

The *Data Fluencies* exhibition series will take place in three cities in 2025:

Rivulets

Boston Cyberarts (Boston, MA, USA)

18 April — 15 June, 2025

Tributaries

Or Gallery (Vancouver, BC, Canada)

29 May — 19 July, 2025

Confluence

The Living Arts and Science Center (Lexington, KY, USA)

6 June — 25 July, 2025

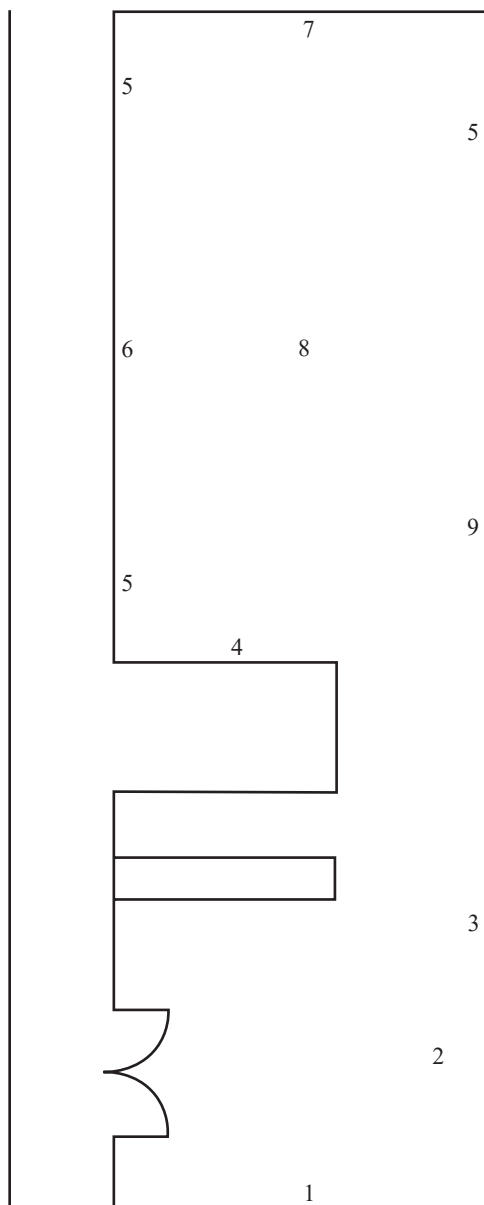
Data Fluencies: Tributaries

Curated by

**Roopa Vasudevan for the
Data Fluencies Project**

**29 May—
19 July 2025**

Or Gallery



List of Works

1. Roopa Vasudevan, **Pressure Systems (Vancouver)**, 2025, adhesive vinyl, 172 x 198cm. Courtesy of the artist.
2. Caroline Sinderson, **Feminist Data Set**, 2017-present, worksheets, acrylic document holders, prints, curated selection of books from the Or Gallery bookstore, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.
3. Data Fluencies Pedagogies, **Moments with Data**, 2025, zine, 22 x 28cm. Courtesy of the artists.
4. Lai Yi Ohlsen, **between $\beta=1$ and $\beta=2$** , 2025, single-channel video (duration: 9:02 min). Courtesy of the artist.
5. Kristoffer Ørum, **Diffused States**, 2025, series of 8 inkjet prints on panel, each print measures 60 x 84cm. Courtesy of the artist.
6. Jazsalyn, **RP 002 / Reimagine Prototype 002**, 2020-2022, 2-channel video (duration: 30 sec), wooden box, sand, 175 x 210 x 91cm. Courtesy of the artist.
7. Lani Asunción, **SOS H2O | Through The Eyes of Atlas**, 2025, vinyl, camo netting, video (duration: 10:52 min), 178 x 279 x 122cm. Courtesy of the artist.
8. The Imaginative Methods Lab, **Fables for Imagining**, 2022-2025, series of 3 wood signs and series of 6 prints, signs measure 61 x 91cm each, prints measure 28 x 43cm each. Courtesy of the artists.
9. DATA/FFECT (Anthony Burton, Matt Canute, Craig Fahner, Ganaele Langlois, Mel Racho & Rory Sharp), **Affective Landscapes**, 2025, series of three plotter drawings (ink on paper), each measures 60 x 84cm. Courtesy of the artists.

