist theory have each, in overlapping ways, asked us to attend to the *forms* we mobilize in our research—with writerly vocality understood here as form—and to understand these as devices through which we craft our research towards certain values, politics, and ideologies. Research-creation contributes to this by asking us to pay rigorous attention to “non-writerly” forms as challenges to conventional knowledge production as inherited within the settler-colonial spaces of the Canadian university.

SPRINGGAY: Increasingly, I understand arts-based research and research-creation as quite distinct, but I’m also wary of gatekeeping, disciplinary boundaries, and naming. As Erin has noted, the terms

can differ across geographical places and even different disciplines. Here I'm thinking about some of the work coming out of Australia that might not use the term *research-creation* but engenders similar ethical and artistic interests to my own work. Another example might be the artist/scholar Jorge Lucero in the United States, who does not use the term *research-creation* to describe his practice. Lucero often refers to his work as "conceptual artist as teacher" and draws heavily on conceptual practice, Fluxus, and radical art pedagogy from the 1960s. What makes his work research-creation are the ways his work challenges the ways that students and teachers move through and learn together in institutions. For Lucero, his work in the academy holds in tension intimacy, presence, and collaboration in ways that are unfamiliar and frictional. Something that both Lucero and I share is an understanding of pedagogy as intimacy, as a touching encounter, that does not resemble normative pedagogical models of transmission.

However, distinguishing arts-based research from research-creation, at least in the field of education, is important from a pedagogical standpoint. In education, most arts-based forms of research embody what Natalie has identified above as "creative presentations of research," where qualitative data is represented, presented, and mobilized using artistic forms. My agitation, at least within educational research, is the adoption of the term *research-creation* for work that has little relation to, or understanding of, contemporary art practices (both the history of, and present work) and theoretical frameworks that conceive of research-creation as an event, a speculative middle, and a practice. Too often I see researchers take interview transcripts, collaged with string and paint, or torn and shredded, and call this a work of research-creation. It's simply not. You and I have taken up some of these debates at length in our 2017 paper "On the Need for Methods" and our book *Walking Methodologies in a More-Than-Human World* (Routledge, 2018). We argue that we need to forgo data collection/extraction



and instead focus on generating events. Research-creation as an event of doing research from inside a speculative middle, and as a mode of inquiry that is affective and bodily, does not rely on proceduralism. This, for me, is one of the ways that research-creation is distinguished from other forms of arts-based research. Perhaps, the distinction, at times, has to do with rigour, which you've asked us to elaborate on elsewhere (see below).

TRUMAN: What is useful (or not) about research-creation for your work? What draws you to this practice of working? When do you use the term *research-creation* to describe your work (or not), and do you use other terms/concepts to describe your research/art practice?

MYERS: Anthropological research hinges on making the familiar strange. For me, research-creation is one way to detune, to tone down, or tune out normative, moralizing discourses that constrain how and what we can know. I love the disruptive potential of art practice. I get a lot from thinking with Rancière about the political significance of art, that art making can disrupt hegemonic consensus through a practice of dissensus. Art making can reorient attentions and perceptions, and remake the relations between ontology and epistemology; it can expose the moral economies that tacitly inform the disciplines, including what counts as an object worthy of inquiry; and it can alter what counts as a generative method for getting to know a phenomenon. The disciplines have often already decided they know what matters; researchers writing grant proposals must convince others that they already know what really matters in the world, and how to go about describing or analyzing it. But sometimes we need to forget and unlearn what we think matters. We need to rearrange our sensorium and sense-making practices and disrupt disciplinary thought styles and ways of seeing so that other worlds within this world can come into view. Art making helps me break the frame so that new phenomena

come to matter. Movement, photography, drawing, and video rearrange my attentions, change my research questions, and offer new media for storytelling. Research-creation is one modality that shows the impossibility of distance or neutrality in research: it is a mode of inquiry that amplifies the involutory momentum between all kinds of bodies making meanings in the affective entanglements of inquiry.

