MATERIALISING METHODS:
Un-black-boxing practice-based research at the interface of art and biomedical science

Date: 20 February 2025
Time: 10.30AM–6PM
Venue: Durham University

@DurhamImh
@durhamimh.bsky.social

A one-day symposium hosted by the Discovery Research Platform for Medical Humanities at Durham University, in collaboration with The Cultural Negotiation of Science research group (Northumbria University) and Hannah Star Rogers (Medical Museion, University of Copenhagen).

What can practice-based research tell us about working with disciplinary cultures that are not our own? With a focus on how contemporary art practices engage with expert cultures in health and biomedicine, this symposium foregrounds questions of method, practice and process in relation to interdisciplinary enquiry. Critical art practices are knowledge-producing practices that shape interdisciplinary research agendas. Yet within academic institutions, arts-based research has often been reduced to an instrumental or illustrative device. With the aim of sharing new narratives about what 'counts' as research in an interdisciplinary environment, and moving beyond a focus on public-facing 'outputs', this symposium asks how artists, curators and other scholars might 'un-black-box' or make manifest the questions, processes, inter-relations and power dynamics that inform practice-based research at the interface of art and science.

Grace Denton, All Facing in the Same Direction (2023), film still.

Durham University Institute for Medical Humanities
The Cultural Negotiation of Science Northumbria University NEWCASTLE
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PROGRAMME

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Registration and coffee	**10.30AM**
Welcome Fiona Johnstone (Visual & Material Lab, Discovery Research Platform for Medical Humanities, Durham University)	**10.50AM**
Keynote: Art, Science, and the Politics of Methods Hannah Star Rogers	**11.00AM**

Rogers explores how the tools of Science and Technology Studies (STS) can provide critical insights into art and science projects, highlighting the practices of these knowledge-making communities as discussed in her book Art, Science, and the Politics of Knowledge (MIT Press, 2022). Rogers challenges the conventional boundaries between art and science, suggesting that these fields may be understood as knowledge communities constructing, maintaining, and manipulating their own boundaries. By demonstrating how STS methodologies are being applied by STS scholars to artistic practices and, conversely, how art can inform STS inquiry, Rogers highlights the emergence of a new subdiscipline—Art, Science, and Technology Studies (ASTS). This framework reimagines the categories of art and science and shows their changing states, with significant implications for understanding their roles in shaping social worlds.

Lunch	**12.30PM**
Introduction to the afternoon programme Fiona Crisp and Laura Harrington (The Cultural Negotiation of Science Research Group, Northumbria University)	**1.30PM**
Artists' presentations and discussion Jackie Donachie, Grace Denton and Daksha Patel	**1.45PM**
Break	**3.00PM**
Artists' presentations and discussion Helen Knowles, Alis Oldfield, Louise Mackenzie	**3.30PM**
Final remarks	**4.45PM**
Shared reflections	**5.00PM**
Event finish	**6.00PM**

ORGANISERS

The Discovery Research Platform for Medical Humanities (DRP-MH) at Durham University brings different groups of people together to collaborate in tackling barriers – of diversity, risk, evidence and scale – faced in medical humanities research. Large in scale, global in reach, and innovative and experimental in its methods, the Platform aims to empower health and wellbeing researchers from different sectors, disciplines, and areas of expertise to co-develop new approaches to widespread health challenges. Through international research networks, fellowships, and a wide range of voluntary and health sector partnerships, it centres people with lived experience and people from marginalised communities as the co-creators of health research, including research on mental health and health inequalities.

Researchers on the Platform come from a wide range of arts and humanities and social science disciplines including Literary Studies, Psychology, Philosophy, History, Sport and Exercise Sciences, Education and Sociology. Beyond Durham University, work on the Platform takes place across three physical sites including St Anthony's Health Centre in Newcastle; ReCoCo, a radical peer led mental health recovery college based in Newcastle; and The Edinburgh International Book Festival. The Platform also hosts six 'method Labs' with expertise in measurement, affect, cognition, narrative, and visual and material methods. The Labs will generate new research questions on topics such as chronic pain, addiction, mental health, movement, neurodiversity and disability, as well as critiquing storytelling practices around health and human experience.

The Platform is supported by Durham University's Institute for Medical Humanities and funded by Wellcome until 2030.

https://medhumsplatform.org

The Cultural Negotiation of Science Research Group (CNoS) brings together artists, academics and research students whose practices engage with expert cultures across a broad spectrum of science and technology. Based at Northumbria University, Newcastle, CNoS seeks to reach across publics and research communities to develop a performative approach to the production of knowledge that actively challenges the use of art as an instrumental or illustrative device to interpret science. We are committed to supporting the development of innovative, practice-based methods which re-vision the relationships between scientific and artistic research, leading to artistic outcomes which can enable community engagement as well as generate wider socio-political impact.

The unique structure of CNoS allows us to occupy a distinct position in the field of Art-Science research; our members are a mixture of current and former staff of Northumbria University as well as doctoral researchers and alumni who, collectively, bring extensive networks of collaborative working. Recent partnerships include the Psychoactive Trials Group at King's College London (Helen Knowles), Anatomy Department, Kings College London (Daksha Patel), Royal Botanical Gardens Edinburgh (Christine Borland), iCASP at University of Leeds (Laura Harrington) and The Laboratori Nazionali del Gran Sasso (Fiona Crisp).

