

**CALL FOR PROJECT SUBMISSIONS FOR MASTER STUDENTS OF ZHDK**

for

**artists-in-labs Master Series Residencies in the  
Spring Semester 2027**

as part of the Minor

*Art & Science*

In the spring semester 2027, the artists-in-labs program (AIL) offers four residencies at the intersection of art and science in cooperation with the Master Transdisciplinary Studies (MTR) and the Minor Art & Science. The residencies are situated in research institutes in the Zurich area.

Interested **MA students** of all departments of ZHdK may **apply with a project idea in the context of these research groups:**

- **Urban Energy Systems Laboratory (Empa)**
- **Phytopathology Group (WSL)**
- **Ecological Genetics Group (WSL)**
- **Plankton Ecology Group (Eawag)**

**Applications for these residencies are open for:**

Master's students from all ZHdK departments and specializations

The following conditions apply:

- The Master Series residency is an integral part of the minor in *Art & Science*; enrolment in the minor must be completed by **18 May 2026** at the latest

**Duration of the Residencies: January and February 2027 (for the residencies at WSL and Eawag that include the possibility of field trips, the residency can be split: 1 month in January and 1 month in May, June or July).**

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: Sunday, 26 April 2026**

**PLEASE SEND YOUR APPLICATIONS VIA THE ONLINE APPLICATION FORM. YOU CAN AD YOUR PORTFOLIO AND CV IN ONE PDF-FILE (MAX. 15 MB).** Video files should be linked in the PDF (to sites such as vimeo.com, youtube.com etc.).

The application may be written in German or English.

**If your application is shortlisted, we will invite you to a preliminary interview, that will take place on Tuesday, 12 May 2026.**

If you have any questions, you are welcome to contact the AIL-team via [flurin.fischer@zhdk.ch](mailto:flurin.fischer@zhdk.ch)

## BACKGROUND

The artists-in-labs residencies *Master Series 2027* offer the unique opportunity to a total of four MA-students of ZHdK to exchange and work during 2 months in January and February 2027 with researchers of the **Urban Energy Systems Laboratory (Empa)**, the **Phytopathology Group (WSL)**, the **Ecological Genetics Group (WSL)** or the **Plankton Ecology Group (Eawag)** and to develop an art or design project.

### About the residency:

- The residency's unique setting opens up the possibility for a transdisciplinary dialogue that is brought about by juxtaposing concepts and procedures, cultural knowledge and backgrounds
- The residency offers the student significant time and space to develop a project and to critically reflect as well as to explore a range of scientific topics, methods and technologies
- During the residency the student will be immersed in the research and developing his/her project alongside scientists of the team
- It will be possible to further develop the project into the master thesis in consultation with the head of the Master degree programme or the head of specialisation
- There will also be a coordinator at each research group available to the artist for more general issues
- Mentoring will be provided by the project management (AIL/MTR/Minor Art & Science) to reflect and facilitate the process.

## RESIDENCY 1: Urban Energy Systems Laboratory (Empa)

Head of Laboratory: Dr. Georgios “George” Mavromatidis (Link: <https://www.empa.ch/web/s313>)

**The Urban Energy Systems Laboratory is part of Empa, the Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology.** Empa is an interdisciplinary research institute of the ETH Domain and is based in Dübendorf, on the outskirts of Zurich.

Empa aims to conduct cutting-edge materials and technology research. Material science brings together chemistry, physics, and engineering. This specialist area deals with the development and research of materials of all kinds. The technologies and experimental procedures are an important part of the research. Chemical, physical and biological factors determine the properties of a material. Whether transparent or reflective, heavy, or light, durable, or decomposable, conductive, or insulating: the composition and structure of the material are decisive. These properties in turn have an influence on its processing and therefore on its use in everyday life. Empa’s research and development activities focus on meeting the requirements of industry and the needs of society, and thus link applications-oriented research to the practical implementation of new ideas in the areas of nanostructured, “smart” materials and surfaces, energy, sustainable building and environmental technologies as well as medical technology and solutions for personalized medicine.

**The Urban Energy Systems Laboratory focuses on the development of methods, strategies and solutions to transform buildings, neighbourhoods and cities into energy efficient and decarbonized systems.** With its research the lab seeks for solutions that significantly contribute to reaching national and global emission targets. Its core competences lie in the modelling, design and assessment of building and urban systems with focus on energy hubs, multi-energy grids, and integration of renewable energy and storage systems.

The strategy is:

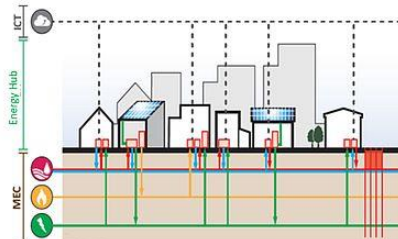
- to develop innovative building energy systems and technologies,
- to design relevant numerical models and analysis techniques for assessing the optimal integration, design and operation of multi-energy systems from building to district and higher scales, and
- to test and implement the developed strategies through demonstration in close collaboration with research and industry partners.