**MANNING:** As a philosopher and an artist, I necessarily move between philosophy and artistic practice. What I would want to underline, though, is that each practice engages in its own, singular, ecology. Philosophy's modes of thought are deeply concerned with philosophical knowledge and, similarly, art's modes of thought are committed to artistic exploration. I don't find it interesting for either the philosophical or the artistic to generalize across practices. For this reason, I tend in my own practice to work predominantly in one modality or the other, usually first in the studio, and over time, in the development of concepts that may or may not connect to or build on the artistic practice. It is not my aim to make the two converge or to give value to the artistic through the philosophical. Quite the opposite: I find artistic practice to be at its strongest when it is capable of developing its own modalities of expression. In my artistic practice, these modalities are usually non-linguistic. It is important for me to encounter how these modalities move, what they can do, what they propose. It may be the case, later on, that they elicit a philosophical exploration, that they open up a world I want to explore philosophically. But the crossing of art and philosophy for me is more diffuse than direct. I want to think philosophically because it expands my capacity to engage in the world. I make art because it touches a nerve that is specific to what material/incorporeal intervention can do. I want to value both practices as modes of thought and making in their own right.

LOVELESS: I use research-creation to describe my work when the research question I am working with requires being answered through research and publication practices that include yet exceed scholarly essay and book form. I see research-creation as an expansion of the modes through which we understand ourselves as able to engage in and publish (render public) scholarly research. So, when, in 2010, I asked the question, “why does there seem to be a resurgence of interest in the maternal as a site of political and artistic debate in these first few years of the twenty-first century?” my first site of research and publication was an art-as-daily-practice project that took three years to execute ([www.maternalecologies.ca](http://www.maternalecologies.ca)) my second and third and fourth were a series of curated exhibitions and catalogues, my fifth was an exhibition (*Complicated Labors*, May 2014, in which my “Maternal Ecologies” video series was paired with Mary Kelly’s photographic series “Primapara”), my sixth was a symposium called Mapping the Maternal: Art, Ethics, and the Anthropocene (co-organized with Sheena Wilson), and the edited volume I recently published (*New Maternalisms Redux*) will be the seventh (and last!). I list these as a way to describe the variety of publication forms and contexts that were needed when engaging in and rendering public my research on the topic. I never thought of it as an art historical project, nor a feminist theoretical one, nor a feminist art practice project, but an iterative conjunction of each of these orientations. The “art” wasn’t really presented as “art.” It draws on artistic methodologies such as daily practice performance art and Fluxus instruction pieces, but isn’t produced as an “artwork.” The exhibitions were not formally curated in the way that they would have if I were curating an exhibition for the professional art world and speaking to that audience. Instead, they were framed as critical curatorial/research-creation projects. The publications, too, are not scholarly in the way that they would be if fully oriented to the discipline of art history.

Here, each form works not to translate the same key insight for different audiences but, rather, works *to get at a different aspect of*

*the research*. This is why I refer to this project as research-creational. Conversely, my essay on feminist art and the maternal published in the 2019 Blackwell-Wiley *Companion to Feminist Art* (edited by Hilary Robinson and Maria Elena Buszek) is not a research-creational publication. It is a discipline-specific output. It is an art historical academic essay. Period. Nor is my book on research-creation (*How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation*) a research-creation project. It is a book. On research-creation. One that describes the practice and theory of research-creation as I teach it and champion it, but that does not, in any way, take a research-creational form. These distinctions matter to me. They matter not as a way to police the boundaries of research-creation but as a way to dig into the specificity of research-creation as an interdisciplinary and intersectional intervention into how we do things in the university today.

SPRINGGAY: Some of the ways that research-creation is useful have been teased out in previous responses, particularly for the ways that research-creation disrupts traditional forms of knowledge mobilization, representation, and practices of doing research. As mentioned above, since 2011, I have curated The Pedagogical Impulse. The project initiated a number of experimental, critical, and collaborative projects, including a series of artist residencies in public schools and community spaces in Toronto. In the residencies, artists created social practice projects *with* students. What emerged from those classroom projects were works of “art.”

