

pReview at a Glance

Origins

Prof. Tanja Diezmann and Tobias Gremmler have worked together as independent designers since 1997. They founded pReview digital design GmbH in April 2000.

Company Name

The name »pReview« stands for the idea of simultaneously looking back at past events and looking forward to future ones. In this way we can transform our experiences into action, examine and question knowledge, learn to think ahead and help to shape the future.

Positioning

A focus on digital design and a tight intermeshing of research, commerce and culture – this is what makes pReview different from other design studios.

Management

Prof. Tanja Diezmann

Number of Staff

The pReview team consists of four Design Experts and an Office Manager.

Memberships

Tanja Diezmann is member of the Art Directors Club (ADC). pReview is involved in the team media design process for »Partner for Berlin« by Young Creative Industries.

Our Skills and the Services we offer

RESEARCH: product development, research projects, research studies, analysis, development of new processes

DESIGN CONSULTING: usability tests, studies of ergonomics and Beta testing processes, analysis of needs, functions and optimisation issues, strategies and concepts, coaching

CROSS MEDIA DESIGN: cross-media branding processes, corporate and communication design

INTERFACE DESIGN: »Navigable Structures«, information architecture, GUI, HCD, new device interface, web design, knowledge management, CSCW systems, location-based services

MOTION GRAPHICS: TV design, station ID, digital design services for TV commercials and music videos, design of interactive platforms

NEW MEDIA EVENTS: new media on the scene, design of digital events, experiential rooms for exhibition and trade fair areas

DIGITAL CULTURE: generic visuals, video art, VJ clubbing, digital design for art and culture events

References

ECONOMY

- Ariston Pictures • DFN, Deutsches Forschungsnetz • Digital Vision Online Ltd., UK
 - Entopia Inc., US • Getty Images Inc., US • Gate5 AG, Berlin • GMD, Bonn
 - Hypo Vereinsbank AG • Merck KG, Darmstadt • Münchener Rück AG • Partner für Berlin GmbH
 - Pixelpark AG, Berlin • Triad GmbH, Berlin • Sony Europe GmbH • Vodafone AG, Düsseldorf
- u.v.m.

DIGITAL CULTURE

- Brechthaus, Berlin • Division Medienfest, Wien • Festival of Vision, Hong Kong
 - Intermedium 1, Berlin • Literarischer Salon, Hannover • Roter Salon der Volksbühne, Berlin
 - Sammlung Essl, Wien • Steirischer Herbst, Graz • Theater am Halleschen Ufer, Berlin
 - Transmediale, Berlin • Videofest, Bochum • ZKM, Karlsruhe
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pReview: Our Skills and the Services we Offer

Behind the digital user interface is a team of hard-working researchers, strategists and designers

pReview specialises in digital design. The services and skills offered by our team of experts are structured so as to anticipate market developments. Our range of services includes research, consulting and design in the following areas of competence: interface and cross-media design, motion graphics, new media events and digital culture. Our aim is to achieve user-friendly integration of these disciplines which still often tend to be applied separately.

Research

The small, highly-qualified team therefore focuses on plumbing the depths of the nature, effects and principles of that which we define as »digital«, investigating the interrelations and distinguishing characteristics of a variety of disciplines, deriving design and system mechanisms from this analysis and, finally, developing unique, cross-media design concepts. pReview works on product development and prototypes within EU-sponsored and home-grown research projects. The key topics are convergence, usability, knowledge management and process analysis. Laboratories financed by pReview investigate issues such as how interactions involving huge volumes of data can be improved in ways which benefit the user.

Consulting

The starting point for our business strategy is the recognition that markets and media are gradually growing closer together, that the number of virtual products and services is increasing on a day-to-day basis and that the importance of non-material value items, such as service and communication, is rocketing. Prof. Tanja Diezmann is convinced that design nowadays has to offer a lot more than just the visual creation of an interface. For example, if the task involves structuring complex quantities of data and preparing content for a range of media, it is essential that we also understand the logic behind this. On the basis of scientific methodology such as usability tests, studies of ergonomics and Beta testing procedures, pReview is able to conduct comprehensive analyses of needs, functions and optimisation issues. The team elaborates strategies and concepts and provides support for the subsequent implementation process. Furthermore, the Design Consultants are responsible for coaching and team leadership within the context of external creative direction.

Cross-Media Design

pReview stresses that »anyone who wants to enable a brand or company identity to be experienced consistently over a range of media has to have more than just a theoretical knowledge of the design rules and parameters of print , TV, Internet and mobile devices – they basically need to have perfected their abilities in this area.« Many years of experience in providing consulting services and meshing together the individual disciplines have given pReview the skills required to structure cross-media branding processes and to meet the most demanding technical and creative quality requirements.

