

**Debbora Battaglia, PhD**  
**Author and Anthropologist of Art, Science and Technology**

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**Biographical Statement**

Debbora Battaglia received her M. Lit and Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from the University of Cambridge. She has presented and published extensively on the ethics, poetics and politics of world-making, identities and differences, and futural imaginaries, most recently at intersections of art, science and technology in modernity. Her books include *E.T. Culture: Anthropology in Outerspaces* (Duke UP), *Rhetorics of Self-Making*, ed. (University of California Press), and *On the Bones of the Serpent: Person, Memory, and Mortality in a Melanesian Society* (University of Chicago Press), in addition to her monograph, *Bringing Home to Moresby*, and special issues in scholarly journals. Her current project develops the idea of “archipe/logics” for describing her own fieldwork itinerary as collaborative ethnographic installations. Her awards include the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, the National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, the ACE/SLOAN Research Fellowship, the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Senior Verville Fellowship, and the 2010 Five College 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Professorship.

**Education**

Ph.D., Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge

M.Lit., Social Anthropology, University of University

B.A., Art History, University of California at Santa Barbara

**Specializations**

Anthropology of art, science and technology; future studies; identities/differences

Area specialization: the cosmos; critical space studies; mediaspheres; interbeing relations and new climatic regimes; Oceania

## Awards

John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship

2010 Five College Fortieth Anniversary Professorship (for Excellence in Teaching and Scholarly Research)

National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship

Verville Fellowship, Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum

ACE/SLOAN Research Fellowship

## Books, Monographs, and Special Collections

(in progress) Battaglia, D. *Archipe/logics: An Ethnographic Drift Voyage*

(2012) Battaglia, D., Valentine, D., Olson, D., eds. *Extreme: Humans at Home in the Cosmos. Special Issue. Anthropological Quarterly*. Fall 2012.

(2006) Battaglia, D., ed. *E.T. Culture: Anthropology in Outerspaces*. Durham: Duke University Press.

(1995) Battaglia, D., ed. *Rhetorics of Self-Making*. Berkeley: The University of California Press.

(1990) Battaglia, D. *On the Bones of the Serpent: Person, Memory, and Mortality In Sabarl Island Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

(1986) Battaglia, D. *Bringing "Home" to Moresby: Urban Gardening and Ethnic Pride among Trobrianders in the National Capital*. Special Publication no. 11. Port Moresby: Institute for Applied Social and Economic Research.

## Installations and Podcasts

(2017) Outer Space Trilogy II: Moondust and Cosmo/Politics: SCA podcasts. Interview with Willi Lempert. February 14, 2017. Fieldsights. Online: <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1072-outer-space-trilogy-2-moon-dust-and-cosmo-politics>

(2014) Battaglia, D., Alberto Corsin-Jimenez, Kasper Jelsbech Knudsen, Trine Mygind Korsby, Rane Willerslev. "Out of the Box" An installation of ethnographic objects (material, textual and sound-based) produced for the symposium, *The Comedy of Things*, organized by Morten Axel Pedersen and Morten Nielsen, Denmark, September 2014. For exhibition at the Cultural History Museum, Oslo, Norway.

### **Distinguished Lectures, Keynote Addresses, Invited Talks, Symposia (selected)**

(2019) "Empty Spaces that Aren't." Symposium. Empty Spaces. University of Oxford. May 5-6.

(2019) "Strange Attractors – Animating Posthuman Futures Past." Public keynote address. A.R.T.E.S. Graduate School for the Humanities. "Beyond Humanism: Cyborgs – Animals – Data Swarms." Cologne, Germany. September 26.

(2019) Public talk and roundtable discussion. "Petros Moris' *The Gift of Automation*." Fast-Forward Festival-6. Onassis Stegi. May 23.

(2017) "Insularities or Follow the Islands" Symposium on Digressions. Aarhus University, Denmark. August 2017.