More recently, we have been researching the relationship between the history of social practice work and its manifestation in 1960s and 1970s course curricula and pedagogy in Canada and the United States. Our focus is on teaching artists associated with Fluxus and Happenings, who held teaching positions at major institutions. Many of these artist/pedagogues created artist-multiples, game boards, event scores, activity booklets, and other printed matter as

creative and inventive curricula materials. Much of this history privileges white Euro-Western art practices, demanding that we question institutional power and taxonomies of knowledge, and to tell the stories that, in some cases, remained untold. To research this history, my research team and I have used a variety of methods, including archival research and interviews with contemporary artists who teach in post-secondary institutions. These methods themselves are neither innovative nor forms of research-creation. However, my interest isn't in describing or analyzing the archival work and interview transcripts through traditional qualitative frameworks. Rather, we are creating new artworks, exhibitions, and social practice events that take up and extend the archival and interview data. This is why I frame the larger project as research-creation. For example, the archives have unearthed a set of tarot cards as a curricular model, a board game, and other less traditional syllabi. Influenced by Fluxus Kits, we have invited sixteen artists to create and contribute curricular-based artworks to be included alongside reproductions of some of the archival work in an Instant Class Kit. The Instant Class Kit will then circulate to sixteen post-secondary classrooms to be activated by students and the instructor. New artworks will emerge and these will be documented and shared on the research-creation website. The Instant Class Kit will be works of contemporary art, curated, circulated, and documented as such. Embedded in the larger project they also enact research-creation.

In other instances, the terminology of research-creation is less distinct. For example, the Artists' Soup Kitchen (<http://artistsoup-kitchen.com/>), which I co-curated with Jess Dobkin, was a queer, feminist community art project. If I were required to explain it—which I am frequently required to do (what this really means is how to *justify* the fact that I am an artist/curator doing this work from inside the social sciences, where such work is not particularly valued)—I might use the term *research-creation*. But at the same time, I find the limits of naming to be particularly violent,

and distrust making claims that a work is this or that. It was a soup kitchen. And it was “more-than.” It was a performance-based queer feminist art project. It was an intimate space, with warm aromas of cooked food, the gentle noise of communities in conversation, and the coming together through bodily and affective labour, eating, and performance. It enacted an intimate pedagogy. Why it might be an example of research-creation has less to do with naming it as such, but because it performs the “eventing” and “the inside a work working” that I believe is crucial to the theorization of research-creation. It is also research-creation because of the kinds of destabilizations it performs in the institution, rupturing the appearance of research, knowledge, and bodies.

MYERS: I am learning that research-creation can happen at any point in the research process. My research-creation projects have taken shape at various stages. Sometimes, a new research question or a new insight is the outcome of a “para-site,” a field site alongside my primary ethnographic research (see Myers, this volume), in which I experiment with the arts to disrupt thinking as usual. This was the case with *Cellular Practices and Mimetic Transductions*, a performance/installation collaboration with Boston-based artist Clementine Cummer. This project helped me figure out the conclusion to my dissertation. In cases like this, the research-creation project is not so visible in the final, formal publication. However, the research-creation did inform the method, approach, or ethos through which the research was generated. For example, in 2008–2009 Natalie Loveless and I launched simultaneous 365-day projects. Alongside Natalie’s *actionaday*, I created *adanceaday* (<http://adanceaday.ca>), an experiment in attunement that explored the “anthropologist as a transducer of affects” (see Myers, this volume). In some senses, this research-creation project was an experiment in research ethics: it allowed me to ask, what is a relation? and how am I participating in relations as I document them?

In other cases, a performance or installation is one of many possible outcomes of a research project, as with my new collaboration with Ayelen Liberona, my lifelong friend and award-winning dancer and filmmaker. Our project *Becoming Sensor* experiments with movement, gesture drawing, sonic mapping, and kinesthetic imaging to detune the colonial sensorium, and explore other modes of attention and rendering that can do justice to the sentience of more-than-human beings. The aim of this project is to remake the science of ecology through art, to organize ecological research around techniques drawn from art. *Becoming sensors in sentient worlds*, we are inventing protocols for an “ungrid-able ecology” that can disrupt the colonial, economizing, heteronormative, mechanistic and functionalist logics of the ecological sciences. In some ways, I see research-creation like this as a way to expand the academy’s publics by pulling research findings out of the constraints of standard textual publications through expansive media forms and modes of storytelling.

TRUMAN: A Euro-Western approach to the arts is burdened with notions of rigour, value, and aesthetics. As such, there are “established,” although perhaps mutable, regulatory structures that dictate what is considered “good or bad” art, or “rigorous and un-rigorous” research practices. Is artistic and theoretical rigour necessary in research-creation and what does it look like?

