



# KALTBLUT

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**COLLECTION 4**  
*THE NORTH*

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## Faces

### *you should*

“When it comes to the future, there are three kinds of people: those who let it happen, those who make it happen, and those who wonder what happened.”  
John M. Richardson

**KALTBLUT** wants to introduce you to some of the kind who make it happen. They are extraordinary, creative, outstanding, special, notable and unique and they will change the world soon. That’s why we have to keep an eye on these three people and you should better do the same.

# know

*By Fleur Helluin*



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*artin Backes created a sensation a few month ago with his pixelhead. There's something in his art meets activism that's just completely fashion-forward. But the man isn't only the dad of the protective piece; artist, designer, director, lecturer, performer, hacker and composer. Yes, it's the XXIst century, let's talk about it.*

**KALTBLUT:** Your work is at the meeting point between visual and audio art, could you tell our readers a little more about background?

**MARTIN:** I started my career as an artist in the late 90s focusing mainly on experimenting with sounds, producing & composing music and DJ-ing. Later on, during my studies at the University of Arts in Berlin, I got myself more into the field of sound, video, new media, installation and performance art, and of course design. Most of my works are still using sound as a material, but some don't. So I am also interested in working with other materials like graphic, light, fabric, interactive components, the use of sculptural materials, media, etc. Talking about pigeonholes people would probably put me into categories such as new media, computational & generative, video, installation, sculpture, intervention in public space and sound art. At the moment my main focus is somewhere around failure, stability, mimesis, illusion, simulation and ambiguity I would say. Beside my artistic career and

teaching at the University of Applied Sciences Berlin I am also co-founder of a company called Aaconica - creative lab for sound + media which is so to say a studio for sound & new media design constantly working on commercial, artistic and independent projects in the fields of culture, industry and research. Within this platform we are currently working pretty hard on our first software product which is about to be released very soon.

**KALTBLUT:** You are living as an artist, working as a teacher and also being an entrepreneur. How do you juggle them all?

**MARTIN:** For me it's just one hat, but yes, I know what you mean. Sometimes I ask myself exactly the same question (laughing). I am kind of driven. One could say that I get bored by things pretty fast, but I would say that I am getting interested in things pretty fast. Things which arouse my curiosity and interest - things I want to know and understand. At the moment my biggest concern and problem is really to concentrate on just one thing, that's hard

though. When an idea comes into my mind - I have to do it, no matter whether I have the expertise in it or not. My Pixelhead artwork is the best example for this kind of issue. I really had no idea about fabrics, sewing, designing a fashion piece, etc. but I managed to produce it with some help of good friends. And now I am very glad and thankful that I made it, because it attracted world-wide attention and I found myself in the news with Justin Bieber (laughing). I really do love this kind of lifestyle and variation. Every day is different in the sense of not getting to the office from nine-to-five each and every day. If we talk about professions the combination of learning new things, teaching, working and trying to implement my ideas is what gives me the biggest freedom. But everything I do, whether commercial or more artistic, is somehow linked to each other. And we all know there are more things in life besides work which are important, but that was not the question (laughing).

**KALTBLUT:** What do you have next to your bed?

**MARTIN:** A medium called air, lots of space ;)

**KALTBLUT:** Environment in a broader sense is an extremely important part of your work. What would be your ideal surroundings?

**MARTIN:** Yes, of course. I mean there's always some sort of environment - surrounding or context. It's very nice to exhibit artworks in a gallery, but it's probably much more interesting to go into a public space for example - for both, analyzing and intervention. I mean we are not living in a clean laboratory room-like environment. It could be interesting from a social, religious or political point of view or even perception-wise. I am also interested a lot in how we perceive things and what this does to us. When it comes to an outcome, doing works for more than just two dimensions and working for more than just one sense is what interests me the most as an artist. I think this comes closer to our human nature. So I am not sure what my personal ideal surrounding would be and probably never will, but I am working on it.

