

Call for applications



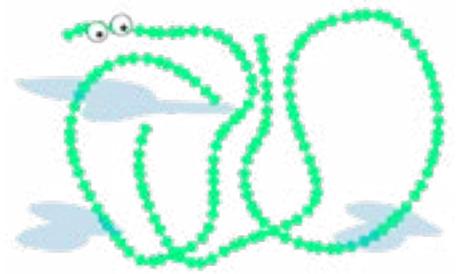
Water as horizon

Arts-sciences-citizenship Summer School
as part of Festival de l'Eau

Du 18 au 22 mai 2026 – Creative Labs
EPF Engineering School - Saint-Nazaire

Les 23 & 24 mai 2026 – Public weekend
Chapelle des franciscains - Saint-Nazaire

Useful Fictions . 6



The Useful Fictions · 6 Creative Research Summer School at the Institut Polytechnique de Paris is linking up with Le Festival de l'Eau, an event that brings music, sound, and artistic creation into dialogue with the environment of Saint-Nazaire, its natural, riverine, urban, and industrial sites. For this 2026 edition, the theme is Water, and the ways it inhabits the varied landscapes around Saint-Nazaire, from protected wetlands and the Brière marshes to shipyards and industrial, oil, and chemical sites. One of the central questions will be how to forge new links with this element in its liquid state in order to share its resources, adapt its uses, and respect its limits ?

Partners :

- Centre SPIRAL | IP Paris
- Laboratoire d'Hydrodynamique (LadHyX), CNRS, École polytechnique | IP Paris
- ENSTA | IP Paris
- École des Arts Décoratifs Paris (EnsAD)
- EPF Engineering School Saint-Nazaire
- Blue Lab Saint-Nazaire
- Médiathèque Etienne-Caux de Saint-Nazaire
- Parc naturel régional de Brière
- Stereolux, SMAC, Nantes

With the support of the Fondation Daniel et Nina Carasso

Videos from previous editions :

Useful Fictions · 1 : [Prendre la mesure | 2019](#)

Useful Fictions · 2 : [Prendre racine | 2021](#)

Useful Fictions · 3 : [Symbiose\(s\) | 2023](#)

Useful Fictions · 4 : [Faire Corps | 2024](#)

Useful Fictions · 5 : [Atmosphère, atmosphères | 2025](#)

**Bringing together citizen issues, academia, and artistic practices.
Exploring the interdependence of our living and technological environments.**

An international arts- sciences-citizens summer

- An international call for applications for around twenty participants selected by an interdisciplinary committee
- 5 research-creation Labs supervised by artist/scientist pairs
- An intensive week of creation on the campus of EPF Engineering School | Saint-Nazaire
- A public weekend of exhibitions, performances at la Galerie des Franciscains | Saint-Nazaire

The opportunity for participants and supervisors to combine their know-how and disciplines within Creative Labs, to benefit from the campus' fablabs and tools in order to create an innovative device that will be presented to the public at la Galerie des Franciscains at Saint-Nazaire.

Registration procedures & practical information :

The call for applications is open to anyone motivated and curious, regardless of age or educational background, to form multidisciplinary and gender-balanced teams. The number of places is limited to four participants per Lab. Each candidate can apply to a maximum of two Labs.

Accommodation, breakfasts, and dinners are fully covered by the Summer School from Monday, May 18th to Sunday, May 24th morning; transportation and lunch are the responsibility of the participants. Accommodation in Saint-Nazaire will be provided for non-residents from the evening of Sunday, May 17. Transportation assistance is available to non-Nazairian and international candidates upon request.

File to be completed online: [APPLICATION](#)

Application deadline : Sunday, march 8, minuit UTC+2



Useful Fictions • 6

Water as horizon

Water as horizon, horizon in space from dawn to dawn, horizon in time from the beginning to sunset. A gale is coming, the sea is swelling. The white foam from the breaking waves begins to be blown into streaks that follow the wind. The sky is an inverted ocean. Clouds form on the marine aerosols, evaporated spray. The water is salty, it remembers the foam of time, all those moments lost in oblivion... like... tears in the rain.

The cycle begins again, the water flows, carrying alluvium to the estuary, stratifying the past in the wandering river, in the black mud of the peat bogs. On the Grande Brière Mottière, as on the Loire, echoes of Celtic languages still linger: *breth*, *brai*, mud, and *Liga*, silt.