Fluencies as Agency: Between, Around, Through

Roopa Vasudevan

The discourse around data, machine learning, and artificial intelligence (AI) seems to be moving around us at light speed. It can feel almost overwhelming to try and parse all the latest developments. Every day, we are confronted with new modes through which our behavior is tracked and surveilled, monetized, or used to classify and categorize us in ways we might not even be able to comprehend. And with the advent of generative AI, these discussions have only become more urgent as we struggle to wrap our heads around questions of intellectual property, consentful tech practice, and the impacts of automation on human existence at large.

In recent years, there has been increasing attention to “data literacy” as a response to the mounting concerns about the ways that data is used (and misused) by big corporations, governments, and researchers alike. The assumption seems to be that by understanding the mechanisms by which data is collected, cleaned, analysed, and deployed, we will better be able to navigate the impacts that these processes are having on the world. But often, the focus on “literacy” is constrained to simply comprehending the decisions that are already being made for us—as if our technologies are a foregone conclusion, and there’s nothing for us to do except play catch-up.

It is helpful here to contrast the notion of literacy with that of fluency. A key part of fluency is the ability to shift, move, change, adapt. To reimagine our realities and envision new ways of being. To take what exists and push it, manipulate it, or rethink its place in the world. Fluency, and the evolution and motion that come with it, allow for a clear and explicit emphasis on agency that a simple focus on literacy often hides from view.

The Data Fluencies Project is a multiyear international research initiative that uses the notion of fluency to investigate the role of data in our world, and bring to light opportunities for rethinking commonly held assumptions surrounding its impacts. Based out of the Digital Democracies Institute at Simon Fraser University, the project seeks to develop new ways of understanding and imagining these ideas by drawing from a deeply interdisciplinary approach—placing scholars, artists, activists, and technologists from a range of disciplines across the arts, humanities, social sciences, and data science together in order to spark generative conversations that can only occur when a diversity of methodological and theoretical approaches are put in close proximity.

A key argument that the project makes is that scholars across disciplines are already working on the same problems, just not necessarily together. To that point, many of the questions about data and technology's place in everyday life are being discussed in both academic and creative contexts. I have been privy to this myself, as an artist and scholar who has been practising in the new media and creative technology space for over a decade, and who also holds a doctorate in Communication. As my work in both of these fields has increasingly merged more and more over the years—becoming much more of a hybrid practice than neatly fitting into one category or the other—I have noticed that scholars working in critical data studies have consistently pointed to the ability of artists and artworks to broaden our understanding of computation and data-driven systems. Because they so often use high-tech tools in unconventional ways, digital and new media artists are thought to enable a more nuanced understanding of the impacts of data and technology on our day-to-

day lives—and to spark generative conversations with more strictly quantitative fields.

This is an exciting and hopeful moment for both artists and researchers alike; the influences of each group on the other are palpable, both directly and indirectly. It's different, though, when it comes to actual conversation. Because I have one foot in each world, it has often felt as though I am a bridge for these groups who are speaking *at* each other, rather than *with* each other. While it is gratifying to see scholars point to artists and artworks as examples of how we might think differently about technology and society, simply placing these practices on a pedestal can feel surface-level and cursory—and, as I have argued in my own research, serves to reify the false notion of art as the aesthetic sublime, existing in its own realm with no connection to questions of power, capital, or social inequity. Similarly, part of my decision to pursue a PhD at all was driven by a desire to engage more deeply and rigorously with the literature in Communication and Science and Technology Studies than felt possible within the compressed timescales and relentless hype cycles of the contemporary new media art world.

I have often asked myself how we can foster a more robust dialogue between critical data studies and creative practitioners working in this space. A key part of this has to do with rethinking the ways we view and connect art and scholarship. Rather than choosing a few artists to be “representatives” in the ivory tower, as is often done today, it's important to create venues specifically suited to the work that they are doing, and to encourage scholars to more seriously consider multimodal approaches to research. Rather than pointing to art without directly engaging it, the goal should instead be to foster an actual dialogue—a symbiotic relationship where both sides give and receive, pushing each other out of their comfort zones and

broadening understanding and reciprocal giving. Part of my thinking about “fluencies” includes translations across space; how artwork can transcend the gallery context and be understood as research in its own right, and how research can be disseminated in more expressive, impactful ways that engage non-academic audiences. I am also interested in the “space” question in a literal sense—exploring how people engage with these ideas inside galleries and out, in academic writing and out, in their everyday lives and in more constructed contexts.