Interface Design

As our everyday life becomes increasingly digitalized, more and more human activities are conducted via user interfaces and networks. Instead of direct person-to-person communication we have platforms, portals and applications. As a Professor of Interface Design, Tanja Diezmann has spent many years studying solutions which contribute towards improving orientation in the data environment. Her aim is to make complex structures more visible, comprehensible and navigable. Interface design at pReview is based on three core elements: our very own principle of »Navigable Structures«, cognitive models and clearly-structured information architecture. pReview specializes in topics such as GUI, HCD and new device interfaces as well as in the design of complex systems including CSCW systems, location-based services and knowledge management systems.

Motion Graphics

The convergence of telecommunication, consumer electronics and information technology has already reached an advanced stage in the back-end environment (digitalization, compression, transfer protocols, bandwidths, etc.). Front-end and content design have fallen behind in terms of development. However, the market is growing: the Internet is becoming more dynamic and television more interactive. New platforms are emerging. Structuring this in the most effective manner requires substantial experience and know-how both in the field of television design and in the design of interactive applications. This is precisely the area where pReview perceives a growing need for its combined skills – skills which have already been successfully put to the test in research projects such as the Virtual Studio Browser. Daily business is currently still closely oriented towards the graphical design of moving images in TV commercials and music videos as well as text animation, station ID, broadcast/transmission design, trailers, final credits, etc.

Digital Culture & New Media Events

New media on the scene, digital event design, experiential rooms for exhibition and trade fair areas, generic visuals, video art, VJ clubbing – abstract terminology used to describe what happens when we try to bring the digital world out of the computer and into »the real world«. The result is a bizarre world of images, a fantastic play of colors, light and music following a unique set of rules. Drama, dynamics and rhythm emerge from the inner structures of the various media. In cultural projects pReview can go beyond the digital; can break the rules, transfer them to other media and develop hybrid forms. pReview calls this transfer of structure from one media to another »Structure Tracking«, e. g. the transfer of music into a moving image.

pReview's interdisciplinary skills are combined with a passion for experimenting with new ideas and creating new designs. The result is a range of unique creative concepts. The digital designers' reputation has even made it as far as Hong Kong. In 2000 Diezmann and Gremmler were commissioned by the Goethe Institute to participate in the Hong Kong »Festival of Visions«. The program featured VJ-ing as well as the planning of a multimedia production.

A focus on digital design and a tight intermeshing of science, commerce and culture – this is what makes pReview different from other design studios.

Company Overview – pReview

»We are the digital specialists«

pReview – a vision combined with experimental passion and professional know-how. As a specialist in digital design, pReview is working towards achieving its goal of »Real Virtuality« – the ideal scenario of a user-friendly digital world – through the investigation, development and creation of new digital forms of design and means of expression. Their team of experts from the fields of cross-media branding and interface, TV, Web and event design are simply not satisfied with the idea of conforming to existing concepts. They are determined to create something new and exclusive, something which crosses the boundaries between different media and which is built on the basis of painstaking logic.

The success of this Berlin design studio rests on their determination to create high-quality products and is based on a wealth of experience. Prof. Tanja Diezmann and Tobias Gremmler, the founders of pReview, have been actively involved in the multimedia industry for more than ten years. They have worked under the label of pReview since 1997 and are renowned for their expertise in interface design, cross-media branding and motion graphics. Their work currently centres on research, consulting

»We are the digital specialists«, explains Prof. Diezmann, the Managing Director of pReview. In their role as Design Consultants, the pReview staff develop strategies and concepts for digital communication. They achieve this by analysing and evaluating applications and programmes in workshops, studies and usability tests, thereby revealing any potential for optimisation and providing support in the implementation process. As specialists in interface design and »Navigable Structures« they have become internationally respected experts in research projects. pReview achievements include the user interface for the Estonia Community Platform as well as the concept of a Virtual Studio Browser designed to search for data on the Internet during scientific TV broadcasts.

The digital designers see increasing demand for their services coming from three key market segments. Firstly, companies which carry out business processes involving large volumes of data transmitted via digital channels and which therefore require carefully designed, easy-to-use interfaces. Secondly, TV and Web producers who require creative consulting services for convergence projects. Thirdly, larger agencies which are dependent on specialised know-how to complete individual projects. Clients' references include Hypo Vereinsbank, Vodafone, Pixelpark, Sony Europe and Münchener Rück.

pReview is convinced that the quality of human-machine interfaces will play a decisive role in the success of products in the future. Their number one aim is therefore to make encounters with digital media as comfortable and as practical as possible. To simplify, to create clarity, to make complex things visible, clearer and more practically useful. These are the tasks the company rigorously pursues.

The name has a meaning, too: pReview stands for the idea of simultaneously looking back at past events and looking forward to future ones. In this way we can learn from our experiences, change things and help to shape the future. »What interests us is not just what is doable, but what is thinkable«, Diezmann explains.

