

## Master Thesis Media design

Spring semester (S2) + Fall Semester (S3)

### FRAMING

The Masters Thesis is a research project carried out in anticipation of the diploma project. It provides the opportunity to conduct an investigation to consolidate your perspective, deepen your knowledge, which is essential to the construction of your thinking and feed the practical project you will work on afterwards. Overall, it aims at establishing one's position in the discipline of design.

The dissertation is conducted under the direction of a tutor who regularly discusses the student's work at each stage of completion. Neither a simple literature review nor a strictly theoretical dissertation, it is a writing assignment grounded in an investigation as well as a personal reflection. The dissertation should therefore identify a knowledge gap in the literature and bring an additional perspective to an area or topic, and feed into the upcoming project.

From a design research standpoint, the Media Design master's thesis corresponds to a "research on/for design" approach: it is the preliminary stage of creation, which serves to establish a perimeter, and to prefigure the possible paths for the practical project, whether it concerns the design of an interactive experience, a product, a service or an object. For this, you will conduct an investigation, generally about a context or a phenomenon, an object or a social practice. This is, for example, what Gabriel Abergel (2021) did in his dissertation about the various roles of automation technologies among Orthodox Jews on Shabbat. Or with Salome Kahn (2023) who explored how people personify everyday objects. It is also possible to investigate a context in order to understand the issues at stake, as Ilhana Besic did in her investigation of the studios involved in Extended Reality production. But it can also be a question of investigating a specific artefact, as in Andreia Rodrigues' dissertation (2023) on the ways of promoting a Portuguese heritage object, the azulejos. Or, about the evolution of video game controllers carried out in the work of Nicolas Nova and Laurent Bolli (2013) by means of genealogical diagrams, in order to understand the logic and opportunities of design.

#### Design research : three perspectives

Recherche on design, which consists in studying the discipline, the objects and the practice of design. Takes design as an object of study: history of design, sociology of design, etc.

Recherche for design, that aims at investigating a situation, an object or a practice prior to changing it with an artifact or service

Recherche through design, in which knowledge, ideas and questions emerge from the design practice itself. Also called "practice-based research".

## METHODOLOGY

Practically, this investigation is based on the approaches of field research coming from ethnography, using interview techniques, direct observation, or analysis of objects etc. But it can also be innovative in its method – for example by designing an object that help your inquiry, as is the case of the "cultural probes" (kits given to survey participants to enable them to document their daily lives, see Gaver et al. 1999) or web-scraping tools used in the field of Digital Humanities or Computational Social Sciences.

This field investigation will produce data that you will have to analyse and discuss in order to write down your thesis. The dissertation then takes the form of a description of the field material you produced, and of the ways in which this inquiry makes it possible to (1) describe a situation and its stakes, (2) discuss opportunities for design: possibly problems and needs, but also opportunities, new questions, even original theoretical concepts, or more broadly the social, cultural and political implications of the phenomenon you considered.

Presenting your field research obviously involves writing a text, but you should also use your design skills in order to enrich your manuscript with data visualization, diagrams, observational sketches (Curious Rituals project, 2012) and illustrated vignettes (Dr. Smartphone by Nicolas Nova & Anaïs Bloch, 2020), cartographies, objects rendering observations (Multi-Touch Gestures, Gabriele Meldaikyte, RCA, 2013). While the dissertation generally corresponds to a printed document, it is also possible to explore digital and on-line formats (podcast, interactive narrative, website with interactive features, etc.). Similarly, writing a textual dissertation can also take singular forms (narrative with a more or less important visual component, visual essay, commented lexicon, etc.). The important thing here is to reconcile content and form by taking this memoir as a creative object in its own right.

The conclusion of the dissertation should offer a synthesis of the work, but also present three ideas for practical projects to be carried out in the second semester. These intentions should be discussed in the light of the survey carried out and the observations and findings presented in the dissertation.

Length of the manuscript and submission date: the dissertation provides for a manuscript not exceeding, in principle, between 45'000 and 65'500 characters. However, an exception may be considered with the authorization of the tutor. It may be written in French or English. Particular care must be taken with the final formatting, iconography, and reference citation standards.

It must be submitted to the jury during the last week of November (date to be specified). The day of the defence of the dissertation is generally mid-February.

## PROCESS

The dissertation is supported by :

- a seminar in the second semester that provides conceptual and methodological support for the choice of subject and approach to the investigation.
- Intermediate stages of presentation in the third semester. In the form of an oral presentation to the supervisory team and all the students, these sessions are a place for exchange and enrichment for the realization of the thesis.

In order to allow this collaboration with the team, the dissertation work is based on the sharing of documents in a directory tree on your GitHub, to be updated at different stages. This tree reflects the trajectory of the dissertation project, as a prerequisite to the practical project:

INSPIRATION: illustrations of projects, bibliographic references (academic and other texts) or any notes that inspire you

METHOD: lexicon in the form of a network + interview guide, observation guide, criteria for case studies

DATA: notes, drawings, audio or video recordings

OUTPUT: semester 2: presentation of field research material, semester 3: written chapters of the dissertation

## **TUTORING**

The tutor helps the student to choose the subject and define the objectives, advises on readings and on methodological choices, and makes remarks on the manuscript and its formatting in order to improve it.

## **ADMIN**

See timeline for calendar.

The distribution of grades about the dissertation is as follows: 2/3 at the dissertation rendering, and 1/3 at the oral defense.