

We would also like to thank the extended Science Gallery Dublin team and mediators for their work on all aspects of OPEN LABS. For more details on the people behind the scenes, please visit dublin.sciencegallery.com/staff. For more information on OPEN LABS, its artists, projects and their supporters, please see dublin.sciencegallery.com/openlabs

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OPEN LABS

15.03.19
02.06.19

LABS FEATURED

(ART)SCIENCEBLR
BIOART SOCIETY
HACKERS & DESIGNERS
PUBLIC LAB
OPEN SHOP

OPEN LABS IS PART EXHIBITION, PART EXPERIMENT SHOWCASING DIY CULTURE ACROSS DESIGN, RESEARCH, TECHNOLOGY AND ACTIVISM.

OPEN LABS

Office of Life + Art
Curators of OPEN LABS

This exhibition is a group show, but it is also a kind of glimpse of the network that our studio, the Office of Life + Art, circulates within. Over the last decade the four international labs featured in the OPEN LABS exhibition have each nurtured and inspired our own development as artists who seek to engage with technology and science in a critical and creative way. Science Gallery at Trinity College Dublin and the larger Dublin creative community have also been important in that journey. So, for this exhibition we have assembled some of the tools, methods, ideas and associated artists from these spaces that have most influenced our thinking about the future of post-disciplinary research and the ways it can embrace openness. We see this as a fundamental social responsibility: to maintain an open and accessible intellectual commons that counters the dominant and increasingly restrictive knowledge economy.

The Office of Life + Art has always been attracted to the potential of the scientific method and the openness that science promises. We remain skeptical of contemporary Art's continued reliance on the trope of the lone genius and the use of closed systems and processes to reinforce this myth. However, as we began to deeply engage the scientific community in the early 2000's, we were surprised at how many features of open science were actually being closed down. Research journals are unnecessarily expensive and hard to access for non-experts. Many studies we thought were important were never replicated. Lots of the information we were interested in was inaccessible because it was classified as "Confidential Business Information". The push for

academics to become more entangled with industry only exacerbated the move away from openness. These challenges are still present, and indeed in a lot of research fields have only gotten worse. The life sciences and artificial intelligence in particular seem to be entering a dark age of closed, opaque and inaccessible knowledge.

The science fiction author Cory Doctorow has compared secrecy in computer science research to alchemy, saying "Alchemy looks a lot like science except that instead of telling people what you thought you learned, you keep it a secret" and suggesting that "by keeping the results of research secret (...) every Alchemist had to discover for themselves that drinking mercury is a bad idea." *

This exhibition explores new organisational structures that thrive under conditions of openness. The four labs take on mainstream research topics — from mapping contested sites to exploring self-driving cars — in an open, inclusive, playful and critical way. In other cases they turn their attention to topics that are unlikely to receive private funding or academic attention. It is our hope that these prototypes inspire others to launch their own Open Labs or inject the learnings into more formal spaces. We'd love to exist in a future where not every researcher has to drink mercury to know that it is a bad idea. The rise of Open Labs are one of the things that give us hope for this future.

*The Intersection of Alchemy and Open Source, By Sean Michael Kerner. Thanks to Marcos Garcia, Artistic Director of Medialab Prado for sharing these insights.
datamation.com/open-source/the-intersection-of-alchemy-and-open-source.html

HYBRID VIGOUR

Ann Mulrooney
Director Science Gallery
at Trinity College Dublin

Hybridity as a term has been in popular use since the 19th century. The concept of hybrid vigour is that selective interbreeding between two different races or species can bypass inherent weaknesses and create an offspring that is stronger than either parent. Personally, I have always been attracted to the idea of hybridity; combining unlikely heterogenous objects or ideas made up a large part of my artistic training. My initial attraction to Science Gallery was that it so deliberately positioned itself at the intersection of different disciplines in order to draw from their combined strengths in the advancement of new and innovative ideas.

Hybridity is, of course, not without its challenges; different disciplines have specificities of language, method and interest. Overcoming these differences requires a generosity of understanding, an openness to difference and to accepting the conflicts that different perspectives can bring — but

that is also exactly where the value of hybridity lies. In a situation of conflicting perspectives, we are more likely to question both ourselves and others, less likely to accept standard norms or assumptions. In this way, diversity can lead to disruptive creativity.

The four international lab spaces featured in this exhibition cross many disciplines and subject areas. They are characterised by their creativity, their curiosity and their openness — both to new ideas and also in terms of how they disseminate and share their findings. Much of what you see here is open-source and available to you to look into further and build upon. The fifth lab space is Science Gallery itself; over the next season we will be hosting thinkshops, talkshops and workshops exploring and combining different ideas and approaches with the aim of seeding of new hybrid vigour for the future. We look forward to you joining us along the way.

THE LABS

(ART)SCIENCEBLR

(Art)ScienceBLR is a public laboratory at the Srishti Institute of Art, Design & Technology in Bangalore, India where artists and designers engage with scientific practices and look at the artistic, social and political implications of diverse technologies. Their work exists at the intersection of art-science and education, creating spaces of dialogue and interaction between artists, designers and scientists. Since their inception in 2009 they have focused on using DIY techniques to build low-cost laboratory equipment, in order to offer more accessible forms of engagement with the life-sciences with students, practitioners, and the local community.

artscienceblr.org

BIOART SOCIETY

The Bioart Society develops, produces and facilitates activities around art and the natural sciences, with an emphasis on biology, ecology and life sciences. It is based in Helsinki, Finland with more than 100 members. The Bioart Society was established in May 2008 at the Kilpisjärvi Biological Station in Lapland, where it runs the Ars Bioarctica art & science residency programme. Its latest initiative is SOLU, an artistic platform and laboratory for art, science and society.

bioartsociety.fi
solu.earth

HACKERS & DESIGNERS

Hackers & Designers (H&D) is a community of people investigating the ways in which tools and technologies are constructed, through hands-on approaches including soldering, breaking apart, and deploying code you acquire new knowledge and skills. They confront assumptions of dominant technological constructions and question closed systems and their societal implications. H&D have created a series of projects, workshops, symposiums and publications that explore topics such as ‘smart’ technology, Peer-2-Peer networks, biometric data, and more generally the agency of user and citizenship.

hackersanddesigners.nl

PUBLIC LAB

Public Lab is a worldwide community democratising science in order to address environmental issues that affect people. Supported by a non-profit, Public Lab members work together on and offline to create inexpensive do-it-together techniques for environmental monitoring that can lead to better environmental management, regulations and enforcement. The science, technology and data in Public Lab are community-created and open source. Using the data generated through their open tools and platforms, members can advocate for the changes they want to see in their local environments.

publiclab.org

OPENSHOP

OPENSHOP is Science Gallery Dublin’s Open Lab platform. It will host thinkshops, workshops and talkshops to explore the process of collaboration and creation, highlighting homegrown experimentation. Over 11 weeks it will showcase collaboration and experimentation from Trinity College Dublin’s research institutes, highlighting lab spaces working in non-traditional ways. It will feature artist-led collectives in Ireland working across disciplines and in a socially engaged way, and will facilitate workshops around provocative ideas with creative thinkers and disruptive entrepreneurs.

dublin.sciencegallery.com/events

Explore the exhibition further and experiment with the OPEN LABS identity by creating your own poster at dublin.sciencegallery.com/openlabs.

Share your designs with the tag #OPENLABS