Customer Care Starts with the Interfacing Process

pReview utilizes design, research and consulting to optimise digital user interfaces

The success of a digital application is largely dependent on the quality of the user interface. Whether we are dealing with software, e-Commerce platforms or interactive television, the interface is a strategically important element in building up a customer relationship. From the moment first contact is made, the person-machine interface must be capable of clearly communicating content and functions, transmitting messages and brand value, making services accessible and keeping to promises.

»Our task as designers is to create added value for digital products and applications – the type of added value that isn't simply limited to aesthetic aspects. Only the most clearly structured and user-friendly interfaces can handle the ever-increasing complexity of applications and make them usable. Poor customer orientation has a very real cost,« insists Tanja Diezmann. A recent »e-Branding« research study supports this perspective. The study was carried out by the consulting firm Accenture and the CRM company Online Insight. It revealed that almost one-third of Internet customers feel that price is a less significant issue than speed, handling, payment security and product selection.

Usability = user-friendliness when interacting with large quantities of data

Tanja Diezmann has spent many years investigating how to improve interactions involving huge volumes of data in ways which benefit the user. She founded pReview in collaboration with the Cross-Media and TV Designer Tobias Gremmler. This specialist digital design studio decodes the design and system mechanisms of digital applications, works on research projects, product development and prototypes and provides consulting services to clients involved in launching or optimising products. Before a new shop is opened on the Internet, for example, pReview can carry out scientifically based studies dealing with needs, functionality and optimisation issues.

»You can't properly develop a design without bringing in scientific knowledge and strategic requirements,« Diezmann explains. An alarming number of opportunities for growth and profit on the Internet come to nothing simply because the selection and purchase processes, the customer interests, have not been sufficiently taken into account. In fact, 65 % of online shopping baskets never make it to the check-out (i. e. do not get as far as the actual transaction stage) according to the »State of Online Retailing 3.0« study carried out by the Boston Consulting Group. In the quest for clear evidence concerning the quality and usefulness of digital products, the pReview Design Consultants employ a wide range of qualitative research methods, including the scientifically-based usability test, studies of ergonomics, screen evaluations and perception analyses based on eye tracking and biofeedback systems as well as needs analyses based on analysing target group behaviour.

What does the user expect from the system?

Can they easily find the information and goods they are searching for? Are the explanations and instructions easy to follow? What are the key factors which determine user satisfaction? With the help of usability tests and laboratory evaluation which includes the analysis of eye movements, the pReview experts search for meaningful answers to questions such as these. The usability test involves 6-10 testers checking a site before it is launched by running through a series of sample activities which focus on functionality, clarity and user-friendliness. During this test surfing process they fill out detailed questionnaires. They are recorded on camera and subsequently interviewed by experts. The aim is to ensure that every possible aspect comes to light. The results of the questionnaires and interviews, the processing times, error frequency and observation data are all evaluated, summarized and condensed either into recommendations to the customer or into briefings for agencies and designers.

»Navigable Structures« Provide Orientation.

pReview's consulting services are based on research and development. The team has a wide resource of past research contracts to draw on in the interface design field. The work carried out in the laboratory financed by pReview plays a vital role in supporting the development of interfaces for complex programs, online platforms and new styles of transmission. It was this research work environment which led to the creation of »Navigable Structures«, an interface design principle formulated by Professor Diezmann which supports dynamic information architecture and the visualization of interrelations. Her principle was first applied in 1998 in an interface study for a workflow management software product. The aim of this EU-sponsored project was to depict a complex data structure and the updated status of the team work process and to make these items directly accessible via an interface. A solution had to be found which allowed participants to call up context-related data, personalize their user interface and keep constant track of how their work – and indeed the whole project – was developing.

Diezmann is convinced that »the facilities and programs of the future will have to be more oriented towards practical application and simply be more useful to people. All the time spent carrying out interminable »trial and error procedures« and reading endless instructions could be saved if we only had logical interfaces and intelligently designed facilities.«

The pReview Management

Prof. Tanja Diezmann

Tanja Diezmann (35) has held the position of Professor for Interface Design at the Anhalt University of Applied Sciences in Dessau since 1998. She conducted her first courses and management training seminars in Web and Interface Design at the age of 24. As Creative Director at Pixelpark between 1994 and 1998, she was responsible for the design of modular interface systems, Internet sites, CD-ROM titles and POS solutions, providing consulting services for companies such as adidas, Conrad Electronic, Lufthansa and Deutsche Telekom. In April 2000, she founded the company pReview digital design GmbH together with Tobias Gremmler. Tanja Diezmann formulated the principle of »Navigable Structures« and has obtained international renown as a Video Jockey and Interface Design Expert. In her roles of Professor, businesswoman and Creative Designer, she has been an active member of expert panels, congresses and juries for many years, including membership of the juries for the »Bundespreis für Produktdesign Deutschland« (German Federal Prize for Product Design) 2000-2004 and the »Netvision« category of the Prix Ars Electronica 2001, Linz. Furthermore Tanja Diezmann is member of the German Art Directors Club.