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# IN:VISIBILITIES

Queer-Feminist Curating in the Post-Digital Age

## Introduction

In the realm of art, the dynamics of visibility and invisibility are significant not only within the confines of exhibitions, collections, and art fairs, but they also extend to broader power dynamics, as feminist scholar Peggy Phelan pointed out in 1993: “If representational visibility equals power, then almost-naked young white women should be running Western culture.”<sup>1</sup> Since then, numerous discussions have emerged that critique the pervasive white gaze present in exhibition contexts (see the debate around Dana Schutz’s painting *Open Casket* at the Whitney Biennial 2017).<sup>2</sup> Prevailing paradigms of Western-dominated representational power and subsequent exhibition conventions were critiqued and dismantled, as exemplified by the last two editions of *documenta*: *documenta 14* focussed on the decentralization and decolonization of the Northwest canon, while *documenta 15* emphasized the collective and processual sharing of resources as opposed to a Eurocentric practice of accumulating and displaying goods shaped by colonial relations of exploitation. Nevertheless, the representation of bodies, including gender dynamics, ethnic identities, and the resulting racialization within exhibitions, continues to adhere to rules influenced not only by national agendas and cultural conventions, but also by the very nature of the exhibition and its historical lineage. Tony Bennett’s concept of the “exhibitionary complex”<sup>3</sup> illustrates how the normative stances adopted in the representational methodologies of nineteenth-century museums are intertwined with the exercise of nation-state authority and colonial dominance. The resulting exoticizations and distinctions continue to influence exhibitions to this day. As I will argue here, the post-digital age is transforming engagement within frameworks of representation and the simultaneous co-creation of identities; the boundaries

1 Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, London and New York 1993, 10.

2 Jo Livingstone, Lova Gyarkye, “The Case Against Dana Schutz. Why her painting of Emmett Till at the Whitney Biennial insults his memory”, in: *The New Republic*, March 22, 2017 <https://newrepublic.com/article/141506/case-dana-schutz> (accessed March 31, 2024).

3 Tony Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” in: *new formations* 4, 1988, pp. 73–102; Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, London 1995.

between institution and individual are becoming increasingly blurred and mutable. This shift affects not only activities within online platforms—such as posting content on social media or directly disseminating images via smartphone cameras<sup>4</sup>—but also the representation and construction of subjectivity within ostensibly non-digital environments.

In contrast to the conventional role of the curator or the formal structure of exhibitions, the practice of curating encompasses a range of activity-oriented elements aimed at making art and culture visible. This includes formal curatorial services as well as independent initiatives “ranging from practical, administrative, and organizational techniques and skills through conceptual knowhow for programming, linking of previously unconnected elements, and mediation between all of those involved.”<sup>5</sup> Curating is also linked to moments of subject constitution: in the course of a generalization of curatorial practice as a valorization strategy and lifestyle,<sup>6</sup> as well as a growing demand for online visibility. Curating, I argue, has become a subjectivization strategy that has not only adapted to the conditions of the post-digital, but is intertwined with them. The post-digital conditions of becoming public refer primarily to the internet, which is no longer an accompanying medium<sup>7</sup> but was already declared a living space at the Web 2.0 conference *re:publica* in 2009.<sup>8</sup> Parallel to the rise of the internet as a mass medium, curating has become a practice that can be used to realize exhibitions, but also to demonstrate personality and distinction. Post-digital environments suggest a convergence of visibility within digital displays and participation in online networks, subtly generating new mechanisms situated between inclusion and exclusion, between centralization and marginalization. According to the ensuing proposition, curatorial practice is uniquely intertwined with the post-digital, which inherently engages with digital media and networks as an integral aspect of everyday life. Consequently, the question arises as to how curatorial practices specifically address the politics of visibility within the post-digital context. In essence, what are the implications of this entanglement with post-digital regimes of invisibility for curatorial practices that both present art and establish collaborative infrastructures? How can a queer-feminist artistic and curatorial practice in particular react to these changed conditions—produce them, prevent them, change them?

As a case study, I would like to present the curatorial program IN:VISIBILITIES that I realized at the Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung 2021/22 in Hohenlockstedt (Schleswig-Hol-

<sup>4</sup> Tanja Carstensen, Tanja Paulitz (eds.), *Subjektivierung 2.0 Machtverhältnisse digitaler Öffentlichkeiten*, Wiesbaden 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Beatrice von Bismarck, *The Curatorial Condition*, London 2022, 14.