MANNING: Rigour is an important concept for me, but not rigour as assessed and valued from the outside. What I want in my own practice is to feel as though the process is as consistent with itself as possible. This kind of internal rigour is very close to Henri Bergson’s notion of intuition as a practice that recognizes the difference between (generative) problems and false problems. False problems are problems that already carry their solutions. The institutions we

work in are habituated in the deployment of false problems. What I would hope to relay to students and practice as a philosopher and an artist is the sensitivity to the difference between a generative problem and a false problem. A generative problem creates a new ground from which the work emerges. It leads us toward a thinking (and making) at the limit. There is humility here—minor gestures and their capacity for variation lurk here. I consider it a goal of practice and thought to be as attuned as possible to (generative) problems, to true problems, problems that don't already carry solutions. This involves being moved by thought rather than seeing ourselves as its mover. Critique is very often engaged in the practice of mobilizing false problems. Engagement with the tendrils of a thought growing into itself is much more difficult than critique. I often think that a life of making-thinking is actually a life of becoming more sensitive to the generative problems that carry it. The rigour is here involves staying true to the complexity of the problem as it unfolds. This is the rigour I aim to make part of my practice. This kind of rigour is a practice in its own right. In the philosophical register, for me it involves close reading and hypothetical sympathy (Bertrand Russell). Hypothetical sympathy means reading/engaging a work for what it is doing (rather than for what it is not doing) and asking ourselves how it does what it does. In artistic practice, for me this means following the lure of the materiality and seeing where that produces the problem that can lead the way for the artistic process to develop itself in excess of the initial proposition I bring to the table. In a pedagogical context, this means listening to how the student addresses what moves through their thinking-making and assisting in clarifying and intensifying the problem as it develops. The work that ensues must not, in my view, ever be limited to a product—to “study” in Fred Moten and Stefano Harney’s terms is to return to the knot of engagement. It is to become committed to a thinking that exceeds us.



MYERS: If rigour is understood to be that which keeps research ethical, accountable, embodied, and situated, then it is a must for all research. Research-creation could be understood as an opportunity to free practitioners up from disciplinary norms of rigour, especially those, as Natalie points to above, that avow distance and neutrality as means for securing objectivity. Research-creation should give practitioners an opportunity to reinvent what rigorous research means. Rigour is also a question we have to ask about the pedagogies that make research-creation possible. Given that a large proportion of research takes shape in the contexts of graduate training, we must make sure that we create opportunities for students to experiment—and to fail—so that they have the opportunity to learn from doing. This means not expecting students to arrive with research or artistic practices fully developed. This is why I like anthropologist George Marcus's concept of para-sites, those sites that create space for students to experiment outside of disciplinary norms. Students don't have to be artists to start working with art-making practices, to begin to detune and re-attune their sensibilities. They can also be encouraged build collaborations with artists and other practitioners to make research-creation projects.

LOVELESS: Is artistic and theoretical rigour necessary in research-creation? Yes. To my mind, absolutely. That is not to say that I adhere to "Euro-Western" ideals of scholarly and artistic rigour in the sense that you may mean. Rather, I advocate for the kind of rigour that I was trained in (in the interdisciplinary humanities). The job of working interdisciplinarily, as I understand it, requires a problem-based approach in which the research-question comes first and the disciplinary tools and methods adequate to that research-question second. It requires a mode of rigour that I would reframe as respect and accountability to each of the disciplines engaged, and its customs.

If you are a “visitor” to a discipline, take the time to humbly discover which modes of practice, engagement, and address are recognized and valued in the field. This doesn’t mean adhere to them blindly. It means that if you are drawing on a set of disciplinary tools that constitute a “primary” home—academic, artistic, or otherwise—do so in a way that translates these generously across the disciplinary locations you are visiting.

Disciplinary poaching and diletantism makes for bad work (unless we understand the amateur in the way that Marjorie Garber does in her excellent book *Academic Instincts*—as a practice of love and delight). To *love* a form, method, theory, or field, changes how we work with it. It demands respect, care, and commitment. This is why in *How to Make Art at the End of the World* I draw on the field of critical polyamory to name research-creation a *polydisciplinamous* practice. As a long-time bi- and poly-identified person, I have found the conjunction of the practical, theoretical, political, and ethical insights of the interdisciplinary humanities and the practical, theoretical, political, and ethical insights of polyamory to work well together. They work well because to think through “poly” requires that we honour emergent libidinal drives, attachments and loves in ways that resist the logics of mononormativity, whether that “mono” is about disciplines or people.