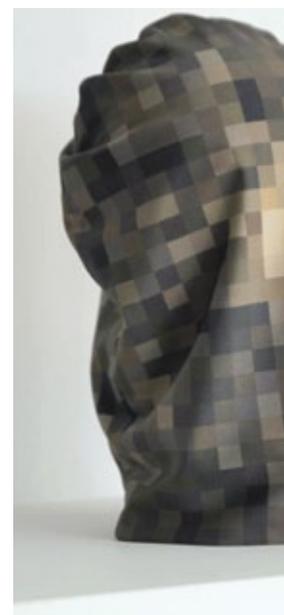
**KALTBLUT:** Where is your favourite place to listen to music?

**MARTIN:** I don't listen to music, I am just listening to the every day soundscape ... I think our acoustic environment is entitled to be heard. Just kidding! There's no special place. I surround myself with music when I am on the way, at home or during work (if I am not working with sound of course). But sometimes I'm listening to music or more experimental stuff in total darkness lying in bed and trying to immerse myself into the sounds and get fully absorbed by it. Have you ever heard of transducers, a technique which converts sound directly into vibration - you should try it! Especially when your full body is connected to the corpus of a bed for example.

**KALTBLUT:** Is there a mantra or motto that you repeat to yourself?

**MARTIN:** "I Have Nothing to Say and I Am Saying It". Surely not by myself, but I love this quote by John Cage. Pure Poetry!

**KALTBLUT:** Who most inspires your work?



MARTIN: I'd rather decline answering that question. I think too many people categorize us by our influences. So I would say I'm influenced by everything that surrounds me: education, every day life, culture, politics, literature, art, design, media, technology, commercialism, history, reality, the power and strength of nature, etc.

KALTBLUT: To what extent is your work having an impact on your everyday life?

MARTIN: There's probably not a distinction between my everyday life and working, at least not mentally. It could be a predominant political status quo seen in the news which pisses me off or a perfectly synchronized flight of a bird flock moving slowly through the air which triggers some ideas. I mean there's basically no quitting time so to speak. There's no definite break like in a nine-to-five job where you go home in the evening and try to concentrate on the funnier things in life or whatever. So my head is constantly thinking on something and working on stuff. Even during the night I sometimes find myself awake while I am not able to turn off my brain. Which brings us back to your question "How do you deal with so many hats?" (laughing). But I am working on that - don't worry. Asian philosophy and martial arts are good friends of mine. I am trying to have a well-balanced life and it's working better and better nowadays. And talking about procrastination, I am living in Berlin. I've heard that you can have parties here each and every day (laughing).

KALTBLUT: Would you like to tell us about your current projects?

MARTIN: Beside teaching and working also on commercial projects (please see [www.aconica.de](http://www.aconica.de)) I am working on a bunch of new works. A new audio-visual installation is nearly finished. Basically it will be a computer within an installation environment which presumes understanding human emotions and performance in the context of pop culture. The machine tries to perform the most emotional songs you can get unstoppably. If you are familiar with the movie "Terminator" you get the idea (laughing). So within this installation artificial intelligence/emotion will rise up and attempt to take over, but more in a poetic and funny way.

Another audio-visual installation is about expressing the feel of a cos-

mic consciousness experience. Or in other words - it will be a generative installation which is about the poetics of natural sciences working with materials like sound, wind and transforming motion graphics. Yet another work is dealing with perceptual coding systems, probably better known in the context of computation as file formats like JPEGs or MP3s. There will be also a follow-up to my Pixelhead work. It will not be a wearable piece this time, more like a fully functional sculpture. That's all I can say at the moment.

All in all there are a lot of things in the pipeline right now. So if you or your readers would be interested in those projects, please feel free to take a look at my websites below for more information.

[www.martinbackes.com](http://www.martinbackes.com)  
[www.aconica.de](http://www.aconica.de)