<sup>6</sup> David Balzer, *Curationism. How Curating Took Over the Art World and Everything Else*, Toronto 2014; Michael Bhaskar, *Curation: The Power of Selection in a World of Excess*, London 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Stefan Münker, *Emergenz digitaler Öffentlichkeiten. Die Sozialen Medien im Web 2.0*, Frankfurt a.M. 2009, 80.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 80.

stein), which explored the visibilities and invisibilities that determine the public nature of art in the post-digital age through the interweaving of different formats, media, and spaces. The focus was on queer-feminist practices and questions of researching, hosting, and showing, which will be presented here using two specific project examples: the program cycles GOSSIP and EXCLUSIVITIES—EXKLUSIVITÄTEN. Using these examples, I would like to show how queer-feminist theories and theorizations of the curatorial help to shape and reflect an institutional program in order to understand curating as a continuous and critical negotiation process that develops specific forms of publicness from the constellation of different formats, participants, and media.

## **Post-digital curating and queered visibilities**

Situating my own curatorial practice within the post-digital does not imply a declaration of the digital age as concluded. Rather, it suggests a genuine conflation of the digital and the analogue, the material and the symbolic, the technological and the social. While the prefix “post” typically denotes a subsequent phase, the concept of post-digitality does not imply the inevitable adaptation of social, cultural, and economic life to progressive digitization or its eventual transcendence. As Florian Cramer points out in his seminal article “What is Post-Digital?”,<sup>9</sup> the prefix “post” in this context differs from movements such as postmodernism, which conceptually refer to previous paradigms. According to Cramer, post-digitality can be understood in an analogy to post-colonialism, post-feminism, or even post-punk movements and methodologies. This analogy suggests a critical re-evaluation of their own conceptual frameworks and historical trajectories, without seeing them as completed endeavours.<sup>10</sup> Cramer concludes: “In this sense, the post-digital condition is a post-apocalyptic one: the state of affairs after the initial upheaval caused by the computerization and global digital networking of communication, technical infrastructures, markets, and geopolitics.”<sup>11</sup> Consequently, post-digitality entails a reassessment of the once utopian ideals associated with the early internet, such as notions of community and friendship, which have become commodified in the age of social media.

The association of curating with the post-digital corresponds to its conceptual evolution: as an alternative framework to digitization, the term post-digital has gained traction, particularly in art discourse. However, post-digitality is not primarily defined in technological terms. Instead, the focus is less on the direct impact of digitization on everyday life and more on its ramifications and consequences in tangible reality. This shift occurs because the emblem of digital transformation, the computer, has gradually

<sup>9</sup> Florian Cramer, “What is ‘Post-Digital?’” in: *APRJA* 3 (1), 2014, pp. 11–24.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

receded from public consciousness as a tangible device, giving way to computerized processes and systems that regulate individuals' everyday experiences without manifesting visibly as apparatus.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, what is described as post-digital is not so much the devices or media themselves, but rather the invisible environments, practices, and organizational forms they produce. Curatorial processes are linked to this aspect of interconnectedness; they may not be readily visible in themselves, but they serve to connect different contexts and actors. Post-digital curating thus involves situating one's curatorial practice within a network that includes both digital and non-digital, human and non-human agents. It underscores the idea that technology has become an almost incidental yet potent component of everyday life precisely because of its subtlety and pervasiveness; it permeates social, political, economic, and cultural spheres even beyond digital networks or devices. As a result, paradigmatic actions encompass activities that facilitate, extend, and shape this interconnectedness while appearing mundane and unremarkable (see Nora Sternfeld's description of the "unglamorous tasks" of art mediation and curating).<sup>13</sup> In an analogy to the ubiquity of digital technologies, it is their routine and continuous operation that is significant.

The concept of post-digitality therefore encompasses not only a technical interpretation, but also an everyday, procedural meaning. Three key points are particularly relevant to curatorial practices: first, the *critical dimension* implied by the prefix "post" is emphasized, highlighting the moments of reflection and discourse within the curatorial practice. Second, the post-digital signifies a fundamental socio-technical condition—a medially oriented disposition that apprehends society in relation to the digital realm. The resulting *relationality* inherent in this term serves as a crucial parameter for curatorial practices that aim not only to make art and culture visible, but also to establish connections with both human and non-human agents. Third, the ephemeral, processual *interplay* between art, design, and popular culture forms an important foundation for curatorial research processes, which often involve collaborations with designers and engagement with audiences and their respective lifeworld(s). From a curatorial perspective, this "messy state of arts and design after their digitization"<sup>14</sup> raises questions about regulation, power, and subversion, which on the one hand relate to the analysis of a data-capitalist and techno-colonial present, and on the other open up potentials for queering those (un)regulated orders. The objective of exploring these potentials is not centred on the representation of queer identities. Instead, according to José Esteban Muñoz, the focus lies on the act of *queering* prevailing paradigms of representation. Muñoz highlights the notion of potentiality, the future, and the vanishing point inher-

<sup>12</sup> Peter Schmitt, *Postdigital: Medienkritik im 21. Jahrhundert*, Hamburg 2021, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Nora Sternfeld, "Unglamorous Tasks: What Can Education Learn from its Political Traditions?" in: *e-flux journal* #14, 2010. <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/14/61302/unglamorous-tasks-what-can-education-learn-from-its-political-traditions/> (accessed May 6, 2024).

