Contemporary research is polarised by opposing research approaches. For example, the study of invariant effects confronts and competes with the study of incommensurable affects and differences. In this paper, I will propose that innovations will emerge as practice-as-research is re-positioned away from existing arts models yet without adopting the research values of science. Currently, the difference between research cultures may be characterised such that:

- The sciences attempt to provide a transcript of the organisms in action within a prefigured solution space for the purpose of anticipating probability.
- The arts attempt to find emergent conditions and pre-adaptive strategies in non-prefigured space for the purpose of increasing new possibility.

Even though the subject of many interdisciplinary inquiries is the same, the search for invariants or incommensurability, the study of effect or affect, persists. For practitioners-as-researchers, such as Arakawa and Gins, the approaches can be combined where emergent non-prefigured events can be actualised by moving between prefigured solutions spaces.

I have used the subtitle of neuro-biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela’s influential book *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realisation of Living* (1981) to point to the importance of *poiesis* (making) in regard to the production of life. Maturana argues that self-consciousness and intuitive understanding have never
provided a biological foundation (Maturana in Maturana and Varela, 1980:55-6). He points to the problem of the position of the observer where the logic of description is the same as that of the describing system (1980: 52). Biologically, this means that a substratum (in the organism) is needed for the interactions to occur, and this substratum cannot be seen as independent from the observer (1980: 52). He goes on to observe:

Many conclusions about self-consciousness and knowledge which arise from this mode of analysis have been proposed in one way or another by scientists from their intuitive understanding, but never, to my knowledge, with an adequate biological and epistemological foundation (1980:55-56).

Research on the position of the observer — both the observer of the experiment and the observer of the subject within the subject — is precisely the point at which practice can contribute to contemporary research.

In 2003, biophysicists Carey Rudifolkine and Jean Zinovieff wrote to the artist-turned-architects Arakawa and Gins regarding their work The Mechanism of Meaning:

It, this ‘(the) mechanism of meaning’ of yours, is for all intents and purposes the mechanism that all physicists following your friend and ours, Werner Heisenberg, identify as that which distorts all their data. Heisenberg insisted that each of the fiery group of young physicists assembled around him spend a good deal of time with your book (Gins and Arakawa 2005 unpublished manuscript, Making Dying Illegal: 62).

We can no longer quarantine the scientific observer from the phenomenological observer and must study the constructions of observation. Various practitioners, philosophers and theorists have crystallised the position of the observer in art, or the outside of art:

- Duchamp asks, “Can one make works that are not works of ‘art’?” (Duchamp’s notebooks quoted in Perloff, 2002: 163).
- Wittgenstein remarks that “The value of the world must lie outside of the world” (cited in Gins and Arakawa, 2002: xii).
- Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe observes “The principle of art is put to work by what it is not” (1999:42).
For Arakawa and Gins, setting any activity apart as ‘an outside’ participates in a historical and habitual mistake. Instead they propose we focus our efforts on the movements, or cleaving, of the organism to the person, to the surround. The way to study the cleaving and the enveloping bioscleave, is to research cognition as embodied and distributed by devising material situations through which to practice the reconfiguration of perception and action. Therefore, I propose that the coordinated activities of practice–as–research infuse the following qualities of sensation into the position of the double-observer when constructing further inquiry:

- anti-utopian
- anti-teleological
- anti-expressive

These ‘anti’s’ are counter-movements within the self-differentiating process of becoming. As anti-dotes, they are not meant to partake in the dialectic of opposition, which I am trying to eradicate, but as distinctions consistent with the way biotopological space is divided by sensation. “Sensation occurs as the movement that forms a boundary and subsequently maintains that boundary through repetition” (Kawamoto, 2003: 88). It is paradoxical that a project that aims at inclusion (whether practice-led research as a whole, or specifically Arakawa and Gins’s work) would have to work toward the exclusion of projects that promote exclusion and reduction. The way to think beyond the oppositional character of research approaches that reflect larger dualistic positions is to rethink dualisms, as Elizabeth Grosz suggests, as representing tendencies, not oppositions.

A note on Arakawa and Gins

Arakawa and Gins’s work demonstrates these tendencies across a range of sites that include paintings, books, installations, architectural structures, earth-work parks, prototypes, residences, apartments, housing communities and small cities. (Slides of work accompany these brief descriptions). In order to “map the living body as a world forming inhabitant” we must study our habitual tendencies (2002: xxi). Their work has attracted numerous high profile commentators, including Arthur Danto, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Hans Georg Gadamer, Italo Calvino, George Lakoff, Charles
Bernstein, Jean-Jacques Leceuré and Jean-Michel Rabaté, as well as researchers from an array of social science and scientific discourses such as linguistic analysis, psychology, urban studies, sociology, neuro-sciences, biotechnology, cognitive sciences, neuro-physiology, embryology, evolution theory and ecology.