I dive, let the water carry me and watch the sun fragment into rays as it crosses the liquid surface. I am still aware of gravity, yet it no longer affects my body. I cannot see the water, but I feel its mass adding to each movement and drawing me into its dance. The interface with the sky is black on the horizon and the diffuse glow of the fluid captivates my gaze. Unlike aquatic creatures, I have not learned to listen to space.

Water is both familiar and foreign to us. We see it as an interface that separates us from the liquid world, reflecting the sky and the light of sunset, a line stretching out into infinity. We can only stay underwater for the duration of a dive. Life emerged from water over the ages, but we have lost the ability to inhabit it. Water has shaped the land, and man modifies the landscape by working with it, cultivating peat bogs, or against it, as when the De Bray company drained the Donges marshes by royal decree.

Water and humans are linked. Can we swap roles to understand each other, become the other, just as we must become plants, animals, rain, wind, swamps, oceans, skies... to invent the worlds to come?

Water, air, earth, and fire are commons, neither goods, nor spaces, nor elements, but active entities that are part of life. The people of Brière have been living this way since well before 1838, when the joint ownership of the Brière marshes was formalized, a commons with plants, algae, fish, birds, a commons with the strip of sand that separates it from the estuary, the indolent waters of the Brivet, the breathing between ebb and flow.

Perhaps we don't need to become, but simply remember that we are humus, peat, marsh, river, wind, current, and from the trap, *you are caught, you make a home, the labyrinth.*

Each of the five workshop proposals questions our relationship with water, in terms of time, space, memory, and the sound imprints we leave on one another.

Useful Fictions • 6

Water as horizon

At EPF Engineering School | Saint-Nazaire

How does the dialogue between arts, design, science and society allow us to question the interdependent links between living and technological, human and non-human environments? What narratives can be used to invent and bring about desirable, shared futures that respect our planet and its limits? By combining research and creation, educational innovations, and public events, the Useful Fictions Summer School series is part of a desire for broad and cooperative reflection on these topics.

Useful Fictions prioritizes sensory experience, hands-on learning, multidisciplinary projects and meetings, as well as original formats that renew relationships with audiences. The question of the compatibility of societal models with planetary resources and that of respect for biodiversity are integral parts of the innovation and creation protocols implemented to design ways of being in the world and narratives of futures that are both sustainable and desirable.

For its sixth edition, Useful Fictions will explore meaning, the senses, the essence of water.

Public weekend at Galerie des Franciscains | Saint-Nazaire

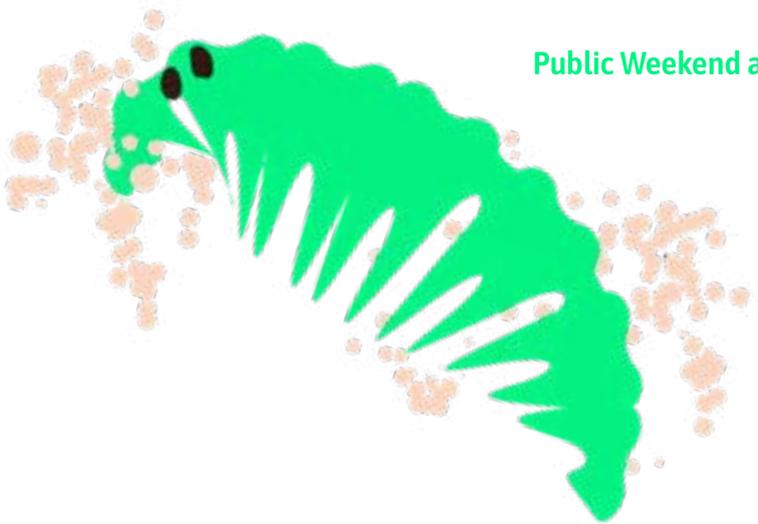
For a week, around twenty participants supervised by pairs of researchers and artists will question water as horizon to invent an ephemeral device - artistic installations, performances, interactive workshops - to, for the duration of a weekend, open and share this sensitive and creative debate.

In a "DIWO" (Do It With Others) spirit, 5 interdisciplinary thematic Labs will be proposed to deploy a sensitive dialogue at the crossroads of arts and sciences: installations, robotics interactive workshops, poetic writing, performances... All the achievements will be presented during a weekend of exhibitions, performances, conferences and participatory workshops.

Public Weekend at Galerie des Franciscains | Saint-Nazaire

Saturday, May 23 : 2 p.m.-9 p.m.