<sup>14</sup> Cramer, *What is 'Post-Digital'*, 17.

ent in the term “queer”: “Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality.”<sup>15</sup> Queering, then, involves the repetition, reinterpretation, and consequent destabilization of entrenched fixed structures or (pre)conceptions. Similarly, according to Francesco Striano’s perspective, the post-digital can be conceived as an ongoing goal aimed at fostering criticality through revision and recontextualization: “If we consider that a more aware class of users is a goal to pursue, in order to avoid risks related to the reckless use of new technologies, then we must understand post-digital as an aim to be achieved.”<sup>16</sup> Examining the act of making something visible as a curatorial practice in the post-digital thus involves questioning the foundations of visibility and its politics of display,<sup>17</sup> as well as cultivating so-called counter-publics. The emphasis is less on mere representation and more on understanding the conditions that govern it and its subsequent re-contextualization.

Drawing on Eve Kosofsky Segdwick’s conception of queer as “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning”,<sup>18</sup> post-digital curating initiates from the very openness inherent in a network. It aims to forge new connections, determine one’s own positionality within specific infrastructures, and critically generates new public(s) through performative, often process-oriented settings.

## **The Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung in Hohenlockstedt**

I see my curatorial practice as transmedial, transcending various media and locations. The physical setting of this endeavour is of particular importance: Hohenlockstedt, a community in Schleswig-Holstein with about six thousand inhabitants. The rural region in northern Germany corresponds to what the systems theorist Johan Galtung calls the “periphery of the centre.”<sup>19</sup> In contrast to areas that are considered to be the “centre in the centre”, such as cities like New York, London, Berlin, or Paris,<sup>20</sup> the “periphery of the centre” refers to regions outside of national or federal capitals. While Galtung’s studies in the 1960s and 1970s focussed primarily on centres within the so-called global North—an approach that is problematic from a contemporary perspective—the economic, cultural, and state hegemony he examined remains significant. In the context of the program I conducted at M.1 of the Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung, it is the

<sup>15</sup> José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia. The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, New York 2009, 1.

<sup>16</sup> Francesco Striano, “Towards ‘Post-Digital’. A Media Theory to Re-Think the Digital Revolution,” in: *ETHICS IN PROGRESS* 10 (1), 2019, 83–93, esp. 83–84.

<sup>17</sup> Sharon Macdonald, *The Politics of Display. Museums, Science, Culture*, London and New York 1997.

<sup>18</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, New York 1994, 7.

<sup>19</sup> Johan Galtung, *The True Worlds: A Transnational Perspective*, New York 1980, 118.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 119f.

micro-social perspectives emphasized by Galtung's framework that stand out in contrast to macroscopic or macro-historical approaches. Inconspicuous everyday actions, which can be seen as paradigmatic of the post-digital, are emblematic of a location on the "periphery of the centre": they exert influence without becoming visible as the central object or place of investigation.

Consequently, I want to review the IN:VISIBILITIES program through the lens of Donna Haraway's paradigmatic concept of situated knowledge.<sup>21</sup> Just as Haraway posits the inherent conditionality of all scientific knowledge, I do not aim to present an objective study. Instead, I conceive of my curatorial program as a social and historical practice that is neither closed nor absolute, but rather embodies an ongoing inquiry—one that is deeply enmeshed in institutional procedures and personal experience. Utilizing my institutional starting point at the Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung, I strive to cultivate a sense of situatedness; building on this foundation, I seek to uncover, question, and re-contextualize narratives while critically reflecting on my own institutional positioning within a private foundation, along with the inclusions and exclusions that accompany it.

At first glance, the social environment of the Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung can be described as a homogeneous community. The population consists mainly of people of white ethnicity leading a heteronormative lifestyle. In contrast to the curatorial projects I have realized in places that Galtung classified as "centres within the centre," in Hohenlockstedt I encountered individuals who, for the most part, had minimal or no contact with the art world. In order to engage with a diverse audience characterized by a mix of social backgrounds and professional experiences, I had to actively cultivate it myself—this meant not relying on a pre-existing, locally or media-constrained audience, but rather actively fostering divergent yet intersecting publics. The onset of the coronavirus pandemic facilitated not only a focus on post-digital environments, but also their systematic and methodological integration into the program. Beginning in January 2021, the program's inception coincided with a period in which individuals had become accustomed to, and in some cases fatigued by, digital artistic and cultural offerings. As a result, the inherent ubiquity of digital media took on added significance in shaping the development of program formats.