**Building Energy Systems and Technologies**



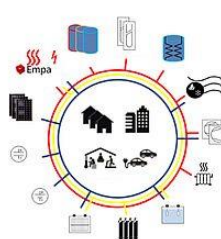
- Decentralized Energy Systems
- Building Efficiency
- Energy management
- Storage systems

**Multi-Energy Systems**



- Energy hub
- Multi-energy grids
- Network convergence
- Retrofitting strategies

**Demonstration**



- Technology integration
- Operational schemes

## RESIDENCY 2: Phytopathology Group (WSL)

Head of Group: Dr. Simone Prospero (Link: <https://www.wsl.ch/en/about-wsl/organisation/research-units/forest-health-and-biotic-interactions/phytopathology/>)

**The Phytopathology Group is part of the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research WSL** and is based on its own campus in Birmensdorf, a few bus stations away from Zurich.

As the leading Swiss research institute for terrestrial environmental systems, WSL performs research at the national and international level that aims to benefit the environment and society in Switzerland and beyond. WSL researcher address global challenges driven by land use change, climate change, biodiversity loss, altered biogeochemical cycles, and urbanisation, as well as their interactions.

In phytopathology, native and exotic pathogens of forest and ornamental trees and shrubs are researched in changing environments. Phytopathology contributes to research that studies the effect of biotic factors (insects and fungi) on forest health and develops the scientific basis for protecting the forest against potential pests and pathogens. Researchers conduct surveys on the emergence of forest pests and diseases, advises forestry services on forest protection issues, and assists the federal government and cantonal authorities with measures to combat pests and pathogens. WSL's infrastructure includes a modern diagnostic laboratory and a high-security plant protection laboratory, so that alien organisms can be dealt with appropriately.

Another focus is on studying the effect of biotic (alien species) and abiotic disturbances (wind damage, climate change), as well as cultivation, on invertebrate fauna and the interactions between them and their host trees.

The research pursues the following goals, among others: To understand the biology of pathogen populations at different spatial and temporal scales. To develop and improve methods to control fungal diseases, with particular emphasis on biological control with parasitic viruses. To identify potentially invasive pathogens and the threats they can cause in a new ecosystem. To develop and apply modern diagnostic methods for tree pests and pathogens. To lay the foundations for supporting the federal and cantonal authorities in the prevention and containment of quarantine pathogens.



### RESIDENCY 3: Ecological Genetics Group (WSL)

Head of Group: Dr. Martina Peter (Link: <https://www.wsl.ch/en/staff/peter/>)

**The Ecological Genetics group is part of the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research WSL.** Its campus lies in Birmensdorf, a few bus stations away from Zurich.

The group studies ecological processes in populations of plants, mycorrhizal fungi and animals with molecular-genetic methods and supplements them with experimental approaches. The researchers mainly investigate species that are relevant for Switzerland owing to their function in ecosystems, their distributional focus or their conservation status. They describe how plants of the Alpine region evolve to adapt to changing environmental conditions (adaptation).

As important symbiosis partners of Switzerland's forest trees, the Ecological Genetics group investigates mycorrhizal fungi, their adaptation to tree partners and local conditions, and their significance for the stability of forest ecosystems in a changing environment. The scientists study how landscape features impact the dispersal and connectivity of organisms and their populations and how land use affects rare plant and animal species (conservation genetics).

Among the group's current projects are study of the genetic diversity of selected tree species, with a special focus on gene conservation units and seed harvest (TreeGD), an investigation of the role of hybridization in climate adaptation using the white oak species complex as a study system, with a special focus on Austria and Southeastern Europe (HybOakAdapt) or the pilot project GENSCOP, that establishes a network of experts in applied conservation genetics. This platform, co-financed by the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) and under the lead of the Conservatoire et Jardin Botaniques Genève (CJBG), is primarily directed towards the cantonal authorities for solving questions on applied conservation genetics.



#### RESIDENCY 4: Plankton Ecology Group (Eawag)

Head of group: Dr. Francesco Pomati (Link: <https://www.eawag.ch/en/about-us/portrait/organisation/staff/profile/francesco-pomati/>)

**The Plankton Ecology Group is part of the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology.** Its main campus lies in Dübendorf, on the outskirts of Zurich.