(2017) "New Phyto-Technologies for Drought Conditions: Ethical Issues." University of California at Santa Cruz. May 2017.

(2017) "Roots in Air: Further Thoughts" Rutgers University. (2016) Keynote Lecture for series on "Natural Knowledges." March 2017.

(2016) "Roots in Air: Plants/People/Ethics in Suspension" Berdahl Memorial Lecture. Department of Anthropology. University of Minnesota.

(2015) "Aeroponic Gardens and Their Magic: Ethics in Suspension" First Distinguished Lecture: Centre for Cosmopolitan Studies. St. Andrews University, UK.

(2015) "Flying with Plants" Public Lecture, Miami, Florida. Cannonball Art Collective.

(2014) "Diary of a Space Zucchini" Invited Talk. University of Chicago, Department of Anthropology.

(2014) "Cosmic Open Sourcery" Invited Talk. Department of Media, Culture, and Society, New York University. April 2014.

(2013) "On Epi-Ontological Warming" Keynote Discussant's Talk, in correspondence with Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. Sawyer Seminar: Indigenous Cosmopolitics: Dialogues about the Reconstitutions of Worlds. UC Davis, June, 2013. Convenor: Marisol de la Cadena.

(2012) "Writing Outer Space" Invited Talk and Symposium. The Worlding, Writing Project: Arts of Non-Sovereignty. Conference on Rolling the Dice: The Art of Chance. University of Chicago. February 12-15. Convenor: Lauren Berlant.

- (2010) "No Longer an Earthling (?)" Keynote Address. Society for Cultural Anthropology, Annual Meetings, Nature-Culture, Santa Fe, NM. May 7, 2010.
- (2010) "Lost in Trans(re)lation" Sawyer Seminar Talk. Department of Communications and Culture. Workshop: Truth and Lies in Translation.
- (2010) "Seriously at Home in '0-Gravity'" Invited Talk: Works-in-Progress series. Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum.
- (2009) "On Perspectival Anthropology" Keynote Discussant's Talk, in correspondence with a paper by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. IT University of Copenhagen Conference: Comparative Relativism. September 2009.
- (2009) "Ephemeral Architectures of Space Diplomacy" Discussant for conference, Uncanny Encounters: Recounting Interactions with the Invisible" Cambridge University, December 2009.
- (2008) "E.T. Diplomacy and the E.T.-Effect" Annual Distinguished Lecture, School of Social Sciences and Social Anthropology, University of Manchester.
- (2007) "Galaxies of Discourse" Keynote address for conference, Imagining Outer Space, 1900-2000. Zentrum fur interdisziplinare Forschung (ZiF), Germany.
- (2007) "E.T. Diplomacy." Invited Paper. Department of Anthropology, Johns Hopkins University.
- (2005) "Ethnography Between the Lines" Keynote address. Cambridge University conference, Description and Creativity: Approaches to Collaboration and Value from Anthropology, Science, and Technology.
- (2004) "Human Cloning and Post-Apocalyptic Personhood" Keynote address. European Molecular Biology Organization conference on Science and Society: Time & Aging – Mechanisms and Meanings, Heidelberg, Germany.
- (2003) "Invitations to Abduction: Technoscience Spirituality, the Media, and G.S. Peirce" Keynote Address for the Cornell - St. Andrews University Knowledge Exchange Conference, Cornell University, September 7, 2003.
- (2003) "Technoscience Spirituality: An Invitation to Abduction in a New Key" Keynote Address. The Association for Social Anthropology Decennial Meetings, Manchester, England, July 21, 2003.

(1998) "Ethnomathematics and Ideology" Keynote Address. Mathematics Across The Curriculum conference, Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, July 1998. Invited Presentations (selected)

(2003) "Writing Outer Spaces" Paper presented at the University of Lisbon, June 2003.

(2003) "Insiders' Voices in Outer Spaces: Invitations to Abduction in a New Religious Movement" Invited Paper. Yale University.

