

LAB 5

**THE
MECHANICS
OF TRUTH**

**WHITE
PAPER**

**MEDIA LAB
MATADERO**

Why has it become so much easier and, simultaneously, so much harder to believe what we see?

The perception of the world has always been contested territory, but something has shifted.



A WHITE PAPER

This is a working document — an attempt to name something that is happening, map its contours, and open space for thinking and making inside it.

The field of action is the production of truth: how facts are assembled, how belief is manufactured, how reality gets contested in real time, how models and simulations can manipulate or come to the rescue.

This is not a new problem. But the tools available to those who want to construct — or demolish — a version of the world have changed dramatically, and so has the speed at which those constructions circulate and calcify.

LAB 5 The Mechanics of Truth is a program designed to respond to this moment. It brings together artists, designers, researchers, journalists, technologists, and scientists to investigate these phenomena as practitioners who can open them up, reveal their internal logic, and imagine alternatives.



THE PROBLEM

The proliferation of AI-generated content produces hyperrealistic versions of reality — images and narratives so polished, so fluent, that they merge seamlessly with the desires and fears of those grasping for solid ground in an relentless flood of information and stimulation

This is not just a problem of individual judgment or media literacy. It signals something structural: a transformation of the conditions under which knowledge is produced, distributed, and trusted.



The systems that now shape what counts as real — algorithmic platforms, synthetic media tools, data infrastructures, prediction markets — are reorganizing the public sphere, often faster than we can track.

They carry assumptions, incentives, and politics embedded in their design, but also, sometimes, opportunities for change.

Do these new systems sharpen our ability to grasp complexity, or erode it?

Do they amplify previously marginalized voices, or become subtler instruments of control?

How do we fight for truths that can withstand the assault of rumor and propaganda, while also recognizing that knowledge is not a discovery but a process — built from agreements, technological abstractions, successive approximations?

And yet, the speed of these transformations is often disorienting — generating distrust, technophobia, sometimes outright paranoia. Those are understandable responses. Let's make sure they are not the only ones.

LAB 5 proposes a shared practice of inquiry, grounded in the conviction that these questions are best approached through collective intelligence and the encounter between art, technology, and other ways of knowing — at the edges of disciplines, rather than from within the mastery of any single one.



THREE AXES OF INQUIRY

The program organizes its research around three areas of investigation. They bleed into each other, and that is intentional.