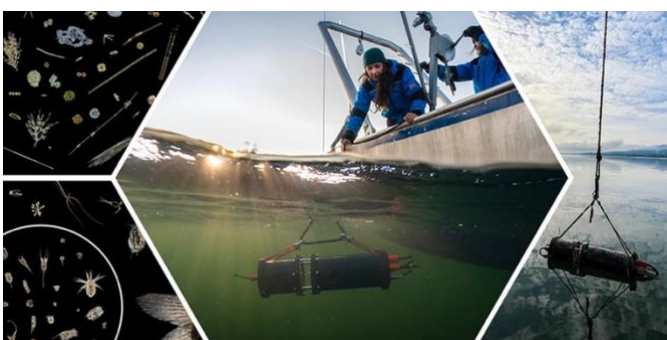
Eawag is one of the world's leading aquatic research institutes and part of the ETH domain. With its disciplinary diversity, close partnerships with practitioners and an international network, Eawag offers an excellent environment for the study of water as a habitat and resource, for identifying problems at an early stage and for developing widely accepted solutions.

The mission of the Plankton Ecology group is to explore plankton communities in their natural environment, explain their diversity, how they respond to environmental change, and ultimately how they affect aquatic ecosystem services. By pioneering innovative research methods and fostering interdisciplinary collaborations, the group is committed to advancing the field of plankton ecology and elucidating the mechanisms that govern plankton dynamics, enabling the researchers to forecast and mitigate the impacts of global change on lake ecosystems, including harmful algal blooms.

Plankton communities are at the basis of aquatic food webs, responding rapidly to environmental change and affecting the functioning and services (e.g. water quality, fisheries) of lake ecosystems. The large and dynamic biodiversity of plankton communities is iconic in ecology, and it is maintained by an intricate web of interactions between hundreds of species and their abiotic environment. Most of these interactions have been overlooked due to the limitations of traditional methods, which cannot provide data at the temporal (daily) and/or spatial (whole community) scale needed to elucidate plankton dynamics, including outbreaks of toxic cyanobacteria.

Knowledge of how plankton species interact with each other and their natural environment and what conditions favour the dominance of a single taxon (or genotype), as in toxic cyanobacterial blooms, is essential to understand and predict what effects climate change, eutrophication and pollution will have on lake ecosystems.

The Plankton Ecology group is diverse and multidisciplinary, with many local and international collaborations. It is committed to Open Research Data and FAIR principles. The group embraces equity, diversity and inclusiveness by actively promoting equal opportunities for everyone and supporting the compatibility of private life and work. As people and scientists, the researchers value differences in ideas, backgrounds, beliefs, genders, and opinions as the essence of creativity and fundamentals to personal and professional growth.



## Project management ZHdK

The *Master Series 2027* residencies are curated and supervised by **the artists-in-labs program in cooperation with the Master Transdisciplinary Studies/Minor Art & Science.**

### About the artists-in-labs program

- Since 2003, the artists-in-labs program (AIL) has been facilitating artistic research by way of long-term residencies for 62 artists in 22 scientific laboratories and research institutes in Switzerland and worldwide (as of 2023)
- It is part of the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) and promotes sustainable transdisciplinary and cross-border collaborations as well as the development of new knowledge by providing artists with an opportunity to critically engage with the sciences and their experimental and aesthetic dimensions
- This includes explorations of the site of the laboratory, as well as a range of scientific topics, methods and technologies. Publications and short documentary films record the processes and results of these collaborations and offer reflections on them
- All the collaborations the AIL produces are presented at various national and international exhibitions, symposia and workshops, making it possible to share findings and ideas, and to provide accessible discussions and aesthetic experiences to our students, peers and to the public.
- Since AIL's beginning the integration of its projects into the ZHdK and at the same time the integration of the ZHdK into its projects has been an important part of the work of the artists-in-labs program: Artists present their projects at the university or invite students to visit the labs, students take part in exhibitions, debate with the artists in seminars or develop ideas in workshops.

[www.artistsinlabs.ch/en](http://www.artistsinlabs.ch/en) / [vimeo](https://www.vimeo.com/artistsinlabs) / [instagram](https://www.instagram.com/artistsinlabs) / [facebook](https://www.facebook.com/artistsinlabs)

### About the Master Transdisciplinary Studies:

- Since 2007, the Master Transdisciplinary Studies (MTR) has been offering students with an artistic, creative and/or academic practice the opportunity to analyse and utilize the potential of artistic and aesthetic strategies for their own interests and planned projects.
- The programme acts as a hinge between different disciplines in art and design, science and society.
- It enables students to position themselves in cooperative constellations, to encounter different questions and problems critically and reflectively, and to develop new methods and formats for dealing with them that go beyond disciplinary constrictions.
- The profile of the programme is based on the teaching and research focus of the ZHdK, the competence profiles and work perspectives of the students as well as the possible connections in the professional field.

[mtr.zhdk.ch](http://mtr.zhdk.ch)