SPRINGGAY: I want to think about rigour that is feminist, collaborative, and accountable to transdisciplinarity and to the different human and nonhuman bodies one works with. As my colleagues have outlined, the problem with normative evaluations of rigour is their insistence and adherence to Euro-Western, cis-heteronormative, ableist, settler colonial logics. Rigour is assumed to be measurable, concrete, and visible. Further, rigour and impact are assumed to be fixed in time and space, and causal. In trying to disrupt such an account of rigour, unfortunately research practices have become diluted, with an “anything goes” attitude. Instead, I want to advocate

for a feminist rigour that is deeply co-produced, emerges from the process of research itself, and involves an incremental, partial, and diffuse series of changes. Rigour becomes tangible and felt across different registers. Feminist rigour is constituted through experimentation or what Isabelle Stengers calls an ecology of practice. This is a rigour dedicated to the creation and sustainment of diverse forms of life.

Linked to this, and echoing Natalie, above, I consider research-creation to be transdisciplinary. Transdisciplinary work is hard, complicated, and requires an ethical commitment or accountability to many different disciplines, practices, and ways of being in the world. It requires a degree of care in multiple fields and multiple registers, so, on one level, yes, there is a need to have a sustained understanding of art. On the other, as Natasha has noted, this doesn't necessarily mean coming into the academy as graduate students, for example, with an already-existing art practice, but that one might be cultivated through a deep engagement with theory and artistic practice.

**TRUMAN:** Can you tell us about an inspiring research-creation event you organized or were part of recently? Why was this event important?

**MYERS:** In May 2017, as I mentioned above, Ayelen Liberona and I mounted a synesthetic installation of our Becoming Sensor project at the Great Hall in Toronto for the Canadian Association of Theatre Researchers annual conference. What is significant about this for me is that the project is aiming to use art-based practices to invent new forms of what I am calling "alterdata" for an ungrid-able ecology of naturecultures ten thousand years in the making. This is a project that could, and perhaps should, take a hundred years if we are to create a robust mode of inquiry that can stand up alongside the sciences and force scientists to ask better questions and develop

more nuanced methods. We are drawing on the arts to upend what we think of as rigorous research, what we think counts as a robust form of knowing, and to disrupt particular desires around data as reducible, grid-able, quantifiable, and legible. Our aim is to detune colonial common sense about land as extractable resource and commodity, so that we can attune our sensoria otherwise. Our art practices aim to rework attentions and perceptions so that we can conjure speculative fabulations that can pull affectively and kinesi-  
thetically on our viewers' imaginations about the sentience of the lands around us. We are making kinesthetic images and practicing a kind of kinesthetic listening in order to render the numinous, the ephemeral, and the unseen. Our kinesthetic renderings with sound and images expose ecological inquiry as it could be: an embodied, involving, situating, and unsettling practice.

LOVELESS: I was recently co-lead on three-year project that I think of as research-creationally allied. Called The Vaccine Project to start and Immune Nations ([www.immunenations.com](http://www.immunenations.com)) following this, the project brought together people who identified as artists, social scientists, arts and humanities scholars, law and health researchers, health journalists, scientists, and as mixes of these. Together, we worked to develop a genuine interdisciplinary collaboration that required taking the time to slow down, get to know each other, and grapple with a problem together. This meant that we didn't just add disciplinary competencies together and produce something based on all of our strengths; we worked to remake each other's understandings of things by taking the time to fully get to know the basis of perspectives (and methods of attainment) that, in some cases, felt alien, odd, or wrong.

For example, in the first workshop, a health and policy expert underscored the need for us all to agree on a singular message that would help us in assessing the results of the exhibitions' impacts through social scientific metrics. The arts and humanities-identified

folks in the room balked at this, stating that the arts were not here to be illustrative handmaidens that could be “reduced” to metrizable data-bits as a way to assess impact. Rather, the arts are, so the conversation went, “excessive” modes that produce often undefinable impacts, at least from the perspectives of the quantitative social sciences. We seemed to be at an impasse. But instead of forcing a resolution, as a group we sat with the dilemma for a full year between workshop #1 and #2. By the time we got to workshop #3 and the final exhibitions, Immune Nations had developed into a fantastic and collaboratively robust project that allowed all of us to speak across disciplinary and ideological differences and come together to produce an event in which most of the “artworks” exceeded anything the collaborative groupings producing them could have predicted.

