

Institute of Experimental Design and Media Cultures



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“How did design methods and ideation techniques develop in relation to science and art?”

Prof. Dr. Claudia Mareis, designer and cultural scientist

Director of the IXDM

“How can media infrastructures and their effects be made tangible?”

Jamie Allen, designer, researcher, artist and teacher

Senior Researcher at IXDM

0. Intro

The Institute of Experimental Design and Media Cultures (IXDM) is a research group and facility that carries out fundamental, practice-oriented research. Our interests are at the intersections of design, media arts, anthropology, sociology, historical studies and technology. An integral part of the institute is the Critical Media Lab (CML), which provides an excellent space for practice-based research, scholarly exchange and teaching. The institute belongs to the Academy of Art and Design FHNW and is situated at the Campus of the Arts Basel.

The group is headed by
Prof. Dr. Claudia Mareis

1. Profile

IXDM investigates the art, design and media practices that are embedded in and constitute our technology-saturated, digital culture. We explore the ways technologies continue to open up new possibilities for interaction and knowledge production. These same technologies fundamentally change the condition and character of experience, knowledge and action. Our research examines the lifeworlds shaped and conveyed through technologies and media. Research knowledge and its expressions are also a matter of design. Design has a stake in the analysis and conceptualization of technical, scientific, artistic and cultural knowledge.

Our methods are diverse. Research at IXDM is approached from an inherently interdisciplinary perspective. We draw on the diversity of backgrounds in sociology, cultural and media studies, engineering, design and media arts. We are proponents of historically and critically informed experimental media practices. We merge the benefits of academic research and media-technical practices, in the context of an art and design academy. Our work occupies the interstices between traditional disciplinary pursuits. We publish as often as we exhibit, we demonstrate technologies as often as we give lectures. Each is

done in an experimental frame, and centers on innovative research questions.

The Critical Media Lab (CML) is part of IXDM. It is a unique working environment and platform that allows for explorative reflection-in-action. As a distinctive component of the Campus of the Arts Basel, CML is a place where technologies are developed, research partners are convened, and public lectures and events are held. The Critical Media Lab's activities stage and voice the public-facing aspects of our research. The lab is also a place for conceptual framing, a testing ground for notions and practices of criticality.

IXDM is part of a wide-spread network of academic, cultural and commercial partners. Our newly founded institute at Dreispitz Basel has close local ties to the House of Electronic Arts (HeK), Atelier Mondial and the University of Basel. We also cooperate nationally with the Swiss Design Network, the Swiss Artistic Research Network and other Swiss art and design schools. Our research activities are supported by Swiss national and international granting agencies. We have partnerships and collaborative research with groups all around the world.



2. Research Topics

Our research projects fall into a set of general themes, including: Design Theories & Methods, Designing Knowledge, and Agential Media.

Design Theories & Methods

Design is a knowledge culture in its own right. We investigate its methods and modes of expression in light of history and epistemology. The conditioning of creative practices by material, medial and visual techniques is of prominent interest. We investigate how design intersects with scientific, technological and cultural discourses and role of each in interdisciplinary knowledge processes. Closely linked concepts of creativity, projection and synthesis are critically examined for their epistemic potentials. Proclaimed promises and imperatives associated with cultures of design and creativity are subject to a historical and ideological critique. We combine historical investigation, ethnographic techniques and practice-based experience.

Designing Knowledge

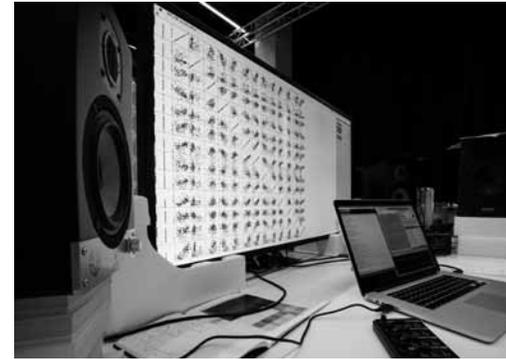
Knowledge practices and cultures from art, science and technology are connected to the paradigm of design and “Gestaltung”. We investigate how knowledge is shaped and orchestrated through multiple forms of representation

and media formats. The very production of factuality, evidence and objectivity becomes an object of designerly research and critique. Designing knowledge goes beyond mere representation and involves the whole spectrum of its conception, production, distribution and archiving. We shed light on the social, material, aesthetic and historical conditions for knowledge. Through experimental practice we develop and test novel media designs for knowledge production in inter-, trans-, and antidisciplinary contexts.

Agential Media

Media are environments. They are “milieux”. They condition the possibilities for knowing about ourselves and the world. At the same time as creating illusory structures, these systems and technologies also wrap the globe with material, somatosensory infrastructure. Investigations into the deep time, materiality of hardwares and softwares need to be undertaken, with an eye towards how such scaffolding allows or disallows certain regimes of perceiving, thinking, feeling, knowing and being. Outputs include artistic exhibition work and workshop formats, as well as published writings and media documents which characterize the infrastructures of both sensing and media.

3. Selected Projects



Experimental Data Aesthetics

This application-oriented research project fosters a multi-sensory approach to data analysis by the synthesis of seeing and hearing. It aims at the sensual extension of visual representations of complex data by acoustic means. Through experimental as well as historico-theoretically informed design research methods, it closely interlocks designing, programming and critical analysis.