(2002) "Writing Outer Spaces". Invited Paper. Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago.

(2000) "Multiplicities: The Anthropology of Human Replication in Popular Cinema". Invited Paper. The Humanities Center, Harvard University, History of Science seminar.

### **Articles and Chapters (selected)**

(forthcoming) Breaktime. In Daniel Knight, Fran Markowitz, Martin Demant Frederiksen eds. *"Vertiginous: Temporalities and Affects of Living in Vertigo."* *Anthropological Theory Commons*.

(forthcoming) 2021. Past as Portent: Encounters with Extinction Art Impactors. *Journal as Cosmos*. Editor, Julijonas Urbanas. 17th International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia, titled 'How will we live together?'

(in press) Climate Change and the Creative Beyond. *Dawn DeDeux: The Space Between Worlds*. New Orleans Museum of Art. (February 2021)

(2020) Beyond. An Afterword. In Franck Bille, ed. *Voluminous States: Sovereign Spaces, Material Boundaries, and the Territorial Imagination*. Duke University Press.

(2019) Unknowns. Theorizing the Contemporary, *Cultural Anthropology: Lexicon for the Anthropocene*.

(2017) As It Was in the Beginning, So Shall it Be in the End (Matthew 24:37) – Possibly. In *Alicja Kwade: Medium Median*. Whitechapel Gallery, London.

(2017) Aeroponic Gardens and their Magic: Persons/Plants/Ethics in Suspension. *History and Anthropology* No. 3. With invited commentaries.

(2015) with David Valentine, Valerie Olson. Relational Space: An Earthly Installation. *Cultural Anthropology* 30/2: 245-256

(2014) Cosmos as Commons: An Activation of Cosmic Diplomacy. *E-Flux Journal*. Special Issue on the recent work of Elizabeth Povinelli.

(2014) with Rafael Antunes Almeida. "Otherwise Anthropology" Otherwise: The View from Technology. Fieldsights – Commentary, *Cultural Anthropology* Online, February 24, 2014. <http://culanth.org/fieldsights/493-otherwise-anthropology-otherwise-the-view-from-technology>

(2013) On Cosmic Exo-Surprise or When the Sky is (Really) Falling What's the Media to Do? *E-Flux Journal*. June, 2013.

(2012) Coming in at an Unusual Angle: Exo-Surprise and the Fieldworking Cosmonaut. In Battaglia, D., Valentine, D., Olson, D. eds. Extreme: Humans at Home in the Cosmos. Special Issue: *Anthropological Quarterly*. Fall 2012.

(2012) Valentine, D., Olson, V., Battaglia, D. Limits and Horizons in the Once and Future Cosmos. In Battaglia, D., Valentine, D., Olson, D. eds. Extreme: Humans at Home in the Cosmos. Special Issue: *Anthropological Quarterly*. Fall 2012.

(2012) Battaglia, Debora. Coming in at an Unusual Angle: Exo-Surprise and the Fieldworking Cosmonaut. In Battaglia, D., Valentine, D., Olson, D. eds. Extreme: Humans at Home in the Cosmos. Special Issue: *Anthropological Quarterly*. Fall 2012.

(2012) Arresting Hospitality: The Case of the "Handshake in Space". In Candea, M. and da Col, G., eds. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* – Special Issue: The Return to Hospitality: Strangers, Guests, and Ambiguous Encounters. Volume 18, Supplement 1.

(2012) Galaxies of Alien Discourse: An Anthropologist's First Contact with Science of "Weird Life". In Alexander Geppert, ed. *Imagining Outer Space: European Astroculture in the Twentieth Century*. Palgrave

(2011) Writing the Parallax Gap: An Itinerary. In Jeanette Edwards and Maja Petrovic-Steger, eds. *Recasting Anthropological Knowledge*. Cambridge University Press. 19-30.

(2011) Of Archipelagos and Arrows. Comment on the thoughts of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. In Special Issue on Comparative Relativism: *Common Knowledge* 17 (1): 151-154.