As I mentioned in response to your first question, I am now working with a colleague at the University of Alberta, Sheena Wilson, on a seven-year project (Speculative Energy Futures, [www.justpowers.ca/projects/speculative-energy-futures](http://www.justpowers.ca/projects/speculative-energy-futures)) that draws on the method developed for Immune Nations but is directed towards feminist, artistic, and decolonial approaches to climate change. Mobilizing research-creational approaches in this way has been extremely generative for me and I am excited to see what will come of this new endeavour.

**MANNING:** SenseLab is working on an alter-university we call the 3 Ecologies Institute. This institute aims to ask what else learning can be in the environment of research-creation where art, philosophy, and the political move together. Our aim is to para-site the university, not to replicate it. We have no desire for accreditation or for any type of service economy (we will not have a curriculum). Our aim is to work together to invent neurodiverse modes of knowing that trouble the increasing alignment between teaching/learning and the debt economy. Toward this end, we are also working on a post-capitalist

economy we call the 3E Process Seed Bank. Brian Massumi and I recently gave an interview with Marc Todoroff on the topic. It can be found here: <http://senselab.ca/wp2/3e-process-seed-bank/interview/>.

SPRINGGAY: In addition to the research-creation project The Pedagogical Impulse that I described earlier, WalkingLab has been prolific in generating diverse projects, publications, and events over the past five years. In February–March 2018 I organized, with my colleague VK Preston, a ten-day event in Toronto that mobilized a number of research-creation outputs and outcomes into different public spaces, and for public engagement beyond the academy. Called Indelible Refusal: Bodies, Performances, and Walking Resistance, this series of public lectures, panel discussions, film screenings, workshops, research-creation walking interventions, performances, and master classes aimed to actively engage in pedagogies of refusal and solidarity. The program aimed to walk-with and think-with Indigenous, black, Two-Spirit, queer, and trans artists and scholars to work through concepts related to land, settler colonialism, slavery, erasure, violence, and refusal. The enormity of the event, bringing together diverse research-creation practitioners, artists, and community activists, amplified the importance of research-creation activities in public engagement.

One of WalkingLab's ongoing research-creation practices is what we call queer walking tours. These include pop-up lectures, artistic interventions, and community participation, and approach a topic *obliquely*. We have initiated a number of these tours internationally, and a recent event explored the name, place, concept Lancaster. The walking tour, Stone Walks Lancaster: Militarisms, Migration and Speculative Geology, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, introduced three militarisms: the Lancaster Bomber, the Lancaster Treaty, and the Sims speculum from Lancaster South Carolina. The walk interrogated militarism, gynecology, migration, settler colonization,

black diaspora, free-market capitalism, sinkholes, and speculative geology.

As you know, I am currently embarking on a new research-creation project with both you (Sarah E. Truman) and Astrida Neimanis from the University of Sydney, on toxic bodies, from a queer, feminist, artistic, and decolonial perspective. The project is part of WalkingLab's interest in land, place, bodies, and ecologies and their larger research-creation investigation into walking, affect, and the Anthropocene. Toxic Love / Making-with-Windermere Basin intervenes into Windermere Basin, at the western tip of Hamilton Harbour in Oniatari:io / Niigani-gichigami (Lake Ontario), which was once the most polluted body of water in North America and is now Canada's largest human-made coastal wetland. Merging DIY citizen science testing with performance art, choreography, and writing, Toxic Love will investigate ways of loving and living with wounded bodies of water in the shadow of settler colonial petrocapi-talism. Our investigations will use domestic kitchen utensils and food stuffs, gynecological home-test kits, lab science tests, microplastic monitoring technology, and affect metres to gather data about the health and status of the basin's body, and for understanding our own bodies' relations to this place.

TRUMAN: Any further thoughts on research-creation and its ethico-political, artistic, or methodological relevance?