“How can meaningful data be conveyed beyond visual means?”

Dr. Shintaro Miyazaki, media scientist, artist and historian

Senior Researcher at IXDM



Critical Artifacts

This design research project extends current design practices that question values and norms embedded in contemporary technologies. Through practice-based research, it investigates how design scenarios and prototypes could visualize and question established paradigms that are embodied in the design of information technologies.

“How can material culture be designed to spur discussion around alternative technological and social narratives?”

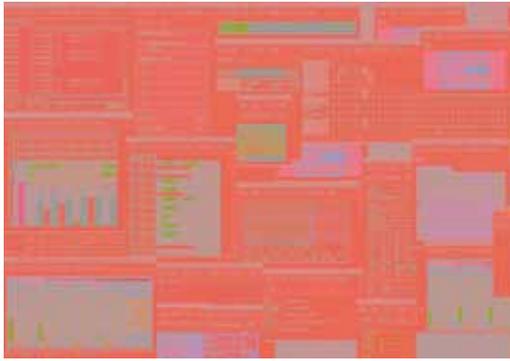
Ludwig Zeller, design researcher

Research Associate at IXDM

“How can technologies be designed to embody a form of self-criticism?”

Moritz Greiner-Petter, designer

Junior Researcher at IXDM



Machine Love?

This project investigates transformations in (sub)cultural production that are induced by digital technologies and current visions of creative economies. It looks into the fields of underground electronic music production and software engineering in particular to determine how production practices and (infra)structures influence each other. Based on historical, ethnographic and practice-oriented investigation, new ways of researching and representing contemporary cultures of production are sought.

“How do media technologies and infrastructures shape (sub)cultural production?”

Johannes Bruder, sociologist and political scientist

Postdoctoral Researcher at IXDM



Poetics and Politics of Data

The big data phenomenon challenges not only science and technology but is increasingly becoming a concern for artists and designers as well. Through an extensive exhibition and an international conference, the project exposes concepts and strategies of data interpretation and critique that are developed in the fields of media arts and design.

“How do economic structures, programming practices and cultural reverberations of software interrelate?”

Felix Gerloff, cultural scientist

Junior Researcher at IXDM



Times of Waste

This project looks into contemporary notions of “waste” from an artistic and scientific perspective alike. Material transformations and their economic, social and aesthetic value changes are traced. New media-aesthetic strategies are developed to expose and map out dynamic material flows from a local context to a global network.

“How do media formats allow for rendering, documenting and experiencing research differently?”

Flavia Caviezel, ethnologist, film researcher and vidéaste

Senior Researcher at IXDM



Designed Immediacy

Wearable sensors and computational environments change our established concepts of technical human extension beyond notions of prostheses or implants. Through theoretical examination as well as a setting for phenomenological experiments, the project inquires how human perception, affection and bodily experience are influenced in mediated responsive environments.

“How do media technologies shape the felt atmosphere of a space?”

Dr. Christiane Heibach, literary and media scientist

Senior Researcher at IXDM

“How do responsive environments affect bodily experience?”

Jan Torpus, artist and designer

Senior Researcher at IXDM



Network

Associations

- Board of International Research in Design (BIRD)
- Swiss Design Network (SDN)
- Swiss Artistic Research Network (SARN)
- German Society for Design Theory and Research (DGTF)
- Immediations: Art, Media and Event

Project Partners

- House of Electronic Arts Basel (HeK)
- Museum der Kulturen Basel
- University of Basel (NCCR Iconic Criticism eikones, Seminar for Media Studies, Sustainability Research, Seminar for Cultural Studies and European Ethnology)
- IBA Basel 2020
- Department for Culture Basel
- Institute for Contemporary Art Research (IFCAR), ZhdK Zurich
- Centre for Technology Assessment TA-SWISS
- Opendata.ch
- Cluster of Excellence Image Knowledge Gestaltung, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin
- transmediale – festival for art and digital culture, Berlin
- C60/Collaboratorium für kulturelle Praxis, Berlin
- ZKM Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe
- Academy of Media Arts Cologne
- Médialab SciencesPo, Paris
- Sound Studies Lab, University of Copenhagen
- SenseLab, Montreal
- Société des Arts Technologiques (SAT), Montreal
- Cisco Systems
- Swiss Post
- Vitra

Contact

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Image credits

Poetics and Politics of Data: “Hello World! Or: How I learned to Stop Listening and Love the Noise” by Christopher Baker, 2008. Photo by Marco Frauchiger.

Critical Artifacts: Extracts from “Un-House. Transportable Standard-of-Living Package” by François Dallegret, 1965.

Photos of the Critical Media Lab by Samuel Hanselmann

“How are design processes conditioned by the media involved?”

Leonie Häsler, literary, cultural and media scientist

Junior Researcher at IXDM

“How do digital media expand the experience of a physical place?”

Dr. Christine Schranz, designer

Postdoctoral Researcher at IXDM

“How do we enable new kinds of meaningful interaction through technologies?”

Andreas Simon, computer scientist and interaction designer

Senior Researcher at IXDM

**“How has the creativity
discourse been shaped by
media techniques?”**

Prof. Dr. Claudia Mareis, designer
and cultural scientist

Director of the IXDM

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