(2008) E.T. Culture and the E.T.-Effect on the Social. *Vienna Vision for Humans in Outer Space*. European Space Policy Institute, eds. Munich: Springer.

(2007) Battaglia, Debora. Where Do We Find Our Monsters? In Jeanette Edwards, Penny Harvey and Peter Wade, eds. *Ways of Knowing: Epistemologies in Practice*. Oxford: Berg Press.

(2006) Battaglia, Debora. Comments on Scaling Place and Networks: An ethnography of the imperative to connect through information and communications technologies. *Current Anthropology*.

(2005) Battaglia, Debora. Insiders' Voices in Outer Spaces: Toward an Anthropology of Visits. In D. Battaglia, ed. *ET Culture: Anthropology in Outerspaces*. Durham: Duke University Press.

(2005) Battaglia, Debora. "For Those Who are Not Afraid of the Future": Raelians, Faith-Based Human Cloning, and the Media. In D. Battaglia, ed. *ET Culture: Anthropology in Outerspaces*. Durham: Duke University Press.

(2004) Battaglia, Debora. Religion and Media Across the Great Divide of Essentialist and Situated Knowledge: Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber, eds. *Religion and Media*. (Review Essay). *Anthropological Quarterly* 77, no.1: 145-151.

(2004) Comments on 'The Archaeology and Ethnohistory of Exchange in Pre-Colonial Roviana: Gifts, Commodities, and Inalienable Possessions.' *Current Anthropology* Vol.44, Supplement.

(2004) Religion and Media Across the Great Divide of Essentialist and Situated Knowledge: Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber, eds. *Religion and Media*. (Review Essay). *Anthropological Quarterly* 77, no.1: 145-151.

(2001) Multiplicities: An Anthropologist's Thoughts on Replicants and Clones in Popular Films. *Critical Inquiry* 27 no. 3 (Spring):493-514.

(1999) Toward an Ethics of the Open Subject: Writing Culture in Good Conscience. In H. L. Moore, ed. *Anthropological Theory Today*. Cambridge: Polity Press

(1997) Ambiguating Agency: The Case of Malinowski's Ghost. *American Anthropologist* 99 (3): 18-22.

(1997) Displacing the Visual: Trobriand Axe Blades and Ambiguation. In H. Morphy and M. Banks, eds. *Rethinking Visual Anthropology*. Yale UP.

(1995) Fear of Selfing in the American Cultural Imaginary or "You Are Never Alone With a Clone" *American Anthropologist* 97 (4): 15-21.

(1995) Problematizing The Self: A Thematic Introduction. In D. Battaglia, ed. *Rhetorics of Self-Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

(1995) On Practical Nostalgia: Self-Prospecting Among Urban Trobrianders. In D. Battaglia, ed. *Rhetorics of Self-Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

(1994) Retaining Reality: Some Practical Problems With Objects as Property. *Man* (n.s.) 29: 1-15.

(1993) At Play in the Fields (and Borders) of the Imaginary: Transformations of Forgetting in Melanesia. *Cultural Anthropology* 8 (3): 20-32.

(1992) Displacing Culture: A Joke of Significance in Urban Papua New Guinea. *New Literary History* 23 (4):1003-1017.

(1992) The Body in the Gift: Memory and Forgetting in Sabarl Mortuary Exchange. *American Ethnologist* 19 (1): 3-18.

(1991) Punishing the Yams: Leadership and Gender Ambivalence on Sabarl. In M. Godelier and M. Strathern, eds. *Big Men and Great Men: The Development of a Comparison in Melanesia*. Cambridge and Paris: Cambridge University Press and Maison des Sciences de L'Homme.

(1985) "We Feed Our Father": Paternal Nurture Among the Sabarl of Papua New Guinea. In *American Ethnologist* 12 (3): 427-441.

(1983) Projecting Personhood in Melanesia: The Dialectics of Artefact Symbolism on Sabarl Island. In *Man* (n.s.) 18: 289-304.