MANNING: I'd like to say that when it comes to research-creation, the political cannot be separated from the question of value. If research-creation is about engaging with what does not ordinarily register as value (as knowledge, as productive, etc.), the work is necessarily political. This makes study/research-creation proto-political: study creates the conditions for the mobilization of other ways of living and learning. For me, this engagement with the political is connected to the modes of pedagogy we propose in the aligning of

thought to the more-than of experience in the making. That is to say, it is connected, deeply, to transforming how our classrooms value thought. This necessarily involves troubling our relationship, in the university, with evaluation. It is clear that evaluation is concerned with what already registers as thought and knowledge (whether this be in the form of an object or of a written paper). When asking the question of what else value can feel like, or look like, we must ask for whom and in what conditions it registers. Who sits in our classrooms and how are their knowledges registering across the student body? Are the neurodiverse, the black, the Indigenous, the trans students also heard in the cacophony of what counts as knowledge? Do we even know how to recognize knowledge?

As you can see, I am not particularly interested in the concept of research-creation as it moves toward institutionalization. I don't want to foster departments of research-creation. I don't want methods of research-creation to be taught and developed. I prefer an ad hoc approach to how knowledge needs to express itself. In the interdisciplinary PhD I direct at Concordia (the PhD in the Humanities) we have consistently refused to establish hard guidelines as regards research-creation. Research-creation, for us, is the engagement with other ways of activating knowledge. As much as possible, we attempt to be sensitive to each singular way of asking the question of how process and practice think. To do this well, we cannot relegate research-creation to art. Research-creation must also include the process and practice of thought in the so-called disciplines—in philosophy, in political theory, in sociology and anthropology, in education. Each mode of thought must be engaged as an open environment for inquiry, asking each time how that thinking values the questions being asked. A research-creation approach singularly asks what modality the expression of these questions can take. This engagement with the multiplicity of expression allows us to engage beyond the linguistic to pull open the inquiry and to learn how else thinking can happen.



MYERS: One assumption about research-creation might be that the final product should look like art, or that every drawing, diagram, or gesture in the activity of research-creation is a work of art. I've found that research-creation can be very powerful when it is activated behind the scenes in scholarly work, such as with my project *adanceaday*, where each dance, drawing, and text serve as data in an archive, as scribbles in an ethnographer's notebook, not as artworks in a gallery. That research-creation project served as a parasite (Marcus) for me to improve my skills as an anthropologist of movement, affect, and gesture, giving me more nuanced tools and techniques for making notes in the field. At no point in that project did I consider that I was making art. However, in the new work, *Becoming Sensor*, I am explicitly interested in activating dataforms that can also stand as artworks, to help rethink the relation between aesthetics and knowledge.

The ethico-political projects I pursue in my research-creation practice are grounded in feminist and anti-colonial politics. I can't say that these values are inherent in research-creation, but rather a feature of a praxis inspired by feminist technoscience and decolonial methodologies. What is crucial to me is that we start to recognize all research as political, and get better at examining the moral economies and common senses that drive our own political interests to help us become better able to situate the stakes of our own research, whether it is creation-based or not. And at the same time, what I love about art is that it can operate at the level of the sensorium, that node between what we sense and how we make sense of the world, to disrupt common sense and make strange the goods and bads we may take as given in our political work.

SPRINGGAY: For me, once a concept or a term is mobilized it becomes overused and lacks (in)tension. Research-creation becomes a buzzword and researchers simply insert the term into their publications without much regard for its theoretical orientations. Too often, in

the social sciences, researchers take existing data (collected through more traditional and procedurally driven qualitative methods) and then attempt to experiment with it perhaps by performing it, collaging it, sewing it, drawing on it, and so on. This is not research-creation. It's not very good art either. It's not the collaging or sewing that is the issue, but the continued reliance on the extraction of data in one form that then is simply manipulated and reworked to give it another form. In both instance, form drives the work. Rather, what we need is an eventing—research that occurs in the speculative middle. I think the problem I have with some of these examples is that the forms are actually metaphors for doing research—cutting and collaging seen as messy, or an assemblage, or there is an understanding that doing data diffractively/differently in this way is more artful—but without a lot of understanding about the history and practices of various art forms. The arts are typically undervalued in the academy. And yet, they are often appropriated by researchers in order to justify or exemplify “alternative” practices of doing research.

LOVELESS: Only one: Thank you, Sarah, for organizing this wonderful exchange!