At the time, the Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung had little digital presence. Its Instagram account had less than a hundred followers, and its digital offerings were limited to public Zoom conferences. The curatorial program *M.1 kuratieren* ran alongside the locally oriented program *M.1 Lokal*, which offered and produced (partly self-organized) cultural programs such as comic workshops and film evenings for and by people from the region. An advancement award was also given to artists with a connection to northern Germany. For *M.1 kuratieren*, the Artistic Direction of the foundation was a rotating position;

<sup>21</sup> Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," in: *Feminist Studies* 14 (3), 1988, 575–599.



1 The building M.1,  
postcard, 1918

I was the tenth Artistic Director since the program began in 2007. The foundation is named after the artist and entrepreneur Arthur Boskamp, who was born in 1919 and passed away in 2000. In 1945, he took over the pharmaceutical company Pohl-Boskamp from his father. That same year, Boskamp fled Gdańsk to escape the Russian army and settled in the former Lockstedter Lager, where he bought the then-empty building M.1 and re-established the company. In 2003, parts of his estate were used to establish the non-profit Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung, which continues Arthur Boskamp's artistic activities by promoting curatorial, artistic, and art education work, administering Boskamp's artistic estate, and preserving the historic M.1 building.

The name M.1, an abbreviation for Militärbaracke (military barrack) 1, refers to the town's military history (Fig. 1). In 1864, the Prussian Army established a reception, discharge, and recruitment camp on the site of today's Hohenlockstedt, which also served as a military training area from 1872. By 1914, approximately 18,000 soldiers resided in the barracks town, and in 1926/27 the camp community of Lockstedt was founded. M.1 was one of numerous barracks laid out in a grid pattern and marked with numerical identifiers. During the Third Reich it served as part of an army ammunition depot. It wasn't until 1956 that the camp was renamed Hohenlockstedt.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, the building M.1 was converted into a commercial building, and from 1985 it housed the Kunsthaus Boskamp (Boskamp Art Gallery), which showcased exhibitions by Boskamp and other artists. Following the establishment of the foundation, the historic M.1 building was converted into an exhibition space, opening its doors in 2007.

<sup>22</sup> See Stefan Wendt, "Lockstedter Lager/Hohenlockstedt," in: Klaus-Joachim Lorenzen-Schmidt, Ortwin Pelc (eds.), *Schleswig-Holstein Lexikon*, Neumünster 2006, 370–371.

IN:VISIBILITIES was thus situated within an institutional framework characterized by military, entrepreneurial, and artistic histories – histories intertwined with the name of an individual. The program aimed to inscribe itself in this complex historical background, navigating between visibilities and discontinuities. The challenge was to approach a place whose cultural and artistic heritage had been shaped by a male patriarch on the one hand, and, on the other, by a succession of Artistic Directors whose changes often caused confusion within the local community. The institution's fluctuating directorship made it difficult to discern a cohesive programmatic identity, contributing to a local perception of ambiguity or obscurity. How could I adopt a questioning approach toward an institution whose clear visibility on site was often perceived as alien or unclear and based on the invisibility of its name-giver?

## **GOSSIP**

*You're no one until you're talked about (Gossip Girl)*

The inaugural program cycle I initiated during my tenure was titled GOSSIP and ran from April to October 2021. As both an exploration of the site and my role within the Foundation, GOSSIP embodied a process of inquiry and self-reflection, exploring the implications of networking and circulation in the post-digital landscape as a kick-off to the IN:VISIBILITIES program series. It sought to re-imagine what is often taken for granted on screens and displays through moments of research, discussion, assembly, and exhibition. Central to this endeavour was the concept of gossip, which typically carries negative connotations and classist and sexist undertones—especially when associated with rural women, who are often perceived as symbols of gossip. I wanted to use this association, which intersects with notions of the peripheral and the (supposedly) feminine, in a curatorial context. Consequently, IN:VISIBILITIES placed emphasis on scrutinizing social norms and attributions such as race, gender identity, and class. The program unfolded as an open-ended exploration: it began with workshops involving students from the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig and the University of Hildesheim. This was followed by a series of hybrid discussions and evenings held in a queer bar in collaboration with the artist Paul Niedermeyer. In September, an exhibition opened with works by Ana Botezatu, Rindon Johnson, Katarzyna Perlak, and Bruno Zhu. The program was complemented by video commentaries by artists Shirin Barthel and Sunny Pudert, published as part of a media partnership with the art magazine *KubaParis*. The use of different spaces and formats contributed to the creation of a hybrid, multifaceted program that was intricately interwoven dramaturgically.

