

DesignLab and Smart Media: The Revelations of Dr. Kx4l3ndj3r

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Social institutions globally are caught in a bind produced by the onto-historical folding of disciplinary humanism beneath an emerging performative posthumanism whose contours are traceable via certain material patterns (à la McLuhan) and propagated by experiments that mix gay science and sci-fi (à la Ronell). In this futural atmosphere, disciplinary debates over subjects, objects, and critical methods become largely irrelevant, as do the reading of conference papers. One pressing challenge: how to let the nonhuman lead, as it were? And how to do this far beyond the relatively small number of people now engaged with such issues?

DesignLab is a new media consultancy at UW-Madison whose mission is to democratize digitality, just as public education helped democratize literacy in the 19th century (for better and for worse). To this end, DesignLab seeks to democratize design beyond the professional designers of commodities and to democratize post-ideational thought beyond experimental theorists such as Derrida and Deleuze. We serve students from potentially any discipline, and our means are *smart media*, emerging scholarly genres such as TED talks, podcasts, theory comix, and persuasive games, genres which supplement books, articles, and conference papers. Smart media remix concept and affect, eidos and imagos, logos and mythos: they target new venues and new audiences and point beyond the monomedial disciplinary expertise that still dominates humanist—and posthumanist—discourse and practice. One instantiation is “The Revelations of Dr. Kx4l3ndj3r,” a lecture performance whose disaeronautic refrains slip past the all-too-human truth modes of correspondence and adequation (which inform debates over realism vs. constructivism) in order to explore recursion at a cosmographic scale.