Axis 1

Technologies
That Establish Facts

Axis 2

Technologies
for Lying

Axis 3

The Grey Zone

THREE AXES OF INQUIRY

Technologies That Establish Facts

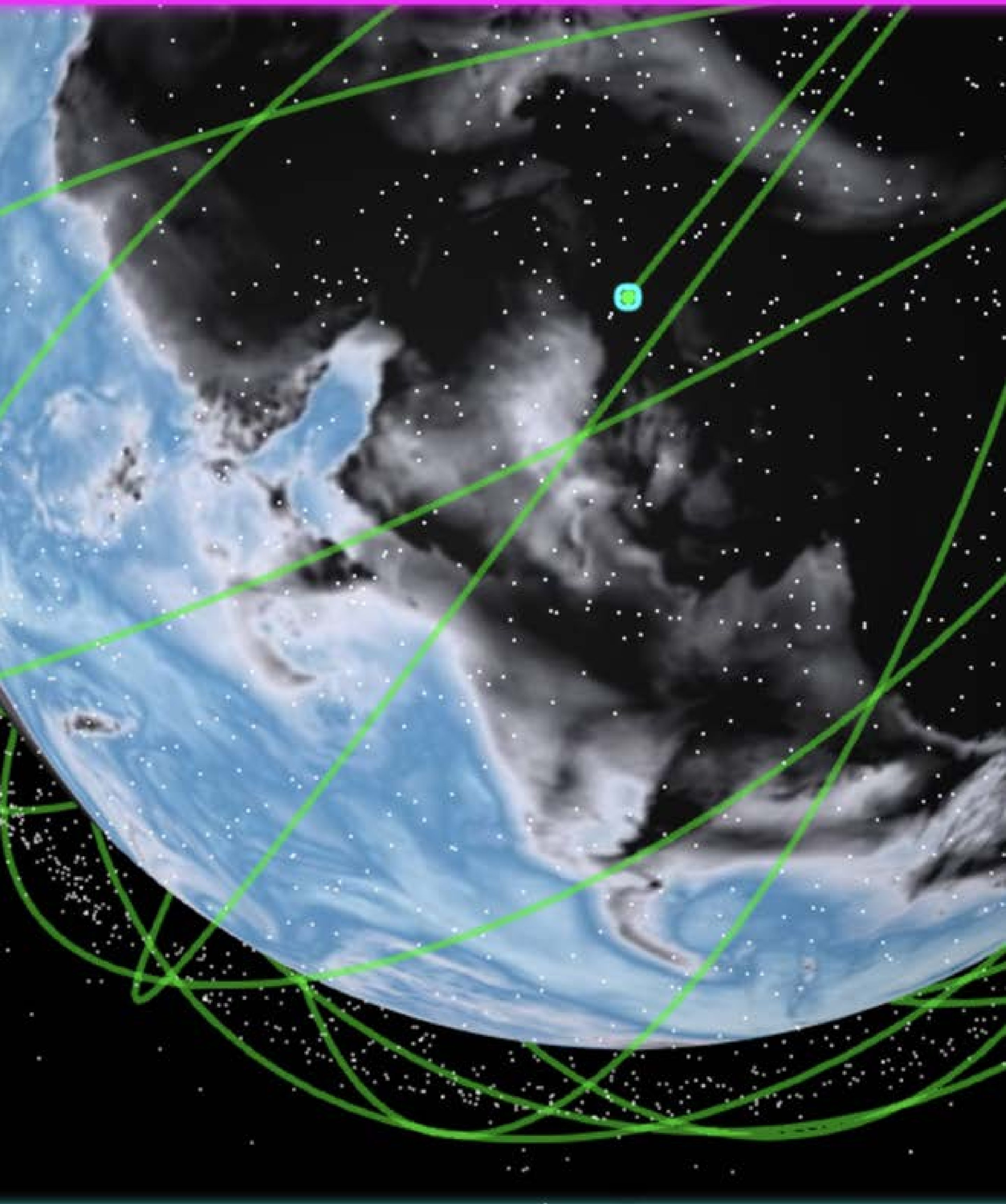
Every fact is a construction: the product of specific instruments, protocols, institutions, and decisions about what counts as evidence. Digital infrastructures have vastly expanded the capacity to articulate and verify events, but also to simulate them convincingly, or to undermine their foundations. This axis examines investigative aesthetics and counter-forensic practices, the use of open-source intelligence as an artistic and political tool, and the tension between dominant systems of truth-production and the alternative models that challenge them.