Sunday, May 24 : 10 a.m.-5 p.m.



– Lab 1 –

Le Labyrinthe



Project coordinators :

Jean-Marc Chomaz - Teacher researcher, Artist-physicist | Hydrodynamics Laboratory (LadHyX), CNRS | École polytechnique, Institut Polytechnique de Paris

Camel Zekri - Artistic director | Athénor - Centre National de Création Musicale, Saint-Nazaire

Quentin Benelfoul - Designer artist | Freelance

The water in the Labyrinth in the hollow of my ear vibrates with the pressure of the air, with the movements of my head. Three intertwined arches, two tiny oceans, their shores lined with lashes, receive the shivers.

The world's noise and the Earth's gravitational pull mingle with the movements of my body. Music and dance become one in the fusion of my senses.

Why not try to share my perception by exchanging vibrations, not only through the air, but also through water, Earth, light and wind, like a caress that ripples the water on your skin ?

This workshop aims to expand ways of producing and perceiving sound by involving the whole body and the environments around us. The notion of sound will unfold through the vibrations of air, water, their boundary, and the light between the sky and the water. The musicians' modes of play will be augmented by modifying, distorting and generating sound and voice through electronic programs that capture the movement of their bodies. Part of this sound material will be designed to be emitted by simple physical devices on pools. As they pass through the water, the light rays will be distorted by reflection, transmission and refraction, revealing the tiny deformations on its surface.

A water surface is a membrane stretched by surface tension but also by gravity, which constantly seeks to restore horizontality. The vibrations of this surface create waves that propagate energy horizontally, just as sound waves propagate vibrational compression energy in the three dimensions of air. But surface waves are more complex; their dynamics depend on their wavelength and the depth of the water: pools can be tiny, propagating rapid waves, or gigantic, with waves and spray.

For example, we have already positioned accelerometers on a guitar to capture musical gestures and

body movements, and used these signals in real time to transform the sound of various instruments and the voice. A program allows variable sound transformation parameters to be assigned to the sensor, which has two directions on three axes. All these elements related to gestures allow us to open up to breath, breathing and movement, and to question the body as an integral part of the playing style.

The project aims to adapt sound analysis and transformation to the propagation medium – the surface of water, the skin – in order to consider vibration as a language, as a new sensory experience, a sound that can be touched, a sound that propagates on a liquid body, a sound that can be seen in the form of folds of light.

Candidate profile

We are looking for people with **artistic and/or scientific backgrounds, craftspeople, artists, coders, designers, architects, makers, hackers, engineers, tinkerers, singers, musicians, instrument makers, dancers** who are interested in the **body, musical gesture, water, the reflection of the sun, the echoes of the world, breath, touch, wind, air...** to form a group and jointly set up ephemeral interactive installations of sounds and extended gestures and play...

Keywords :

#vibration, #perception, #liquid, #light, #sound, #body, #instruments #labyrinth

– Lab 2 –

The Sound of Silence

Project coordinators :

Julie Everaert - Artist, PhD candidate arts and sciences | Hydrodynamics Laboratory (LadHyX) | École polytechnique, Institut Polytechnique de Paris

Yann Le Jeune and his team - Geoarchaeologist | UMR 6566 CReAAH, Rennes

Soft robotics researcher | Université de Nantes

“The Sound of Silence” takes the form of an intensive research-creation workshop, alternating between fossil observation, reading experiments (sonification, recording), prototyping and sculptural design. It will result in a series of objects/structures/installations – activated, sound-producing and/or moving – presented as fragments of an evolving fictional narrative. This Lab draws on fossils from the Brière Regional Nature Park, considered as silent archives and surfaces that record time. The fossilised striations of tree rings, planktonic micro-organisms and pollen, similar to the grooves on a vinyl record, are envisaged as lines to be read, diverted and transformed. The strata and imprints left in the rock by extinct organisms, bearers of latent forms and rhythms.

Through a free and poetic approach, this Lab offers participants a space for collective production **to translate and reactivate these traces of the past using analogue reading tools, software and moving sculptures.** “The Sound of Silence” echoes the core samples taken from the depths of the peat: a memory revealed by the sonification of data and the use of current technologies (3D printing, soft robotics, moving materials, etc.). These traces are read and set into vibration. This translation into sound and movement is not intended to be a reconstruction, but rather the production of a speculative fiction situated between the arts, geosciences and archaeology. Through soft robotics, the fossils are extended into inflatable and sensitive structures capable of deploying emergent behaviours. The traces then come to life. These fabulous robots take the form of sculptures that are activated (sensors, Arduino, etc.), originating from an alternative branch of evolution, a false return in time activated in the present. Rooted in the aquatic and ecological environments of Brière, the project explores an

offbeat naturalism and imaginings of living things, questioning the reuse of fossils as a sensitive interface between deep time and contemporary technologies.