The definition of gossip that inspired me fundamentally was formulated by feminist and queer theorist Silvia Federici. In “Caliban and the Witch,” Federici shows how the term “gossip” was first used derogatorily in modern sixteenth-century England to un-

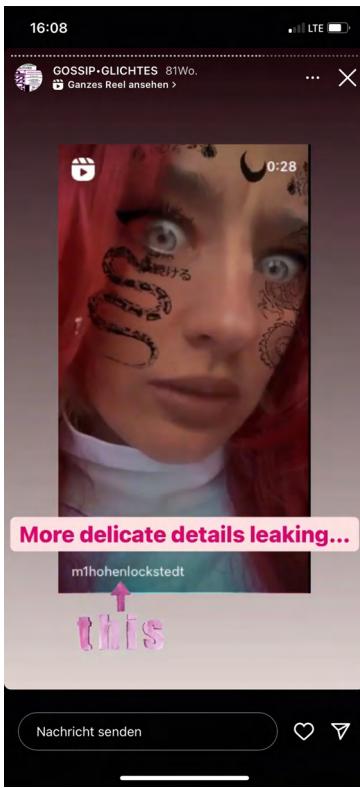
dermine exchange and solidarity among women\*.<sup>23</sup> In the Middle Ages, gossip referred to a close female friend. Federici argues that it was the rise of capitalism that removed women from the public realm, exploiting their reproductive work, now understood as private, and linking property relations with gender. Gossip was seen as attacking these relations, as it formed an alliance between women\* beyond the relationship of husband and wife—and, according to Federici, can be seen as perpetuating discrimination and persecuting women\*, as was done with the witch hunts of the Middle Ages. This devaluation, followed by possibilities of solidarity and invisible alliances within and beyond institutions, was an important starting point for me. I wanted to explore the resistance of gossip through the formation of counter-publics. Elusive, marginal publics based on trust rather than authorization, informal gatherings, and the uncontrolled circulation of content. I wanted to explore these gatherings as perpetuating a previously invisible archive on an institutional level as well. I drew on queer and feminist approaches as articulated by Marc Siegel and Gavin Butt, also regarding the art world. Siegel underlines the subversive power of gossip in the queer subcultures of the 1980s and emphasizes its speculative momentum: "Gossip, I argue, is not simply a means of oral communication but rather a speculative logic of thought [...] and central to the construction of identity and intimacy in queer counterpublics."<sup>24</sup> As a consequence, gossip has a performative and transformative effect on the relationships of individuals, institutions, and media; it changes one's own self-image and narratives by circulating speculations about others.

Accordingly, I sought to conceptualize my curatorial practice within an institution as a performative process: with each curatorial intervention, the institution would articulate and actualize its identity, constantly transforming itself in the process. This mode of self-assertion was framed as an open-ended inquiry that integrated feminist critiques and critiques of capitalism into its programming. Below, I will therefore outline some of these formats as case studies.

To encourage a truly open approach, I opened the program with a moment of relinquishing control. As part of a seminar I was teaching, students from the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig were invited to take over the foundation's Instagram account for several days. This experimental and largely unpredictable format aimed to explore informal and everyday actions as a means of institutional self-representation—with the outcome left open. The only stipulation was to refrain from posting discriminatory, derogatory, or defamatory content or comments, and to avoid sharing private information about individuals associated with the foundation and the Boskamp family. Under the

<sup>23</sup> Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, New York 2004, 221.

<sup>24</sup> Marc Siegel, "The Secret Lives of Images", in: Malte Hagener, Vinzenz Hediger, Alena Strohmaier (eds.), *The State of Post-Cinema. Tracing the Moving Image in the Age of Digital Dissemination*, London 2017, 195–210, esp. 196.