These ideas were the genesis for the *Data Fluencies* exhibition series, which represent the culmination of three years of ideation, exchange, and consideration of the role of art in advocating for the digital futures we want. Over the course of 2025, three exhibitions spanning the North American continent will provide open public engagement with the experimental and community-engaged outputs from the larger Data Fluencies Project, and place them next to critical work of artists considering the same questions and ideas. The exhibitions consist of a series of three separate but conceptually interconnected events, taking place in three cities associated with collaborating institutions (Boston, MA, USA; Vancouver, BC, Canada; and Lexington, KY, USA).

The exhibition you are viewing at Or Gallery—*Data Fluencies: Tributaries*—is the second in the series, and moves from individual subversion and critique to community-centred forms of resistance and knowledge production. Taking inspiration from river tributaries, which eventually flow together and combine into larger rivers or water systems, the works in the show consider the ways that engaging communities can open up doors for a reimagination of our relationships with technology. The six artists featured here—Lai Yi Ohlsen, Lani Asunción, Jazsalyn, Kristoffer Ørum, Caroline Sindors,

and myself—offer explorations of data, machine learning, and AI that are by turns poetic, reflective, meditative, and invigorating. These works are placed in conversation with experimental research outputs that work with people, and their lived experiences, to offer insight into what happens when we engage publics and perspectives that are often left out of the conversation. Together, these artists and researchers offer us ways to (re)consider our relationships with the data that surrounds and drives our everyday lives—and perhaps find new routes to agency once we are able to do so.

It is my hope that the works in this exhibition will prompt deep reflection on what could be possible when we approach data and technology as a collective issue, rather than something we each must wrestle with on our own. The goal of this project is to spark a more robust and multidirectional conversation—one which includes artists, academics, and, perhaps most importantly, anyone whose lives have been affected and shaped by the increasing prominence of data and automation in our world. Perhaps by bringing more voices into the flows that are already moving, we can carve out and strengthen paths for better data futures beyond the ones that we have been told to simply accept.

May 2025

Roopa Vasudevan, *Pressure Systems (Vancouver)*

Adhesive vinyl on windows of gallery

Pressure Systems is a series of site specific works investigating the tangible effects of data collection and storage. Taking inspiration from both meteorological maps and electronics schematics—traditional means of representing fluid events that often cannot easily be seen by the human eye—the works superimpose iconography and motion on physical space to depict the material needs of processes that are often regarded as immaterial and invisible. The work seen here is an installation mounted over the Or Gallery windows, which depicts spatial relationships between the gallery and the bodies of water, power plants, and data centres in the Vancouver area.

Caroline Sinderson, *Feminist Data Set*

Participatory installation

If data is increasingly used to code planetary futures, what would it look like to code alternative futures through intersectional feminist methods of data creation? *Feminist Data Set* pursues this question by developing a methodology for collaborative data collection, data labelling, and data training in order to imagine other horizons of possibility for AI. In the iteration of the project installed here, visitors are invited to learn about feminist data set creation through a set of pedagogical diagrams that outline taxonomies of feminist AI. Visitors are invited to become coproducers of the data set by filling out the worksheets provided and depositing them in the accompanying receptacle. In future iterations of this work, visitors' contributions will be incorporated in training an algorithm to generate feminist AI.

Data Fluencies Pedagogies, *Moments with Data* Zine

What does it mean to teach about data beyond just data literacy? How can we help students develop skills to critically engage with data through creative and experimental practices? During the Data Fluencies Project, we sought to answer these questions by designing new workshops and courses that encouraged students to think critically and creatively about data. This zine presents some of our most impactful “moments with data” from this experience.

Lai Yi Ohlsen , *between $\beta = 1$ and $\beta = 2$* Single-channel video

between $\beta = 1$ and $\beta = 2$ explores the influence of Western cybernetic and overpopulation theories on the development of the One Child Policy in 1980s China. Ohlsen, a Chinese-American adoptee, considers how her life might have been different had different data been utilised to inform the PRC’s policies, and the irreversible impact of metrics that take on a life of their own.