Candidate profile

We will be able to use a vinyl player, speakers, silicone, latex, iron filings, magnets, small pumps, pipettes, sensors, Arduino, 3D filaments, etc. The equipment listed constitutes a working base; participants are encouraged to bring their own tools, sensors, instruments or specific materials. Designed as a space for collective co-creation, this Lab aims to bring together diverse sensibilities and skills within a multidisciplinary team with hybrid profiles. The profiles mentioned below outline a direction without setting limits; anyone wishing to explore, experiment and contribute to this research is invited to join us: **engineers, scientists, sound artists, sound designers, composers, makers, electronics hobbyists, researchers in flexible materials / 4D / textiles / soft robotics, artisans, glassblowers, origami artists, designers, landscape architects, ecologists, archaeologists, programmers, coders, 3D designers, biologists, physicists, oceanographers...**

Keywords :

#fossil, #sculpture, #movement, #sonification, #microorganisms, #softrobotics, #programming, #strata, #swelling

– Lab 3 –

Cycles et ressacs pour une jam-session hybride

Project coordinators :

Olivier Doaré - Researcher | ENSTA | Institut Polytechnique de Paris

Raphaël Forment - Musician, Musicology Researcher, Developer | Freelance

The aim of this Lab will be to create a hybrid device that is both an art installation and a musical instrument. It is aimed at anyone who values improvisation and DIY and has a taste for sound experimentation. Together, we will build an interconnected network of musical machines, each with its own unique identity and role. These machines will interact with the audience and artists:

- via data captured around the exhibition space and instruments,
- via computer code transmitted over the network by both the audience and the artists.

Interaction with the machines will be through simple, high-performance programming languages designed for musical improvisation (live coding). The installation is intended to be a space for play. Musicians will direct the machines, which will also be able to improvise based on the instructions they receive or play on their own without external intervention. In short, it will be like taking part in a cybernetic jam session! This workshop invites participants to reflect on how an art installation can be transformed by the intervention of those who pass through it. The device will exist in two states :

- In the absence of humans, the installation 'dreams'. An autonomous and generative sound flow occupies the space. The digital agents follow the flow, listen to each other and respond to each other, engaging in dialogue.
- The arrival of human agents distorts the surface. The digital backwash radically transforms the nature of the installation, which becomes a turbulent whole.

In terms of technical aspects, the tools and technologies explored are :

- Live Coding : Sova (multiplayer event engine), TidalCycles, SuperCollider, Pure Data / Plug Data, etc.
- Hardware : Computers, Raspberry Pi, Sensors Caméras, Physical resonance devices (water/material).
- Protocoles : MIDI, OSC, Ableton Link.

Candidate profile

This workshop is designed as a moment of co-creation. We are looking for certain types of profiles to form a multidisciplinary team. This list is of course not exhaustive, and we encourage anyone interested to join us:

- **Visual artists/set designers** : to design the physical layout of the installation (lighting, materials, structure) and move beyond simple 'screen projection'.
- **Musicians & improvisers** : curious to interact with algorithms and integrate their instruments (acoustic or electronic) into a do-it-yourself digital network.
- **Developers/creative coders** : to programme the behaviour of autonomous agents and explore network communication and feedback protocols.

Keywords :

#music, #installation, #instrument, #DIY, #machines, #algorithm, #programming, #livecoding

– Lab 4 –

Strates : Imaginer des mondes perméables

Project coordinators :

Sarah Bouttier - Lecturer in English Literature | Department of Languages, École polytechnique

Meghann Cassidy - Lecturer in Philosophy and English Language and Literature | Department of Languages, École polytechnique

Delphine Lamand - Actress, Director | Freelance

How can we inhabit this world we've inherited ? How can we navigate spaces that have become impracticable ? How can we think and act when the possibilities for movement and being appear to be predetermined, built into the very architecture and fabric of our cities, our tools, our languages ? To circumvent this architecture, we will turn to the smooth spaces of water that carry and transport matter to shores, beaches, rocks, pipes, habitats and atmospheres.