2 Institutional Glitches, April 2021,  
Instagram screenshots



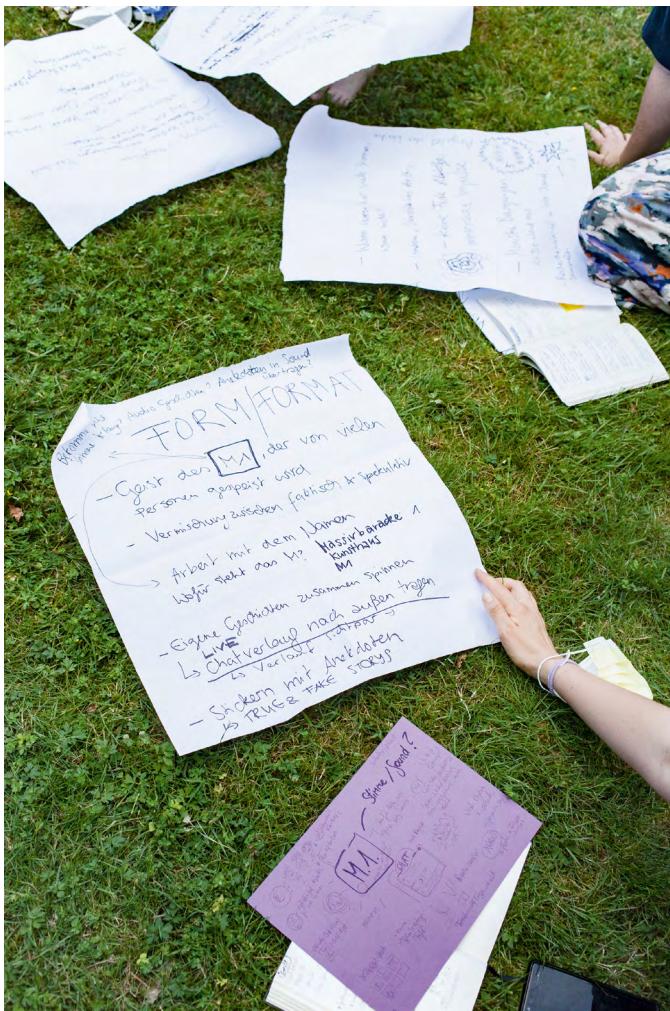
3 Institutional Glitches, April 2021,  
Instagram screenshots



4 Institutional Glitches, April 2021,  
Instagram screenshots

title *Institutional Glitches*, students created a variety of posts for the M.1 Instagram accounts (Figs. 2–4). Inspired by Legacy Russell's concept of the glitch,<sup>25</sup> which denotes an accidental error that signals the fundamental breakdown of a system, their intervention utilized the foundation as a case study to examine institutional narratives, self-images, and representations of others. Their approach involved juxtaposing, accelerating, distorting, and transfiguring these narratives and images. *Institutional Glitches* made visible a diffuse, perhaps disturbing network of speculations and fabrications about the past and the future—especially about the potentially (im)possible. The takeover underscored how the circulation of manipulated information has become an invisible component of the networked infrastructures in which institutions are embedded. Of particular interest was the meaning of gossip in a situated sense that resonated with the students: while the contributions initially focussed on the location of the Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung in relation to Leipzig or Boskamp's history as a manufacturer of gelatine capsules, they quickly shifted focus to the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig – an institu-

<sup>25</sup> Legacy Russell, *Glitch Feminism, a Manifesto*, London and New York 2020.



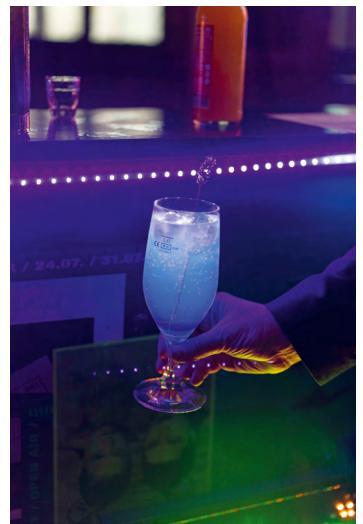
5 Workshop *The Speculative Institution*, M.1 Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung, June 2021

tional pivot. From this changed position as spokespersons, the students delved into discussions about the neoliberal exploitation of free time and leisure, as well as instances of power abuse within the academy. Gossip thus emerged as a tool for harnessing these shifts—and the disruptions that accompany them—to productive ends, while also demonstrating that gossip can play an important role in acknowledging students' needs and knowledge, and in fostering networks of solidarity to combat abuses of power.

The workshop *The Speculative Institution*, in collaboration with Fiona McGovern and the University of Hildesheim, explored the narratives an institution constructs around itself. With each curatorial cycle, the M.1 establishes new focal points that not only generate new content, but also forge relationships that become integral to the institution's history. Students of Cultural Studies and Art Mediation explored the composition of this narrative and how it might be reimagined as a speculative scenario (Fig. 5). The workshop drew on theoretical frameworks that critically interrogate the dynamics be-



6 Queer Bar, M.1 Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung, August 2021



7 Queer Bar, M.1 Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung, August 2021

tween guest and host within institutions, examining them through the lens of social, economic, and artistic contexts. Through intensive engagement with the site, students developed video as a potential mediation strategy. During the workshop, participants discussed dominant narratives, deconstructing and reassembling them to disseminate a fluid narrative of the M.1. The personal dimension of institutions, in particular the Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung, was of great importance: Ulrike Boskamp, daughter of Arthur Boskamp and Co-Director of the Foundation, told the story of the institution. This demonstrated how storytelling methods can yield implicit knowledge, with seemingly insignificant details gaining significance upon closer examination. In addition, this format underscored the fact that an institution's role as host is fraught with risk: control over the persistence of a narrative is relinquished the moment it is told as a story, transforming it into a speculative scenario that can be mediated in different ways.