(1983) Syndromes of Ceremonial Exchange in the Eastern Calvados: The View from Sabarl Island. In E. Leach and J. Leach, eds. *The Kula: New Perspectives on Massim Exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### **Academic Positions and Board Memberships**

(2016 - present) Professor Emeritus and Senior Research Anthropologist. Mount Holyoke College.

Board Member (2018-Present): Ethno-ISS. Focus on Critical Space Studies and Environmental Issues in Art and Design. University College London.

(1995-2016) Professor of Anthropology; Chair, Department of Sociology and Anthropology; Associate Professor of Anthropology; Assistant Professor of Anthropology

(1990-2016) Member of the Graduate Faculty, Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts

(Fall 2013) Visiting Scholar, Massachusetts Institute of Technology



(1990-1992) Visiting Associate Professor/Visiting Scholar, Department of Anthropology, Stanford University

(January 1982-September 1984) Lecturer (full-time appointment) Anthropology of Art (Africa, Oceania, Indonesia, Latin America before the Conquest). Department of Art, University of East Anglia, Norwich, England (October 1980-July 1981; December 1979-March 1980)

### **Fieldwork**

(ongoing) Aeroponic garden sites: laboratories, encounters with art installations, urban gardens.

(2000-2002) Multi-Site Ethnography: The Raelian Religious Movement, faith-based science, and alien personhood in an intentional community.

(1976-1978; intermittent visits through 1987) Papua New Guinea (Milne Bay Province and Port Moresby). Personhood, the ethnography of loss, cultural identity performance, socioaesthetics, exchange theory.

(July 1975-January 1976) Elmdon, England. Village/hamlet identity differences.

### **Teaching**

Courses Taught: Cultural Identities/Differences, Visual Anthropology in the Material World, Social Process in Oceania, Making Class Visible, Ritual as Performance, Introduction to Anthropology

### **Public and Community Events and Service**

Co-organizer. Three Five College Public Lectures and faculty symposium on Legal Encounters with Violence and Governmentality. Carol Greenhouse (Princeton).

Organizer. Five College Lecture on the Anthropology of the Gulf Oil Spill. Valerie Olson (NASA/UC Irvine).

Project Coordinator: *Making Class Visible: A Project of, for, and by the Mount Holyoke Community*. Including creation and supervision of an internal community-based learning course (January Term 2 units), oversight of an original student

film, *Making Class Visible: A Home Movie*, publicity campaign for a MHC community forum on social class, original website: [www.mtholyoke/go/socialclass](http://www.mtholyoke/go/socialclass). Winter and Spring 2007.

Co-Organizer: Public Lecture Series/Faculty Workshops: *The Culture and Nature of the Visual*. Academic Year 2002-2003 (monthly interdisciplinary symposia and public lectures by esteemed scholars).

Co-Organizer: Faculty Seminar: *Engaging The Visual: Cross-Disciplinary Exchanges*. Academic Year 2002-2003.

Organizer: "Muslim Worlds Through Film" series. Mount Holyoke College: Fall 2001.

Organizer: Mellon/Mount Holyoke College Distinguished Lecture Series, *New Directions in Sociology and Anthropology*: 2014, 2013, 2011, 2010, 2001, 1999, 1997.

Session Leader: Five-College Undergraduate Symposium: 2001.

Organizer: Public Lecture - Film Studies and Anthropology. Professor Steven Caton (Harvard University), "Lawrence of Arabia." February 2000. Also, Film Studies Seminar on Orientalism in "Lawrence of Arabia."

Organizer: Public Lecture - Professor Steven Feld (New York University), "World Music and Afro-Pop." February 1999.

Organizer and Chair: "Gender Imagery - New Approaches in Anthropology". A Symposium at Mount Holyoke College (November 1988).  
Panelists: Emily Martin, Marilyn Strathern, Alfred Gell.