Kristoffer Ørum, *Diffused States*

Series of 8 inkjet prints on panel

Diffused States is a series of posters imagining an alternate technological history where AI evolved through graffiti culture's global exchange. It envisions AI systems emerging from DIY culture rather than corporate labs, where diffusion algorithms mirror spray paint's atomized particles—transforming digital noise into coherent images just as artists transform blank walls into vibrant expressions. The posters form a site-specific speculative timeline exploring how experimentation at society's edges might birth radically different forms of artificial intelligence, where each local adaptation spawns new possibilities for global reimagining.

Jazsalyn, *RP 002 / Reimagine Prototype 002*

Two-channel machine learning video installation

RP 002 / REIMAGINE Prototype 002 is an ongoing computational study and an attempt to refigure lost, indigenous and extraterrestrial memory. The RPX Series applies computer vision algorithms to juxtapose data archives from NASA Mars rover missions and The Metropolitan Museum African Collection.

Lani Asunción, *SOS H20* | *Through the Eyes of Atlas*

Multimedia installation

SOS H20 | *Through the Eyes of Atlas*, made in collaboration with artificial intelligence (A.I.) software through prompts of “a flooded Boston,” takes the perspective of a rebooted Boston Robotics humanoid robot, Atlas, after coastal flooding has overtaken the city in 2070. The work emits the Morse code signal SOS, warning of the climate crisis and signaling the devastating results of global warming. The installation critiques the military-industrial complex and high-tech industries, whose contributions to greenhouse gas emissions and extractive practices propel the climate crisis forward.

The Imaginative Methods Lab, *Fables For Imagining (The Public Night School for Data Fluencies)*

Design materials and prints

The Public Night School for Data Fluencies is a community-engaged research initiative led by Dr. Gillian Russell and the Imaginative Methods Lab. Designed as a platform for creative and critical engagement with data, the Night School empowers individuals—especially young people—to shape the digital futures in which they want to live. Through immersive activations, playful tools, youth-focused curricula, and co-created workshops, the project brings together local residents, artists, technologists, educators, and students to explore how technology impacts our lives—individually, socially, and ecologically. Together, they design resources that build not just technical understanding, but also the imaginative and critical fluencies needed to navigate and reimagine the digital world. Featured in this exhibition is *Fables for Imagining*, one of several tools developed through this ongoing collective practice.

DATA/AFFECT, *Affective Landscapes*

Series of 3 plotter drawings

“What’s on your mind?” “What’s happening?” Wherever you go on social media, you are prompted to disclose how you feel about an endless stream of content through likes, reactions, and text. No matter how you feel, these responses are fed back to you as algorithmic recommendations meant to keep you scrolling. The Image-Affect tool gives you the tools to answer differently, offering a simple interface to express and interpret the many layers that constitute how you feel online, and providing a means of reflecting upon the affective imprints of digital media. This exhibition presents a series of prints that visualize affective data contributed anonymously to the app by participants. Each affect registers as its own colour, and line lengths denote their intensity which articulates the affective flows and resonances of algorithmically recommended images found in Instagram news feeds (provided as QR codes next to the prints). These affective imprints are accompanied by algorithmically generated descriptions of the given images, contrasting the ways in which computational models contend with the affective intensities of images.

Public Programs

Opening Celebration

Thursday, May 29, 2025, 5:00-8:00pm

Or Gallery

Curatorial Tour with Roopa Vasudevan

Saturday, May 31, 2025, 2:00pm

Or Gallery

Virtual Artist Talk

Wednesday, July 9, 2025, 5:30pm

Online; registration via orgallery.org

Digital Futures Lab

June 2025

Central Library, Yosef Wosk Poets' Corner, VPL

***Data Fluencies* Catalogue Launch**

Fall 2025

Or Gallery

Digital Futures Lab

In partnership with Or Gallery, the Night School for Data Fluencies is hosting a month-long pop-up lab at Vancouver Public Library. Join artists, designers, and researchers for interactive workshops and creative activities that tackle big questions in digital media.

Using critical thinking and creative tools, participants will explore the possibilities and pitfalls of emerging technologies—and learn how to imagine more just digital futures.

Scan the QR code for workshop details and registration.

Fables for Imagining

Friday, June 6, 2025 1:00-4:00pm

Protests from an Unwanted Future

Friday, June 13, 2025 1:00-3:30pm

Souvenir Patches from the Future

Friday, June 20, 2025 1:00-4:00pm

Reimagining the Now

Friday, June 27, 2025 1:00-3:30pm



All workshops will take place at the Yosef Wosk Poets' Corner, Central Library (350 West Georgia Street, Vancouver BC V6B 6B1).