In the summer of 2021, the first *Queer Bar* event took place as part of the GOSSIP program (Figs. 6 and 7). The primary motivation behind this initiative was to explore how queer communities manifest and unite in rural areas. The *Queer Bar* aimed to explore what community means when, unlike in urban centres, milieu-specific codes are not the primary means of making subcultural groups visible and providing them with space. In many cases, such spaces are either non-existent, or else adopting an assimilated appearance serves as a vital strategy for social integration and acceptance within smaller communities. To realize this concept, I invited Berlin-based artist Paul Niedermayer to create a bar in the garden of M.1, effectively transforming a familiar environment into a new space. Furniture elements from local restaurants were reassembled in the garden of M.1, complemented by light fixtures and objects from the closed *Studio 42* bar in Hohenlockstedt. This fusion of elements from different places and times blurred boundaries and created a unique ambience. As a result, the contrasts between different

styles, places, and temporal contexts became apparent, illuminating their existing but invisible connections and highlighting the inherent familiarity that underlies seemingly disparate entities. The *Queer Bar* unfolded over three evenings, each consisting of distinct thematic episodes that were interwoven to create their own narrative of repetition and transformation. These episodes told the story of how queerness transcends mere categories of gay, lesbian, or simply “different” and goes beyond notions of pride and diversity. Instead, they delved into the ongoing struggles inherent in everyday life that exist beyond the glitz of glamorous moments or the veneer of advertising messages. The bar thus served as an ephemeral space in which established norms were challenged and reimagined with an open-ended outcome. Queerness in this context not only stood in opposition to mainstream heteronormative ideals, but also embodied a multiplicative effect – a space that was spontaneous, open, and intimate, defying predictability and fostering new connections and understandings.

## **EXCLUSIVITIES—EXKLUSIVITÄTEN**

In contrast to the GOSSIP event series, the second program cycle, EXCLUSIVITIES—EXKLUSIVITÄTEN, did not start from the open possibilities of networked forms of communication, but rather from their limits. This initiative resulted from the observation that the debate on topics of pop and everyday culture, as in GOSSIP, is often perceived as exclusive as soon as it enters the realm of art. Despite inherent differences in programming, the resulting demarcations echoed the strategies of distinction that Bennett describes as emblematic of the nineteenth-century museum complex. The M.1 was seen as a “UFO” in the local landscape—a cultural anomaly whose program had difficulty gaining a permanent foothold due to its fluctuating artistic orientation, which led to disturbances. In addition, the M.1 encountered minimal cultural infrastructure or prior educational commitment due to the limited cultural offerings in rural areas. An invisible threshold was palpable to passers-by, who might peer with interest into the large windows but ultimately refrained from entering the exhibition space. I wanted to explore this phenomenon from a site-specific perspective, focusing on the invisibilities that generate exclusivity in the post-digital world. Exclusivity in the post-digital can be both a luxury and a necessity, a sign of belonging as well as a display of difference. In contrast to the art field, it is ambivalent and multifaceted, creating not only distinction but also protection. Exclusivity therefore becomes visible precisely when it is used to create hierarchies, for example between the institution and the individual. When these relationships accelerate, multiply, and change in an increasingly networked society, the question arises as to what exclusivity means here—at a time when sharing and participation are considered to be the basic conditions of a digitized society. What privileges and potentials does exclusivity render invisible? And how can an art institution respond?

Drawing upon these reflections, I have conceptualized exclusivity as both plural and intersectional. In alignment with bell hooks's analysis in *Where We Stand: Class Matters*,<sup>26</sup> I understand the classism inherent in exclusivities as entangled with racism and sexism. A central aspect of my approach is a relational conception of space, wherein classism is initially encountered as a perspective or access point.<sup>27</sup> An art institution serves as a space that, like an educational institution, presupposes an implicit body of knowledge and class consciousness. Within the space of an exhibition, not only are artworks displayed, but also the tacit understanding of who is allowed to occupy that space, how they navigate it, and what assumptions they make about its content.<sup>28</sup>

Building on Gayatri Spivak's concept of "unlearning,"<sup>29</sup> with which Spivak describes the unlearning of colonial relations of violence, EXCLUSIVITIES—EXKLUSIVITÄTEN aimed not only to challenge ingrained spatial behaviours and assumptions—essentially, the negation of hegemonic spatial structures—but also to cultivate counter-hegemonic spatial relations, or at least to work toward their realization. The program's approach to art mediation was closely aligned with this ethos; certain modes of engagement, such as passively strolling through an exhibition, were deliberately avoided. So how could exclusivities—in their explicit ambiguity—be transferred spatially and medially into an art institution and at the same time question its own mechanisms of exclusion? What demands and norms did they follow?