The Earth's spheres, its estuaries, our bodies, our cells even comprehend their own smooth spaces through which we'll aim to wander, in poetry, in narrative, in bodily movement. In this Lab, our goal is to write this water and its expanses in order to enable its possibilities for expression and action to influence our ways of thinking, and infiltrate our world.

Through writing and performance, we will explore the surfaces water shapes – the marsh, the mud, the sand, the sky – to see, hear, and feel the different ways of being, acting, and moving that they make possible. But water is not just a flat expanse : we will also break its surface and plunge into its world, which gives us both the feeling of being carried and constantly connected to our surroundings, and greater freedom of movement, because what connects us to others is in fact already there. Finally, we will attempt to convey the strata of flesh, rock, gravel, and sand to which water brings matter, but which also support it in their turn.

Merging a geological perspective with poetic and performative creation, we hope to expose water and its carriers to other forms of perception and language.

Candidate profile

We are seeking participants with **artistic and/or scientific** backgrounds, whether amateur or professional : **writers, artists** (performing and visual arts), **geologists, hydraulics specialists** and any **specialists working on water and its spaces**. People who **speak a Celtic language** and want to reflect on how water is conceived in that language may also find a place in our lab. Anyone interested in the issue of water who wants to write and put together a short performance based on these themes is welcome to apply.

The Lab will take the following form : a few preliminary video calls to stimulate writing before the week of creation, then, during the week of creation, a pooling of our texts, further work on them, and then the staging of a theatrical reading or performance at the Saint-Nazaire Media Library and in the Galerie des Franciscains, where we also plan to exhibit our texts. Let's inundate our words and selves and imagine a more permeable world on Earth !

Mots clés

#creativewriting, #performance, #strata, #movement, #permeability, #transformation, #habitability

– Lab 5 –

L'Eau en chambre noire : images, flux et corps en immersion

Project coordinators :

Giancarlo Rizza - Research Director CEA | Laboratoire des Solides Irradiés (LSI) | Institut Polytechnique de Paris

Pierre Bourdon - Design engineer CEA | Laboratoire des Solides Irradiés (LSI) | Institut Polytechnique de Paris

Eléonore Aïdonidis - PhD candidate in physics CEA | Laboratoire des Solides Irradiés (LSI) | Institut Polytechnique de Paris

This Lab proposes the creation of an immersive camera obscura, designed as an art-science creation device where the image of the Saint-Nazaire region – between shipyards, the Loire estuary and the Brière park – becomes material for transformation, a sensory experience and a space for interaction. Using a pinhole system, this landscape is projected into a dark space, where it is continuously transformed by physical, light and digital interventions.

Water plays a central role here : fluid, unstable and reflective, it acts as a surface, filter and medium, introducing variable temporalities and constant disturbances to the image. Environmental and meteorological data extend this relationship between image and territory.

Participants are invited to manipulate cameras, lenses, projectors and microcontrollers to design interactive visual situations. During the presentation, the audience enters the darkroom and becomes part of this interactive work, contributing to the transformation of the projected landscape. The images produced are then displayed outside in the form of ephemeral projections, extending the experience between interior and exterior, appearance and disappearance.

Candidate profile

We are primarily looking for **photographers and visual artists** whose **practice is related to image, light, immersive installation, video or experimental photography** ; **researchers and engineers with experience in microcontrollers** (Arduino or equivalent), **sensors and real-time data or image processing** ; **digital artists and creative technologists interested in interactive devices and generative systems.**

Keywords:

#cameraobscura, #cameralucida, #projectedimage, #shadow, #immersion, #perception, #microcontrollers, #bodyimageinteraction, #dataandimageprocessing



Calendar

Call for applications and constitution of Labs

- Launch of the call for applications : **January 30**
Deadline : **March 8**
- Selection of applications : **March 19**
- Announcement of successful candidates : **March 23**
- Online meeting of each Lab : **during April**

Intensive Week - Campus of EPF Engineering School | Saint-Nazaire

- Reception of participants on campus : **Sunday, May 17**
- Research-creation labs : from **Monday May 18** to **Friday May 22**

Public weekend - Galerie des Franciscains | Saint-Nazaire

- Exhibition installation : **Friday May 22 afternoon** to **Saturday May 23 morning**
- Exhibition opening : **Saturday, May 23, 2 p.m**
- Exhibition closing : **Sunday, May 24, 5 p.m.**

Contact - infos

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