→ facts as assemblages

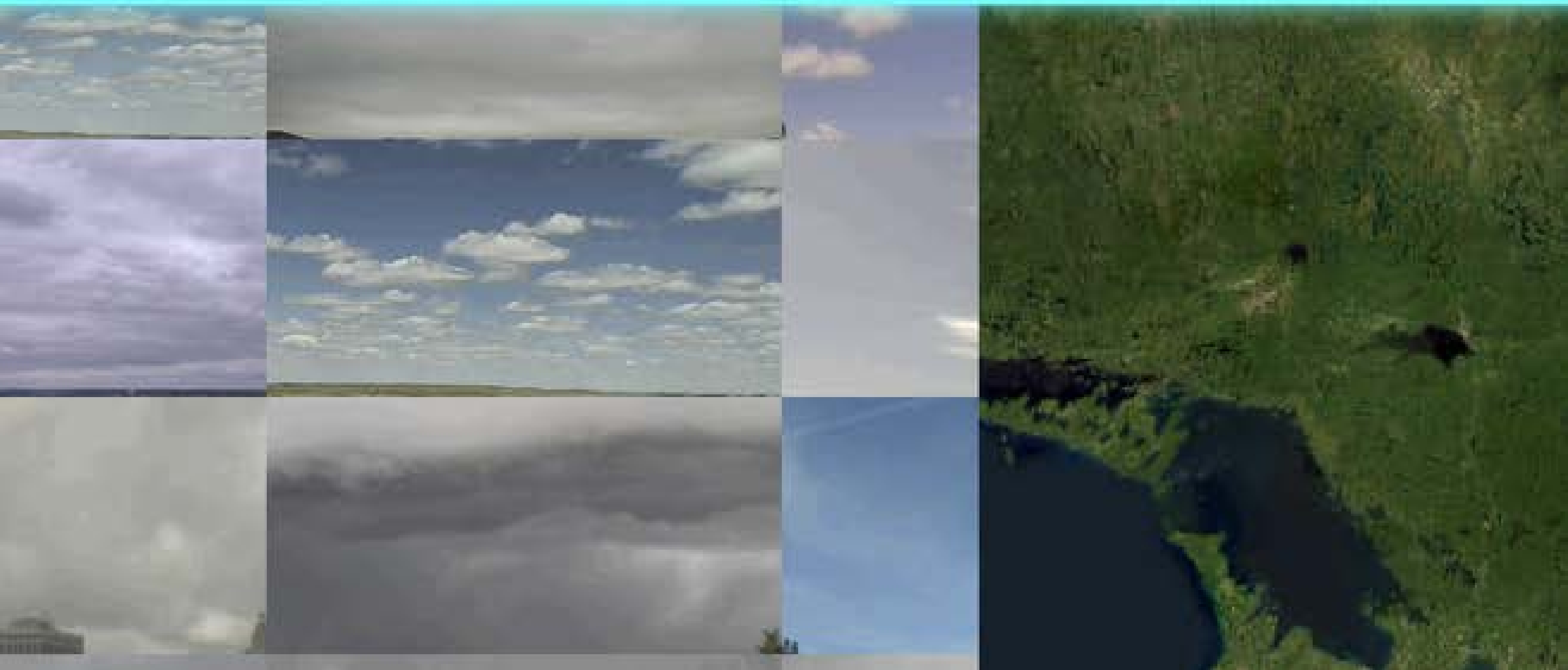
→ digital infrastructures of truth

→ counter-forensic practices

→ contemporary investigative aesthetics



INTERFERENCE



THREE AXES OF INQUIRY

Technologies for Lying

This axis looks at the weaponization of synthetic media: how narrative, image, and data get instrumentalized to destabilize shared reality, and how emerging platforms are mutating the terrain of public discourse in ways we are only beginning to understand.

- weaponization of synthetic fiction
- history and present of psychological operations
- theories and practices of conspiracy
- prediction markets as a mutating public sphere



THREE AXES OF INQUIRY

The Grey Zone

What happens when the goal is not to reach consensus on a fact, but to dissolve the very possibility of a shared reality? Can technology become a portal toward other ways of seeing and living together, beyond the constraints of inherited conventions and dysfunctional sociotechnical relationships? This axis holds both impulses in tension — the dark and the visionary — while examining phenomena such as epistemic dispersion, ambiguous ideological formations, and aesthetics that promise access to a deeper reality, as well as the underexamined industry of seduction and fraud.

→ technoparanoia and the fear of simulations

→ digital nihilism and post-irony as epistemic dispersion

→ technological illusionism

→ the industry of online seduction and fraud



WHO THIS IS FOR

LAB 5 is built for people who are already asking these questions — or who want to ask them differently, in the company of practitioners arriving from very different directions:

Artists and designers working with data, synthetic media, and digital subcultures. Rebellious ethnographers. Researchers and journalists investigating disinformation or the politics of knowledge. Technologists drawn to the cultural consequences of what they build. Scientists curious about what happens when their methods enter the contested terrain of the public sphere.

This is a space for shared thinking and making, not a program with fixed outcomes. What it asks of participants is not expertise in any particular field, but the curiosity and drive to explore cases, narratives, and methods — and to use them to build alternative tools and technological imaginaries.

FULL PROGRAM

Estudio de Sistemas

May - October 2026

A creative research, artist-led study program focused on creation, experimentation, and professional development for artists, designers, researchers, journalists, technologists, scientists, and students from any discipline or field.

→ <https://www.medialab-matadero.es/en/programs/study-systems>

FULL PROGRAM

Collaborative Prototyping Lab

November 12 - 25, 2026

A residency program for the creation of experimental technocultural projects, open to 25 participants and mentored by leading international professionals: Júlia Nueno Guitart, Lucia Rebolino, and Sophie Publig.

→ <https://www.medialab-matadero.es/en/announcements/open-call-lab-5-mechanics-truth>

Deadline for applications: June 14, 2026

FULL PROGRAM

Exhibition The Mechanics of Truth

October 15 - December 13

Site-specific installations

for Nave Una, Matadero Madrid

OpenLAB festival

November 26 - 28, 2026

Featuring lectures, project presentations, workshops, professional networking events, and performances.

The Mechanics of Truth
is curated by Bani Brusadin

Head of Programme
Javi Garriz

Project Coordinators
Paca Blanco,
Sonia Díez Thale,
Daniel Pietrosevoli,
Carmen Talabán

Assistant Curator
Victoria de la Torre