Biographies

Lani Asunción is a multimedia artist who holds a Master of Fine Arts from UConn School of Fine Arts. Recipient of 2022 Public Art for Spatial Justice Grant from New England Foundation for the Arts. Asunción is a visiting lecturer at Massachusetts College of Art and Design teaching public art, performance, and Interdisciplinary Studio.

JAZSALYN is an artist exploring data loss, memory restoration, and Ancestral Intelligence through alternative media and re-indigenization. Her work has been supported by Serpentine Arts Technologies, Pioneer Works, and more. She is the Artistic Director of Black Beyond and teaches at The New School, where she has written coursework on African and Diaspora rituals as speculative technology.

Lai Yi Ohlsen is an artist and Internet researcher. Her creative work has been supported by NEW INC, Pioneer Works, Movement Research, Triple Canopy, BRIC and more. She is an adjunct lecturer at The New School and a Senior Product Manager at Cloudflare.

Kristoffer Ørum is a multidisciplinary artist whose work examines the intersection of technology, memory, and imagination. Through innovative uses of AI and digital systems, he explores alternative narratives that challenge social and political norms. His internationally exhibited practice invites audiences to reimagine the possibilities of human-machine collaboration and collective storytelling.

Caroline Sindors is an award winning critical designer, researcher, and artist. They are the founder of human rights and design lab, Convocation Research + Design, and a current BRAID fellow with the University of Arts, London. They have worked with the Tate Exchange at the Tate Modern, the United Nations, Ars Electronica's AI Lab, The Information Commissioner's Office (the UK's data protection and privacy regulator), the Harvard Kennedy School, and others.

Roopa Vasudevan is a media artist, computer programmer, and scholar investigating sociotechnical defaults and protocols, and how they intersect with larger cultural and economic power structures. She has been supported by the Processing Foundation, Eyebeam, and NEW INC, among others, and is an Assistant Professor of Art at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

The Imaginative Methods Lab, founded by Gillian Russell and Frédéric Lesage, is a methods incubator dedicated to the design, analysis and deployment of research methods for collaborative imagining, prototyping, and experiencing different understandings of the present. *Fables For Imagining* was created in collaboration with Samein Shamsheer, Craig Badke, Lauren Thu, and Pete Fung. Illustrations by Doan Truong.

DATA/FFECT is Anthony Burton, Matt Canute, Craig Fahner, Ganaele Langlois, Mel Racho, and Rory Sharp. The collective is developing open-source software tools and methods that explore the relationships between algorithmic media, affect and mis- and dis-information.

Moments with Data represents a collaboration among the researchers of the Data Fluencies project, along with workshop facilitators, instructors, and students who took part in the courses and workshops developed as part of the initiative.

The Data Fluencies Project is based at the Digital Democracies Institute at Simon Fraser University, the Data Fluencies Project works to counter the impacts of discriminatory technology and online mis- and disinformation and foster more just and equitable futures. The project seeks to develop an expansive and interdisciplinary approach that combines the interpretative traditions of the arts and humanities with critical work in the social and data sciences to support innovative engagements with (and resistances to) our data-filled world. The 2025 Data Fluencies exhibitions were organized by Roopa Vasudevan, a co-PI on the project.

Or Gallery 236 Pender St East, Vancouver, BC V6A 1T7, Canada

Contemporary Art Space and Bookstore
Open Wednesday to Saturday, 12–5pm

Or Gallery acknowledges its presence on the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Skwxwú7mesh, and səlilwətał First Nations, who have stewarded this land since time immemorial.

Or Gallery is generously supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, the British Columbia Arts Council, and the City of Vancouver along with numerous community partners, donors, and volunteers.

Data Fluencies: Tributaries is made possible by the support of the Digital Democracies Institute at Simon Fraser University.

Cover illustration courtesy of PROPS SUPPLY (Brooklyn, NY, USA)

Please sign up to Or Gallery's email list and visit our social media for public programs related to this project:

www.orgallery.org

or@orgallery



Conseil des Arts
du Canada

Canada Council
for the Arts



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ARTS COUNCIL



Supported by the Province of British Columbia



CITY OF
VANCOUVER