Anti-Utopia

Utopia attempts to unify reason. Architecture provides the utopian desire for totalisation with an informatic (conceptual and material) system of implementation. The connection of reason to architecture is examined by Diane Morgan in her book, *Kant Trouble* (2000). She observes that “architecture is most architectonic, that is, it most clearly reflects human concerns for an art that corresponds to our attempts at systematisation, when its buildings are utopian (unbuildable) temporary (doomed to destruction) or ruined (destroyed)” (54). These pathetic building types express a determinative will, and ultimately demonstrate the impossibility of linking architectonic reason to the phenomenal world (54-55). She continues:

For buildings to represent human attempts to link the sensible to the super-sensible, phenomena to ideas of reason, one would have to use an example of experimental architecture. Such an architecture could be utopian or temporary, effacing itself, revealing its lack of foundations or, on the other hand, a ruined structure. Experimental architecture is a product of an explorative, reflective judgment looking around for rules and guidelines (55).

Arakawa and Gins disagree – effacement and deconstruction are not enough. For experimental architecture to escape the orbit of habitual reason it must be buildable. Arakawa and Gins propose:

In the post-utopian era it will be possible to exact out across thinking fields place-forming images that will indicate how to position oneself … For this to happen, every detail must be attended to and that attending must itself be attended to (Arakawa and Gins in Benjamin, A., ed. 1994: 109).

Their approach to research reconsiders the faculties of reason in light of distributed cognition. For example, in *Bioscleave House*, the relationship of the floor, made of rammed earth, to the very high and low placement of the windows, does not permit a resident to establish a relationship to the horizon. The effect and affect of this is dramatic. It is accentuated when walking around the sunken kitchen and dining area, where the ability to determine horizontal levels is difficult visually, because no
indicators of standard level are offered. There is no correspondence between the floor and the walls or ceiling, and no fixed measure, resulting in unbalance and disorientation followed by efforts to find other modes of balance or combinations of modes that are proprioceptive and event-based rather than structure-based, where connections to the architecture are momentary rather than programmatic.

Morgan cites Kant’s observation that “reason cannot know when to stop unifying” (2000: 125). This implicates teleology in the structure of reason. From Morgan’s assessments we can identify two key points for practice-as research:

- the presupposition that reason will guarantee a result
- the necessity to radically problematise the formation of boundaries in general, and in particular the boundaries between the mechanical and organic (Morgan, 2000: 203).

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Anti-teleology

Teleology manifest itself, in research, in language and in daily life, by our tendency to know the final result in advance, which determines from the beginning the process of observations and selection of information.

Jost Muxfeldt addresses the ‘reverse teleology’ of Arakawa and Gins’s declaration ‘We have decided not to die’. This non-ironic challenge is the basis of their Reversible Destiny project. Muxfeldt locates a teleological presupposition in the very structure we use to frame our questions (Muxfeldt, 2003: 145). This is most evident in the preference given to identity as opposed to change. In Architectural Body (2002), Arakawa and Gins state that the Reversible Destiny project should be seen as an “open challenge to our species to reinvent itself and to desist from foreclosing on any possibility, even those our contemporaries judge to be impossible” adding, “nothing could be more unethical than that we are required to be mortal” (Gins and Arakawa, 2002: xviii)

Muxfeldt cites Derrida (Speech and Phenomena 1973) to unpack the way identity is expressed as a state of presence. The issue stems from the problem of the idealisation of presence conceived as a universal form of transcendence that exists before and after ‘I’ exist. Presence is not affected by the overthrow of the content of every possible experience, and being as presence is ideality and absolute possibility of repetition. Derrida concludes that the possibility of one’s disappearance must be experienced for presence to be instituted. But since ‘I am’ is only experienced as a present, a conundrum appears for the continuity of the self:

The appearing of the ‘I’ to itself in the ‘I am’ is thus originally a relationship with its own possible disappearance. Therefore, ‘I am’ originally means I am mortal (Derrida 1973:54 cited in Muxfeldt 2003: 150).

The way we structure the relationship makes our mortality a foregone conclusion. Muxfeldt sees the incompleteness of ever being able to manifest the ideality of the ‘I am’ as an opportunity to use the limits of identity within change, or loss of identity through change, for an existential teleology. He states that the move toward ideality of identity requires severe limitations of our existence:

The very real experience of difference, of limit, of the effect of the other, of non-self-identity within present experience, of change, is

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effaced in service of a teleology that aims at the certitude and permanence of idealities, while simultaneously effacing and utilising their non-permanence. Idealisation pulls up short when we compare it with experience. In fact, experience itself involves the simultaneous experience of ideality together with its incompleteness and its ephemeral character (Muxfeldt, 2003: 150).

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Resistance to teleology of the ideality of identity can be found in Arakawa and Gins’ practice of inclusion, which they formulate as Sited Awareness Hypothesis:

What stems from the body by way of awareness should be held to be of it. Any site at which a person finds an X to exist should be considered a contributing segment of her awareness (Gins and Arakawa, 2002: 50).

Muxfeldt notes that the reconfiguration of identity borders occurs when all relationships and rules of judgement require “a case-by-case judgement concerning the boundaries of person, if not a more permanent ideal of a self” (2003: 154). The rule of judgement that limits any result can be vacated in favour of the emergence, “where the decision not to die involves exceeding the limits of a subject’s authority extending its scope to include contingent influences” potentially without limits (146).