https://cnos.ac.uk/

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Hannah Star Rogers holds the art and science postdoctoral fellowship at Medical Museion, University of Copenhagen, where she co-directs the Metabolic Arts Gathering (MAG) with Adam Bencard. She is the author of *Art, Science, and the Politics of Knowledge* (MIT Press 2022) and the lead editor of the *Routledge Handbook of Art, Science, and Technology Studies* (2021). Her current book project is an edited volume, *What Curators Know: Art and Science in the Museum*, due out from Rowman & Littlefield in 2025. She holds a PhD from Cornell University (2012) in Science and Technology Studies and an MFA from Columbia University (2018). Rogers works as a curator on art and science exhibits including "Emerge: Artists and Scientists Redesign the Future" at Arizona State University and "Art's Work in the Age of Biotechnology: Shaping Our Genetic Futures" at North Carolina State University and the University of Pittsburgh. Her exhibition "Making Science Visible: The Photography of Berenice Abbott," received an exhibits prize from the British Society for the History of Science and resulted in an invited lecture at the Smithsonian Archives of American Art.

hannahstarrogers.com

Jacqueline Donachie is a Baxter Research Fellow at University of Dundee. She graduated from Glasgow School of Art in 1991, won a Fulbright Award for MFA at Hunter College in New York in the late 1990's and has established an award-winning career as an artist working across socially engaged, interdisciplinary practice. Her work is held in many significant public collections, including Tate and the Arts Council of Great Britain. In 2016 she completed a PhD with Northumbria University that examined the capacity for artworks to shape research and care in the field of genetics, continuing a long collaborative engagement with biomedical researchers in Newcastle and Glasgow. Her research interests cover contemporary art practice, in particular socially engaged work, healthcare, leadership and inclusion, with an emphasis on the role of participation in both academic and artistic research.

jacquelinedonachie.co.uk

Grace Denton is an artist and researcher currently completing minor corrections on her PhD: *'The Nominally Sovereign Body: A practice-based exploration of the language of self-governance through the prism of ADHD'* at Northumbria University. This body of research analyses the point at which we put language to experience, and engage in collective mythmaking around health, wellbeing, and political influence. It harnesses neurodivergence as methodology to generate artworks articulated through moving image, performance, radio broadcast, installation and craft. Grace co-runs a weekly online session for other neurodivergent artists and researchers called Making Time, and remains an active member of the Cultural Negotiation of Science research group. In 2023 she received funding from Arts Council England to create All Facing in the Same Direction, a new moving image work, and launch it as part of Nominally Sovereign at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art.

gracedenton.co.uk

Louise Mackenzie is an artist and researcher making gallery, site-specific and participatory work across installation, sound, film and performance. Her research explores human relationships to the nonhuman world through process-based and participatory art practice. She is founder and curator of interdisciplinary pop-up cinema project, Black Box, a member of the Cultural Negotiation of Science research group and holds a PhD in Fine Art from BxNU Institute of Contemporary Art, Northumbria University. Louise lectures and writes and has published with Leonardo Journal (MIT Press), Journal of Technoetic Arts (Intellect), PUBLIC Journal, and Artnodes, Journal on Art, Science and Technology.Her works, T*he Stars Beneath Our Feet*, *Zone of Inhibition* and *Lively Material* have been exhibited in the UK, USA, Germany, Canada, China and Australia.

loumackenzie.com

Alis Oldfield is an artist, PhD researcher (CNoS, Northumbria University) and Lecturer at Birmingham City University. Interested in ecology, storytelling, craft and technology, her research project imagines the internet as a landscape with ecological systems, to diagnose its health. The project questions whether the soil of the internet is sick, adopting a fiction-as-method art practice to ask how ecological thinking can help create a vital, life-sustaining future 'in-terra-net.' Recent projects include: *Carrying the Craft* (exhibition, workshop and seminars) with Christine Borland as part of the CNoS Symposium at Northumbria University (2023) and *Planetary Thinking* exhibition at Bankley Gallery, Manchester with the Cosmotechnics Reading and Research Group (2024).

alisoldfield.co.uk

Daksha Patel is a multi-disciplinary artist whose practice has engaged with research in biophysics, botany, biomedicine, applied mathematics, environmental modelling systems & environmental justice. Her recent work includes the exhibition *A Sense of Flora* (2024) at Manchester Museum, the experimental film *Interacing* (2024) which was selected for Raw Science, Science New Wave and Oregon Documentary Film Festivals, USA, inter-disciplinary workshops and conference speaker at Imperial College, London (2024) and a Creative Fellowship at University of Exeter (2023) during which she created an onsite large-scale drawing *Sticky Wicked*. She is currently working upon a new commission (2025) for LUTN (Light Up The North) exploring themes of climate change and air pollution.

dakshapatel.co.uk

Helen Knowles is an artist and curator of the Birth Rites Collection currently housed in the University of Kent. Knowles is preoccupied with the way the immaterial meets forms of life, particularly in the social realm, teasing out questions of responsibility and autonomy. Her recent focus on more-than -human healthcare and cosmotechnics has involved collaborations with indigenous communities in Putumayo, Colombia and researchers on the psychoactive trials and in the AI lab at Kings College, London. Recent shows include; Hyundai Motor Studio, Beijing (2022), Illingworth Kerr Gallery, Alberta, 'Ars Electronica' Austria, (2020). The Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, NEMO, Paris, Hannover Kunstverein (2019) 'Impakt Festival, Centro del Carme, Valencia, ZKM Germany, Zabludowicz Collection, London (2017). Knowles received an honorary mention in ARS ELECTRONICA Interactive Section, (2020). Her work is held in collections including The Whitworth Art Gallery & Tate Library and Archive. In 2021, she was awarded a research studentship from Northumbria University to carry out a practice-based PhD project called *'More-Than-Human Healthcare: A practice-based study of relationships, allyship and technical assemblages, where humans, plants, psychedelics and artificial intelligence mutually tend to and sustain health'.*

helenknowles.com
birthritescollection.org.uk

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