EXCLUSIVITIES—EXKLUSIVITÄTEN began with a solo exhibition by Berlin-based artist Zuzanna Czebatul, featuring her work THE JOY OF BEING THE CAUSE, which was specifically developed for the M.1 building (Fig. 8). At the same time, several art mediation workshops were organized to explore the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion within art institutions. This included a collaboration with Carina Herring and Nora Sternfeld from the University of Fine Arts Hamburg. In addition, a series of podcasts were produced with Cana Bilir-Maier, Ute Kalender, Mi You, and Bad Puppy from House of Living Colors, bringing together voices from the fields of art, activism, and culture. These discussions explored exclusivities in terms of institutionalization, representation, education, protection, mediation, and mediatization, aiming to expose them in informal, invisible, and constantly accessible ways.

THE JOY OF BEING THE CAUSE can be interpreted as the architectural framework of the program. Zuzanna Czebatul wrapped the M.1 building with a scaffolding tarp, creating a striking visual effect. While the building remained closed from the inside, the

<sup>26</sup> bell hooks, *Where We Stand: Class Matters*, New York 2000.

<sup>27</sup> Jan Niggemann, "Keine Klasse für sich. Perspektiven einer sorgenden Theoriearbeit," in: Francis Seeck, Brigitte Theißl (eds.), *Solidarisch gegen Klassizismus – organisieren, intervenieren, umverteilen*, Münster 2020, 45–58, esp. 45.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>29</sup> S. Danius, S. Jonsson, G. C. Spivak, "An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak," in: *Boundary 2: An International Journal of Literature and Culture*, 20 (2), 1993, 24–50.



8 Zuzanna Czebatul, *The Joy of Being the Cause*, M.1 Arthur Boskamp-Stiftung, March 2022

exhibition was open to the outside and permanently accessible. This unconventional approach not only challenged the traditional concept of exhibitions, but also questioned the socially constructed perception of art associated with them. Czebatul's work used the scaffolding tarp as a symbol of ongoing reconstruction, suggesting that by covering the building, the institution was undergoing a period of transition. The act of concealing the building initially disrupted its apparent transparency; passers-by could no longer look directly into the foundation's exhibition space. At the same time, the view was obstructed by what lay beneath: the outline of the house repeated on the tarp. This almost cartoon-like representation elevated the building into a fictional, narrative realm, raising questions about whose story was being told and for whom it was intended. The act of covering the building symbolically alluded to the uncovering of an institutional agenda that is always open to question. It referred to the future aspirations of art institutions as well as their fundamental rationale for fulfilling a public mission. Czebatul's work spanned a net between these opposing elements that hindered conventional insights and at the same time opened new perspectives. In this way, Czebatul's work made visible what makes institutional exhibition spaces exclusive: the personal signature of individuals in relation to the participation of many.

## Conclusion

Curatorial practice has the capacity to expose interfaces to the post-digital realm that often operate as invisible modes of action, encompassing power dynamics, protected spaces, and modes of communication. In order to make these modes of action visible as political forces, curatorial practice must extend beyond itself to include the final product of the exhibition, the role of the curator, and the institutional framework that shapes these visibilities. IN:VISIBILITIES demonstrated that the “messy state of arts and design after their digitization”<sup>30</sup> is rooted in the complex interplay between various digital and non-digital formats and their associated publics. This facilitated the interconnection of exhibitions and community infrastructures. The project’s queer-feminist curatorial approach enabled the relationships of invisibility explored in the program to be repeated, questioned, and transformed by highlighting the curatorial—“a field of cultural activity and knowledge which relates to the becoming-public of art and culture”<sup>31</sup>—as an encompassing performative principle that includes both the activity of curating and the role of the curator.<sup>32</sup> The conditions created in this process have produced new “messy” conditions that are characteristic of the post-digital age. By paying particular attention to the duration, movement, localization, and performative realization of post-digital phenomena, the repetition and recontextualization of existing concepts can produce new meanings and consequently possibilities for queering. Accomplishing this within an institutional framework is indeed a difficult starting point. However, the endeavour to do so embodies the potential of queer-feminist curating in the post-digital, as it is understood as a quest and a field of inquiry.

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<sup>30</sup> Cramer, *What is ‘Post-Digital?’*, 17.

<sup>31</sup> Von Bismarck, *Curatorial Condition*, 8

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 13.

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