Tactics to reform of the rules of judgement that limits results are changed by perceptual learning and sited awareness. In Bioslceave House this line of investigation can be traced to their prior exploration of multilevel labyrinths (in the Reversible Destiny House in Gifu, Japan). The labyrinths allow a researcher to explore the barest noticing that construct identity borders by setting a different labyrinth for different levels of the body for a person acutely aware of the many configurations of sites that constitute our body, both separately articulated and interconnected.
Critical Resemblance House is one of many prototypes using the multi-level labyrinth to explore sited awareness.

Bioscleave House develops and attenuates the experience caused by the absence of a fixed horizon by making the resident use vision to orient the top portion of the body and proprioception to orient the lower portion. It is the coordination of apportionment that perceptual learning provides, which reason and rule of judgment cannot. Muxfeldt notes that there is a “decidedly different relation to decision within architecture in that its teleology is not directed at the moment but at the exploration of the economy of the moment” (157).

Anti-expression

Anti-expressivity in practice-as-research can be considered a heuristic move, aimed at establishing research as an existential and biological basis for interaction with our own modes of becoming. Anti-expression cuts out the middle or figurative scale of reference, allowing the minute and the large to interact without conforming to pre-established categories of understanding and meaning. The objective is to undo the organic metaphor associated with expression, which can be seen in the bio-function of
expression that drives health and the psycho-function of expression that drives identity through abjection.

Practice-as-research instigates complex coordination when it becomes heuristic – that is, focused on learning — rather than expressive by shifting the focus of research from functions to procedures. Arakawa and Gins contrast architecture that is functional: facilitating actions, extending and/or amplifying the senses with an architectural surround that is procedural and “fills an ‘organism that persons’ with questions by enabling it to move within and between its own modes of sensing” (2002: 58).

_Bioscleave House_ in East Hampton, Long Island NY, is built on the principles of tactical posing surrounds that enable study, construction of hypotheses and offer many tactics to counteract one’s own automaticity. For example, the entire interior, and for that matter the relation of the exterior to the interior, alters the environmental features by which a person would detect and judge distances, ambient light, horizon, ground level, bodily balance, integrated body, and scale.

An anti-expressive approach to research can be seen most readily in _Bioscleave_ by the inclusion and re-positioning of the psychological experiment called the Ames room. The Ames room confounds the perception of distances by which to judge relative heights of a person in the space. For psychology, the false perspective aids in the study of the relation of prior knowledge, precepts and expectations to the act of perception.

The Ames room is functional with respect to amplifying the visual experience for psychology and ophthalmology, but does not make us aware of how we construct these perceptions, nor does it require we question the mode of perception by which we assess the situation. The inclusion of the Ames room in _Bioscleave House_ is of another heuristic order. In such built examples of procedural architecture the research findings produced by interacting with the Ames room structure, are not for the benefit of an observer — the psychologist — external to the site. Its inclusion is for the researcher-in-residence, who is the beneficiary of the findings that question existing subject/object/environment relationships. It is this individual who becomes aware of him or her self as ‘the mechanism of meaning’ and the ‘organism that persons’
because the house makes the ‘shape of awareness’ perceptible and able to be re-entered (2002: 86). The practice or procedural architecture is the practice (of extent of the site) of person.
In Conclusion:
Arakawa and Gins literally turn the notion of an outside to art, inside-out. Bioslceave House demonstrates the necessity of configuring body-wide perceptual learning and conceptual discursive sequences. Therefore innovation in practice-as-research entails the ability to move across different conditions of constructing the observer and make a reconstitution of the acquisition and production of knowledge. To achieve this, I recommend the inclusion of:
- An anti-utopian critique of the faculties of reason.
- An anti-teleological re-examination of what constitutes border identities and their rules of judgment.
- An anti-expressive investigation, emphasising the heuristic benefits of the research for an ‘organism that persons’.

Works cited:


The distinction between the possible (as prefigured) and the virtual (as actualised from non-prefigured solution-space) has been carried forward from Bergson by Deleuze, and more recently by Massumi. In her public lecture ‘Bergson, Deleuze and Becoming’ at University of Queensland on March 16 2005, Elisabeth Grosz discussed the different theories of difference separating Bergson and Deleuze’s development of Bergsonian becoming that aims to reinstate theories of difference on an ontological basis, using Bergson’s notion of duration and intuition. Bergson’s degrees of duration eliminate the
need to undo dualism and free subordinate terms because he maintains that “the proliferation of dualisms is the expression of a single force where diversity and plurality are becoming and not univocal being’.

Kant’s troubles, so to speak, consist of claims that his project never manages to delimit the terrain around reason and exclude its other. Morgan observes that the over-investment of utopian reason in the architectural metaphor, and the manifestation of utopia in architecture design, is indicative of the blind spots of western metaphysics in general (3). Despite the structural necessity of blind spots for insight and vision, (by constraining information so that objects may appear) the danger that Horkheimer and Adorno refer to in their discussion of Kant arises from “every philosopher’s inability to every give a complete and adequate account of the world, or more generally, every test’s inability to completely account for itself” (from The Dialectic of Enlightenment, 1987 cited in Morgan 2000: 3).